




The district development model as a catalyst for improved integrated development planning



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Background: In the search for a panacea to local government dysfunction, the structure of local government is an important area of focus. Largely, district and local municipalities which were carved out of the need for post-apartheid transformational spatial development, struggle to achieve the delivery of planning goals. In 2019, the South African government introduced the District Development Model (DDM), an innovative platform that will tackle poor coordination of service delivery in the local sphere. The model has been piloted in the O.R. Tambo District in the Eastern Cape province.

Aim: This research critically explores the potential of the DDM to improve Integrated Development Planning (IDP) in O.R. Tambo District Municipality.

Methods: In search for meaningful exploration of this latest intervention, the study anchors itself on the interpretivist research paradigm. Semi-structured interview with in-depth preset open-ended questions was conducted with five senior managers.

Results: The results show that although there seems to be a general awareness of the DDM among principal actors, there are some grey areas on how it is to function and how the expected results are to be achieved. Internal and external grey areas include coordination and communication dynamics within the model, and the whole change management process needed to effectively put this initiative in place.

Conclusion: The article recommends an open systems approach to the DDM which makes the DDM hub an agile team.

Contribution: This study adds to the knowledge on alternative service delivery models; it provides as a source to the introduction of the DDM, and it represents initial exploratory research into DDM.

Keywords: local government; district development model; service delivery; intergovernmental relations; coordination.

Introduction

The District Development Model (DDM) was heralded as an innovative method aimed at expediting economic growth and service delivery across the 44 districts and 8 metropolitan municipalities, which are considered pivotal areas for development. They represent key centres of service delivery and economic development, including job creation. The President of South Africa, in his 2020 State of the Nation Address (SONA 2020) stated:

We have come together as different spheres of government, as different state entities, as business associations and community groups under a new District Development Model that is fundamentally changing our approach to local development. (p. 6)

The DDM is thus pushing for a single plan approach for all districts and metros in the country. The approach will also prioritise job creation, inequality, and poverty, with the youth being the main target group (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) 2020; Manungufala 2020). This study is delimited to the potential of the DDM to strengthen the efficiency of intergovernmental relations (IGR) for improved local government planning and implementation.

Our research context, the O.R. Tambo District Municipality (also referred to as ORTDM or simply the District in this study), represents one of the six district municipalities in the Eastern Cape province. Located in the eastern half of the province, it borders the Indian Ocean coastline of South Africa to the east. To the north, it is bordered by Amathole, Alfred Nzo, Joe

Gqabi and Chris Hani district municipalities. The ORTDM has a service jurisdiction over five local municipalities (Ingquza Hill, King Sabatha Dalindyebo, Nyandeni, Mhlontlo, and Port St Johns) which must ensure that planning and programmes of the district are synchronised with those of the local municipalities. Furthermore, this function ensures that critical issues affecting local municipalities are brought to the attention of the district. Among the many roles of the District municipality is to deliver basic services (water & sanitation, infrastructure maintenance, and development and promotion of economic development) to the citizens (Mamburu 2020). Largely, the O.R. Tambo District municipality has a rural character and is classified as a Category C2 Municipality. A Category C2 municipality, as stipulated in *Municipal Structures Act*, has a moderate level of administrative and financial capacity, providing a range of services, including water and bulk infrastructure services (COGTA 2020). According to Currie (2021), the O.R. Tambo District municipality is considered the most struggling region in the Eastern Cape in terms of economic activities even though it has a huge potential in agriculture, tourism, and the ocean economy. This inconsistency between potential and struggle, perhaps highlights the significance of the ORTDM being one of the districts selected for piloting DDM. This section of the article provided an overview of the research context, and now, in addressing the problem at hand, the article probes into the specific challenges and issues that motivate this study.

The problem

Municipalities are mandated to guarantee that services are provided in a sustainable manner, encourage social and economic development, deliver democratic and responsible government for all communities, and most notably, inspire public participation in local governance matters (Van Zoonen 2020; Zondi 2015). However, for this mandate to be effective, it must be anchored on an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) that can be effectively implemented within the current complex intergovernmental system. Some scholars have argued that the local sphere of government in South Africa does not have suitable strategies to deal with the complexities of IGR and the development of the local economy (Biyela et al. 2018; Hofisi 2022; Tafeni & Mngomezulu 2022). The structural challenges are compounded by capacity and resource inadequacies (Currie 2021). Scholars in the discipline of local government administration (Lungisa et al., 2019; Magagula et al. 2022; Mle & Ngumbela 2020) attribute the failure of local government in South Africa to a plethora of factors, which include, to mention a few, political interference in administrative functioning, non-compliance with regulatory frameworks, transgression of recruitment processes, and poor consequence management systems.

In district municipalities, Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2019) argue that backlog challenges in delivering water, sanitation, and housing are rife. The problem is that municipalities in general, and district municipalities in particular, have failed over the years to operate the IGR

system efficiently and deliver on the IDP effectively. This new DDM model should, as envisioned, promote IGR and improve the implementation of IDPs. However, an important question being: can the DDM assist in improving IGR efficiency towards IDP?

What is the District Development Model?

The DDM is characterised by a strategy that brings together key priority projects that are catalytic in nature. The strategic document is referred to as the 'One Plan', and it merges all the grand plans that will ensure the planning and the implementation of catalytic projects (high impact projects) in a coordinated manner (Lodi 2020; Manungufala 2020). Catalytic projects like housing development, roads and bridge construction are projects that enable increased job creation and other local economic opportunities (CLGF 2020; Lawrence & Rogerson 2019). The plan does not include all projects in a district, as it prioritises major infrastructure projects that will enable fast economic growth (Development Bank of South Africa 2021).

