

# Leadership development for developmental local government

## Challenges and prospects

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### ABSTRACT

*Local government is at the core of service delivery as it is the sphere of government closest to the people. The local sphere of government is tasked with the obligation of providing basic services to citizens in a sustainable manner. Within the context of a developmental state, developmental local government calls for new knowledge, skills and competencies from those in leadership positions in municipalities to promote service delivery. Developmental local government requires political leadership which creates opportunities to account to the community over and above regular elections. In this regard therefore the role of councillors as political leaders in local government is of significance as councillors are elected to provide political direction and leadership in municipalities.*

*This article focuses on the development of leadership capacity in local government in South Africa. With an emphasis on the knowledge, skills and competencies that councillors as the providers of political direction and leadership require. The article asserts the continuous development and improvement of leadership capacity in local government in order to enable councillors to meet local governance challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to promote the objectives of a developmental local government.*

### INTRODUCTION

Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people and is at the coal face of service delivery. Councillors as political leaders in local government are entrusted with the responsibility of providing a leadership role to municipalities to ensure that services are delivered, effectively, efficiently and economically. The article provides an overview of the legislative framework pertaining to the leadership development of councillors in local government and

investigates the challenges that councillors face as political leaders in local government in order to provide strategies and recommendations for effective leadership development.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The objectives of the local sphere of government are outlined in section 152 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*. The section states that local government has as objective to provide services to communities in a sustainable manner, to promote social and economic development, to promote a safe and healthy environment, and to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government. For the purpose of this article, the objectives of local government are the objectives which councillors as political leaders in local government should strive to achieve.

Three categories of municipalities are provided for in section 155 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*. A category A municipality is a municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area of jurisdiction. A category B municipality is a municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a Category C municipality within whose area it falls. A category C municipality has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one category B municipality. Prior to 2011 South Africa consisted of 283 municipalities, currently there are 278 municipalities (8 metropolitan municipalities, 226 local municipalities and 44 district municipalities).

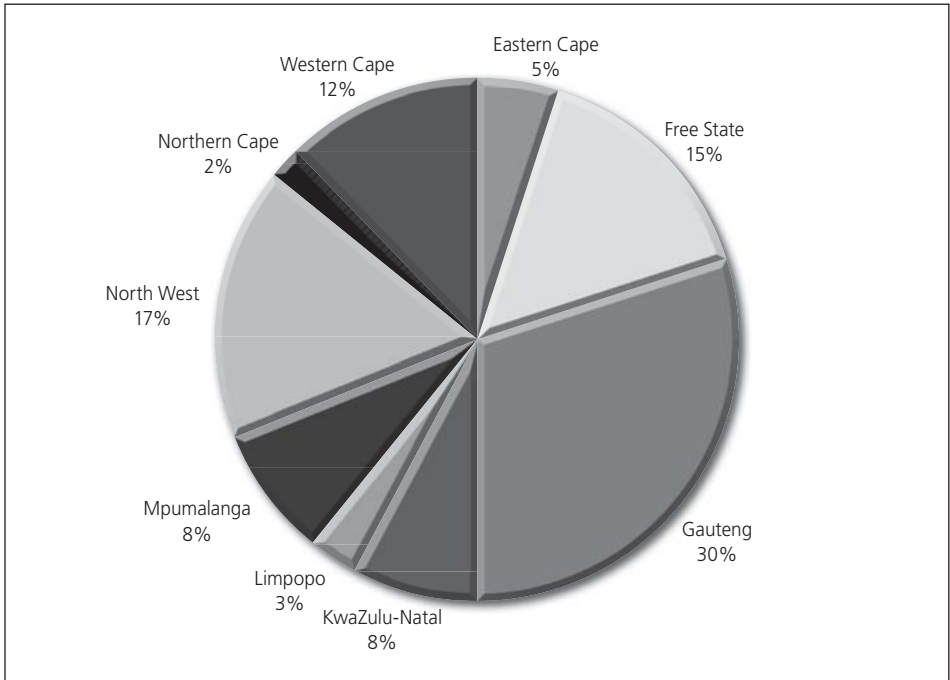
A developmental state is a state that excels in public administration and intervenes strategically in the economy to promote social development. It is a state concerned with integrating dual economy by addressing the socio-economic needs of its entire population, especially the poor, the marginalised and the historically disadvantaged. A well-managed and democratic state that builds its legitimacy on its capacity to simultaneously foster productive economic activities and economic growth quantitatively improves the living conditions of its people. (*National Capacity Building Framework 2007:9*). Local government in South Africa has a developmental role in terms of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* and the *White Paper on Local Government, 1998*. Developmental local government requires political leadership which creates opportunities to account to the community over and above regular elections. Increased accountability ensures that the actions of the councillors to resolve the aspirations of the community would increase the legitimacy of the council and deepen local democracy. This article argues for leadership development programmes for councillors in local government to equip them with the skills, competencies and knowledge to be able to promote the role and objectives of developmental local government.

