

Is South Africa Building a Capable State through Developmental Local Government?

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Abstract

It is widely agreed that service provision is the biggest challenge facing South African municipalities and particularly smaller municipalities. This paper analyses the South African municipal government with a focus on how it responds to the vision to build a capable state through developmental government – and the effects of political interference and corruption - to find ways to reduce the problem of service delivery. A qualitative approach was used, and data were collected from various jurisdictions through record review and telephone interviews to fill data knowledge gaps. Most municipalities have described clean water, work prospects and free basic services as the key service delivery obstacles that hinder the realisation of a developmentally competent local government in South Africa. The discussion finds that yet another problem is political interference in municipal administration. Although public engagement in civic affairs is a legal necessity, much remains to be done to bring about meaningful participation. Sanitation has always been a challenge for service delivery, particularly in rural communities, due primarily to a lack of infrastructure. Lastly, it was found that municipalities must do more to create human resources to provide services reflecting a developmentally competent South African local government.

Keywords: Service delivery challenges; participatory democracy; good governance; local governance; citizen participation; accountable governance.

1. Introduction

South Africa has three spheres of government: National, Provincial and Local Government. Of the three, the local government sphere is closest to the people. Particularly in South Africa, the local government sphere is expected to play a strategically important developmental role and act as the epicentre of service delivery. For this reason, the local government in this country has a mammoth task to fulfil. Since 1994, different stakeholders have made various attempts to address challenges of political interference, corruption, and deployment of cadres, who sometimes lack the necessary skills. However, significant problems remain despite development, such as increased housing access, and potable water and electricity supply. Based on the context and reasoning for this paper, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA 2016) states that the South African Constitution (1996) envisaged the local government sphere playing a transformative role by offering a mechanism for reliable, secure and sensitive service delivery to improve the well-being of people since they pay for service delivery. SALGA was founded in 1997 and was intended to ‘represent, promote and protect local government interests and raise the profile of the standard of living thereof of the ratepayers in the municipal areas’ (SALGA 2016). It further noted that the organisation had a strong strategic role in serving local government interests within the larger government system and assisting its members in fulfilling their developmental duties (SALGA 2016). It claims to set out six pillar mandates dealing with, among other things: capacity building in local government, focusing on leadership and technical capacity building in municipalities, and support and advice for the successful implementation of municipal mandates, including awareness and information sharing aimed at promoting peer learning in the sector and encouraging service delivery. Therefore, the overriding question of this paper is: Are South African local municipalities the tools of effective and efficient local service delivery, backed by a capable state and developmental local government whose impact is merely a short drive from the fog into the light — or are they moving further into the dark?

Previous pre-1994 regimes generated complex problems at the local level, from racially motivated urban planning to unequally financed Bantustans. The local government in South Africa has a tremendous job in addressing these legacies. Different stakeholders have made various attempts since 1994 to address

these challenges. However, despite some development, such as increased housing access and potable water and electricity supply, significant problems remain at both national and local government levels. Thus, the need for the constant pursuit of viable solutions remains. Equally, there is a need to continuously monitor local government and its stakeholders to ascertain whether they are on the right path.

Considering the above, an argument is made for this paper, including its rationale. As this and the previous problem statement will show, local government can be called a 'house of chaos', as stated by Amtaika (2013: 291-307), hence the clarion call made by SALGA's 2016 conference for the sector to get its house in order. This is a massive call for a single study to assess the issue, particularly since there are complexities associated with South Africa's categorisation of local government, exacerbated by the country's notorious past. Indeed, South African local municipalities are not entirely the same, and thus, a 'one size fits all approach' does not work; however, lessons may still be learned and shared. To determine these lessons, the research question is asked here: What is the state of governance in South Africa in terms of a framework for good governance? Specifically, is the South African Local Government a strong instrument for efficient and sensitive structural impact service delivery? A brief analysis of the literature shows several philosophical problems, given the general agreement that good governance is vital. To this end, an attempt is made to include a summary of these issues and a synthesis of them under the preliminary literature review. Methodological issues follow on from this. The study builds on the foundation of a qualitative research tradition, with a selection of elements of mixed research approaches.

