Service Delivery Disparities at Winnie Madikizela Mandela Local Municipality: Prospect and Challenges

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Abstract: Although the South African local government is doing its best to ensure enhanced services for its citizenry, disparity in the delivery process remains the real challenge in various municipalities. The unequal distribution of services within municipal wards is resulting in unhappiness because selected communities appear to enjoy services, while others do not. It is acknowledged that limited access to municipal services infringes on one's rights, for example, human dignity and right to life. Some of the municipal services are basic and are the mainstay of human survival, for example, water, housing, and waste removal. It is evident that disparities in the delivery of services could be as a result of various factors within the local municipality affairs, including administration and political influence. This study was conducted to establish the root cause of disparities in service delivery and to ensure equal provision of municipality community. An extensive literature review was conducted to comprehend the causes for disparities in the delivery of services. The literature and findings concur that the disparities are as a result of, for example, political interference in administration, corruption and fraud, elevated unemployment levels, and inadequate institutional capacity. The study recommends community participation and external supervision of local governance to encourage openness and fair administration of services rendered.

Keywords: Community Participation, Development, Municipal Services, Service Delivery Disparity, Winnie Madikizela Mandela Local Municipality

1. Introduction

The basic municipal services, such as in-pipe running water, electricity, and sanitation services are vital for human survival. Moreover, it meets the service delivery public policy mandate (Gazzeh & Abubakar, 2018: 71). Service delivery disparities remain a critical government challenge in the 21stcentury in South Africa. There has been an increase in the levels of community protests against poor to non-existent delivery of services (Mamokhere, 2019). Disparities the delivery of services creates levels of enhanced poverty in certain society's. Therefore, municipalities should manage the situation decisively and effectively. Services should be based on equal access to quality and quantity including decision-making and the services received. Reddy (2016) defines disparity in the delivery of services as the inability of government, particularly municipalities to render services to the citizenry equally. This results in a gap in the delivery of services to the communities. Adequate service delivery improves the quality of life (Gazzeh & Abubakar, 2018). According to Dick-Sagoe (2017: 223), governments in developing countries adopted a basic need approach to deliver services to the communities, and combat poverty. The poor delivery of these services is attributed to the decentralisation of powers on the local sphere of government (Dick-Sagoe, 2017). Mathebula and Sebola (2019: 113) assert that South African municipalities should become the principal drivers in the alleviation of poverty and promote economic and infrastructural development. Service delivery backlogs remain a disproportionate challenge in South Africa because several municipalities encounter high levels of poverty among its communities including service delivery disparities in, for example, Winnie Madikizela Mandela Local Municipality (WMMLM). Nwafor (2016) states that WMMLM is facing disparities in the delivery of services due to limited economic growth and social development.

Govender and Nwafor (2019) concur that WMMLM encounters poor levels of service delivery because of intraparty disagreements within the municipality and criminal acts reported in municipal practices. The Honourable Mayor of WMMLM in the 2020/2021Integrated Development Plan (IDP) review plan acknowledged that this municipality experiences greater levels of poverty and unequal distribution of services; however, the municipalities IDP continues to provide social and economic radical changes to the society. Disparities in the delivery of services present are a massive challenge for the South African government in the 21st century. The levels of community protests are increasing as well as becoming violent (Mamokhere, 2019). The WMMLM experiences huge service delivery disparities, which harms its citizens. The living conditions are unsuitable with either limited or no access to municipal services at all. Each municipality in South Africa is mandated to provide equal services to its citizens (Jili, 2012). The WMMLM population is 319 948, translating to 61 383 households. Of the total households, 91, 9% (44 479) have access to electricity. The severity of disparities is evident in access to water because 0.6% (368) of the households has access to in-pipe water inside their yards or homes; 0.6% (368) have access to flushing toilets; 1.4%

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(859) have access to refuse removal services, while21 173 households have formal dwellings in this municipality. The entire population resides on traditional and informal dwellings (IDP 2017/ 2022). Given the above statistics it is evident that WMMLM is facing a huge service delivery backlog which translates into disparity of services. However; this municipality is doing very well in the provision of the electricity.

2. Literature Review

An extensive literature review was conducted to comprehend the causes for the disparity of municipal services in South Africa.

