

# De-politicisation of service delivery in local government

## Prospects for development in South Africa

**O S Madumo**

School of Public Management and Administration  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa

### **ABSTRACT**

*Most African countries have undergone administrative reform since the end of colonisation and oppression. These measures were imperative as they aim at creating an environment conducive for development, growth and prosperity for the continent. However, Africa is still faced with a myriad of challenges. This article aims at providing an explanation of how to achieve an effective public service by utilising a depoliticised local government. It begins by exploring the concepts of politicisation and de-politicisation. The article argues that de-politicisation as an administrative reform will usher in a professionalised local government, where the improvement of the delivery of services is achieved and sustainability of the quality of services is maintained. The article provides a conclusion and recommendations summarising the salient feature of the discussion of dissociating politics from administration when delivering services to citizens, thereby ensuring development through equitable and efficient provision of services.*

*"A man by nature is a political animal"- Aristotle*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As Aristotle's quote suggests, any activity that the people participate in, aimed to improve their lives, will inherently be political and influenced by political thought and ideologies. Development of communities in Africa, Latin America, Asia and some European countries is of primary importance to global political leaders and agents of change. The political will to achieve development in recent times is tested through the leaders' commitment to the Copenhagen consensus (2006) which identifies a number of factors that require improvement. For governments to flourish in their endeavours and develop, they need to

win the confidence of the people they govern. The aftermath of colonisation and oppression in Africa has created a vicious cycle among a number of challenges, where the existence of some challenges is as a result of the legacy created by colonialism. In some African countries, governments are struggling to address challenges that exist as a result of the legacy created by colonisation. For example, inequality as propagated by South Africa's Apartheid regime remains a central challenge for the new democratic government. In other parts of Africa, particularly countries in the central and north of the continent are faced with challenges ranging from, poverty, conflict, terrorism, to political instability caused by *coups d'état* (Iroanya 2007:67–68). All these challenges create dysfunctional local government machinery that results in poor delivery of public services. Some states are more prone to challenges relating to, *inter alia*, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases and unstable economic environments created by market fluctuations. Local government in many African countries, i.e. Swaziland, South Africa and Nigeria, find it difficult to address some of these challenges.

All governments are charged with the responsibility of ensuring a sustainable livelihood and improvement of the quality of lives of the people it governs. Such improvements and preservation of the citizens' wellbeing are predicated upon a well-structured government system that supports development of the continent. The Copenhagen consensus emphatically states that development and improvement of the quality of lives of the people should be prioritised by governments (Hilderbrand 2015:10). Local government is characterised as the sphere/level of government that could provide the immediate necessary intervention, because it operates within reach of the community. The purpose of this article is to investigate how administrative reform could be used to facilitate de-politicisation in order to enhance service delivery in local government.

This article begins by conceptualising politicisation and de-politicisation. This conceptualisation is important in creating a common definition of elements that serve as salient features of the discussion. The second section provides an explanation of the importance of instigating administrative reform in order to achieve sustainable delivery of public services. This can be understood if one is familiar with the conditions of an environment within which such services are rendered. This article will argue that administrative reform will usher in a professionalised local government where the management principles are effectively utilised to achieve enhanced delivery of services in local government. This is done to assess the benefits that the paradigm shift could yield. The POSDCORB administrative principles as developed by Gulick and Urwick in 1937, as an example, are used to demonstrate how professionalisation of service delivery could be instilled. In order to fully understand the impact that de-politicisation of services will have on the efficiency and effectiveness of municipalities, the different roles, functions and powers of selected local governments are discussed in the third section. The middle-range studies will be used as a comparative approach to determine if political dynamics have an effect on the functioning of local government. Lastly, the improvement of the provision of public services is discussed and further recommendations are provided for an improved system of local government. This is followed by the conclusion that highlights the aspects covered in the discussion, moreover the critical importance is emphasised of dissociating politics from administration when delivering services to the citizens, thereby ensuring an equitable and efficient delivery of services.

