




Governance challenges in the provision of municipal services in the Vhembe District Municipality



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Background: The local communities judge their municipalities' performance through the provision of municipal services and the treatment that they get from its officials. The challenge of governance adversely affects the delivery of municipal services. However, it appears that municipalities are failing their respective local communities.

Aim: The article seeks to assess the challenges experienced by the Vhembe District Municipality regarding governance practice in the provision of municipal services.

Setting: It is important for the municipality to adhere to good governance practices, which ultimately manifests through effective and efficient municipal service delivery.

Methods: The article employed a mixed-method approach that comprised quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Data were collected through closed-ended questionnaire and structured interviews. For data analysis, the article adopted statistical for quantitative data and thematic content analysis for qualitative data.

Results: The article found that poor efficiency for service to be delivered, a lack of accountability, shortage of machinery and equipment, dysfunctional implementation of policy framework, poorly maintained infrastructures, a lack of responsiveness, a lack of requisite resources, incompetent service providers and poor performance appraisals for municipal officials are challenges faced by the Vhembe District Municipality in as far as municipal service provision is concerned.

Conclusion: There are multiplicities of poor governance challenges that prohibit effective and efficient municipal service delivery.

Contribution: As a measure to address these challenges, it is recommended that municipalities must ensure that there are improved accountability mechanisms, infrastructures should always be maintained, and municipal officials should be equipped with skills and technical know-how to effectively implement policy framework.

Keywords: governance; good governance; municipality; public; service delivery.

Introduction

The year 1994 marked the beginning of South Africa's democratic regime, which brought new social, economic, demographic, cultural and political orders. The transfer of power to government and the public's trust in it following the first free and transparent election in 1994 gave South Africa fresh reasons to be hopeful about its future progress and good governance (Thebe 2017). Many legislative and regulatory actions were implemented after the country's *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (RSA) was approved in 1996 to set the foundation for a morally upstanding and honest administration of government, with the *Batho Pele* tenets acting as the cornerstone. By consulting, establishing service standards, enhancing access, assuring courtesy, giving information, openness and transparency, redress, and offering value for money, *Batho Pele* aims to provide the foundation for effective and good governance (Department of Public Services and Administration 1997). The government has been working hard to address many of the problems that affect all spheres of government, as well as to encourage strategic and tactical planning and the application of good governance (Mantzaris & Pillay 2014). Participation, a focus on consensus orientation, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusion are qualities of good governance (Munzhedzi & Makwembere 2019; Prinsloo 2013). The concepts of good governance are supported by the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996* (henceforth referred to as 1996 Constitution), which also emphasises

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the significance of good governance as a crucial component for effective and successful government. *Sections 152(1) (a) and (b) of the 1996 Constitution* makes the provision for democratic and responsible local government as well as sustainable service delivery to local communities. The commitment to accountability, responsiveness, openness and transparency, as well as principles and values are underlined in the 1996 Constitution and are linked to the adherence of good governance. There are many scholars who have discussed these principles including Gaghman (2020) and Council of Europe (2022). There are three different spheres of government in South Africa, namely national, provincial and local. Through established municipalities, local government provides services to local communities on behalf of the state. According to the 1996 Constitution, municipalities are required to provide essential municipal services such as water, sanitation, refuse removal, electricity, municipal health services, municipal roads and storm water drainage to local communities in their jurisdictions (RSA 1996).

According to the Vhembe District Municipality (2020), the municipal values are responsibility, accountability, development, ownership, responsiveness, democratic, transparency, respect, economic prosperity, hospitality, caring, opportunity, pride and visionary. However, these values seem not to be well taken care of in most municipalities. Faranak et al. (2018) posit that indicators of a sound public administration include responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency to the needs of the people. However, when it comes to municipalities, responding to the demands of the local communities takes time.

To maximise the success of good governance, a municipality should integrate principles such as accountability and responsiveness and recognise that good governance is not just about meeting compliance requirements with legislations, regulation and codes of practice. Nzimakwe (2005) asserts that politicians, officials, business people and members of civil society should declare that good governance is the only viable choice or the only alternative available. For years, only few municipalities received clean audit. Only 16% of South Africa's 257 municipalities obtained clean audit by the Auditor-General for the 2020–2021 financial year (Auditor-General of South Africa 2021). Auditor-General indicated that audit outcomes were in a bad state when the previous administration took over in 2016–2017 and this state had not improved since then. This proves that there was poor governance by the management of these municipalities.

