

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN LEPELLE-NKUMPHI MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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—Abstract—

The local sphere of government remains an important role player in ensuring effective delivery of services and basic infrastructures. The developmental role accorded to local government requires adequate administrative capacity and the implementation of sound strategic tools. The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is one of the tools that assist local authorities in executing their developmental mandate. In practice, local authorities have been struggling with ineffective implementation of IDP which resulted in service delivery upheavals. The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges faced by the Lepelle-Nkumphi municipality in the implementation of IDP and service delivery. This study adopted a qualitative semi-structured interview to gather data from the participants who were selected through purposive sampling method. The participants include 15 municipal officials, IDP steering committee, ward councillors and committees. Data was analysed using qualitative thematic content analysis. It was found that the implementation of IDP is critical for the enhancement of service delivery and basic infrastructure. In the course of

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implementation, the municipality was faced by various administrative and management challenges. This study unravelled key challenges, including shortage of resources, incomplete projects, inadequate community participation, political meddling and limited capacity. As a result, the municipality has not fully achieved its implementation plan and service provision. In light of the aforementioned challenges, the municipality should emphasise the advancement of the participation of the community in the planning and implementation process. It is equally important for the municipality to seek ways of enhancing institutional organisational capacity for efficient utilization of its resources to improve implementation and service delivery.

Key Words: Integrated Development Planning, Service Delivery, Municipality, Basic Infrastructure.

JEL Classification: H7

1. INTRODUCTION

The local sphere of government remains an important role player in ensuring effective delivery of services and basic infrastructure. The developmental role assigned to local government requires adequate institutional capacity and the implementation of sound strategic tools. Local municipalities have the mandate to provide their communities with services which are a priority, well-informed by a consultative process, and sustainable (Dlamini & Reddy, 2018). One of the strategic tools put in place to assist local authorities in accelerating service delivery is the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The main purpose of IDP is to improve and accelerate the delivery of municipal basic services (Maake, 2016; Mathebula, 2018).

South African local municipalities have been implementing IDP to enhance basic service delivery in their area of jurisdiction. However, the challenge of service delivery remains an unresolved and alarming issue in almost all South African municipalities (Dikotla, Mahlatji & Makgahlela, 2014). Poor provision of basic household services including water, electricity, and sanitation and refuse removal is what has characterised many municipalities in South Africa (Beyers, 2015). In different parts of the country, residents have shown their dissatisfaction and frustration in the form of sporadic violent service delivery protests which pose social unrest and political challenges. This suggests that municipalities should promote their developmental role with a view of overcoming centralised and fragmented planning practices of the apartheid era.

Integrated development planning is one of the tools that promotes an integrated and participatory approach in which all sectors and affected individuals must be legally consulted (Cash & Swatuk, 2010). Municipalities are unabatedly given a role to play in service delivery enhancement in their areas of jurisdiction. All municipalities in the country have a policy mandate to ensure better coordination in order to maximize their administrative functions, budgeting and planning (Tsatsire, Taylor & Raga, 2010). Municipalities continue to face service delivery challenges despite the effort exerted by the provincial and national government spheres to build the local planning capacity through the introduction of the integrated development planning process (Mashamba, 2008; CoGTA, 2009; Akinboade, Mokwena & Kinfack, 2013; Makalela, 2016).

Local municipalities are struggling with implementation of IDP and service delivery. The planning and implementation of IDPs did not result in sustainable services, particularly within rural areas (Maake, 2016). Mathebula (2018) also argues that IDPs were not properly, efficiently and effectively implemented to carry out and deliver services as intended.

Given the above context, the aim of this study was to examine the challenges faced by the Lepelle-Nkumphi municipality in the implementation of IDP and service delivery. The specific objectives were to determine challenges in implementation of IDP and to suggest the necessary strategic interventions to improve municipal service delivery.

