

A REFORM MODEL FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Despite clear constitutional and legislative provisions for the composition, functioning and development of local government in South Africa, the rendering of essential services, particularly to the poor and disadvantaged communities eleven years after the establishment of a true democracy in South Africa, appears to be still highly problematic for some municipalities. In fact, the recent wave of unrest at the local sphere of government in South Africa questions the ability of municipalities to provide basic services such as housing, sanitation, electricity and water to local communities.

This article focuses on past and present dilemmas in municipal service delivery, as well as the possible underlying reasons why some municipalities find it difficult to provide basic infrastructural services to local communities. Bearing in mind the principal overarching provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and related legislation and policy frameworks for local government, this article proposes a hypothetical model for the reform and improvement of municipal service delivery. This model, which has a generic character, could serve as a useful guide or instrument to municipalities in their quest for change within a transformed society.

INTRODUCTION

The word democracy literally means government from and by the people, which find particular application at the local sphere of government as representative of national government in South Africa. Unfortunately, despite clear *constitutional*

provisions and municipal legislation passed by Parliament for the restructuring of local government within a transformed democratic dispensation, municipalities in a majority of cases appear to be unable to render basic services such as housing, education, health care, sanitation, electricity and water, especially in the poor and disadvantaged communities. This, together with backlogs in municipal service delivery originating from the pre-1993/4 political dispensation in South Africa, raised various concerns amongst local communities about government's ability to implement well-meant, and in most cases, sound policies. The recent wave of unrest has escalated to the extent that the democratic stability of the country could be in jeopardy.

Whatever the reasons might be, the current wave of unrest re-emphasises the paramount importance of municipal reform and change, not only to maintain democracy, but also to improve the quality of life of all the inhabitants of South Africa. This article focuses on the past and present dilemmas in municipal service delivery in order to identify possible reasons for this state of affair. Against the background of the *constitutional* and legislative framework that apply to the local government landscape in South Africa, a hypothetical reform model for the improvement of municipal service delivery is also proposed. Hopefully, such a model could stimulate further debate on this contentious issue, as well as be instrumental to local government reform and change for the benefit of local communities and the country.

PAST AND PRESENT DILEMMAS IN MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY

The fundamental governmental transformation that took place since 1993/4 affected the current structure, composition and focus of local government in South Africa. In fact, the *Policy Framework* of the ANC as envisaged in the original *Reconstruction and Development Program* noted the critical importance of local government, because it is the level of representative democracy closest to the people. (ANC, RDP 1994: paragraph 5.12.1). The former *Policy Framework* also suggested that the estimated 1 100 segregated local authorities be amalgamated into approximately 800 new local authorities with non-racial boundaries (since 2000 there are 284). The demarcation of the boundaries of local authorities was to ensure that informal settlements on the outskirts of towns and cities are incorporated into the jurisdiction of new local authorities. The *Policy Framework* placed particular emphasis on the restoration, upgrading, maintenance of networks of services, as well as the eradication of existing backlogs of municipal services. (ANC, RDP 1994: paragraph 5.12.3-5.12.10). The *Freedom Charter* of the ANC in addition, adopted in 1955, specifically amongst other, emphasised that "... all people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security" (ANC, *Freedom Charter* 1955:4).

The vast service delivery backlogs that exist particularly in the previously neglected areas remain a challenge for local government in South Africa. A report published by the *Department of Provincial and Local Government* (DPLG) (SA, DPLG 2001:8) from which Tables 1 and 2 below are derived, serve to illustrate the severity of the situation.

Table 1: Distribution of services in urban and rural areas in 1996

		Below basic	Basic	Inter-mediate	Full services	Total
Water	Urban	10.1%	12.7%	13.6%	63.6%	100.0%
	Rural	39.2%	36.6%	13.5%	10.8%	100.0%
	Total	21.8%	22.3%	13.5%	42.3%	100.0%
Sanitation	Urban	25.8%	2.0%	0.0%	72.2%	100.0%
	Rural	75.8%	16.0%	0.0%	8.3%	100.0%
	Total	45.9%	7.6%	0.0%	46.5%	100.0%
Electricity	Urban	21.4%	0.1%	18.8%	59.7%	100.0%
	Rural	67.6%	1.3%	18.8%	12.3%	100.0%
	Total	40.0%	0.6%	18.8%	40.6%	100.0%
Roads	Urban	16.0%	8.8%	21.2%	53.9%	100.0%
	Rural	42.7%	42.7%	13.3%	1.3%	100.0%
	Total	26.7%	22.5%	18.0%	32.7%	100.0%
Storm water	Urban	20.4%	14.4%	11.5%	53.6%	100.0%
	Total	20.4%	14.4%	11.5%	53.6%	100.0%
Waste removal	Urban	18.3%	2.1%	0.0%	79.6%	100.0%
	Rural	53.3%	42.4%	0.0%	4.3%	100.0%
	Total	32.4%	18.3%	0.0%	49.3%	100.0%

A basic level of service is defined as that level of service ensuring or meeting requirements of health and safety. To illustrate, in the case of water, a basic level of water provision will mean that there are at least communal standpipes. The intermediate level of service will mean there is a yard tap; full service means that the recipient has in-house running water (SA. *Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG). 2001:6*).

