




# Contending for the designs and features of integrated development planning in South Africa? An empirical analysis of the Limpopo Province



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**Background:** The Sphere of Local Government in South Africa serves a pertinent role of realising the provision of basic municipal services. In this case, the legislative interventions consider it mandatory for every municipality to develop integrated development plans (IDPs) to facilitate their developmental agendas. These municipalities are required to undertake approval process of IDPs to eventually generate measurable municipal agenda as the basis for basic municipal service delivery.

**Aim:** This empirical study sought to analyse contentious issues regarding the structural design and operational features of the IDP process.

**Setting:** Some municipalities in the Limpopo Province were selected for case study purpose where data were collected. This was in two district municipalities.

**Methods:** Semi-structured interviews with adept municipal officials and councillors as well as surveys with some members of the community were conducted to gather relevant data so that informed analysis could be generated.

**Results:** The findings highlight that the fundamental challenges of designs and features manifest on both the development and the implementation parts of the IDP process.

**Conclusion:** It is therefore proposed, on the one hand, that there is a need to strengthen municipal capacity building for officials to facilitate an effective IDP process. On the other hand, municipal councils are considered necessary to have the capacity to undertake their oversight role over the municipal executive and functions in driving the IDP process agenda. In this way, a remedial consideration suitable for various categories of municipalities should be introduced.

**Contribution:** No contentious issues regarding the structural design and operational features of the integrated development planning process was discovered and also demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all regarding municipal planning and implementation.

**Keywords:** integrated development planning; participation; implementation; capacity; local communities.

## Introduction

The Sphere of Local Government in South Africa is a constitutional construct that comprises 257 municipalities as local, district or metropolitan. These municipalities are required to regularly ensure that they generate their development plans in 5-year periods with annual reviews. These processes of integrated development plan (IDP) development and reviews for these municipalities should be committed to working with local communities and respective organisations within those communities with the purpose of finding sustainable ways to achieve their social, economic and material needs as well as improve the general quality of life of their people (Maserumule 2008; Van der Walldt 2018). This is in accordance with the provision of sections 151–153 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996* (hereafter referred to as 1996 *Constitution*) to broadly address the status, objectives and developmental duties of the local government. Furthermore, the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 repositions the discourse on developmental local government within the four interrelated features, namely, maximising social development and economic growth; integration and coordination; democratising development; leading and learning (Department of Provincial and Local Government 1998; Xali 2005). These have subsequently informed the structural design and

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**Note:** Limited participant information is provided in order to protect the anonymity of the participants.

operational features of the entire democratic local government since its establishment in the year 2000. There is a need that integrated development planning process should address inadequacies of the past and reposition local government with its developmental mandate (Munzhedzi & Phago 2020; Pycroft 1998).

The design and features in the municipal planning processes requires the Sphere of Local Government in South Africa to work closely with other spheres of government and relevant stakeholders both in the development and implementation of the IDPs (Maserumule 2008; Van der Waldt 2018). The historical background and geographical location of such municipalities often play a significant role in forming these relationships, including their level of dependency on other spheres of government (Hemson, Meyer & Maphunye 2004; Kanyane 2012; Koma 2010). It should also be noted that the constitutional requirement for public administration to be development-oriented also applies to municipal administrations and municipal organs of the state (Craythorne 2006; Republic of South Africa 2000).

A conceptualisation of the integrated development planning process is provided in order to properly locate the discourse as used within the South African context. The question of a design of the structure of local government and feature of operationalising integrated development is considered to clarify the process of development and implementation of the required integrated development planning. A discussion of New Public Management (NPM) as an important conceptual framework underpinning studies of this nature is advanced to demonstrate how the general regulatory environment for local government that does not befit (appropriate) local conditions of development to require such an approach (there cannot be a cost-recovery approach, which is underpinned by IDP–NPM in rural local government).

This article used a mixed method approach in the form of semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires for its empirical data collection. The article seeks to undertake an analysis of issues considered contentious regarding the structural design and operational features of the integrated development planning process in South Africa. The findings are advanced critically to highlight weaknesses inherent in the structural designs and operational features of integrated development planning process. In the final analysis, the conclusions and recommendations are made for reconsidering the relevance of some practices to strengthening the Sphere of Local Government.

## Conceptualising integrated development planning

Planning is a managerial function for all public institutions and serves as a prerequisite to determine the possible usage of resources and maintain accountability in realising their institutional mandate. Integrated development planning is