## **CURRENT STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

One of the biggest challenges facing municipalities in South Africa is the backlog of service delivery. Over the past five years, service delivery protests have been prevalent in South Africa. The two figures below indicate the service delivery protests from 2009 to 2011.

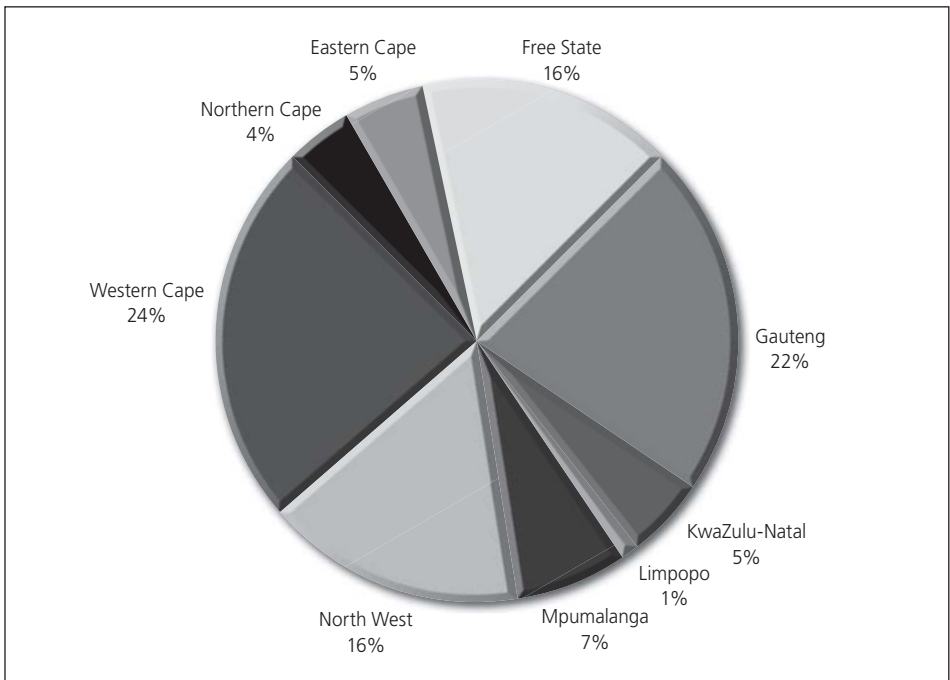


**Figure 1 Service delivery protests per province 2009**



Adapted: Municipal IQ Hotspots Monitor

**Figure 2 Service delivery protests by province for 2011**



Adapted: Municipal IQ Hotspots Monitor

Figures 1 and 2 indicate service delivery protests in South Africa in 2009 and 2011. The year 2009 produced the highest incidence of service delivery protests in South Africa in the period 2004-2009. Figure 1 indicates the highest service delivery protests were in Gauteng. There has not been a significant decrease in service delivery protests in other provinces in 2011, although Gauteng still has a high rate of service delivery protests. As the sphere at the coal face of service delivery, the lack of services is often attributed to ineffectiveness in municipalities. Councillors are tasked with the duty of providing leadership in these situations. Therefore it is important that as leaders they are capacitated with the skills, knowledge and competencies to effectively lead.

## **ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF COUNCILLORS**

In order to provide strategies for effective leadership development it is important to ascertain what their roles and functions are. Differentiation must be made between two different types of councillors, proportional representative councillors and ward councillors. Proportional representative councillors are elected through a system where the electorate votes for a party and the party decides on a candidate who will represent the party as a councillor. Ward councillors are elected directly by the electorate in a particular ward. For the purpose of this article both proportional representation and ward councillors are referred to. *Councillors serve as the representatives of the people.* This role is based on the principles of representative democracy which recognises the need for people to have a voice in their government but assigns that voice to selected persons chosen through the voting process (SALGA 2006:48). *Councillors serve as facilitators of community and constituency input.* The principle of participatory democracy is where citizens have the right not only to elect their representatives but to participate actively in government decision-making on a continuous basis between elections (SALGA 2006:49). *Councillors help to monitor municipal performance.* Councillors act as a key feedback mechanism for monitoring whether the municipality's plans and programmes are achieving the intended effect and whether services are provided in a way that is efficient and fair. *Councillors serve as a communication link between council and the community.* The roles and functions of councillors require specific skills, knowledge and competencies. As councillors in local government are elected and not appointed, capacity building initiatives such as leadership development programmes provide an avenue to ensure that councillors build their leadership capacity.