2. Literature on Local Governance and Democracy

From the outset, it seems appropriate to ask what local government is before trying to bring the need to transform it to the forefront. The local sphere of government is sometimes referred to as 'grassroots' democracy, according to Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, and Jonker (2001: 77). This is due to the local government's proximity to and close relationship with societies. Du Toit and Van der Waldt (1999: 250) describe the local government in South Africa as an agency created by law by the national government for the citizens of a given region. The authors further note that it is an agency that can exercise legislative authority in a region demarcated by statute and by a competent authority. According to them, local government

can also be defined as a heterogeneous body with the power and authority to provide services and amenities to citizens in its area of jurisdiction and preserve and promote their well-being within the limits of legislation by the central and relevant provincial governments. Daily Maverick (2020.07.13) reports that the government is perceived as involving municipal and metro administration and that the sector is currently considered the most dysfunctional in South Africa.

On the transformation front, Du Toit and Van Der Waldt (1999: 252–253) reported that the danger of local government failing in black communities grew towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. This was partly due to the non-payment of rent and utility fees and the ongoing resignations of remaining city counsellors from the previous dispensation. In 1992, the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) held talks with the then local government minister on reforming local government in South Africa (Cloete 1995: 4). Such discussions led to the creation, on 22 March 1993, of a regional forum - the forum for local government negotiations. This platform had to act as the principal negotiation mechanism for reforming local governments. According to Sentiwe (undated), 50% of members represented statutory institutions, and the remaining 50% were non-statutory institutions. The forum was managed by a committee consisting of two Local Government Negotiating Forum chairmen (LGNF) and 10 LGNF members. A model for local government reform was created through negotiation and consensus and was introduced to the Multi-Party Negotiating Process (MPNP). This model was updated and approved by the MPNP at the Kempton Park World Trade Centre.

The advent of democracy heralded a political shift and symbolised the hopes of millions of South Africans who had been side-lined by the pre-1994 regimes. While they seem to have been overshadowed by negotiations at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), which resulted in the 1993 interim constitution, some of these expectations and ambitions were codified by the LGNE. As a result, a critically important developmental task has been housed within the local government sphere ever since (Tau 2016: 8). A developed local government implies a local government collaborating with different stakeholders, including communities, to establish effective ways of enhancing overall socio-economic well-being and thereby increasing the quality of their living standards (Van der Waldt 2014: 21; Koma 2010: 111-113; South African Constitution 1996: section 152). Steps have been taken to this end, though significant obstacles remain. There

have been some significant improvements by local government in South Africa since the democratic dispensation of the mid-1990s. So far, South Africa appears to have transformed from racially-divisive and fragmented ‘bantustans’ into an integrated democratic local government facilitating local democracy (Ramaphosa 2017: 15). Manyoni (2017) and Van der Waldt (2014: 18) both accept that South Africa has steadfastly tried to reposition itself from being a national government instrument to an autonomous realm with the capacity to raise revenue, provide large basic services to millions of South Africans, and develop local economies. According to RSA, Auditor-General (2020), nearly 60% of municipalities now have unqualified audits. Eighty-seven municipalities and entities in the Red Zone in 2018-19, and 18 had clean audits. Fifty-four municipalities were regarded as safe audits in 2018-19, and only 40 municipalities and agencies were in the red zone. Furthermore, notably, there was an average increase of 90% in demonstrable spending power and operating budgets (RSA Auditor General 2020). It may be argued that while, to some degree, municipalities share the responsibility for the poor state of their affairs, many of the socio-economic problems facing South Africa remain profoundly related to its infamous past. This is especially so with regard to urban planning, which has consequences for the growth of local economies and, by extension, deprivation, inequality and unemployment (NDP 2011; 2013: 365), which, jointly and separately, influence the free demand and collection of revenue for essential service delivery by every municipality, among others. Nevertheless, because of issues relevant to their background, from the political environment to structural structures, many municipalities cannot adequately perform their functions. The general concern of this study is with these kinds of issues. The latest South African Local Government Association theme, ‘Creating a Green, Responsive and People-Centred Local Government’ (2016), called on municipalities ‘[to] get their houses in order’ (Kgosana 2017: 11). Although this is undoubtedly a noble call, it is fair to argue that communities must first embark on a research project to uncover and better understand the root problems that hinder their attempts to administer, grow and deliver services.