referred to as a participatory planning process aimed at integrating sectoral strategies, in order to support the allocation of scarce resources between sectors and geographic areas across the population in a manner that promotes sustainable growth, equity and empowerment of the poor and the marginalised (Mashamba 2008; Van der Waldt 2018). Pillay, Tomlinson and Du Toit (2006) posit that such a process aims to offer a long-term vision for a municipality, detail the priorities of an elected council, link and coordinate sectoral plans and strategies, align financial and human resources with implementation needs, strengthen the focus on environmental sustainability and provide the basis for annual and medium-term budgeting. For the South African Sphere of Local Government, a process of planning referred to was legislated as a uniform system required for all municipalities, which result in a document referred to as an IDP. An IDP is a culmination of a holistic consideration of a broad range of socio-economic, environmental, legal and other contextual factors (Maphunye & Mafunisa 2008). In terms of section 25(1) of the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000* (Act 32 of 2000), all categories of municipalities, namely metropolitan, districts and local municipalities, are required to formulate their own IDPs for the purpose of integrating development within their jurisdiction. Craythorne (2006) defines an IDP as a plan aimed at the integrated development and management of the area of jurisdiction of a particular municipality. The IDP takes the form of a report that sets out a single, inclusive strategic plan for the development of the municipality (Republic of South Africa 2000). One of the objectives of an IDP is that it must propose practical initiatives for the development of the municipality, and that it must align available resources and capacity of the municipality with the implementation of the plan (Govender 2005). *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000* (Act 32 of 2000) defines IDP as a principal strategic planning instrument that guides and informs all planning and development and all decisions regarding planning, management and development in the municipality (Xali 2005). For the purpose of this article, an IDP should be considered as an integrated plan of municipalities containing key designs and features resembling the socio-economic and other contextual needs of the local citizens.

## International perspective on integrated development planning

For developing nations to adequately address needs of their people, decision-making powers to plan ought to be decentralized (Rondinelli 1981). This is undertaken through the system of integrated development planning facilitated by the Sphere of Local Government. Many other countries in the world including New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have moved away from an *ad hoc* planning to a more strategic and integrated approach of planning (Harrison 2001). This planning, which is integrated and decentralised in nature, is well informed by the provisions of the NPM framework, which declares that management of government systems must be decentralised, efficient and involves relevant stakeholders (Munzhedzi 2020a). This framework prompted a shift from a bureaucratic model,

which was characterised by red tape and inefficiency to a managerial model based on performance, accountability and efficiency (Maserumule 2017:104). It therefore meant that the integrated development planning in most countries in the world starting from the West adopted a more decentralised system that engaged relevant stakeholders such as local communities. One of the main ideas behind the decentralised planning in the Sphere of Local Government is that the more stakeholders are involved, the more supportive they are on the plans and policies of government. Section "South African Integrated Development Planning" discusses integrated development planning in the South African context.

## South African integrated development planning

Section 152 of the 1996 *Constitution* is the foundation within which a provision for engaging relevant stakeholders during the integrated development planning process by the Sphere of Local Government is made (Van der Waldt 2018:114). There are many other legislative frameworks, including the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act*, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), and *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act*, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003), that promote the participation of stakeholders in the integrated development planning and budgeting processes. The process undertaken to produce an IDP consists of six phases (Mashamba 2008; Van der Waldt 2018:123). The main phases in producing an IDP as provided for by Mashamba (2008:430) are the following: preparatory, analysis, strategies, project, integration and adoption.

Different roles and responsibilities by stakeholders are clarified in the Preparatory phase (Mashamba 2008:430; Van der Waldt 2018). Current circumstances within a locality are then contextualised in the Analysis phase. This analysis is inclusive of current socio-economic, political and environmental reality of that area. Municipalities deal with the existing situation in the municipal area and focus on the problems or challenges facing communities in a particular municipal area (Van der Waldt 2018). During the Strategies phase, municipalities formulate strategies to deal with problems identified. They develop a vision that includes achievable statement of intent of what they would like to achieve in short, medium and long terms. The vision entails the direction the municipality seeks to take also considering its own capacity and resources (Munzhedzi 2020b). Project phase entails the design and specification of projects for implementation. Municipalities must identify location, commencement and completion date, project managers, project cost (projections), source of funding as well as beneficiaries (Mashamba 2008; Motingoe 2011:25). The output of the Integration phase is an operational strategy, including a clear plan on the implementation of the developed IDP. Evaluation is done to ensure alignment between the vision, objectives, targets and strategies of the municipalities as well as other organs of the state. Once the IDP has been completed (compiled and edited), it is submitted to a municipal council for consideration and approval during the Adoption phase.

Before municipal council approval, all relevant stakeholders and interested parties, including the public and other spheres of government, are granted an opportunity of commenting on the draft plan (Munzhedzi 2020b; Van der Waldt 2018).

These phases must be carefully followed in order to produce a required IDP document. If ever there is a need to amend the existing IDP after the comments or participation stage by relevant stakeholders, such a process must be allowed. After the above processes have been completed, the document should be submitted to a relevant Member of Executive Council for assessment purposes. A municipality may translate the IDP to other local official languages.

## Structural designs and operational features

The regulatory framework that considers IDP as a compulsory tool for municipal planning has inherent one-size-fits-all problem. This requirement assumes that all municipalities of various sizes should be able to generate a comprehensive plan for their institutions. This requirement includes even municipalities with salient features, such as the following:

- Rural: a substantial number of municipalities in South Africa are rural, including those in the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM) and Capricorn District Municipality (CDM).
- Declining population: young people in rural municipalities often move to urban areas in search of better employment, business and academic opportunities. Subsequently, the population levels in these areas deteriorate (Limpopo Treasury 2019; Stats SA 2011).
- Restraint in capacity: albeit to the capacity of metropolitan municipalities, rural municipalities lack the requisite capacity to plan, collect revenue and implement relevant municipal policies (Ababio, Vyas-Doorgapersad & Mzini 2008; Munzhedzi 2019).
- Sustainable revenue streams: municipalities that are small and largely rural are often not financially viable and to an extent largely reliant on the higher spheres of government for revenue (Kanyane 2012). Consequently, the minimal revenue streams available are not sustainable for them to achieve their constitutional mandate.
- High unemployment: the limited economic activities at most of the small and rural municipalities contributes negatively to the huge number of unemployment in their jurisdiction. Vhembe District Municipality was reported to be having a 55.85% poverty rate (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) 2011). Vhembe District Municipality has unemployment rate at 37% while CDM has also noted that unemployment in their district is substantially high (43.4%) (Limpopo Treasury 2019; Stats SA 2011), particularly in the Blouberg Local Municipality (CDM 2016).
- Lower literacy levels: early childhood facilities and basic education schools fail to attract the best experts compared to their counterparts in major cities (Limpopo Treasury 2019; Stats SA 2011). CDM (2016) posits that the literacy rate at the district is low.



The above features are some of the critical descriptions for conditions of many municipalities in the Limpopo Province. The province remains one of the provinces lagging behind in the provision of basic municipal services, capacity development and community participation (Mafunisa & Xaba 2008; Munzhedzi 2019). The analysis of municipalities in this province often identifies inherent weaknesses, which include internal institutional problems such as inadequate procurement procedures, leadership problems, skill shortages, deficient management and a lack of capacity (Ababio et al. 2008), ineffective performance management system (PMS) and a lack of institutional monitoring and evaluation system (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss 2011; Munzhedzi 2020c). The reports of the Auditor General highlight that these issues are perpetual and have bedevilled many of the municipalities for an extended period of time where it is clear that internal controls are seriously lacking (Auditor General of South Africa 2018). This lagging behind regarding the delivery of basic services in these cases could mean that the designs and features of IDPs that are developed and implemented within these contexts are not always as effective and functional tools as they are intended. This article seeks to examine the relevance of the legislated integrated development planning process in the context of municipalities, which are poorer and unable to sustain themselves. This examination is undertaken through the use of the NPM framework.

## New public management framework

The use of NPM framework as a tool of analysis in this article serves at least two overarching purposes:

- to locate the constitutional and legislative purpose
- to argue for the relevance of the NPM framework as a tool of analysis for the integrated development process in the South African Sphere of Local Government.

The NPM framework propagates that government should function and operate from a private sector principles orientation, including but not limited to efficiency, participatory planning, decentralisation, outsourcing, financial service reforms, cost-recovery and performance management (Carstens & Thornhill 2000; Maserumule 2017).

At the Sphere of Local Government, which is essentially a sphere closest to its people, there are enacted legislative frameworks to provide meaning to chapter seven of the 1996 *Constitution*, which broadly makes provision for the local government: for example, the provisions of the *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003* (Act 56 of 2003), to prescribe the entire financial management including the supply chain. In terms of this Act the focus of decentralised financial management powers to the accounting officers (municipal managers) or their respective managers is maintained. The Act is also emphatic on financial reporting and control, financial performance, curtailment of wastage, maladministration as well as identifying risk factors and solving them (Republic of South Africa 2003). The Act has

also made provision for accountability measures, such as the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC), which is used as municipal council committee where members of the executive and administration account regarding their respective functions. All these are provisions of the NPM. The NPM as a framework encapsulates good and necessary intentions of transforming and shifting a paradigm from a traditional and bureaucratic public administration to a business-oriented public sector underpinned by principles, including but not limited to decentralisation of powers, participatory planning, effective and efficient performance management, financial service reforms, outsourcing and contract appointments (Maserumule 2017; Munzhedzi 2020a). Integrated development planning is also a provision of the NPM in that it promotes the decentralised planning and participation of stakeholders in the entire process.

However, it is the view of these authors that the relevance of NPM frameworks should be considered a 'straight jacket' solution for any public sector institutions. This concern is necessary to raise also bearing in mind the origin and conceptualisation and intention of this model during the 1970s and 1980s. The contention raised in this discourse is that in the context of many developing countries, including South Africa, the issue of rurality means social and economic exclusions. In this case of rural communities the question that arises is whether the required integrated development planning serves a purpose? This question is raised on the basis of the fact that key NPM principles, such as outsourcing, financial service reforms, cost-recovery and performance management, may not find relevance and expression within the context of rural-urban divide. For example, it is often difficult for these rural municipalities to charge full user charges for its services and recover expenses from its communities because of the socio-economic issues, such as high unemployment rates. These conditions may only serve to frustrate the intentions of the integrated development planning process, as this process embeds the principles of NPM, which are clearly not conceptualised for such situations as manifesting in municipalities, such as VDM and CDM.

## Research approach

### Context

Limpopo Province comprises five district municipalities and 22 local municipalities. Two district municipalities, namely Capricorn and Vhembe, which consist of four local municipalities each, are the areas of focus in this article. Vhembe District Municipality comprises Makhado, Thulamela, Musina and Colins Chabane Local Municipalities while CDM is made up of Blouberg, Lepelle-Nkumpi, Molemole and Polokwane Local Municipalities.