## **LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

"There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define it" (Stogdill 1974:259). Leadership is defined by (Rothwell & Kazanas 1999:5) as the process of influencing the activities of an organised group toward goal achievement and deduces that leadership is not linked to position, but it is linked to the ability to influence others. It can therefore be argued that any person in the organisation can be regarded as a leader regardless of where he or she is in the organisational hierarchy. According to Brache (1983:120) leadership is the process of defining current situations and

articulating goals for the future. It involves making the decisions necessary to resolve a problem or achieve the goals; gaining the commitment from those who have implemented these decisions. Therefore, leadership can be regarded as the responsibility that a person assumes over a number of people in order to motivate them to reach a particular goal. There are common factors that are common in all definitions of leadership which are; that leadership influences and that individual behaviour can be directed for the benefit of the organisation Logola (2007). The aim of leadership is to achieve organisational goals. A leader must recognise the abilities of individuals in the organisation and establish how these can result in the best performance. It is in the context of leadership that leadership development becomes an important aspect of any organisation. The definition of leadership highlights the components that are vital in leadership; leadership development then focuses on developing these components.

There are different leadership styles that are carried out by leaders. Traditional leaders clarify the role of subordinates, initiate structures and provide appropriate rewards, and conform to organisational values. Charismatic leaders have the capacity to motivate people to do more than is expected of them, they motivate people to do more than is expected of them whereas transformational leaders have the ability to make the necessary successful changes in the organisation's vision and mission and goals (Smit, Cronje, Brevis and Vrba, 2011:323). Although there are different leadership styles, this article argues for leadership development that is based on the roles and functions that councillors perform. For the purposes of this article councillors are required to provide leadership in municipalities and enable municipal officials to be able to implement the policies that are sanctioned by council. This means that councillors influence the work of municipal officials in order to carry out the policy decisions of the political parties they represent.

It is important to differentiate between leader development and leadership development. "Leader development includes those aspects commonly understood to result from individual development initiatives, changes in self-awareness, learning and behavior" (Martineau 2004:5). Hannum, Martineau and Reinelt (2007:18) define leadership development as "the expansion of the organisation's capacity to enact leadership tasks needed for collecting work, setting direction, creating alignment and maintaining commitment". Leadership development includes aspects associated with leader development but also involves connections among individuals and among groups.

Leadership development builds the skills, knowledge and abilities of a leader in order to develop and improve these competencies. In the local government context, leadership development aims to develop the skills of senior elected office bearers and appointed officials in local government to ensure that they have the competencies necessary for improved service delivery. In order for councillors to carry out their leadership roles effectively, they must be capacitated with the leadership skills to be able to lead.

## **CONTEXTUALISING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCILLORS IN MUNICIPALITIES**

Leadership development programmes cannot be developed and consequently evaluated in isolation. The legislative framework relevant to human resource development in local

government and by extension leadership development has to be reflected upon. It is also important to take into account the impact of the political/administrative interface on leadership development of councillors in municipalities in order to contextualise leadership development of councillors in municipalities.

## **Legislative framework applicable to leadership development in South Africa**

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 is the law that sets the precedence for other laws in all spheres of government including the local sphere. Therefore, all requirements set out in the local government legislation have to be done in accordance with the constitutional requirements. Municipalities have an obligation to develop human resource capacity to a level that enables it to perform its functions and exercise its powers in an economic, effective, efficient and accountable way. Leadership development is one way of building the human resource capacity of a municipality through the development of leadership capacity in terms of Section 68(1) of the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act*, 32 of 2000. The *South African Qualifications Authority Act*, 58 of 1995 as well as the *Skills Development Act*, 97 of 1998 regulates skills development initiatives in all spheres of government. The *South African Qualifications Authority Act*, 58 of 1995 was passed with the purpose of providing for the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and to establish the South African Qualifications Authority. The *South African Qualifications Authority Act*, 58 of 1995 aims to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements, which means that all qualifications that are registered with the South African Qualifications Authority are recognised as formal qualifications. This Act makes provision for leadership development programmes which provide formal qualifications.