Reasons for disparities in the delivery of services in municipalities

Factors such as political interference in the administrative duties, corruption, lack of community participation in the municipal decision-making processes, and high levels of unemployment contribute towards the increased levels of disparity in the delivery of services (Nwafor, 2016; Shabangu & Madzivhandila, 2017; Mamokhere, 2019). These factors are explained below:

Political-administrative interface

Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution, (1996) stipulates the establishment of municipalities throughout the Republic. The political leadership is recognised as the main governors of these municipalities; and vested with both legislative and executive functions. According to Reddy (2016), the municipal council is authorised to implement policies (by laws) to govern the area of jurisdiction. This is aimed to improve the lives of the constituents while identifying municipal leadership structures or positions. The political-administrative theory outlines the significance of the separation of powers between the political and the administrative staff to provide impetus in the provision of services. The municipal council is authorised to decide on the appointment of municipal leaders for structures or positions. The political-administrative boundary should be identified in a municipality because its underestimation (conflicts and overlaps) influences poor service provision (Reddy, 2016: 01). Reddy (2016) poses cadre deployment as a major concern within the municipality because it results in political party in fighting, which in turn culminates in service delivery disparities. Cadre deployment is an ineffective instrument in the provision of services because it is associated with unskilled and unqualified staff (Tshishonga, 2014; Kok, 2017). Cadre deployment is the process where the leading municipal political party appoints staff (belonging to the same party) as loyalists, to delivery services to the constituents. Cadre deployment results in bias towards the provision of services. Hence, the community is not treated equally due to political dynamics and differences.

Corruption and fraud

Municipalities are considered the primary looters of state resources meant for the constituents' transition (Managa, 2012: 04). According to Managa (2012), theft of state resources violates the constituents rights, and the communities are denied their needs. This assertion is supported by Masters and Graycar (2016) who postulated that corruption affects the citizen's daily living conditions. Corruption in local government results in poor planning for local resources, for example, water, housing, and roads (Masters and Graycar, 2016: 43). Corruption is also observed as the main reason governments fail to perform mandated functions for the constituents (Aranha, 2017). A high number of cases of corruption in a municipality may result in enormous disparity in the delivery of services. Levels of corruption in a municipality should be considered when disparity in the delivery of services is highlighted.

Lack of community participation

Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (Act of 2000) stipulates the significance of community participation in local government affairs. This section also mandates municipalities to have a culture of community participation in the formulation of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). This includes planning, implementation, and successful Performance Management System (PMS). Maphazi, Raga, Taylor and Mayekiso (2013) posit that participation in government is observed as the foundation of (2014) democracy. Madumo defines community participation as the process whereby the municipality provides citizens with the power to stand for their own needs and development. Matyana and Mthethwa (2022) define community participation as the fundamental principle of democracy to enhance service delivery through the citizen's voice. Various democratic mechanisms were established to facilitate community participation in local government affairs across South Africa since 1994. Municipalities must enhance community participation in the formulation of the IDP because its deficiencies result in poor service delivery and bias in decision-making (Skenjana & Kimemia, 2011; Kugonza & Mukobi, 2015; Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019).

Elevated unemployment levels

Unemployment is increasing in developing countries. Moreover, limited effort is being made to inhibit the challenge (Nnatu & Ochuko, 2017). Unemployment is a condition whereby one seeks a job opportunity. However, he/she is unable to acquire a job or works without payment (Gbosi, 2006). Unemployment implicates the lives of many citizens in numerous countries. According to Vermeulen and Stotijn (2019: 40), unemployment causes tremendous harm to countries' social and economic development. The Statistic SA report for the third quarter of 2021 discloses the unemployment rate in South Africa at a worrying 34, 9%. The high unemployment rate impacts negatively on the delivery of services which in turn affects the economic welfare and production of the country. All municipal services must be provided through the equitable share grant from the national or provincial governments to the municipalities (Mamokhere, 2019). Unemployment reduces the capacity to raise taxation and revenue to support municipal services (Parr, 2022).

Inadequate institutional capacity

A lack of skilled and adequate staff in most municipalities has left numerous communities without (or with less) service provision (Managa, 2012: 03). Furthermore, skills scarcity in local government is a primary reason government fails to manage the challenges associated with South African constituents. The government should manage the situation

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effectively and efficiently as mandated by the Section 195 Sub-Section B of the South African Constitution, (1996). The lack of adequate institutional capacity in local government has resulted in many projects failure because the staff fail to strategise and plan due to the lack of skills (Zwikael, 2017). Other factors, such as political interference, corruption, uncommitted staff, and improper supervision, are among several reasons why municipal projects fail. Consequently, an increase in poor service delivery (Damoah & Kumi, 2018: 06). The failure of a municipality to manage and strategise the implementation of projects may have devastating results on the lives of citizens including future development (Damoah & Kumi, 2018). Municipalities should, therefore, address institutional capacity.

