

EVALUATION OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN ASSISTING SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY

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Abstract

The reports tabled by the Auditor General on yearly basis reflect poor performance on a number of areas in respect of service delivery in South African municipalities. As a possible solution, the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs (DLGTAs) has introduced a strategic management plan that should be implemented by municipalities to assist them improve their performance. Hence, the aim of this paper is to evaluate the perceptions of municipal managers and councillors on the role of the strategic management in assisting them improve service delivery. The findings show that the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs is not without weaknesses. It is then recommended that the areas of improvement should be addressed in an effort to improve audit reports.

Key Words: Auditor General, Local Government, Municipalities, Strategic Management, Service Delivery

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1. Introduction

Media reports indicate that service delivery protests are the order of the day in South Africa (SA). The protests usually result in damages to property, injuries and in some cases to death of community members. Reasons behind this apparent failure of the democratically elected government municipalities to cater for the poor vary from accusations for corruption by municipal officials to concerns with issues of weak leadership in strategic management due to unskilled personnel who get appointed based on political affiliations (Areff, 2012; Mawonga, 2012; Ngcamu, 2013).

The concern with poor leadership is also supported by the Auditor General (AG) Terence Nombembe who notes that out of 278 SA municipalities only nine had clean audits due to financial irregularities that are attributed to mismanagement. The AG supports his argument by indicating that improved audit outcomes in successful municipalities, such as the Western Cape province, were due to “leadership commitment” which necessitated an “urgent need for additional capacity building and skills development for municipalities” (Stone, 2013). This success story is in contrast to what transpired in other provinces, such as the Eastern Cape (EC) which is the case study of this article. De Kock (2012) notes that the AG reported that of the 45 municipalities in the EC only 13 received unqualified audits and those that received

unqualified ones had many other matters of concern raised. These concerns included issues related to supply chain management, predetermined objectives (service delivery reporting), information technology controls, Human Resources Management and material errors in financial statements. The state of affairs in the EC reportedly led the local government to consider putting under administration, as permitted by section 139 (1) (b) of the constitution, two Metropolitan areas (Nelson Mandela & Buffalo City) and three local municipalities namely, Mquma, Mbashe and Mbizana (de Kock, 2012).

In contrast to this reactive consideration by the local government, Aijaz (2010), Koma (2010) and Daily Dispatch (2014) recommend a proactive approach in which priority should be accorded to appropriate staff recruitment that is linked to further training programmes on areas of project management, financial management, policy management and strategic management. In response to the AG report that attributes poor performance by many EC municipalities to lack of skills among officials, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) is said to have unveiled its municipal support programme that is aimed at developing capacity in order to improve audit reports (Daily Dispatch 2014). Yet, Singh and Twalo (2014: 314) find that most of the inappropriate job behaviour and performance practices are purposeful in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa with some level of understanding of the wrongfulness of the act

and with the capacity to prevent or avoid it. For this reason, Singh and Twalo (2014) do not support a high expenditure on skills development. This may suggest that in most cases government officials are corrupt rather than incompetent in carrying out their duties.

The negative reports in the EC are in opposition to the strategic objectives of the five year strategic plan of the EC Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs (DLGTAs) that are meant to ensure improved management that should impact positively on audit outcomes and, consequently, on service delivery. Three of the six objectives of the DLGTAs that are the focus of this case study are to:

- support 45 municipalities to meet their targets for basic services;
- to support the achievement of clean audit; and
- to implement a monitoring and evaluation services in 45 municipalities (EC DLGTAs, 2012:10).

However, the continued negative reports from the AG suggest that there is something else that is amiss that the EC DLGTAs objectives are failing to address. In an effort to uncover the issue, the reported case study sought to determine the perceptions of municipal members, in the form of management and councillors, about the EC DLGTAs Strategic Plan. The question that directed the investigation focussed mainly on the role of strategic management as a strategy that is supposed to contribute to improved service delivery. In this regard, the case study sought to understand how the respondents perceive the assistance provided EC DLGTAs objectives in strategic management.