### Sampling

The research for this article considered purposive sampling because of its relevance in the social sciences studies of this nature. Out of the 51 respondents, 20 community members were samples while 31 officials (counselors and

administrators) were interviewed: 10 IDP managers (or an official responsible for integrated development planning process at the municipalities), 10 councillors, 10 officials responsible for IDP implementation at both the local and district municipalities and 20 members of local communities as well as one (1) senior manager responsible for IDP coordination in the province at the Limpopo's Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs. Members of local communities have also been selected purposively with specific focus to either civic committee members or ward committee members. This means that the targeted area is inclusive of eight (8) local municipalities and two (2) district municipalities. The reason these participants were chosen is because they are relevant and better placed at municipalities, and they are familiar with all the integrated development planning processes as well as the challenges that confront its development and implementation. The two districts were chosen because they are able to paint a good picture of a largely rural versus largely urban and semi-urban communities.

### Data collection methods

A good prerequisite for any research is a well-defined research problem, which should be logically followed by an adequate research design. Babbie (2011) refers to research design as a plan or even a blueprint on how a particular researcher seeks to unfold himself or herself in so far as the identified research problem is concerned. Descriptive research design was adopted because it collects accurate data and provides a clear picture of the phenomenon under study. The research problem is that regulatory framework governing municipal planning considers IDP as a compulsory tool for municipal planning, and has inherent one-size-fits-all problem. The assumption is that all categories of municipalities in the country should be able to generate a comprehensive plan for their institutions. This difficult requirement includes even municipalities with salient features, such as the following: rural, declining population, restraint in capacity, unsustainable revenue streams, high unemployment and lower literacy levels. This article applied a mixed method approach of qualitative data from the provincial and municipal officials and quantitative data from the local communities. With regard to the former, participants in the form of ward councillors and public and municipal officials, data collection was done through semi-structured interview instrument. Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) claim that semi-structured questionnaires are the most suitable in social sciences studies of this nature where examination, exploratory case studies or even studies based on qualitative analysis of data are concerned. In the case of the latter, participants from local communities were contacted to complete a survey instrument with structured questions where responses were limited to only the options provided. Structured questionnaires are considered to have advantages, including the fact that it is easier to expedite the data collection process especially where community members are involved. Critical ethical considerations were observed when

collecting data. The data collected through qualitative means were thematically analysed while data collected through quantitative means were analysed using SPSS version 25.0.

## Findings from the semi-structured questionnaires

These findings were made on the basis of primary data collected from semi-structured questionnaires. The instruments were developed and informed by the literature review on local government and integrated development planning. What was also critical for consideration included the NPM Theory as a framework underpinning the study. In this way, some key aspects of the NPM are considered on the basis of their relevance and/or contentions to the designs and features of integrated development planning process in municipalities within Limpopo Province. The following findings are propounded:

### Municipal resources and capacity

As expected, embedding NPM framework assumes that municipal resources and capacity are an institutional strength. Resources are inclusive of human, financial or material resources that are required in the development of an IDP document. In the case of capacity, the focus is more on skills, education and experience of the municipal human resources as well as their technical know-how. One of the municipal legislative mandates is to develop, adopt and implement an IDP framework. The question to the participants (officials and councillors) has been whether these municipalities (specifically in the Limpopo Province) have the required and necessary resources and capacities to develop their own credible IDP documents. A majority of participants indicated that municipalities in the province lack capacity and required skills regarding the development and implementation of their own IDP. One respondent puts clearly and said:

'[T]he municipal IDP units in the province are understaffed and also lack required skills and expertise to develop informative and credible IDPs. There is a need to appoint researchers, economist, and statisticians within these IDP units to support this key municipal function.' (P162)

It was also indicated by another respondent that:

'[M]ost municipalities only have an IDP manager without support staff or an IDP officer without a manager and fellow colleagues. This kind of a situation leaves a gap to engage thoroughly on municipal planning issues.' (P163)

However, the lesser number of participants indicated that in their view they consider capacity and expertise in the municipalities in the Limpopo Province sufficient. This lack of resources and capacity of most municipalities as highlighted by one provincial official is that:

'[H]as led the provincial government through the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs resolving that all municipalities in the province should strive to develop their own IDPs. Only a few municipalities still

needs to be capacitated to a desired level. This means that most municipalities in the Province possess necessary resources and capacities to develop credible IDPs in their areas.' (P163)

The internal capacity assists municipalities regarding the development, adoption, review and implementation of their own IDP as opposed to outsourcing the planning function to external service providers, such as consultants. Several municipalities have relied on the services of consultants when they can develop their internal capacities as claimed by Van der Waldt (2018). It is also advisable for municipalities to dedicate sufficient resources (human and financial) to their IDP programmes. They must appoint, equip and retain qualified personnel to deal with planning processes.

### Participation of external role-players

During the integrated development planning process, there is desired participation and involvement of intended external role-players, including but not limited to provincial and national government departments (Mafunisa & Xaba 2008; Van der Waldt 2018). The participants were asked whether they believe that there's effective participation by government departments. All the participants unanimously concurred that there is no effective participation by provincial and national departments in the process of integrated development planning as posited by literature. While participants believe that some of these government departments do participate, their views are that they remain minimal and insignificant. A participant posited that:

'These government departments which are considered as sector departments just provide the municipality with the list of projects they intend to do at a particular municipality. After the provision of such a list, there is no reporting on the status and progress of the projects.' (P161)

Another participant indicated that:

'Instead of a cooperation for providing financial, human and capital support, these sector departments prefer to usurp municipal functions.' (P162)

The above responses demonstrate that there are cases where some sector departments have been unable to deliver on their mandates. Other issues, which are considered to be hampering effective participation of these external role-players as highlighted by participants, include the following:

- limited knowledge of IDP issues within sector departments
- poor coordination
- lack of adherence to IDP Review Frameworks and process plans
- poor alignment of IDP and intergovernmental structures and clusters
- poor participation of key stakeholders (important role-players) in the IDP Representative Forums, such as the business community.