A major factor that undermines South Africa’s social and economic progress is the deficit in the capabilities of the state. This gap was identified some time ago by the National Planning Commission, first in its diagnostic report in 2011 and again when it issued its final National Development Plan in 2012. The plan is the country’s blueprint for fixing its problems.

3. Theoretical Considerations

The principles of good governance and participatory democracy in this paper both serve as an appropriate basis for building the study. The theories of good governance and participatory democracy provide clear theoretical explanations on conceptualising and contextualising good governance for a developmentally capable state.

In addition, the use of the principles of the theory of good governance allows the researcher to predict future events and opportunities. As noted in the introduction, the value of the theoretical framework is that it helps to organise the paper. In this paper, the selection of good governance theory is important to the analysis, as the theory's underpinnings describe the causal determinants of perceived specific needs and how the needs form the functioning of humans; they also do not position basic needs in one class. The theory factors affecting the functioning of administrative management in certain circumstances and conditions, since administrations do not experience the same struggles, means that administrative needs differ from one municipality to another. Moreover, through good governance theory, one can incorporate the needs of the ratepayers into the municipality's developmental character to explain their socio-economic position, which has been the result of several factors that have harmed their participatory functioning in the running of their civic affairs. Thus, the theory helps one understand why ratepayers experience such governance problems and effectively explains how the municipality takes certain administrative measures to adequately meet the requirements for a developmentally competent, properly-operating municipality. It is imperative to note the complexity of defining service delivery challenges facing South Africa's local government from the outset. In a developmental local government, the definition of service delivery challenges has gone beyond simply referring to ratepayers as individuals who pay for rates but also includes non-statutory members who opposed the oppressive apartheid regime.

As per Walker (2020), participatory democracy underlines the broad involvement of constituents in the direction and functioning of political systems. Democratic etymological origins (Greek *demos* and *kratos*) mean that the people are in control and that all elections are participatory. US political scientist Diamond (2015) of The Freeman Spogli Institute for International

Studies argues that democracy consists of four main elements: a democratic structure for choosing and changing government by free and fair elections; active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and public life; preservation of the human rights of all citizens and active democratic auctioning and behaving in a manner acceptable to all involved. Participatory democracy requires more lay citizen participation in decision-making and offers greater democratic representation than conventional representative democracy, e.g. broader control of proxies provided to members by those who become personally involved and actively vote. Voting is one way of being interested in our democracy. People can even contact their officials to endorse a law or amend it. Voting in an election and contacting our elected officials are two ways for South Africans to engage in local government's democratic and competent state in their democracy. In Qobo's (2020) view, however, a strong democratic, developmental and capable state is where people and citizens govern themselves to the greatest extent possible, instead of delegating their power and responsibility to representatives acting in their names.

As a nation, South Africa has a distinguished history of popular participation in the battle for democracy. Mass participation and popular control characterised the discourse of struggle under the largely African National Congress (ANC) aligned national liberation movement. As critics of apartheid and as free people, South Africans have demonstrated their ability to participate in democracy.

4. Our Research Approach

The paper is based on qualitative research study's architecture, an approach that enables researchers to analyse social and cultural phenomena in an organised and systematic way, allowing for a social construction interpretation of truth (Hanekom 2006; Lopez & Abod 2013). The researcher interviewed councillors selected through a purposive sampling strategy in this study. Supervisors in contract companies were purposely selected for in-depth interviews since they enable probing to understand participants' perspectives extensively (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014: 142). The researcher had to interview municipal officials and local government politicians in public areas, mindful of potential hazards caused by Covid-19. Written documents were also used to derive insights (Payne & Payne; 2004 and 2006 by Mogalakwe).

Various approaches to best practices about good governance and local government development or agreements are discussed below to ensure participatory democratic local governance and development among people and protect lives and citizens' rights in civil society. Qualitative data were collected from primary and secondary sources, including internet links, books, studies, newspapers, policy briefs, journals, blogs, news bulletins, and official records and statements on local and capable South African developmental government. Therefore, this paper contributes and makes suggestions, based on a Sustainable Developmental Strategy, for fostering good governance and participatory democracy for local and competent state development in South Africa. More than 70 journal articles from various sources have been studied, with various search criteria about local developmental government in South Africa applied. An evaluation of the material revealed 46 items of literature of reference to this paper.