2. Policy and Legal Frameworks

In terms of Section 155 of the Constitution (1996) each provincial government must provide for the monitoring and support of local government in the province and promote the development of local government capacity to enable municipalities to perform their functions and manage their own affairs. In conducting their duties the municipal managers and councillors of different provinces are further guided by the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs (DLGTAs). As noted above, the objectives of the DLGTAs are mainly to support municipalities to achieve clean audits. It therefore becomes imperative to evaluate the success of the EC DLGTAs strategic plan through the personnel that are expected to implement it in order to assess whether it is enabling or not.

Another critical document in this respect is the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) (2000) of which Section 16 indicates that a municipality must encourage, and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in the preparation implementation and review of its integrated development plan. Furthermore, Section 41 of

Municipal Systems Act (2000) states that a municipality must set appropriate key performance indicators as yardstick for measuring performance, including outcomes and impact with regard to the municipality's development priorities and objectives as set out in its integrated development plan. In this respect, municipality refers to personnel such as municipal managers and councillors that need to drive these processes.

The MSA's importance lies in its emphasis on community participation in the affairs of their municipality and ensuring that measures are set in place to monitor the performance of municipalities in achieving the set objectives. However, Ihrke and Newson (2005: 610) note that while many studies have been conducted to evaluate governments' performance, there has been a very limited focus on how well governments are doing in terms of representing the interests of their constituents. They then emphasise the importance of research that explores the impact of strategic planning on perceptions (Ihrke and Newson, 2005: 610). The method of data collection they recommend are surveys using evaluative scales in which case they focussed on elected officials in a study conducted in the United States of America in Wisconsin municipality.

On the one hand, Koma (2010) supports the importance of monitoring by provincial governments over municipalities as successfully demonstrated by the Mpumalanga Provincial Government over the Mbombela Local municipality when it was under administration in 2008. This view is shared by Singh and Twalo (2015:81) who argue that performance has a normative element which reflects whether the workers performance is appropriate or not in relation to the organisation's objectives. On the other hand, Koma (2010: 117) asserts that monitoring should "assume a more strategic and focussed role with a view to provide support and resources to low-capacity municipalities". In the same breath, the strategic plan of the EC DLGTAs is meant to support municipalities in achieving service delivery and improve on financial management. It however remains to be investigated if the managers and councillors find the EC DLGTAs' objectives really supportive and achievable.

3. Strategic management

Strategic management is composed of two components: the strategy crafting and strategy implementation. The managerial process of crafting and executing of a company's strategy consists of five interrelated and integrated phases (Thompson et al., 2010: 24) that are;

- Developing a strategic vision;
- Setting objectives and using them as yardsticks for measuring company's performance and progress;

- Crafting strategy to achieve the objectives;
- Implementing and executing the chosen strategy efficiently and effectively; and
- Evaluating performance and initiating corrective adjustments.

The Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans (SDBIPs), quarterly reports and the annual reports are the products of the five phases that Thompson, et al. (2010) are referring to above. The crucial message lies in the interrelatedness and integration of phases because if this is not kept in mind (both in strategic planning and implementation) it results in a situation where there is inconsistency or strategic non-alignment of activities. In a situation where there is strategic non-alignment of activities, it becomes impossible to achieve the intended strategic impact that the organisation intended.

Ihrke and Newson (2005: 614) assert that strategic planning evaluation within an organisation should measure the use of technology to frame the mission and priorities, conduct stakeholder analysis and that the strategic plan should address both short-term and long-term issues. Incidentally, the AG (2014: 12) report identifies information technology (IT) as one of the six key areas that need to be addressed in an effort to improve audit outcomes and financial and performance management. If the performance management system is effective it has the potential to assist employees discover their own abilities to achieve organisational goals and experience job satisfaction (Singh and Twalo, 2015: 81-82). Yet, Ngcamu (2013: 432) notes that many municipal departments in South Africa have been operating without the approved strategic plans from IDP. This makes strategic management to be a critical area of investigation in municipalities where it exists to assess perceptions about its impact on service delivery.