Municipalities in South Africa have continuously battled with the challenge of service delivery. Many municipalities are unable to spend monies allocated to them, which leads to unfinished projects that have been budgeted for (Munzhedzi 2013). Therefore, the ability of local government structures to deliver fundamental services that are in line with the requirements and preferences of local communities must be used to evaluate the success of good governance. The majority of the Vhembe District Municipality's jurisdictional territory is rural, and rural basic service delivery backlogs

exist (Mafunisa & Xaba 2008; Munzhedzi 2020). It is clear that there is still a lot that needs to be performed regarding the adherence of good governance practices in the Vhembe District Municipality. A district municipality is responsible for rendering many services including but not limited to potable water supply, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal sites, municipal health services, fire-fighting services, cemeteries and crematoria.

The fundamental aim of this study is to examine the challenges experienced by the Vhembe District Municipality regarding governance practices in the provision of municipal services, with a purpose of recommending corrective measures. In investigating the challenges experienced by the Vhembe District Municipality regarding good governance, the following question has been raised:

- What are the challenges experienced by the Vhembe District Municipality regarding good governance practices in the provision of municipal services?

The study could be of value to the Vhembe District Municipality by providing a clear or better picture of the challenges that the municipality is faced with regarding good governance. The study will also benefit public policymakers and committees responsible for ensuring good governance in the local sphere of government. The study findings will be of benefit because the recommendations to curb those challenges will be outlined.

Democratic theory

Democratic theory was co-founded by Mark Chou who was from the Australian Catholic University and Jean-Paul Gagnon who originated from the University of Canberra. A democracy is a form of government in which supreme authority is given to the people and can be exercised by people either directly or indirectly through various forms of representation (Fox & Meyer 1995:35). According to Lindell and Scott (1999), democracy has originated from the Greek word '*demokratia*', which means 'rule of the people' and is coined from '*demos*' 'people' and '*kratos*' 'power' or 'rule'. One cannot talk about good governance and leave out democracy. Democracy and good governance are like two inseparable twins. According to Ogundiya (2010:204), an inseparable connection exists between democracy and good governance because both concepts are based on almost the same principles. Both democracy and good governance should be more responsive to the demands and pressures from citizens. Democracy, according to governance theorists, is a necessary tool for good governance (Mafunisa & Dzungwa 2007).

Nazarov and Obydenkova (2021) indicate that democracy is typically linked to greater transparency, independent and critical media, better public policy decisions, better access to education, information and healthcare facilities, lower levels of corruption and an overall higher standard of living. These elements might lead to better service delivery. The general welfare of the society and, more specifically, the provision of public services are positively impacted by democracy.

Unpacking concept of good governance

According to Pasape, Anderson and Lindi (2015:147), there is no universal definition of good governance because it depends on what the organisation considers important features or attributes. Accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, responsiveness, transparency, forward vision and the rule of law are all characteristics of good governance (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2009:4). Similar to the OECD, the UNDP (1997a:4) emphasised accountability, transparency, rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency, and responsiveness, as well as features of consensus and participation. Good governance is defined by the African Development Bank (ADB) (2008:15) as accountability, transparency, involvement, fighting corruption and promoting an enabling legal and judicial environment. Accountability, participation, predictability and transparency are four concepts advocated by the Asian Development Bank (1995:8) to characterise good governance. According to the European Union (EU) (2001:8), good governance is defined by five principles: transparency, accountability, effectiveness, coherence and participation. The United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) (2021) shared eight principles of good governance as participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability.

According to scholars such as Sayeed and Pillay (2012:3), good governance refers to the degree of accountability, moral standards and responsiveness of the government to the needs of its citizens. According to Erasmus (2010:98), good governance forces the government to carry out its duties or engage in its activities with the primary goal of attaining and preserving openness, predictability, a culture of justification of government action and assurance. This concept has been raised frequently in modern public management, but it has been neglected in the municipal sector. Scholars such as Juiz, Guerrero and Lera (2014:11) define good governance as a process in which the public sector is pressured to enhance performance, be transparent and effectively combat corruption. Predictable, open and enlightened policymaking; a bureaucracy equipped with a professional culture; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a vibrant civil society participating in public affairs and all behaving under the rule of law should be what defines government including that of South Africa (Kulshreshtha 2008:557). For the purpose of this article, an amended definition by the UNDP (1997c:4) that emphasised accountability, transparency, rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency, responsiveness and transparency, equity and inclusivity, consensus and participation is adopted.