## POLITICISATION OR DE-POLITICISATION: AN OVERVIEW

In order to avoid uncertainties and lack of clarity in this article it is important to provide a dissection of the concept of politicisation and provide a brief overview of its benefits and the disadvantages in the functioning of governments. The politicisation of public service refers to government activities, where the appointment and career of those in the service are subjected to the political will (Rouban 2012:384). This means that political interference dictates who is appointed for which position at a particular government department or state institution. Thus, politicisation could be regarded as a means through which government leaders interfere with the administration of a specific public institution on the instruction of a political party to which they are directly or indirectly related. The concept politicisation originates from the word *politics*, which Heywood (2007:4) defines as the practice of applying the means through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. To politicise, would therefore imply the act of enforcing politics in circumstances where it (in some instances) is unnecessary to do so. However, the dictum by Aristotle argues differently, that man by nature is a political animal and this makes it impossible for them (people) to operate outside the political realm. Important to note, the politicisation of the local government is considered to be a significant process of nation building (Aars and Ringkjøb 2005:164). The discipline of Public Management and Administration has specific principles in place that dictate what both the managerial and administrative functions should be and with this it makes it easier to separate, or at least attempt to distinguish political elements from managerial functions and activities in government.

De-politicisation could be regarded as the avoidance of partisan control of the bureaucracy. In essence de-politicisation in public administration serves as a reform in states where political interference is prevalent. The process of de-politicisation often leads to a reform where effectiveness and efficiency is pursued by local government (Reitan, Gustafsson and Blekesaune 2015:158). The unintended consequence of such a reform would thus be to professionalise the delivery of services in the communities concerned. For the purpose of this discussion, the public service referred to is a responsibility of the local sphere/tier/level of government in some African countries. These services, consisting of the provision of water, electricity, sanitation and refuse removal are considered as the basic services, because the lack thereof would enervate the quality of lives and the welfare of individuals in a specific community.

Recognising the role played by political parties and in other instances liberation movements in the functioning of governments in Africa, government's operating in contemporary states, provides for the promotion of partisan interests. According to Cameron (2010:678) politicisation can include the attempts of controlling the functioning of government through the nepotistic systems of recruitment, where family members and allies are rewarded with employment for their loyalty. Such recruitment practices are not done on merit and they are influenced by individuals who have access to the political network. Most of the literature on de-politicisation in government focuses primarily on the central government, thereby neglecting the local government arena, which is a sphere of government at the coalface of service delivery. The contribution of this article is essentially to explain how de-politicisation would benefit the local government, through ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the administrative and management processes.

## ROLE, FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Traditionally, local government is regarded as the sphere/tier/level of government that is instrumental in promoting the general wellbeing of the citizens in a country through the collective organisation of communities (Stoker 1988:5). Among others, local authorities throughout Africa are responsible for rural and urban development, housing, strengthening chieftainship institutions and the promotion of socio-economic development (White Paper on Local Government 1998:24; Mkhonta 2007:123). This rationale elevates the importance and status of local authorities, because the local government, being closest to people, aims at overcoming some of the global challenges as highlighted through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals are essentially a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are a set of international development goals which are entailed in the Millennium Declaration signed in 2000, in which the United Nations member states commit themselves to achieve by 2015, thereby improving the living conditions of the disadvantaged and impoverished people (United Nations 2014:4). The nature of these MDGs as identified which ought to be achieved in 2015, is complex such that it will not be practically possible to achieve some goals by the time the year 2015 ends. Consequently, the SDGs are a contingency measure that have been put in place to address the developmental challenges facing countries across the world post-2015. These measures are adequately expressed in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Hilderbrand 2015:1). It, therefore, becomes imperative to ensure that the personnel in local government have the required capabilities and expertise to solve some of the identified problems. Central government should provide all the necessary support to local government and its subsidiary public enterprises.

The administrative arm of local government should be free from political interference, because services in municipalities should be equitably distributed and not provided only to individuals who have a partisan interest. Thus, an age old debate of dichotomy, arguing whether politics is necessary in the administration and management of the government will resurface. This dichotomy was a dominating theme in the discipline of Public Administration in the 1920s and 1930s in the United States (Svara 2001:177). The primary focus of dichotomy was introduced by earlier scholars when an investigation was done in an attempt to find the best modalities that could be implemented to effectively dissociate politics from administration, without interrupting the delivery of services. Notably, Woodrow Wilson was the first scholar to initiate a discussion on the separation discourse, in his 1887 article. The importance of a paradigm shift in public administration in Africa is illustrated by the need to speedily improve the delivery of services. The significance of promoting social development in communities depends on the ability by local government to ensure the equitable dissemination of services to the people without any favour, bias or partiality. Olowu (2012:604) opines that members of the public often find it difficult to obtain specific services from the local authorities without first paying the officials responsible for the service a bribe. Furthermore, this unscrupulous situation is stimulated by the patrimonial system that is prevalent in, *inter alia*; Africa, Latin America and South East Asia.