This paper comprises four sections. The first section reviews the relevant literature on the subject area. Secondly, this paper presents the research methodology adopted for conducting this study. Thirdly, it provides the findings from the qualitative interview. In section four, the main conclusion and recommendations will be presented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrated development planning is the strategic and participatory process of formulating a comprehensive plan. It is a process through which municipalities develop their Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (Meiklejohn & Coetzee, 2003). The IDP is the outcome of the planning process which guides all developmental activities in a municipality. The IDP is the principal strategic planning instrument that guides and informs all planning, budgeting, management and decision-making in a municipality (Mathye, 2002).

According to Dlamini and Reddy (2018), the implementation process of IDP includes a number of steps. In the first step of the IDP implementation process, municipalities are expected to carry out a situational analysis of the current context in their area of jurisdiction. The second step of the implementation process emphasises the formulation of strategies which involve development of a common vision and objectives in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term among multiple stakeholders. The third step involves development of operational strategy, and emphasis on the designing of project proposals by setting up objectives, targets and indicators. The fourth step includes the screening, adjusting, consolidating and approving of project proposals, thereby ensuring an integrated process between preparation, implementation and delivery. The fifth step focuses on the decision and endorsement of the IDP projects. The last step of the implementation of the IDP process involves the assessment of whether the IDP is compliant with the requirements of the legal framework (Dlamini & Reddy, 2018). Municipal officials and IDP representative forum members need to properly conceptualise and understand the implementation process of IDP in order to improve and speed up service delivery at the local level.

Some scholars argue that the effectiveness of a municipality to successfully plan and implement IDPs is largely dependent on the ability of the municipality to allocate budget to a variety of development projects and programmes within the IDP (Valeta & Walton, 2008). To inculcate budget with planning, municipalities need to use the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), (Valeta & Walton, 2008).

The SDBIP is an annually adopted document that contains projections of the revenue to be collected by the municipality, and operational and capital expenditure to be incurred by the municipality. The municipality, to successfully plan and implement the IDP to deliver on its mandates, is largely dependent on the ability to plan and allocate public resources in a developmental and sustainable manner (Phago, 2009).

Tsatsire et al. (2010) argue that establishing and maintaining sound intergovernmental relations becomes vital in ensuring the success of local government implementation of the IDPs. It is anecdotally evident that at the core of IDP implementation, municipalities must first position themselves to achieve full integration and coordination of sector specific plans in the IDPs (Beyers, 2015). However, Mojapelo (2007) maintains that sector plans are normally developed as standalone plans and independent from one another, which results in

fragmented programmes and projects that are not entirely contributing to the vision of the municipality. Given the capacity challenges confronting local authorities, the national and provincial governments are taking a decisive role to address capacity and skills for the local implementation process.

The IDP contributes positively in enhancing service delivery by the municipalities, as it identifies key developmental objectives which are translated into programmes and projects that reduce the underlying causes and symptoms of service delivery backlogs and delays (Sinxadi & Campbell, 2015). The IDP as a policy framework reduces poverty through multi-sectoral programmes that include a variety of developmental initiatives including provision of services such as water, sanitation, electricity and housing (Phago, 2009). However, critiques have been raised regarding the failure and inability of the IDP to enhance service delivery (Tsheola & Mokgokong, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to examine the challenges in the implementation of IDP and service delivery in Lepelle-Nkumphi municipality. This municipality is one of the local municipalities within the Capricorn District Municipality in Limpopo province and is located in the southern part of the Capricorn District. The municipality is predominantly rural with a population of approximately 230 350 people. It comprises of 30 wards which consist of a total of 94 settlements. About 95% of the land falls under the jurisdiction of traditional authorities (Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, 2016).

This study adopted an interpretivism paradigm. An interpretivism paradigm is based on a life-world ontology that argues all observation is both theory and value-laden and investigation of the social world is not, and cannot be, the pursuit of a detached objective truth (Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2010). It is characterized by a need to understand the world as it is from a subjective point of view and seeks an explanation within the frame of reference of the participant rather than the objective observer of the action (Ponelis, 2015).