The question of external role players as highlighted in these responses indicates a proper conceptualisation of what

roles and skills are necessary. This should seek to determine interventions required to ensure that external role players are not only involved but also maximise their involvement for realising a municipal planning in any form.

### Participation of internal stakeholders

Participation of internal stakeholders, such as IDP manager and the municipal manager, in the integrated development planning is of paramount importance. These particular stakeholders are legally mandated to play a principal role during both the development and the implementation of the IDPs, including all other related municipal programmes (Van der Waldt 2018). On this basis, it was then probed from participants to provide a view on whether they consider the participation of internal stakeholders in the municipal IDP processes is sufficient. An overwhelming response was positive that the participation of internal stakeholders is sufficient in that they are mandated and obligated by section 6(2) of the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000* (Act 32 of 2000), to facilitate the whole process of development to adoption of the IDP by the municipal council. A respondent stated that the municipal manager as the overall administrative head of the municipality (accounting officer) takes a lead in the integrated development planning, participation and budgeting processes.

On the contrary, interviewees cautioned that:

'One key challenge is that some senior managers reporting to the municipal manager do not regard the integrated development planning process as their key function. These managers often lack an understanding of their strategic role in the functioning of the municipality in relation to integrated development planning. Such a situation leaves too much responsibility in the sole care of the IDP Manager who would easily get overwhelmed.' (P159)

These views require more investigations to understand what is needed to make sufficient participation of internal stakeholders successful. This observation is made on the above responses, which consider internal stakeholders as sufficiently involved despite the fact that responses on the other sections of the primary data and the literature review demonstrate municipal performance issues at a large scale as outlined below.

### Aligning performance management

Performance management system requires a regular assessment of the performance of key stakeholders responsible for IDP process. It is actually referred to as an instrument used to harness all available resources, including human, financial and material, in order to achieve the organisational goals and objectives. Participants were requested to respond on the alignment of performance management tool to the development and implementation of IDP process.

All participants were clear that while they were aware of the performance management tool and assessments, they were not always sure of the alignment with the entire municipal integrated development planning process. In addressing

this point, a significant number of officials interviewed indicated that service delivery and budget implementation plan (SDBIP) determines the performance agreements between the mayor and municipal manager, and the municipal manager and his or her senior management. The SDBIP is a framework that provides for the costing and implementation of IDP plans and needs to be approved through council. The participants concurred that:

It is only through proper alignment and integration of the different processes that the design and features of the integrated development planning process could be made relevant. These processes are inclusive of municipal planning, budgeting, monitoring, measuring, reviewing and reporting that successful management of performance and service delivery (though *performance management system*) can take place. (P160)

The above response points clearly to a lack of alignment necessary for performance agreements of the key stakeholders with the municipal integrated development planning. Without such focused initiatives of consistent alignment of the various interventions, including performance agreements, it further weakens the prospects of any potential success (Motingoe 2011).

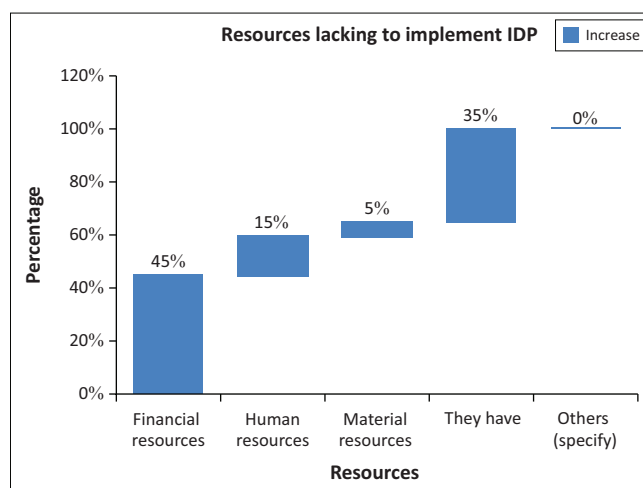
## Findings from the survey instrument

Structured questionnaires in the form of surveys were utilised on 20 carefully selected local community members to obtain their views on development and implementation challenges in the province. These selected community members were purposively selected on the basis that they are involved in the municipal processes and represent any community structure on municipal forums, such as ward committee. The identified challenges from the local communities are discussed in the following sections.

### Municipal resources to implement integrated development plan process

This question sought to determine resources that are considered to be most lacking in their respective municipalities and that could have a negative bearing on service delivery. The results are shown in Figure 1. On the one hand, the highest percentage (45%) of participants believes that the most lacking resource in municipalities is financial resources. On the other hand, 35% of the participants claim that municipalities have resources but fail to manage them effectively and efficiently. Quite a substantial percentage (15%) believe human resources is also lacking substantially to an extent of affecting implementation of the adopted IDP, whereas 5% opines that other than financial and human resources, material resource is lacking in huge droves.

