



**THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP IN ACCELERATING  
TRANSFORMATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT**

**Prof Sybert Mutereko**

**Dr Elvin Shava**

**Dr Tigere P. Muringa**

**Mrs Barbara-Lynn Mutula-Kabange**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decade, local governments in South Africa have been confronted with many challenges. These challenges have persistently affected the local government and its ability to deliver quality services, limiting its ability to achieve efficient transformation. Available evidence suggests that, despite local governments' critical role in developing and improving local communities, many municipalities struggle to deliver timely, effective, and equitable services to their constituencies. The lack of clarity concerning the responsibilities and effectiveness of municipal leadership deepens this challenge.

This extensive research examines and assesses the various roles of municipal leadership in expediting transformation and enhancing service delivery within local government in South Africa. The scope of this study's objectives includes the understanding of the effects of transformation on the provision of services, the examination of practises at the international and regional levels, the identification of impediments to leadership, the assessment of the capabilities of transformational leadership, and the evaluation of the potential contribution of the Local Government SETA. Additionally, the research offers practical suggestions to empower municipal leaders and improve service delivery. Furthermore, it aligns local governments with the current service delivery trends at the global and regional levels.

The study used a mixed-methods methodology to gather and analyse quantitative and qualitative data. Online surveys were responded to by 121 officials in municipal leadership ranging from Nelson Mandela, Matlosana, Emfuleni, Ehlanzeni, Mbombela, Bushbuckridge, Msunduzi, Okahlamba, and Mbombela Local Municipalities, including the City of Johannesburg, and South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Structured questions were used to assess respondents' municipal transformational leadership competencies. In addition to the surveys, eleven focus group interviews were conducted with participants from Nelson Mandela, Matlosana, Emfuleni, Ehlanzeni, Mbombela, Bushbuckridge, Msunduzi, Okahlamba, and Mbombela Local Municipalities, including the City of Johannesburg, and South African Local Government Association (SALGA). These focus groups allowed participants to discuss leadership and its role in local government service delivery and transformation. SPSS version 29 was used for quantitative data descriptive analysis. This research revealed

patterns and trends in survey results, offering a statistical summary of local government transformational leadership competencies.

Thematic analysis was employed to scrutinise qualitative data from focus groups. This method revealed and dissected data themes, offering nuanced insights into participants' experiences. Leadership competencies, difficulties, and local government service delivery and transformation topics were identified through thematic analysis. A holistic image of local government leadership was obtained by integrating online surveys with focus group interviews and using descriptive and thematic analysis. This strategy captured a wide range of experiences and perceptions, enabling a deeper understanding of how transformational leadership affects local government performance and development.

Additionally, using a Comprehensive Literature Review model (CLR), the study undertakes a comprehensive examination of the role municipal leadership plays in expediting the provision of services and facilitating transformation in the realm of local governance. This section evaluates the varied roles, responsibilities, and impact of municipal leaders in shaping the quality and effectiveness of services provided to local communities. The study findings uncovered five key roles of municipal leaders in bolstering service delivery and transformation within local government: influencing reform, fostering a sense of responsibility for change, exploring reform alternatives, and framing citizen participation.

The study delves into the effects of transformation on service delivery within the local government sector. It scrutinises how alterations in administrative, political, and organisational frameworks influence the provision of essential services to community members. It evaluates whether these changes hinder or enhance service delivery efficiency.

Additionally, international and regional literature concerning the enhancement of service delivery within local communities is reviewed, thereby presenting a wealth of valuable insights. This section offers best practices, case studies, and global perspectives, thereby providing crucial contextual information for the implementation of local government service delivery initiatives. The findings reveal a diverse array of best practices and models. For example, initiatives such as improving water and sanitation in South India, providing employment opportunities for rural Romani communities, and

implementing mobile health clinics are highlighted. Furthermore, the TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System in Bogotá, Colombia, and organic waste recycling efforts in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, are showcased as successful examples of transformative projects. These case studies underscore the multitude of approaches available for enhancing service delivery across various regions.

The study reviews the literature on the impediments faced by local government leadership, encompassing both administrative and political aspects. This analysis sheds light on municipal leaders' challenges in providing efficient and effective services to their communities. Findings indicate that many municipal leaders are linked with the ruling party, influencing decisions and appointments based on political loyalty rather than merit. Additionally, the study reveals that politicisation of the public sector has muddled politics and administration, causing conflicts, inefficiency, and corruption. The blurred line between political and administrative functions has led to confusion in policy priorities, hindering implementation. Tensions between executive municipal functionaries and municipal administrators have impeded service delivery, resulting in protests and dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the study analyses and elucidates the essential competencies necessary for effective transformational leadership in the context of the local government sector. The abilities, qualities, and methods that have the potential to exert a positive influence on the perspective and efficacy of local government bodies are highlighted. These include the ability of municipal leaders to implement emotional, ethical and visionary leadership. Furthermore, having critical, conflict and change management skills is essential to fostering innovation and creativity while promoting good communication and team building and boosting workplace morale in local government. Having a culture of continuous learning within the local government is regarded as a prerequisite for developing the much-needed critical, good financial management skills that help municipalities budget funds and use them accordingly to render public goods and services in communities under their jurisdiction.

Finally, the report focuses on the impact of the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) in enabling municipal leadership to effectively guide and enhance service performance by implementing a strategic framework. This body encompasses evaluating the training and resources accessible to local officials.

Findings from this study reveal that the LGSETA equips South African municipal executives to improve service delivery by evaluating municipal leaders' competencies to address service delivery needs. Capacity building and training address corruption and maladministration that hamper service performance. The LGSETA also advises on leadership development skills audits. Collaboration and partnerships help local governments to get funding from stakeholders. Moreover, the LGSETA promotes knowledge management, innovation, digital inclusion, and local government leadership to improve public service delivery.

Finally, key strategies and actions are proposed to enhance the role of municipal leadership in accelerating transformation and service delivery in the local government sector in South Africa. The report firstly recommends that South Africa thoroughly examine its legislative framework to enhance the autonomy granted to municipalities. Secondly, South African local government policymakers, municipal officials and leaders prioritise the depoliticising of local government structures and their decision-making processes. Thirdly, the report suggests that political parties need to augment and enhance institutional integrity and honesty within municipalities. They should be reestablishing public confidence in local government by the local communities, thereby ensuring that municipalities are progressively meeting their socio-economic needs over a period. Finally, to mitigate some of the leadership challenges emanating from local government, the LGSETA must promote a learning culture of continuous learning that is crucial for developing skills needed in local government and for improving public service delivery.

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Capacity:** is the 'how' of development – “it is about strengthening the capabilities of people and the institutions so that they are able to efficiently and effectively meet the objectives, adapt to change and be resilient...” (Reddy, 2014, p. 2).

**District Municipality:** a Category C municipality with municipal executive and legislative authority in an area with more than one municipality, as defined in section 155 1 (c) of the constitution (1996).

**Local Government:** the third sphere of government in South Africa, as detailed in Chapter 7 of the constitution (1996).

**Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 177 of 1998:** provides for the establishment of categories/types of municipalities; the division of powers/functions between categories of municipalities; regulates the internal systems, structures, and office bearers of municipalities; and stipulates the municipal electoral system to be used.

**Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000:** focuses on the core principles/mechanism/processes to facilitate the socio-economic upliftment of communities; establishes a regulatory framework for municipalities to perform their functions and exercise their executive authority; prescribes the processes underpinning developmental local government namely public participation, integrated development planning, performance management/reporting, resource allocation and organisational change.

**Local Municipality:** a Category B municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that has more than one municipality, as defined in section 155 (1) (b) of the constitution (1996).

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>AGSA</b>	Auditor General of South Africa
<b>AG</b>	Auditor General
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>BRT</b>	Bus Rapid Transport
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-Based Organisations
<b>CLR</b>	Comprehensive Literature Review
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>EI</b>	Emotional Intelligence
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>4IR</b>	Fourth Industrial Revolution
<b>ICTs</b>	Information and Communication Technologies
<b>IDP</b>	Integrated Development Plan
<b>IGR</b>	Internally Generated Revenue
<b>IPRDP</b>	Innovation Partnership for Rural Development Programme
<b>IS</b>	Information Systems
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NPM</b>	New Public Management
<b>LG</b>	Local Government
<b>LGSETA</b>	Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority
<b>LGTA</b>	Local Government Turnaround Strategy
<b>MDGs</b>	Millenium Development Goals
<b>MIGPU</b>	Municipal Infrastructure Grant Project Unit MSA-Municipal Systems Act
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan

<b>NPM</b>	New Public Management
<b>ODF</b>	Open Defecation-Free
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PCRPP</b>	Palmiet Catchment Rehabilitation Project
<b>PDU</b>	Pharmacy Dispensing Unit
<b>PIIS</b>	Project Implementation and Institutional Support
<b>PMS</b>	Performance Management System
<b>PPP</b>	Public-Private Partnerships
<b>RDP</b>	Reconstruction and Development Programme
<b>100RCP</b>	Resilient Cities Programme
<b>PSET</b>	Post-School Education and Training
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SALGA</b>	South African Local Government Association
<b>SAPS</b>	South African Police Service
<b>SARS</b>	South African Revenue Service
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Developmental Goals
<b>SERVQUA</b>	Service Quality
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package of Social Science
<b>TNCs</b>	Transnational Corporations
<b>TQM</b>	Total Quality Management
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>WASH</b>	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

**YES**

Youth Employment Service

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## **SECTION 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

South Africa's post-apartheid era brought about a transformative agenda required to overcome historical injustices and imbalances. Local municipalities are pivotal in providing service delivery and driving transformation at the grassroots level by implementing policies and initiatives that seek to address historical imbalances and ensure that all citizens have equal access to opportunities and services (Palmer et al., 2017). The municipality acts as a conduit through which policies and developmental goals are translated to benefit local communities. Its effectiveness in driving transformation and service delivery is hinged on citizen engagement, effective governance, efficient resource management, and the ability to handle complex challenges (Abrahams, 2018; Atiku et al., 2023). As the closest sphere to the citizenry, local municipalities are responsible for delivering a range of essential services to their communities, including water supply, sanitation, electricity, waste management, housing, and local infrastructure (Morudu, 2017). They directly contribute to enhancing citizens' living conditions and well-being by providing these services efficiently and equitably.

The democratic transition in 1994 brought about governance founded on human rights, equality, and social justice principles, projecting the need for equal access to services, improved infrastructure, and meaningful citizen participation (Palmer et al., 2017). It is envisaged that municipal managers are at the epicentre of ensuring municipalities carry out the mandate on transformation and sustainable service delivery (Campbell, 2018; RSA, 1996). The South African legislative framework pinpoints the critical areas that local municipalities and leadership must capitalise on to drive transformation and enhance service delivery (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Municipal Systems Act, 2000; The White Paper on Local Government, 1998). The key areas include sustainable service delivery, accountable and transparent governance, equitable provision of adequate infrastructure, facilitation of socio-economic initiatives through local economic development, citizen engagement and empowerment in planning and policy formulation, resource mobilisation, collaborative partnerships, capacity development, integrated development planning and policy implementation (RSA, 1996).

In fulfilling the transformation agenda, municipal managers are encouraged to explore innovative and effective strategies to enable sustainable community service provision. Local government, recognised as a critical sphere of government, is responsible for delivering services to previously marginalised communities and fostering inclusive development (Abrahams, 2018; Phago, 2020). However, despite the significant progress made, local municipalities continue to grapple with multifaceted challenges that impede their ability to navigate the transformation and service delivery terrain effectively and efficiently (Masuku and Jili, 2019; Mbandlwa et al., 2020c). Issues such as corruption, limited resources, skills shortages, political interference, and infrastructure and service provision disparities continuously plague the local government's efforts to accelerate transformation and enhance service delivery (Masuku and Jili, 2019; Millington and Scheba, 2021; Venter et al., 2020).

The recent Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) report (2021/22) revealed that the lack of compliance with legislation, poor accountability, weak oversight, and internal controls systems affect local government in South Africa, triggering underdevelopment of local communities and in some cases, various municipal strikes as communities protest over the poor state of service provision. Similarly, Masuku and Jili (2019) confirm that these service delivery protests are attributed to poor governance due to political interference in administrative components at municipalities, financial irregularities, maladministration, and corruption. Also, Atiku Atiku et al. (2023) state that ineffective leadership, logistical issues, a lack of a skilled workforce, and financial constraints are challenges hindering service delivery. They add that there is a need for transformational leadership that impacts governance with a focus on collaborative partnerships, financial sustainability, and stakeholder engagement. The above-mentioned institutional weaknesses illuminate the importance of understanding the role of municipal managers in influencing governance through transformation, consequently enhancing service delivery (Ncgobo and Malefane, 2017). The challenges further provide opportunities that municipal leadership can harness to overcome local government systemic impediments.

### *1.1.1. Problem statement*

Available evidence shows that local governments play a crucial role in ensuring effective service delivery of essential services and driving transformative initiatives

within their jurisdictions (Phago, 2020). Central to the success of local government operations are the municipal leaders who are mandated with key responsibilities in shaping policies, implementing strategies, and fostering collaboration to meet their constituencies' ever-changing needs (Ngqwala, 2019). Campbell (2018) emphasises the role of municipal leadership, stating that transformational leadership wields influence by reinforcing public service motivation. Similarly, Muchadenyika and Waiswa (2018) found that leadership on the municipal scale plays a crucial part in spreading beyond partisan politics and advocating for comprehensive local administration and progress.

While the role of municipal leadership in ensuring service delivery and transformation at the local level cannot be overemphasised, the effectiveness of municipal leadership in accelerating transformation and service delivery in local government remains a subject of great concern (Mbandlwa et al., 2020a). Mbandlwa et al. (2020a) attribute the failure of service delivery in local government to poor leadership, management practices and maladministration. Various factors contribute to this situation. For instance, Mbandlwa et al. (2020a) argue that owing to inadequate leadership capabilities and skills, municipal leaders often face challenges in acquiring the necessary skills to drive transformation and efficient service delivery. This lack may be the result of a lack of limited professional training. There is a link between leadership failure and poor service delivery. Keovilignavong et al. (2023) established that failed local government leadership harms community participation, resource mobilisation, and building communities' social capital. Municipalities in South Africa are struggling to provide services to their people (Masuku and Jili, 2019). This situation has resulted in citizen dissatisfaction, often transmuting into protests in many municipalities (Mashamaite, 2014). Additionally, most municipalities continue to receive poor audits, either disclaimers or qualified opinions (Mbandlwa et al., 2020c). Against this background, the research will examine the role of municipal leadership in accelerating transformation and service delivery within the local government sector in South Africa.

## **1.2 Research Question**

The study aims to address the research question: What is the role of municipal leadership in accelerating transformation and service delivery in the local government sector?

### **1.3 Objectives**

- To provide a critical analysis of the role played by the municipal leadership in accelerating service delivery and transformation in the local government sector.
- To determine the extent to which transformation impacts on the service delivery in the local government sector.
- To explore the literature in international and regional spheres in the promotion of service delivery in local communities.
- To identify the leadership impediments faced by the local government sector, considering both the administrative and political leadership in the delivery of services to the communities.
- To unpack broadly the competencies of transformational leadership instrumental in changing the outlook of the local government sector.
- What could be the contribution of the local government SETA in empowering the municipal leadership to provide a strategic direction in improving the rendering of services in the local government sector?
- To provide concise, feasible recommendations to the LGSETA for implementing the best strategies and tactics that the municipal leadership should employ to accelerate service delivery, considering regional and international trends.

### **1.4 Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-methods methodology, which involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques to obtain a thorough comprehension of the subject matter. A total of 121 participants from different local municipalities, including Nelson Mandela, Matlosana, Emfuleni, Ehlanzeni, Mbombela, Bushbuckridge, Msunduzi, Okahlamba, and Mbombela Local Municipalities, including the City of Johannesburg, and South African Local Government Association (SALGA), completed online surveys. The online survey consisted of well-designed questions aimed at capturing the respondents' perceptions of the role of leadership in enhancing service delivery and transformation.

Furthermore, to obtain comprehensive insights from participants in Nelson Mandela, Matlosana, Emfuleni, Ehlanzeni, Mbombela, Bushbuckridge Municipality, Msunduzi, Okahlamba, and Mbombela Local Municipalities, including the City of Johannesburg,

and South African Local Government Association (SALGA) eleven focus group interviews were conducted alongside the surveys. The focus groups served as a forum for participants to engage in discussions about their experiences and perspectives on leadership and its impact on driving service delivery and transformation in local government. Quantitative data was subjected to descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29. The research enabled the discovery of patterns and trends in the survey results, offering a statistical summary of the qualities considered crucial in transformative leadership in the local government sector.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data obtained from the focus group interviews. This approach facilitated the recognition, examination, and communication of patterns within the data, providing comprehensive, intricate, and multifaceted narratives of the participants' experiences. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification of important topics on leadership skills, difficulties, and the consequences of providing services and implementing changes in local governments.

The integration of online surveys and focus group interviews, along with the utilisation of descriptive and thematic analytic methodologies, allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the leadership dynamics in local government. This approach guaranteed the inclusion of a wide range of experiences and perspectives, enhancing our understanding of how transformational leadership can impact the performance and development of local government.

In the methodology portion of the study, the description entails the utilisation of a strategic coding system to organise and analyse municipal data. Data from participants in Nelson Mandela were coded (NM), Matlosana (MTN), Bushbuckridge Municipality (Bush), Ehlanzeni Local Municipality (coded EhLM), Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM), Mbombela Local Municipality (MBLM), Msunduzi Local Municipality (MLM), Okahlamba Local Municipality (OLM) and the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) and SALGA. These acronyms made qualitative and quantitative data analysis easier. Descriptive analysis in SPSS used these codes to classify and analyse municipality responses, allowing a nuanced assessment of patterns and trends related to each locality's transformational leadership competencies. This coding system simplified the thematic analysis and directly traced findings to municipalities,

improving the reliability and specificity of insights on leadership competencies and their impact on local government service delivery and transformation.

Additionally, a literature review based on the Comprehensive Literature Review model (CLR) was used as a research methodology to gain an understanding of the role of municipal leadership in accelerating transformation and service delivery in the local government. The researchers relied on peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports and online websites, conference proceeding papers, masters' theses, doctoral dissertations, textbooks, published working papers and unpublished work to get information relating to the role of municipal leadership in accelerating transformation and service delivery in the local government. An exhaustive and comprehensive search using library databases, google scholar, Scopus and online searches was conducted to identify the journal articles and government reports. The comprehensive literature search was conducted to identify the articles and literature in high-ranking journals that offered valuable information to researchers and practitioners researching the role of municipal leadership in accelerating transformation and service delivery in the local government.

## **1.5 Study Outline**

This section outlines the structure of the report. It describes what each section covers.

### *Section 1: General introduction*

This section centres on the significance of municipal leadership in expediting reform and enhancing service delivery within the local government sector in South Africa. This paper provides an overview of the historical backdrop and obstacles encountered by municipal entities at the local level, with a particular focus on the importance of proficient leadership in surmounting these issues. The problem statement raises questions regarding the efficacy of municipal leadership in the provision of services and the process of transformation. The study also presents the research question and objectives, which are to conduct a critical analysis of the role of municipal leadership, comprehend the effects of transformation on service delivery, explore pertinent literature, identify obstacles to leadership, and offer recommendations for enhancing service delivery. This part establishes the foundation for the ensuing analysis of the research approach.

## Section 2: The role of municipal leadership in accelerating service delivery and transformation

This section offers a review of the literature on the role of municipal leadership in facilitating service delivery and transformation, especially in the context of societal changes, economic challenges, and the COVID-19 epidemic. It also examines municipal leadership's history, difficulties, and possibilities to improve local governance. Review topics include post-pandemic local governance, leadership's impact on service delivery, and government change. To study how municipal leadership affects local governance, service delivery, and transformative change, this section shows how leadership, governance, and community objectives are interconnected.

## Section 3: The impact of transformation on service delivery

This section offers a thorough examination of the influence of transformational leadership on the provision of services in local government settings, utilising a range of academic research. It examines the impact of transformational leadership on several aspects, such as service quality, community leadership, public trust, and employee engagement. The section specifically focuses on the role of e-governance and digital transformation in improving administrative efficiency and the delivery of public services. Moreover, it explores the correlation between transformational leadership, employee motivation and engagement, innovation, and flexibility, emphasising their role in enhancing service delivery methods. The cited studies cover a range of topics, including local governance in India and Pakistan and organisational resilience during crises. These studies collectively emphasise the importance of transformational leadership in creating an environment that promotes effective service delivery, boosts public confidence, and improves organisational performance in the public sector.

## Section 4: International and regional best practices for promoting service delivery in local communities

This section analyses global attempts to improve service delivery and citizen well-being. It investigates international service delivery within global development goals and its connection to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It describes how global aspirations affect local service delivery and presents successful case studies, including water and sanitation projects in South India, mobile health clinics in rural



Romania, the TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit System in Bogotá, Colombia, and sustainable organic waste recycling in Twin Cities, Minnesota. The section also examines political and economic elements in European service delivery literature and the challenges of service delivery in Africa, specifically the trend of municipalising privatised services.

*Section 5: Local government leadership impediments in delivering services to communities*

This section focuses on the obstacles encountered by local government leadership in the efficient provision of services to communities. The review encompasses several reasons that impede the provision of services, including deficiencies in leadership competencies, poor training, political interferences, limitations in resources, and administrative complexities. Moreover, it explores the ramifications of these obstacles, encompassing discontent among citizens, demonstrations, and unfavourable outcomes of audits. It also examines prospective approaches and resolutions to overcome these obstacles to enhance the provision of services at the municipal level.

*Section 6: Competencies of transformational leadership in changing the outlook of the local government sector*

This section offers an extensive exposition of the core competencies that are required to change the current outlook of local government into a more robust and responsive local government that benefits communities in South Africa. The review includes a discussion on key competencies such as emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, visionary leadership, critical thinking, conflict management skills, communication skills and team building. Fostering a culture of continuous learning is also discussed as a critical determinant in building project management and good financial management skills that are crucial in transforming the outlook of the local government sector in South Africa.

*Section 7: The role of LGSETA in empowering the municipal leadership to improve service delivery in the local government sector strategically*

The main emphasis of this section is on the significant role that the LGSETA plays in augmenting the ability and efficacy of leadership within the local government sector in South Africa. The initial step involves emphasising the significance of performing

needs assessments to identify and rectify the deficiencies in skills and competencies within municipal leadership. This assessment is essential for enhancing service delivery and project management. The section further explores the LGSETA's endeavours in enhancing organisational capabilities and training initiatives, fostering leadership growth and collaborative and partnership endeavours, managing knowledge, disseminating information, adopting technology, and promoting innovation within the local government context. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of monitoring, assessment, and accountability in guaranteeing the efficient implementation of service delivery initiatives. The fundamental role of the LGSETA in promoting collaboration between local government leadership and the authority is crucial for improving the delivery of public services and increasing leadership capabilities considering the changing social, economic, political, and technical environment.

#### *Section 8: General discussion and recommendations for best strategies and practices*

This section provides a concise overview and critical examination of the primary discoveries and understandings derived from the preceding sections while providing a thorough examination of the various obstacles and prospects associated with the leadership and provision of services by local government in South Africa. It offers pragmatic recommendations and solutions for implementing effective strategies to tackle these difficulties and augment the efficiency of municipal leadership in the provision of public services. The purpose of these recommendations is to enhance capacity building, foster leadership development, promote collaboration, facilitate knowledge management, encourage technology use, and provide accountability measures within the local government sector. These efforts ultimately aim to enhance the efficiency and equity of service delivery for local communities.

## **SECTION 2: THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP IN ACCELERATING SERVICE DELIVERY AND TRANSFORMATION**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section explores the several complex aspects of municipal leadership, encompassing its historical development, the current obstacles it faces, and the promise for transformation it holds within the context of local government. By exploring key themes such as post-pandemic local governance, the role of municipal leaders in service delivery, and their capacity to influence local government reform, this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pivotal role played by municipal leadership in shaping the dynamics of local governance, fostering service delivery excellence, and catalysing transformative change in the local government sector. By conducting a comprehensive examination of available scholarly works, valuable knowledge on the historical, contemporary, and prospective prospects of municipal leadership within the framework of local governance can be acquired. This process illuminates the complex dynamics that exist between leadership, governance, and the ambitions of local communities.