Poor asset management and failure to collect revenue

Some of the South African municipalities can raise revenue for their operations without primarily depending on share grants from the national and provincial governments. According to Bunk, Forquilha, Klawonn, Krull, Sennewald, Steinhilber, von Boeselager and von Schiller (2017), the local collected revenue could influence the lives of local citizens, although it is far less than the national revenue. The gathered revenues could cover the municipality's operational and capital costs. Municipalities should collect the revenues to upkeep the delivery of services to the constituents of their jurisdiction. These municipal revenues could be raised through asset management, metre readings, credit and data collection, user charges, and tariff management. Various reasons could result in the disruption of the maximum ability of a municipality to collect owed revenue, such as ineffective revenue collection methods by a political partycontrolled municipality (specifically when aligned to the national leading political party), and the weakness of civil society or community to knowledge poor financial management by the municipality (Bunk et al., 2017: 02). Jacobs (2019) further asserts that the municipalities cannot raise maximum revenue due to the citizens inability to pay for municipal services; a lack of required skills among municipal revenue collectors; lack of accountability in revenue collection including credit and debt collection; poor customer care service; and failure of a municipality to bill users for certain services.

Strategies to overcome municipal service delivery disparities

Service delivery should be based on equal access (quality and quantity) for decision-making and services received. Adequate service delivery improves the quality of life for citizens (Gazzeh & Abubakar, 2018). Literature confirms strategies that could be adopted by municipalities to combat service disparities in their juristic areas. These strategies are specified below:

Local Economic Development

After 1994, the South African Government adopted Local Economic Development (LED) as a strategy to combat disparities among South African communities. The disparities included poverty, low standards of living for the constituents, and unemployment (Nxumalo & Naidoo, 2018). LED can be regarded as crucial tool to decentralise municipal planning processes to encourage development among municipalities (Lawrence & Rogerson, 2019). The

main aim of LED is to ensure that the injustices of the past are inhibited, specifically, human development. According to Rodrigueze-Pose and Tijmstra (2009), LED is to decentralise central or national government policies and targets of disputing the injustices of the past in development through local government operations and affairs. A national framework for the LED is adapted to support operations for local areas. These include competitive, innovative, inclusive, and sustainable local economies, to maximise local opportunities for development and direct the local community's social and economic needs (Walaza, 2017: 6). LED is aimed to develop local areas, but aspects such as poor awareness and understanding of LED, human and capital constraints, and insubstantial environments for private business operations, impede its success (Lawrence & Rogerson, 2019).

Avoidance of political interference

According to Reddy (2016: 01), political-administrative boundaries should be identified in a municipality. Its underestimations (conflicts and overlaps) influence poor service provision. Concerns, such as cadre deployment by the municipal leading political party, result in service delivery concerns. These concerns result in service delivery disparities. Cadre deployment is regarded an ineffective instrument to enhance service delivery because it is associated with unskilled and unqualified staff (Tshishonga, 2014; Kok, 2017). Cadre deployment is the process whereby the leading municipal political party appoints individuals belonging to their party as loyalists for constituent service delivery. Political interference is primarily associated with political conflict. It affects and delays service delivery adversely to the citizens. Avoiding political interference in the administrative duties of the municipality accelerates positive outcomes in service provision.

Combating corruption

Corrupt local government actions promote inadequate service provision to the communities in its jurisdiction. These services include roads, recreation facilities, houses, and water, among other things. Local government corruption harms the constituents because the municipality fails to deliver the expected services to the citizenry due to poor governance (Masters & Graycar, 2016). Hindess (2013: 06) posits that the behaviour of local government officials and political office bearers are corrupt when they are engaged in the following activities:

- When their acts disadvantage the public interest.
- When they observe public opinions as corrupt.
- When they violate the provided authority, aiming to maximise a personal profit.
- When they fail to obey the provided working norms and laws.

For municipalities to maximise service delivery to the constituents in their jurisdiction, they should eradicate corruption. Corruption causes wasteful expenditure, obstructs effective and efficient delivery of services (Naidoo, 2017). Corruption also wastes taxpayers' money. Millions of Randis lost annually at the local sphere of government because of corrupt public officials (Munzhedzi, 2016; Gasela, 2022).

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Promote citizens participation

Citizen participation involves a process of attracting and engaging citizens of a certain area of jurisdiction to participate in government, political, and administrative actions (Thomas, 1995, cited in He and Ma, 2020). This process could be conducted at all spheres of government where necessary to engage citizens. According to He and Ma (2020), citizen participation is vital in governmental affairs because it strengthens the citizens' trust while it enhances the legitimacy of government. Local municipalities must promote citizen participation in formulating the IDP. Scholars assert that public involvement in governmental affairs has a favourable effect on service delivery (Masango, 2002; Maphazi *et al.*, 2013; Schafer, 2019; He & Ma, 2020).