Local government service delivery interventions such as the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (2009) and the current Back to Basics have yielded minimal results owing to a number of structural challenges. According to Tshishonga (2021), the performance of the interventions in municipalities like Madibeng, Maquasi-Hills, Lekwa-Teemane, Randfontein, Thaba Chweu, Bushbuckridge, and Mtubatuba did not achieve the expected outcomes. The intention of the Local Government Turnaround Strategy was to respond to the systematic failures of local government, which include a lack of technical and financial capacity to manage municipalities (Kroukamp 2011; Madumo & Koma 2019). The Back to Basics strategy sought to strengthen the processes of active monitoring and measures of accountability in municipalities. These strategies managed to diagnose the real problems faced by local government and proposed realistic measures to deliver quality service to the citizens (Ngumbela 2021).

However, the main challenges encountered by these two models are insufficient capacity of the administrators to get the job done, a lack of accountability of administrators to the politicians, and a lack of accountability of politicians to the citizens (Lekala 2019). The DDM takes its point of departure from this. To operationalise the DDM, the Cabinet concept note highlighted the need for a District Hub for DDM (the Hub). The role of the Hub would be to house critical skills that will be needed to execute the task. Each Hub from the pilot projects will be capacitated with a District Hub Manager with a team with multiple experts, such as planners, engineers, economists, social facilitators, among others (COGTA 2019b). This section provided a thorough understanding of the DDM, setting the stage for our subsequent exploration of the relevant literature.

Literature review

This section intends to delve into the theoretical, conceptual, and legislative frameworks that provide an overall view and understanding of the DDM as a catalyst for improving IDP of municipalities.

Theoretical framework

This article applied the change management theory to better understand the intricate relationship between the DDM and the IDP. The aim was to establish solid theoretical framework that can provide the conceptual lens through which the study can analyse their interactions and impacts. Change management theory relates to a transitional process from implementing the IDP strategy to the new DDM which proposes radical changes to how service delivery is coordinated and planned. According to Knoepfel (2018), Torfing et al. (2020), Ansell et al. (2021), and Meek (ed. 2021), the key elements of change theory are characterised by programme and/or project initialisation using human and budgetary resources, implementation of planned activities, and the monitoring of results (output, outcome, impact) from the intervention. These key elements are vital in the planning and implementation processes of the IDP, as they emphasise on coordination and cooperation among stakeholders, from the three spheres of government (Cameron & Green 2019). These elements form part of the DDM in pursuit of strengthening IDP and implementation.

Change management theory is relevant to the objectives of this article as the DDM will require a change of mindset and full participation of stakeholders from the three spheres of government, in a coordinated manner, as discovered in the lessons from the pilot phase of the DDM implementation (COGTA 2020). Local government administration in South Africa is often exposed to potential administration changes, leaving them vulnerable to starting new political leadership with its principles and plans. This means the incoming leadership will have a different style of working with administrators and might have their own 'pet projects'. In these modern times, change is inevitable, and municipal administrators specifically have struggled to successfully manage such changes (Munzhedzi 2021; Rolland 2018).

Legislative standing of District Development Model in South Africa

Sections 40–41 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, state that the three spheres of government must work together in trust and cooperate with one another in mutual respect for the benefit of the citizens. This is what the government seeks to achieve in introducing the DDM in the O.R. Tambo District. Through the *Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005* and other measures, national and provincial governments have an obligation to support and reinforce the capacity of municipalities to manage their own affairs, to exercise their powers, and to perform their functions (Republic of South Africa [RSA] 1996). Section 25 of

the *Municipal Systems Act* (32 of 2000) stipulates that for the development of a municipality, a council must approve one comprehensive and strategic plan for the development of the municipality. The municipality must link, integrate and coordinate plans, and consider proposals for the development of the municipality. The new DDM is premised on these legislated principles, and is intended to improve IDP among the three spheres of government (Manungufala 2020). The examination of the legislation framework governing the DDM sets the stage for our conceptual framework, which will elucidate how these legal foundations are practically implemented and evaluated.

Conceptual framework

For the DDM to be better conceptualised, decentralisation, IGR, Local Government (structure and types of municipalities) and the IDP are discussed below. Afterwards, the DDM is explored in detail.

Decentralisation

According to Loïc (2020), decentralisation is the transfer of administrative and financial power from the national government to the local sphere of government. Siddle (2011) and Mathonsi (2020) note that decentralisation in South African municipalities works best when the three spheres of government work well together in a responsive, accountable, and transparent manner.

Mudalige (2019) and Smith (2023) submit that decentralisation involves transferring resources and responsibilities to local government (devolution), shifting decision-making from headquarters to local service delivery (deconcentration), and delegating authority to public agencies (delegation) or private organisations (outsourcing). The DDM aligns with these decentralisation characteristics, enhancing IDP. District Development Model suggests bolstering district-level resources (devolution) and strengthening governance for district developmental priorities (deconcentration). The DDM-Hub, managed by the Development Bank of South Africa, plays a critical role in ensuring the DDM is operationalised (delegation), working with all district stakeholders. Projects identified through the prioritisation processes of the DDM One Plan will be implemented by private service providers, who will be sourced from the open market (outsourcing) through supply chain processes of government (COGTA 2019b, 2020; Currie 2021; Lodi 2020).