Two key issues are observable regarding this feedback: firstly, community members consider allocation of resources a serious issue. Secondly, community members believe that municipalities often lack the capacity to manage resources to



Source: Munzhedzi, P.H., 2019, 'An evaluation of the development and implementation of integrated development planning process for municipalities in the Limpopo province', Unpublished doctoral thesis, UKZN, Westville

IDP, integrated development plan.

**FIGURE 1:** Municipal resources to implement integrated development plan process.

support effective and efficient municipal functioning. Both observations highlight that the community views regarding municipal resources are negatively based on the outcomes of municipal services delivery.

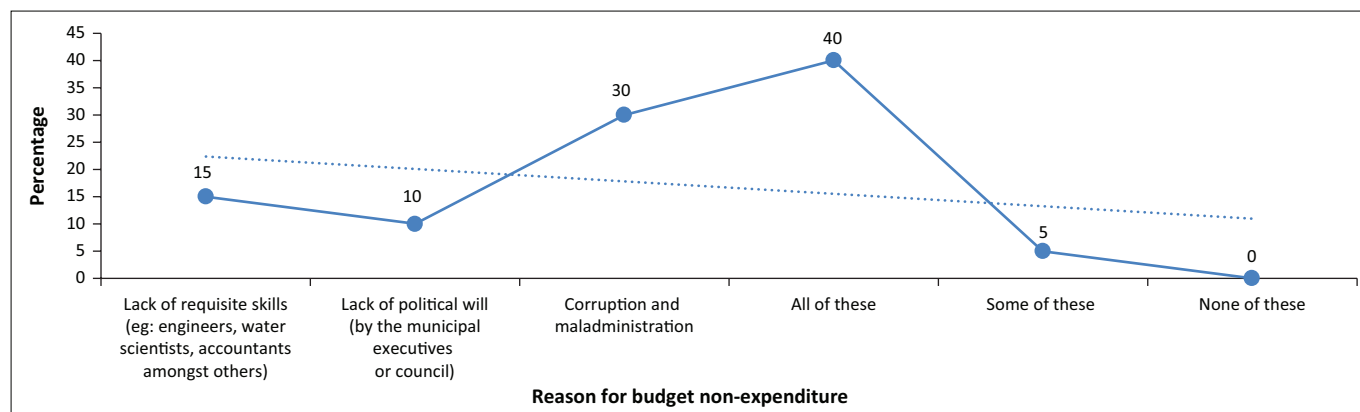
### Budget expenditure

In view of the ongoing under expenditures, respondents indicated what they consider as reasons for municipal budgets often not being spent even in instances where municipal services have not been rendered. As shown in Figure 2, the responses highlight a lack of political will (by the municipal executives or council) (10%); a lack of requisite skills, such as accountants (15%); corruption and maladministration (30%); all of these (40%); some of these (5%); and none of these (0%). Most participants (40%) considered the option of 'All of these', which is ideally intended to be inclusive of a lack of requisite skills, a lack of political will as well as corruption and maladministration. This is in concurrence to the assertion made by Munzhedzi (2016). The second highest option of 'corruption' also means that there is a strong opinion within communities regarding the fact the public funds do not benefit citizens.

### Monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance

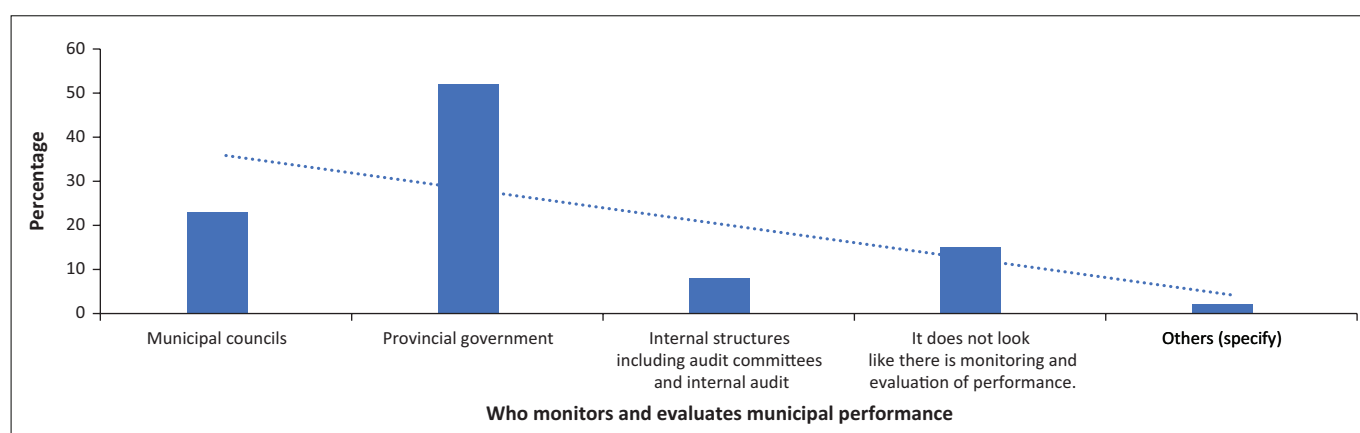
The purpose of the question was to probe understanding on how monitoring and evaluation of the overall municipal performance is undertaken. Because this should be the primary role of a municipal council, the essence of this question was to determine whether community members are able to understand such basic municipal processes and keep councillors accountable. In the options provided, 52% signifies that it is the provincial government, 23% indicate that it is the municipal council, 15% showed that 'it does not look like there is monitoring and evaluation of performance' and 8% demonstrated that it is 'internal structures including audit committees and internal audit'. The remaining 2%





Source: Munzhedzi, P.H., 2019, 'An evaluation of the development and implementation of integrated development planning process for municipalities in the Limpopo province', Unpublished doctoral thesis, UKZN, Westville

FIGURE 2: Budget expenditure.