From the above Table it can be deduced that the worst service provision standards are in rural areas. Probable reasons for such vast variations in service delivery can be attributed to the past biases in services expenditure and delivery, during the pre-1994 Government of South Africa.

Eleven years after the establishment of a true democracy in South Africa, the rendering of essential services, particularly to the poor and disadvantaged communities, appears to be still highly problematic. In fact, recent months have been characterised by a spate of community violence at various municipalities countrywide. Protests started in 2004 in Harrismith in the Free State (Wyngaard 2005), and since then have spread to other parts of the country. In June 2005 demonstrations took place in 21 local communities,

from Guguleto in the Western Cape to Mpumalanga in the east and Tshwane in the north (Rademeyer & De Lange 2005). In July 2005 approximately 50 towns and cities were affected by violent protest (*Business Day* 2005). According to media reports an estimated 136 municipalities find it difficult to provide basic services to their respective communities (Smith 2005).

Thousands of people took to the streets to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with municipalities' inability to render basic services such as housing, sanitation, electricity and water, especially in the poor and disadvantaged communities. The gravity of the situation is evident in the fact that, according to recent figures for 2001, there were 1,4 million informal settlement dwellings in South Africa and 460 000 backyard shacks. Since then, the number of shack dwellers has increased with the pace of urbanisation (Ensor 2005). It is estimated that in the Western Cape a backlog of 320,000 dwellings exists, with about 260 000 people on the waiting lists concentrated in the Cape metropole. According to the *South African Survey 2003/4* (Rademeyer & De Lange 2005), Government has build approximately 1,5 million new houses between 1994 to 2003, and approximately 3,4 million homes received electricity. However, by 2003 almost a third of households have not as yet received electricity or running water, and 1,3 million families had to be satisfied with backyard shacks in townships. Zille (*Business Day* 2005) points out that about 203 out of 284 municipalities are unable to provide sanitation to 40% of their residents. In 71% of municipal areas, most people do not have flushable toilets; 40% are without refuse removal in 64% of municipalities; and residents in more than half of municipalities are without piped water.

Table 2 illustrates the total capital requirements calculated in 2001 that are needed to meet the various service levels.

Table 2 Estimated Cost of Meeting Service Backlogs 1998-2007

Targeted Service Level	Capital Needed
Basic	R 39 billion
Intermediate	R 104 billion
Full	R 230 billion

Source: Nyamukachi 2004: 41.

In a recent research report entitled *Rethinking fiscal decentralization in South Africa* it is stated that the municipal service delivery and infrastructure could collapse due to inadequate skilled staff, as well as absence of sustainable sources of income (cf. Van Tonder 2005). The *Report* further indicates that municipal debt during 2004 amounted to R40 billion. This figure could grow to as much as R70 billion in the next decade.

For Government to meet the targeted service levels, whether based on earlier or recent calculations, large sums of capital investment will be required. In fact, it has been acknowledged in government publications such as the *White Paper on Local Government*

Service Partnerships (No. 2116 of 2000), that to acquire the capital resources needed to meet service delivery needs, other innovative financing solutions have to be devised such as partnerships with the private sector and more prudent financial management practices (*White Paper on Local Government Service Partnerships, 2000: Section 1*).

the possible *reasons* for the current state of affairs in some municipalities according to recent media reports appear to be, *inter alia*, the following:

- the lack of implementation capacity, particularly at local government level (Enzor 2005)
- the inability to spend available funds for local government development (Wyngaard 2005)
- corruption and nepotism (In some municipalities senior politicians own the companies responsible for the rendering of municipal services. Cases have also been found where municipal councilors appointed family members to the municipality)
- Inadequate human resource capacity and expertise (Rademeyer & De Lange 2005).
- inadequate institutional and infrastructural capacity to render municipal services effectively
- Inadequate communication between national government and local government on the real needs of local communities (Wyngaard 2005).
- inadequate financial resources to fully implement and manage well-meaning government programs (Makhura 2005). (Inadequacy in this regard could also be ascribed to the culture of non-payment for municipal services and the inability of municipalities to collect moneys in some local communities).