5. Auditor-General Flags Lack of Accountability as the Major Cause of Poor Local Government Audit Results

The 2018-19 Auditor-General's (2020) report states that the overall downturn in audit outcomes has overshadowed the efforts of pro-active municipalities. Releasing his latest municipal audit report of 2018-19 on the performance of South Africa's municipalities, the South African Auditor-General (AG), Makwetu (2020), said that municipalities were in an undesirable state of worsening audit outcomes, showing that various local government role players have been slow in implementing, and in several instances even disregarding the audit office's recommendations. This general report deals with the audit results of the local government for the financial year ending 30 June 2019. This precedes the Public Audit Act changes, which became effective on 1 April 2019. Accordingly, the specifications of these amendments will be applicable for the first time to audit reports published for the financial years that began on or after 31 March 2019. Such reforms incorporate the definition of a material irregularity in audits conducted under the Public Audit Act and, once a material irregularity has been found, may result in a variety of potential acts, including the referral of the material irregularity to an investigative body, where there are complicated and nuanced matters not capable of being concluded directly by the audit. If

a recommendation is made via an audit, it will be expected to be done within a period prescribed by the auditors, without which, the auditors will give a binding remedial action to the accounting officer to remedy the found material irregularity, also within a prescribed period. Makwetu has persistently called on those charged with administration and oversight to look at basic systems and controls as the foundation for proper accountability to the citizens of the country in order to ensure that taxpayers' monies are spent in a disciplined manner in line with the prescripts set out in the many pieces of legislation governing the proper running of municipalities, and so that citizens can derive the expected benefits from this spending.

However, in his final local government report, the AG tells a disturbing tale of most municipalities 'crippled by debt and being unable to pay for water and electricity; unreliable and lacklustre revenue collection; spending that is unauthorised, sporadic, fruitless and wasteful; and a heavy reliance on grants and assistance from national government'. There are few municipalities whose diligence is recorded. Makwetu also recognises the municipalities' efforts that have obtained, or retained, clean audits and detailed how they operated to achieve this. 'The financial statements of a municipality tell the story of how well a municipality is run. As is the case with these few municipalities, it can be a good story of prudent spending that achieves value for money; rigorous billing and collecting practices; properties that are retained and safeguarded; cautious contributions and savings for emergencies and future projects; and promises to creditors and the community being honoured' (Makwetu 2020). Thirteen of these municipalities are in the Western Cape, including the Cape Winelands and West Coast district municipalities, Berggrivier, Cape Agulhas, Cederberg, Drakenstein, Hessequa, Langeberg, Overstrand, Prince Albert, Saldanha Bay, Theewaterskloof and Witzenberg. Other municipalities that regularly perform well are Senqu (Eastern Cape), Midvaal (Gauteng), Okhahlamba (KwaZulu-Natal), Capricorn district municipality (Limpopo), Gert Sibanda and Nkangala district municipalities (Mpumalanga), and John Taolo Gaetsewe district municipality (Northern Cape). The best practices in these jurisdictions included a cohesive leadership dedicated to a good management system and successful governance. Continuous monitoring of audit action plans to fix any audit findings timeously, and a constructive approach to coping with emerging threats were standard features at these municipalities.

6. Local Government and the Developmental State: A Discussion

The term ‘service delivery’ is a widely used term to describe the provision of basic communal needs and services, such as housing, water and sanitation, land, energy, and infrastructure, on which local people have grown to rely for their daily survival. However, in South Africa, the supply and continuing maintenance of these fundamental utilities has proven inconsistent at times, causing significant inconvenience and putting local populations at risk. The outcome has been an increase in service delivery protests, or rallies, seeking ‘better service delivery’ – notably in the last decade. As the National Development Plan (NDP) (2011; 2013) shows, South Africa’s increasing inequality, poverty rates, and unemployment are unacceptably high, hence the need for a ‘capable developmental state’ to take centre stage in reversing the country’s path. If we are serious, as a country, about local government, what we need is to address the triple problems of unemployment, deprivation, and inequality; a state must be able to play a transformative, strategic, and capable role. This involves, among other things, well-run and efficiently organised state institutions staffed by professional civil servants dedicated to the public good and willing to provide consistently high-quality services to all South Africans while prioritising the development goals of the country. This will allow people from all walks of society to have confidence in the state, which will strengthen the state’s effectiveness (National Planning Commission 2013: 365).