### **2.2 The Historical Evolution of Municipal Leadership Roles in Local Government**

The municipal leadership roles have a long history and have undergone a considerable transformation process (Mawonde and Togo, 2019). In the early medieval periods, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece, local governance was often characterised by rulers or elders who oversaw small communities. (Mawonde and Togo, 2019) state that feudal lords and local nobility held authority over towns and villages in medieval Europe with limited citizen participation. As time progressed, local governance was decentralised in the Feudal Systems. However, feudal lords supervised the daily running of the local territories. The early modern period (Renaissance) saw the advent of a city-state and republic in most parts of Europe. In this period, elected leaders were responsible for the city administration. The roles of the city leaders expanded owing to the increased trade and urbanisation that led to the establishment of municipal councils that were responsible for local government (Mawonde and Togo, 2019).

The advent of democracy led to increased citizen participation. These changes necessitated a shift in the type of municipal leadership. The French Revolution and other subsequent democratic movements in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries led to the formalisation of municipal governments with elected officials. Wollmann (2004) states that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several countries enacted various reforms that led to the modernisation of the local government. For instance, in England, the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 introduced elected municipal councils. Among its effects, the Act “established a uniform system of municipal boroughs, to be governed by town councils elected by ratepayers (termed ‘burgesses’). The reformed boroughs were obliged to publish their financial accounts and were liable to audit. Each borough was to appoint a salaried town clerk and treasurer who were not to be council members” (Dillon, 2023). In the United States, the concept of a city manager in government was realised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This introduction resulted in the distinction of political and administrative roles in local leadership. Mawonde and Togo (2019) note that the 20<sup>th</sup> century further witnessed the establishment of aspects like local government associations, improved administrative structures, and increased focus on service delivery. For instance, municipal leaders assumed various roles, including policymaking, budgeting, infrastructure development and community engagement. Moreover, decentralisation efforts were noticeable in countries that devolved many authorities and responsibilities to local governments, strengthening the role of municipal leadership.

### **2.3 Contemporary Challenges and Transformative Leadership in Local Government**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, municipal leaders are often confronted with numerous challenges, including urbanisation, sustainability, social equity, and technological advances. All the challenges have brought about renewed efforts to address them, and, in the process, the local government and its leadership are forced to transform and come up with new ways to adjust to these challenges. Long and Evans (2023) state that urban change in post-industrial cities, such as Liverpool, requires the implementation of adaptive leadership strategies to navigate the dynamic economic landscapes effectively.

In a study that sought to identify the nexus between city branding and urban planning related to master planning and placemaking, Bonakdar and Audirac (2020) emphasise

the significance of urban planning and city branding, drawing attention to the complexities of fostering social cohesion and mitigating disparities. The researchers above discuss the issue of reconciling economic growth, which is frequently prioritised in city branding efforts, with the principles of inclusivity and social equality. They emphasise the need for transformative municipal leadership that involves leaders who demonstrate a solid dedication to inclusive urban planning. These leaders actively strive to ensure that economic development yield advantages accessible to all members of the population rather than perpetuating and intensifying existing disparities and inequities.

Literature indicates that local government officials face significant obstacles due to insufficient expertise and money, the necessity for enhanced policies and infrastructure, and the complexity of aligning solutions with local concerns (Mikalef et al., 2019). Integrating artificial intelligence in the public sector has presented opportunities and problems for municipal leaders. For instance, (Mikalef et al., 2019), in a study that investigates the state of AI use in municipalities in Norway and municipalities future aspirations, observed that technological improvements have posed challenges to data security, privacy, and the fair and widespread adoption of these technologies (Mikalef et al., 2019).

In another study, Tan and Taeihagh (2020) investigate the current status of innovative city development in developing nations, encompassing an analysis of the conceptualisations, motives, and distinctive factors influencing the advancement of smart city initiatives. Additionally, their study explores the obstacles encountered when implementing smart city projects. Tan and Taeihagh (2020) argue that governments' idealistic vision of smart cities is hindered by several factors, including the significant financial burden associated with infrastructure upkeep, the considerable scale of informal economies, and other governance obstacles. For these scholars, government aspirations for smart cities face distinctive problems due to the significant financial burden associated with infrastructure upkeep and the considerable scale of informal economies in emerging nations, necessitating a comprehensive examination.

Tan and Taeihagh (2020) argue that technological advances and the changes they have brought about are significant in local government. Using technology generates disparity in digital literacy between individuals who possess expertise and those who

may harbour scepticism or lack experience in its usage. The difficulty mentioned above has resulted in establishing a novel role inside municipal administrations worldwide, commonly referred to as the chief innovation officer. Scholars argue that in cities like San Francisco and Miami, local governments are hiring innovation officers to ensure that technology-based tools are used effectively to serve their residents. In New Jersey, the local government hired a state-wide chief innovation officer. The challenges associated with technological advances have sparked the need for transformation, as evidenced by the fact that municipalities now hire technology officers.

## **2.4 Post-Pandemic Local Governance and Service Delivery Efforts**

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed unprecedented challenges on local governments worldwide, necessitating swift and adaptive responses to protect their communities. Wright (2020) states that local government played a pivotal role in fighting COVID-19, with municipalities leading lockdowns, testing, contact tracing, and vaccination efforts. These efforts highlighted local governance's centrality in disaster management and public health. The pandemic had significant economic effects on individuals and businesses.

A study conducted by Long and Evans (2023) examines the involvement of local government in managing the issue of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research was accomplished by conceptualising local council meetings as arenas for problematisation, wherein the issue of homelessness is subjected to rationalisation and the negotiation of potential solutions. Long and Evans (2023) state that local governments manage poverty by providing relief, food, and financial aid to needy communities. The findings from this study revealed that municipal officials in both cities invoked a common set of 'problem spaces', including systems, strategic opportunism, and power. Within the framework of 'doing what is feasible', local councils have undertaken several actions. These actions include recognising homelessness as a multifaceted and systemic issue, determining effective and ineffective strategies, examining the constraints imposed by jurisdictional boundaries and their consequences, and advocating for the implementation of innovative types of housing (Long and Evans, 2023). Nevertheless, the prevalent discourse advocating for the imperative of 'building back better' and a somewhat altered poverty management

framework that emphasises both care and control, it is evident that local administrations in isolation could not eradicate homelessness in the urban areas following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In another study, Adekoya et al. (2021) investigated the effects of COVID-19 on the internally generated revenue (IGR) of local governments (LGs) in Nigeria, as well as strategies to improve future information systems (IS) tax compliance and LGs' IGR. The research utilised an exploratory research design, with a specific emphasis on relevant material on LG administration, the COVID-19 pandemic, public sector accounting and finance, and the Nigerian Constitution. The secondary data on the IGR of LGs in Lagos state was collected, and a descriptive statistics approach was employed to analyse the data. The research findings indicate that the COVID-19 epidemic has significantly impacted all aspects of society, including individuals' lives, businesses, and governmental entities. The impact of this phenomenon on LG's revenues and budgets was predominantly negative.

Consequently, Adekoya et al. (2021) suggest that leaders at the local government level must acknowledge the significance and impact of ISs on economic development and the potential for IGR. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to implement measures that extend palliative actions. According to (Adekoya et al., 2021), this financial strain showed municipal governments' crisis-related financial issues. Creative economy growth was one recovery strategy in several places.

In a different study, Chollisni et al. (2022) ascertain the post-COVID-19 development of the creative economy in Indonesia by examining management techniques, policies, and the involvement of other economic actors. The study employs a survey research methodology grounded in ethnographic principles. The research findings indicate that various stakeholders, including local governments, economic actors, economic activists/observers, and the public, can implement multiple tactics and policies. Therefore, it is anticipated that the creative economy in Indonesia will persist and undergo further advancements to uphold the well-being of the Indonesian populace in the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic. Chollisni et al. (2022) note that creative economy development is a potential strategy for bolstering post-COVID-19 recovery. To strengthen their economies, local governments recognised creative sectors'

income-generating and innovation-promoting potential. Local administrations in federal systems like Nepal faced epidemic challenges.

Chaudhary (2022) examined Nepalese local governments' crisis response and recovery experiences and the need to reassess their duties. The study was based mainly on a literature review. The key finding from this study highlights that local government become the beacon of hope for the local people in the face of the pandemic. This finding is partly due to the transformative approaches the local government leaders adopted in the face of the pandemic. Chaudhary (2022) states that the pandemic allowed the local government to reach people and demonstrate government decentralisation's fundamental essence. In addition, Chaudhary (2022) emphasises the importance of good governance and public service in responding to pandemics. In a different study, Scott (2020) examines the possibility of facilitating increased economic self-determination and highlights the dynamic transformation between municipal planning authorities and Indigenous governance institutions. For Scott (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significant importance of municipal leaders in effectively addressing public health emergencies, healthcare infrastructure, and the overall welfare of the population.

The literature above highlights the importance of local governance in effectively tackling the complex problems presented by the COVID-19 epidemic. It draws attention to the necessity for novel approaches, the acknowledgement of local governing bodies as pivotal participants in addressing crises, and the capacity of creative industries to contribute to the revitalisation of the economy.

## **2.5 The Role of Municipal Leaders in Service Delivery and Transformation**

The involvement of municipal leaders in providing services and transformation is a crucial and ever-evolving component of local governance. Municipal leaders, encompassing mayors, council members, and administrators, have crucial responsibilities in influencing the provision of basic services, instigating reforms, and cultivating constructive transformations within their communities. The literature below investigates municipal leaders' diverse responsibilities and significant impact in the context of local government reform endeavours. It explores these leaders' strategies in public administration, including proactive decision-making, cultivating a collective sense of responsibility, pursuing novel approaches, and promoting citizen involvement.



This review seeks to provide an understanding of the role of local leaders in defining the future of their communities by analysing the fundamental aspects of municipal leadership in service delivery and transformation.

### *2.5.1 Influencing local government reform*

Available literature suggests that municipal leaders play a crucial role in influencing local government reform. For instance, Keuffer (2018) investigates the role of local autonomy in facilitating government reform initiatives in Switzerland. For this scholar, municipal leaders, as key decision-makers, can drive reform efforts. According to Keuffer (2018), greater autonomy empowers them to respond effectively to local needs and challenges, thus contributing to the success of reform initiatives. This finding highlights the significance of municipal leaders in shaping the direction of local government reform. Keuffer (2018) argument regarding the role of municipal leaders in influencing local government reform finds support and further context in various studies (Van der Kamp et al., 2017), especially those related to China's experiences and the political influence at the local government level in South Africa. Van der Kamp et al. (2017) examine the dynamics of decentralisation, revenue pressures, and governance reform in China. The study highlights the complex interplay between local governments and central authorities. For these scholars, municipal leaders often find themselves at the forefront of reform initiatives as they seek to balance local revenue generation with governance improvements (Van der Kamp et al., 2017). The autonomy and discretion afforded to municipal leaders in China allow them to shape the direction of governance reforms (Van der Kamp et al., 2017). This thinking aligns with Keuffer (2018) assertions that local autonomy empowers leaders to drive reform efforts.

Additionally, Dai and Spires (2018) explore the advocacy efforts of grassroots environmental NGOs in China and their influence on local governments. For these scholars, municipal leaders in authoritarian states like China are subject to various pressures, including those from civil society (Dai and Spires, 2018). Dai and Spires (2018) establish that grassroots advocacy can push municipal leaders to consider reform measures that align with public interests. This dynamic demonstrates the agency of municipal leaders in responding to external pressures and driving governance reforms (Dai and Spires, 2018), a key aspect of Keuffer (2018) argument. Masuku and Jili (2019) investigate the political influence at the local government level

in South Africa. Their study accentuates the manner in which political factors can shape local government decisions and actions. For these researchers, municipal leaders in South Africa, as in other contexts, often have to navigate complex political landscapes to advocate for reforms (Masuku and Jili, 2019). Masuku and Jili (2019) argue that their role in mobilising support, securing resources, and implementing policies aligns with Keuffer (2018) argument that municipal leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of reform initiatives.

### *2.5.2 Driving felt responsibility for change*

A substantial body of research has indicated that municipal leaders drive the felt responsibility for change. A common consensus among scholars is that municipal leaders inspire a sense of duty and ownership in themselves and their communities to launch and sustain constructive reforms in service delivery and governance (Campbell, 2018). To illustrate, Campbell (2018) examines the concept of 'felt responsibility for change' in public organisations in Korea. For this scholar, municipal leaders' sense of responsibility for improving service delivery and governance is a critical factor in driving transformative efforts within the local government sector (Campbell, 2018). Their leadership stimulates a commitment to change and continuous improvement. In line with Campbell (2018) exploration of 'felt responsibility for change' in public organisations, several studies shed light on the role of leadership in fostering a sense of responsibility for change among employees. Tayal et al. (2018) investigate the impact of transformational leadership on employees' acceptance of change. For Tayal et al. (2018), transformational leaders, as discussed by Campbell (2018), have the potential to instil a sense of responsibility for change among their followers. They inspire confidence, foster a shared vision, and encourage innovation, all of which contribute to employees' willingness to embrace change initiatives (Tayal et al., 2018). This stance aligns with Campbell's argument that leaders' commitment to change can influence their followers' sense of responsibility for it (Campbell, 2018).

Moreover, Khan and Khan (2019) explore how transformational leaders foster employee innovation through organisational learning, knowledge sharing, and social media use. Campbell's concept of 'felt responsibility for change' can be linked to the innovative capacity of employees (Campbell, 2018). Transformational leaders, as described by Khan and Khan (2019), create an environment where employees feel

responsible for contributing to organisational improvement. Their leadership style encourages a proactive approach to change, aligning with Campbell's idea of leaders driving a sense of responsibility for transformation. Middle managers also play a crucial role, as highlighted by Ancarani et al. (2021), who studied the role of middle managers' leadership in promoting work engagement within the public sector. The concept of 'felt responsibility for change' can be related to employees' engagement in their work. For Ancarani et al. (2021), middle managers, acting as leaders within their units, influence employees' commitment to their roles and their sense of responsibility for achieving organisational goals. This approach aligns with Campbell's argument that leaders at various levels can inspire a commitment to change (Campbell, 2018).

Leadership's influence extends to regional governance and planning, as demonstrated by (Granberg et al., 2019), who investigated regional-scale governance and planning in the context of transformative adaptation. Granberg et al. (2019) argue that leadership at the regional level plays a critical role in driving the necessary changes to address complex challenges, such as climate adaptation. Additionally, leaders who embrace their responsibility for change can mobilise stakeholders and drive collaborative efforts toward transformative adaptation (Granberg et al., 2019), as suggested by Campbell (2018). Furthermore, Timeus and Gascó (2018) explore how innovation capacity can be increased in city governments. These scholars argue that leadership, in the form of innovation labs, can shape the culture and environment of city governments (Timeus and Gascó, 2018). Timeus and Gascó (2018) argue that leaders who foster a sense of responsibility for innovation among employees can drive digital transformation and enhance innovation capacity, aligning with Campbell (2018) argument that leaders play a key role in shaping employees' commitment to change.

### *2.5.3 Exploring alternatives for reform*

Existing scholarship on the role of municipal leaders in service delivery and transformation suggests that municipal leaders are often engaged in efforts to identify alternatives for reforms to ensure better service delivery (Bel et al., 2018). For instance, previous research established that municipal leaders explore and evaluate many ideas and tactics to improve service delivery and make real improvements in their communities (Masuku and Jili, 2019). Bel et al. (2018) discuss alternatives for local government reform beyond privatisation and cost savings. For this scholar,

municipal leaders are influential in exploring innovative approaches to reform that prioritise service quality and community well-being (Masuku and Jili, 2019; Bel et al., 2018). Their leadership is essential in steering reform efforts towards more holistic and community-cantered outcomes. In the context of local government, the pursuit of reform often necessitates a consideration of alternative approaches to address complex challenges and improve service delivery (Bel et al., 2018). In another study, Masuku and Jili (2019) investigation of political influence in South Africa reveals the need to navigate political dynamics as a crucial aspect of reform.

Moreover, Pittaway and Montazemi (2020) emphasise the role of digital transformation and leadership in reshaping local government operations, offering new avenues for reform. For these scholars, local governments possess a favourable position to effectively incorporate government, business, and citizen data to provide advantageous, novel, and digitally facilitated public services. However, there has been a lack of progress in obtaining the anticipated advantages in numerous instances (Pittaway and Montazemi, 2020). The reason for this is that managers possess insufficient expertise to effectively oversee the adoption and execution of integrated enterprise systems aimed at enhancing the processes. For Masuku, delivering public services is a crucial aspect of the broader process known as 'digital transformation' (Pittaway and Montazemi, 2020).

Additionally, Chatfield and Reddick (2018) examination of big data analytics established the manner in which data-driven decision-making can optimise services, contributing to public value creation. Findings from Chatfield and Reddick (2018) indicate the importance of fostering a culture centred around analytics, guided by robust political leadership, inside a data-driven government, which is crucial for enhancing the creation of public value on a city-wide scale. These various studies together highlight that local leaders have an array of alternatives at their disposal to drive reform, aligning strategies with specific challenges and contexts.

#### *2.5.4 Framing citizen participation*

Municipal leaders play a pivotal role in framing and fostering citizen participation, which is a critical feature of contemporary local governance. Van de Griend et al. (2019) investigate how civil servants frame participation and balance municipal

responsibility with citizen initiative in Ede's Food Policy. According to Van de Griend et al. (2019), municipal leaders' framing of citizen participation is crucial for building trust and effective engagement. For Van de Griend et al. (2019), their leadership sets the tone for collaborative governance, ultimately enhancing service delivery outcomes.

Similarly, Lemanski (2017) exploration of participatory urban governance in South Africa reveals the complexities of unequal citizenship and underscores the need for leaders to bridge gaps and promote inclusivity. In another study, McLaverty (2017) focuses on innovations in community governance, stressing municipal leaders' responsibility to make platforms for citizens to engage effectively. The research of Mawela et al. (2017) employs an inductive thematic data analysis to examine the significant role that municipalities play in the implementation of e-Government initiatives. It investigates the various stakeholders that have the potential to influence the implementation of e-government initiatives inside municipalities. Mawela et al. (2017) emphasise that municipal leaders can leverage technology to facilitate citizen involvement. In a study on new democratic spaces, Cornwall (2017) emphasises the role of leaders in institutionalising participation within local government structures.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Liao and Ma (2019) examines the effects of professional associations on the attitudes of municipal managers towards citizen engagement. This research highlights the potential role of these networks in altering the viewpoints of leaders (Liao and Ma, 2019). Additionally, in their study, Mees et al. (2019) explore the involvement of local governments in community activities aimed at climate change adaptation. The authors emphasise the implication of leaders' active participation in engaging with citizens to tackle urgent environmental concerns effectively. The findings indicate a progressive transition of municipal governments towards assuming more networking, stimulating, and facilitating functions. The primary concerns expressed by local practitioners pertain to several key issues. Firstly, there is a notable lack of flexibility and support within their respective municipal organisations to effectively facilitate citizens' initiatives. Secondly, uncertainty prevails regarding the sustainability and continuity of citizens' initiatives over an extended period. Thirdly, potential apprehension exists regarding the possibility of an increase in inequity among different citizen groups because of facilitating citizens' initiatives. One significant observation is that local governments exhibit a degree of adaptability in their responsibilities, as they can transition from one position to another throughout the

many stages of development of a citizens' initiative. Furthermore, local governments can concurrently assume multiple roles for distinct citizens' initiatives.

In a study conducted by Sønderskov (2019), an inquiry is made into the inclination of local politicians to adopt collaborative governance. The study emphasises the significance of leaders' dedication to cultivating partnerships with citizens. Findings from Sønderskov (2019) suggest that while most politicians recognise the merits of promoting increased citizen participation, they express concerns regarding the practical implementation of "inclusiveness" and "popular control" as essential components of democracy. The individuals in question seem to believe that most individuals lack the necessary motivation to engage actively. Consequently, they do not perceive it as feasible or advantageous to engage in more direct interactions with citizens in collaborative processes aimed at generating collective proposals for novel approaches to public issues (Sønderskov, 2019). The study conducted by Rafique and Khoo (2018) examines the significance of community-based organisations in facilitating citizen participation, with a particular focus on the involvement of leaders in these entities to strengthen grassroots engagement. Rafique and Khoo (2018) indicate the necessity of implementing additional educational programmes targeting community-based organisations (CBOs), enhancing public awareness campaigns, and establishing effective systems to integrate and assess public requirements.

## **2.6 Summary**

This section covered the historical evolution of municipal leadership roles, current problems for local leaders, and the possibility of revolutionary leadership in local government. History shows how municipal leadership roles have developed from administrative to dynamic and community-oriented. This development indicates how social, economic, and technical changes are complicating municipal governance. To meet various community requirements, municipal leaders have had to adapt and broaden their responsibilities.

Local government has massive challenges. Municipal leaders face fiscal restrictions, environmental sustainability, social inequality, and now the consequences of a worldwide pandemic. They need efficient management and transformative leadership skills like flexibility, creativity, and stakeholder engagement to overcome these obstacles. The COVID-19 pandemic tested local leaders' resilience and adaptability.

They have coordinated reactions, provided the necessary services, and led communities through exceptional times. These experiences could change local governance and service delivery post-pandemic, emphasising the necessity for adaptive, forward-thinking leadership.

Section 2 also stressed municipal leaders' role in service delivery. Their ability to improve local government services affects citizens' well-being. Citizenship-focused leadership builds trust, community satisfaction, and local development. Municipal leaders also shape local government reform. They can encourage citizens to take responsibility for change and seek community-aligned reform options. Effective leadership can also encourage citizen participation in decision-making, giving locals a say in their communities' futures.

In a nutshell, municipal leadership is varied and dynamic, changing with local administration. Strong and flexible municipal leadership is crucial when facing current and future problems. Municipal leaders may restructure local government, promote inclusive service delivery, and engage communities in reform. Their dedication to these positions is crucial to their communities' success. This literature analysis highlights the importance of municipal leadership in expediting service delivery and transforming local government.

## **SECTION 3: THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATION ON SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section provides an overview of the impact and influence of transformation and transformation leadership on service delivery within the context of local government. Implementing leadership transformation has the potential to exert a substantial impact on service delivery across multiple dimensions. Evidence from reviewed literature reveals that new leadership can bring fresh objectives and perspectives, perhaps leading to adjustments in resource allocation and service delivery techniques, aligning them more closely with the needs and goals of the community. Moreover, enhancing accountability and transparency through effective leadership will likely culminate in leaders being more sensitive to the requirements of their constituencies. In addition, good leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing efficiency through the simplification of procedures, optimisation of resource allocation, and the timely and cost-efficient delivery of services. Evidence from the review also suggests that leadership transformation actively promotes the cultivation of innovation in the provision of services, facilitating the integration of novel technologies and the use of inventive approaches to problem-solving. In addition, transformation leadership employs performance assessment tools to monitor service outcomes, thus enabling ongoing enhancement.

### **3.2 Transformation, Service Improvement, Effective Community Leadership and Increased Public Confidence**

Much literature has been published on the impact of transformation and leadership on service delivery. Several scholarly studies indicate that the process of local government transformation has the potential to yield positive outcomes, including enhanced service quality, improved community leadership, and increased public trust. However, it is important to acknowledge that other research emphasises certain obstacles associated with this transformation, such as inadequate managerial practices, shortages in skills, and potential adverse effects on both public employees and citizens.

Downe and Martin (2006) analysed the objectives and effectiveness of local government policies and their coherence in delivering services. These scholars argue



that although the connections between policies within the Local Government Modernisation Agenda may not be immediately apparent, there has been a growing trend towards a more integrated and comprehensive approach to policymaking. Local authority officers view individuals to engage in behaviours that contribute to the attainment of service improvement, enhanced community leadership, heightened stakeholder engagement, augmented accountability, and higher public confidence (Downe and Martin, 2006). According to the findings of this research project, the transformation strategies implemented by local governments contribute to the enhancement of services, the enhancement of community leadership, the enhancement of stakeholder involvement, the enhancement of accountability, and the enhancement of confidence (Downe and Martin, 2006).

In another study, Karpagavalli and Mohanasoundari (2017) examined the impact that the e-governance policies and transformation had on the functioning of Tirupur City in India. These scholars argue that implementing digital governance at the municipal level can facilitate greater economic growth, enhance the provision of social services, and simplify government operations. In addition to this, it has the potential to reduce the costs associated with transactions and make public services more financially accessible to local communities (Karpagavalli and Mohanasoundari, 2017). Findings from this study suggest that transformation in local government through e-governance has the potential to lead to improved planning, monitoring mechanisms, cost savings and more effective administration of public services (Karpagavalli and Mohanasoundari, 2017). In another study that critiques the transformation approaches that relate to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in South Africa's local government capacity to achieve these goals, Reddy (2014) argues that the implementation of transformation in local government is most notable and impactful when accompanied by initiatives aimed at improving public governance and promoting local economic growth, with the ultimate goal of achieving inclusive MDGs.