Although each one of the above possible reasons justifies its own investigation and research, the inability to reengineer and introduce *municipal reform* for improved service delivery appears to be at the root of the current problems facing local government development in South Africa. Municipal reform for this purpose can be viewed as an *umbrella* concept, which includes issues such as financial resources, human resource capacity and related strategies, policy implementation and institutional and infrastructural capacity, amongst other.

In order to understand the responsibilities of the local sphere of government in South Africa in so far as the delivery of essential services are concerned, it is important to also understand the development of constitutional and legislative arrangements that reformed, changed and transformed the local government landscape in South Africa, since 1993/4. The latter serves as a regulatory and policy framework within which any municipal reengineering and reform endeavor should take place.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, paved the way for a truly democratic dispensation. This dispensation is based on principles such as freedom of speech and association, freedom to assembly and respect for life and property, as

well as maintaining civilized standards and discipline. The 1996 *Constitution*, preceded by the 1993 *Interim Constitution*, indeed reflects a significant change in political thought, if compared to the separate development policies of the previous apartheid regime. In contrast with previous constitutions, in which Parliament was the supreme authority, Parliament is now subordinate to the *Constitution* and the 1996 *Constitution* is indeed the supreme law or 'authority' in South Africa.

The goal of a democratic state would be to ensure the *spiritual* and *material* welfare of all the inhabitants. The basic ideology underlying democracy is the creation of conditions whereby and according to which the individual will be able to achieve the greatest degree of individual well-being. Government, therefore, has a social responsibility and this, in particular, find practical application in local government, as one of the three spheres of government (cf. *Constitution* 1996: Section 40(1)). The other spheres are national and provincial government. The local government sphere consists of municipalities in South Africa. Each sphere of government is distinctive yet the spheres are interrelated and interdependent. Because of its position, local government is often regarded as a *mirror reflecting* of the successes and failures of national government. Local government is, also, often referred to as the government closest to the people, and exists primarily to bring government to grass root level. The role of local government in the Republic of South Africa largely focuses on the delivery of a variety of services. The latter has recently become a major challenge for municipalities especially in maintaining effectiveness and efficiency when providing services in outlying regions (Nyamukachi 2004: 16).

The principal overarching provisions of the 1996 *Constitution*, which are significant for municipal government and administration in South Africa, are the following (Cloete & Thornhill 2005: 19-22. cf. also Chapters 1,2,3 & 7 of the *Constitution* 1996).

- The *Constitution* is the supreme legal framework. Any other *law* passed by Parliament, or a provincial legislature or a municipal council *must* be in accordance with the contents and spirit of the *Constitution*.
- Any *actions* resulting from laws passed by any of the legislative structures in anyone of the three *spheres* of government *must* be consistent with the 1996, *Constitution*. Of importance for municipal officials is the fact that all *conduct* must also honour the spirit of the *Constitution*. (For example, the recognition of the *Bill of Rights*, as will be explained in a further paragraph). Action or conduct inconsistent with the *Constitution* is *invalid*. Therefore, any policy decision for the purpose of municipal reengineering or reform, or action by municipal officials that contravenes the *Constitution*, is invalid. In practice, this implies that municipal councilors, municipal managers and other municipal employees should ensure that their decisions, actions as well as conduct are continuously evaluated against the relevant sections of the 1996, *Constitution*.
- A further implication of the 1996, *Constitution*, contained in Section 2, is the *obligations* that have to be fulfilled. This implies, for example, that all spheres of government and all organs of state (government departments, parastatals) *must* act in a particular manner to promote *co-operative government* and *intergovernmental relations* as required in section 41(1) of the *Constitution*. Therefore, any programme for municipal reform should be structured in such a manner that it fulfills the above obligation.

Section 7 of the 1996, *Constitution* establishes the *Bill of Rights* as the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa, and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. As the state is required to respect, protect, promote and fulfil these rights (cf. also Section 7(2) of the *Constitution* 1996), municipal councils, whether in their daily functioning or when embarking on a comprehensive programme of reform, should ensure that policy decisions, financial arrangements, human resources, practices and control measures are designed and implemented in such a way that the rights are seen to be honoured by their fellow officials, their clients as receivers of services, and the electorate at large.

Local government defined

According to Ismail, Bayat & Meyer (1997: 3), local government can be described as "...that level of government which is commonly defined as a decentralised representative institution with general and specific powers devolved to it by a higher tier of government within a geographical area". Section 40(1) of the 1996 *Constitution*, recognises local government as a distinct sphere of government and as such its powers are derived from the *Constitution* (cf. Section 151) and other statutes, and are not derived or devolved from the provincial and national spheres of government.