Firstly, for these processes to succeed, effective decentralisation requires cooperation among the three government spheres, guided by IGR principles in Section 41 of the South African Constitution. This may involve setting up coordinating committees and hubs to pool skills and resources from both government and the private sector (Lodi 2020). Secondly, the political games, value conflicts, and corruption rife in local government cannot be disassociated from any intervention that seeks to bring efficiency to the IGR system such as the DDM. In their comparative research analysis on the impact of

decentralisation in Colombia and Paraguay, Rodriguez-Acosta (2016) and Sithomola (2019) showed that politics significantly influences service delivery planning, execution, and progress. Models like DDM, impacting IGR, require effective preparation and implementation of institutional and mindset changes. Yerkes and Muasher (2018) and Loïc (2020) agree that for decentralisation to be effective, a good vision and political resolve from the national government is key. This is an effort to ensure that decentralisation works effectively and efficiently, as intended (COGTA 2020).

Intergovernmental relations

Intergovernmental relations in South Africa, as mandated by the Constitution, require collaboration among national, provincial, and local governments to enhance local programme delivery. The *South African Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act* (RSA 2005), in Section 4, emphasises coordination among the three government levels to facilitate service delivery. However, the relationship among these spheres has often been marked by a lack of cooperation. For instance, Ify (2021) notes that there is unprecedented interference and arrogance by government departments when dealing with municipal officials. The IGR forums serve as decision-making hubs. To establish a well-coordinated and effective intergovernmental forum, promoting collegiality is essential.

In terms of the study focus on the DDM's potential to strengthen IGR efficiency, it is notable that the DDM proposes to strengthen the existing IGR structures from the IDP Forum to the District Mayors Forum, Sectoral Clusters, and the Premiers Coordinating Forum (COGTA 2019b:20). The District Intergovernmental Management Forum (DIMAFO), comprising the District Mayor and local mayors, can be utilised via DDM. The District Mayor, as the chairperson, can legally invite national, provincial government officials, and relevant organisations to enhance municipal coordination (Malan 2005; Biyela et al. 2018; Currie 2021). The introduction of the district hubs in the existing IGR framework is also notable. The District Hub will serve as a technical support arm of the entire IGR framework (COGTA 2019b, 2020). The DDM is thus relevant for effective application of IGR, as it encourages consolidation of efforts from all corners of government (COGTA 2020; Manungufala 2020).

Local government structure

The South African Constitution (Section 40) defines three interdependent government spheres, aiming to coordinate their efforts for the nation's common goals. Local government, according to Section 152, is tasked with advancing democratic citizen aspirations. It comprises various municipality types based on unique challenges (RSA 1998a).

Section 155(2) of the Constitution mandates national legislation to establish various types of municipalities. The *Local Government Municipal Structures Act* (1998) defines three types: category A (metropolitan), category B (local),

and category C (district), primarily based on the country's political systems (RSA 1998b). These structures aid decision-making and oversight by Executive Management and politicians (De Visser 2010; Mbandlwa, Dorasamy & Fagbadebo 2020). District Development Model is designed for these structures, responsible for approving planning and implementation documents in municipalities, tailored to the type, systems, challenges, and needs of each municipality (COGTA 2019a, 2020; Manungufala 2020).

O.R. Tambo District Municipality, the research context for this study, is a category C municipality which is a municipality that is signified by low urbanisation, rural character, and it faces resource challenges in vast areas. Development in the district is guided by the IDP process.

Integrated Development Plan

The IDP is the primary tool for strategic planning in local government, guiding planning, budgeting, decision-making, and management. Historically, local-level planning focussed on infrastructure and land use, which has since been improved by integrating social and economic development elements (Abrahams 2018; Bobilev, Syrbe & Wende 2022). This is key in understanding the complex terrain of development in South Africa and the colossus mandate of local government to not only act as distributors of government policy mandates, but also as arbiters of government's redistributive policy intentions.

As a participatory planning tool, the IDP ensures that communities are involved in making decisions on services and projects implemented in their communities. In addition to this, the IDP represents a tool for service delivery and development in local government (Aklilu & Makalela 2020). The effectiveness of the IDP is disputed. For example, a study of Matlosana Local Municipality's IDP found that, despite engaging with affected communities and discussing developmental needs, the municipality was engaging in malicious compliance (Molale 2019). This means municipal officials are not fully engaging with citizens in deciding on projects to be implemented. A lack of capacity in local government to communicate service delivery information to the citizens has potential to destabilise local government (Haarhoff 2019; Msenge & Nzew 2021).

Several empirical studies (Aklilu & Makalela 2020; Enwereji & Uwizeyimana 2021; John, Lavhelani & Richard 2021; Mabuza 2016; Makalela 2019; Meso 2021; Siyaya 2012) have identified key IDP challenges, including ineffective stakeholder communication, insufficient funds, coordination issues, and capacity limitations for project implementation and monitoring. They also agree that Integrated Development Representative Forums no longer serve their intended purpose of interaction between bureaucrats and politicians, as outlined in the 1998 White Paper on local government, and have become mere 'talk shops' held for compliance.

The funding structure of the IDP is dependent on various stakeholders that are not accountable to municipalities. This poses a risk as these institutions do not provide guarantees of funding and implementation of the projects (Makalela 2019; Meso 2021). In the quest to improve integrated planning and service delivery, the DDM highlights these challenges and offers solutions through cooperation, collaboration, and coordination between the three spheres of government (COGTA 2020; Enwereji & Uwizeyimana 2021; Manungufala 2020).

To better situate DDM, let us look at how the IDP process works in ORTDM. According to the 2020–2021 IDP review (ORT 2021), the ORTDM followed a prescribed process plan that was approved by the Municipal Council. During the preparation of the IDP, a detailed process to be followed is illustrated in Table 1.