Source: Munzhedzi, P.H., 2019, 'An evaluation of the development and implementation of integrated development planning process for municipalities in the Limpopo province', Unpublished doctoral thesis, UKZN, Westville

FIGURE 3: Monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance.

specified their own structure that does adequate monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance, which is the local communities. Unfortunately, as shown in Figure 3, a fair majority (52%) consider the monitoring of municipal performance as a function of the provincial government. The second moderate majority (23%) appropriately consider this as the function of municipal council. The responses of the third smallest majority (15%) reflect an interesting response, which is critical because it highlights the fact that some community members consider municipalities as seriously compromised and even unaccountable.

These overall key findings converge on the fact that community members are not conversant with the role of council in its monitoring and evaluation responsibility. The implications of such responses are dire as they highlight the fact that municipal participatory structures for community members need to be strengthened in ensuring that citizens' roles are well understood, including the lines of accountability (Mafunisa & Xaba 2008; Munzhedzi 2020b).

## Community participation

To establish the meaning of community participation for local communities, participants were requested to identify the most

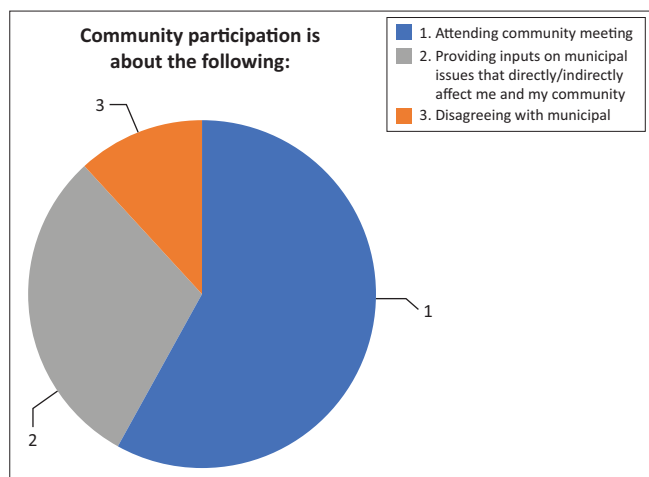
appropriate options as provided in the survey instrument. The three options were that community participation refers to (1) attending community meetings (2) disagreeing with municipal officials or (3) providing inputs on municipal issues that directly or indirectly affect their community as demonstrated in Figure 4. As can be seen in Figure 4, the highest number (58%) of responses considered Option 1 highlighting a mere attendance of community meetings. The second highest responses (30%) were of the view that community participation is about making inputs on municipal affairs, which could essentially inform municipal decisions as posited by Mafunisa and Xaba (2008).

The above responses highlight the fact that a significant number of participants understand their role as more passive in that mainly attendance of meetings could be sufficient. The important matter of community participation needs to inform the design and features of municipal planning.

## Key contentions for the designs and features

The article sought to undertake an analysis of issues considered contentious regarding the structural design and operational features of the integrated development planning





Source: Munzhedzi, P.H., 2019, 'An evaluation of the development and implementation of integrated development planning process for municipalities in the Limpopo province', Unpublished doctoral thesis, UKZN, Westville

FIGURE 4: Community participation.

process in South Africa. An empirical study was undertaken in VDM and CDM of the Limpopo Province for this analysis and provides essential observations on what could be done to improve these designs and features of municipal planning. The essence of this approach is also corroborated by the report for 2017/2018 financial year by the Office of the Auditor General of the Republic of South Africa highlighting a declining audit performance for many municipalities in South Africa, including VDM and CDM. Some of the following key contentions serve as challenges that need to be addressed to effect improvement in municipal planning process in no particular order:

### Municipal capacity

While the issue of municipal capacity remains a serious challenge, it is clear that many of the interventions such as Project Consolidate and Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS) have not yielded the required results to improve municipal performance. Project Consolidate was a Presidential programme that was designed by the government of South Africa to address the underperformance of certain ailing municipalities in 2004 (CoGTA 2009:10) while LGTAS was a mechanism of ensuring that municipalities are able to render required municipal services. However, to this day municipalities are still grappling with the ability to provide basic municipal services (Kanyane 2012; Munzhedzi 2019; Van der Waldt 2018). This perpetual lack of capacity since the democratisation of local government in 2000 to deliver continues to position municipalities as fragile and unable to meet community expectations to provide basic municipal services. This situation therefore presents this fragility and suggests that municipalities are clearly unable to strengthen their capacity where their structural designs and operational features serve the interest of local communities.