Developing local government

Section B of the White Paper on Local Government discloses the significance of developing local government (DLG)among local municipalities. DLG focuses on three approaches, namely: participation of all sectors in local government affairs, equity provision, and integrated planning management (Cuthill, and 2001). Local municipalities should collaborate with other sectors in local government, such as non-profit organisations (NGOs) and the private sector to change the standard of living among local citizens, as well as meet their economic and social needs (Madumo & Koma, 2019). According to Werhane, Newton and Wolfe (2020), NGOs and public-private institutions should be utilised as strategic devices to end poverty, collaborate with local markets (municipalities) to develop local areas and create employment.

3. Methodology

In understanding the primary causes of disparity in the delivery of services at WMMLM, the qualitative research method was adopted to gather data from the community members. The data was gathered through face-to-face interviews. The study targeted 30 community members or participants who were purposively selected from three wards which differs in terms of municipal services they receive. The participation was hundred per cent. The selected participants were key informants for the communities.

4. Results

Provision of basic services, such as in-pipe water, and sanitation is important for survival. These services must be provided equivalently to all citizens, taking quality and quantity into consideration. Failure to do so may result in disparity of services within the municipality. When participants were asked what they think contributes towards these disparity's in WMMLM, the following was highlighted:

Corruption

Corruption is one of the major reasons for efficient service delivery in South Africa. The scrouge impedes the delivery of services to the citizens, especially at the local sphere of government. In this study, 90% (27) of participants demonstrated their frustration about levels of corruption at WMMLM. They reported that most of the municipal decisions are not disclosed to them. They accuse the municipality of looting funds meant to change their lives. Consequently, they continue to live in unpleasant conditions due to the lack of municipal services. This frustration highlighted by the citizens corresponds with Managa (2012); Graycar (2016) and Aranha (2017) that corruption is the principal reason most South African municipalities fail to adequately serve their constituents.

Arrogance among officials

Sixty per cent (18) of community citizens also revealed that municipal officials fail to consider their needs in most instances. They observe the officials as selfish who manipulate community citizen's minds. This arrogance among the municipal officials is harmful. There is a lack of transparency and accountability at the municipal sphere which enables municipal officials to conduct corrupt practices.

Lack of proper communication

Citizens have identified a lack of communication with the municipality or municipal officials as a major challenge which they believe it causes disparities in the delivery of services at WMMLM. Citizens accused the municipality of employing diverse systems of communication in the wards. Consequently, services are delivered unequally among the communities. According to the citizens, the municipality has disregarded standard communication at all wards of jurisdiction, including processes and stages of required proper consultation. This discourages community participation in local government affairs, particularly, formulation and management of the IDP. The municipality needs to ensure open communication with its constituents (Skenjana & Kimemia, 2011; Kugonza & Mukobi, 2015; Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019).

Municipal council incompetence

Seventy per cent (21) of the citizens also identified incompetence among councillors within the municipal council. A municipal council comprises of councillors from all wards of the municipality, presided over by the appointed mayor from among the councillors. According to section 151 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (1996) its function is to take care of the legislative and executive powers of the municipality. It plays a crucial role in adopting the municipality's IDP and oversight the actions of the administration. Although the council plays a crucial role in the municipality, citizens are discontented by the councillor's incompetence at WMMLM. The citizens complain about the councillors lowly levels of education. They believe that certain councillors are easily taken advantage of by other councillors especially matters related to service delivery discussions and decision-making. This results in unequal distribution of services among the communities. They wish to appoint educated councillors, but political interference impedes them from doing so. This complaint by the citizens corresponds with the assertions held by Managa (2012), Zwikael (2017) and Singh (2016: 07) that unskilled municipal workers, including the council, result in poor decision-making. Legislation which demands ward councillors to have a certain tertiary qualification/s in local government is lacking. They have to win over the political spectrum to be empowered in the municipality. In this political spectrum, the citizens or the youth with

Volume 11 Issue 6, June 2022 www.ijsr.net Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY relevant local governance qualifications are usually sidelined although they possess the required skills. This system of appointing councillors without relevant qualifications is harmful, and results in disparity in the delivery of services because these councillors are unable to take competent decisions.