The IDP processes are legislated and will not be replaced by the DDM. On the contrary, the DDM seeks to enhance the IDP processes by complementing them (Manungufala 2020). This enhancement will be through a coordinated effort to develop the DDM One Plan and synchronise it with the IDP (COGTA 2019b, 2020; Manungufala 2020).

Financial, skills, and human resource capacity challenges hinder local government's IDP implementation. In the 2019–2020 fiscal year, the ORTDM had a 53% vacancy rate for officials below senior management (ORT 2020). In addition, the senior management level had no vacancies, as all 12 posts were occupied. This implies that the implementation of the IDP will suffer owing to fewer boots on the ground to deliver services to the communities. Manungufala (2020) and COGTA (2020) submit that the DDM aims to enhance municipal skills for coordinated IDP implementation. It introduces a crucial concept called 'One Plan', explored further in the following section.

District Development Model – One Plan

Operationally, all government departments, entities, business, and the municipalities submit their planned budgeted projects to the One Plan based on their annual performance plans (COGTA 2019b, 2020). The plan will also include

TABLE 1: Integrated development plan process plan.

Process	Details	Timeframe
Preparation	Tabling and approval of process plan by the IDP Representative Forum	September–October
Situational analysis	Conducting an institutional wide situational analysis by the IDP Representative Forum	November–December
Strategic planning	Mayoral Committee Leggotla and Mega Strategic sessions conducted by politicians and IDP Representative Forum Draft IDP is compiled during this process.	January–March
Public participation	District-wide IDP roadshow conducted by the IDP Representative Forum to hear the views of the community	April–May
Approval	Approval of the final IDP by the Municipal Council	May

Source: O.R Tambo District Municipality (ORT), 2021, *Draft integrated development plan review 2020/21*, viewed from https://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/O-R-TAMBO-DISTRICT-2020-2021

IDP, integrated development plan.

developmental aspirations of the district based on its potential, spatial referencing, and available natural resources. These aspirations are translated into costed projects to be implemented in a medium to long term outlook (COGTA 2019b; CLGF 2020). Manungufala (2020) and Currie (2021) agree that this approach will ensure that poorly capacitated municipalities are rescued and are able to respond to the needs of the citizens. The One Plan aims to eliminate wastage and duplication of resources at local government level. It encourages all three spheres of government to move towards a single plan and work as a single unit within districts (COGTA 2020). At this phase of piloting, the Development Bank of Southern Africa is the funding and implementing agent of the plan, working in conjunction with all the role players from the three spheres of government (Fosi 2021). The bank has established offices that are fully capacitated in the three piloted districts, with the O.R. Tambo office setting up in Mthatha. The office, which is called the 'DDM Hub', has all the much-needed expertise including engineers and economists (COGTA 2019a).

The 'One Plan' approach involves IGR stakeholders creating a comprehensive district development plan, including a 1-year operational plan, a 5–10 year implementation plan, and a 25-year spatially-referenced long-term plan (COGTA 2019a; Lodi 2020). The 'One Plan' serves to identify and address gaps between the Spatial Developmental Framework (SDF), IDP, and the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), and government sector plans (COGTA 2020; Manungufala 2020).

As a coordination model, the DDM addresses national challenges like hunger, unemployment, and inequalities among local citizens in South Africa. It ensures that these issues are collectively addressed by all three government levels, along with business, civil society, and citizens (COGTA 2020; Currie 2021; Manungufala 2020). Local government is the relevant space to introduce this model as it will enhance IDP (COGTA 2020; Lodi 2020). Having established the concept of 'One Plan' within the DDM, the article examines the specific focus areas that underpin the realisation of this unified approach.

District Development Model – One Plan focus areas

According to a presentation to Parliament made by Fosi (2021), One Plan has key areas of focus as illustrated in Figure 1. The hierarchical structure does not depict them according to importance rather the focus is on the building blocks of the One Plan.

These focus areas are the priorities identified through a high-level assessment exercise of a district, and they are for transformation and developmental purpose. The results of the assessment form part of the One Plan as they are relevant in the improvement of IDP (COGTA 2019b; Lodi 2020).

Governance and financial management: This focus area deals with how workplace controls and the administration of

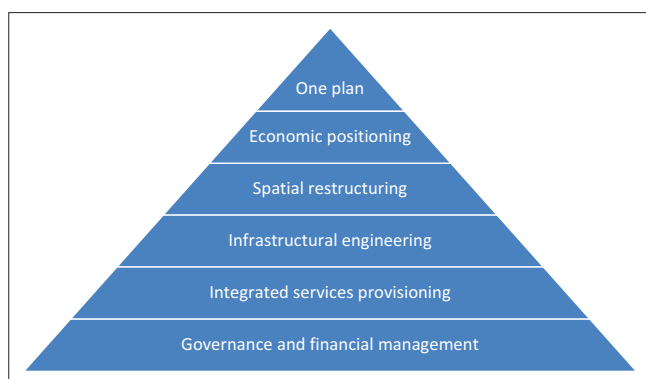
financial resources that are linked to the performance of an organisation are managed. Good performance of local government is because of good governance and prudent financial management (Saputra 2021). These principles cut across all three spheres of government. Cooperative Government & Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Provincial Treasury and the Auditor General are the overseers and custodians, and they ensure compliance issues are effectively managed by government (COGTA 2019a; Fosi 2021). As such, governance and financial management principles are crucial and are included in the DDM One Plan.