The comparative approach of middle range studies, where it is possible to determine the comparison of a specific aspect in two or more countries will be used. Through this approach it becomes possible to determine what responsibilities different central/national



government delegate to their local government in order to render services to their local communities (Heady 2006:76–77). This will be dependent upon the political environment and the context of the community within which a municipality finds itself. For instance, local government councils in Nigeria are responsible to, *inter alia*, authorise the registration of licences for bicycles, trucks, canoes, wheel-barrow and carts in accordance with the fourth schedule of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 1999. Furthermore, local government councils in Nigeria are responsible for the registration of births and deaths, which is a competence of the national government in South Africa.

## Challenges created by politicisation

The influence of politics in administrative functions in a municipality causes delay in the delivery of services in the local government sphere. Thus, the reform aims to remove politics from the mainstream administrative operations of the local government, thereby calling for a non-partisan local government (Perry and Keller 1991:8). With the implementation of administrative reform, it is assured that the intended approach will promote efficiency. Historically local governments in developing countries were organised for a specific number of people within the population, for instance 20 000 people in Manus Island in Papua New Guinea and between 150 000–800 000 people in Nigeria (Cochrane 1983:44). This was done to ensure equitable delivery of services, through the balancing of the ratio of the representative versus the population in an area. This means that there should be a specific number of residents per representative. In the City of Tshwane in South Africa, there are 210 municipal councillors and over 22 000 municipal officials responsible for providing services to over 2.2 million residents within the municipal boundaries (City of Tshwane 2011:39; 127). This means that one municipal official is responsible for approximately 100 residents. However, in a contemporary local government unit its environment is dynamic and it is unavoidable that it will have an exponential increase of the number of the population residing within its area of jurisdiction. The dynamic environment is created by migration of people to urbanised settlements in search for better economic opportunities. Urbanisation sets out as a challenge and it creates a burden to the management of municipalities in urban settlements in their pursuance of effective service delivery.

Politicisation in local government develops as a result of the interference by the political leaders in the administrative and managerial affairs of the local government. According to Akpan and Ekanem (2013:195) local government in Nigeria is characterised by pre-bendalism. Pre-bendalism is a system of political patronage where officials of the municipality responsible for the delivery of services are recruited from amongst the ranks of the political party. Consequently, in South Africa some municipalities such as uMhlathuze, are being investigated for nepotism in the recruitment of personnel who do not possess the appropriate qualifications and experience. Furthermore, the investigations extends to ascertaining why would municipal officials flounder the supply chain management regulations in a bid to favour the awarding of the procured services to the people aligned to the governing party in their municipality (SA Local Government Research Centre 2014:28). De-politicisation as a means of administrative reform begins with the training of officials to be loyal to the government system and not partisan interests. For de-politicisation to manifest, it is imperative to determine the nature of the type of the government system in

place. For instance, politicisation in a matured democracy could be perceived and easily accepted as compared to newly democratised nations, where de-politicisation could be more acceptable. The following section will explore the notion of introducing de-politicisation by implementing administrative reform. This will further clarify the approach in which the reform would introduce the separation of politics from administrative processes.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM: A PANCEA FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY?**

Administrative reform is an induced introduction of the new form of a system in the government and have different meanings in different countries. According to Farazmand (2002:2) administrative reform is primarily based on the relationship between the administrative component operating in the local government and national/central government in terms of the social, political and economic factors. Furthermore, it could be regarded as a process of changes in the administrative structures or procedures within public services as a result of the deviation from the initial expectations of the social and political environments. In public administration, the concept *administrative reform* indeed has a profound impact on the nature of politics within public sector and especially between the officials and the politicians (Peters and Pierre 2003:2).