Like Karpagavalli and Mohanasoundari (2017), who focused on the impact of digital transformation and its impact on service delivery, Vedantam and Doctor (2022) examined the experience of the digital transformation of urban governance in Andhra Pradesh. Findings from this study revealed that the municipal digital transformation of urban governance in Andhra Pradesh resulted in huge positive outcomes and the scope for improvements in public grievance redressal. Findings from Vedantam and Doctor

(2022) and Karpagavalli and Mohanasoundari (2017) were echoed by Vogl et al. (2020), whose study examined the effects of adopting smart technologies on public administration functioning in the United Kingdom. The results Vogl et al. (2020) indicate that local governments are increasingly embracing smart technologies, which are unexpectedly influencing the integration of public administrators and computer algorithms in the provision of public services. For Vogl et al. (2020), the use of smart technologies within the realm of local government is having a profound effect on the organisational framework of public administration, hence leading to a significant alteration in the socio-technical dynamics between employees and the instruments they employ.

In a study that examines the enablers for an effective and efficient public service delivery in local government in Jordan, Aladwan and Forrester (2016) put forth the assertion that the transformation of local development units and the clarification of administrative and financial autonomy of subnational government institutions have the potential to exert a constructive influence on service delivery within local government. Scholars have discovered that to achieve effective local public service delivery in Jordan, several key factors must be addressed (Aladwan and Forrester, 2016). These include the transformation of Local Development Units, the establishment of clear administrative and financial autonomy, the promotion of coordinated dialogue between central, governorate, and municipal levels, and the implementation of strategic capacity-building initiatives for local civil servants and elected officials. In a different study that assessed the implementation of skills development at Umzinyathi District Municipality and the impact that transformation has on service delivery, Ngobese (2017) paid attention to the negative effects that the transformation has on the provision of services. Findings from this study revealed that transformation in South African municipalities has faced challenges such as poor management, skills shortages, corruption, and conflict resulting in service delivery.

The literature examined above provides a comprehensive overview of the function and influence of change and transformational leadership on several aspects of local government operations, particularly concerning service delivery. A recurring pattern observed in scholarly research, exemplified by the works of Downe and Martin (2006) and Karpagavalli and Mohanasoundari (2017), is the existence of a positive association between transformational endeavours and several desirable outcomes,

including enhanced service quality, community leadership, and public trust. Significantly, e-governance is identified as a transformative instrument for augmenting economic growth, the provision of social services, and administrative efficiency (Karpagavalli and Mohanasoundari, 2017; Vedantam and Doctor, 2022). Hence, it can be argued that the adoption of transformation and transformational leadership approaches can enhance local governance and improve service delivery. However, it is important to acknowledge that the implementation of these approaches is complex and requires careful consideration of several factors, including facilitators and obstacles.

### **3.3 Transformation, Leadership, Employee Motivation and Engagement**

Other studies have considered the relationship between transformation, leadership and employee motivation (Ennis et al., 2018; Schiuma et al., 2022; Shabane et al., 2017; Mavhungu and Bussin, 2017). For instance, a common argument among scholars is that transformational leaders motivate and inspire their teams, thus fostering a shared sense of purpose and cultivating an environment that promotes high levels of performance and achievement (Schiuma et al., 2022). In a study that examines the mediating roles of affective and normative commitment in the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention of government employees, Schiuma et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership practices positively influence employees' affective and normative commitment, leading to a decrease in turnover intention. This effect is particularly pronounced among individuals belonging to the baby boomer generation compared to other generational cohorts. Additionally, these scholars also observed that the magnitude of the indirect impact of transformational leadership on turnover intention is comparatively higher among individuals belonging to the baby boomer generation in comparison to other generational cohorts.

In a different study that was conducted in China that examines the multilevel impacts of transformational leadership on employees' service quality and the multilevel mechanism mediating relationship, Su et al. (2019) collected data from 208 managers and 1 431 employees at 223 branches of a la larger catering corporation in southern China. Su et al. (2019) found that strong transformational leadership improves the quality of service provided by employees on both an individual and a branch level. This

relationship is partially mediated by affective commitment and psychological empowerment. When employees exhibit high levels of motivation and engagement, they are more likely to deliver services effectively and efficiently (Su et al., 2019). In a different study, Yang et al. (2023) examine the interplay among transformational leadership in government, public trust, and posttraumatic growth. The study sample included 1011 community-dwelling adults (61.2% females; Mean age = 41.2 years, SD = 15.8) in Macao, China. Findings from this study confirm the idea that transformational local government leadership during the COVID-19 epidemic improves posttraumatic growth, but government trust does not mediate these effects (Yang et al., 2023).

Shabane et al. (2017) study conducted in South Africa determined whether transformational leadership played a mediating role in the relationship between satisfaction with remuneration and intention to stay amongst artisans employed in the military. They used a quantitative survey research design to collect data from a sample of 108 artisans employed at the military in Pretoria. The findings indicate that the participants, irrespective of their gender or ethnicity, exhibited a widespread sense of dissatisfaction with their compensation. The study revealed that transformational leadership serves as a mediator in the association between satisfaction with compensation and the intention to remain in the organisation. Also, Shabane et al. (2017) argue that organisations must cultivate the aptitude for transformational leadership among their managers to enhance talent retention rates and mitigate employees' intent to resign.

Similarly, Mavhungu and Bussin (2017) examine the significance of individual performance levels in identifying performance-related challenges within the public sector. Specifically, the study concentrated on the intermediary function of motivation in the connection between leadership practices and the overall performance of the public sector. The study employed quantitative methods and a cross-sectional survey to collect data from 65 employees in the South African public sector. Results from this study indicate a direct link between leadership and employee performance in the public sector. For instance, it was discovered that public sector motivation serves as a mediator between perceived leadership styles and individual job performance (Mavhungu and Bussin, 2017). These findings imply that increased employee performance improves service delivery.

The studies reviewed above collectively illustrate that transformational leadership has a crucial role in improving different facets of public sector success, including staff motivation and commitment, service quality, and stakeholder satisfaction. The research encompasses a wide range of contexts, including China and South Africa. It addresses various aspects of public sector employment, such as the phenomenon of employee turnover, the experience of post-traumatic growth in times of crises, and the evaluation of job performance. Therefore, this collection of literature plays a crucial role in both conceptualising and measuring the many benefits of transformational leadership at multiple levels, thereby providing evidence for its importance in improving service delivery in the public sector.

### **3.4 Transformation, Leadership, Innovation and Adaptability**

Numerous studies have revealed that transformational leaders encourage innovation and adaptability (Madi Odeh et al., 2023; Zaman et al., 2019; Khan and Khan, 2019). These two aspects are, in turn, the two essential qualities crucial for enhancing service delivery mechanisms. Madi Odeh et al. (2023) study builds upon established theories of transformational leadership, adaptive organisational culture, and resilience to examine the influence of the chosen Total Quality Management (TQM) leadership approach, namely “transformational leadership”, on organisational resilience. It does so through the intermediary role of an adaptive culture, which is crucial for an organisation’s survival during crises such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic that had a profound global impact on businesses. This cross-sectional online survey of a random sample of Dubai service organisations focused on firm-level units of analysis. The researchers collected 379 valid responses for the study. Regression analysis was used to test hypotheses. Extensive research has found that transformational leadership positively impacts adaptable culture and organisational resilience. The study also indicated that adaptive culture largely mediates transformational leadership’s impact on organisational resilience (Madi Odeh et al., 2023).

In another study, Khan and Khan (2019) utilise the Diffusion of Innovation Theory as a framework to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee innovation. This study explores the mediating role of organisational learning and information sharing in the relationship between certain variables. Additionally, their study evaluates the potential moderating effect of social media usage on this

relationship. The data was obtained by employing random sampling techniques from a sample size of 375 individuals, consisting of both employees and supervisors. This sample was drawn from a total of 89 municipal committees in Pakistan, which serve as a level of local government entities. The results indicate that there is a beneficial relationship between transformational leadership and both organisational learning and information sharing (Khan and Khan, 2019).

Similarly, the impact of organisational learning and knowledge exchange on staff innovation is substantial. Moreover, it may be argued that the processes of organisational learning and information exchange mediate the influence of transformational leadership on staff creativity. In contrast to initial predictions, the moderating influence of social media usage on the association between organisational learning and staff creativity was determined to be statistically negligible (Khan and Khan, 2019).

In another study, Zaman et al. (2019) stress the importance of transformational leadership in the success of municipal projects. Zaman et al. (2019) examined how project flexibility and project visibility interactively influence the relationship between transformational leadership and various facets of project success, such as achieving design objectives, effects on customers, and advantages to the project-based organisation. Data for this study was retrieved from cross sectional survey of 160 project managers from telecom-intensive companies in Pakistan. The results indicate a positive correlation between the transformational leadership of project managers, project flexibility, project visibility, and the construct of multi-dimensional project success in its second-order formative form. Interestingly, there is evidence to suggest that the association between transformational leadership and project performance is influenced by project flexibility and project visibility, resulting in negative moderation (Zaman et al., 2019).

Evidence from previous research shows that accountability and transparency are key aspects of transformational leadership. Research has conclusively established that transformational leaders and their teams are accountable for their actions (Hawkins, 2021). In a study that describes a model of trust-culture leadership from comments of local government managers in the USA, Fairholm et al. (2018) argue that transformational leaders strive for transparency in operations, which is a key

component for public trust in local government services. Additionally, in a study that examines the impact of accountability on Public Service Delivery efficiency in Pakistan, Rana et al. (2019) argue that accountability ensures that the available resources are used optimally and services are delivered efficiently. Additionally, Rana et al.'s (2019) study found a strong relationship between accountability and public service delivery, indicating that accountability significantly enhances service delivery. Consequently, this will boost public confidence in local governance.

The literature reviewed above repeatedly emphasises the positive effects of transformational leadership on diverse dimensions of service delivery, encompassing organisational resilience and staff innovation. In their study, Madi Odeh et al. (2023) emphasise the significance of adaptive culture as a mediator in bolstering organisational resilience, particularly in the context of crises, when it plays a vital role in ensuring effective service delivery. Khan and Khan (2019) provide additional insights into the relationship between transformational leadership, organisational learning, and knowledge sharing. They highlight the positive influence of transformational leadership on these factors, which later impact staff innovation. This innovation is considered a crucial element for achieving effective service delivery.

Nevertheless, the study also observes that the influence of social media usage as a moderating factor is inconsequential. According to Zaman et al. (2019), there is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and project performance. However, it is important to consider that certain elements, such as project flexibility and visibility, may have a negative moderating effect on this relationship. These studies collectively validate the significant impact of leadership on shaping the outcomes of service delivery.

### **3.5 Summary**

The literature shows that competent leadership serves as a catalytic agent for motivating and actively involving the employees in local government. This knowledge will ultimately lead to improved levels of morale and productivity. Additionally, the literature shows that leadership transformation promotes increased community engagement in decision-making procedures and integrates citizen feedback into the implementation of service delivery plans. Resource management is a crucial component wherein competent leaders demonstrate greater competence in acquiring

resources, grants, and funding prospects to facilitate the provision of services, hence assuring enduring financial viability. The process of leadership changes has the potential to facilitate the formulation of strategic plans and policies that are in congruence with the long-term objectives of the community.

Furthermore, leaders establish and cultivate relationships and collaborations with other stakeholders, including neighbouring governmental entities, non-profit entities, and commercial enterprises, to augment the provision of services and facilitate the sharing of resources. Adaptability is a key attribute that is often linked to strong leadership, as it facilitates the ability to effectively respond to dynamic situations and unforeseen challenges, including crises. Lastly, effective leaders must possess the necessary abilities in conflict resolution to effectively address any disputes or conflicts that may potentially impede the delivery of services. It is imperative to acknowledge that the results of leadership changes may exhibit variability, contingent upon the presence of leadership attributes, adequate support, and effective engagement with diverse stakeholders.



## **SECTION 4: INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL BEST PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING SERVICE DELIVERY IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Countries work together to improve citizens' lives by providing efficient and fair services. This section analyses worldwide trends, challenges, best practices, and case studies on service delivery promotion to shed light on successful international projects. It covers several main subsections to examine the complexities of delivering services that meet global development goals. International perspectives on service delivery within global development goals and their significance in achieving SDGs are examined in the first subsection. Exploring how global ambitions and aspirations affect local service delivery is crucial to understanding the broader context.

Additionally, this section describes best practices and models using compelling global case studies. These multinational service delivery projects are innovative and successful. Providing clean water and sanitation in South India and providing rural Romanians with mobile health clinics are examples. In Bogotá, Colombia, the TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System transformed the city, while organic waste recycling in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, demonstrates sustainable environmental service delivery. These case studies demonstrate the many methods used to improve service delivery across several areas. The review also examines European service delivery literature, which is shaped by its political, economic, and social environments. A thorough analysis of service delivery activities in Africa reveals the complexity of service delivery on the continent, particularly the emerging tendency of municipalising privatised services.

### **4.2 International Perspectives on Promoting Service Delivery: Global trends and challenges**

This section analyses international perspectives on the promotion of service delivery, considering global trends and problems that impact governments' efforts to fulfil the requirements of their populations. This study aims to examine the effective techniques and exemplary approaches adopted by different nations to improve service delivery while also acknowledging the prevalent obstacles encountered in the pursuit of these objectives. Through the analysis of overseas experiences, our objective is to provide

useful insights that can guide and motivate local initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery in South Africa.

#### *4.2.1 Global development goals and service delivery*

Over the past few years, international bodies such as the United Nations have set ambitious goals, including the SDGs. Among its key emphasis is the need to provide services such as essential services, clean water, health care, and sanitation to attain a quality of life. The SDGs are a set of global development objectives that emphasise service delivery and are associated with those objectives. As a component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SDGs are a collection of 17 interrelated and lofty objectives that were approved in 2015 by member states of the United Nations. They intend to address a wide variety of global issues, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and peace, as well as, most crucially, the improvement of service delivery to guarantee a higher standard of living for everyone. Their aims, amongst others, are to:

- **Eliminate All Forms of Poverty:** This objective focuses on putting an end to all types of poverty and ensuring that people have access to fundamental services such as education, healthcare, and clean water.
- **Zero Hunger:** A mode of service delivery, particularly for disadvantaged groups, ensuring access to nutritious food and enough nutrition.
- **Optimal Health and Happiness:** This goal focuses on access to high-quality medical care, which strives to make sure everyone lives a healthy life and promotes overall happiness.
- **Providing Quality Education is an essential service:** All people with access to an inclusive and equitable education at all levels, from early childhood to postsecondary education, is the primary focus.
- **Ensure Access to Clean Water and Sanitation Services:** Having access to services that provide clean water and sanitation is an essential component of providing services, and the purpose of this objective is to guarantee the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for everyone.
- **Affordable and Clean Energy:** It is essential for sustainable development to ensure that people have access to energy services that are both affordable and clean.

- **Eco-Friendly and Thriving Towns and Communities:** This objective is to make cities and other human settlements more welcoming, secure, resilient, and environmentally friendly. It includes things like reasonably priced housing, reliable public transportation, and easy access to essential services.
- **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** Strengthening governance and institutions is crucial for effective service delivery and for ensuring that services are provided fairly and transparently.
- **Partnerships to Achieve the Goals:** To achieve all the SDGs, including the ones that deal with the provision of services, governments, civil society, and the private sector need to work together and form partnerships.

#### *4.2.2 The Role of service delivery in achieving SDGs*

A recurring theme in the literature is that the provision of services is a pivotal factor in attaining the SDGs (Reddy, 2016a). This is achieved through the enhancement of the quality of fundamental services, the promotion of students' knowledge and dedication through service-learning, and the integration of ecosystem services to foster energy efficiency and sustainability (Olofsson and Mark-Herbert, 2020).

To illustrate, Reddy (2016a) argues that there is a strong emphasis on local government being a key implementation partner in attaining the new SDGs. For Reddy (2016a), the focal points of the ongoing debate and discourse have been on strategies for localising the forthcoming development framework, assessing the local ramifications of the future SDGs, and guaranteeing that the local dimension receives due attention and is effectively executed (Reddy, 2016a). In a different study, Olofsson and Mark-Herbert (2020) expound on the perceived value associated with the integration of the SDGs in sustainability communication within the clothing retail industry. A comparative case study was undertaken to examine two Swedish garment retail enterprises, namely Lindex and Filippa K. The study involved a review of six sustainability reports spanning the years 2015 to 2017. The available empirical evidence indicates a positive association between the integration of SDGs, the maturity of communication practises, and the extent of SDG contributions. The research indicates that the SDGs can play a significant role in broadening the extent of company effect and value in the context of sustainability communication.

Additionally, the study by Mutyambizi et al. (2020) offers a comprehensive examination of the current state of basic service provision. It identifies the elements that are linked to the level of satisfaction with service delivery in informal settlements that are being targeted for improvement in South Africa. Findings from this study suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing the quality of fundamental services are important to achieve the objectives outlined in the SDGs (Mutyambizi et al., 2020). Similarly, Yuan and Lo (2020) study investigates the relationship between sustainability and regional GDP by focusing on certain aspects of sustainability, namely food, energy, water, and core ecosystem services. Yuan and Lo (2020) findings demonstrate that service delivery plays a crucial role in effectively attaining the objectives of sustainable development. Jackson (2020) argues that public service is the engine of effective governance delivery in the global economy. For Jackson (2020), governments cannot function well without the enabling structures of public administration to deliver on their mandate as set out mostly in (political) manifestos and ensure an efficient market system meets citizens' basic welfare needs.

### **4.3 Best Practices and Models: Case Studies of Successful International Service Delivery Initiatives**

This section examines best practices and models by analysing case studies that showcase effective international service delivery projects. Through an analysis of several case studies from diverse nations, the section elucidates the fundamental methods, policies, and methodologies that have resulted in favourable results in augmenting the provision of services. The case studies provide significant contributions in terms of understanding new solutions, efficient governance models, and effective administrative procedures that have led to enhanced public services. It offers a comprehensive collection of international experiences, serving as a valuable resource for policymakers and practitioners who are interested in improving service delivery within their respective local contexts. It facilitates the adaptation of successful practices to tackle local challenges and fulfil local aspirations effectively.

#### *4.3.1 Clean water and sanitation in South India*

The Indian government has partnered with the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank (WB) to provide and offer clean water and

sanitation services to rural communities in the southern parts of India. India, with a population of over 1.3 billion people, faces severe water shortages and sanitation and hygiene problems. As a result of inadequate sanitation, there are high rates of illness and water-borne diseases that lead to serious health and economic consequences. To address the water challenges, the Indian government, in partnership with the UN, WHO, and WB, has taken various initiatives to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions in the country, such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the National Rural Drinking Water Programme. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, also known as the Clean India Mission, was initiated in 2014 to attain comprehensive sanitation coverage and establish a clean and open defecation-free (ODF) environment throughout India by the 2nd of October 2019. The programme has successfully facilitated the construction of over 110 million toilets, leading to the declaration of ODF status in 22 states, as well as over 700 districts and 600,000 villages. The methods have played a substantial part in effectively tackling the water, sanitation, and hygiene issues prevalent in India. The endeavours undertaken by the government, in conjunction with collaborations between the public and private sectors, have yielded favourable results, such as an augmentation in sanitation coverage and a reduction in instances of open defecation.

#### *4.3.2 Health clinics on wheels in rural areas of Romania*

There are still many rural towns in Romania and Bulgaria that are located in a significant distance away from the services that are taken for granted by the country's metropolitan residents. One of these services is oral healthcare, which has an effect not only on people's overall health but also on their quality of life. Because it can be excessively expensive or take too much time to travel to the nearest dental facility, SAN-CAR project has delivered dental treatment to individuals in need of them.

The programme builds mobile health clinics in Romania in collaboration with the Romanian government. These mobile clinics are stocked with essential medications, medical staff, and diagnostic equipment and travel to far-flung communities to provide important medical services such as check-ups, vaccines, and instruction on proper health practises. Improved access to healthcare services in rural areas should result in earlier disease diagnosis and better health outcomes overall.

In the counties of Constanta and Calarasi in Romania, as well as the Dobrich District in Bulgaria, the project's mobile dental clinic has provided free consultations and treatment to a total of 10,107 individuals who do not have access to a dentist in their immediate area. SAN-CAR has also allowed eight dental students to gain hands-on experience, allowing them to work alongside more seasoned medical experts who oversaw the treatment.

#### *4.3.3 Bogotá, Colombia - TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System*

The TransMilenio bus rapid transit (BRT) system in Bogotá serves as a prominent illustration of effective urban public transport service provision. The development of this project was facilitated with the assistance of international organisations such as the WB.

The TransMilenio BRT system serves both Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, and Soacha. In December 2000, the public was provided access to the system. As of 2022, the city is serviced by a total of twelve transport lines, which collectively span 114.4 kilometres (equivalent to 71 miles). In addition to the urban, complementary, and special bus routes that are in operation inside the various neighbourhoods and significant roadways of the city, it constitutes an integral element of the city's Integrated Public Transport System (Sistema Integrado de Transporte Público [SITP] in Spanish).

The TransMilenio system comprises several interconnected BRT lines and has raised floor stations situated along a famous boulevard referred to as a 'tronal'. Individuals traverse a bridge spanning the roadway to gain entry to the stations. Bus traffic is generally confined to the innermost four lanes of the road, which are situated along the central axis of the street. Express buses can bypass stationary buses at a station by utilising the outer lanes.

#### *4.3.4 Organic waste recycling in the Twin Cities, Minnesota*

The metropolitan region under consideration has a population of 3.5 million individuals, constituting 64% of Minnesota's total population. It contains the two most populous cities in the state, namely Minneapolis and St. Paul, together with more than 150

smaller municipalities (Hughes and Peterson, 2018). The Minnesota state legislature implemented a waste diversion objective of 75% for the Twin Cities metropolitan region by the year 2030. Both state and county governments have determined the necessity of organic waste recycling to accomplish the objective of transforming the waste management system of the metropolitan region into a more sustainable model (Hughes and Peterson, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the state-wide directive aimed at diminishing trash sent to landfills and promoting the practice of recycling organic materials, the reactions at the municipal level have exhibited a certain degree of inconsistency.

The Twin Cities do not possess exclusive characteristics in terms of their diverse strategies for garbage management. Open collection systems are frequently observed in the United States, particularly in small to medium-sized municipalities. Based on a survey conducted by Skumatz Economic Research Associates in 2008, which involved 700 municipalities in North America, it was found that 29% of these municipalities had public waste collection services, 43% had organised systems where waste management services were outsourced to the private sector, and 23% had fully privatised 'open' waste and recycling collection systems (Hughes and Peterson, 2018). Waste collection within the European Union is structured through several public-private partnership (PPP) structures (Hughes and Peterson, 2018). The case study of the Twin Cities thus serves as an illustration of many potential approaches via which the private sector might participate in the provision of municipal services and the resulting repercussions of such involvement on urban sustainability endeavours.

#### **4.4 Service Delivery Efforts in Europe**

A recurring theme in the literature is that municipal service delivery initiatives in Europe encompass various measures such as the provision of key services like education and housing, the enhancement of service delivery through citizen awareness campaigns, and the improvement of efficiency through the pooling of resources, external public comptrollers, and leveraging past investments in infrastructure (Petkovšek et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2020; Connolly et al., 2018).

In a systematic literature review study on local service delivery mechanism, in-house provisions, privatisation and inter-municipal cooperation, Petkovšek et al. (2021) explored which delivery mechanism dominated. This study employs a content analysis

breakdown to investigate the potential impact of economies of scale, cost reductions, efficiency, and various economic, political, institutional, and social aspects on the provision of local public services (Petkovšek et al., 2021). Findings from this study suggest that the selection of delivery methods for local public services is primarily impacted by factors such as the scale of the local government, the effectiveness of service supply, the resources at hand, and the institutional structure in place. Politics and market competitiveness influence the decision-making process.

Furthermore, in a study that was conducted in Britain, Allen et al. (2020) tested the relationship between e-participation as a means of co-production and service performance. The study used multiple large longitudinal datasets from a smart city mobile platform. Findings from this study revealed that “citizen e-participation, in providing service feedback, is positively associated with the clearance rate of urban service requests in subdistrict service units, after controlling for various factors” (Allen et al., 2020). In addition, the study revealed that the magnitude of the impact that e-participation has on the efficiency of various kinds of municipal services varies greatly (Allen et al., 2020). E-participation has a greater proportional influence on complicated issues, which may include the collaboration of several organisations, than it does on straightforward everyday services. Overall, this study provides empirical data supporting the notion that e-participation, namely in the form of service feedback, has a beneficial role in enhancing the performance of service delivery within subdistrict service units. In a subdistrict characterised by a greater volume of e-feedback reports, there is an observed correlation with a higher clearance rate (Allen et al., 2020).