Integrated services provisioning: This aspect focusses on the provision of basic services such as health, security, and environmental protection of local citizens. Municipalities are expected to prioritise and strengthen their core mandate of providing water, sanitation, refuse removal, and maintenance of roads. These services are an important component in the compilation of the DDM One Plan (COGTA 2019b; Fosi 2021).

Infrastructural engineering: Infrastructural development in local government promotes job creation and improves local economic development (Currie 2021). The delivery of houses, bulk water schemes, schools, roads, and bridges is made possible by the engineering sector, and it is a crucial focus area of the One Plan (COGTA 2019b; Fosi 2021).

Spatial restructuring: This area focusses on the management of urbanisation and the land use management of the local areas. Scholars agree that efficient use of land use planning principles results in the sustainable use of grazing lands, arable lands, and land for settlement (Jain, Korzhenevych & Hecht 2021; Le, Zhu & Nguyen 2022; Long & Liu 2016). Incorporating spatial restructuring in the One Plan will enable government to have a blueprint of the DDM in respect to town planning and rural development (COGTA 2019b; Currie 2021; Fosi 2021).

Economic positioning: This refers to the economic development potential in the local government space to attract investments (CLGF 2020; Luthuli & Houghton 2019). Projects that will improve the economic conditions of the local



Source: Adapted from Fosi, T., 2021, *District development model progress report to parliamentary Portfolio Committee*, viewed 13 April 2023, from <https://www.readkong.com/page/district-development-model-progress-portfolio-committee-3220546>

FIGURE 1: One Plan focus areas.

area will be included in the DDM One Plan (COGTA 2019b; Fosi 2021). These focus areas are the crucial building blocks in the process of developing the DDM One Plan.

Processes of the District Development Model – One Plan

The DDM One Plan follows a collaborative process among the three spheres of government. The plan will be executed for all the 44 districts and 8 metropolitans in South Africa (COGTA 2020; Lodi 2020). This One Plan will be harmonised and aligned with the IDPs of all the local municipalities under each District (COGTA 2020; Manungufala 2020). Synchronising the DDM One Plan with the IDPs has the potential to improve IDP and implementation of service delivery. Currie (2021) agrees that the transformation processes of the One Plan have a positive long-term strategic view of a desired future of all these municipalities. As outlined in Table 2, the development of the DDM One Plan follows a prescribed process (Fosi 2021).

According to Lodi (2020), the framework of the DDM One Plan processes provides a high-level guide to improve IDP in the 44 districts and 8 metropolises. These processes are further explained below:

Diagnostic study: This process examines a district's current profile and trends in demographics, economy, infrastructure, services, governance, and management. It is essential for assessing IDP planning and implementation (COGTA 2020). Overwhelming evidence suggests that the current IDP processes, in the context of South Africa, are not yielding results in dealing with the triple challenges of unemployment, inequality, and poverty (COGTA 2020, 2021; Currie 2021). The public sectors' poor performance in the three spheres of government has always been a worrying issue in the country, and it has cast the issues of IDP in a poor light (COGTA 2020; Masuku 2019).

Trend & scenario analysis: This assesses global, continental, and national policy contexts, analysing and localising them to district municipalities. The analysis includes urbanisation, inequality trends, technological potential, and climate change scenarios (Fosi 2021; Lodi 2020). Solutions and options that are appropriate will be identified based on the modelling of the policy to address the current problematic issues of IDP.

Desired future: Outlining the developmental vision and outcomes of the districts forms part of the process of developing the DDM One Plan of the future state that is

TABLE 2: District Development Model One Plan processes.

Process	Details
1. Diagnostic study	Analysis of current profile and trends of the district
2. Trend and scenario analysis	Assessment and localisation of trends
3. Desired future	Framework development of the vision and outcomes
4. Strategy formulation	Preparation of strategies and actions with timeframes
5. Outputs and implementation	Drafting of the implementation plan linked to the 5-year election cycle

Source: Adapted from Fosi, T., 2021, *District development model progress report to parliamentary Portfolio Committee*, viewed 13 April 2023, from <https://www.readkong.com/page/district-development-model-progress-portfolio-committee-3220546>

anticipated by the citizens (Lodi 2020). Currie (2021) contends that an integrated service delivery model should consider citizens' future wellbeing, the economy, infrastructure financing and maintenance, and the desired spatial system in district municipalities. These factors shape improved IDP planning and implementation outcomes.

Strategy formulation: This aspect addresses governance arrangements for integrated planning, budgeting, and service delivery. It involves scrutinising programmes and projects across government spheres, prioritising projects aligned with the districts' strategic imperatives, including economic infrastructure (COGTA 2020; Currie 2021; Lodi 2020; Dlamini & Zogli, 2021).

Outputs & implementation: This aspect addresses the DDM One Plan's implementation in all municipalities, specifying responsibilities, timeframes, resourcing, funding strategies, and identifying quick service delivery actions and catalyst activities. Targets are aligned with the local government's 5-year electoral cycle (COGTA 2020; Lodi 2020). The processes of the DDM One Plan are relevant in ensuring that officials from the three spheres of government adapt and manage change to this policy shift. A relationship between the DDM and the IDP needs to be explored to show alignment of these two planning mechanisms.

However, one critique of the structure and process is around the closed system approach of the model, which does not consider the dynamics of the external environment and its effects on the internal working environment. There is growing research into how public institutions can adopt more agile frameworks in terms of responding and adapting to external pressures. In their treatise on agile frameworks in local government, Soe and Drechsler (2018) conceptualised agile governance as a part of adaptive governance, arguing that digital government is the broadest form while agile governance is the narrowest (Soe & Drechsler 2018:324). Recognising the importance of agility in DDM structures and processes ensures improved coordination and crisis response. The article also delves into the implementation of the DDM's 'One Plan' and the vital connection between DDM and IDP, which shapes these processes.