According to Farazmand (2007:355) administrative reforms that were implemented in the last two decades, were mostly the structural adjustments programmes, where it was required and demanded of the developing countries to follow a specific framework towards development. This was done at the discretion of the international organisations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). To an extent, through the intervention by these organisations, the independence and sovereignty of the states were threatened as the funders of these reform initiatives attached conditions that needs to be fulfilled prior to the funding provided for the implementation of these reforms. The purpose of implementing an administrative reform varies from country to country, with various intentions. However, for the purpose of this study, the intended purpose of an administrative reform in local government is to ensure the improvement in the administrative and system capacities (Farazmand 2007:355).

Olowu (2012:609) states that most African countries suffered from a confidence crisis after they obtained independence. As a result of the crisis, these countries instituted administrative reforms as a measure to address the perceived mistrust that exists in the public institutions inherited from the colonial authorities. Reforms are mostly implemented where the authorities aim at improving the *status quo*, as guided by the social agreement between the governors and the governed. Often, administrative reforms are funded by the external donors, who determine the conditions for funding as discussed above. In Tanzania, for example, a donor funded reform aimed at improving the local government was ambivalently considered by the people across the different sectors of the society (Lange 2008:1126). In such situations the relations between the governors and the governed is compromised and this results in the diminishing trust that the people have in their government.

As the discipline of Public Administration evolved, it found itself in a quandary where the direction of the future of the discipline was uncertain. In the 1980s, the discipline witnessed



the introduction of a new ideology which brought with it some elements of administrative reform. The New Public Management (NPM) movement, as the proponents to this ideology coined it, introduced some business-like ideas to the body of knowledge of Public Administration, often arguing that for the delivery of services to be enhanced, governments should be managed in a more flexible, business-like form (Cameron 2010:680). Furthermore, the NPM embraced some private sector models to ensure the value for money provision of public services. In Africa, what sets to be a main challenge is the lack of financial resources to enhance development as expected by the civilians, because most African governments depend on foreign aid (Olowu 2012:614). Hughes (2003:218) argues that it is important to avoid making assumptions that the style of management (NPM) that was established in the *first world* countries would perfectly work in the underdeveloped countries of Africa. Thus, the introduction of NPM serves as more than just a managerial regime as it significantly influences the cultural norms of a specific society. As such the introduction of the paradigm of NPM was faced with a barrage of resistance in Africa and its implementation could not be as successful, albeit the current utilisation of some of its principles in governments could be of benefit.

Local government reform has proven to be successful in improving the delivery of services in the past. In the 1980s in the Scandinavian region, most countries such as, Sweden, Norway and Denmark implemented a local government reform where the delegation of duties from political bodies to a professionalised administrative structure was considered imperative. This ensured that the increasing need of public services was effectively addressed (Klaven, Floris, Gransberg, Montin, Rieper and Valo 2000:96). For any administrative reform to succeed, emphasis must be placed on the methods under which public administration operates and the approach within which that reform have to follow.

From amongst various possible classifications both the 14 principles of administrative management by Henri Fayol and POSDCORB by Gulick and Urwick, were introduced as an attempt to improve on the efficiency of the management of government. However, Gulick and Urwick omitted to comprehensively discuss the method and approach for the implementation of their identified principles of administration, thus favouring the *focus* of the discipline over the *locus* (Henry 2013:39). This means that the principles concentrated only on how to achieve efficiency and disregarded the debate on how they should be applied. POSDCORB is an acronym used to list how an organisation is managed, and it stands for, planning, organising, staffing, directing, co-ordinating, reporting and budgeting. For the purpose of this article the principles, as developed by Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick in 1937 will be utilised as an example to explain how such principles could be used as a set framework by the organisation to achieve its objectives. These are the administrative functions which an organisation will cease to effectively and efficiently operate if they are absent. It is argued that for maximum efficiency to exist in government, it is significant for public administrators to learn and apply the scientific principles of administration (Henry 2013:38).

