CITY OF TSHWANE METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY: A ROLE MODEL IN MANAGING QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY?

Prof. Enslin Johannes van Rooyen
Dean
Management College of Southern Africa

Mr. Solly Pooe
Assistant Registrar
Tshwane University of Technology

ABSTRACT

Service delivery protests have in past years become a frequent occurrence in South African municipalities. Socio-economic realities and ever-increasing despondency with the fruits of a democratic dispensation, which did not yield the expected result, may exacerbate the situation. Yet, as much as service delivery protests are prevalent throughout, it is notable that in the City of Tshwane, the frequency thereof seems much less, and when prevalent of a lesser intensity. The Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality
(known as the City of Tshwane) is the third largest municipality (measured by land mass) in the world. It has a population of almost 3 million.

The relatively low incidence of service delivery protests may warrant research into the reasons therefor. It is observed that to reach scientifically plausible conclusions, much research, approached from multiple angels, which take into account amongst others sociological, economic, public administrative factors and demographic configurations into account. However, as part of an initial venture into researching this question, key senior managers of the City who are responsible for key services were interviewed. The results suggest that service delivery has improved significantly since the formation of the Municipality in the post-democratic dispensation’s formation in 1994. This supposition is as a result of analysing the way in which the City of Tshwane vigorously pursue five pre-defined principal drivers of managing quality as stated in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) namely: Batho Pele, Revenue Management, Outcomes-based, Performance Management and Regional Approaches. In light of these results consumers are, by and large, satisfied with service delivery. The findings generate useful insights about how municipalities can enhance the quality of service delivery. The paper identifies areas for further research.

**KEYWORDS:** Service Delivery, Service Quality, Accountability, Local Government
INTRODUCTION

South African consumers of municipal services often express dissatisfaction with service delivery by means of protests. The news media often bears news of service delivery protests and during the run-up towards the 2016 municipal elections, increased activity of this phenomenon is evident. However, these protests have not occurred to equal frequency in the City of Tshwane (City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality). As much as pronounced service delivery vacuums exist here, as in other similar municipalities, the infrequency and intensiveness of such does raise interest. Recent protests in Tshwane related to the political run-up to the elections, and service delivery weren’t the primary reasons cited therefor.

For scholars of Public Affairs, this state of affairs begs the question as to why this may be the case. It warrants research to establish how the municipality manages service delivery. Logically, such scholars will concede that urban dynamics as it relates to service delivery satisfaction indexes, is complex. In probability, no one, or even a mere few factors may contribute to high (or low) satisfaction ratings only. A multi-variable/multi-factor scrutiny pertaining to this matter is required; extensive and longitudinal research is imperative to achieve valuable conclusions and this article merely serves an entrée to the bigger question posed above.

However, route towards this end this paper reflects and postulates on how the Municipality achieves relatively acceptable levels of quality service delivery in areas of electricity, water and waste management. An assumption is made that the aforementioned services seem to form base-line requirements for community service delivery.

Subsequently, 11 senior managers were interviewed. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify and select participants. Interviews were conducted by the researchers and a semi-structured interview methodology was employed. The 11 managers form the cohort of senior and pivotal
decision-makers in the City of Tshwane. The managers are all accountable directly to the City Manager and all account for particular functions within their respective departments.

**Brief description of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality**

Local government jointly with national and provincial governments are charged with the task of providing basic services (Sanderson, 2001; Binns and Nel, 2002; Phago, 2009). In South Africa, the Constitutional and concomitant legal dispensation allow for a system of government which includes local government (a sphere of government that consists of municipalities), which comprise three different permutations of local government. The first class (category A) are metropolitan municipal entities, the second (category B), are entitled district municipalities, which typically consist of a collective of local municipal entities and finally, the third class (category C) are local municipalities, which are the smallest form of local government.