Relationship between the District Development Model and Integrated Development Plan

The DDM and the IDP adopt the concept of integrated planning in the local sphere of government. However, they differ based on application. Scholars (COGTA 2019a, 2020; Mathebula & Sebola 2019; Molale 2019; Ngumbela 2021; Tshishonga 2021) are unanimous in categorising the IDP as a legislated tool of municipalities to provide services to the citizens. The DDM, a coordination tool, harmonises planning tools, including the IDP, and involves relevant stakeholders from all government spheres to enhance service delivery (Currie 2021; Lodi 2020; Manungufala 2020).

The relationship between the DDM and the IDP remains evolving and ambiguous. This transition is based on a

theoretical context focussed on change management, explored further in the findings section.

Methodology

Given that DDM is a new initiative with limited research so far, exploratory research was considered an appropriate research design for the study. The research article adopted qualitative approach and was designed to have a small sample of key informants with vast experience in service delivery coordination and the current pilot roll outs to better understand the phenomenon under research. As seen in Table 3, five participants were selected purposefully and interviewed. The purposively derived sample was made up of senior municipal managers representing the ORTDM and senior managers from the departments of Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development (DALRRD), COGTA, and the Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT). A qualitative study is used to understand and learn more about the phenomenon being researched and how the findings can be applied (Bertram & Christiansen 2020).

A semi-structured interview with an in-depth preset open-ended questions instrument was designed and used in this study to probe the views of the study participants about the phenomenon. These questions were objectively administered to purposefully identified participants from key institutions. Interviews with the sampled participants were conducted on a one-on-one basis. Consent was received from the participants, and they were met at their convenient time and were given enough time to respond to questions.

In analysing the themes and variables of the article from an exploratory lens to determine variations in the studied phenomena, data gathered from the interviews were transcribed verbatim, as advised by Bairagi and Munot (eds. 2019). The DDM has been rolled out through pilot projects and initiatives in selected districts, which are essentially experimental in nature. These pilots serve as a testing ground to explore how the model can be applied and adapted in various contexts. Furthermore, non-statistical techniques were used for the analysis of the transcribed textual responses and the narrative data from the key informant interviews. For this research, NVivo software package version 12 produced by Lumivero, was used and the data were categorised into themes. This article presents findings limited

TABLE 3: Sample size and data collection.

Population group	Sample size	Data collection method
O.R. Tambo District Municipality (ORT)	2	Interview or transcription
DALRRD	1	Interview or transcription
COGTA	1	Interview or transcription
DEDEAT	1	Interview or transcription

Source: Teti, M. & Nzewi, O. I., 2023, 'District Development Coordination Model as an Integrated Development Strategy in the O.R Tambo District Municipality', Dissertation, Forthcoming, University of Fort Hare, Fort Hare

DEDEAT, Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism; COGTA, Department of Cooperative Government & Traditional Affairs; DALRRD, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development.

to the research question posed, which is: 'Can the DDM assist in improving IGR efficiency towards IDP?'

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Fort Hare Research ethics committee (No. NZE041STET01).

Results

To better interrogate the viability of the DDM for IGR efficiency towards IDP, the study sought to find out the following from key participants:

1. Key aspects of the IDP that will be strengthened by the implementation of the DDM model.
2. IGR significance and the implications of the model.

Key challenging aspects of the Integrated Development Plan that can be strengthened by the implementation of the District Development Model

Identifying experts' views on current challenges to the IDP in the district municipality, the research revealed key areas for DDM improvement. Notable challenges in IDP development coordination were emphasised by interviewees. Here are challenges in the O.R. Tambo District as per interviewees:

Cooperation of stakeholders

The ORTDM IDP manager stressed that internal stakeholder cooperation, specifically with municipal departments, posed coordination challenges. Externally, during consultations, departments failed to inform communities about the IDP. The DDM Hub official confirmed these challenges, attributing them mainly to stakeholder management and consultations. Cooperative Government & Traditional Affairs and DEDEAT interviewees added that community participation and contributions were unstructured or insufficient. One said:

'Some areas are outlying and geographically cannot be reached. Some people are illiterate, you know they cannot read some of the documents and do not understand the terminologies that are presented to them.' (ORT 2, Male, 38 years old)

Intergovernmental relations

Cooperative Government & Traditional Affairs and DEDEAT participants highlighted challenges in participation, contribution, and support from other government departments. Officials' irregular attendance at meetings causes issues to persist and prolong resolution. Literature indicates that trust and goodwill between government spheres worsen because of litigations and interferences (COGTA 2020; Tau 2015). Yet, local government programmes and projects will not succeed without effective functioning of IGR (Mle & Ngumbela 2020).

Financial and human capacity constraints

The DALRRD interviewee cited the ongoing issue of unqualified personnel. Additionally, the DDM Hub interviewee

pointed out the perennial problem of insufficient funding for implementation. The DEDEAT interviewee emphasised the critical challenge of limited resources when addressing high-demand priorities. These findings are consistent with the view from several authors (Currie 2021; Mamburu 2020; Ngumbela 2021) who highlight the dearth of funds and relevant skills to effectively implement the IDP.

Political interference

The IDP interviewee highlighted that decisions often revolve around politics and the influence of those in power, who may direct programmes to their own areas. Nkadimeng (2019) found that political meddling in the IDP process is common, and this was because of the non-alignment of the planning tool in the local government space.