The *Skills Development Act*, 97 of 1998 aims to provide an institutional framework to devise and implement national sector and workplace strategies in order to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce and to integrate these strategies with the National Qualifications Framework contemplated in the *South African Qualifications Act*, 58 of 1995. The need for strong political and managerial leadership is the focus of the *National Capacity Building Framework*, 2007, which supports and promotes capacity building initiatives in local government and this includes leadership development of councillors. The implementation of leadership development programmes is contextualised through the legislative framework governing local government. The next section of the article analyses the current state of local government in South Africa in order to highlight the challenges that municipalities are faced with and thus highlighting the need for effective leadership in municipalities.

## **The political/administrative interface**

The political/administrative interface is explained by Thornhill (2005:182) with the practical example of a motor vehicle. The public administration and politics interface is where the tyre hits the road. In the case of a motor vehicle, the bonding between the tyre and the road determines the extent to which the driver is in control of the vehicle. If the bonding



is insufficient due to tyre failure or road inconsistency, the vehicle tends to move in any direction but forward. By this it is meant that the executing authority is the tyre and the political office-bearer is the road, there has to be a relationship of trust and the responsibilities need to be clear (Thornhill 2005:182). It is important to ensure that there is clarity of roles and responsibilities in municipalities between elected and appointed officials. The debate on the separation of politics from administration has been on-going for decades as explained by scholars in Public Administration. Woodrow Wilson in his article *The Study of Administration* asserts that “the field of administration is a field of business, removed from the hurry and strife of politics. It is part of political life only as the methods of the manufactured product as machinery is part of the manufactured product. Policy does nothing without the aid of administration” (Wilson 1887:12-13). There is a difference between the function of seeing that laws are enforced and that of actually performing the functions the law calls for (Willoughby 1936:219). Public administrators are tasked with the job of elaborating and detailing of broad policy frameworks as put forward by political office bearers. This entails the entire policy process, from formulation of policies, to the implementation (where these detailed policies have been adopted by political office bearers) and the review of policies (Kuye (2011:171). Elected and appointed officials in municipalities have to work together in order to promote the developmental role of local government. It is a reality however that politics and administration interface in municipalities which has an impact on the leadership role of councillors.

The results of interviews conducted by Logola (2007) with organised local government in terms of the context within which councillors execute their leadership role indicates a tendency for councillors to interfere with administrative matters in the domain of appointed officials instead of providing leadership in this regard. To illustrate this, one municipal manager reported that a councillor entered his office. The manager politely enquired how he could help. The councillor indicated that he was there to monitor the performance of the official. The councillor wanted to see “what the official did from 08h00 to 17h00 because it was important that the municipality remains accountable to the community”. This is a practical example of the interface between politics and administration. Four types of political behaviour in organisations are outlined by Smit *et al.* (2011:327); the first is when a manager or a leader promises someone something in exchange for that person’s support. An example of this in municipalities could be when a councillor is offered a vote in exchange for something they do for someone else. The second type of political behaviour is persuasion which plays on a subordinate’s emotions and may even include fear or guilt. Another type of political behaviour is the creation of an obligation, for example support in a particular matter even if opposed to it, being fully aware that the managers support will be needed sometime in the future (Smit *et al.* 2011:328). The fourth type of behaviour is the use of force to get one’s own way. It becomes important to develop leadership development programmes that take into account the impact that political behaviour has on leaders and their leadership role.

To develop leadership capacity of councillors to enable them to effectively function as leaders in municipalities the environment within which they execute their roles and functions must be considered. The impact of the political administrative interface on councillors’ duties therefore has to be considered to ensure effective leadership development programmes that reflect the context within which councillors lead.