Stated differently, local government could be described as public organisations authorised to manage and govern the affairs of a given territory or area of jurisdiction (Nyamukachi 2004: 17). It should be noted that local government refers to a *sphere* of government, and not to an individual municipality. All the individual municipalities in South Africa make up the collective sphere, known as local government (Reddy 1996: 50). Municipalities were created for the whole of South Africa to render services in specific geographical areas/locality/jurisdiction (cf. *Constitution* 1996: Section 151).

The composition of the local sphere of government

Chapter 7 of the 1996 *Constitution*, deals substantively with local government as the third sphere of government (cf. *Constitution* 1996: Sections 151-164). Provisions in these sections determine that:

- the local sphere of government consists of municipalities
- the executive and legislative authority of a municipality be vested in its municipal council
- a municipality has a right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the *Constitution*
- the national or provincial government may not compromise or impede a municipality's ability or right to exercise its powers or perform its functions.

According to section 152 of the 1996 *Constitution*, the objectives of local government are:

- to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities

- to ensure the provision of 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.

Section 153 of the *Constitution* emphasizes specifically that municipalities must strive, within its financial and administrative means, to achieve these objectives. Therefore, a municipality must structure and manage its administration, and budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community. Municipalities are also obliged to participate in national and provincial programs (See Section 2 of the 1996 *Constitution*).

When the 1996 *Constitution* came into full effect, including the related legislation such as the *Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998* (Act 117 of 1998) and the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000* (Act 32 of 2000), the previously 843 (pre-2000) municipalities were replaced by 284 municipalities, in which there are no racial separations (Cloete & Thornhill 2005: 5). The amalgamation of these multiple administrations has created numerous challenges for the local government sphere in South Africa. The first imperative being the establishment of an organisational structure with sufficient capacity and resources that could serve as a vehicle for rendering a variety of essential services to the community, within its area of jurisdiction.

Categories of municipalities

There are various ways in which municipalities can be organised to perform their tasks. Section 155(1) of the 1996 *Constitution* (cf. also the *Municipal Structures Act, 1998*, Chapter 1) identifies three categories of municipalities. They are:

- **Category A**

Category A municipality refers to a municipality that has exclusive and legislative authority in its designated area. There is only one municipal council in such a municipal area.

- **Category B**

Category B municipality refers to local municipalities that share municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a Category C municipality within whose area it falls.

- **Category C**

Category C municipality refers to municipalities that have municipal legislative and executive authority in an area but has more than one municipality, i.e. a district municipality.

Presently there are 6 Category A, 231 Category B and 47 Category C municipalities, totaling 284 (i.e. before the proposed redemarcation of municipalities to obviate cross-boundary municipalities) as mentioned earlier (Cloete & Thornhill 2005: 24).

The 1996 *Constitution* provides that the executive and legislative authority of a municipality is vested in a municipal council. Parliament legislated on municipal government affairs by passing *inter alia* the 1998 *Municipal Structures Act, supra*, and the 2000 *Municipal Systems Act, supra* acknowledging this stipulation. According to these acts every municipality could have its own structure of legislative, governmental and administrative/executive institutions, as well as functionaries (Cloete & Thornhill 2005: 39). In practice this implies that municipalities consist of local, district or metropolitan councils, depending on the category of municipality.

Service delivery

Being the government closest to the people, it is to be expected that a core function of municipalities is the rendering of a variety of basic but essential service to the community within its jurisdiction. The provision of services by municipalities, as indicated in an earlier paragraph, is a constitutional obligation. Part B of Schedule 5 (exclusive provincial competence) of the 1996 *Constitution*, identifies the following services that fall within the ambit of local government and its consequent municipalities. They are; water, electricity, town and city planning, road and storm water, waste management (refuse collection), emergency services, for example, fire fighting, licenses, fresh produce market, parks and recreation, security, libraries, town and city planning, and economic planning. Part B of Schedule 4 (concurrent national and provincial competences) of the 1996 *Constitution* further identifies the following matters that are also the responsibility of local government; air pollution, building regulations, child care facilities, electricity and gas reticulation, fire fighting services, local tourism, municipal airports, municipal planning, municipal health services, municipal public transport, municipal public works, pontoons, ferries, jetties, harbours excluding the regulations on international and national shipping and matters related thereto, tracking regulators and water and sanitation. These services are known as external services, meaning services rendered to the general public within the jurisdiction of the municipality. Internal services are those services rendered within the municipality. Such services are, for example, human resources management and information technology assistance. These are internal functions/services that assist other departments to perform their mandate effectively. The above-mentioned internal services are also known as staff functions (Gildenhuys 1997: 24).