In another study, Hughes and Peterson (2018) explore the critical role played by the private sector in the transformation of municipal services within cities in Britain. The authors address the relationship between municipal government and the private sector as they endeavour to provide insight into how partnership and privatisation have the potential to impact service delivery in urban areas. Findings from Hughes and Peterson (2018) emphasise the necessity of gaining a deeper comprehension of the most effective strategies that local governments can employ to achieve urban sustainability within the framework of privatisation. It highlights the importance of the public sector’s ability to handle such initiatives and explores the possibilities for corporate social responsibility in the provision of municipal services. Hughes and Peterson (2018) findings indicate a necessity for more focus on the involvement of the



private sector in municipal services within cities. This finding highlights the significance of such involvement for the progression and results of urban sustainability programmes.

In a study conducted in the United States, Connolly et al. (2018) explore the inclusion of e-government services, paying specific attention to the American municipal government. The study sought to understand how the adoption of e-government services differs among different municipal governments in the US. For these scholars, e-government services encompass different online platforms and tools that are used to deliver government services and engage with the citizens (Connolly et al., 2018). The authors examined multiple elements that could potentially exert an influence on the diverse degrees of adoption of e-government services (Connolly et al., 2018). The research findings indicate that multiple elements influence the implementation of e-government services inside local government entities. It is worth noting that larger municipalities have a higher degree of adoption of e-government services, which can be attributed to their relatively larger pool of resources and greater capabilities. Economic considerations, such as increased levels of revenue within a municipality, may influence the process of adoption (Connolly et al., 2018). Connolly et al. (2018) argue that political issues, such as the configuration of local government and the existence of elected officials, have an impact on the level of adoption of e-government services.

#### **4.5 Service Delivery Efforts in Africa**

The section on Service Delivery Efforts in Africa predominantly centres on municipal service delivery initiatives, placing significant emphasis on the process of municipalising services that were formerly privatised. This study examines the trend towards greater public control in service supply, focusing on the experiences, achievements, and insights gained in African municipalities. The purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors that contribute to this trend and the potential consequences it has on the changing dynamics of service provision in Africa.

Pockets of excellence regarding public service delivery do exist in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. However, their successes are often short-lived by various constraints that may be triggered by macro and

microenvironments. In the SADC region, Botswana uses a Performance Management System (PMS) that aims to provide a planning and change framework that is linked to the National Development Plan (NDP) and budgetary processes. It is done to ensure that the skills, knowledge and competencies of the public service to render effective public goods and services are achieved while enhancing the capacity of public servants to improve their work (Botswana, 2022). These systems have been working for Botswana's public service. They could be used in South Africa's local government to link the ideals of the NDP Vision 2030 with the already existing PMS systems, especially in the local government sphere.

Mauritius, another signatory to the SADC, utilises a Service Quality (SERVQUAL) model which proposes that the public (customers) evaluate the quality of services rendered using the five distinct dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Ramseook-Munhurrin et al., 2010). This model has 22 statements that are used to assess consumer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of service. Arguably, local government in South Africa can pilot the SERVQUAL model to enhance citizen satisfaction in service delivery while upholding accountability, responsiveness, and empathy, including providing tangible service for effective and sustainable community development. Given the service delivery deficiencies raised in reports such as those of the Auditor General (AG) (2021/22), this model can be instrumental in fostering ethical and transformational leadership, which are key imperatives in ensuring that municipal officials deliver public goods and services in a timely and accountable manner.

To enhance the quality of public healthcare, Lesotho has implemented a decentralised local healthcare system, which is crucial for rendering health services to remote rural areas that have been marginalised and underdeveloped (Sagoe, Nuamah & Sagoe, 2021). The rationale for implementing such systems is to ensure that efficiency and effectiveness in public healthcare delivery, in line with the 2016 National Health Policy, is achieved. In addition, decentralising health services was meant to help local citizens have access to affordable and full healthcare services by the year 2030 (Review, 2018). This practice could also work for South African local governments where remote rural provinces could regularly implement a system of decentralised mobile services to offer health services to the people equitably.

Furthermore, the proliferation of modern digital technologies in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has seen other SADC countries harnessing their human and financial resources to adopt the latest technologies to enhance the quality of service delivery in their countries. The Tanzanian government, with the help of Zipline, utilises drone technology for emergency demand services (laboratory reagents, blood transfusion, medications, surgical supplies), which is fundamental to improving health care delivery (Nsengimana, 2018). This practice could have been emulated in the Eastern countries where Rwanda uses robotics and artificial intelligence, including drone technology, to deliver life-saving blood and medical supplies – something the local government can try to foster in public hospitals in South Africa.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) uses giant solar-powered robots (robocops) to control traffic in major cities such as Kinsasha. This technology can be piloted in SA, given the current state of load-shedding, which affects traffic movement (Kermeliotis, 2014). The idea of using robots has been witnessed in West Africa, where, in its education sector, Ghana developed ‘Fundi Bots’ robot programmes in 2016 to equip learners with the use of robots. This initiative was fundamental for enhancing the African Robotics Network and exploring some of the digital opportunities triggered by the 4IR (Naudé, 2017) (Shava, 2022). Similarly, in North Africa, Egypt, as noted by Shava (2022), launched EG Robotics in 2015 to assist entrepreneurs within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. These efforts were meant to ensure that by using modern technology, entrepreneurs can mitigate some of the barriers they may encounter in their quest to alleviate poverty and curb unemployment.

The use of blockchain technologies has been done in Kenya, including other Western countries, to ensure that public records are properly verified and transactions are correctly captured, as well as offering credit to the informal sector (Gebre, 2018). This step indicates a gap in the SADC region where the use of modern technology, such as drones, is still to be embraced. The use of robots to render services is crucial as it helps local governments in these countries to effectively deliver key services, while using technologies such as blockchain is believed to have assisted in curbing corruption and fraud in the management of public finances (Ndung’u and Signé, 2020). Depending on the available workforce and resources, these international and regional examples could be piloted and possibly used by South African local governments to enhance service delivery in various sectors of the economy.

#### *4.5.1 Municipal service delivery prioritises the municipalisation of privatised services*

A review of previous research on service delivery efforts in Africa reveals that initiatives aimed at enhancing municipal service delivery prioritise several strategies. These include municipalising privatised services, bolstering local capacity through skill development and government interventions, and embracing new technology and infrastructure funding models (Obeng-Odoom, 2018). For instance, Obeng-Odoom (2018) explores the roles of transnational corporations (TNCs) in shaping urban development. The researcher delves into the way TNCs influence a city's economic development, socially and spatially, impacting various aspects of urban life. The scholars found that the TNCs are a vital organ in the service delivery metrics, particularly in local government. To illustrate, Obeng-Odoom (2018) argues that TNCs contribute to the dynamics of urban development. It includes examining the ways TNCs invest in and affect the economic growth of cities, as well as their impact on urban infrastructure, housing, and services (Obeng-Odoom, 2018).

In a study conducted in South Africa that analysed the performance of South African municipal officials, specifically in the service delivery service, Masiya et al. (2021) revealed that factors such as an unsupportive institutional environment, negative power struggles, over-regulation, political interference, a tense and bureaucratic environment, lack of coherent management systems, absence of a culture of excellence, poor skill utilisation, poor oversight mechanisms, weak capacity to engage in collaborations, and lack of trust between councillors from different political parties, were responsible for the lack of performance (Masiya et al., 2021). The study's findings suggest that for South African municipalities to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities of providing efficient basic services to the population, the government must allocate resources towards enhancing the capabilities of municipal officials (Masiya et al., 2021). It can be achieved through the implementation of various local government interventions and transformative measures alongside the development of essential skills. Towns must undertake the depoliticisation of local government and actively encourage the non-partisan selection of municipal leaders.

In another study, Cirolia (2020) argues for the necessity of comprehending the development problem by examining the intersection of urban governance and municipal infrastructure. Cirolia (2020) presents three points regarding the tendencies

in African urban development throughout the post-colonial period. For this scholar, African cities encounter a fragmented budgetary authority. The implementation of decentralisation policies has led to the emergence of city government systems that are both controversial and complex. Furthermore, Cirolia (2020) argues that there has been a significant emphasis from donors and investors on making substantial investments in infrastructure at a massive scale.

Consequently, there has been a proliferation of disjointed networks and systems (Cirolia, 2020). Ultimately, the convergence of these two processes has facilitated the development of hybrid systems for delivering services within urban areas (Cirolia, 2020). It has significant ramifications for both the governance of urban services and their physical configurations. The present situation, together with the fundamental mechanisms that have played a role in its creation, is inadequately acknowledged in global development discussions. Cirolia (2020) argues that it is imperative to develop novel approaches to infrastructure funding to address the fragmented fiscal authorities, fragmented infrastructure networks, and hybrid service delivery patterns that are prevalent in African cities.

Additionally, research suggests that there is an increased focus on the relationship between political influence, accountability, and the delivery of public services at the local government level among scholars in Africa (Masuku and Jili, 2019). For instance, scholars discuss how political dynamics, citizen engagement and governance structure the quality of urban services in different African countries, with a specific focus on South Africa and Tanzania (Kulaba, 2019). Masuku and Jili (2019) explore the political influences at the local government level in South Africa. The scholars examine how political factors can influence the delivery of public services, especially at the local level. For Masuku and Jili (2019), the impact of the political interface inside local governments has significant implications on the administration's effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the potential for growth opportunities. These scholars argue that administrators have a crucial role in maintaining a clear distinction between the assignment of objectives and administrative responsibilities, as well as the policy-making activities of the government. Masuku and Jili (2019) propose that municipalities should implement the merit system instead of the spoils system, which is known for its reliance on political favours and intervention. The prevalence of

political patronage and intervention within local South African government entities significantly impedes the equitable provision of services.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This section discussed the global importance of service delivery as a key driver of social well-being and sustainable development. The international adoption of SDGs emphasises clean water, healthcare, sanitation, education, and energy to improve people's quality of life. Local governments are essential to implementing these global goals through SDG-aligned programmes. They are crucial implementation partners, help localise the SDGs, and ensure their attention and execution. Additionally, the case stories and research findings here demonstrate the transformative power of service delivery programmes worldwide. Strategic, well-executed service delivery efforts can improve local communities' quality of life, as shown by the Clean India Mission in South India, the innovative mobile health clinics in rural Romania, and the TransMilenio BRT system in Bogotá.

The European and African perspectives both emphasise the necessity for regionally specific service delivery systems. Europe improves service delivery by considering scale, resource allocation, political pressures, and e-participation. It emphasises public-private partnerships, external comptrollers, and talent development to improve service. In contrast, African efforts focus on municipalisation, capacity building, technology adoption, and infrastructure investment. Political dynamics, accountability, and citizen participation affect urban service quality, according to research. This literature review shows how global development goals, local government activities, and service delivery interact. It emphasises the importance of public administration, governance frameworks, and innovative techniques in achieving service delivery excellence, which improves lives worldwide. Policymakers, scholars, and practitioners trying to navigate service delivery and contribute to a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future can learn from this literature as societies evolve.

## **SECTION 5: GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP IMPEDIMENTS IN DELIVERING SERVICES TO COMMUNITIES**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This section investigates the varied environment of local governance in South Africa post-1994. It analyses the governance difficulties that evolved during this period, the rhetoric surrounding the political-administrative interface in local governance, and the intricacies of political-administrative styles and relationships. Additionally, it addresses the local government environment and describes the development of local administration after 1994. Furthermore, in this section, the legislative and policy dimensions of the local government's political-administrative interface will be discussed, stressing the dynamic legal framework that underpins this crucial feature of governance in South Africa. By delving into these issues, we want to get a full picture of the evolution, problems, and prospective possibilities for better local governance in post-apartheid South Africa.

The foundational base of public administration is politics, as the governmental sector is the constitutional, legislative, administrative, and organisational apparatus that is utilised for implementing public policies, plans and programmes. The conceptualisation of the politicisation of local government has always been realistic, and this has been more marked following the advent of local government dispensation after 1994 (Cameron, 2010; Reddy and de Vries, 2015). A significant number of councillors in local government, until the last government elections in November 2021, were from the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party. Consequently, the ruling party would have been accountable for municipal executive oversight as part of its political mandate. More specifically, the municipal leadership, which comprises the executive councillors, would be accountable for guaranteeing that the resultant policies/plans/programmes that they have officially sanctioned are applied and executed by the municipal officials that they have appointed (Maqoko and Asmah-Andoh, 2019). It is a given that the top leadership of the municipality will largely decide the accomplishment of any goal and the attainment of a policy objective.

According to Azunu (2013) and Thornhill (2012), the core of the interface between politics-administration is the positive linkage amid the political and administrative workings in municipalities. It is going to be that machinery which will, by and large, determine whether the policies developed and the resultant plans and programmes will be successfully implemented. The political component of the municipality has been voted into power by the local citizenry, who have also been delegated the requisite powers on their behalf (Maqoko and Asmah-Andoh, 2019). The elected politicians or councillors firmly believe that they are elected to govern. They do this on behalf of the voting public, and this would consist of, among other things, ensuring that municipal policies, plans and programmes are implemented and executed efficaciously and effectively, thereby enhancing the lifestyle of the local citizenry in that municipal jurisdiction. The Constitution of South Africa (1996) and requisite legislation does provide clarity on the role and responsibilities of the council/administration of the municipality; it has been a recognised and traditional exercise for the councils to appoint individuals based on benefaction and political patronage, as opposed to requisite qualifications, skills and experience (Tshishonga, 2015; Reddy, 2016b).

A critical component of the lengthy, drawn-out discussion on the politics-administrative crossing point is where politics is separated from administration at a more practical level. This discussion is relevant for young and evolving democracies like South Africa, where there is competition between politicians and bureaucrats, and both groups assert themselves politically to ascend to authority within the extended space for public governance. The resultant effect is ongoing conflicts that impact very destructively on service delivery and, in the final analysis, the global performance of the municipality (Azunu, 2013; Maqoko and Asmah-Andoh, 2019; Reddy, 2016b). This study evaluates the leadership impediments faced by local government nationally, factoring in both the administrative and political leadership in discharging basic services to the local citizenry. A critique of the transformation and reform of local governance demonstrates the resultant effect of politicisation on municipal performance and delivery of services. Recommendations are made at the end, which impact policy, as a rejoinder to the key thematic issues emphasised, with specific attention on the enhanced rendering of services within a good local governance context. A comprehensive desktop literature review was conducted nationally, continentally, and internationally as part of the research methodology. Additionally,



virtual and telephone discussions were held with executive municipal officials and leadership from a provincial non-governmental organisation, all of whom contributed valuable insights to the study's completion.

## **5.2 Local Governance Post-1994: Governance Challenges**

The post-1994 South African state is viewed as a deracialised and democratised state. It is characterised by a restructured, transformed, and reformed third sphere of government facilitating, strengthening and entrenching local democracy. Key to the progression was the primary constitutionalisation of local government as “developmental”, followed after that by certain key principles and ideals highlighted in the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), namely non-racial, non-sexist, redistributive, efficient and effective, all of which was high on the local governance schema. Several key pieces of legislation and policies were critical to the transition and transformation processes, notably Local Government Transition Act 202 of 1993; the South Africa Constitution (1996); White Paper on Local Government and Related Legislation; Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. Municipalities were reduced in number from 843 to 278, then 267 and finally to 257. The policy and statutory context and the resultant implications on the political-administrative interaction will be interrogated shortly.

Given that party politics drives the third governmental sphere in the country, the crucial issue in the real operation of a municipality is the quality of the political leadership locally (Tshishonga, 2015; Booysen, 2012; Reddy and de Vries, 2015; Reddy, 2018). The crucial aspects that will have a bearing on the process and will be the determining considerations are the capacity, effectiveness and honesty of the executive municipal functionaries. Some municipalities have shown distinction in executing their statutory and progressive mandate, while others are challenged even in basic services provision (Reddy and de Vries, 2015; RSA, 2009a; RSA, 2009b). Given the dissatisfaction of the national citizenry, with more specifically, basic service provision, public protests have increased considerably in the past two decades. Booysen (2012) points out that political patronage, corruption, and nepotism are important features of local politics. Consequently, any indication of this at the local level activates and causes public protests and marches.

Municipal service delivery post-1994 and, more specifically, in the past two decades, has indeed been a major challenge. The constant and unending clashes and strained relationships between the executive municipal functionaries, notably the mayors, deputy mayors, speakers and executive members on one side and the municipal managers, heads of departments and managers on the other side, has adversely impacted service delivery (Maqoko and Asmah-Andoh (2019). Ndudula (2013) points out that this created a deadlock in the council, requiring involvement by the province, which then had a damaging impact on the delivery of services in those municipal jurisdictions. Assessments done by the provinces on the general functioning of municipalities nationally have emphasised, among other things, the following: legislative/executive workings are not demarcated/strong and vibrant; political-administrative tensions; legislative/regulatory frameworks for compliance are inadequate; councillors' incapacity/inability to manage challenges organisationally; controls between political parties/councils are partially separated; imperfect accountability arrangements and weak systems; resources are limited as are local democratic support systems (RSA, 2009a; RSA, 2009b; Powell, 2012).

The regime (RSA, 2009a) pointed out that party political interests which have created divisions and the subsequent growth of a new political elite due to coalition governance have all contributed in some way or another to a steady decline in the functionality of South African municipalities (SACN, 2019). The resultant effect of the political-administrative crossing point is discord, where differences are not related to policy or even philosophy but to inadequate public resources, which are not often accessible (Nyawose, 2023). The requisite principles, values or ethics are not the key reflections and thoughts but rather personal gain. A nepotistic ethos and benefaction are deeply rooted in municipalities, and prevailing public accountability systems and structures have proven to be ineffectual, remote, and distant to many local communities. The subsequent results are violent marches and public protests, while – although to a lesser extent – non-governmental organisations and the media have been unsuccessful in ensuring that the requisite municipal accountability and oversight responsibilities are being discharged. Aggravating the situation on the ground is the strong awareness and discernment that councillors are unresponsive, indifferent and arrogant and are certainly not reactive and sensitive to local needs (Piper in Reddy, 2017) and (Reddy, 2016b).

Furthermore, the complaints management system and arrangements are ineffective, with jointly observed systems measuring municipal service provision or the value of community interface being absent (RSA, 2009a). Mismanagement and the lack of controls, highlighted in Powell (2012) and the Local Government Turnaround Strategy Report (RSA 2009b), point to the fact that good governance ideals are not being continuously factored in. The organisational and institutional deficits highlighted have given rise to a loss of public confidence in the country's systems and structures. The universal observation and perception is that many municipalities nationally are incapable and cannot further execute their rudimentary tasks, as espoused in the Constitution (1996). This service delivery breach and the re-establishing of assurance in local government capability must be open, receptive and responsible, and the LGTA was supposed to have done exactly that and remedied the situation; however, that has not happened.

### **5.3 Political-Administrative Interface Discourse in Local Governance**

A strong and clear differentiation between politics and administration was supported and encouraged by Woodrow Wilson, a key figure in the discipline of public administration. More specifically, it was pointed out by Waldo in Reddy (2018) that politics should reflect the views of the community, political party actions and activities, lawmaking body responsibilities, the clash of views and the struggle of ethics and values. On the other hand, policy administration by municipal bureaucrats was supposedly non-partisan, impartial, and procedural and was construed generally as a servant-master suggestion. In terms of this understanding of the politics-administration interaction at the local level, the council must provide direction, and municipal bureaucrats are responsible for executing them (Maqoko and Asmah-Andoh, 2019). This understanding then leads one to conclude that merit is the foundational basis for the appointment of officials, and, more importantly, favouritism is not included in that comparison.

Additionally, officials' employment should be based on competency and merit, following the Weberian model rather than considerations of race, religion, ethnicity, language, or caste. This approach forms the foundation of employment practices in developed countries, where the separation of managerial positions from political patronage is a crucial consideration. This perspective aligns with Woodrow Wilson's

aim to strengthen the legislative function and ensure minimal political interference in administration, as highlighted by Svvara (2001) and further emphasised by Cameron (2003).

Critics and detractors, according to Montjoy and Watson cited in Reddy (2017), have advanced two alternative models, notably the modified dichotomy and partnership models, that have since added to the politics-administration discourse. The former model posits the thinking that politics and administration are discrete and distinct thematic parts and, consequently, have a dividing line. Goodnow in Azunu (2013) emphasises that politics points to government expressions, the result of which is public policies, while administration is the process of giving effect to the government's will through the enactment of public policies. The latter model emphasises the connection between the distinct areas of influence in government and underscores interrelation, complementarity and, most importantly, a positive linkage between them.

#### **5.4 Political-Administrative Style and Relationships**

Azunu (2013), Cameron (2003) and Tahmasebi & Musavi in Reddy (2017) are of the view that the major misconception of the politics-administration interaction is that management is apolitical and to believe otherwise is being trusted. Five different approaches to political involvement in staff appointments have been highlighted, namely:

- **Neutral:** Denotes the difference between political administration and the supposition that executive staff are not partial and not linked to policy in any way.
- **Minimalist:** Middle and senior management appointed by the mayor/council. Approximately 5% of senior management are perceived as being linked to the past management and have been replaced (Germany, France, UK and USA).
- **Medium Patronage:** Senior and middle management appointed by the mayor/council (Latin America).
- **Comprehensive Patronage:** All staff are completely removed when the administration changes (1920s – 1930s in the USA).

- **Fused Party State:** No differentiation between local government and ruling party; characteristic of one-party states, where the ruling party appoints/promotes staff (Cameron, 2003).

The fused-party-state approach has applicability to developing countries and, more specifically, South Africa, as it typifies a political connection in the appointment of management staff. It is generally accepted that appointments are made using party-political links and that the individuals appointed are bona fide members of the ruling party (Tshishonga, 2015; Reddy, 2016b; Reddy, 2019), the country is a 'struggle democracy', which was liberated. Consequently, the ruling party is of the view that party stalwarts and supporters should occupy the executive leadership positions as they are critical to the implementation of party policy. The appointment of party loyalists in the public sector has been an ongoing phenomenon since 1994, and it has had dire consequences on the overall functioning of the state apparatus, resulting in a considerable increase in public protests nationally, at the local level (Tshishonga, 2015; Reddy, 2016b; Reddy, 2018).

## **5.5 Local Government Milieu**

Politics is a component of the state sector, as it involves political parties and politics in the wider framework of decision-making and policymaking. Political control is not exercised individually in society but by a cluster with the requisite support from the mainstream voting public in a democracy. According to Thornhill (2012); Van der Waldt (2007) and Van der Waldt (2022b), political parties are interest/pressure groups. They are responsible for assessing the realities on the ground and pertinent information available relative to a defined agenda. They are responsible for making a political policy decision based on all of this. The positive linkage and complementarity between politics and administration, according to Cameron (2003), is multi-layered and much more complicated. Consequently, the success of the interaction will depend on the cooperation and working together of the key municipal personalities involved, as well as their commitment to working together for the benefit of the local electorate.

Historically, the political-administrative crossing point has played itself out in diverse ways in developing countries, including Africa, in the 1960s and 1970s, where the politicisation of the public sector, both externally and internally, was a given. The

former implied that individuals recruited and employed in the public sector were primarily party supporters, and the ruling party decided this. The external part entailed consultation with the party on all major decisions and policies. Cameron (2003) opined that the conception of an impartial and neutral public service was unacceptable by nearly all countries continentally.

It was accepted that the difference between politics and administration was superseded and that municipal bureaucracies are largely politicised (Reddy, 2018), and it was not sensible and prudent to usher in a municipal service that was fully politicised. The African experience in public sector development has demonstrated in no uncertain terms that the unavoidable combination of administration and politics in the governmental sector has resulted in corruption and malfeasance increasing, and this has contributed to many countries continentally being declared failed states (Reddy, 2018; Cameron, 2010). It is a fact that those individuals appointed or elected were not necessarily the best, and they demonstrated more loyalty to their political party than the municipality itself. Consequently, the notion of developing a workforce that was skilled, loyal, trustworthy, passionate, and committed to service delivery was breached, as the loyalty to the ruling party was greater than that towards the municipality and service delivery. Most countries continentally have demonstrated that the pursuit of political power was a crucial aspect of public administration. Consequently, the quest for good governance and resultant public accountability and basic services provision has been compromised in the process.

## **5.6 Local Governance Beyond 1994: Where to?**

Local government has been restructured, transformed and reformed post-1994. A positive linkage between the political party and the political and managerial mechanisms of the municipality must be developed to facilitate policy formulation and implementation, thereby responding to basic services provision (Maqoko and Asmah-Andoh, 2019). Developmental local government, as constitutionalised, is key to improving the lifestyles of the local communities. The requisite trust and lucidness in the administrative and political functions must be prevalent, and additionally, skills set to ensure firm and decisive policy formulation and implementation must be in place (Cameron, 2003). Thornhill (2012) believes that in the absence of these defined pre-conditions, municipalities are unlikely to endorse and attain the anticipated policy ideas

or effectively assimilate the ideals championed politically and governmentally in the wider administrative and management systems and structures and vice versa.