A capable local government of the state - and development - inevitably involves, among other aspects, well-governed municipalities which can play their part in ‘prioritising the development goals of the nation’ (National Planning Commission 2013: 365). Therefore, the question is whether South African municipalities are well-governed enough to serve this role. To address this question, Kgosana (2017: 11) suggests that ‘[they] must be efficient tools of service delivery [characterised by sound judgment, financial sustainability and good governance in general] for municipalities to be confidently assumed to be well-governed.’ However, there seems to be an over-emphasis on effectiveness, as can already be deduced, probably, with the view that this is necessary to yield developmental fruit. Nevertheless, is this the case for necessity? From the literature on local government, while not strictly causal, there is a correlational relationship between political interference, lack of skills, corruption, and poor service delivery

to citizens. As stated by the OECD (2013), productivity enhances institutional confidence in government, and this, in effect, may contribute positively to the credibility, commitment and ability of social partners to collaborate in the pursuit of shared objectives such as the development of prosperity, which would enhance the quality and well-being of people when benefits fall away. However, if the traditional market-led economy is anything to go by, the trickle-down theory does not always seem to hold. There have been several global development examples without the general population sharing in the gains. It is worth mentioning that effective and efficient municipal administration is an aspect of South Africa's notion of local government development. The theory is that if there is good governance, efficient and effective growth will occur. Whatever the case, considering variables such as sizes, typologies, locations, and historical factors of municipalities in South Africa, it is practically impossible to provide a clear answer as to whether municipalities in South Africa are successful tools of service delivery because there is no one-size-fits-all approach showing how good governance influences growth. However, obviously, the persistent warning, or even the mandate, of municipalities 'keeping their houses in order' during the 2016 SALGA Conference seems to indicate that municipalities are failing, although this does not similarly extend to all municipalities. Therefore, for practical reasons, it is by individual assessments and evaluations that one will know whether a municipality is in order and to what degree that is the case when juxtaposed with its obligations in the field of growth. Although oversight by South Africa's Auditor-General's office is effective, problems such as public engagement and political dynamics are still not properly considered. It does not attempt to grapple with the evolutionary impact of municipal malfeasance.

Specifically, it focuses on financial reporting and sustainability. Therefore, studies that take a broader approach to provide insight into issues of non-financial governance and their effect are important. The year 2020 marked twenty-four years since the adoption of the democratic constitution of the new democratic South Africa in 1996 and, by extension and in principle, the mandate of the local government of South Africa to serve the people of South Africa. A figure of more than two decades implies sufficient time to mature and take the reins. In this regard, De Visser (2005: 1) briefly notes that the South African Constitution unambiguously chooses to make local government the epicentre of development and gives it a strong institutional status. According to De Visser

(2005), it is important to take stock of the local government sphere of the country and its position in building a healthy and productive society.

As Maseremule (2020) puts it, participatory democracy in the form of urban growth means 'the transfer of authority to the common people'. But this is not possible when parties place their partisan power interests above citizens', as demonstrated by Tshwane's paralysis when running basic services. Brooks (2020), from the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection, while analysing the ANC's interpretation of participatory democracy as a revolutionary movement first, then as a government after 1994, paints a bleak image of the democratic process that has gone wrong, despite its quest for a developmentally capable state at local government level. It seems that the failure of a state to implement effective local development government is blamed on lack of coherence and application of new ideas and influences that arise from development theory and debates on what constitutes governance and international best practice. This can be seen in various advisory mechanisms, such as ward committees and planning for municipal development. According to Brooks (2020), there is some tension between an opportunity to control the public sector and allowing people to participate effectively. But the public participation strategy of South Africa does allow for some common impact. Separately though, the ANC as a movement has moved away from a distinct discourse on participation since being in government. The adoption by the present government of a predominantly market-oriented economic strategy since 1994 inevitably made public participation dialogue useless at the policy level. Yet, despite its shortcomings in realising a local developmental government through a capable state, the attempt to improve continues. For Brooks (2020), the problem for South African democracy is simply the presence of vanguardism, which prevents the mobilisation of the people. A dominant party runs the state. There also exists what the political theorist Joseph V. Femia as quoted by Bond, Desai and Ngwane (2013: 136), said in *Marxism and Democracy*: a major conflict in Marxism between a desire for political power from above and common initiative from below. Brooks sums up the problem as a tension between avant-garde and participatory democracy, which keeps downplaying a delaying tactic in making the participatory democracy a reality of life in local government and all other spheres of government, in my opinion. It has been almost 26 years since the end of apartheid, and South Africa's democracy has reached a critical point. Mass disillusionment with the new government and