The importance of good governance in South African municipalities

Good governance is essential in a democratic country like South Africa. Good governance and democracy go hand in

hand with one another. Good governance has the ability to strengthen the principles of democracy. The importance of good governance includes wide public participation, greater access to democracy, and proper delivery of service and control of corruption. According to the UN (2007:9), good governance encourages public participation in government, inclusion in law making and policymaking, and accountability of elected and appointed officials. It enables the society to become actively involved in public policymaking and leads to wide representation of societal interests in decision making. According to Erasmus (2010:98), good governance forces the state to carry out its duties or engage in its activities with the primary goal of achieving and upholding transparency, predictability, a culture of justification of state action, and assurance. In terms of supporting ethical decision making, good governance is fundamental because it facilitates ethical decision making. When elected officials and council officers make choices, good governance creates an environment in which they question themselves 'what is the right thing to do?' Making decisions and having to account for them in a clear and open manner encourage honest consideration and examination of the options available to individuals involved in the governance process (International Federation of Accountants [IFAC] 2013). When implemented by an institution, whether public or private, good governance offers numerous advantages. Mlangwa (2016) outlined the following advantages or benefits of good governance in the public sector:

- Economic growth and development is one of the key benefits of good governance because it secures the following outcome in practice: corruption is reduced through competent and good governance. Because one of the pillars of good governance is battling corruption, corruption is unlikely to exist where there is good governance. Corruption is fundamentally opposed to good governance, which is why if an institution or state practices good governance, corruption is likely to be decreased or eliminated completely.
- Accountability is influenced by good governance. People must accept responsibility for their acts and for what they have done in order to be held accountable. It is easier for people to fulfil duties as expected when they are held accountable for their actions or activities, which will lead to improved performance of the institution, improved governance and beneficial consequences.
- Transparency is another benefit of good governance. Openness is inextricably linked to excellent governance, and this aids in the performance of duties significantly.
- Good governance ensures people participation in decision making and promotes equity in society, allowing the entire society to see itself as one. This will aid in the delivery of services being deployed more quickly.

Good governance is very beneficial and important more specifically in the local sphere of government. Many of the challenges that the sphere is confronted with may be sufficiently addressed by applying the good governance

principles. Munzhedzi (2021) posit that it is only unfortunate that many of the municipalities in South Africa do not fully apply the good governance principles.

The concept of municipal service delivery in South Africa

According to Maseko (2018:27), service delivery refers to a government or government entity delivering goods or services to a group of people or community in a way that was promised to or demanded by that community. Municipal service delivery is described by Mfene (2009) as an all-encompassing activity intended to promote the overall welfare of the community. Batho Pele service delivery principles are outlined in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997 to ensure efficient service delivery. These guidelines now serve as the benchmark for judging whether municipal service delivery is successful or unsuccessful (Nengwekhulu 2009). Municipal service delivery is highly politicised in South Africa, as claimed by McLennan (2009) as it exemplifies some of the inconsistencies of the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. Municipal service delivery has a broader meaning because it is connected to development, righting historical wrongs, reducing poverty and fostering economic progress (McLennon 2009). According to *Schedule 5 of the 1996 Constitution's part B*, the provision of water, electricity, sanitation, refuse removal, housing and other services constitutes the provision of basic services (which includes education, health, roads, transport, sports and recreation, street trading, parks and community halls). An excellent reputation is built by the delivery of high-quality services, which is the duty of municipal institution to their local communities.

Challenges experienced by the South African municipalities in the provision of municipal services

Literature reviewed posits that municipalities in South Africa are said to be faced with various challenges that impede the provision, progress and improvement of municipal services. The following are challenges experienced by the municipalities in the provision of municipal services and will be discussed as follows.

Poor efficiency

Poor efficiency in as far as receiving of services in the South African municipalities is a major challenge. The prolonged waiting time reduces the quality of the service and absence of good governance. Tana (2013) states that waiting times do not seem to be unique to the South African context. Developed and underdeveloped countries share this inability to resolve the problems, which results in service users experiencing services as lacking in quality. Tana (2013) and Yu (2018) shared some causes of poor efficiency in the South African municipalities including the following:

- Insufficient or unbalanced operational budget to deliver services
- Ineffective management and incapacity to regulate workflow to the needs of the service
- Insufficient personnel and/or improper staffing schedules (Tana 2013; Yu 2018).