Having identified the problems and their causes in the state of the local government report, of which the first is service delivery, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA, 2010) developed Local Government Turn Around Strategy (LGTAS). Provinces (Departments of Local Government) are expected in terms of LGTAS to improve their support and oversight responsibilities over Local Government in order to improve performance, accountability, communication, involvement of municipalities and communities in planning and execution of provincial functions. The departments of local government in provinces included these objectives in their five year strategic plans that are translated into programmes in their Annual Performance Plans (APPs). The provincial department of local government in the EC is no exception in this regard. However, the Auditor General Kimi Makwetu (AG, 2014: 8) raises concerns that "considering the five-year trend in outcomes, it is evident that progress has been slow"

with respect to improvement towards clean administration in the EC municipalities.

This is not to suggest that the EC is the only province with municipalities that are not performing when it comes to service delivery, as indicated by studies conducted among other provinces' communities. For example, Dlulisa (2013:78) notes that the Randfontein Local Municipality (RLM) in Gauteng province lacked in crucial areas as it did not contain all the information, such as budget for the empowerment of communities and community participation. Dlulisa (2013:80) argues in her conclusion that the assessment conducted on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) revealed that the RLM IDP was struggling to utilise the integrated planning process as the instrument for facilitating coordinated and integrated delivery within its locality. A large portion of the projects listed in the IDP were funded by the other spheres of government and there were no clear linkages with other programmes. Jessa (2012:114) notes that respondents in her Western Cape province study confirmed that the full delivery chain matrix components such as inputs, allocation of resources, output and outcomes KPI's were not aligned to strategy, strategic human resources planning or OPM. According to Jessa (2012:118) respondents claim that (i) managers lacked the skill to manage and measure organisational performance, (ii) to communicate effectively and (iii) that little information on performance matters is shared or discussed, thereby slowing down the growth and development of OPM at the municipalities. In contrast to Jessa's (2012) views, Hlongwane's (2011:100) study in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province indicates that there is a significant effect in aligning the IDP with the municipal delivery performance plan as a performance management system for a municipality. It appears that there is a relationship between the IDP as a holistic approach to planning and monitoring, tracking and measuring performance, ensuring municipal performance and speed of service delivery. In this respect, Hlongwane (2011:100) indicates that in order for the Ugu District Municipality in KZN to monitor and track performance of all strategically linked projects, there is a need for a common approach in measuring performance or progress that will be of benefit to municipality's holistic approach to service delivery and development planning. These could assist the municipality to improve service delivery, meet targets set out in the key performance indicators while ensuring that the Ugu District Municipality achieves its IDP objectives. Two authors' (Dlulisa, 2013 and Jessa, 2012) findings point to the fact that IDPs do not adequately inform the processes and systems in the municipalities to ensure that the IDP objectives and indicators are translated into targets and activities to deliver services needed by the communities. The issues raised by the two authors are crucial for effective and efficient service delivery in

municipalities and are unfortunately not in line with the principles expressed by Thompson et al., (2010) above.

Mqulwana's (2010:109) findings in Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality of the EC province, with respect to the scheduling of Integrated Development Plan/Budget public participation meetings, indicate that the respondents in the community stated that they were not accommodated in terms of appropriate times. A greater area of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality is highly industrialized and communities are at their various places of work during the most part of the day. This then leads to the non-attendance of meetings resulting in situations where citizens do not give input to the Integrated Development Plan and Budget. Mqulwana (2010:112) further notes that municipal officials are well vested with the public participation concept, however, the study discovered that their view was that the current public participation in the Metro does not assist the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) processes in totality. Njenga's (2009:79) broad analysis of selected municipalities across South Africa indicates that the nature of participation used in the IDP process showed low levels of public involvement and showed that the public lacked power to influence decisions. The conclusion that can be drawn is that public participation is a legitimating exercise for many municipalities. Although Njenga (2009:79) identified a lot of weaknesses in the IDP processes, unlike Jessa, she also acknowledged the benefits that emerged as a result of public participation in the IDP process. Njenga (2009:79) indicates that one important benefit for communities was having a say in decisions that affect them, despite the fact that their inputs did not always yield results. The views expressed by researchers across SA indicate that there is a lack or poor participation by the communities in development and implementation of the IDPs. This might be one of the contributory factors to service delivery protests. The consultation of communities is an important instrument in strategic planning process because it is in these forums that the municipalities, in the form of managers and councillors, can communicate with communities they serve. It is also in these forums that the municipalities stand a chance to convince communities that what the communities need would not be possible to achieve because of financial constraints.