the governing party, shortcomings in government performance and mass protest increases are evident. Yet the way participatory democracy is practised tends to affect both ideas and the operational practices of a developmentally capable state due to ongoing service delivery challenges bedevilling local government space. The new government has been found lacking as a nation member as agreed by both Brooks and Qobo. Rampant corruption and abuse of power have weakened the claim to rightful leadership of the people of South Africa. According to Brooks and Qobo, it becomes obvious and unavoidable that people will lose confidence in established democratic processes, hence the hamstrung municipalities in South Africa.

Maseremule (2020) agrees that developmental government should be based on the residents. The Greeks named this demo, meaning 'collectively, the body of people'. Sometimes, political parties rob democracy of its essential aspect. Thankfully, Maseremule agrees with the results of this paper: South Africa's electoral structure already offers the foundation for situating local government among the citizens. A cities are divided into wards for local elections, and in practice, the elected representatives for the municipal councils are not active, and the rights represented by him or her not clearly exercised due to poor participation by councillors. Many such councillors stand as independents. This arrangement for independent representation is not ideal because such a ward candidate may be a political party representative. Yet this can be overcome by having people directly nominate most candidates. According to Maseremule, a ward candidate should be the ward residents' nominee and be accountable directly to them. Ideally, all -or most - council seats should be filled by ward members. This will ensure the city leadership is made up of 'public society members'.

It has also been noted and supported by the Daily Maverick statement that the annual reports of the Auditor-General (AGSA) on local government have, for many years, expressed the bleak and deteriorating condition of South African municipalities. The National Treasury also expressed its consternation at the lack of governance and financial control in the municipalities and the metro. One has to ask the citizens of most South African towns and cities whether they get value for their property rates and taxes compared to a decade ago. I do not doubt that their response will express a collective frustration at the deterioration in water quality and wastewater facilities, potholed highways, collapsing electricity distribution networks, inadequate management of refuse and deteriorating

financial discipline. If the average citizen pondered on the presence of a local government body that would need to be organised to reflect and assist with municipal management and efficiency, they would be forgiven for assuming that there is no such organisation.

The key problem about free basic services is, among other things, the lack of appropriate infrastructure, especially in rural municipalities. Municipalities in urban areas can provide services, as most have sewage, power, water, and waste treatment systems in place. This challenge, however, goes beyond the sole capacity and powers of most municipalities, especially the local municipality. The study shows that some jurisdictions regarded the shortage of public infrastructure as one of the biggest problems facing communities. Further work will help decide what needs to be done to solve this problem successfully. This paper may also expose concerns about unemployment, which has been seen as a contributing factor to the difficulties faced by local institutions in providing services. In response to the question on what could be done to alleviate service delivery problems facing South African municipalities, some respondents said that municipalities should create an atmosphere conducive to the development of jobs. A significantly higher percentage of municipalities said job creation was a major factor in response to how they viewed the service delivery problems faced by their local municipality. Thus, it is obvious that unemployment is of great concern.

Corruption in South African municipalities, particularly in most provinces, is a major problem that cripples the desire for development-friendly local governments, some of which have little capacity to generate income. It is assumed that both politicians and managers are crooked. Corruption is prevalent when awarding tenders and appointing employees. In response to the query about the key causes of service delivery problems, corruption was identified by 30% of municipalities. For problems facing public service delivery to be tackled effectively, corruption must be curbed immediately. It would also be useful to conduct further research into other areas relating to service provision.