Service users may experience increased stress levels, frustration and anxiety because of these factors, with poor efficiency being the worst for the service to be rendered. Often, members of the local communities with little or no information provided with the reason why the service is delayed or not provided at all.

Shortage of machinery and equipment

According to Mokoena (2017), shortage of material resources, equipment and supplies causes local communities to have to wait way longer for the service to be offered to them. According to Manyisa and Van Aswegen (2017), the lack of administrative equipment such as water and electric billing equipment has a negative impact on the quality of service provided by the municipality. It is imperative that there be adequate resources available to ensure effective management and delivery of service to the respective local communities (Kwizera, Dunser & Nakibuuka 2012).

Dysfunctional implementation of policy framework

Chukwuemeka (2018) asserts that the main activity of public administration is to implement public policies and programmes; hence, the government relies on public administration institutions to provide services to the people. Mugwagwa (2015) is of the view that there are various policies and strategies governing public institutions including municipalities. However, the implementation of these policies and strategies is generally rated as being poor. Mugwagwa (2015) further states that the cause of the dysfunctional implementation of policy framework includes lack of coherent policy, lack of enforcement and accountability mechanism. It has been maintained for many years that one of the primary cause of policies failing to produce the desired results is implementation failure (Tebele 2016; Uwizeyimana & Munzhedzi 2022). An argument that frequently appears in South Africa is that effective policies are created but never put into practice. According to Meyer and Cloete (2006), poor implementation has been a significant barrier to advancement in developing nations. The government is adamant that the framework for the policies is clear and well defined and that what is required is their efficient implementation. Unfortunately, the implementation of policies such as the municipal budget, integrated development plans and by-laws is more difficult than how well the administration is thought to be doing. One of the main concerns is the implementation of policy, namely how it can be carried out effectively and who should be in charge of it (Meyer & Cloete 2006).

Poorly maintained infrastructure(s)

Numerous municipalities struggle to run and maintain their service infrastructures in a way that is both economical and long-lasting (Appelbaum, Habashy & Malo 2012). Most municipalities' technical departments' present infrastructure life cycle is a result of failing to follow health and safety regulations (Jaaskelainen & Lonnqvist 2011). As a result of the complete lack of routine to preventative maintenance, the existing infrastructure life cycle situation might be characterised as 'run to destruction' with the tragic result of early asset collapse. Downstream blockages, clogged pump impellers and eventual mechanical breakdowns occur as a result of failure to remove screens at sewer pump stations and at the inlets of wastewater treatment works (De Vries & Nemec 2013). When sewer obstructions are not addressed in a timely manner, raw sewage is released into delicate natural environments.

Poor responsiveness by municipal officials

Municipal officials do not respond to queries on time (Munzhedzi & Phago 2020). For instance, unattended water pipe breaches result in significant water losses and prolonged water supply outages. Water purification chemicals are frequently in short supply at remote water treatment plants because of supply chain bottlenecks, resulting in low-quality drinking water (De Vries & Nemec 2013).

Research methodology

Bryman (2012) states that research design is a strategy outlining the steps that will be taken to address the research question. This article used descriptive research design to aid in generating quantitative and qualitative data in order to examine the challenges experienced by the Vhembe District Municipality regarding good governance practice in provision of municipal services. This empirical article employed mixed research method. The term 'mixed research method' refers to the utilisation of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques (Maree 2013). According to Kgwefane (2014:62), a population can be defined as the entire set of people or groups from which a sample is drawn. For the purposes of this article, the researchers target population are the administrative and political municipal officials of the Vhembe District Municipality. The Vhembe District Municipality is one of the five district municipalities in the Limpopo province, which is in the most northern tip of South Africa. It shares its borders with Mopani and Capricorn districts, respectively. It is a gateway to Zimbabwe through N1. It has four local municipalities, namely Makhado, Musina, Thulamela and Collins Chabane. The number of individuals from which researcher acquires necessary information is referred to as the sample size (Kumar 2014). A sample size of 60 was taken based on stratified random sampling adopted, as shown in Table 1. The sample is from the entirety of the district including its four district municipalities.

TABLE 1: Sample size of the Vhembe District Municipality.