Accountable governance

In its *Preamble*, the 2000 *Municipal Systems Act, supra*, states that the Act was passed because there is a need to set out the core principles, mechanisms and processes that give meaning to developmental local government and to empower municipalities to move progressively towards the social and economic upliftment of communities and the provision

of basic services to all people, especially the poor and the disadvantaged. The *Preamble* furthermore states that a fundamental aspect of the new local government system is the active engagement of communities in the affairs of municipalities of which they are an integral part in planning, service delivery and performance management. It is argued that the new system of local government requires an efficient, effective and transparent local public administration that conforms to constitutional principles to ensure financially and economically viable municipalities.

Chapter 4 of the 2000 *Municipal Systems Act, supra*, provides for community participation. Municipalities must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance. In this respect local community participation in the activities of the municipal council should be encouraged, particularly regarding the preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan; the implementation and review of its performance management system; the monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance; the preparation of its budget; strategic decisions relating to the rendering of municipal services; and building the capacity of the local community to participate in the affairs of municipal councils (Cloete & Thornhill 2005: 41-42).

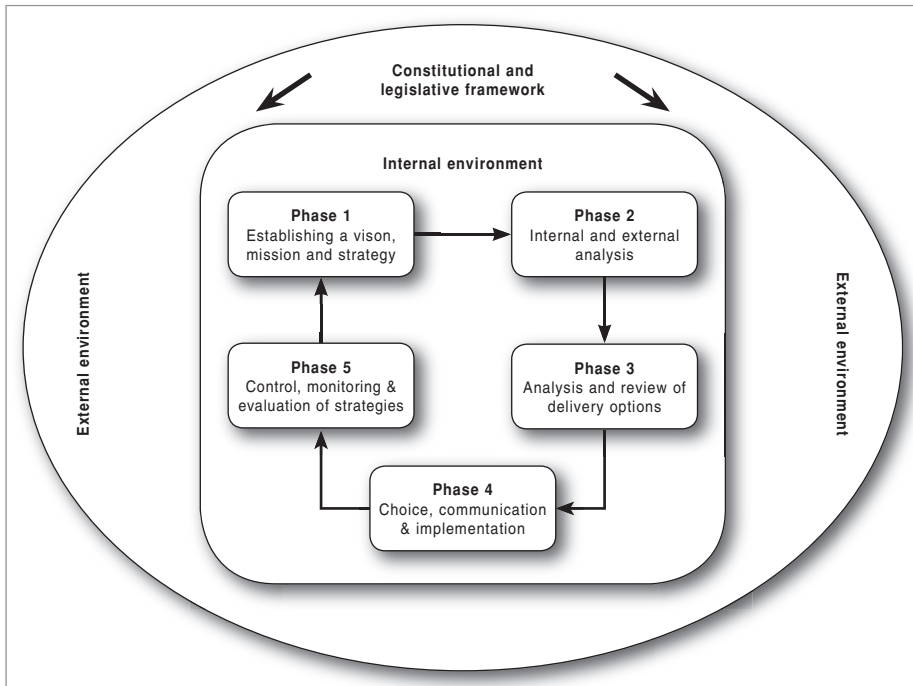
The above, place particular emphasis on *accountable governance* in so far as the rendering of municipal services is concerned. If municipal councils do not perform as expected by local communities it is understandable that such communities will express their dissatisfaction. The recent wave of local unrest serves as an example to this extent and also emphasises the need for municipalities, considering comprehensive reform, to incorporate mechanisms that would secure accountability in municipal affairs. .

A HYPOTHETICAL MODEL FOR THE REFORM OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Municipal reform, within the broader concept of transformation implies that municipalities virtually have to start from scratch, where the underlying vision, mission and strategy are under scrutiny. Real reform can only successfully occur when the majority of individuals in political and executive institutions change their mindsets, behaviour and corporate culture is reborn. Every component is involved namely, all structures and systems, management styles, core competencies and worker profiles, even core outputs required. It is, therefore, a much larger entity than the concept of 'change'. In summary it entails the creation of a completely new paradigm for the purpose of service provisioning.

In contrast to the broader concept of transformation, and consequently reform, *change* is a planned or unplanned response to pressures and forces. Change may be regarded as a complex strategy intended to change beliefs, attitudes, values and the structures of municipalities so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets and challenges (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk & Schenk 2000: 753). It is about analysing the municipality's strategies and operations, planning and implementing alternatives and/or streamlining current standards, in order to be more productive and effective in its goals and achievements.