Managing change

One interviewee, the IDP manager, highlighted that the DDM reform itself might be the root issue, reflecting a broader reluctance among government officials to embrace change and innovation. Scholars have recommended implementing change management interventions to address this challenge (ed. Meek 2021; Torfing et al. 2020).

Time management

The COGTA representative stated that some challenges were because of the late start of the procurement process or the long time the procurement processes took. The participant said:

'Projects get approved at least by June of each year before the end of June all IDPs should be updated...the municipality and sector departments will start procurement processes very late to a point that when it comes to the end of the financial year, you find that they are at 15% in spending in the implementation of the projects. Then they are forced to request roll-overs of funds and stuff like that. So, in the main, it is the late start of procurement processes.' (COGTA 1, Male, 46 years old)

Lack of compliance

Finally, the processes around compliance with the supply chain management process and the inherent flaws constrain some of the big plans in place, the implementation of the IDP as such. A participant said:

'[I]f the IDP sometimes is costed but not accurate, you find that there are shortcomings that pertain to that. And also, what is expected is adjusted at some point by the Minister of Finance and therefore does not always provide enough for the plans that are in place.' (ORT 2, Male, 38 years old)

Compliance can sometimes be attributed to a lack of skills. Manungufala (2020) argue that a dearth of financial management skills at local government results in a lack of financial controls and mismanagement.

Poor coordination

Interviewees generally agreed that IGR Coordinating forums, like the IDP Representative Forum, were established

in the ORTDM. However, opinions on their effectiveness varied. The IDP participants noted positive performance before coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), while the DDM Hub manager had no comment on the committees' functioning. However, the participant noted that:

'[W]e liaises with the municipality through Municipal Manager and about various Directors Convening of Council meetings, how they convene, what is discussed, agendas, DDM Hub is not part of that but provides remote monitoring of making sure that there is good governance. So, when there are issues, then we come in, but we are not part of the municipality establishment.' (ORT 2, Male, 38 years old)

The COGTA and DEDEAT interviewees were not fully sure about the functioning of the coordination committee but noted that there were some establishments which were in place. The COGTA participant stated:

'[T]o me IGR is functional, and I know the guy who is working there, and, on the reports, I receive from him, IGR Forums are functional. I might not be sure about the Rep. Forum, but because it is chaired by the Executive Mayor as well as the Municipal Manager, it might be the same as IGR.' (COGTA 1, Male, 46 years old)

The DALRRD interviewee believed that IGR coordination committees were fully functional with proper representation. However, prior studies have identified challenges in organising and managing meetings and maintaining records (COGTA 2021; Masuku 2019; Ngumbela 2021). Indeed, lessons learnt from the DDM pilot sites highlighted the need to strengthen coordination of working committees in driving change, and willingness of relevant stakeholders to collaborate was registered (COGTA 2020).

Intergovernmental Relations significance and the implications of the model

The DDM aims to accelerate service delivery and replace fragmented development approaches. It introduces an integrated district-based approach to overcome the 'silo' mentality across government spheres (COGTA 2020; Currie 2021; Manungufala 2020). The interviewees agreed that the DDM was a call to action towards improving the coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness in the implementation of government programmes. Captured responses suggest the following:

1. The DDM gives a lot of authority and responsibility to districts in terms of key projects coming from municipalities. A participant said:

'It is one of a kind where you find a level of concentration of government power in one place ... So, the DDM has managed to do that, to bring the government into one place.' (DEDEAT 1, Female, 35 years old)

According to Fosi (2021), the One Plan will address unique IDP needs in different local municipalities, covering economic positioning, spatial restructuring, infrastructure engineering, and integrated services. Assessment outcomes will shape an improved IDP. (COGTA 2019a; Lodi 2020)

2. The model identifies all the districts and metros nationwide that will be used to speed up service delivery and economic development, including job creation. A participant stated thus:

'Under the model, the three spheres of government will also work from a single plan for each district and metro. That plan should provide details of the transformation processes required to achieve long-term strategic goals and the desired future in each district and metro.' (COGTA 1, Male, 46 years old)

3. By focussing on implementation at a district level, the model will also provide clarity on what needs to be done to remedy failures at a local government level, as well as significantly ensure development is driven in consultation with the citizens at the grassroots level. COGTA 1 said:

'What the DDM is bringing in is more like a shared service. In OR Tambo specifically there is what is called the District Development Model Hub ... The DDM Hub has all the expertise that are needed for effective running of a municipality, effective implementation of the program ... All those engineers, all those skills, all that expertise are in the District Hub.' (COGTA 1, Male, 46 years old)

4. Implementation will be tracked more closely under this new integrated district-based system. Thus, there will be greater ability to pinpoint with precision the level of intervention that will make local government more effective (Manungufala 2020). A participant indicated thus:

'And I think they even proposed a structure of reporting where district coordinators would take information to the province and then the province would take the information to national. So, if now programs are appearing from the DDM plan, people will be pressured to perform, because now they are in the national spectacle so they would need to really perform.' (ORT 1, Female, 45 years old)

5. District Development Model enhances IGR coordination, addressing a central challenge in managing IDP within an IGR system. Effective coordination depends on DDM hubs understanding key management factors and recognising the importance of skills for DDM implementation. A DALRRD participant said:

'Co-ordination is not going to be strengthened by the DDM, or by the model if you put it like that, it is not. Co-ordination depends on the coordinator who is co-ordinating. So, a person who is co-ordinating is the one who is going to ensure that this thing is done effectively, efficiently and will yield better results.' (DALRRD1, Female, 42 years old)

This view means that critical coordinating skills are crucial and needed for the implementation of the DDM (COGTA 2021; Mamburu 2020).