Respondents	Number of sampling size
Integrated Development Plan officials	10
Performance Management System officials	10
Local Economic Development officials	10
Community development officials	10
PR councillors	10
Administrative officials and managers	10

Structured questionnaire with close-ended questions and interview comprising open-ended questions were employed to collect data from the IDP officials, LED officials, PMS officials, and administrative officials and managers as well as PR councillors. Statistical and thematic analyses were used to analyse collected data. The information gathered through the questionnaire was analysed using Microsoft Excel and shown as tables, graphs, frequencies and percentages, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data. Out of 50 questionnaires, only 40 responded to the questionnaire because of the fact that the remaining few respondents did not want to participate and availability of municipal officials and the 10 PR councillors were interviewed for the purpose of this article.

Data presentation, interpretation and analysis

The main aim of this article, which was developed from a master's research work, was to seek to assess the challenges experienced by the Vhembe District Municipality regarding governance practices in the provision of municipal services. This section presents, interprets and analyses quantitative and qualitative data collected from the selected respondents. These good governance challenges are discussed in detail next in relation to the provision of municipal services in the Vhembe District Municipality.

The respondents were surveyed to determine whether the municipality faces challenges related to the length of time local communities must wait for municipal services to be provided to their respective communities. Figure 1 shows that majority of 26 (65%) respondents strongly agreed, 12 (30%) respondents agreed, 2 (5%) respondents are not sure and none of the respondents neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed that prolonged wait times for local communities to receive services are a challenge. A lack of resources may also cause the municipality not to respond or deliver municipal services to the local communities on time. Ekundayo (2017:156) states that in order to be responsive, institutional procedures must provide timely assistance to all the affected community members. The ability of the municipality to respond as required by good governance allows it to provide services to all stakeholders in a timely manner.

Service delivery accountability

The respondents were asked as to whether accountability when delivering municipal service is also a challenge faced by the municipality. Figure 2 indicates that majority of 22

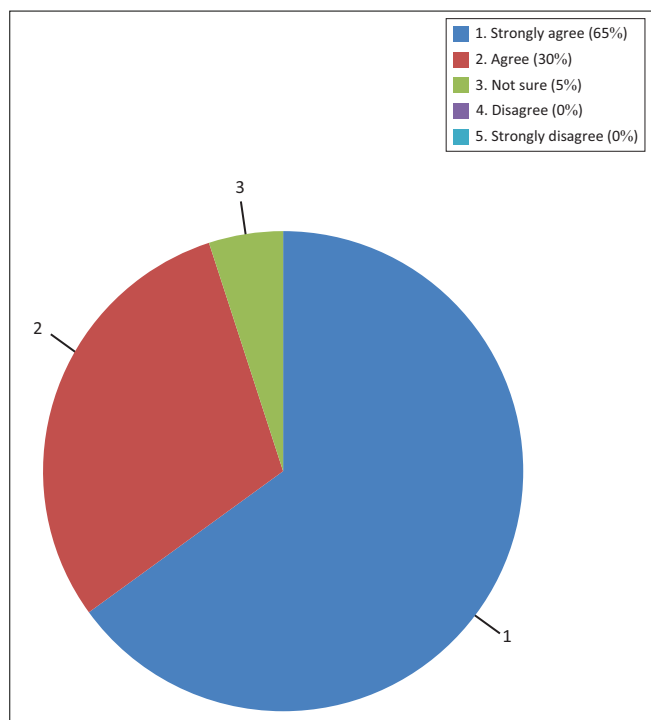


FIGURE 1: Level of efficiency.