Figure 1: a model for municipal reform and change



Source: Nyamukachi, 2004: 142

Continual municipal reform is imperative if municipalities are to be successful in their service delivery endeavours in the future. However, reengineering and reforming municipalities should always be conducted within the parameters of the constitutional obligations and related legislative frameworks as explained earlier. Given the current backlogs in municipal service delivery, as well as the recent unacceptable high levels of dissatisfaction amongst local communities, the following *hypothetical model* is proposed for municipalities intending to introduce reform and improvement of their systems and processes for service delivery. Furthermore, this model could serve as a useful guide or instrument to municipalities in their quest for change within a transformed society. By definition, a model could be seen as a *symbolic representation* (example/image) of a particular phenomenon (Hoos 1972: 125). It is a substitute for reality, or, an *imitation* of reality (Quade 1975: 143).

The model illustrates a five-phase approach to municipal reform and change. The phases, which are reiterative in nature, can be explained as follow:

Phase 1: Establishing a vision

Lewis (1997: 9) defines a *vision* as a declaration or statement that answers the question what do we want to create? A vision expresses in simple, clear and appealing terms exactly

where an institution wants to go and how it intends to get there. A vision should naturally be the starting point of any kind of planning as it answers why an organisation exists, how the management of a municipality views the institution, what they hope to achieve, how they plan to achieve that which they intend to achieve. This vision naturally has an impact on the mission and strategies a municipality or institution implements and choices made by the municipal managers and other officials (Thompson & Strickland 1995:26). According to Thompson & Strickland (1995:30), an effective vision must;

- be realistic in terms of time span, simple and doable,
- be challenging,
- be reflective of what the institution aspires to achieve, and
- be endorsed and frequently communicated to the operational level by top management.

However, the vision of a municipality is worthless unless it is a shared vision. According to Lewis (1997: 9) a shared vision is one that "...provides focus and energy to what the leadership wants the institution to be and inspires a commitment from everyone to achieve it". A shared vision provides a unifying framework that guides all decision-making, planning and actions.

A question that can be asked is why is a shared vision important? The correct shared vision provides a picture of what the municipality wants to achieve and this vision becomes the energy that drives the institution. Lewis (1997: 16) writes that the right/correct shared vision increases commitment, motivation among employees and stakeholders because they understand their purpose and believe in the common purpose of the municipality as a whole. Thus, a shared vision unites the institution and makes sure that all energies are directed towards the same goal. A vision also informs employees and stakeholders of the municipality's values and key distinguishing competencies, which in turn determines how people within the institution will act. The leadership provided by a vision statement will ensure unified action and create in everyone's mind clarity regarding what is expected of them and the goals worth striving for. As Thompson & Strickland (1995:31) state, a vision is "...the star we can steer by, as we sail the turbulent and uncharted waters of the future".

Phase 2: Environmental analysis

Having established the vision, the institution needs to undertake internal and external analyses, also known as environmental analysis, to identify opportunities worth exploring that would enhance the achievement of goals, and also to identify threats within and outside the institution, which may hamper service delivery. There are various tools of analysis that can be used. Examples are, the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, and the Political, Economic, Social and Technology (PEST) analysis. Results from these analyses will enable a municipality to plan and implement the right strategies that could address the problems they face.

Environmental analysis can be defined as the process of "...monitoring an organisation's environment to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that

may influence the organisation's ability to reach its goals" (Certo & Peter 1995: 31). Municipalities are open systems and thus rely on the environment for resources and the success of any institution depends on how well they are able to understand and proactively respond to its environment. The environment can be divided into three main segments, namely the general environment, the operating environment and the internal environment (Certo & Peter 1995: 32).

The *general environment* refers to factors outside the boundaries of a municipality, which directly or indirectly affect the municipality's operation and includes components such as the economic factors, technological developments, politics and socio-cultural aspects of the society. Unlike the general environment, the components of the *operating environment* have specific and immediate implications for a municipality. Hence, the municipality needs to consistently monitor trends in this environment for opportunities and importantly threats that might hamper progress and goal attainment. Components of the operating environment include the customer component, the supplier component, the competitive component, labour component as well as the international component (Certo & Peter 1995: 36).

The *internal environment* represents forces within the municipality with specific implications for institutional performance. Components within the internal environment are:

- the policy and policy formulation component
- the organisational component, which includes aspects such as the municipal structure, objectives and culture
- the human resource component, which includes aspects such as labour relations, recruitment practices, training and development policies, appraisal and incentive systems and turnover and absenteeism statistics
- the financial component which addresses the availability or lack of resources, liquidity and credit worthiness of a municipality
- the procedural component, which include aspects such as rules and regulations
- The production component, which includes aspects such as the use of technology to achieve goals, service delivery/production processes, use of subcontracting, inventory control and
- the management and control component, which include aspects such as monitoring and control of municipal activities, as well as the management of broader components of the internal environment (cf. Certo & Peter 1995: 37-40 & Botes, Brynard, Fourie & Roux 1996/7: 362-366).