Cadre deployment and nepotism

Another cause identified by the citizens is the concern of cadre deployment and nepotism at the municipal sphere. According to the findings, 90% (27) of the citizens held that selected municipal officials award tenders to political comrades and friends. Often these corrupt officials receive a kickback for awarding the tender. Cadre deployment is a process wherein the ruling party of the municipality appoints employees associated and members of the party, while nepotism concerns the employment of friends and family members. Tshishonga (2017); Reddy (2016: 01) and Kok (2017) assert that cadre employment results in the appointment of unskilled and unqualified workers to provide an efficient service. These workers are appointed to serve certain individuals corrupt principles within the municipality and the ruling party.

Levels of unemployment

The last cause identified by 40% (12) of the citizens is the high unemployment rate in WMMLM which is currently above 50% of the population (IDP 2017-2022). This was also identified by the WMMLM Honourable Mayor in the 2017-2022 IDP. The citizens acknowledged that most fail the municipality financially, for example, settle municipal rates or initialise economic activities. Another contributing factor is that the municipality does not have industrial activities to support the unemployed youth. Only employment in farming and forestry is available in this municipality, which is considered inadequate compared to the remainder of the populace. Vermeulen and Stotijin (2019: 40) assert that unemployment is extremely harmful towards a countries' social and economic development. This high unemployment rate in WMMLM may put pressure on the municipality because the demand for municipal services is high while the gathered funds for serves rendered is limited.

5. Recommendations

According to the findings, the aforementioned concerns lead to disparity in the delivery of services at WMMLM. The citizens displayed great levels of anger when identifying these causes. They hold that the municipality is the primary cause of these challenges. Regardless of the identified reasons, each affects community service delivery, resulting in disparity in the municipality or wards. The municipality needs to respond to these reasons effectively. Therefore, to overcome the disparities in the delivery of services in South African municipalities, the study recommends:

• Enhance community participation in local government affairs

Community participation is regarded a mainstay of democracy, that is, individuals are provided with an opportunity to influence public decisions. If levels of community participation are high in local governance affairs, then service delivery is likely to improve. The lack of community participation in local government affairs gives rise to many other managerial issues identified by the study such as corruption and fraud. Hence, the citizenry is unaware of what is happening in their governance of municipalities. The lack of community participation in local government affairs enables municipal officials to do as they want and manipulate the systems for their own personal gain which in turn affects the efficient output of services. An independent institution body or office for community participation must be established within local government affairs which will oversee the empowerment and inclusion of its citizenry in the local governance matters. These bodies or offices should ensure that all the municipal wards needs are managed equally and each municipal councillor is bound to update his/her ward of matters related to local government affairs. The enhancement of the community participation in the local government affairs could result in enhanced services for most municipalities in South Africa as well as manage disparities they face. Hence, openness and accountability are key points of departure.

• External centralisation of service systems and oversight

The study recommends the review of employment; supply chain; and procurement policies. These systems must be managed by external or central institutions, independent of the manipulation of municipalities or municipal politics. For example, South African national departments employ one data-based system termed Logis to facilitate its supply chain and procurement businesses (tenders). This system is managed by the National Treasury as a central driver of the system. Persons who intend to do business with national departments (tenders) must register with the National Treasury and on the Logis system. This system limits corruption in the tendering process, for example, award of tenders to unqualified companies or businesses, and to the same persons or businesses. The study proposes such systems be introduced at the local sphere of government to reduce the absolute power the municipalities have over their governance systems. These central institutions could ensure that municipal governance powers are decentralised and the levels of accountability and transparency improve service delivery and associated disparities. The study also recommends maintenance of strong oversight over the South African municipalities by mandated institutions such as Auditor General (AG) to ensure that municipal services are provided efficiently and effectively.

6. Conclusion

South Africa acquired political freedom in 1994. The citizens placed their hope on the local municipalities to change their living conditions. Although certain South African municipalities are said to be rural based and struggling to raise their own revenue, they are perceived as principal drivers of social and economic change for the local communities. They must continue to ensure that services are provided to the communities effectively and efficiently. They must ensure that the available financial resources are used wisely to ensure the development of the country and its local citizenry. In conclusion, this study observed disparities in the delivery of services in the South Africa context,

Volume 11 Issue 6, June 2022 <u>www.ijsr.net</u> Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY specifically at WMMLM. The literature revealed that certain municipalities are performing poorly due to concerns associated with corruption, failure to engage citizens on governmental affairs, and political interference in municipal administration. Strategies of how to overcome disparities in the South African municipalities is provided followed by recommendations to ensure a new era of service provision for the South African municipalities. All municipalities must work towards overcoming disparities in the provision of services. In South Africa, the citizens' rights are constantly violated due to the lack of vital municipal services.

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