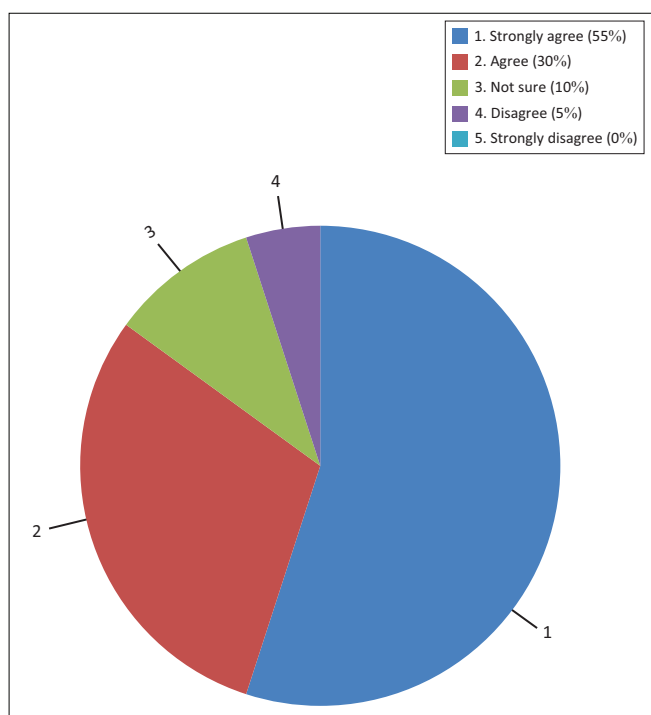


FIGURE 2: Accountability.

(55%) respondents strongly agreed, 12 (30%) respondents agreed, 4 (10%) respondents are not sure and 2 (5%) respondents disagreed about challenge of accountability when delivering service to the people. There was no respondent who strongly disagreed on the question posed. It therefore means that the data correspond with the literature that there is a lack of accountability in the municipality. Accountability focuses on the ability to account for action or inaction by the officials such as how the budget allocated has

TABLE 2: Shortage of machinery and equipment.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	28	70
Agree	08	20
Not sure	02	05
Disagree	02	05
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	40	100

been used. When the municipality fails to provide certain service to the people, a reason should be provided. The functioning of the municipality like any government institution is about making decision. The process of making decision should be open to scrutiny and transparent. Municipal officials should be accountable for their actions and inactions.

Availability of machinery and equipment to deliver service

Respondents were asked if there are sufficient machinery and equipment to deliver basic municipal services. Table 2 indicates that shortage of machinery and equipment contributes negatively to municipal service delivery. Majority of 28 (70%) respondents strongly agreed, followed by 8 (20%) respondents who agreed that shortage of machinery and equipment contribute negatively to municipal service delivery. It is only 2 (5%) respondents who are not sure and 2 (5%) respondents disagreed. None of the respondents strongly disagreed that shortage of machinery and equipment hinders effective municipal service delivery. From the given analysis, it can be said that lack of resources is one of the barriers of good governance and service delivery in local government. Without sufficient resources, it would be impossible for the municipality to operate effectively. If resources are not sufficient, the municipality will not be able to deliver expected municipal services to the people and that compromises good governance. The collected data concur with the literature that many municipalities in South Africa lack requisite machinery and equipment such as graders and tractor-loader backhoe (TLB) to provide certain municipal services.

Dysfunctional implementation of policy framework

Figure 3 presents data on the dysfunctional implementation of policy framework as a challenge faced by the municipality. It shows that 20 (50%) respondents strongly agreed, 14 (35%) respondents agreed and 6 (15%) respondents are not sure that policy implementation does affect delivery of service. There were no respondents who neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed that dysfunctional implementation of policy framework is a challenge faced by the municipality. South Africa is one of the countries that have good policies; however, problem arises when it is time for implementation (Tebele 2016; Uwizeyimana & Munzhedzi 2022). Many good policies exist in the South African municipalities, but these policies are often not fully implemented. Annual reviews of

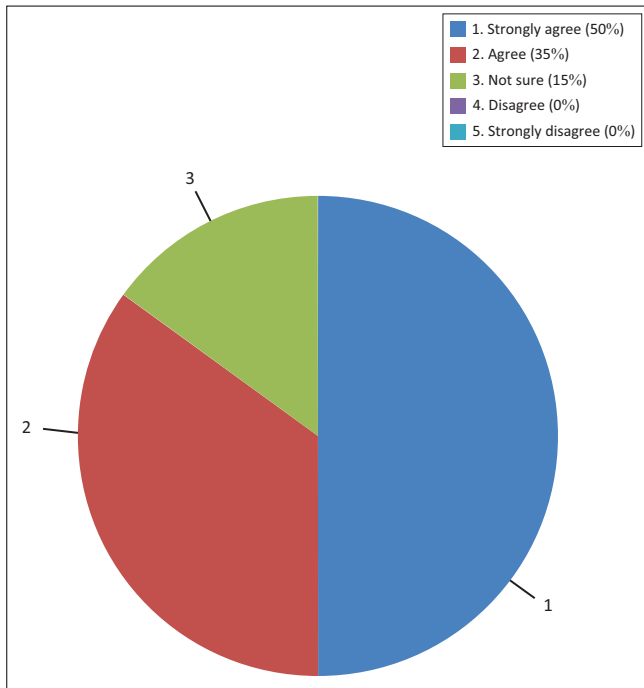


FIGURE 3: Policy implementation framework.