In the South African local government system for example, the head of administration is responsible for the overall administration of a municipality. Section 55 of the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act*, 32 of 2000 recognises the municipal manager as an accounting officer of a municipality. Hence these officials are required to possess a particular set of expertise that will enable the diligent performance of duties (Madumo

2012:89). The 14 principles of administrative management, POSDCORB and other similar frameworks are necessary tools to be utilised to measure and support officials in decision making positions, to act according to the required standard. They should be seen as the guiding framework for public institutions to achieve their objectives, effectively and efficiently. Significantly, the environment should be conducive for the implementation of such frameworks. According to Jones, Thompson and Zumeta (2001:22) organisational functions can be classified into two levels *i.e.* higher level and lower level functions. This distinction is based on the importance of a specific function on the daily operations of a manager. Thus, this distinction aims to explain how important each function is, in what a manager does on a daily basis. However this classification is problematic, on the basis that it does not clearly explicate the rationale for categorising these functions in the two hierarchical levels. It is needful to emphasise and acknowledge that a distinction can be established between the generic administrative functions and management functions. According to Thornhill (2012:87) the generic administrative functions are conceptual and directive in nature. This means that, the generic administrative functions should precede the managerial functions. For instance, policy making as a generic function that identifies the needs and prepare legislation should be engaged prior to the managerial process of planning can take place in an organisation.

## **Policy making and Planning**

Local government units (municipalities) are responsible for policy making and planning in the local government sphere. Thus, the influence of political leaders is critical in the formulation of policies and legislation. In fact in South Africa, political parties are responsible for policy making in municipalities. This is done through participating in various formalised structures, such as the municipal council and various committees, created to afford political organisations an opportunity to influence the process of policy making (White Paper on Local Government 1998:88). Municipal councils are required to formulate a strategy that will ensure that a municipality functions effectively. In the case of South Africa, municipalities use the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) as a guiding document to ensure that the municipality creates an alignment between the services that the electorate wants, measured against the resources available, and how to achieve such delivery of services. The function of policy making and planning in a municipality is two-fold, the first being policy making which is primarily the responsibility of the municipal council (politicians). The second aspect is that of the implementation of the policy made, which is the responsibility of the administrators.

## **Organising and co-ordinating**

Since a municipality is a multifaceted organisation with many departments responsible for various functions, co-ordinating and organising will assist in integrating all the activities taking place in a municipality and consolidate them into the broader organisational strategy. This will ensure that all the administrative functions and responsibilities are aligned with the municipal strategy. The appropriate utilisation of the functions will benefit the organisation and ensure that through the co-ordination of the activities of municipal





officials and political office bearers, the municipality will collectively strive towards achieving the organisational goals.

## Controlling

Controlling as one of the administrative functions focuses on the determination of the control systems and directives. Often, this function is utilised to create a benchmark or standard through which specific expectations should be met. For example, in South Africa the government has resolved that the general benchmark for the delivery of Free Basic Services should be not less than 50 kWh per month for electricity and 6 kl per month for water to the indigent (Republic of South Africa n.d.:30). However, municipalities could implement their different indigent policies, but should always measure it against the controlled minimum target of the inhabitants in dire need. Controlling also assists in providing feedback to the communities in respect of the initiatives and programmes informed by their plans as per the medium-term and long-term plans. For municipalities to successfully achieve provision of services it is important for both the officials and municipal councillors to perform their duties guided by the respective legislative frameworks. Thus, this practice will ensure an environment conducive to municipal officials to perform their duties without any political bias and subsequently the enhancement of the delivery of services.

## Staffing

Staffing is the most critical function of an organisation, since it focuses on how and who to recruit appropriate personnel for an organisation. More broadly, staffing emphasises the need to acquire and retain personnel with the skills and knowledge best suited for a specific responsibility within an organisation. Thus, providing effective leadership is an important attribute that should be considered when attempting to motivate and inspire the responsible municipal officials to deliver the services of a high standard to their communities. The appointment of administrative staff should only be subject to administrative process and not linked in any way with the influence of politicians or political parties. The salient feature of the article emphasises the need for officials who are responsible for the provision of services to be apolitical by loyally executing of their duties. As emphasised above, the career public officials are trained to be loyal to the government system and not to a specific political party's interests, hence it is important for them to ensure the delivery of services without any bias or prejudice. However, this hardly happens, especially in developing countries where the issue of trust and confidence to deliver on a specific government mandate are prioritised.