Among other findings is that all successful organisations require good leadership in the Batho Pele Principles (www.kznhealth.gov.za/bathopele.htm). Pretorius and Schurink (2007: 23) [quoting a research participant] make the following points about staff training and development: 'In leadership, people who are skilled have the expertise, are capable and confident, and have a vision, so that

in return, people who are recruited to the organisation have the necessary skills, necessary expertise, and they share in the values of the organisation.' According to the African National Congress (ANC), the failure to properly implement a cadre deployment policy has contributed to the organisation's current challenges and weaknesses. To that end, the ANC's 4th National Policy Conference reaffirmed that a 'contingent of cadres should be produced who are competent, committed, disciplined, and conscientious' (ANC 2012: 3). It was suggested that the basis of 'deployment' should be intellectual, academic, and ethical training and political preparation. The conference also agreed that before cadres are elected or appointed to leadership posts, their performance should be closely watched and evaluated. According to the report, academic qualifications should be an important aspect of cadre deployment (ANC 2012: 3). Despite the ruling party's judgments and suggestions, little has changed, and the consequences for local government and, more specifically, service delivery have been terrible. The protests against poor service delivery have persisted unabated, and the outcomes of the 2016 local government elections may have served as a wake-up call for the ruling party.

According to Reddy (2016), the South African local governance system can be described as 'world-class' internationally if judged by the legislative and policy framework; however, to complement that framework, the necessary human and financial resources must be committed to municipal structures and ensuring that the system works. Reddy further emphasises that individuals in charge of municipal functionary political deployment must consider the enthusiasm, commitment, competence, qualifications, and ethical leadership of those in line to be appointed or elected. ANC 'deployees' will play a key role in devising and executing service delivery and development; therefore, having 'struggle credentials' is not enough. The essence of developing local government, as well as a constitutional need, is delivery. In the end, the concept of 'cadre deployment' and political patronage should be abandoned since it undermines the fundamental principles of good local governance.

7. Conclusion

In light of the above, this paper argues that the idea of South Africa's building of a capable state through developmental local government is indeed a short drive

from the fog into the light– it is possible. It is hoped that the results of this paper will encourage good local governance and participatory democratic governance and bring to light the vision of a growing and competent state and other sectors of South African government to resolve the service delivery challenges they face. Its recommendations could help improve the delivery of service to the communities. However, a common claim by the governing ANC in South Africa appears to be false: its commitment to participatory democracy, involving citizens in decisions on issues affecting their lives. It is a principle that has been greatly compromised by a system that has been institutionalised alongside representative democratic government; primarily at the local government level. Participatory democracy in the post-apartheid local government sphere is widely perceived to have collapsed. Two areas of concern are the institutionalised structures and the development of informal networks, such as protests. Despite these protests, citizens still lack any influence in governance processes.

8. Recommendations

The findings of various consulted documents offered several suggestions for tackling service delivery challenges facing South African municipalities. Community participation is typically achieved by ward commissions, ward councillors, and public meetings. If the municipalities were to commit to participatory, democratic good governance, local needs would inform municipal planning and programmes. Groups feel isolated and detached from decision-making processes and are often stripped of authority. Participatory engagement by citizens is believed to increase the perceived legitimacy of a municipality. Therefore, it is recommended that municipalities set up/strengthen and train ward committees to connect them and the communities they represent to ensure that communities are actively engaged in service delivery projects. It is common knowledge that South African municipalities are characterised by conflicts between politicians and senior office bearers. There is considerable confusion about the responsibilities and roles of the mayor's office and the City Manager's office. A further challenge is that municipal officials cannot divorce party politics from the municipal government. Some officials become involved in administrative affairs, irrespective of the city manager being the municipality's legal accounting officer. Therefore, it is recommended that these two essential municipal components be harmonised.

There are also common perceptions that most municipalities are corrupt, especially when awarding tenders. Many municipalities and agencies ignore processes for granting tenders, in particular grant-related contracts for public services. Municipal tenders are assumed to be awarded to family members, associates, or those related to local officials or senior politicians. On an international scale, these views negatively impact the image and reputation of South African municipalities. Business investment is thus potentially harmed. The clarion call is for a local government free of corruption at every level.

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