The City of Tshwane is classified as a Category A Grade 6 Metropolitan Municipality by the Municipal Demarcation Board in terms of Section 4 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) (Phago 2009; Breetzke 2010). The City of Tshwane was established in 2000 through integrating several smaller adjacent municipalities and councils. In 2008, the Government Gazette incorporated Metsweding, Cullinan and Bronkhorstspruit districts City of Tshwane, thus extending its jurisdiction to becoming the third largest municipal area in the world by population size and land mass (Binns and Nel, 2002; Breetzke and Horn, 2006; Aigbavboa and Thwala, 2013).

The City of Tshwane has a mayoral executive system at the apex combined with a ward participatory system in accordance with Section 2(g) Determination of Types of Municipality, 2000 (Act 1 of 2000). The municipality has 105 wards, 210 councillors and 2.5 million residents
(Breetzke and Horn 2009). It is divided into 7 regions covering 6 368km² of Gauteng's 19 055km² (Bouckaert and Peters 2002; Breetzke and Horn 2006). From the very outset, the Tshwane Metropolitan Council acknowledged that its sheer size and general demography called for the development of a bespoke service delivery model. The model took account geographical imperatives and therefore regionalised the entity whilst focusing on attending to improving the efficiencies of cross-cutting functionalities such as energy, water and waste management. The initiative to establish new structures and municipal boundaries and internal reorganisation was geared towards local government transformation to improve systems of service delivery and raise the quality of life of South African citizens (Cameron and Sewell, 2003; Cameron, 2005; Aigbavboa and Thwala, 2013).

**Municipal service delivery challenges in South Africa**

Service delivery means offering a consistent service experience to a specific user community in a specific institutional context (Buick and Muthu 1997; Alegre, Tuhovcak and Vrbkova 2004). A set of principles and policies help to guide the design, development, operation and retirement of services delivered by a service provider. When such principles and policies are not adhered to, service delivery protests occur. Service delivery protests are rife in South Africa and can be traced back to the apartheid epoch (Alexander, 2010; Seekings, 2000). Mokwena, Paradza and Richards (2010) captured nationwide incidences of municipal service delivery protests as 27 and 104 in 2008 and 2009 respectively. This increase is symptomatic of continual and mounting discontent with the quality of service provision of municipalities.

In order to restore the diminishing consumers’ confidence and improve service delivery, the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs undertook a complete review of local government in 2009 (White Paper on Local Government, 2009). Its objective was to determine the problems that lead to persistent poor service delivery in municipalities. The report identified a cluster of problems. One key issue was the number of
poorly governed and dysfunctional municipalities. Issues of dysfunctionality identified include role confusion, and conflicts among political office bearers or politicians and administrators (The State of Local Government in South Africa, 2009; Makobe, 2002). The report noted that ‘internal problems are matched to low level of community trust in the municipality, due to poor communication between councils and their local citizenry’ (The State of Local Government, 2009). Bvuma and Russell (2001) contend that ‘municipalities exhibit features of traditional bureaucracy, including hierarchical structures, low levels of training, a poor work culture and an overall orientation towards inputs and process rather than meeting the basic needs of all citizens’.

Other problems include lack of accountability, a collapse of rule of law, and problems with uniformity in functional arrangements of municipalities. In addition, weaknesses in the state’s capacity to provide support and monitor local government and policy failures are contributing factors (Haines, Marcoux and St-Onge, 2004; Carmel, 2002; Curtis, 1999; Pretorius and Schurinksa, 2007; Aggenbag and Lues, 2009; Zegeye and Maxted, 2003). A number of studies (e.g. Kumar, 1999; Chakrapani, 1998) assessed the positive impact of local government by recording consumers’ experiences and perceptions of service delivery in their daily lives.