Sikrweqe (2013:97) contends that the higher the failure of the municipality to encourage community participation in projects, the more it exposes itself to criticism, dissatisfaction and sometimes opposition. There are many projects that, as a result of lack of buy-in and support of members of the community, were unable to take off. In line with Sikrweqe's (2013) views, Hofisi (2012:80) argues that the structures for participation are not only poorly composed but are unknown to the communities for which they are intended. Technical expertise for

policy and planning in integrated development planning, coupled with the neoliberal and globalization impetus, inhibit community participation. Bogopane (2012:98) states that even though there were IDP plans, policies, systems, processes and procedures in the District, these were not given the importance that they deserved. They were inadequate and counterproductive. It was found that such IDP plans, policies, systems, processes and procedures were very far from expressing the genuine needs, aspirations and interests of the local communities. Instead, they were found to be reflecting the wishes of the "external consultants" who pretended to understand the real needs of local communities. Yet, Siphuma (2009:115) contends that IDP representative forums and budget consultative meetings are the most frequently used public participation strategies in the Thulamela Municipality.

The gap that is evident in the above discussion is that the authors have not mentioned the product quality of the IDP processes, with or without the participation of the communities. The Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans (SDBIP) has been scarcely mentioned whereas it forms part of strategic management processes and in fact it is a product of strategic planning process just like the IDP. This concern is raised because the effectiveness of service delivery is directly affected by the quality of strategic planning processes and their products. In addition, the reviewed studies do not provide the perceptions of municipal managers and councillors on the role of the DLGTAs objectives as enabling in this respect (Ihrke and Newson, 2005: 610).

The AG (2014:15) comparison of the 2012-13 outcomes report with those of 2008-9 indicates that 10 outcomes have regressed over the same period. This leads the AG to conclude that municipalities do not appear to address the highlighted root causes but rather inappropriately focus on the symptoms of findings. More worrying for the AG is that a culture of good governance and accountability is not being embedded at all in municipalities as there are also no consequences for poor performance. For example, while the AG (2014: 16-17) notes some improvements in audit outcomes of the Chris Hani district at the same time concerns are raised about the sustainability of the improvements because they do not appear to be fully embedded in the daily financial and performance management practices.

The AG's (2014: 21) finding also declares that municipal leadership in the form of councils is to blame for the increasing trend in irregular expenditure as they failed to implement adequate controls since the previous general reports. This is where the DLGTAs evaluated objectives are supposed to be playing a role in terms of their strategic plan. In an effort to address this gap, the study also investigates how successful the assistance provided by the DLGTAs to municipalities is on ensuring clean audits

and monitoring and evaluation. The AG's finding on leadership indicates lack of capacity in project management. In an organisation executives select projects, stand behind projects as champions or sponsors tasked with overseeing project progress and providing advice to project manager and team (Verzuh, 2011:5). If both the members of management and council in municipalities were aware and practicing the views expressed by Verzuh (2011), the AG would not have blamed leadership for not paying sufficient attention to the development of objectives, indicators and targets and the evidence required to prove performance as contained in these plans. Van der Westhuizen and Wessels (2011: 280) argue that an effective performance agreement should enable and empower public sector managers to implement the strategy and objectives of the institution successfully. This means that all performance agreements in the public service should be based on the overall corporate plan and business plan of the institution. The implementation of the contents of performance agreements is crucial to the achievement of institutional objectives. It is therefore important for managers to supervise the implementation, coach, mentor and train and develop where necessary. If this does not happen, the institution is likely that it will not achieve its objectives and as a results service delivery protests take place in the case of municipalities.

The AG's findings also point to poor performance management systems in municipalities. Swanepoel, et al., (2014:422) comprehensively define performance management as a business process that links what individuals and teams do on a daily basis with larger goals, values and cultural practices of the organisation and the needs of customers. It is a process for establishing a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved. It is an approach to managing people that, when done well, contributes to an enduring and healthy organisation. The message from these authors is that there needs to be a purposeful strategic alignment between human resource management, project management and strategic management processes if there is going to be an effective and efficient service delivery. Municipalities in the EC, however, do not seem to be applying the principles expressed by these authors.