The research design selected for this study is a qualitative case study. The qualitative design produces holistic understandings of rich, contextual, and generally unstructured, non-numeric data (Mason, 2002). A qualitative study provides an opportunity for participants to interact during the research process (Creswell, 2009). According to Hanekom (2006), the qualitative research method enables researchers to investigate social phenomena. The qualitative research design was specifically employed in this study to investigate the perception of

participants on the challenges in the implementation of IDP and service delivery in the local municipality.

The study area, Lepelle-Nkumphi municipality, is situated in Limpopo province. The municipality was selected because the researchers are familiar with the area and due to the fact that it is one of the underperforming municipalities in the province. A total of 15 key informants were selected purposefully from municipal officials, IDP steering committee, ward councillors and ward committee members. The main criteria which was used for selecting the key informants was whether a participant was involved in IDP and service delivery. Qualitative data was collected using face-to-face semi-structured interview method. The data analysis used in this study was a qualitative thematic analysis method which involves description, classification of the data into themes, and sub-themes and interpretation.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The qualitative data gathered in this study were analysed through thematic analysis, that is, in terms of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews. The following key themes and sub-themes were identified in this study:

- Challenges in the Implementation of IDP: poor community participation, inadequate financial resources, abandoning of projects, political meddling
- Perception on Service Provision
- Suggestions by Participants: strengthen community participation, efficient use of financial resources (especially MIG grant), better coordination between local government and sectoral departments, improve reporting and feedback platforms.

4.1. Challenges Faced by the Municipality in Implementation of the IDP

The findings from respondents confirm that, irrespective of the rural-urban context, the implementation of IDP is a strategic tool for eradicating service delivery backlogs through effective planning and efficient utilisation of available resources. Below are the selected responses from the municipal officials.

- “IDP is highly important for the municipality as it serves as a tool for eradicating service delivery backlogs because it directs an order in terms of the municipal planning. IDP addresses the intended needs of the communities and that is through the community-based planning whereby we go visit every ward in the

municipality asking the community members to identify and prioritize the development needs.” (The IDP Officer).

- “IDP assists in terms of prioritization of services. The communities inform us about their service delivery issues in our area of jurisdiction... As the municipal officials heading the planning directorate, we strive to ensure effective planning and implementation of the IDP and by so doing we gather the community members and ask them about their different needs in their area of jurisdiction and then at a later stage ask them again to prioritize the intended and identified needs.” (Public Participation Officer).
- “IDP is a very important tool for the municipality to use in terms of planning ... It further serves as an integrative document that includes all the development plans of the municipality... It anticipates covering both public and private sector development initiatives.” (LED Manager).
- “IDP serves as a tool for prioritization of community needs against the available resources or the budget. The IDP serves as a mechanism within which the performance of the municipality can be measured... IDP is also a project management tool because it makes the identification of the diverse projects possible in accordance with the time frame for implementation.” (The IDP Manager).

The findings of this study are in line with the literature and support the view that the implementation of IDP is very critical to eradicate service delivery backlogs (Valeta & Waton, 2008). The implementation of IDP would assist communities in rural areas who are suffering from lack of services. The main challenges in the implementation of IDP and service delivery are presented as follows:

As the findings suggest that inadequate public participation was one of the challenges encountered by the municipality in the implementation of IDP, the remarks below are an indication of the overall response:

- “Inadequate public participation is a serious concern that inhibits the planning and implementation of the IDP in the municipality.” (IDP Officer).
- “Ward consultation meetings for identification and prioritization of community needs are tending to violence and civil unrest.” (IDP Officer).

The above finding is supported by the literature which suggests that inadequate public participation in the planning and implementation of the municipal IDP is found to be a problem affecting almost all South African municipalities (Phago, 2009).

The study found that the municipality encountered financial difficulties during the implementation of IDP. The remark below is an indication of the overall response:

“The municipality experiences lack of funds to address the extreme needs of communities and that is mostly attributed to the non-payment of certain municipal services by the communities (revenue collection) such as refuse removal, property rates and water.... the main reason for non-payments of such services is simply because the municipality is predominantly rural as opposed to urban municipalities whereby people are able and willing to pay for services.” (The IDP manager).