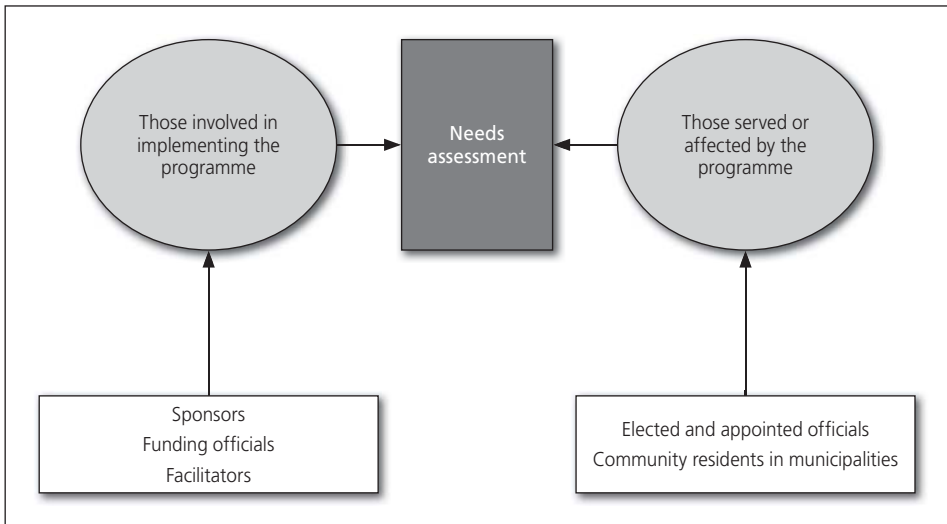
# STRATEGIES AND PROSPECTS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The above mentioned challenges have an impact on leadership development of councillors and therefore in order to be effective this article recommends that specific strategies be put in place. The recommended strategies include; the development of an effective needs assessment tool; the revitalisation of the Local Government Leadership Academy; emphasis on accredited qualifications for leadership development; and the evaluation of leadership development programmes.

## An effective needs assessment tool

Organisational leaders involved with successful leadership development programmes begin with a thorough needs assessment (Leskiw and Singh 2000:447). There is a definite trend among organisations towards defining the programme needs by clearly linking the development programme to the organisational strategy (Fulmer and Goldsmith 2000). An organisation's strategic direction and intent should according to Melum (2002:2) define leaders instead of someone designing leadership in a vacuum and trying to imprint it on the organisation. A leadership development programme is effective if it satisfies the needs of both the organisation and the individuals. It is therefore important that the first step in leadership development assesses the extent to which the leadership development needs of municipalities and councillors are assessed prior to attending the Programme. The significance of a needs assessment is two-fold, for the municipalities a needs assessment entails that the skills, knowledge and competencies required in order to meet the goals of the municipality are identified, for the individual councillors their development needs are identified and can be addressed. This includes barriers that hinder the councillors in carrying

**Figure 3 Stakeholders involved in a leadership development programme**



Adapted: Baker, Q., Davis, D., Gallerani, R., Sanchez, V., Viadro, C. 1995. [Online] Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalcbph.pdf>. [Accessed on: 30 March 2011].



out their leadership tasks; an effective needs assessment tool is one that assesses the needs of the various stakeholders in a leadership development programme.

Figure 3 indicates the various stakeholders involved in a leadership development programme to councillors in local government. In order for a leadership development programme to be effective in developing leadership skills, it is important that all the stakeholders have a clear understanding of the needs to be addressed through the councillors' participation in the programme. The programme sponsors and those funding the programme have a vested interest in the success of the programme, it is important that their views regarding the programme are taken into consideration. The facilitators of the programme also have a vested interest in the programme and have to understand the needs to be met through the development of and participation in a leadership development programme.

## **The revitalisation of the Local Government Leadership Academy (LOGOLA)**

The Local Government Leadership Academy is a programme of the former Department of Provincial and Local Government (Now Department of Cooperative Governance) which was established, on account of the informed needs of the communities and the role that officials and councillors play in meeting these needs. It is vital to state that the LOGOLA was established in order to capacitate local government councillors and other elected and appointed officials with specific leadership competencies. These competencies are necessary to achieve the aims of a developmental local government and promote improved service delivery. Hangana (2007) states that the LOGOLA is tasked with developing relevant and focused programmes that are aimed at empowering elected and appointed officials. Due to ineffective planning and a lack of proper planning and management the Local Government Leadership Academy currently does not offer leadership development programmes to councillors.

This article recommends that the Local Government Leadership Academy be revitalised in order to develop leadership capacity of councillors in local government. This article recommends a closer working relationship between municipalities and the Local Government Leadership Academy. This relationship has to be aligned with an effective needs assessment where the Local Government Leadership Academy aligns its leadership development programmes with the specific needs of the municipalities in order to provide programmes that are relevant to the leadership development needs of councillors in particular and municipalities in general.

## **Emphasis on accredited qualifications for leadership development**

As previously mentioned councillors of municipalities are elected through democratic processes and not appointed, therefore their election is not dependent on their academic qualifications. The literacy challenges that plague councillors are indicative of this and largely problematic. Councillors who participated in the empirical research for the purpose of this article indicated a need for accredited qualifications for participation in leadership development programmes. The value of accredited qualifications to councillors is twofold: *firstly*, accredited qualifications promote the attendance of these programmes by councillors

due to the academic value that can be derived upon completion of the programme. *Secondly*, accredited qualifications ensure that after their term of office ends councillors will be employable and have improved chances of finding employment.