The Integrated Development Plan and the District Development Model

Timelines

Regarding the IDP, responses emphasised the need for a deep understanding of the model, as it is not short-term.

The DDM approach reinforces the IDP, ensuring development is not time-constrained. A participant said:

'I think one of the areas that will be strengthened is the fact that the IDP will look at the 5-year term horizon, but the One plan will complement by going further than that. So, I think that approach strengthens the IDP and making sure that it is not constrained by time or period, as it were.' (ORT 2, Male, 38 years old)

Capacity

The DDM Hub will bring together more experienced and qualified personnel from various fields to collaborate. A participant said:

'Then the last one from me is the fact that they brought in what is called District Development Model Hub which has got a pool of experts in various fields.' (DEDEAT 1, Female, 35 years old)

Accelerated service delivery

The DDM Hub official noted that with effective coordination, citizens' lives could significantly improve, with economic development and improved basic services. They described how this would occur:

'We have stakeholders that come from different departments through the DDM. As I have said there are champions on each of the sector departments. So, once we convene meetings on local economic development, infrastructure, governance and so forth, we always have sector departments taking centre stage, sharing their plans and also pledging commitments to various things.' (ORT 2, Male, 38 years old)

The participant from DDM also shared a practical example of this by saying:

'For instance, we have a harbour that is planned around Port St Johns for enabling the oceans economy, fishing and so forth. The department of Public Works is very integral in that. Once you talk agriculture, the department of Agriculture and Land Reform is very integral in those processes. So, I think the DDM really depends on sector departments as well as State Owned Entities (SOEs) to thrive and in order to be successful.' (ORT 2, Male, 38 years old)

Challenges in implementing the District Development Model

Cooperative Government & Traditional Affairs implements the DDM with Cabinet's approval, but some government stakeholders lack a complete understanding. The interview's final part focused on the challenges faced by municipality officials when implementing the DDM. The DDM Hub Manager identified these challenges as primarily related to change management, including a paradigm shift for everyone involved. The IDP manager added that they still do not fully understand the DDM, as it is primarily discussed at higher levels. Clarifying on that, the participant noted that for the team that is responsible for reporting and monitoring the implementation of plans:

'... [W]e do not know how reporting will be integrated. Because we already use different systems, and we also have different financial years.' (ORT 1, Female, 45 years old)

The DEDEAT manager emphasised the need for employee training to understand the DDM. They also stressed the importance of improved coordination between government departments. The COGTA official pinpointed communication, accountability, and learning as the primary challenges hindering DDM implementation. This will lead to delays in terms of understanding and accepting the DDM. Moreover:

'... [T]he pandemic itself, limits us in terms of interactions, the physical meetings or workshops or gatherings have got more advantage than the virtual sessions.' (COGTA 1, Male, 46 years old)

From the issues raised by the participants, the following key points are coming up as challenges which must be addressed in implementing the DDM:

1. Understanding the DDM is a challenge as it is new to local government. Officials will need time to grasp its significance, making continuous improvement and modification essential based on lessons learned (COGTA 2020).
2. The absence of change management is slowing the acceptance of the new strategy for enhancing IDP. Municipal management must prioritise a change management process to introduce the DDM. This approach necessitates a mindset shift and full stakeholder participation from various sectors, as evident in lessons from the DDM pilot phase (COGTA 2020).
3. A lack of cooperative governance hinders the effectiveness of DDM. Strengthening cooperation is essential. Overcoming political and process roadblocks, such as IGR litigations, is critical for DDM to achieve its goal of improving IDP. Bertrand et al. (2007) and Currie (2021) suggested that for IDP to improve and function efficiently and effectively, cooperative governance principles should be adopted and applied consistently.
4. The absence of coordination among government spheres hampers basic service delivery. Specialised skills for coordination exist in key departments like the Office of The Premier, COGTA, and Treasury. Collaboration between these departments is vital to encourage other departments to adopt DDM and ensure meaningful contributions with financial and human resources (COGTA 2021; Currie 2021; Hofisi 2022).

Conclusion

Our exploration of the issues so far reveals that the DDM offers some important advantages and leverages to solving key problems that have dogged local government in South Africa for almost 30 years. The issues of capacity, sluggish red tape, poor IGR coordination, and early politicisation of issues are among several key issues. However, we note that there are weaknesses in the DDM. Thus, we recommend that municipal and other stakeholder employees be trained on the DDM initiative and roll out to accommodate for the change it will bring to IDP and other municipal processes. We also recommend that the DDM Hub be translated into an agile hub with the ability to quickly adapt to the internal and external pressures involved in governing the functioning of the system.

Finally, although there is great consensus from the interviewees that the DDM Model will sustain and complement the full functioning IDP within the municipality, the relation between the IDP and DDM, for all intents and purposes, is still ambiguous and evolving. This phenomenon would need further exploration by future studies, preferably using a mixed-method research approach to get a deeper nuanced view of the DDM challenges and recommendations as put forward.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

M.T. and O.I.N. conceived the idea. M.T., O.I.N. and S.L. developed the theory and performed the computations. M.T., O.I.N. and S.L. verified the analytical methods. O.I.N. encouraged M.T. to investigate 'District Development Coordination' Model as an Integrated Development Strategy in the O.R. Tambo District Municipality and supervised the findings of this work. M.T., O.I.N. and S.L. discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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Data availability

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Disclaimer

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