The studies suggest that the majority of the protests by members of the public are a result of failure by municipalities to deliver quality services. Although this is the case in South Africa, such protests have not occurred to a significant extent in City of Tshwane (Reichard, 1998; Pollitt, 2006; Phago, 2009; Snyman and Vorster, 2011). Consistent with this view, this paper considers City of Tshwane as a model municipality and examines how it manages the quality of service delivery from a management’s perspective. The implication is for management to transform their verbal pledges into deeds and prioritise the satisfaction of the general public.
Problem statement

The performance of local government has received close scrutiny in recent years. However, issues of service delivery failures and civil unrest, mismanagement, financial management challenges and poor audit outcomes, skills shortages, inadequate infrastructure planning and labour unrest continue to make headlines in South Africa (Sabri and Jaber, 2007; Marais, 2008). A report compiled by Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs confirms that the list of challenges is interminable. Municipalities operate with huge service delivery backlogs. Statistics relating to backlogs countrywide are estimated as: 19.3% access to water, 33% sanitation, 27% electricity and 40% refuse removal (Oberholzer, 2012). These backlogs account for continued civil unrests and poor service delivery across municipalities in South Africa except in City of Tshwane (Mokwena, Paradza and Richards, 2010). Thus, a scenario where City of Tshwane emerges as a model municipality warrants research into how it manages service delivery in providing water, waste management and electricity supply.

Areas for further research

This study examined the management of quality of service delivery in the context of supply of water, electricity and waste management. It thus constitutes an area of importance for the municipality, researchers and government in general. The general research objectives stated supra, apply but in particular future studies on the management of service delivery may consider the following areas for further research:

- Future studies could include more municipalities in a province or nationally and a wider range of municipal functions.
- A quantitative approach to studies of this nature can also be undertaken. Future studies would profit from the use of additional methodologies to
cross-validate findings on the management of quality of service delivery in municipalities.

- Other studies could consider conducting an analysis of citizen satisfaction with public service delivery in the City of Tshwane.

**METHODOLOGY**

In light of the research problem stated above, general research objectives associated with the larger research project are stated as follows:

1. To identify measures that are in place to deal with the challenges experienced in the provision of water, electricity and waste management.

2. To identify envisioned short, medium and long term quality management mechanisms to ensure optimal and professional service delivery in municipalities.

3. To suggest quality management control systems that will ensure satisfactory public service delivery in other municipalities.

*Article-specific research questions*

This article forms part of a longitudinal research undertaking which relates to service delivery shortcomings and the associated service delivery protests prevalent across South Africa. The following research questions were posed during this part of the project:

1. What is the regulatory regime which provides the thrust of the service delivery project in the City of Tshwane?

2. What model(s) of service delivery is used e.g. in-house, public private partnerships etc.?

3. How is service delivery quality measured?
4. What general best practices may be identified, which may contribute to improved service delivery?

**Article-specific research objectives**

Taking the above-mentioned research questions into account, the following research objectives may be posed:

1. To establish the regulatory regime which provides the thrust of the service delivery project in the City of Tshwane.
2. To establish the model(s) of service delivery is used e.g. in-house, public private partnerships etc.
3. To identify how service delivery quality is measured.
4. To gather information on general best practices may be identified, which may contribute to improved service delivery.

**Data collection**

Several sources were consulted to develop an instrument with open-ended questions that were used in the interview process. This resulted in the selection of a total of 11 key senior managers who were selected for interviews using a purposive sampling technique. The reason for their selection was because of their experience in management of service delivery in areas of water provision, electricity supply and waste management. Interviews were conducted in the participants’ offices – an environment they are familiar with and where they should feel comfortable to participate. The protocol for ethical research conduct was observed. This aligns with Bogdan and Biklen’s (1998) stipulation which states that if participants are treated as research subjects, they act differently from how they usually do. The researchers recorded the responses in writing, in a systematic and accurate mode to ensure that there is sufficient, accurate data for analysis.
Data analysis

In line with Tesco’s (1990) recommendation for qualitative data analysis, a line-by-line analysis of the content was conducted. Each statement was extensively scrutinised to ensure familiarity with the data and put into distinct units of meaning or themes. Thereafter, the themes were labelled, verified through reflection of the raw data, discussed with experts with a view to obtaining greater clarity and proper interpretation, and recorded. Finally, those themes suggesting recurring patterns of responses were extracted for analysis, per universal research protocol (Nell, 2005). The ‘Describe-Compare-Relate’ technique as suggested by Bazerley (2009), was utilised in presenting the findings in summary form.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The thrust that motivates service delivery and the quest towards seeking excellence in this regard, lies in the Constitutional mandate endowed upon municipalities within the context of the South African system of local government and the concomitant policy documents (i.e. White Paper on Local Government, 1998) and the prevailing City of Tshwane Integrated Development Plan, read together with the Tshwane 2055 plan.