Municipal councillors are challenged by service delivery backlogs and therefore have limited time to attend programmes that they are not motivated to or that they do not perceive as valuable to them. It is, therefore, recommended that leadership development programmes offered to councillors provide not only functional but academic content as well. There are, however, councillors who have the academic qualifications such as a university degree or diploma and serve as councillors in municipalities. It is vital therefore that the leadership development programmes they attend provide academic value to them as well. Robbins (1998:309) defines motivation as the willingness to do something and is conditioned by this action's ability to satisfy some need for the individual. Councillors with an academic qualification which carries a higher academic value than that being offered through a leadership development programme will be less motivated to attend; it becomes important then to provide leadership development programmes with academic and functional content to councillors that will motivate them to attend such programmes.

## **Evaluation of leadership development programmes**

It is not only vital to send councillors to attend leadership development programmes. It is also important to evaluate the impact of these leadership development programmes. Evaluation of leadership development programmes will not only improve development efforts and the quality of leadership, but also contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation. Done well, the evaluation of leadership development is itself an important activity (Martineau 2004:3). Due to a lack of evaluation of training courses, employees might be sent on training that does not satisfy their training needs and causes a non- alignment with organisational needs (Van Dijk 2004:511). It can therefore be deduced that the evaluation of training and development initiatives are vital both for the individual and the organisation. For the organisation, evaluation provides recognition of the impact that training and development programmes have or could have on organisational performance. For the individual, evaluation provides the advantage of self-satisfaction and meeting their own training needs resulting in improved performance and personal development. Two main reasons for the lack of evaluation are identified by Lewis and Thornhill (1994:24–27). They identify two main reasons for this; namely the belief that training (and development) must be good, irrespective of the outcome, is not questioned. Another reason is that evaluation might point towards the ineffectiveness of the training (and development), which is why trainers and/or organisations shy away from dealing with or prioritising it.

Given the current challenges that municipalities are facing in terms of service delivery, the attendance of leadership development programmes by councillors is costly in terms of time and finances. Therefore the evaluation of these programmes is essential in order to assess the lessons learned from participation in the programme as well as to assess the impact of these programmes. Motivation is defined by Robbins (1998:309) as the willingness to do something and is conditioned by this action's ability to satisfy some need for the individual whereas Chung (1977:42) defines it as what an individual will do. In order for councillors to effectively participate in leadership development evaluation they need to be willing to do so.



It is important that councillors accept and understand the significance of their participation in leadership development evaluation for their individual well-being as well as that of the municipalities they serve. For the purpose of this article different motivational theories outline factors that have an impact on leadership development evaluation.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is based on the premise that people are motivated to satisfy five basic types of needs organised in terms of a hierarchy, when one need is satisfied a higher-order need another one arises. Maslow identifies lower order needs as physiological needs such as food and water as lower order needs and self-actualisation needs such as the realisation of one's potential as the top order need. Leadership development forms part of realising one's potential as councillors attend leadership development programmes to develop their potential as leaders in municipalities.

Alderfers' ERG theory is based on the premise that there are three basic human needs, existence needs, relatedness needs and growth needs. Existence needs are related to safety and physiological needs whereas relatedness needs include social and interpersonal relationships and growth needs include needs that relate to the development of human potential. Leadership development evaluation forms part of growth needs of developing the leadership potential of councillors and contribute to their growth. Alderfers' ERG theory according to (Chung 1977:43) differs from the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory as the lack of higher order need satisfaction makes lower order needs more important.

Expectancy according to Vroom's expectancy theory is a person's estimate of the probability that a specific act or behaviour will result in a specific outcome or reward. Councillors participate in leadership development evaluation to ascertain the extent to which their leadership competence is developed. This article argues that prioritisation of leadership development evaluation of programmes that will motivate councillors to attend leadership development programmes if the value brought about by these programmes can be ascertained.

## CONCLUSION

The focus of this article was on the challenges impacting on councillors as political leaders in municipalities. The article focused on the developmental role of local government in South Africa, the roles and responsibilities of municipal councillors as well the legislative framework that provides a context for leadership development of councillors. The article provided a detailed description of the challenges impacting on leadership development and concluded with recommendations and strategies to deal with these challenges and continuously develop leadership capacity in local government.

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