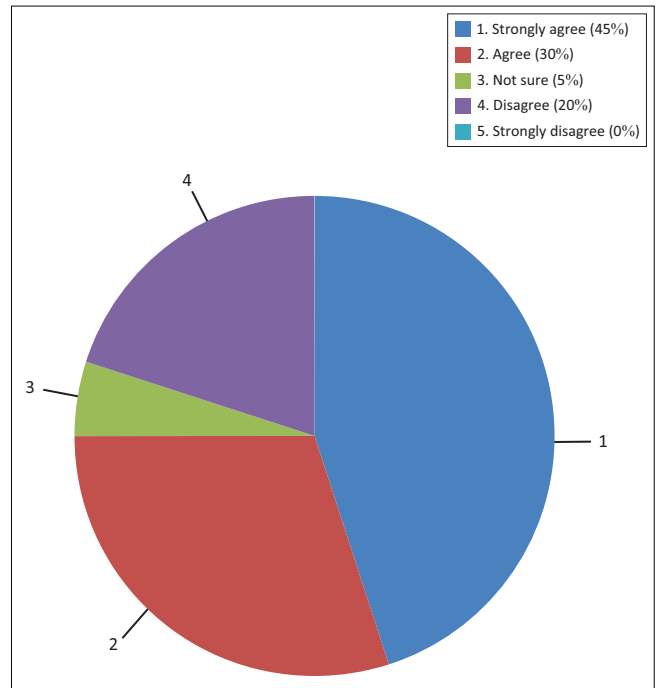


FIGURE 5: Response rate of municipal officials.

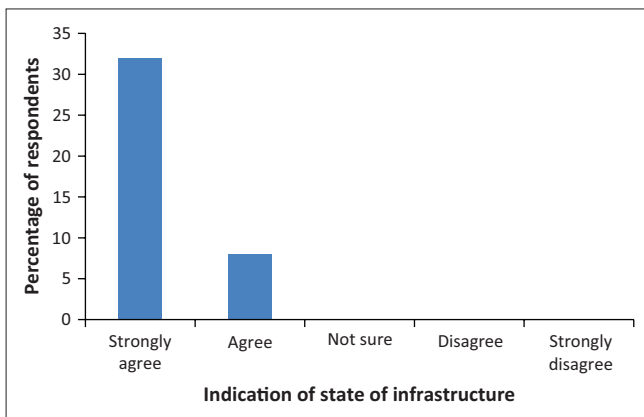


FIGURE 4: Poor infrastructure.

municipal regulations are required to make sure they are user friendly and appropriate for their intended usage. If a programme, strategy or initiative does not address the demands and priorities set forth by the citizens, it risks failure. A good policy means nothing if it does not achieve desired results.

Poorly maintained infrastructure

Figure 4 presents the data on whether poorly maintained infrastructure has an effect on municipal service delivery and makes the local communities to complain. It shows that majority of 32 (80%) respondents strongly agreed and 8 (20%) respondents agreed that poorly maintained infrastructure has a negative effect on municipal service provision, which makes the public to complain. None of the respondents indicated not sure, disagree and strongly disagree respectively that poorly maintained infrastructure has an effect on municipal service delivery and make the local communities to complain. Contractors struggle to finish the municipal

service delivery projects on time set because of poorly maintained infrastructure. It causes a backlog of infrastructure extensions and improvements. The municipality also has to deal with everyday incidents of illegal connections, like those for electricity and water. Infrastructure renovations and additions in the municipality are not completed on schedule because of shortage of staff and finance.

Response rate by the municipal officials

The respondents were asked as to whether municipal officials do not respond to queries on time. Figure 5 provides that 18 (45%) respondents strongly agreed, 12 (30%) respondents agreed, 8 (20%) respondents disagreed, 2 (5%) are not sure and there were no respondents who strongly disagreed that queries are not responded to by the municipal officials. The government officials are obliged to put people first. Municipal institutions exist for local communities and hence they should make them a 'priority'. In essence, local communities should be at the centre of municipal service delivery. The many complaints in the local sphere of government about low response rate are an evidence that local communities have issues with how their complaints are addressed.