An ideal scenario of a depoliticised local government environment will be to eradicate cadre deployment and pre-bendalism as they are known in South Africa and Nigeria, respectively, thereby installing a professionalised local government system with personnel recruited based on their expertise. The amended section 54A of the Municipal System Act, 2000 highlights the paradigm shift towards professionalisation in South African local government. This piece of legislation dictates that the municipal manager, as the head of administration of a municipality should be appointed based on possession of specific skills, qualifications, competencies and expertise. Should a municipal manager be appointed

without a combination of these requirements, the contract of employment entered into by the municipal council and the official is null and void (section 54A (3)).

## Finance

No organisation can function without financial resources. The generic administrative function of finance comprises activities such as the creation of systems that assist in preparing directives on financial affairs of an organisation (Thornhill 2012:87). Through budgeting, municipalities will be expected to clearly set-out priority criteria in order to ensure that money is properly spent on what it was originally intended for. With an instrument of estimates of income and expenditure such as a budget in place the organisation is enabled to ensure a cost/benefit analysis wherein the priorities of the needs of the people is tabled so that implementation can ensue. Public finance management in a politicised environment is often not effective in addressing the efficient delivery of services. Rather in some politicised environments, especially in developing countries, public money is not properly accounted for, as a result of the lack of appropriate structures of public accountability. Accountability is central to the management of public finances and requires that the utilisation of public money be transparent (Pauw, Woods, van der Linde, Fourie and Visser 2002:29).

## PRACTICALITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

A complete removal of politics in the governing function is practically impossible, especially since the terms of operation of a municipality are dictated by political values. However, systems could be instituted to ensure proper structures in which limitations of political interference are restricted. For example, public policy in any government is a direct manifestation of a political will. As such, the purpose of government administration is to implement such a policy, whether they support it or not. De-politicisation of services as an administrative reform, could assist a government, especially those that have a desire to fast track their level of development, thereby ensuring that the services benefits the entire population instead of few partisans.

The intention of administrative reform could assist countries, because countries implementing reform often provide an opportunity for government to restructure and solve some domestic issues concerned. For instance, in South Africa, in the period (late 1990s- early 2000s), the country experienced a growth in economy as a result of the various interventions that aimed at growing the economy (National Development Plan 2012:110). It could be argued that the transition to a democratic government system, and the confidence that some external stakeholders had in the democratic system also played a role in this achievement.

The importance of administrative reform is to create an environment conducive to governments to re-evaluate their role and that of its institutions in pursuit of development of its society (Bardill 2000:103). With the occurrence of the much despised political interference, government institutions will rarely succeed to achieve its goals without prejudicing some of its citizens, who are not aligned to the political party in power.



# PROFESSIONALISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY

In the local government environment, two structures exist. *Firstly*, a political structure mostly identified as a municipal or representative council, where the politically elected representatives serve and *secondly*, an administrative structure, which is directly responsible for implementing policies to deliver the services provided for in the policies. The difficulty faced by most systems of local government across the world is to establish effective mechanisms that will enable municipalities to operate within an ever-changing environment in a bid to promote development of their communities through the delivery of high quality services. In South Africa, the local government sphere plays an important role in ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner (Section 152(1)(b) of the Constitution 1996). A professional local government system aims to develop a clear distinction between the roles of the bureaucracy and the political sphere with a municipality is maintained. A professionalised environment will strengthen the current existing regulations which focus on the modalities within which services are delivered in municipalities. For instance, it will require a review of the process of service procurement. As a suggestion, the administrative reform should address the transformation of the structure of the municipalities, thereby instilling some mechanisms for accountability as could be observed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Professionalised local government (municipality)**