The AG (2014: 162) attributes the generally improved audit outcomes in CHDM to change in the leadership tone at both an administrative and political level. The issue raised though is that the improvement in outcomes might not be sustainable due to the municipalities' high reliance on consultants. For instance, the Engcobo local municipality 2012-13 report shows that the municipality improved from qualified to unqualified with findings on non-compliance (AG, 2014: 170). The AG, however, raises concerns regarding the quality of the submitted financial statements that remained unchanged. On the

other hand, at the Intsika Yethu Municipality the AG (2014: 178) finds that there were no improvements in audit outcomes since Intsika moved from a disclaimer of opinion in the previous year to an adverse opinion in the 2012-13 review period. Two of the areas of weakness identified are poor leadership and inadequately prepared financial statements. In the same breath, the AG (2014: 186) notes no improvement at Lukhanji Local Municipality due to stagnation of the municipality on a disclaimer of audit opinion for the past three years. Issues of concern include incompetent leadership, deficient financial statements and risks in IT access and security controls.

The AG's (2014) findings in all three above-mentioned local municipalities suggest that indicators relevant to all the key priorities of municipalities were not verifiable in that valid processes and systems that produced information on actual performance did not exist. This is a crucial element of strategic management in that performance information from invalid information cannot be used for strategic decision making.

4. Research methodology

Saunders et al., (2007:138) suggest that surveys are popular and common strategy in business management research. Surveys allow the collection of a large amount of data from a sizable population in a highly commercial way. The target population in this research study are the managers and the members of council in the entire CHDM. The district municipality has an average of seven managers and thirty members of council per local municipality. The target population is located in the eight local municipalities within CHDM.

Often obtained by using a questionnaire, these data are standardised, allowing easy comparison. The choice of this strategy was, in the first place, informed by the fact that the research philosophy chosen in the study is positivism and as such there was a need for alignment. Collis and Hussey (2009:56) explain that positivism is underpinned by the belief that reality is independent of us and the goal is the discovery of theories based on empirical research (observation and experiment). Today researchers conducting business research under a paradigm that stems from positivism focus on theories to explain and/or predict social phenomenon. They still apply logical reasoning so that precision, objectivity and rigour underpin their approach, rather than subjectivity and intuitive interpretation. Similarly, the selection of this research philosophy was influenced by the desire to remain objective, independent and not be influenced by the collected data.

The type of sampling chosen for the research study is cluster sampling technique. Saunders et al., (2007:223) indicate that cluster sampling enables a

researcher to select a few clusters normally using simple random sampling in cases where it is impractical to involve all members of a particular group. In the same breath, the choice of this technique was informed by the fact that it would not have been possible to get the full list of potential respondents in the CHDM. The list of all municipalities in the CHM was therefore the sampling frame. Each local municipality was given its unique number and the principles of simple random sampling were followed. Three municipalities were selected. A letter was sent to the three municipalities to get permission to conduct research and permission was received. One hundred and twenty eight (128) questionnaires were then sent to all managers and members of council within the sampled three local municipalities.

The questionnaire was chosen to ensure alignment with the chosen research philosophy, strategy and sampling technique. The listed questions were broken down in accordance with the strategic management as it applies to the three DLGTAs' objectives that were under scrutiny. The Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=don't know, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree) was used to assess the perceptions of respondents and data from the

research instrument was used in the data analysis process. Data analysis was conducted by using tables to determine trends and compare visually the relationships (bivariate data analysis) among variables

5. Findings

Three municipalities in the Eastern Cape from the CHDM participated in this case study and they were Engcobo, Instika Yethu and Lukhanji local municipalities. This represents 38% of the nine local municipalities in this district. Out of 128 questionnaires that were dispatched to the three municipalities, 102 (79.7%) participants responded. The majority of these were councilors (81%) and a few personnel at management level (19%).

In line with the first objective of the EC DLGTAs' strategic management plan to support 45 municipalities to meet their targets for basic services in line with credible IDPs by 2014, four questions were used. To this effect, the first question inquired on the role of the EC DLGTAs in enabling the municipality to implement processes for community participation in the development and the implementation of the IDP.