Efforts to implement the New Public Management (NPM) approach, which prioritised customer satisfaction, improved governance and empowerment, greater public accountability and decentralisation to capacitate managers in the public sector, failed as it was 'half-hearted' (Azunu, 2013: 66). Reddy, Haque and De Vries in Reddy (2017) believe that the critical reflections are a fundamental organisational development change, skills and capacity development, and attitudes of the staff in the municipal service, as the emphasis is on public management refinement. The global objectives of the NPM approach and the growing politicisation of local government nationally were discordant, and consequently, the principles have not been readily adopted. The government has the right to employ executive municipal functionaries who have the same political leanings and possess the requisite skills to perform those tasks successfully, according to Mafunisa (2003). Given that the former apartheid regime adopted the same policy in 1948, the politicisation of the South African governmental sector was indeed historical. The National Party then ensured that party supporters were well acquainted with the apartheid system, structure and policies, and they were appointed to leadership positions. However, Cameron (2010) points out that political appointments in the public sector increased considerably after 1994 following the ushering of the ANC government. The country was third internationally, according to an OECD study, out of twelve states with increasing political involvement in public institutions (Azunu, 2013), and this no doubt had a destructively adverse impact on service delivery. According to Reddy (2018) and Tshishonga (2015), dissatisfaction with basic municipal services provision and, specifically, service delivery has resulted in an increasing number of protest marches nationally by local communities in South Africa.

Party political immersion in provincial and local administration is also suggestive of developments in the national governmental sphere. Thornhill (2012) adds that there is a propensity for the executive leadership of municipalities – mayors and deputy mayors, speakers and executive committee members – to interfere in the municipal administration. Consequently, sound municipal governance is compromised. The actions of the administrative officials can also be counter-productive as they can influence policy by manipulating the policy agenda or cluttering it, thereby creating

confusion about policy priorities. Moreover, municipal bureaucrats may not implement a policy adopted for some reason or the other.

Consequently, the notion of a municipal service being completely neutral is questionable as municipal bureaucrats could be hostile to plans and developments or supportive of the governing elite, who, according to Cameron (2010) and Mafunisa (2003), could be utilising municipal resources to benefit their particular group. The meritocracy system has distinct benefits and limitations. Municipal officials are independent, but appointments can be made based on patronage, which safeguards policy and programme support for the ruling party. Cameron (2010) and Zybrands in Reddy (2019) add that a qualified, professional, trustworthy and dedicated municipal administration should ensure that political deployees are capacitated and empowered with the requisite skills as opposed to just demonstrating party loyalty only. Additionally, the competent staff should be appointed following national legislation and regulations.

Councillors must be aware that they represent a local jurisdiction that is broadly representative of the entire municipal jurisdiction in a local democratic setting. Thornhill (2012), Van der Waldt (2007) and Van der Waldt (2022a) point out that local needs, demands and aspirations of any municipal area or zone must be assessed against the broader action required by the wider locality. This awareness also applies to the executive leadership, particularly the municipal manager, who must factor in community demands within the broader governance agenda, where resources, both human and financial, are critical (Van der Waldt, 2022b). The legislature, reflective of the broader interests of society through its political composition, has the ultimate municipal decision-making power. The mayor and the mayoral executive committee members will render accountability to the voting public or the mass media in terms of local democracy if there is non-implementation of a policy or a decision. The full council would, after that, have to respond to the issue, as public policymaking is an essential component of local politics.

## **5.7 Local Government Political and Administrative Interface: Legislative and Policy Aspects**

A critical challenge experienced at the local level nationally is the intricate and complicated political-administrative crossing point, which has been prioritised on the



municipal agenda. The municipal manager's and councillor's tasks, responsibilities and structures are detailed in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (Section 52) as part of their global mandate. Public policies must be implemented, and the processes, modus operandi responsibility areas and procedures must be detailed for the collaboration between the municipal manager, heads of departments and political structures, obviating the need for possible conflicts or tension. The council appoints the departmental heads and senior managers, and additional managers and staff are then selected internally (Maqoko and Asmah-Andoh, 2019).

There are several legislative enactments at the local level which have implications for the political-administrative interaction, as underscored below by De Visser (2009) and Cloete and Thornhill in Reddy (2019):

- A councillor who attempts to influence the municipal manager or any other staff member or agent of the municipality is guilty of an offence (Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000: Section 17).
- A councillor interfering in the management or administration of any department of any municipal council unless mandated by the council, which causes or contributes to maladministration in council (Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000: Schedule 1).
- Any action by a political office bearer of a municipality against the Accounting Officer of the Municipality, ... compliance... is unfair labour practice (Municipal Finance Management Act 76 of 2003: Section 76).
- The Municipal Finance Management Act is firm on the separation between the council and administration, and councillors cannot get involved in tender decisions.

The State (Government of South Africa, 2009a and Government of South Africa, 2009b) has, for its part, pointed out that the political-administrative cross point has destabilised local government, the resultant effect being local government dysfunctionality (SACN, 2019). Local government dysfunctionality can be ascribed to, amongst others, service delivery failures; the councillors having a poor skills base; political party interference and ill-considered deployment; weak political management and leadership; inadequate controls systems; distorted and unclear distinctions

between council and the administration; oversight at all spheres inadequate; limited understanding of party municipal relations and framework which is not clear; political infighting; abuse of political power and corruption (Government of South Africa, 2009a and (Reddy, 2016b; Reddy and de Vries, 2015; Van der Waldt, 2007).

The LGTA emphasised the political and organisational performance of the municipality in fortifying developmental local government (Government of South Africa, 2009b). Ajam in Reddy (2019) opines that if recruitment is grounded on political networks instead of capability, then prescribed employment procedures and merit will certainly not secure the most competent candidates for the job.

## **5.8 Summary**

This section examined the complex interplay between politics and public administration in post-1994 South African local governance. Political leadership and administrative duties present unique problems and complexities. The section emphasised political impacts on local government appointments and operations throughout history. It shows how politicisation affects service delivery, public accountability, and municipal performance. Additionally, it examined legal and policy measures that define political and administrative roles in local government. Political-administrative disputes hinder service delivery and local government.

## **SECTION 6: COMPETENCIES OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CHANGING THE OUTLOOK OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The success of transformation in local government is largely reliant on the quality and capability of leadership in directing change processes, among other factors. Research on South Africa's public service has continuously linked poor service delivery to leadership's lack of competencies (Masuku and Jili, 2019; Mbandlwa et al., 2020c; Mlambo et al., 2022; Reddy, 2016b). For good governance to prevail, the local government requires highly skilled and qualified leadership with relevant competencies to drive transformational initiatives. Transformational leadership has been recognised as a prominent leadership style that can positively influence local government in achieving successful outcomes in transitions (Busari et al., 2019; Harb and Sidani, 2019; Schiuma et al., 2022). The transformational leadership theory postulates four elements transformational leaders encapsulate, which are pivotal in directing change processes, including idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Busari et al., 2019; Katywa and Strydom, 2021). Idealised influence is a leader's ability to act as a role model to their followers by demonstrating admirable capabilities and attributes, following ethical doctrines, and providing their followers with a vision based on values, beliefs, and mission. Inspirational motivation is a leader's ability to inspire and challenge their followers, giving them a sense of purpose in their efforts towards achieving organisational goals. Meanwhile, intellectual stimulation is the empowerment and support leaders provide to followers to encourage innovativeness and creativity (Busari et al., 2019; Reza, 2019). Lastly, individualised consideration recognises the leader's role in mentorship as they become attentive to individual follower needs for personal growth and professional development that further contribute to organisational goals (Busari et al., 2019; Reza, 2019).

Central to transformational leadership are the competencies that leaders develop, which are crucial for achieving good governance and management in confronting budding challenges, inspiring innovation, driving positive change, and foresight in local government institutions (Edelmann et al., 2023; Reza, 2019; Schiuma et al., 2022). These include essential skills, behaviours, and attributes that empower leaders to

bring about transformative outcomes. Highlighting the importance of transformational leadership competencies and the outlook on local government, this section describes emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, resilience, visionary leadership, critical thinking and decision-making skills, conflict management, innovation and creativity, change management, communication, team building and flexibility, financial and administrative acumen, project management, legal and regulatory compliance, continuous learning and development, stakeholder engagement, networks and partnerships.

## **6.2 Emotional Intelligence**

Transformational leaders are known to have a high sense of awareness and emotional intelligence, which is required for the successful implementation of change initiatives (Görgens-Ekermans and Roux, 2021; Fareed et al., 2021; Rinfret et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence (EI) is described as the ability to recognise, evaluate and manage one's emotions and those of the team to facilitate quality thinking skills, efficiency in problem-solving and communication in interpersonal relations. Leaders with a high EI can prepare themselves and their team to address challenges that come with transitions through their charismatic attributes, such as sensitivity towards others, empathy, and emotional regulation (Fareed et al., 2021). Their ability to build rapport with subordinates, influencing their values, emotions and attitudes, enhances team members' awareness and maturity in how they cope with and adapt to transitions.

Haricharan (2022) examined the relationships between EI competencies and leadership performance of 35 executive managers in the South African public service using a behavioural EI model. A significant positive correlation was found between leadership performance and four clusters of EI competencies: self-awareness, self-management, relationship management and social awareness. In addition to these, competencies such as inspirational leadership, emotional self-awareness, adaptability and positive outlook had the strongest correlations. Owing to their affective and altruistic nature, transformational leaders foster an environment that is supportive and promotes co-production, which brings about high performance among team members and positively impacts service delivery. A study by Katywa and Strydom (2021) used a Pearson correlational coefficient and multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between leadership competence and efficient service delivery in the

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality. The findings revealed that idealised influence and individual consideration variables had a statistically significant relationship with efficient service delivery, with individual consideration having the strongest positive correlation. The results highlighted that idealised influence was the ability of leaders to demonstrate admirable characteristics and build trust with followers.

In contrast, individual considerations related to the leaders' sense of empathy and sensitivity to followers' needs, which the authors recommended, should be exploited to enhance service delivery in the municipality. However, a study by Matjie (2018) on the relationship between leadership effectiveness and emotional competence used a Multifactor leadership questionnaire and EQ map to measure leadership style and competencies among 126 senior managers and managers. The study revealed that public sector managers possess insufficient emotional competencies, which affects the effectiveness of service delivery. The author emphasised the importance of training current managers to acquire emotional competencies and conducting comprehensive recruitment processes that consider emotional competencies aside from qualifications, other skills, and experience when hiring managers in public service departments.

In the South African local government, EI in transformational leadership is crucial when managing risk in highly complex scenarios and change processes (Enwereji and Potgieter, 2022; Nel, 2019) as in the case of pandemics like COVID-19, natural disasters due to climate change, economic downturns, and service delivery violence. Transformational leaders' emotional self-awareness, sensitivity and consideration for their followers enable them to remain calm and garner their followers' trust during complex scenarios that may stir anxiety. Their high sense of awareness is also useful in resolving inter-party and factionist disputes that may arise due to resistance to change. If exploited, it can restore balance and establish a collaborative and cohesive environment for efficient service delivery. The leaders' affective nature and sense of social awareness can be useful during negotiations with stakeholders to prevent sporadic service delivery violence, build collaborative partnerships when attracting investors to boost the economy through local economic development projects and promote citizen engagement for planning and decision-making processes that affect communities. These attributes are especially crucial in establishing and maintaining good governance for effective service delivery, as the transformation process requires the cooperation of politicians, civil servants and residents.

### **6.3 Ethical Leadership**

Poor service delivery in local government has been attributed to the unethical behaviour of leaders that causes citizens to lose trust in leadership (Mbandlwa et al., 2020c; Shava and Chamisa, 2018). In local municipalities, where corruption, political meddling, maladministration, misallocation of public funds, financial embezzlement, and poor performance evaluation are evident, ethical leadership is required to restore public trust and confidence in government (Masuku and Jili, 2019; Masiya et al., 2019b; Govender et al., 2023). Regarding Chapter 10 of the South African constitution (1996) and the Batho Pele principles, Msila (2022) asserts that ethical leaders live by good values and follow a set of principles such as respect, trust, fairness, integrity, transparency and honesty. They add that such leaders model behaviour that their followers emulate, enabling them to distinguish between ethical and unethical behaviour. Adetunji and Alers (2022) assessed the relationship between leadership and rules of conduct in instilling ethical behaviour among municipal staff from the Human Resource Division and the Operational Division of the Department of Public Works in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. They found that the behaviour and guidance of the leaders influenced staff members' conduct more than the codes of conduct of the municipality. This finding implies that followers place value on leadership's ethical behaviours.

Shava and Mazenda (2021) assert that ethics is pivotal for generating trust and accountability between leaders and stakeholders, which promotes good governance practices. Shava and Chamisa (2018) point out that in local government, where the cadre deployment policy has created opportunities for corruption and unethical practices, appointed officials who lack vision and relevant expertise for driving transformational development initiatives take a position in service delivery processes. They add that this is exacerbated by their unwillingness to practice transparency and accountability. Thus, ethical leadership can promote respect, fairness and equality through meritocracy whereby officials who hold office and public administration servants with the relevant qualifications and expertise are appointed on merit and not through nepotism or favouritism.

Moreover, ethical leaders who uphold integrity, transparency, and honesty and are accountable for the fiscal and economic affairs of municipalities are seen as

trustworthy and can ensure the appropriate allocation of funds for local economic development projects and service delivery. Ethical and morally astute transformational leaders strategically bolster monitoring and evaluation systems to enhance transparency and accountability in public service administration. They reinforce commendable ethical behaviours among public servants while addressing and sanctioning unethical conduct, thereby promoting ethical behaviour among subordinates (Shava and Mazenda, 2021). Ethical leaders who adhere to ethical codes of conduct can greatly influence their team members or followers to exhibit similar moral and ethical behaviours directed by a clear vision towards organisational goals, which in turn builds confidence among the citizenry in their leadership.

#### **6.4 Resilience**

Studies on resilience highlight that it is the capacity and ability to cope and respond to internal or external shocks or destabilisation at various levels and establish equilibrium, adaptability and a sense of strengthening in preparation for change (Roberts et al., 2020; Nhamo et al., 2021; Kareem et al., 2020). Sienkiewicz-Matyjurek (2022) adds that it also refers to the ability to use emerging crises as opportunities to transform economies and implement innovative initiatives. Resilience as a competency of transformational leadership is evidenced in how leaders manage risks, vulnerability and stresses in their organisations, communities, and environment. Resilience is required to manage internal and external shocks that manifest in various forms, such as COVID-19, natural disasters caused by climate change, economic downturns, social conflicts such as xenophobia, and political conflicts, among others (Almohtaseb et al., 2021; Madi Odeh et al., 2023).

In the South African context, service delivery protests have continuously mirrored the challenges of various municipalities like water shortages, inequalities in waste management, housing, sanitation, and lack of electricity brought about by rapid urbanisation, climate change, and economic shocks (Masson, 2023; Morudu, 2017). Existing research indicates that although there is much to be done, the government has taken the necessary steps to establish resilience initiatives to tackle budding issues. For instance, in eThekweni, projects such as the emergence of the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) programme and the Palmiet Catchment Rehabilitation Project (PCRP) for building water resilience and increasing adaptive

capacity through innovative approaches demonstrated the efforts of transformational leadership (Roberts et al., 2020). Ndebele-Murisa et al. (2020) point out that the Adaptation Charter and integrated climate planning through stakeholder engagements enabled biodiversity protection against climate change. The authors emphasise that in achieving transformational adaptation, leadership must exercise transparency and flexibility, implement integration and monitoring systems, and foster continuous learning and knowledge.

Transformational leaders are known to have foresight, which positions them to plan well ahead, facilitate complex decision-making processes and put in place adaptive measures that buffer shocks that come with transitions (Madi Odeh et al., 2023). Their high social awareness and ability to effectively communicate their vision show a sense of direction and are pivotal in building resilience in their subordinates and followers during various crises. They are also able to motivate subordinates and stakeholders to actively participate in decision-making processes and produce innovative solutions for building resilience in organisations and communities. Moreover, their individualised consideration allows for the facilitation of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building programmes that equip their subordinates and stakeholders on crisis management issues.

## **6.5 Visionary Leadership**

Transformational leadership inspires and directs participative followers toward a compelling vision with high expectations and cultivates followers' confidence in meeting these expectations (Busari et al., 2019). Ngqwala and Ballard (2020) argue that leaders are expected to be intentional in leading beyond expectations while focusing on the vision of achieving organisational goals. Van der Voet and Steijn (2021) assert that leaders' visionary skills play a significant role in spurring team cohesion and collaborative governance in innovation for public value creation. Visionary leadership requires a sense of direction and commitment to the cause. Through their passion, enthusiasm and leading by example, leaders can motivate followers to perform towards the shared goals. In local government, Ncube and Chimucheka (2019: 4) point out that a manager's ability to ensure synergy between employees' efforts and the overall strategy of the organisation requires visionary skills to combine strategic aptitude, organisational skills and knowledge from industry.



Enwereji and Potgieter (2018), who propose a conceptual framework for innovative measures municipalities could use to build a responsive payment culture, recommend that to manage payment and conflict in struggling municipalities strategically, leaders must be visionary, dynamic, goal-oriented, transformational, and tactical. This recommendation came about due to the intensity of debts that have accumulated in many municipalities owing to payment defaults or non-payment for municipal services by residents.

The above implies that to drive transformational initiatives, a visionary leader must have the foresight to anticipate budding challenges and strategically plan for long-term goals for future success, know relevant expertise from the industry and know how to apply this knowledge in devising innovative initiatives for municipal departments that give the organisation a competitive advantage and align team member efforts with municipal objectives in stirring the organisation towards the shared vision (Amegayibor, 2022). Visionary skills can be instrumental in building cohesion among team members within organisations, solidifying partnerships among stakeholders in collaborative initiatives, and identifying catalytic opportunities for innovation in local economic development projects in struggling municipalities.

## **6.6 Critical Thinking and Decision-Making Skills**

Critical thinking and decision-making skills are instrumental in driving transformative initiatives. Critical thinking skills require leaders to assess and weigh the consequences of innovative ideas during the stages of conception before planning and implementing projects. Schiuma et al. (2022: 1217) state that transformative leaders combine critical thinking with creativity in developing the capacity to use imagination for continuous innovation and action. Transformative leadership could intellectually stimulate team members to be creative in their thinking, which enables them to share their innovative ideas freely, which may be an opportunity for advancing organisational processes. Intellectual stimulation is evidenced in supportive environments with relevant resources that encourage open communication and knowledge-sharing among subordinates, continuous learning and personal development, creative thinking and innovation.

Meanwhile, decision-making skills demonstrate the leaders' ability to exercise transparency and inclusivity by seeking stakeholders' input before strategising and

communicating the shared vision. In support, (Schiuma et al., 2022) add that transformational leaders promote “decision-making and transformational activities by fostering the identification of possible alternative opportunities and developing a problem-solving oriented approach”. In local government, leaders with decision-making skills can facilitate knowledge-sharing and networking platforms whereby various stakeholders are empowered and have equal opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes that concern their communities (Munzhedzi, 2021). Auriacombe and Sithomola (2020: 60) state that decision-making processes that involve thriving “participation structures, democratic processes, and partnerships between the community and municipalities could significantly improve policy-making in local government.” Critical thinking and decision-making skills can be instrumental when leaders are confronted with social, political, economic, technical and environmental transformation challenges that require them to make critical decisions for the advancement and sustainability of service delivery processes in local government.

## **6.7 Conflict Management**

Cooperative and cohesive team performance in an organisation is reliant on the ability of leadership to create a supportive work environment and mutual trust among team members. Conflicts usually arise within an organisation due to differences in roles, inter-relations and ideologies; transformational leaders should be able to resolve such conflicts through conflict management to foster an environment of co-production, collaboration, open knowledge-sharing, inclusive and participatory decision-making among stakeholders. In local government, literature on service delivery has highlighted that conflicts in the forms of violent public protests arise due to inefficiency, inequality and ineptitude in service delivery and lack of accountability by councillors (Masiya et al., 2019b; Ndasana et al., 2022; Ngcamu, 2019). In distressed municipalities, communities experience water shortages or the lack of clean water, electricity, and housing, as well as poor waste management and sanitation, among others, especially in disadvantaged areas (Masson, 2023; Reddy, 2016b). At the institutional level, conflicts are also evidenced in disagreements (Mukhtar et al., 2020) among public service administrators during transitions such as municipal amalgamations that involve a reengineering of organisational culture and structures, service delivery processes,

and policies that can affect the quality and efficiency of public services. In addition, Ndebele-Murisa et al. (2020) point out that conflicts may also arise in collaborations and networks that may strain co-production during the development of innovative initiatives or knowledge-sharing.

Ndevu (2019) highlights that building trust is instrumental in resolving such conflicts and promotes cooperation harmonisation in decision-making and planning, while mistrust usually stems from divisions due to a lack of accountability and transparency. In order to build trust, leaders must be able to communicate a shared vision clearly to subordinates and stakeholders, demonstrating commitment towards the shared goal and through ethical behaviours. Transformational leadership can be useful in resolving conflict through building trust with stakeholders by engaging excluded stakeholders in the stages of critical change processes or reforms, facilitating training programs for knowledge enhancement in preparation for transitions, and allowing stakeholders to participate in critical decision-making processes actively (Dube et al., 2021), encouraging open knowledge exchange and consulting with stakeholders before, during and post-implementation stages of integrated development initiatives.

## **6.8 Innovation and Creativity**

Innovation and creativity are at the centre of transformational initiatives and are necessary for effective service delivery in local government institutions. Innovation requires leadership that inspires and stimulates their followers to think out of the box and experiment with new ideas that propel the organisation towards a shared vision. Nzimakwe (2015) asserts that innovation in public service delivery involves planned changes designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. These could range from training initiatives for knowledge sharing to developing new policies and standard operations for addressing public policy issues. Taylor (2018) argues that strong leadership, project management skills, partnerships, and elected politicians are crucial in driving change in public service organisations and fostering a culture of creativity and innovativeness. The author projects that innovation is non-linear, allowing a free flow of knowledge that involves stages of generating ideas, adaptability, sustainability of ideas, implementation and diffusion.

A study by Hart et al. (2019) that assessed eight public service innovations in distressed municipalities found that even though municipal leaders were exposed to

innovation through the Innovation Partnership for Rural Development Programme (IPRDP), there was minimal cooperation in innovative initiatives. Municipal leaders' innovative readiness and maturity were minimal regarding innovative capabilities; there was limited engagement with citizens concerning innovations, a lack of knowledge sharing in networking partnerships, which were largely fragmented and lacked a local footprint and a mismatch in innovations and local service delivery needs of rural residents. The authors emphasise strengthening institutional structures and human resource capabilities.

Mokhber et al. (2018) argue that transformational leadership can be a part of organisational innovation through interactive vision, effective communication, and the provision of an environment to support innovative teams. Transformational leaders' ability to facilitate creative thinking in their subordinates allows for advancement in service provision. In local government, advancement in service delivery is also evidenced through digital transformation innovations whereby information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used to enhance communication between local government and citizens and service delivery processes (Bvuma and Joseph, 2019; Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2022). In support, Danielle and Masilela (2020: 41) discuss various service delivery innovations implemented in local government that aim to support and nurture innovativeness, while improving efficiency and the effectiveness of service delivery which include but are not limited to: GovChat that allows direct communication between citizens and public servants through a WhatsApp Instant Message Service; the Pharmacy Dispensing Unit (PDU) which uses digitalisation and ICT to provide services to the community; CodeTribe Academy, a software development training programme that has trained more than 120 township youths; the establishment of eKasiLabs innovation centres in Gauteng; Cape Access e-Centres that provide Internet and computer access to communities; the Youth Employment Service (YES), an innovative effort through PPP engagement to for upskilling of youth; The Namola application, a safety emergency line that alerts public emergency services like the South African Police Service (SAPS), fire department or ambulance services. The authors point out that there is still much to be done since there is a scarcity of skill sets, lack of accessibility and inadequate resources for access. They further advocate for local government to capitalise on open governance structures that promote

stakeholder partnerships to improve accountability, transparency and public participation.

## **6.9 Change Management**

Change management is an important aspect of transformational leadership that enables organisations to put systems in place for a conducive environment when transitioning from current operations to a new state. Miggels and Rulashe (2022) purport that change can either be sudden or planned. They add that planned change is necessary for sustaining the organisation's viability. Bagga et al. (2023) confirm a positive relationship between transformational leadership and change management. Citing Smith (2006), the authors highlight that change management is systematic and requires that leaders plan for transitions, communicate the transition stages effectively to respective members, encourage active involvement in the change process, support, lead, manage the transition and resistance to change (Bagga et al., 2023: 122).