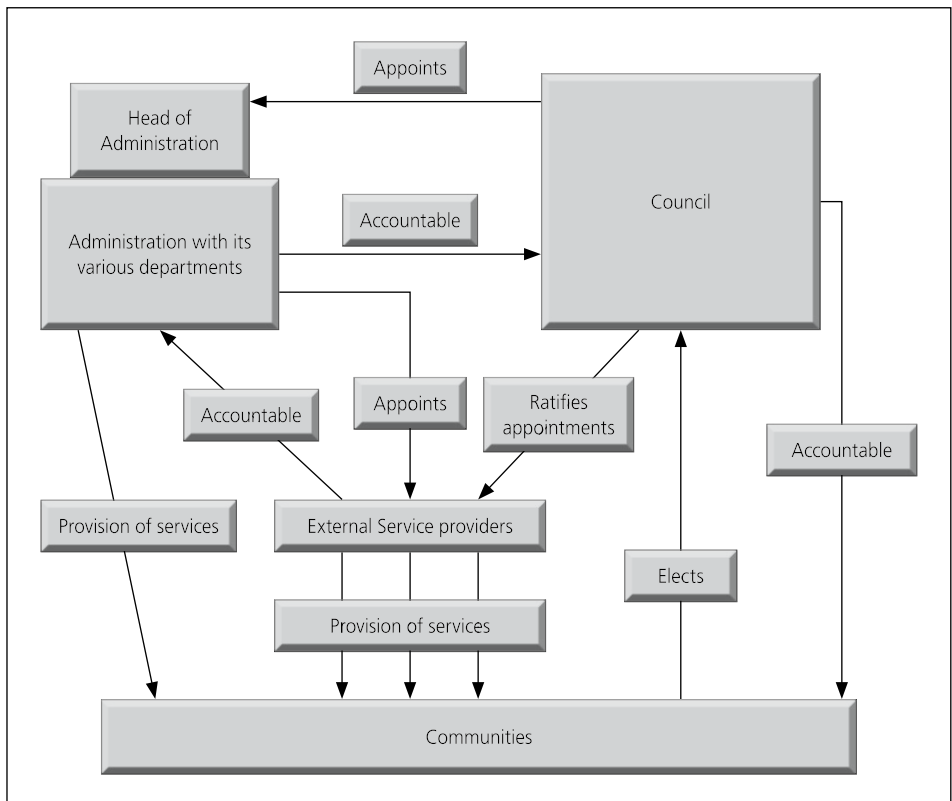


Figure 1 represents the desired professionalised local government system, thereby creating an environment that will promote a developmental local government. When professionalisation materialises, the governance system in municipalities will be unintentionally advancing the long held viewpoint of a dichotomy, where a distinct separation between politics and administration is promoted. However, it is important to note that administration, exists in a political environment, where the electorate could democratically elect the mayor and a municipal council. Thus, it would be virtually impossible to totally separate the two phenomena.

Political will and commitment are required to determine policies for the officials to carry out. In order for the improvement of the delivery of services to ensue, it is envisaged that the services rendered to the citizens should be provided in a systematic and sustainable manner by the external service providers. These service providers should be directly appointed by the administrative component of a municipality to render such services. This would translate the notion of attempting to avoid direct political influence by the elected office bearers in terms of who should be appointed.

Taking into account that local government operates in a dynamic environment affected by politics, social matters, economics and technology, it would thus be critical for the municipal council to prioritise the delivery of services, obviating insignificant matters that may emanate from political bias. The quagmire in such circumstances is often brought about by the challenge of providing the scarce resources to the citizens and consequently this will intensify the competition between citizens regarding the available resources. Achieving a successful administrative reform will occur when the community members have confidence in the idea that the state machinery ought to be effective in its implementation. In particular, institutions within the sphere of local government need to be strengthened and will have to be distinct from political processes.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to discuss the impact of politics in administration, and to investigate whether de-politicisation of the delivery of the public services will encourage efficiency and development in local government. Critical to note, the local government and administration exist in a dynamic environment that is vulnerable to politics, social matters, economics and technology, and any change to the environment attributes a potential danger to the functioning of such a system. The discussion in the article encapsulated a clear understanding of the concept of politicisation and the rationale for its existence in administration. The roles and functions of local government were also highlighted in the discussion. The crucial challenges associated with politicisation in local government were elaborated. This was important as politicisation promotes the political interference and this negatively affects municipalities from effectively providing services to their communities. As a probable solution, the administrative reform was suggested, where an introduction of the de-politicisation of local government was introduced. This section attempted to answer the question of whether de-politicisation could be an answer to the problem of ineffective and inefficient service delivery. Most of the literature consulted, strongly affirm the notion that administration that is free of political bias will yield positive results as the government tends to effectively address the issues that concerns the people as opposed to addressing the petty



political squabbles. Ultimately, a discourse of professionalising local government in a bid to improve service delivery was engaged. Thus, the professionalisation of local government in developing countries proves to be economical and this compromises on the services to be provided in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner.

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