This study shows that municipalities experienced some form of managerial problem in terms of completing a project. The remark below is an indication of the overall response:

“The reason for abandoning various projects in the municipality is mainly because of fraud and insufficient funds to finish up the projects... And that makes the municipality have lots of white elephant projects or projects that are futile in communities.” (The IDP Officer).

This study indicates that political meddling is one of the problems that the municipality struggled with during the implementation of IDP. A respondent remarked the following:

“If the municipality is to implement a particular project in one of the wards of the municipality, it sometimes becomes a problem when councillors intervene and command the municipality to implement the project in their respective wards”. (The IDP Officer).

As a result, the delivery of services is delayed because services are delivered where they are not supposed to be delivered. There is a need for separation of functionalities between politicians and administrative officials (Beyers, 2016). It can therefore be concluded that in dealing with the above-mentioned problems for planning and implementation, municipalities need to revisit and genuinely produce credible IDPs that take account of the real issues of the people with a clear separation from different office bearers of the municipality.

4.2. Views of Participants on Service Provision

The finding confirms that the implementation of IDP has contributed to eradicating service delivery backlogs in rural areas of the municipality. Below are the selected responses from various municipal officials:

- Relatively the municipality has delivered services well, although not all programmes and projects have been implemented... However, the projects implemented through the IDP have brought relief in some ways, like roads, water, electricity and other infrastructure development programmes.” (The LED manager).
- “There are lots of water pipes in communities without running water. There is lot of broken municipal water pipes and the budget for maintenance is available, but pipes are not being fixed.” (The public participation officer).
- “In the municipality we are having improved delivery of services to rural communities. They have improved and there are up-to-standard sanitation facilities and electricity... that is because some of the people during the community meetings appraise the municipality for the delivery of services.” (The IDP manger).
- “The municipality has relatively effectively delivered an ample amount of services because many rural communities in the municipal wards have water, electricity and sanitation among other services.” (The IDP officer).
- “The municipality has delivered service to the rural communities... However, the service delivered is based on the resources allocated.” (The LED manager)

The literature provides mixed results regarding the effectiveness of IDP on promoting service delivery. Some authors argue that IDP has contributed to enhance service delivery at the local level (Sinxadi, & Campbell, 2015). On the other hand, critiques have been raised regarding the failure and inability of the IDP to enhance service delivery (Tsheola & Mokgokong, 2012). In the researchers’ view, although the IDP has contributed towards reducing service delivery backlogs in the municipality, the intention of accelerating service delivery has not been exclusively attained due to challenges related to implementation.

The findings further revealed that the beneficiaries of service delivery are somehow not fully satisfied with the current level of services in their area, meaning that much should be done to improve the access to and quality of

services provided to rural communities. The remarks below are an indication of overall responses:

- “Currently there is a problem of water shortage in the ward; however, we tried to remedy the situation by having a Two Days per Week Programme, whereby we open up the water from the reservoir in trying to address water crises in the ward.” (The ward councillor).
- “Many households in the ward have access to electricity but the problem is the fact that the villages continue to grow. Moreover, those who cannot afford to buy electricity, more especially the destitute households and old people/pensioners, are encouraged to apply for free units.” (The ward executive committee member).
- “There is no refuse collected in the ward because of the rural nature of the municipality; however we are still urging those who are able and willing to pay municipal tariffs to do so... because currently people collect their refuse and dump it in the yard, some in the street and the bush.” (The ward executive committee member).
- “Some have improved services delivered to them and they are satisfied; however, it is an ideal for everyone in the community to receive improved services.” (The IDP manager).
- “To a certain extent, services have been delivered to the communities and they are satisfied, while in the other areas some developmental needs are still a work in progress.” (The IDP officer).

The literature suggests and confirms that there is a public dissatisfaction regarding services delivered by municipalities. This study confirmed that the municipality has experienced similar service delivery dissatisfactions by the beneficiary community due to inadequate and unreliable service provision.