All these internal aspects of the internal environment of the institution need to be analysed. If the analysis is properly undertaken will point out weaknesses that obstruct performance and the competencies that need to be developed for the municipality to thrive.

Phase 3: Analysis of delivery options

The analysis of the delivery options phase specifically considers the production component of the municipal department in terms of the services that the municipality or municipal department offers and how those services are produced. The questions that are asked

in this phase are: what services does a municipality offer? How does the municipality produce and deliver those services? Is the current way of operating the most effective option that the municipality can use? What are the major challenges that impede service delivery efforts? Are there any other delivery mechanisms/options that the municipality can employ to further enhance service delivery? The latter question is of particular importance. There are various alternative service delivery options that exist outside the traditional means of utilising municipal line functions as a means to deliver services. Most of these options are based on developments abroad. Although, it is not the objective of this article to exhaust all the alternative service delivery mechanisms that exist, the following could serve as examples in this regard:

- *Partnership*, which is an arrangement and agreement between a government institution and one or more parties (inside or outside government) where there is an agreement to work cooperatively to achieve public policy objectives (The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), 2000:15).
- *Privatisation*, which is the systematic transfer of appropriate functions, activities or property from the public to the private sector, where service production and consumption can be regulated more efficiently by the market and price mechanisms (*White Paper on Privatisation and Deregulation*, 1987:8).
- *Corporatisation*, which is a process whereby functions that were undertaken by government departments responsible to a minister are transferred to state owned corporations (cf. Nyamukachi 2004: 146-147).
- *Electronic service delivery*, which, for example utilises the Internet and Voice Response (IVR) to provide government services to local communities. This option, however, depends on the availability of modern information and communication technologies, as well as levels of computer literacy.

In practice, a municipality has two main options for service delivery that is, the traditional internal mechanism where a line department is created that produces and delivers the service to the community. The other option entails using external mechanisms (alternative service delivery options as explained above) to deliver service where another entity outside the municipality is tasked with production and delivery of a service with or without control of the municipality (*Municipal Systems Act*, 2000: Section 76).

Phase three in particular outlines the nature of changes and reform that need to take place. Reforms might vary from major changes such as corporatisation or privatisation that drastically impact on the structure of the municipality, to minor changes such as a simple change in procedure or rules and a decision to outsource which does not radically change anything within the municipality.

Phase 4: Choice, communication and implementation

Choices made in phases 3 would imply that municipalities either maintain the *status quo*, or, decide to reform and institute consequent changes. If the management of a municipality chooses to embark on a process of reform, this should, regardless of the nature and extent

of reform be properly communicated to all employees in the municipality, as well as those that will benefit from the services rendered by such a municipality. Stated differently, a municipality should determine the potential *clients and coalitions* prior to the design and development of policies and executive programmes for service delivery in order to ascertain the acceptance of such policies and programmes. All parties concerned must be involved to ensure that ownership is taken for the execution delivery programmes (cf. Brynard in Cloete & Wissink H 2000: 185). As mentioned earlier, the issue of miscommunication or the absence of proper communication between government and local communities has been raised as one of the possible reasons for the recent state of unrest in South Africa. In this regard, government should enter into a *process of consultation* (marketing of policy and programmes for service delivery) with local communities to determine real needs, as well as to ensure that proposed policies and programmes will be supported before finalising it.

The following are important issues that need to be emphasised when communicating proposed reform and change objectives to local communities:

- the reasons for the change
- the choice of communication media considered because the media used can positively or negatively affect how a message is received
- ensuring the involvement of all stakeholders from the very beginning stages of the change process in order to obtain support and commitment from all involved
- the identification of problems, or possible areas of conflict, in order to proactively such issues before they erupt into a crisis, and finally
- communication should always be a two way process to enable feedback and allow problems to be solved and grey areas cleared (cf. Johnson & Scholes 1999: 526).

In fact, section 80 (2) of the 2000 *Municipal Systems Act, supra*, clearly stipulates that before a municipality enters into any service delivery agreement it must first consult with the community. Only thereafter can a municipality commence with the implementation of policies and programs for service delivery.