The study found that most residents have access to electricity except some who live in informal settlements. The in-migration of residents through rapid urbanisation does contribute to exacerbating the situation. The management indicated that the level service delivery is satisfactory, if by resource constraints are considered and has improved over the years although there is still room for improvement in certain areas.

In providing efficient and reliable electricity, the literature advocates the implementation of an electricity maintenance plan and upgrading of existing infrastructure (ad-hoc and planned maintenance). In the City of Tshwane, the focus has always been, among others, the maintenance and upgrading of
infrastructure which included electricity reticulation and sub-stations. The municipality actively monitors and replaces obsolete prepaid meters, and recently embarked on reconstruction and development of overhead power mains. The construction of electricity infrastructure included working on sub-stations, feeder cables, street lighting, electricity bulk supply substations, switch houses, residential expansion and festive lighting. Thus infrastructural resources have significantly have helped in managing the quality of service delivery in the area of electricity.

With regard to refuse collection, the function was sub-contracted in order to manage the quality of service delivery. This development was instituted after 1994 as a means to enhance service delivery and empower black-owned small businesses. The results indicate that service delivery has improved because sub-contractors for waste management are identified from the wards in which they reside, thus giving them greater commitment to provide quality services.

Finally, management indicated that most residents have in-house water systems except for many residents in informal settlements. Yet, the quality of water is generally satisfactory although they sometimes receive dirty water due to aging water pipes. The City of Tshwane is currently repairing and replacing an aged reticulation system, which suggests a commitment to effective service delivery. There are, however, continuous concerns about water provision suggesting that the City of Tshwane’s management systems of quality of service delivery still need to improve.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From management’s perspective, service delivery in areas of water, electricity and waste is satisfactory although there are isolated cases of protests in City of Tshwane. The strategy to outsource the provision of certain functions was implemented with a view to enhance service delivery and not advancing personal ambitions or corrupt tendencies. This is why
City of Tshwane constantly monitors and evaluates the performance of sub-contractors. City of Tshwane reserves the right to terminate contracts for sub-contractors should their quality of service not meet expected standards.

With open communication in the municipality, we conclude that their systems of managing quality of service delivery are based on consultation and there is no selected application of quality management systems regardless of it being a registered or informal settlement.

The municipality remains obliged to provide efficient and effective services to the community. However, the residents of the municipality can succour the municipality to improve its service delivery by engaging in the activities listed below:

The residents can make use of the suggestion boxes in municipal buildings to communicate their concerns to City of Tshwane; this will increase the municipality’s awareness of the service delivery problems that residents are experiencing. This is consistent with the findings of Pretorius and Schurinksa (2007:20), which indicate that lack of communication constitutes as a difficulty that could influences leadership decision making regarding service delivery.

It is also important that residents are invited to public meetings within their communities. These forums are meetings at which service delivery problems are discussed.

Management needs a thorough understanding of policy documents. This enables them to communicate instructions to lower level management and implement them effectively. The findings indicate the lack of common understanding among management on the implementation of certain policies, for example, the results of the interview suggest that senior management is
unaware of the maximum time required to reconnect electricity after disconnection of services due to non-payment.

The above recommendations show that both residents as beneficiaries and municipal management as service agents have important roles to play. It is imperative that they work closely in order to ensure that satisfactory services are provided and also collectively identify those parts of the quality management system that need to be constantly monitored.

As much as the above findings allowed for particular deductions and carefully considered notes of recommendation, it should again be reiterated that conclusive findings may only be made once more in-depth investigation is completed. However, it is hoped that scholars and other interested parties observe the above preliminary corollaries, which may stimulate further debate around vexed matter of dysfunctional service delivery and resulting protest action.

REFERENCES