Analysis of data collected through interview

This section discusses the qualitative component of the article collected through interviews with the PR councillors. The focus was on challenges experienced by the Vhembe District Municipality regarding governance practices as far as good governance and municipal service are concerned. The responses that were captured through the interview process are described as follows.

Participants replied that:

'lack of requisite resources is a challenge that also affects the good work that is being performed by the officials within the Vhembe District Municipality'. (Participant A, Female, 51 years), (Participant E, Male, 39 years)

Regarding the issue of municipal service delivery and governance challenges, participants stated that:

'there are no adequate resources to deliver services to all local communities within the Vhembe District Municipality'. (Participant G, Male, 44 years)

Participant G along with participant B, D and F agreed on the following:

'for that reason, it often leads to service delivery backlogs or services not to be rendered at all'. (Participant G, Male, 44 years)

Participant indicated that:

'unqualified employees are one of the challenges that the Municipality is experiencing'. (Participant C, Female, 42 years)

In responding, participants shared the same view and asserted that:

'corruption is a challenge'; participant I went further and stated that 'tenders are given to incompetent service providers'. (Participants H, Male, 41 years), (Participants I, Male, 44 years)

Participant shared that:

'[P]oor performance appraisal among municipal employees is also a challenge. Necessary trainings are not provided to those who are found to be lacking skills and capacity in terms of the performance management system.' (Participant J, Female, 45 years)

From authors' point of view, this is because of the fact that most projects take time to be completed or to be undertaken. For example, Phiphidi Reservoir was planned to be completed around 2020. Even today (in 2023), it is not yet completed. For that reason, the respondents feel that municipality hires unqualified employees and tenders are given to incompetent service providers. As indicated by the collected data from the respondents, corruption, poor planning, poor performance appraisal, a lack of skills and capacity, and a lack of requisite resources played a fundamental role. This is also supported by Uwizeyimana and Munzhedzi (2022). Munzhedzi (2016) concluded that in South Africa, municipal procurement and corruption are like inseparable twins. In essence, corruption takes away monies meant for the provision of municipal services to the pockets of the selected elites.

Discussion of findings

One of the main findings in the article is that 65% of the respondents strongly agree that prolonged waiting time for municipal services to be delivered to local communities is a challenge faced by the municipality. Data collected show that 55% of the respondents strongly agree that there is a challenge of accountability when delivering municipal services to the

people. This has an implication on good governance in the sense that accountability is at the core of it. The study found that 70% of the respondents strongly agreed, followed by 20% of respondents who agreed, leading to 90% that shortage of machinery and equipment contributes negatively to municipal service delivery. Fifty percent of respondents strongly agree and 35% respondents agree that dysfunctional implementation of policy framework is a challenge faced by the municipality. It has been found that majority of (80%) respondents strongly agree and 8 (20%) respondents agree that poorly maintained infrastructure makes the local communities to complain for unrendered municipal services. Forty-five percent of respondents strongly agree and 30% respondents agree that municipal officials do not respond to queries on time.

From the interviews that were conducted to determine the challenges faced by the Vhembe District Municipality on good governance and municipal service, the data revealed that a lack of requisite resources is a challenge that also affects the good work that is being performed by the officials within the municipality. There are no adequate or enough resources to deliver municipal services to the local communities within the Vhembe District Municipality. For that reason, it leads to late municipal service delivery or services not to be rendered at all. Unqualified employees are one of the challenges that the municipality is experiencing because tenders are given to incompetent service providers. Project takes time to be completed as incompetent service providers are given tenders, which hinder the delivery of service to the people. It is further found that poor performance appraisal among municipal employees is also a challenge. Necessary trainings are not provided to those who are found to be lacking skills and capacity in terms of the performance management system.

Recommendations

The article makes the following recommendations that can be implemented by the Vhembe District Municipality and other municipalities alike effectively addressing the challenges that the municipalities are confronted with to ensure good governance in the provision of municipal services:

- The article recommends that there should be publicised time frame set for municipal services to be delivered to local communities. This will ensure that municipal officials are held to account on these known time frames.
- The municipality must ensure that there are improved accountability mechanisms within municipalities as far as rendering municipal services to the local communities are concerned. For example, the municipal council and its committees must be capacitated to hold the executive and administrators to account.
- There should be availability of machinery and equipment to deliver municipal service to local communities. This is because there cannot be effective provision of municipal services without requisite machinery and equipment. Infrastructure should always be maintained, and that

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