Designing an appropriate implementation strategy at this stage is of paramount importance. However, it appears as if this stage in municipal reform or change tends to be the most problematic one in terms of practical policy execution. Sound policies are annually formulated and analysed in government's quest to offer the South African society the best policy options available. Unfortunately such options do not always include a well-designed programme on the practice of implementation. This appears to be also symptomatic of policy failures elsewhere in the world (cf. Hogwood & Gunn, 1986:197),

Quade (1989: 338) defines implementation as "...the directed change that follows a policy mandate, the process of rearranging patterns of conduct so as to honor the prescriptions set forth in the decision". Ripley & Franklin (in Cloete, Schlemmer & Van Vuuren, 1991: 144) argue that implementation refers to "...what happens after laws are passed authorising a program or policy or benefit or some kind of tangible output".

Deduced from the above, implementation indeed refers to the *setting in motion* of policy directives as authorised by the decision-makers and according to their prescriptions. It implies the practical manifestation of policies for municipal service delivery and should

be conducted in a properly planned and programmed manner. According to Quade (1989:348) the program for implementation should be simple and place as little reliance on bureaucratic processes as possible. An implementation programme should also take into consideration the following requirements:

- the financial or budgetary requirements brought about by new policies or changes in existing policy
- organisational and administrative requirements, i.e. the administrative and organisational capacity of the municipality responsible will have to be realigned, reformed or changed if necessary, in order to cope with new policy challenges
- human resource requirements as implementing policy imply not only the availability of trained or skilled staff, but also their commitment to pursue goals and objectives in a professional manner and
- management requirements to ensure the effective and efficient execution of municipal service delivery strategies.

Who has to do *what*, *when*, and *how* should be thoroughly investigated in order to coordinate activities in the implementation strategy and to ensure that time frames and deadlines are met.

Phase 5: Control, monitoring and evaluation of strategies for change

Municipal management, after making and implementing the selected strategies for action should constantly monitor and evaluate events to ensure that such strategies proceed as planned. Thus, control measures need to be put in place to ensure that plans are executed as planned. Due to human limitations such as being unable to clearly foresee the future, consequences not initially anticipated during planning, can often occur during implementation and should be expected and dealt with as they arise. Unforeseen events may imply that certain changes have to be made to the original plan.

Monitoring is a procedure used to produce information about causes and consequences of public policies (Dunn 1981:278). Evaluation is a process carried out to determine worth or value of policy outcomes. Evaluation, therefore, has to do with the *critical assessment* of policy implementation, as well as to determine the *impact* of policy outcomes (cf. Cloete F in Cloete & Wissink, 2000:211 and Quade, 1989:272).

Effective control, monitoring and evaluation service delivery programmes and strategies require that performance standards be set to serve as benchmarks on which actual performance could be measured. Should there be no deviations between the set/planned performance standards and actual performance, there is no need to change direction. However, should deviations be found, corrective actions need to be taken and adjustments made (cf. Nyamukachi 2004: 149-150).

The above-mentioned model, although hypothetical in nature, could serve as a basic guide to municipalities and municipal departments should they wish to undertake reform measures in order to improve service delivery. In reality the change processes might be more complicated. Despite the challenges that any reform may bring, it has become

imperative for all municipalities to constantly change and review the way services are rendered in order to remain relevant and effective. An institutional culture of learning should be developed, supplementary to any change process. Employees should be empowered through continuous learning, training and development

CONCLUSION

Local government, being the sphere of government closest to the people is faced with numerous challenges in their quest to provide essential services to local communities and in particular the poor and disadvantaged section of the population. However, the recent wave of unrest at the local sphere of government, and the dissatisfaction expressed by local communities questions the ability of local government in South Africa to effectively and efficiently provide for essential services. If the inadequacy of local government to fulfil its mandate within the *constitutional* and legislative framework does not receive serious attention in the short to medium term, it could detrimentally affect the long-term stability of the eleven year old South African democracy.

Unfortunately, a large number of municipalities, despite the organisational challenges that they have to deal with, are faced with financial and infrastructural problems, as well as inadequate expertise and management capacity, which exacerbate the problem of existing service delivery backlogs. Unquestionably, service provision is one challenge that requires creative and innovative solutions and strategies. Municipalities constantly need to review and restructure their institutions in search for more effective ways of achieving goals and meeting service delivery needs of the communities they serve.

The hypothetical model for municipal reform and change posed above, could serve as a guide or instrument for municipalities intending to reform in order to improve their service delivery structure. However, should the application of the model be considered, thorough research and analysis of the *status quo* needs to be undertaken firstly, in order to determine current deficiencies and inadequacies in the functioning of local government. Only thereafter would it be possible to effectively attend to a new vision, commitment and subsequent reform and change strategies. The latter should be conducted with the full participation of all the stakeholders involved, implying that continuous communication with local communities regarding their needs should be maintained in order to secure the success of future local government reform and change endeavours in South Africa.

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