4.3. Views of Participants to Improve IDP implementation

Participants of this study suggested improvements in the implementation of IDP and service delivery in specific areas as follows:

Respondents explicitly indicated that the major areas that need improvement in the implementation of the IDP are public participation and non-attendance of community consultation meetings. The suggestion below provides an indication of the overall responses:

- “Communities need to take charge and get full control of their own development.” (The IDP officer).

- “There is a need for a revamp in public participation processes... That is because public participation is one of the tools of local government which ensures that there is democratic governance and accountability. Therefore, it is important for the municipality to have a structured way of engaging their communities.” (The LED manager).

According to the respondents of this study, one of the areas that need improvement is public financial resource utilisation, specifically the efficient utilisation of the Municipal Infrastructural Grant (MIG). The suggestion below provides an indication of the overall responses:

“There is clearly a need for the municipality to have an efficient usage of the MIG grant to support various projects and programmes of the municipality... because with failure to utilize such funds the government will take back the money for that current financial year, unless the municipality can convince the government as to why they did not utilize the money for infrastructural projects in the municipality”. (IDP officer).

Respondents indicated that clear collaboration between local and provincial departments could explicitly assist the municipality to achieve its developmental mandates. Respondents of this study reflected the following sentiments:

- “There is a need for the collaboration between local, national and provincial department in terms of the IDP priorities Sometimes you find a situation whereby the provincial department constructs additional classrooms in a school where the very same school is in a perfectly good condition, as opposed to the nearest school which has dilapidated classrooms.... But because there is no collaboration, funds are spent in areas where they are not supposed to be”. (The IDP manager).
- “There is need to revamp the consultation processes particularly in terms of stakeholders, and that includes the public, private, civil society organisations, Non-Government Organisations and the communities.” (The LED Manager).
- “The municipality has a schedule for consultation processes in the consolidation of the IDP. However, if stakeholders are not pitching up, then it becomes a problem... For example, the Department of Agriculture wants to implement a particular project to be consolidated in the municipal IDP, so that process must be in consultation with the various stakeholders.” (The LED manger).

Respondents highlighted that the municipality needs to improve reporting and feedback mechanisms. The suggestion below provides an indication of the overall responses:

“There is a need for reporting on any issue affecting the communities in the IDP programmes... The municipality must also have or create platforms for feedback with all the communities in the municipality concerning the IDP projects and programmes.” (The LED manger).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aim of this study was to examine the challenges in the implementation of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and service delivery in the Lepelle-Nkumpi municipality. The findings from the literature review suggest that the implementation of the IDP is key to enhance municipal service delivery as it identifies key developmental objectives which are translated into programmes and projects that accelerate service delivery. Additionally, IDP promotes a multi-sectoral and integrated approach that includes a variety of developmental initiatives, primarily water, sanitation, electricity, refuse removal and housing, to alleviate poverty.

The results from qualitative interviews suggest that the IDP has assisted the municipality in addressing service delivery backlogs. The municipality has extended infrastructure including roads to benefit the community. The IDP related service and infrastructural projects have benefited the community by increasing access to basic services. The results from qualitative interviews further indicate that the municipality had encountered a number of challenges in the implementation of IDP, such as shortage of resources, incomplete projects, inadequate community participation and political meddling.

To address the aforementioned challenges, the national and provincial governments should give emphasis to capacity building and skills development to enhance the competency of local municipalities to plan and allocate budget to projects and programmes. It is further recommended that the relationship between the three spheres of governance needs to be strengthened to develop sound intergovernmental relations. Likewise, the municipality and sectoral departments should improve coordination and integration to improve implementation of programmes and projects related to service delivery. Moreover, the relationship between communities and local municipality needs to be strengthened through enhancing participation in the annual IDP review and budget allocation.

The main limitation of this study is its geographic scope and qualitative nature. Future research should focus on a large scale and mixed method to get better understanding of the subject matter. It is recommended that future researchers think about the content analysis using categorization and interpretation methods which involve both deductive and inductive approaches. Future research should also be done on abandoning of projects as one of the critical issues facing local municipalities in South Africa.

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