Table 1. Community participation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	15	14.7	14.7	14.7
	agree	64	62.7	62.7	77.5
	don't know	12	11.8	11.8	89.2
	disagree	11	10.8	10.8	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 1 above, most of the answers fall to the left (1 and 2) of the mean (2.19). The distribution has a positive skewness value and as such the tail is on the right. This means therefore that the majority of respondents (77.4%) concur that the strategic management plan enables community participation. This implies that, in this aspect of strategic planning, the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs is successful. However, the limitation of the study is that it did not include the community. This finding is in conflict with the findings of Mqulwana (2010), Sikrweqe (2013) and Bogopane (2012) that suggest that communities do not properly participate

in the development and implementation of IDPs. This suggests that if the communities were part of the target group of this case study, the finding could have been different.

The second question sought to establish clarity of expected results (impact, outcome and output statements) that need to be achieved in line with identified priorities in the municipality and relevant sectors. This was an important area to investigate because the Auditor General Kimi Makwetu (2014: 8) raised it as a concern that the level of progress was quite slow in the implementation of the five-year trend in outcomes in the EC.

Table 2. Clarification of results

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	4	3.9	3.9	3.9
	agree	44	43.1	43.1	47.1
	don't know	42	41.2	41.2	88.2
	disagree	11	10.8	10.8	99.0
	strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 2, there is spread of data around the mean (2.62) with a standard deviation of 77, as a result the distribution is symmetrical with the tails extending either side of the centre. The number of respondents who agree with this statement and those who do not know is almost equal (47.0% and 41.2% respectively). When the number of those who disagree (11.8%) with this statement is added to those who do not know (41.2), it becomes clear that the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs in

clarification of results is not successful. The implication of this finding is that the activities in municipalities may not be in line with the results the communities are expecting. This can contribute to the service delivery protests. The findings help to identify the source of the concern raised by AG (2014).

The third question sought to interrogate the identification of baselines that would enable the setting of service delivery.

Table 3. Identification of baselines

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	8	7.8	7.8	7.8
	agree	71	69.6	69.6	77.5
	don't know	20	19.6	19.6	97.1
	disagree	2	2.0	2.0	99.0
	strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total		102	100.0	100.0	

Most of the answers, as reflected in table 3, fall to the left (1 and 2) of the mean (2.19). The bulk of the distribution is skewed to the left and the tail to the right. This means therefore that the majority of respondents (77.4%) agree that assistance provided by EC DLGTAs to the municipality in strategic planning (SDBIP) enabled it to identify baselines to enable the setting of service delivery targets. This suggests that, in this part of strategic management, the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs on identification of baseline is successful. These finding

augers well for improved service delivery. The conclusion in this regard is informed by Ihrke and Newson (2005: 617) study which established that there is a correlation between council members' attitudes towards government's guidelines and achievement of service delivery objectives.

Lastly, the fourth question was on means of verifying evidence against service delivery targets to reduce audit queries on Performance Information (PI) by AG.

Table 4. Means of verification

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	agree	15	14.7	14.7	16.7
	don't know	29	28.4	28.4	45.1
	disagree	50	49.0	49.0	94.1
	strongly disagree	6	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total		102	100.0	100.0	

The distribution has a negative skewness value of -.59, the tail is towards the left and the majority of the answers are skewed to the right of the mean. That means therefore that most of the answers fall on 4 and 5 (disagree and strongly disagree). The majority of the respondents' observation is that the assistance provided by EC DLGTAs on identification of means of verifying evidence against service delivery targets is not successful (54.9%) and 28.4% of the respondents indicate that it does not know. This finding is in line with AG's findings where it was reported that the EC Local Government leadership did not pay sufficient attention to the development of objectives, indicators and targets and the evidence required to prove performance as contained in these

plans. This implies that there is poor oversight on the part of executive and standing committees (Section 79 committees in terms of the Municipal Systems Act) in the council. This confirms that there is a capacity problem in the council to assess IDPs, SDBIPs, quarterly reports and annual reports (AG 2014).

The next set of four questions focussed on the second objective that is aimed at facilitating improved functionality, performance and professionalism in municipalities. Consequently, the first question was on the efforts of the municipality to link Performance Agreements (PAs) of the Municipal Manager (MM) and managers reporting directly to her/him to SDBIP.