In the South African context, change processes such as municipal amalgamations have demonstrated that disputes arise in integrated decision-making, which may negatively affect service delivery (Dube and Radikonyana, 2020; Tshamano et al., 2021). Tshamano et al. (2021) point to a lack of openness, transparency and consistency in preparing municipal employees for the pre-and post-integration processes of the Molemole and Blouberg municipal merger. In addition, poor communication between employer and employee, a mismatch between employees and units, disputes due to pay parity, and inadequate training for new employees placed from the disestablished municipality were noted. The authors emphasise the importance of leaders managing employees' needs by conducting consultations and preparing to actively engage with them in the stages of the amalgamation process. In another study, Subramanyam and Marais (2022) found that the metropolitanisation of Mangaung Municipality exposed challenges of municipal, fiscal and technical capacity that were unresolved, causing an inability to implement mandates on service delivery, integration plans and local economic development. The authors of the study also hinted that political-administrative powers benefited from the transition owing to weak financial systems. They alluded to strengthening municipal systems in secondary cities such as Mangaung by capitalising on human resource capacity building, revising municipal structures and aligning policies to these structures, investing in strategic

planning capacity and enhancing fiscal management systems (Subramanyam and Marais, 2022).

Transformational leadership enables the foresight and know-how to manage budding challenges that emanate from change processes. Leaders can provide guidance to plan, assess suitable strategies for implementation and monitor the changes that occur. Sung and Kim (2021: 6) assert that transformational leaders communicate a clear vision, providing intellectual stimulus for members to escape traditions and manage the process of change within a supportive environment that encourages active participation. In local government, transformational leadership can be instrumental in strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems and facilitating thorough assessments of the fiscal conditions, social capital and legislative alignments in municipalities before making critical decisions regarding change processes (Dube and Radikonyana, 2020). Leaders can also facilitate stakeholder engagements and collaborations for shared knowledge on change processes and during the stages of change to mitigate any possible conflicts that may arise due to integrated decision-making.

### **6.10 Communication Skills**

Having good communication skills is one of the competencies expected of a transformational leader in changing the outlook of the local government sector. As noted by (Mthethwa, 2012), a transformational leader communicates well with fellow employees at work and ensures that a smooth feedback system is in place for effective operations. While communication is key in local government operations, Mbandlwa et al. (2020b) add that leadership is used to make a better workplace for every official, which is also part of creating employee growth. A study conducted by Hasanaj and Manxhari (2017) indicates that communication in public sector institutions is fundamental to relaying the change message. The researchers argue that since public organisations are known for resisting change, good communication skills can help inform employees and employers in advance about the need for change management, which can be used to transform the functioning of public institutions. In South African local government, transformational leadership can be used to communicate change in various sectors such as the adoption of new systems, technologies and software. van der Walddt (2023) asserts that local governments can

communicate using digital technologies to streamline processes and improve communication and transparency, reduce costs, and improve citizen participation and satisfaction. Twizeyimana and Andersson (2019) reiterate that communicating at the local government level helps citizens understand the government services that can be accessed, thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness. Zweni et al. (2022) elaborate that communication is a key competency for local government leaders to be able to handle business transactions and save municipal resources. Drawing from this description, employing transformational leadership can help to change the broader communication and feedback processes at local government and regularly inform citizens through various online platforms on what services are being offered, including upholding accountability on how public money has been spent in delivering services.

### **6.11 Team Building and Flexibility**

Public sector organisations exist in a contentious environment that is heavily regulated by various bureaucratic mechanisms that may affect team building for effective service provision. Nevertheless, past research (Wright and Pandey, 2009) has shown the need for flexibility in local government as a crucial determinant in accelerating municipal service delivery. Research has regarded local government as possessing complex systems that are mechanistic and bureaucratic, which impede the efficiency of transformational leadership in executing flexible judgement regarding service delivery issues (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Masiya et al., 2019a). Although this assertion is not far from reality, transformational leadership has the leverage to execute a wise decision that supersedes the limitation of bureaucracy to ensure that local government becomes responsive and actively engages stakeholders in service delivery issues. While the South African local government is prone to external forces such as political interference (Masuku and Jili, 2019) in the work of officials, transformational leadership is expected to navigate the thin line between administration and make sure it works closely with political offices towards the common good of effectively rendering public goods and services. Koma and Modumo (2016) reason that administrative features in local government must be detached from the political arm, which is critical in rendering inclusive service delivery regardless of the political affiliation of an individual or community. In this sense, having a flexible approach to managing municipal affairs can also help transformational leadership to identify key areas of weaknesses in the sector

departments that may require a collaborative approach (Wright and Pandey, 2009) and team-building exercises with the idea of improving the delivery of services in a timely and accountable manner.

## **6.12 Financial and Administrative Acumen**

Local government is expected to have good financial and administrative acumen, which can be used to render services to communities effectively. Transformational leaders need to know about the financial systems operating within local governance, which is beneficial for avoiding wasteful expenditure or financial embezzlement. The recent AG Report (2021/22) points to various weaknesses in local governance when financial reporting was not adequately done. In some cases, signs of corruption and financial embezzlement were evident. This point is supported by Sebola (2015b), who claims that corruption and maladministration are the main issues faced by South African municipal governments. Since local government is battling with various bureaucratic inefficiencies (Meier et al., 2017), transformational leadership should be implemented to ensure that financial systems are in place to curb any financial irregularities that, in most cases, cripple local municipalities or culminate into local municipalities being categorised as medium risk to high-risk categories. The LGSETA has emphasised the local government to ensure that good financial systems are in place and that there is proper monitoring and reporting of municipal spending, which helps in curbing financial irregularities, among other administrative issues (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Mothabi, 2022).

Executing a proper budget and financial planning system remains one of the duties of a transformational leader in the local government sphere. Implementing participatory budgeting in local government is one of the critical aspects a transformational leader can advocate for. As noted by Mamvuma and Matovu (2007), participatory budgeting is crucial in strengthening local democracy and increasing the prospects for good governance. In various regions of the world where participatory budgeting is used, the direct participation of civil society in the budgeting process can lead to improvements in service delivery, prioritisation of broad social policies, further decentralisation of government, a significant decrease in corruption, and an improvement in transparency and information access, among other things. While signs of poor participatory budgeting and financial planning are evident in local governments (Matsiliza, 2012),



transformational leadership can utilise IDP forums and active citizen engagement processes through online forums to ensure that every voice or contribution of stakeholders is considered. Furthermore, Shah (2007: 57) emphasises the fact that implementing participatory budgeting principles in local government can help promote citizen involvement in the most fundamental and frequently the most formal mechanism of governance – the allocation of resources through the budgeting process. Although IDPs are conducted in local government, Alexander et al. (2018) argue against the exclusion of non-elite groups from the budgeting process, which in most cases triggers citizen discontent that degenerates into protests either over poor service delivery or municipal lack of accountability (Beeri et al., 2019; Masiya et al., 2019a).

### **6.13 Project Management**

The AG Report (2021/22) in South Africa unearthed various institutional deficiencies in local government. These include the absence of financial management skills, lack of ICT expertise and, most importantly, the absence of project management skills. In local government, following the guidelines outlined in the White Paper on Local Government (1998) and other service delivery frameworks, the local government represents the closest level of governance to citizens. Therefore, it is expected to actively undertake local economic development projects to foster job creation and alleviate poverty in vulnerable communities across the country. Wang et al. (2019) confirm that customer orientation is a crucial factor among key project elements for local government during the project management phase. In another study, Koops et al. (2017) emphasise that project management has several benefits for both the public and private sectors. The argument is based on the notion that a properly executed project management system allows local development projects to be implemented timeously within the stipulated budget of the local government.

Nevertheless, the local government has a dire shortage of project management professionals, which triggers various institutional challenges in terms of project monitoring and evaluation and project management. In most cases, this results in local economic development projects failing to achieve their intended outcome (Koma and Modumo, 2016). Transformational leadership, in this case, has a role to play in ensuring that local municipalities are equipped with skilled professionals who have the

knowledge and soft skills to manage huge projects that benefit citizens (Chronéer and Backlund, 2015).

Harnessing such capacity can be done through the recruitment of recent graduates with proper qualifications in project management, including internal skilling of municipal officials who may have the capacity to drive projects offered by local municipalities. The dilemma of not having proper project management professionals in local government can result in financial embezzlement since internal control systems are weak in detecting fraud and corruption in project funding (Khawaja and Khalid, 2022; van der Waldt, 2020b). In some cases, corruption can be related to procurement, where huge projects are awarded to friends and families. As a result, this triggers inefficiency or financial embezzlement due to the absence of control, monitoring and evaluation systems (Sebake and Mukonza, 2021). It can be noted from this description that the role of the project manager in local government is closely tied to monitoring and evaluation, as projects implemented to develop local communities need to be constantly monitored and evaluated to ensure completion.

Jawah (2016: 12) reiterates that leadership in local government is necessary to make sure that municipal officials become focused and attentive to the direction the local entity is taking to meet the goals and objectives. A transformational leader employs a variety of abilities and personality traits to handle any given service delivery issues, finding strategic ways of solving them (Mbandlwa et al., 2022). Arguably, therefore, transformational leadership can ensure that project management skills are harnessed within top to middle management to ensure that projects meant for community upliftment are executed properly to see change in communities.

#### **6.14 Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

Local government in South Africa is regulated by various pieces of legislation relating to financial management, governance and setting up of institutional systems and structures, among others. However, research done in South Africa has constantly shown that compliance with legal frameworks such as the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003) has been a challenge in local municipalities (Mapitsa and Landau, 2019). This lack of compliance is attributed, among others, to weak leadership, skills shortage and inability to interpret important legislation. Transformational leaders must advocate for compliance with legislation since it

provides a moral and legal context for local government activity while ensuring that local governmental actions are in line with the law, fostering equity, openness, and accountability (van der Waldt, 2023). Further, as common cases of poor compliance have been revealed in the AG Report (2021/22) and other literature, compliance with legislation in local government can help lower the potential for bribery, favouritism, and nepotism while striving to improve the overall integrity of local government operations in local communities.

In addition, transformational leadership needs to ensure that compliance with legislation generates citizens' trust and confidence in local authorities. A study conducted by (Cloete, 2023) posits that since local government is strategically mandated to serve the interests of the people, compliance with legislation instils community trust while citizens feel confident that their rights are upheld in accordance with legislation and their service delivery demands are addressed. Given the past service delivery failures in the local government, transformational leaders can advocate for compliance with legislation to ensure that public resources are saved from plunder. In contrast, efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery are achieved.

### **6.15 Continuous Learning and Development**

Transforming local government in South Africa may require several efforts from transformational leadership, such as creating a learning platform that is critical for continuous learning and development. For example, the role of human resources in local government has been lacking, leading to the recruitment of unqualified personnel who fail to perform according to their job descriptions (Cloete, 2023) as confirmed in the study of Houston and Kanyane (2022) the poor implementation of solid human resources practices in local government creates a complacent workforce that can disrupt the governance systems due to poor performance. A study conducted by Tshishonga (2021) indicates that for local government in South Africa to continue being a reliable service provider, there is a need for continuous learning and reskilling of municipal officials in strategic areas such as ICT to enhance their competencies in public service delivery.

Creating a platform for continuous learning may also help in measuring the performance of municipal officials at the local government level. Performance measures, as observed by (Ndevu and Muller, 2017), are vital for enhancing municipal

service delivery. Communities require quality basic services from the service providers, which calls for transformational leaders to stimulate innovative minds and promote the learning of municipal officials with the ultimate goal of improving institutional competencies and service delivery. Evaluating the performance of municipal officials is critical in holding them accountable regarding their service delivery actions while in public office (Sekgala and Holtzhausen, 2016), emphasising that performance evaluation is obligatory in public affairs. Given these competing arguments, a platform for continuous learning and development is required in South African local government, which may go a long way in addressing some of the institutional shortfalls that constrain service delivery. Continuous learning also leads to regular monitoring of the service delivery structures; hence, municipal officials may not deviate from the designated duties of rendering quality services to the citizens. Transformational leadership, in this case, can help identify gaps in the work of municipal officials, and strategic measures can be put in place to ensure responsiveness, accountability and efficiency in public service delivery.

#### **6.16 Stakeholder Engagement, Networks and Partnerships**

The sustainability of local government in South Africa can be championed through collaborative network governance and partnerships. Collaborative governance, as defined by Ansell and Gash (2008: 544), refers to a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programmes or assets. This definition can be used to position transformational leadership in the local government, where municipal leaders are expected to foster close relationships with non-governmental organisations and relevant stakeholders in public policymaking and implementation of public development programmes in local communities. Stakeholder engagement plays a significant role in promoting public participation in local government transformational initiatives. Adom and Simatele (2022) assert that stakeholder engagement is a requirement in the development and implementation of legislation and policies. The authors add that it involves holding leaders accountable for the management of resources, service delivery, and local development outcomes. In most provinces of South Africa, service delivery is problematic owing to minimal

resources including deteriorating bureaucratic systems that have opened the door to influence and corrupt behaviours.

In curbing some of the social ills gripping local communities, transformational leadership can be used to foster critical networks where a sound financial base can be pooled together to finance local economic development programmes (Tshishonga, 2021). Auriacombe and Sithomola (2020) point out that networks can also be used to capacitate community stakeholders through platforms of knowledge exchange so that they are equipped to contribute to local economic development decision-making processes. Further, transformational leadership can be used in municipalities to tap into the innovative programmes that are implemented by partners' networks and duplicate them in local government, which can help create other influential and sustainable development initiatives that benefit communities.

Although networks are fundamental in driving change and fostering inter-organisational interactions (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2016), local government networks can be used to promote development in various sectors of local municipalities. However, Lewis (2011) cautions that, in applying transformational leadership, networks must be managed properly to avoid inter-network conflicts that may deter development. In other words, with the network matrix, there is a need for respect among partnerships. However, a broader focus must be centred on what could be derived by local government when entering partnerships and networks.

## **6.17 Summary**

Local government transformation requires leadership that has the necessary competencies to drive change processes and maintain sustainability. Positioned within a changing climate, leaders face challenges emanating from political, social, economic, technological and environmental dimensions. The examined literature indicates that local government faces service delivery challenges that trigger public protests due to poor leadership structures characterised by maladministration, corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, and a lack of competencies. Transformational leadership is projected as an instrumental style of leadership that can positively influence local government praxis. It focuses on leadership competencies that encourage ethical behaviours through legal and regulatory compliance. It

emphasises clear communication of vision, promotion of personal development and continuous learning for knowledge-sharing, creativity, and innovation.

Moreover, it stresses emotional maturity in managing risk, conflict, and change, as well as cultivating resilience. Critical thinking and decision-making skills are also highlighted for the planning and implementation of initiatives. Furthermore, team building and flexibility are important for nurturing a strong workforce with the agility to adapt to alternative strategies in driving transformation. Financial and administrative acumen, along with project management skills, are essential for effectively managing resources. Finally, maintaining open communication and participative and inclusive decision-making through stakeholder engagement, networks, and partnerships are emphasised.

## **SECTION 7: THE ROLE OF THE LGSETA IN EMPOWERING THE MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGICALLY TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In South Africa, the LGSETA is regarded as the custodian of revamping and reconfiguring how local government should function in response to the dynamic social, economic, political, and technological environment within the service delivery landscape. Central to this broader role in conducting the needs analysis or assessment is the need for municipalities with regard to leadership, which should be a way of responding to service delivery demands by local communities. The remainder of the description will unpack the contribution of the LGSETA with specific references to capacity building and training programmes, strategic direction and policy formulation, collaboration and partnership, community engagement and service delivery mandates, knowledge management and information dissemination and lastly, technology adoption and innovation.

### **7.2 Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment**

Every functioning public sector department must be able to conduct a needs assessment that is crucial in its development and sustainability. The LGSETA regularly conducts the needs analysis mandate as the authority to ensure that local municipalities are capacitated with the right skills that can be influential in driving change (Van der Waldt, 2020a). Municipal leadership is expected to be strategic and innovative enough to ensure that municipal departments function in line with the set target goals as spelt out in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and other key municipal documents (Mamokhere, 2021). Having this ability enables local government to support the efforts by the LGSETA to ensure that the needs of local municipalities are properly identified and proper intervention is carefully instituted. In completing the needs analysis, the LGSETA must consider the nature of the local municipalities, their institutional capacity, the past and present performance records including the success stories of how a certain local municipality has evolved in service delivery (Mothamaha and Govender, 2014). Such an assessment can help when the LGSETA recommends a type of intervention a certain municipality must implement

and whether external support is required to drive municipal service delivery. In this sense, municipal leadership must be proactive in ensuring that closer cooperation is fostered with the LGSETA and other key organisations such as SALGA in ensuring that service delivery is improved in municipalities. Overall, the LGSETA is encouraged to play a continuous role in fostering a learning organisation in local government which is key to further learning and desire to implement change management programmes and empowering municipal leadership to deliver on its key mandates in service provision.

### *7.2.1 Capacity building and training programmes*

The public service landscape in South Africa has been marred by several contestations influenced by both internal and external variables. Internally, the capacity of various local municipalities to deliver public goods and services has always been questionable due to failing municipal leadership associated with maladministration, corruption, weak internal controls and largely the absence of accountability and transparency. These sentiments are shared in the recent AG report (2021/22), where most municipalities were found wanting concerning financial accountability and transparency in procurement systems. The role of municipal leadership in this report was highly concerning as many loopholes were noted that were likely detrimental to the functioning of local municipalities. The recent LGSETA Report on Shared Service Approach (2023) concurs with the findings of the AG report, where municipal maladministration due to poor leadership has been highlighted. Although the LGSETA is the custodian of directing local municipalities on which competencies can be applied to accelerate service delivery, local government in South Africa is still failing. Municipal leadership, in most cases, is failing to be strategic in its approach, which results in several municipalities being placed between medium-risk and high-risk categories. These sentiments are observed by Freeman (2010) and Rankhumise and Mello (2011), who believe that capacity building assumes limited or no capacity at all.

In some cases, local governments embark on capacity-building programmes that fail to ignite change in municipal operations. When this is the case, transformational leadership should have the ability to identify key areas that require capacity-building interventions to ensure that the skills development programmes offered will transform



the functioning of local government. Van der Waldt (2020a) argues that the limited capacity-building programmes in local government are evident in a developmental state such as South Africa. The reasons for this vary, although the local government is expected to develop a skillset in its Workplace Skills Plan to ensure that all departments receive adequate skilled expertise to render services effectively.

Capacity building is one of the most important tools the LGSETA should regularly play to ensure that local municipalities escape their 'shells' and challenge their limitation in public service delivery. Delivering skills development programmes in areas such as information technology and hard and soft skills are critical to ensuring that local government delivers to the public using the right set of skills and competencies so that the public receives value for money. Providing skills development programmes should, of course, be based on the needs analysis regarding what municipalities want to address service delivery demands effectively. Understanding the needs analysis is fundamental to avoid implementing preconceived capacity-building programmes that may not trigger any change.

### **7.3 Leadership Development**

In South African local government, the LGSETA plays a critical role in providing leadership to municipalities in areas such as workplace skills planning. As reflected in the study of Van der Waldt et al. (2018), the LGSETA received and approved workplace skills plans for all municipalities, which are in adherence to the Skills Development Act 97 of (1998) including Chapter 3, section 10 of the LGSETA. This leadership development role played by the LGSETA is fundamental to ensure that municipalities conduct a gap analysis that will inform the type of skills municipal leadership requires to transform municipalities' departments towards improving service delivery. Further, the LGSETA plays a pivotal role in leadership development by advising municipalities on skills audits, which are supposed to be done regularly to determine the level of skills per group and for individuals in local government. In their study, Mothamaha and Govender (2014) observed that the LGSETA is strategic enough to conduct skills development and sectoral training interventions to enhance local government's responsiveness to the needs of communities. Given these assertions, in transforming municipal leadership, the LGSETA is expected to play a more active and innovative role by acting as check and balance mechanism for local

municipalities to make sure they conduct skills audits, which are key in identifying areas of weakness that require rectification towards improving service delivery.

#### **7.4 Collaboration and Partnership**

The current public service delivery landscape in South Africa has shown that for local government to render public goods and services equitably, effective collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders must be taken into consideration (Masuku and Jili, 2019). It is widely accepted that local government in South Africa relied more on equitable share from the national government to render public goods and services adequately. In some cases, the allocation is not enough to support service delivery programmes in communities. Municipal leadership is expected to play a critical role in harnessing both human and financial resources, which can be done by extending the networking to interested stakeholders, including businesspeople and private sector organisations. Such collaboration and fostering of networks can enable local government to draw in a divergent pool of human and financial resources, which can be instrumental in spearheading service delivery in communities. The LGSETA can advise local municipalities on the type of beneficial networks they can tap into to ensure that investment is attracted to support infrastructural, health and local economic development activities in local municipalities. Collaborative government ensures that local government joins forces with other government departments in the Intergovernmental Relations Act (2003). Having such a collaboration goes a long way in ensuring that leadership, particularly the accounting officers' network, shares ideas on how to grow their municipalities. In this case, the LGSETA can further provide a mentorship role, which is vital in ensuring that local government adheres to guiding legislation while striving to upgrade the competencies of municipal leaders to improve public service delivery.

#### **7.5 Knowledge Management and Information Dissemination**

The knowledge revolution is a critical social and economic development within governments (Clausen et al., 2020). Research done by Sebola (2015a) affirms that local government in South Africa is mandated to provide people with access to a wide range of municipal goods and services, improving their capacity to contribute economically, socially, politically, and culturally. Disseminating information on

government services and actions is one of the critical roles local governments play in South Africa. Madumo (2015) states that creating a brighter future for communities through the support of local socio-economic development projects and programmes is the goal of developmental local governance, or local governance for development. In line with these duties of local government, the LGSETA has been excelling in this role by disseminating the new information the local government may require to advance service delivery. For example, the issue of adopting modern technologies is one of the key areas that the LGSETA recently championed in its research commissioned for local municipalities. The rationale was to ensure that local government is not left out in the broader skills debate; hence some modern technology and ICTs could be used to support municipal leadership in its role of executing public service delivery.

By playing this role of disseminating information, the LGSETA acts as the champion, ensuring that local government aligns its workplace skills plans, leadership, and operational plans with current trends in the broader public service delivery landscape. Supporting these notions, Van der Waldt (2015) denotes that the LGSETA's role is crucial in linking grassroots citizens with their local municipalities by advocating for the establishment of capable institutions, systems, strategies and procedures that are responsive to the needs of citizens.

## **7.6 Technology Adoption and Innovation**

The worldwide innovation 'talk' has given rise to several urgent demands on management control practises. Innovation is appreciated and fostered in emerging economies, especially in public sector organisations (Arundel et al., 2015; De Vries et al., 2018). As affirmed by Edler and Yeow (2016), even a little innovation in the public sector can have major results or impacts that go beyond the public sector. In the past decade in South Africa, research has been done to promote the implementation of e-governance, which advocates for the wide use of ICTs and modern technologies to accelerate municipal service delivery (Khanyile et al., 2021). The emergence of the 4IR discourse in 2019 reconfirms the earlier efforts by public sector scholars to influence public sector organisations to adopt and utilise technology to enhance communication and decision-making, which is expected to benefit the people (Mawela et al., 2017). However, without transformative leadership, as noted by Helms (2016), low technology adoption persists due to factors like fear of change, limited budgets,

and, crucially, local government institutions' lack of readiness to embrace unfamiliar technologies without knowledge of their successes.