### One-size-fits-all mentality

The nature of regulatory environment for municipal planning provides some serious contradictions with categorisation of

municipalities as provided for in the 1996 *Constitution* and the *Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998* (Act 117 of 1998). This is because categorisation of municipalities takes into account key local features such as population and economic activities. In this case, there is a need to acknowledge that key municipal designs and features, such as municipal capacity, performance and revenue should, also follow a similar approach and structural design of municipal categorisation. The main contention of this aspect is that the one-size-fits-all approach as currently used, which has demonstrated flagrant limitations over the 19-year period since democratisation of the local government. This approach continues to undermine the urgent needs of many local communities of the rural municipalities in South Africa as their designs and features would instead continue to serve the needs of the political elites.

### Municipal oversight

The current configuration of municipalities requires radical changes to improve their oversight functions. Clearly municipal structures, such as ward committees, councils and MPACs as indicated in this article, are struggling to optimise their contribution to ameliorate municipal planning (Van der Waldt 2018; VDM 2016). New models and approaches are required for appropriating municipalities to their local communities instead of having them as a burden to the national fiscus. Such models could provide significant shifts to allow external stakeholders, such as institutions of higher learning and civil society organisations, to provide professional support and participate in the decision-making processes to improve municipal oversight. For such external stakeholders to be involved, an accreditation requirement could be made for experts within schools of governance and civil society organisations. In this case, professional support and participation should be linked to possible localised development initiatives in accordance with the developmental mandate of local government instead of political interests and expediencies. This would serve to strengthen structural designs where integrated development planning implementation is realised and value chain processes remain fully accountable.

### Municipal revenue

Many rural municipalities, such as VDM, are experiencing economic hardships and high unemployment rates (poverty rate is at 55.85%) (CoGTA 2011). Capricorn District Municipality cannot be absolved from these hardships as well. The municipal revenue bases of many of these struggling rural municipalities are caused by a lack of robust business activities in their areas (Kanyane 2012). It is imperative that a requirement be considered for municipal status to be maintained and that at least 50% of its operational budget be generated from within. This could be important to maintain accountability and sustainability where various adept structures and features take ownership of these key municipal decisions.

## Strengthening municipal accountability

The problem of impunity and accountability requires stringent measures that are able to deter the misuse of municipal resources, which mainly benefits the political elites and their connections. There is a need to increase investigative and prosecution capabilities of both the Police and National Prosecuting Authority. While reports are regularly and annually issued by the Offices of the Auditor General and Public Protector, among others, there has been low prosecution rate on wrong doing on municipal corruption. The stubborn problem of fruitless, wasteful and irregular expenditures continues unabated at the expense of a local development agenda. In this way, the potential for maintaining strong structural designs and operational features remains subverted.

## Conclusion and recommendations

It is clear from this article that the structural designs and operational features of municipalities in South Africa are deficient in that there is a One-Size-Fits-All approach despite the various categories of municipalities. Based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected and analysed from the selected participants from VDM and CDM in the Limpopo Province, it is concluded that these municipalities lack requisite municipal capacity (often technical), financial and human resources, and political will to develop and implement credible IDPs. A metropolitan municipality in a city can never have the same planning and revenue collection capacity like the Collins Chabane Local Municipality in the VDM, which is mainly rural. In instances where the financial resources are available, the collected data state that municipalities often lack the capacity and skills to implement most of their programmes, including the IDPs and municipal budget, because of the same structural designs and operational features of many rural municipalities. One of the functional challenges is that there is weak participation by external stakeholders such as sector departments. Internal stakeholders do play their mandated role in terms of the relevant legislative prescripts notwithstanding their often limited capacity. It is further concluded that there is no effective mechanism of monitoring and evaluating municipal performances. To that end, there is no proper alignment between individual performance, IDPs, SDBIP as well as the municipal budget. The understanding of the community participation processes by members of the local communities is not sufficient.

The NPM theory, which inculcates the principles of decentralisation, cost-recovery approach and continuous accountability, is generic in nature in that some municipalities particularly rural ones lack the requisite municipal capacity to plan and to do cost recovery. On the whole, municipal IDPs cannot be a reflection of community issues when the participation of local communities is not to an adequate level precisely because their understanding

is limited. The contention highlighted in this article is that the structural designs and operational features of rural municipalities are totally different from those of urban municipalities. While the legislative prescripts prescribe uniform procedures and methods of planning, revenue collection and policy implementation, this article proposes a revision to this model to reverse a one-size-fits-all approach. The following is recommended to address some of the highlighted challenges:

- Municipalities should work with institutions of higher learning to capacitate their officials through short- and long-term learning programmes. Regular workshops and bursaries to study at these institutions may contribute positively to skill capacity.
- Largely rural municipalities should benchmark with effective urban ones to learn how best to collect revenue from their jurisdictions. This is because not every member of a largely rural municipality is unemployed and lacks financial capacity.
- The municipal councils should be beefed up to ensure effective and efficient oversight over the municipal executive and administration. This should be cascaded to all committees of the municipal councils, including MPACs. All officials must be held to account through various municipal mechanisms, including PMS, and monitoring and evaluations.
- The specific environmental factors of each municipality must be taken into consideration when municipal plans, budget and policies are developed to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

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## Competing interests

The authors declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

## Authors' contributions

This is from a supervised doctoral work. The first author is the student while the other two authors were supervisors.

## Ethical considerations

UKZN approved the ethical clearance as part of a completed doctoral study (HSS/2186/017D. 6/12/2017).

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## Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials.

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