Table 5. Link between PA and SDBIP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	9	8.8	8.8	8.8
	agree	61	59.8	59.8	68.6
	don't know	20	19.6	19.6	88.2
	disagree	11	10.8	10.8	99.0
	strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

Most of the answers in Table 5 fall to the left (1 and 2) of the mean (2.4). The distribution has a positive skewness of .67 with the tail extending to the right. The majority of respondents (68.6%) agree that the IPMS, which is facilitated by the EC DLGTAs, has enabled the municipality to link PAs of the MM and managers reporting directly to her/him to SDBIP. This is a positive observation as this will contribute to the achievement of the SDBIP objectives that are linked to the priorities in the IDP. This suggests that the EC DLGTAs is successful in this aspect of individual performance management. The findings

are in line with the recommendations made by Koma (2010) and Aijaz (2010) who argue that priority should be accorded to appropriate staff recruitment that is linked to further training programmes on areas of project management, financial management, policy management and strategic management. This type of an approach has positive spin-offs for professionalism within an organisation.

Closely linked to the above first question, the second question was on the ability of the mayor and the council to assess the performance of the MM against the achievements of targets in the SDBIP.

Table 6. Assessment of MM against the SDBIP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	5	4.9	4.9	4.9
	agree	23	22.5	22.5	27.5
	don't know	49	48.0	48.0	75.5
	disagree	23	22.5	22.5	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

It is only 27.4% of the respondents in Table 6 that agrees that IPMS facilitated by the EC DLGTAs has enabled the mayor and the council to assess the performance of the MM against the achievements of targets in the SDBIP. The rest does not know or they disagree with this statement. The implication of this is that the MMs may be paid bonuses for achieving other targets that do not necessarily contribute to the intended outcomes. If the MMs are not held accountable for the achievement of the targets in the SDBIP, chances are that managers directly reporting to the MMs may also get bonuses even if the targets

in the SDBIPs have not been achieved. This finding is strengthened by the view expressed by the AG (2014) to the effect that 13 municipal managers in the EC lack the minimum competency skills for their jobs. Under these circumstances, it is clear that the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs is not successful.

Thirdly, it was important to understand if the MM are able to put mechanisms in place to monitor the performance of the senior managers on monthly and quarterly basis to ensure that targets are achieved.

Table 7. Mechanisms to monitor the performance of senior managers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	9	8.8	8.8	8.8
	agree	74	72.5	72.5	81.4
	don't know	12	11.8	11.8	93.1
	disagree	5	4.9	4.9	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

The most of the answers fall to the left (1 and 2) of the mean (2.19) with the tail extended to the right. This suggests that the majority of respondents agree

that IPMS facilitated by the EC DLGTAs has enabled the MMs to put mechanisms in place to monitor the performance of the senior managers. This clearly

indicates that the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs in this aspect of IPMS is successful. This finding is in line with the view expressed by Hlongwane (2011:100). The implication is that these mechanisms have a potential to contribute towards improvement of service delivery depending though

on whether these targets are in line with the intended results in the IDPs.

Lastly, the fourth question in this area of interest was on the MM's ability to capacitate senior managers in line with the SDBIP requirements.

Table 8. Capacitation of senior managers in line with SDBIP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	11	10.8	10.8	10.8
	agree	63	61.8	61.8	72.5
	don't know	18	17.6	17.6	90.2
	disagree	8	7.8	7.8	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

The distribution has a skewness value of .90, the mean of 2.28 and most of the answers fall to the right of the mean. The majority of respondents' answers (78.4%) therefore suggest that the respondents agree that IPMS facilitated by the EC DLGTAs has enabled the MM to capacitate senior managers in line with the SDBIP requirements. This is an indication that the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs is successful. This success has a potential to contribute to the achievement of the IDP results in the sampled municipalities. The findings are in contrast to what emerged in a study by Singh and Twalo (2014:314)

where inappropriate job behaviour and performance practices were purposeful with some level of understanding of the wrongfulness of the act and with the capacity to prevent or avoid it.

The final set of questions related to the third objective on monitoring and evaluation. In this case, only two questions were considered. The first question was on the development of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Frameworks to enhance collection and analysis of project Performance Information (PI) by management, council members and relevant stakeholders.