Nevertheless, proposing technology integration in service delivery programmes is one of the critical roles the LGSETA is playing in South Africa. Local government exists in a dynamic environment influenced by changes in the technological environment (Alexander, 2022). The digital era popularised by the 4IR demands that local governments prepare and have an enabling platform for adopting digital technologies to aid the existing system and programme for advancing municipal service delivery (Meijer and Thaens, 2018). It remains the prerogative of municipal leadership to ensure that modern digital devices are used where necessary and that municipal officials have the right skills to be able to explore modern technologies to improve communication, uphold accountability and improve transparency in service delivery (Helms, 2016). The LGSETA is strategic enough to complement the efforts of municipal leadership in fostering some of the modern technologies and software that can be viewed as bringing change in local government circles. Worryingly enough, it is the scourge of the digital divide and the desire by local government officials to retain the status quo. As affirmed in the study of Shava and Hofisi (2017), the absence of digital skills and fear of change may affect municipal leadership from implementing digital technologies that may enhance the operations of public institutions. Van Wart (2014) attributes the low level of innovation in local government to political interference, which may influence leadership decisions. It remains fundamental for local governments in South Africa to implement innovative solutions that target change and efficiency in municipal service delivery. To make this a reality, the LGSETA, as a result, takes a leading role as the champion of transforming municipal leadership, which is critical in adopting technology. The research conducted for the LGSETA by Sutcliffe and Bannister (2020), indicates that skills mismatch can be an obstacle to enhancing municipal leadership in adopting technology. Their arguments stem from the fact that what education offers to recruit graduates does not meet what the industry demands. Local government is affected the most as skilled experts often prefer the private sector which triggers more skills shortages within the local government sphere. In this case, the LGSETA must empower municipal leadership to create an attractive environment where skilled professionals may want to join, which may ultimately result in improved service delivery. Retaining skilled professionals and harvesting talent is

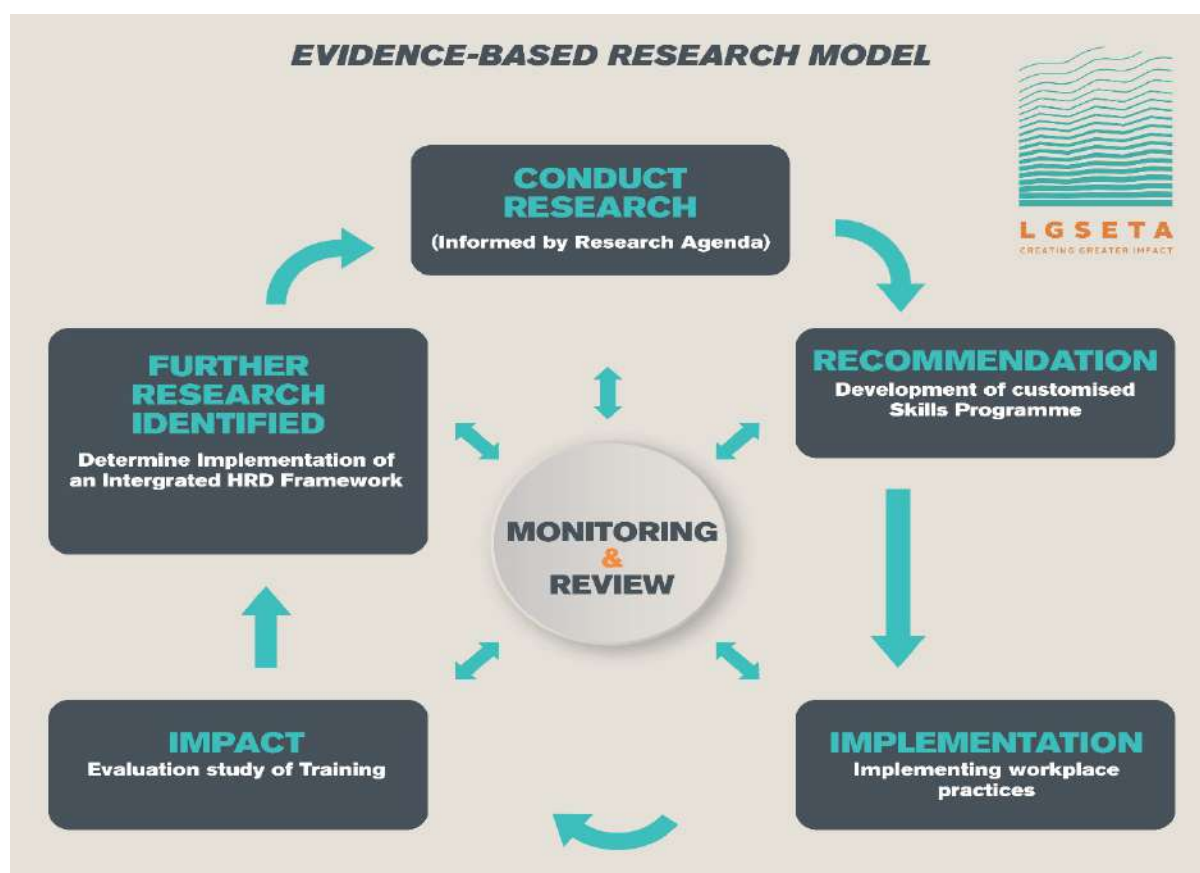
critical for municipal leadership; hence, the LGSETA is positioned to advise local government leadership on the best strategies to retain skilled talent towards advancing municipal service delivery.

## **7.7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability**

The assessment of extant literature in South Africa has shown the critical role monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plays in ensuring that government departments adhere to project commencement and finishing. M&E systems are highly sought after in the public sector of developing nations, according to Mackay (2007), as a means of assuring service delivery and proper public sector management. As a result, emerging nations are attempting to improve their current M&E systems while others are creating them from scratch. Evaluation has become a way to improve government performance. Deriving from this assertion, the LGSETA in South Africa has the mandate to ensure that mentorship support is provided in terms of capacity building to help local municipalities ensure that projects are implemented properly for the benefit of the people.

Effective M&E system deployment is a crucial part of reaffirming the local government's responsibility to ensure that public goods and services are rendered to the people in an accountable and effective manner. M&E in local government is essential for protecting the development agendas of the national and provincial government, as well as for identifying early signs of problems in municipalities that might require some form of intervention. The LGSETA's role in instituting an M&E mechanism in local government can help mitigate some of the institutional weaknesses that may deter effective service delivery (Mothamaha and Govender, 2014). Past research reiterates that M&E within local government and other government departments is a tool which can consistently be used to evaluate project performance and the performance of officials, reassess their approach, and move closer to achieving their goals through refining policies (De Visser, 2005; Kanyane and Koma, 2014). The figure below elaborates more on the role of M&E according to the LGSETA framework.

**Figure 1: Roles of monitoring and evaluation**



Source: (<https://lgseta.org.za/specialProjects/dsbd/>)

As indicated in the above figure, the role of the LGSETA in supporting municipal leadership is critical on many fronts. Conducting a needs analysis in the form of research is one of the mandates, and this should be aligned with the needs of municipalities. In order to achieve this, municipal leadership must work in collaboration with the LGSETA to ensure that the proposed areas that require intervention are key to advancing municipal leadership. Secondly, implementing workplace practices is fundamental for municipal leadership, and the LGSETA can help establish frameworks that can be used to implement good practices in projects. Evaluating the impact of projects is critical at the local government level.

In most cases, local government fails due to the absence of project management skills, which affects the capacity of local government to render public goods and services effectively. The LGSETA plays a pivotal role in equipping local government with skills training programmes to evaluate the impact of projects, which is

fundamental in attaining social and economic development. This authority has been shown to play the role of a learning organisation by advising and advocating for further research, which is fundamental in ensuring that weaknesses that emanate from development programmes are addressed and that it is able to identify future areas of improvement when it comes to municipal leadership.

## **7.8 Summary**

In summary, the LGSETA plays a crucial and diverse role in equipping municipal leadership to enhance service delivery within the local government sector proactively. It functions as the entity responsible for overseeing and promoting improvements in the functioning of local government. This oversight is achieved by performing assessments of needs and implementing programmes to expand capacity and develop skills. In doing so, the LGSETA aims to tackle the significant issues of leadership deficiencies and maladministration. Moreover, it assumes a leadership development function by providing guidance to local governments about skills assessments, supporting cooperation and alliances with relevant parties, facilitating the management of knowledge, easing the sharing of information, and encouraging the adoption of technology and innovation. The support provided by the LGSETA plays a crucial role in ensuring that municipal leadership has the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the ever-changing environment of public service delivery effectively. This support helps in enabling them to make well-informed decisions and enhance accountability and transparency within their respective municipalities. Furthermore, it actively facilitates the promotion of the essential components of monitoring, assessment, and accountability, providing mentorship and support to local municipalities. In general, the multifarious contributions of the LGSETA play a pivotal role in enhancing the capacities of municipal leadership, hence facilitating improved service delivery that is crucial for the socio-economic progress of communities in South Africa.

## **SECTION 8: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP, SERVICE DELIVERY AND TRANSFORMATION**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This section explores the empirical research findings and their consequences for leadership, service provision, and change within the local government sector. It consolidates research findings to comprehend the crucial skills of transformational leadership necessary for initiating change from the perspective of local governance. This research emphasises the need for adaptable and collaborative abilities, people management skills, and the capacity to effectively negotiate decisiveness, planning, monitoring, and assessment by assessing participants' opinions. These findings highlight the difficulties that local government officials encounter in handling intricate governing frameworks and efficiently providing services. Moreover, it explores how these leadership attributes directly impact the ability to provide innovative services and achieve broader transformative goals. This section attempts to provide insightful ideas for improving the effectiveness of local government leadership in handling the complex demands of service delivery and governance change by critically examining these competencies.

### **8.2 The Role Played by Municipal Leadership in Accelerating Service Delivery and Transformation in The Local Government**

Municipal leadership plays a critical role in ensuring that transformation is achieved in local government. It includes both political and administrative leadership. The findings below represent the views of respondents regarding the role of municipal leadership in implementing transformation at the local government level.

**Table: Municipal leadership plays a critical role in ensuring that transformation is achieved in local government**

<b>The role played by the municipal leadership in accelerating service delivery and transformation in the local government sector</b>	<b>To no extent</b>	<b>To a very little extent</b>	<b>To some extent</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>
To what extent is the municipal	4,6%	24,8%	37,6%	33%



leadership involved in Influencing Local Government Reform				
To what extent is the municipal leadership involved in driving felt responsibility for change	6,4%	23,9%	31,2%	38,5%
To what extent is the municipal leadership involved in exploring alternatives for reform	12,8%	21,1%	46,8%	27,5%
To what extent is the municipal leadership involved in framing and fostering citizen participation	12,8%	21,1%	23,9%	42,2%

Respondents were surveyed regarding the level of municipal leadership involvement in local government reform. Results indicate that 38% agreed to some extent, 33% to a greater extent, 25% to a very little extent, and 5% to no extent. These findings suggest that municipal leadership's participation in local government transformation remains limited, likely due to institutional challenges such as political infighting and bureaucratic red tape, among other factors.

Further analysis of the respondents' feedback reveals that 39% agreed to a greater extent, 31.2% to some extent, 24% to a very little extent, and 6.4% to no extent that municipal leadership feels responsible for driving change. While a significant percentage acknowledges the potential of municipal leadership to foster change, hesitancy persists among some respondents, possibly influenced by recurring issues in local government service delivery. Challenges like inadequate sanitation and water services may contribute to doubts about the strategic capability of municipal leadership to enact meaningful change.

In terms of exploring alternatives for municipal leadership reforms, a majority of respondents (47%) agreed to some extent, with 28% agreeing to a greater extent. Conversely, a smaller percentage (21.1% and 13%) agreed to a very little extent or not at all. This sentiment aligns with findings from Shava and Chamisa (2018), who highlight the impact of political interference on municipal functioning, affecting the reporting and performance management of both councillors and bureaucrats. Reforms in local government are often contentious, particularly with the emergence of coalition governments in some municipalities.

Moreover, respondents were queried about the involvement of municipal leadership in framing and promoting citizen participation. The majority of respondents (42.2%) agreed to a greater extent, with 24% agreeing to some extent. In contrast, 21.1% agreed to a very little extent, and 13% did not agree at all that municipal leadership can effectively foster citizen participation.

The observation regarding the lower percentage of respondents who believe that municipal leadership effectively fosters citizen participation aligns with common challenges seen in many municipalities. It is not uncommon for citizens to feel disenchanted with the participation process, often citing frustrations with bureaucrats' failure to implement their suggestions for service delivery improvements. Addressing this issue necessitates a transformative leader with strong persuasive skills to facilitate meaningful citizen engagement and interaction, as echoed by the majority of responses.

The findings of the AG Report (2021/22), which highlights limited citizen engagement, further emphasize the need for improvement in accountability within local government in South Africa. The persistent gap in fostering citizen participation underscores the significant challenge that local government faces in this regard. Closing this gap will require concerted efforts to enhance transparency, responsiveness, and inclusivity in municipal decision-making processes.

These findings are corroborated by qualitative findings where political infighting in many local municipalities has been confirmed in literature as one of the hindrances to achieving transformation.

**Matrix 1 Participants' responses regarding the role played by municipal leadership in accelerating service delivery and transformation in local government.**

Sub-question	Respondents' responses	Sources
In the context of your municipality, what specific strategies have you implemented to enhance service delivery and promote transformation, considering the existing challenges of	<i>For some time, there's been instability in terms of leadership due to consistent changes in leadership. From the political side, also from the administrative side and for a long time, you find that even on the administrative side in terms of the senior leadership, there's been constant change.</i>	EM 1
	<i>We have both political and administrative leadership to support transformation. And two, who if, if you observe, you realize some of them were still young, and a few that will</i>	MBLM 2

maladministration?	<p><i>little bit oldish in terms of experience and one or two that have been in the institution for the second and third or third term now you'll agree with me that and leadership in any municipal environment it's critical to enhance the service delivery.</i></p>	
	<p><i>To ensure transformation in the management of the institution, we have the executive mayor has now served two terms, or this is the second term that is saving and she understands the entire legislative requirement of a leader of the statute of an executive mayor who can also understand her role as a leader of the institution in the executive two, we have got another leader, like your speaker, who's also saving a second term and who also understands her role as the chairperson of Council and her role as a facilitator of both the Council operations in terms of political oversight and the role of councillors in their participation as leaders at what and the Community level.</i></p>	MLM 1
	<p><i>For instance, as we speak now, you see that we are getting new executive directors. There's been a long time whereby there's been acting from positions which bringing instability to the institution because when there's acting, there are no substantive heads, it gives a lack of stability and it is now last year, 20 December 2023, that the municipal finalised the appointment of senior managers.</i></p>	ELM 2

	<p><i>So, what then happens is that in all the departments we'll have the risky, you know, analysis in terms of the challenges that different departments are experiencing in the municipality. And based on those things that have been identified, then you look at intervention measures or plans as to how you would deal with those with those issues like you know, one issue is the issue of how we enhance the Community participation in the programs of them.</i></p>	BBR 2
	<p><i>We have TROIKA where issues affecting service delivery in our communities are discussed. In addition to that WhatsApp groups are being used to communicate with ratepayers and interact with communities. The use of TROIKA to run municipal business and transformation has long existed although the effectiveness is still questionable given the transformation agenda currently being sought by the national government. This may be because of the distinct mix of stakeholders which might affect decision-making regarding service delivery and transformation at large. Using the WhatsApp platform as a strategy to ensure communication is vital as most community members in local government have access to smartphones which may also increase local municipality accountability in service delivery.</i></p>	MLM 1

Source (Field Survey, 2024)

Responding to the questions about municipal leadership in achieving transformation, two participants stated that:

*For some time, there's been instability in terms of leadership due to consistent changes in leadership. From the political side, also from the administrative side and for a long time, you find that even on the administrative side in senior leadership, there's been constant change (ELM 1).*

*We have both political and administrative leadership to support transformation. And two, who if, if you observe, you realize some of them were still young, and a few that will little bit oldish in terms of experience and one or two that have been in the institution for the second and third or third temp now you'll agree with me that and leadership in any municipal environment it's critical to enhance the service delivery (MLM 2).*

Regarding the various roles, another added:

*To ensure transformation in the management of the institution, we have the executive mayor has now served two terms, or this is the second term that is saving and she understands the entire legislative requirement of a leader of the statute of an executive mayor who can also understand her role as a leader of the institution in the executive two, we have got another leader, like your speaker, who's also saving a second term and who also understands her role as the chairperson of Council and her role as a facilitator of both the Council operations in terms of political oversight and the role of councillors in their participation as leaders at what and the Community level (MLM 1).*

These assertions confirm the findings from the literature review that change in political leadership adversely impacts municipal planning and, ultimately, the transformation of local government in South Africa. While it is not new, the relationship between politics and administration in local government needs to be managed to enhance municipal leadership towards transforming local government.

Commenting on the strategies employed to ensure local government transformation crisis, another participant added:

*For instance, as we speak now, you see that we are getting new executive directors. There's been a long time whereby there's been acting off positions which bringing instability to the institution because when there's acting, there are no substantive heads, it gives a lack of stability and it is now last year, 20 December 2023, that the municipal finalised the appointment of senior managers (EM 2).*

The above response indicates the extent to which unstable leadership in local government triggers service delivery challenges and may adversely affect transformation. The dynamics triggered by a change in leadership and coalition politics have not done justice to municipal leadership in South Africa. It is a huge gap that requires redress for municipal leadership to prevail and ensure that it responds to the demands of transformation, which may include reforming structures and systems for the better.

Participants were questioned about the strategies they utilise to facilitate the transformation of municipal leadership in the aftermath of COVID-19. One of the participants asserts that:

*So, what then happens is that in all the departments we'll have the risky, you know, analysis in terms of the challenges that different departments are experiencing in the municipality. And based on those things that have been identified, then you look at intervention measures or plans as to how you would deal with those with those issues like you know, one issue is the issue of how we enhance the Community participation in the programs of them (EM 2).*

The implementation of risk analysis at the local government level is key to averting dangers and other leadership discrepancies that may hinder transformation. Apart from using risk analysis, one participant added that:

*We have TROIKA where issues affecting service delivery in our communities are discussed. In addition to that WhatsApp groups are being used to communicate with ratepayers and interact with communities. The use of TROIKA to run municipal business and transformation has long existed although the effectiveness is still questionable given the transformation agenda currently being sought by the national government. This may be because of the distinct mix of stakeholders which might affect decision-making regarding service delivery and transformation at large. Using the WhatsApp platform as a strategy to ensure communication is vital as most community members in local government have access to smartphones which may also increase local municipality accountability in service delivery (MLM 1).*

Based on the above assertions it is critical to note that the proliferation of various modern digital technologies requires local government in South Africa to adopt and ensure that various online platforms are used in the transformation agenda to enhance communication, accountability and overall municipal responsiveness to the demands of taxpayers. The use of WhatsApp – as confirmed in the findings – is easy, and the local government is encouraged to tap into more online platforms such as X and Facebook to ensure that interaction with local communities is consistently done to avoid citizens' disgruntlement over poor service or lack of communication and feedback from municipal leadership. Additionally, this analysis highlights that leadership transformation should not rely solely on traditional bureaucratic systems that emphasize rules and regulations. Instead, integrating modern digital technologies can streamline work processes, save public funds, and enhance access to markets and resources. Moreover, embracing digital tools can foster mutual trust between ratepayers and municipalities.



### 8.2.1 Leadership approach evolution to enhance transformation in service delivery pre- and post- the COVID-19 pandemic

The analysis of extant literature has shown that transformation is an ongoing and complex phenomenon that may take many years to be fully implemented in local government institutions in South Africa. This is because local government structures and systems need to be reformed to ensure their responsiveness to the transformation agenda. In this study, participants were asked their opinions about the leadership approach they used to see if it has evolved to enhance transformation in service delivery pre- and post- the COVID-19 pandemic era. Varied responses were provided, as shown in the matrix.

**Matrix 2 Leadership approach evolution to enhance transformation in service delivery pre and post-COVID-19 pandemic**

Sub-question	Respondents' responses	Sources
How has your leadership approach evolved to enhance transformation in service delivery pre- and post- the COVID-19 pandemic?	<i>Post-pandemic our municipality has strived to ensure transformation by implementing and adopting more digital innovation and technologies that help improve the delivery of service. For example, the use of e-portals helps increase revenue collection while minimizing and saving money for consumers to come to municipal offices to pay their bills.</i>	CoJ 1
	<i>Yes, there is an appetite to ensure that our municipality remains a world-class city hence the politicians and administrators have a mutual interest in improving the leadership to have effective delivery of services.</i>	CoJ 3
	<i>We have a governance framework that is integrative and used as a guide in communicating service delivery matters in our municipality.</i>	MBLM 2

		CoJ 2
	<p><i>There are structures in place such as the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) which are crucial in ensuring that the transformation of municipal finances is achieved through an oversight role.</i></p>	
	<p><i>COVID-19 gave our city a chance to pause and reflect on how to take service delivery seriously and how both political and administrative leadership can work together to transform service delivery for the betterment of the city.</i></p>	CoJ 5

(Source: Fieldwork Group Data 2024)

The participants were asked about their leadership styles pre- and post-COVID-19 to see if the leadership is strategic enough to implement transformation in local government. Most responses indicated the desire to continue implementing issues such as risk management and timeous response to problems the same way they did during the procurement of goods to address the pandemic. One of the participants confirms that:

*Post-pandemic our municipality has strived to ensure transformation by implementing and adopting more digital innovation and technologies that help improve the delivery of service. For example, the use of e-portals helps increase revenue collection while minimizing and saving money for consumers to come to municipal offices to pay their bills (CoJ 1).*

Commenting on the strategies adopted during the pandemic, another participant added:

*Yes, there is an appetite to ensure that our municipality remains a world-class city hence, politicians and administrators have a mutual interest in improving the leadership to ensure effective delivery of services (CoJ 3).*

It is clear from the above responses that participants in the municipality felt that transformation is possible when the two distinct but interrelated offices of the municipal manager and mayoral office work together towards implementing a transformation agenda in leadership. Such a relationship can help to improve the age and leadership of local government in South Africa by doing things more smartly.

Furthermore, the viability of public sector institutions rests on the ability of leadership to communicate effectively with employees in various coordinating programmes. This assertion is affirmed in the literature as communication is key to ensuring that local government has influential communication structures to relate with external and internal stakeholders concerning municipal business. A study conducted by van der Waldt (2023) confirms that local governments need to communicate using digital technologies to streamline processes, improve communication and transparency, reduce costs, and improve citizen participation and satisfaction. Responding to the question of strategies adopted after the pandemic to ensure transformation in leadership, the following participants have this to say:

*We have a governance framework that is integrative and used as a guide in communicating service delivery matters in our municipality (CoJ 1).*

*There are structures in place such as the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) which are crucial in ensuring that the transformation of municipal finances is achieved through an oversight role (CoJ 2).*

*We have pockets of excellence in ensuring transformation through various leadership programmes where managers are given training to enhance their competencies (CoJ 3).*

Commenting on the leadership style and approach that were used after the pandemic to ensure transformation, another participant added:

*COVID-19 gave our city a chance to pause and reflect on how to take service delivery seriously and also how both political and administrative leadership can work together to transform service delivery for the betterment of the city (CoJ 5).*

It is clear from the above assertion that COVID-19 was the turning point for local government to ensure that transformation in terms of service rendering is achieved. The implementation of quick responses in terms of coordination of service delivery efforts is fundamental for local government post-COVID-19; hence, transformation in leadership is key to ensuring that municipal departments are responsive to the need for change through proper communication channels. These observations are supported by Zweni et al. (2022), who believe that communication is a critical competency for local government leaders to be able to handle business transactions and save municipal resources.

#### 8.2.2 Availability of political will in local government to transform its structures and systems to enhance the delivery of services

The success of transformation programs in municipal leadership hinges on the political will of both administrative and municipal leaders. The commitment demonstrated by the municipal manager's office and mayoral offices is pivotal for achieving transformation at the local government level, fostering inclusivity in service delivery. When participants were questioned about the role of political will in local government transformation, responses varied, with one participant stating:

*Yes, I do believe there is political will to transform municipal leadership for the betterment of services (ELM3).*

This assertion presents a general acceptance common among local government officials as most feel the question is more inquisitive about the different roles they play in municipal leadership. Commenting on a similar issue of political will, another participant added:

*Please note that you cannot implement transformation at the local government level without the political will of the councillors and other senior politicians. Both municipal and administrative leadership should be divorced from each other when transforming local government (OLM1).*

These findings remind readers of the existing political dichotomy at the local government level, which has been seen – in most cases – with the mayoral and municipal manager officers at loggerheads in terms of who will render services to communities. While legislation separates their duties, the battle for supremacy when it comes to implementing a transformation agenda cannot be ignored as some municipalities in South Africa fail to implement budgets, resulting in some failing to deliver basic goods and services. In contrast, others are placed under provincial administration. Given the sad scenario in the politics of local government, transformation is needed. However, its implementation largely depends on the political will, which is the driving force that ensures that systems and structures are transformed to become relevant and responsive to service delivery demands from the citizens. The study of Reddy (2016c) confirms this observation, citing political will as the core ingredient for local government transformation in South Africa.