Table 9. Development of M&E Frameworks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Agree	15	14.7	14.7	16.7
	don't know	30	29.4	29.4	46.1
	Disagree	36	35.3	35.3	81.4
	strongly disagree	19	18.6	18.6	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

Most of the respondents (53.9%) as reflected in table 9, disagree with this statement whilst 29.4% does not know. The distribution has a negative skewness of -.28 and a tail extending to the left. This suggests therefore that M&E frameworks are not developed in some of the sampled municipalities. M&E frameworks are tools to assist the municipal manager, mayor, councillors and relevant stakeholders to hold municipality to account for the targets reflected in the SDBIPs. In the absence of the M&E frameworks, the implication is that managers can get bonuses for achieving something different from the results reflected in the IDPs and SDBIPs. In the same breath, Munzhedzi (2011: 97) and

Kgantlapane (2009: 77) found that there was a perception amongst the respondents that the reward for good performance goes to individuals who do not deserve to be rewarded in most cases. This situation results into a state where the individual performance management system does not contribute to the improvement of organisational performance. It appears that the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs in this aspect of project management is not effective.

The last question inquired on the development of Performance Improvement Plans that are informed by the gaps identified in the project M&E reports.

Table 10. Development of Performance Improvement Plans

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	3	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Agree	46	45.1	45.1	48.0
	don't know	37	36.3	36.3	84.3
	Disagree	14	13.7	13.7	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total		102	100.0	100.0	

Most of the answers, as reflected in table 10, fall to the left (1 and 2) of the mean (2.67) with a median of 3. This means therefore that the majority of respondents (48%) agree with the above statement, however, 36.3 % do not know. This percentage throws some doubts on whether the improvement plans are informed by the project M&E reports. This percentage, even though small, is in line with the view of the majority of authors (Sikrweqe, 2013: 97, Hofisi, 2012: 80 and Bogopane, 2012: 98) who assert that communities are not informed, as stakeholders, of what the projects in municipalities are about. However, in the light of the higher percentage of those respondents that agree with this statement, it can be concluded that the assistance provided by the EC DLGTAs in this aspect of project management is effective. Moreover, the high agreement is consistent with the result displayed in table 1 wherein the majority of respondents (77.4%) concur that the strategic management plan enables community participation.

6. Conclusions

Based on the information obtained from the participants it is concluded that the support provided by EC DLGTAs in strategic management to municipalities has its strengths and weaknesses. This is so because while it is successful in other areas there are also areas where it does not appear to be effective. For instance, the results on the first objective inquiry were not entirely satisfactory. On the one hand, the majority of respondents (77.4%) acknowledged the involvement of communities in strategic planning and identification of baselines, as stipulated in the EC DLGTA. On the other hand, there is inconsistency because the delivery of targets is not successful according to 54.9% of respondents. Most concerning is the fact that this failure still reflects the findings of the AG in which it was reported that the EC LG leadership did not pay sufficient attention to the development of objectives, indicators and targets and the evidence required to prove performance. On the basis of this finding, it is recommended that the EC DLGTAs, the municipalities in the CHDM in particular and municipalities in EC in general should develop a capacity building programme to enable members of the council and management to clarify the results (strategic objectives, outcomes and

outputs). The clarification of results will assist the municipalities to develop IDPs and SDBIPs that are in line with requirements of the FMPPi that is used by the AG when auditing the PI of municipalities. The clarification of results will also keep the municipalities focused on what is to be implemented in terms of both the IDPs and SDBIPs.

It is also disturbing to find that the absence of the M&E frameworks could lead to managers receiving bonuses for achieving something different from the results reflected in the IDPs and SDBIPs. To avoid this situation, the municipalities need to ensure that the Performance Agreements (Key Performance Indicators) of MMs are linked to the targets in the Results Frameworks/SDBIPs. The Performance Agreement of the managers who report to the MMs should be linked to the projects that are aligned to the SDBIP. This will ensure that there is strategic alignment of from strategic planning, project implementation and the Performance Agreement.

In an effort to assist towards the improvement of service delivery in South African communities, suggested opportunities for further investigations could focus on the effectiveness of the induction programme and Skills Development and Capacity Building Initiative provided to municipalities by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

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