### **8.3 The Extent to Which Transformation Impacts the Service Delivery in the Local Government Sector**

Questions often arise in literature as to what extent transformation can affect service delivery in the local government sector. The commonality is that various policies and programmes have been implemented post-1994 to restructure and realign local government in South Africa. However, few of these interventions yielded any positive results as communities. Evidence of community discontent with service delivery in various municipalities is experienced; in some cases, turning out to be violent as communities destroy municipal infrastructure. Transformation is the central pillar that ties municipal leadership to the urge to address various service delivery demands. Respondents of this study were asked about their views on whether transformation can affect or influence service delivery in local government. The responses are presented below:

**Table 2: The extent to which transformation impacts service delivery in the local government sector**

<b>The extent to which transformation impacts the service delivery in the local government sector</b>	<b>To no extent</b>	<b>To a very little</b>	<b>To some extent</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>
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		<b>extent</b>		
To what extent does leadership transformation actively promote the simplification of procedures	8,3%	14,7%	46,8%	30,3%
To what extent does leadership transformation actively promote optimisation of resource allocation	8,3%	14,17%	31,2%	45,9%
To what extent does leadership transformation actively promote timely and costly efficient delivery of services	4,6%	19,3%	41,3%	34,9%
To what extent does leadership transformation actively promote the cultivation of innovation in the delivery of services	6,4%	15,6%	30,3%	47,7%
To what extent does leadership transformation actively promote the integration of novel technologies and the use of inventive approaches to problem-solving	3,7%	16,5%	45,9%	33,9%

(Source: Field Survey Data 2024)

Table 2 above reveals that 47% of respondents somewhat believe, 30.3% strongly believe, 15% only slightly agree, and 8.3% do not agree at all that leadership transformation effectively promotes procedural simplification. These results illustrate a mixed perception regarding the potential impact of local government transformation on leadership and service delivery improvement.

Respondents were asked to further their views about the extent to which leadership transformation actively promotes the optimisation of resource allocation. For most of the respondents, 46% agreed to a greater extent; 31,2% agreed to some extent; 14,17% agreed to a very little extent; and 8,3% agreed to no extent that leadership transformation can indeed optimise resource allocation. The reasons could be derived from the fact that local government in South Africa relied heavily on equitable share

from the national sphere of government. Therefore, some municipalities, especially in rural spaces, have limited economic means to fundraise and boost their revenue, which may trigger service delivery deficiencies. This notion was observed by Shava (2020) in his study on rural municipalities where revenue generation and enhancement have been key impediments in attaining inclusive and efficient municipalities that can render public goods and services adequately. In this case, therefore, transforming leadership in municipalities is not a panacea to enhance service provision. Instead, more needs to be done to restructure and reconfigure the local government structures to ensure that they become responsive and attentive to the needs of communities.

Respondents were also asked about the extent to which leadership transformation actively promotes the timely and cost-efficient delivery of services. Results show that 41.3% of respondents agreed to some extent, and 35% agreed to a greater extent. In comparison, 19.3% agreed to a lesser extent, and 5% disagreed entirely that transformational leadership in local government can achieve effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. Based on these findings, it is clear that a huge percentage believe that by transforming local government systems and structures, chances are high that leadership may perform better in the delivery of services. Nevertheless, in literature, little evidence exists to show that relationship, although a common argument is that by employing leaders with a vision for transformation, local governments can perform better. This notion, in some instances, is undermined by the recent cases of corruption, fraud and financial embezzlement that have marred the local government sector, especially within the public procurement systems. Notwithstanding these limitations, good leadership can help minimise cases of corruption in local government – a repeated call from the AG every year to ensure that municipalities transform and become accountable to the electorate.

Research conducted by Shava and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023) in the city of Johannesburg reveals that public sector innovation can become a game changer in implementing smear services in local government. The same study highlights the need for visionary municipal leadership that can transform the service delivery landscape while realigning municipal goals with existing structures, strengthening them to make sure they respond to the quest by communities to receive quality basic services. Drawing insight from this empirical background, respondents of this study were asked



about their views as to what extent leadership transformation actively promotes the cultivation of innovation in the delivery of services.

Respondents were asked further about the extent to which leadership transformation actively promotes the integration of novel technologies and the use of inventive approaches to problem-solving. The majority of respondents, with 46% agreeing to some extent and 34% agreeing to a greater extent, believe that leadership formation can further embrace modern technologies to enhance problem-solving. Additionally, 17% agreed to a lesser extent, while 4% did not agree at all. The reason for an overwhelming response to the use of novel technologies could have been motivated by the trends in the technological environment where the 4IR is believed to have positive outputs in the public sector organisation that embraces them. Meanwhile, public sector innovation literature warns of the risk-averse attitudes among local government leaders to embrace modern technologies in their daily operations fully. This aversion is due to a low skill set and the heavy costs associated with the use of novel technologies to transform the service delivery landscape.

The qualitative findings for this theme have shown that transformation in local government can trigger both positive and negative impacts in the sense that municipal authorities – in most cases – are not ready for change, which may affect the implementation phase of the transformation phase. On the one hand, transformation can bring new hope and opportunities for municipal leadership to enhance its interaction with the communities being served. Fostering such a relationship is advantageous as communities may enhance their trust in municipalities as service providers, which may also increase the desire for citizens to participate in key municipal affairs that affect their lives. On the other hand, further transformation can help enhance the communication and reporting channels as municipals may want to report back to the citizens regarding how their money was spent delivering services. Furthermore, IDP forums, as strategic components of service delivery, can be vibrant through transformative leadership that listens and is responsive to the needs of the citizens.

Participants were asked their opinion on whether they believe the local government possesses sufficient capacity to implement transformation in service delivery. The

matrix below displays the various responses provided by participants, followed by the ensuing discussion.

**Matrix 3 Local government has enough capacity to implement transformation in service delivery**

Sub-question	Respondents' responses	Sources
In your opinion, do you think local government has enough capacity to implement transformation in service delivery?	<i>Poor budgeting in our municipality affects the financing of service delivery and spearheading the transformation agenda. We do not have skilled budget officials to be able to balance the financial accounts of our municipalities which often results in fruitless expenditure.</i>	BBR 1
	<i>Senior managers lack the proper qualifications to be able to execute transformation in their leadership roles.</i>	ELM 1
	<i>Political instability is the main cause of this ever-changing leadership emanating from coalition politics. We therefore become a less compliant city when it comes to the issue of legislation or adhering to some of the expected requirements to implement transformation in service delivery.</i>	MBLM 1
	<i>We simply don't have enough capacity to implement transformation in our municipality if you look at brain drain among other factors.</i>	OLM 2
	<i>Yes, I believe we can implement transformation in our municipality as we partner with institutions of higher learning to enhance our leadership skills.</i>	MLM 1

Source (Focus Group Data 2024)

As a continuous phenomenon that often requires adequate human and financial resources, the transformation of leadership at a local government level is very complex. It is due to the interplay of factors and actors that are involved that municipal leadership is capacitated to withstand shocks that may be triggered by underperforming municipal departments, notwithstanding community wrath over poor service delivery. The questions were posed to participants to understand if their municipalities had enough capacity to implement the transformation agenda within the leadership ranks, which is tantamount to enhanced service delivery. The responses vary. One of the participants claims:

*Poor budgeting in our municipality affects the financing of service delivery and spearheading the transformation agenda. We do not have skilled budget officials to be able to balance the financial accounts of our municipalities, which often results in fruitless expenditures (BBR 1).*

The absence of competent officials to implement strategic budgets in local government is a setback to transformation as leadership struggled to safeguard municipal finances despite the existence of enabling legislation such as the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003.

Commenting on the question of capacity, one of the participants added:

*Senior managers lack the proper qualifications to be able to execute transformation in their leadership roles (ELM 1).*

Due to a multiplicity of factors, including brain drain and inefficient leadership, local government in South Africa has been on the news platforms for the wrong reasons, as some municipalities are being run by people who have no qualifications for the senior positions they are occupying. The above assertion is a confirmation of what is already happening in the local sphere, which is a gap in theory as human resources practitioners should be independent in recruiting and selecting and possibly desist from succumbing to political interference where unqualified individuals assume higher officials only to trigger various service delivery deficiencies due to poor performance.

The issues of poor capacity or lack of skills are an ongoing phenomenon in local government, and they have significantly impacted the transformation of local government leaders in South Africa, affecting most, if not all, cases. Commenting on

the issue of skills, three of the participants bring in a somewhat new but dominant aspect of political instability, which has seen various municipalities in South Africa failing to perform as expected owing to issues such as coalition governments. The participants state that:

*Political instability is the main cause of this ever-changing leadership emanating from coalition politics. We therefore become a less compliant city when it comes to the issue of legislation or adhering to some of the expected requirements to implement transformation in service delivery (MBLM 1).*

*We simply don't have enough capacity to implement transformation in our municipality if you look at brain drain among other factors (OLM 2).*

*Yes, I believe we can implement transformation in our municipality as we partner with institutions of higher learning to enhance our leadership skills (MLM 1).*

The above assertions are not new, but they confirm what has been and always affects the capacity of local government in South Africa to transform and implement reforms that oversee improved service delivery. Based on the above assertions, it is clear that the absence of skills in terms of budgeting affects municipal leadership from implementing transformation, which is a gap that may require redress. Moreover, coalition governments have become a menace to South Africa's political and administrative leadership. While coalition governments hold promise for enhancing accountability and service delivery, prevailing literature often portrays coalition politics negatively, citing it as a barrier to achieving transformation in local government service delivery. Commenting on the issue of coalition politics and how they derail transformation in service delivery, Houston and Kanyane (2022) argue that the poor implementation of solid human resources practices in local government creates a complacent workforce that can disrupt the governance systems due to poor performance. It remains imperative for both administrative and political leadership in municipalities to ensure they forge close ties when implementing the transformation agenda since this is critical to the delivery of services to local communities.

## 8.4 Transformational Service Delivery Efforts in South Africa: Insights from Local Municipalities

The broad theme of transformational service delivery efforts in local government in South Africa encompasses the initiatives, strategies, and activities implemented by local government entities to enhance and optimise the provision of vital services to communities. It includes endeavours to tackle obstacles such as enhancing infrastructure, providing water and sanitation, access to energy, waste management, and healthcare improvement. The primary objective is to enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and dependability of these services. These endeavours are frequently influenced by the necessity to address past disparities and resource limitations and cater to the changing requirements of varied and expanding urban and rural communities. The objective is to guarantee that every individual in South African communities has fair and impartial access to fundamental services, enhancing general growth and quality of life. From the analysed data, two sub-themes emerged that fall within the ambit of this theme – enhancing institutional capacity and partnerships and structural and systemic reforms. These sub-themes explore the actions taken by municipalities to strengthen their organisational capabilities, build partnerships, and execute significant changes in structures and procedures to enhance governance effectiveness and service delivery. The following sections comprehensively analyse these sub-themes, elucidating local leadership viewpoints and tactics.

**Table 3: Transformational service delivery efforts in South Africa: Insights from local municipalities**

<b>The leadership has addressed the following factors to achieve effective local public service in the municipality</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Transformation of Local Development Units	7.2%	10.8%	35.1%	27.9%	18.9%
Establishment of clear administrative and financial	3.6%	11.7%	23.4%	42.3%	18.9%

autonomy					
Promotion of coordinated dialogue between central, governorate, and municipal levels.	4.5%	11.7%	31.5%	28.8%	23.4%
Implementation of strategic capacity-building initiatives for local civil servants and elected officials.	7.2%	11.7%	25.2%	36.0%	19.8%

Source (Survey Data 2024)

The survey results capture perceptions of fundamental elements and efforts of municipal leaders to enhance service delivery efforts. The results indicate that the transformation of local development units is met with a measured sense of optimism, as 46.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree, while just 18% disagree. This percentage suggests that there has been some progress, but there is still potential for improvement. The concept of clear administrative and financial autonomy is widely regarded in a good light, with 61.2% of individuals agreeing. This percentage underpins the acknowledged significance of such autonomy in promoting effective governance. The approval rating for coordinated interaction between government levels stands at 52.2%, highlighting the significance of collaboration. Most respondents (55.8%) have expressed a positive attitude towards strategic capacity-building programmes, indicating a consensus on the necessity of continuous development of officials.

**Table 4: Leadership involvement in transformational activities**

<b>Municipal leadership involvement in transformational activities</b>	<b>To no extent</b>	<b>To a very little extent</b>	<b>To some extent</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>
Influencing Local Government Reform	4.6%	24.8%	37.6%	33.0%
Driving Felt Responsibility for	6.4%	23.9%	31.2%	38.5%

Change				
Exploring Alternatives for Reform	6.4%	19.3%	46.8%	27.5%
Framing and fostering citizen participation	12.8%	21.1%	23.9%	42.2%

(Survey Data 2024)

The results show the extent of municipal leadership involvement in transformational activities in South Africa. Most respondents reported that municipal leadership was involved to some extent in influencing local government reform (37.6%) and driving felt responsibility for change (38.5%). Exploring alternatives for reform was reported to some extent by 46.8% of respondents. Framing and fostering citizen participation was reported to a great extent by 42.2% of respondents. These results suggest that municipal leadership is involved to some extent in transformational activities in South Africa, but there is room for improvement. The literature suggests that transformational leadership can be a catalyst for efficient service delivery in local government and that it has a positive correlation with subordinate leadership acceptance, performance, and job satisfaction.

The responses from the interview findings support the efforts for service delivery that emerged in the quantitative data. For instance, aspects such as the promotion of coordinated dialogue between central, governorate, and municipal levels, as well as the implementation of strategic capacity-building initiatives for local civil servants and elected officials, are some of the issues featured in the interview data. For instance, the interview responses yielded themes such as enhancing institutional capacity through transformation and structural and systemic reforms are all in sync with the results from the quantitative data. The section below describes the qualitative findings.

**Matrix 4 Summary of responses regarding the effective governance efforts to improve municipal service delivery local leadership insights**

Sub-question	Respondents' responses	Sources
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What are the transformational service delivery efforts in South Africa	<i>However, the local government level is not critically supported to ensure that transformation capacity is provided.</i>	MBLM1
	<i>The new municipal staff regulations... coming up with a view of depoliticizing local government and creating a developmental local government that is apolitical.</i>	MBLM3
	<i>Serious existence of institutional void in local government such that it cannot be able to transform or to implement any transformation of services.</i>	ENLM2
	<i>We've always allowed for restructuring... creating a municipal-owned entity... to ensure that we improve... service delivery approaches.</i>	CoJ1
	<i>One of the key things that the municipality has introduced his continuous training and development for staff and management members to ensure that they can better advise in terms of how we can overcome the challenges that we are faced with as a municipality.</i>	NM 1

(Source: Focus Group Data 2024)

#### 8.4.1 Enhancing institutional capacity through transformation



The sub-theme of “enhancing institutional capacity and partnerships” focuses on municipalities’ efforts to foster institutional capacity and forge partnerships with various stakeholders. The data analysis reveals that municipal leaders and administrators are prioritising the development of organisational capabilities to enhance the provision of services. It entails boosting the skills and capacities of municipal personnel. It also involves establishing collaborations with academic institutions and other organisations to enhance capacity and improve the administrative infrastructure. For the participants, the objective of these endeavours is to establish a highly skilled and productive workforce with the ability to oversee and provide municipal services efficiently.

A participant from Emfuleni Local Municipality addressed the critical issue of overcoming challenges in governance by implementing effective systems and structure from transformational leadership.

*Many challenges have been facing local government with some municipalities in the country being placed under administration because of poor governance. So, I want to know in the context of your municipality which systems and structures have been put in place to implement transformational leadership efficiently (ELM 1).*

Similarly, the need for enhancing institutional capacity and partnerships through transforming and changing political processes was echoed by a participant from Mbombela Local Municipality who said.

*Transforming local government can lead to effective service delivery if we transform how our leadership or councillors are elected at the political level (MBLM 2).*

Another participant from Mbombela Local Municipality stressed the need to transform the local government by eliminating political interferences. For this participant, political leaders needed to be capacitated for effective governance.

*Local government must come to a point where the entire political interference should be discarded altogether... empower our political leadership to create intervention mechanisms, not interference (MBLM 1).*

A participant from the City of Johannesburg describes the municipality’s framework for effective governance, allowing it to build institutional capacity. This participant describes a governance framework implemented to ensure integrity, accountability, and focused service delivery, including oversight structures.

*The city has what we call the governance framework to make sure that we promote good governance... there is integrity as well as the focus as far as service delivery is concerned... structures in place whereby all executives made an account and we also have structures that play an oversight role (COJ 1).*

Municipal leaders and administrators emphasise institutional capacity and partnerships in local governments, signalling a strategic move towards better governance, service delivery, and stakeholder participation. This change requires developing organisational capacities and strong connections with academic institutions and other organisations to improve administrative infrastructure and service delivery. Municipal activities across locales show a coordinated trend towards transformational leadership and structural reform to address governance issues. Municipalities at risk of administration due to governance issues require such measures. Emfuleni Local Municipality's focus on transformational leadership and Mbombela Local Municipality's push for political process reform highlight the need for systemic changes beyond traditional governance paradigms. The endeavour to reduce political interferences and empower political leadership for efficient administration shows a deeper understanding of local government dynamics. Johannesburg's governance architecture through oversight systems promotes honesty, accountability, and focused service delivery. These efforts emphasise the relevance of governance frameworks that promote effective leadership and stakeholder involvement in strengthening institutional capacity.

The literature emphasises collaborative urban planning and local development, supporting these conclusions. Healey (1998) emphasises the importance of generating new policy discourses and solid social networks as institutional capital in collaborative place-making activities. Oatley and Lambert (1999) and Geddes (2006) examine local capacity and how partnerships improve governance and democratic legitimacy. Bontenbal and Lindert (2011) demonstrate the strategic benefit of municipal partnerships in addressing capacity and resource shortages, emphasising the need for institutional designs that maximise contractual duties and local discussion.

#### 8.4.2 Structural and systemic reforms

The sub-theme on "Structural and Systemic Reforms" in the context of local government attempts to enhance service delivery in South Africa and refers to the

extensive changes made to municipal processes and structures. These reforms focus on the underlying structures and processes that regulate the functions of local government. The goal is to improve effectiveness, transparency, and promptness in providing public services. It entails modifying rules, processes, and governance frameworks to tackle systemic inefficiencies, diminish bureaucratic obstacles, and enhance resource allocation and management. Through these changes, local governments strive to address their communities' requirements and guarantee fair and equal access to vital services more effectively.

A participant from Mbombela Local Municipality stressed that there are new regulations geared towards restricting municipalities and reducing the challenge of depoliticising local government. For this participant, it marks the starting point of a major local transformation that will go a long way in enhancing efficient service delivery. They said:

*The new municipal staff regulations... are coming up intending to depoliticize local government and create a developmental local government that is apolitical (MBLM 1).*

Another participant from Ehlanzeni Local Municipality indicated the urgent need to come up with institutional structural changes in local government. The participant highlighted a lack of institutional structures necessary for the transformation of service delivery in local government.

*There is a serious existence of institutional void in local government such that it cannot be able to transform or implement any transformation of services. And I will tell you why am I saying that when I'm saying institutional void, I'm saying that there is a blurring line between a person who's in a local government institution and the person who's outside in such a way that when I talk to you in the street, the same language we are using, even when I'm inside my office, sitting behind my text, we're using, we're still using, they are no rules of engagement that, that, that creates the sense of an institution, institution to say once I'm seated here, here, there is (ELM 2).*

Additionally, another participant from the City of Johannesburg discussed restructuring efforts and the creation of municipal entities to improve service delivery. It involves the city advancing its investments.

*We've always allowed for tweaking and ensuring that we move with the times, so you would know, perhaps approve, that Johannesburg is one of those few municipalities who took a bold step of creating a municipal-owned entity precisely to ensure that we improve (CoJ 2).*

Finally, a participant from Mbombela Local Municipality suggests that an independent body will be created to oversee appointments. This suggestion signifies a report to enhance the capacity and impartial delivery of services in local municipalities. They state:

*Let's also create another Public Service Commission kind of independent body in local government... to ensure that adequate capacities are appointed (MBLM 3).*

The responses above emphasise a significant transition towards structural and systemic changes in local government in South Africa, where the goal is to improve service delivery, transparency, and efficiency. The reforms involve many techniques, such as removing political influence from local government, correcting gaps in institutions, reorganising through the establishment of municipal organisations, and creating independent authorities to supervise nominations. The objective of these reforms is to overhaul local government, making it more focused on development, free from political influence, and efficient. Achieving these objectives will enable it to effectively handle the specific requirements of communities and ensure fair access to critical services.

The emphasis on structural and systemic changes in local government has significant ramifications for the field of public administration and governance, specifically concerning improving service provision. The transition towards more effective, open, and community-oriented frameworks poses a challenge to conventional local governance models and theories. Kachniarz et al. (2018) highlight the advantages of integrating local government levels, emphasising the resulting improvements in effectiveness and efficiency. This notion corresponds with the reform's objective of eliminating bureaucracy and boosting service delivery. Bernardelli et al. (2021) investigate the economies of scale in municipal administration, which highlights the focus on restructuring for economic efficiency in local government. In his work, Boyne (1992) examines the consequences of implementing structural reforms in the United States. He also explores the potential results of implementing comparable reforms in

different settings, such as South Africa. Aibieyi and Edigin (2011) emphasise the significance of autonomy, structure, and institutional innovations in local government, which corresponds to the objective of depoliticising and reconstructing institutions in South Africa.

### 8.5 Leadership Impediments Faced by the Local Government Sector

This section presents the findings on leadership’s various challenges while attempting to enhance service delivery and transformation in local government in South Africa. Findings from the data reveal three significant impediments that municipal leaders encounter while dealing with the intricate realm of local governance. Firstly, this section describes the challenge of capacity and literacy, highlighting that the challenges encountered by leadership result from differing degrees of literacy and comprehension among council members, specifically community leaders. Secondly, the political and administrative interface is described. This theme recognises the complex relationship between political power and administrative effectiveness in local government. Lastly, this section focuses on the challenge of systemic and structural limitations. This theme acknowledges the local government’s significant obstacles, including inadequate budgets and jurisdictional restrictions. It offers a thorough comprehension of the difficulties encountered by municipal leaders, providing valuable perspectives that can guide strategic interventions and solutions to promote efficient service delivery and transformation in local municipalities.

**Table 5: Obstacles hindering the municipality’s leadership efforts in accelerating transformation and service delivery**

<b>Impediments hindering the municipality’s leadership efforts in accelerating transformation and service delivery</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Insufficient expertise	9.3%	13%	30.6%	25.0%	22.2%
Fiscal restrictions	7.4%	19.4%	20.4%	32.4%	20.4%
Lack of accountability	9.3%	10.2%	29.6%	25.0%	25.9%

Lack of maintenance	12.0%	10.2%	23.1%	30.6%	24.1%
Political dysfunction	12.0%	6.5%	20.4%	30.6%	30.6%
Environmental sustainability	13.9%	11.1%	27.8%	25.9%	21.3%
Inadequate managerial practices	12.0%	10.2%	22.2%	28.7%	26.9%
Ageing infrastructure	13.0%	8.3%	25.0%	25.9%	27.8%
Low recruitment and employee retention	13.9%	8.3%	30.6%	26.9%	20.4%
Social equality	9.3%	8.3%	33.3%	25.0%	24.1%

(Survey Data 2024)

The table shows several barriers to transformation and service delivery in municipalities, with political dysfunction and ageing infrastructure seen as major issues, both receiving more than 60% agreement from respondents. Insufficiency in competence and absence of accountability are other significant problems, with a consensus of over 47% highlighting crucial areas that require addressing. The combination of fiscal constraints and insufficient managerial methods exacerbate the challenges, as evidenced by a majority expressing consensus. The findings highlight the complex and varied issues that municipalities face. They emphasise the importance of strategic interventions in areas such as expertise, budgetary management, accountability, infrastructure upkeep, and political governance to improve service delivery.

Interview responses from the various municipal personnel support the key competencies that emerged from the quantitative results. For example, barriers such as insufficient expertise, fiscal constraints, lack of accountability, and political dysfunction align with qualitative findings revealing challenges related to capacity and literacy, skills deficits, financial limitations, political-administrative interface issues, and systemic and structural constraints. These obstacles significantly impact municipal leadership efforts to expedite transformation and improve service delivery.

### *8.5.1 Capacity and literacy challenges*

In a bid to understand the various challenges that impede municipal leadership efforts in transformation and enhancing municipal service delivery, the researcher posed the participants with a question: What are the leadership impediments facing local government in South Africa? In response to this question, one of the themes that emerged prominently from the participant responses is the issue of limited capacity and literacy in local government.

The theme of “capacity and literacy challenges” pertains to the obstacles encountered by municipal leaders because of the diverse degrees of literacy, comprehension, and competence among council members and community leaders. Literacy encompasses not just the fundamental ability to read and write but also the capacity to understand and apply intricate policies and regulations with proficiency. From the participants’ perspective, this issue emphasises a substantial obstacle in local governance and the provision of services. The leaders raise apprehensions regarding the disparity between the technical demands of their positions and the real capabilities of the council members. This discrepancy frequently leads to inefficiencies and obstacles in carrying out municipal duties. The leaders highlight the deficiency in literacy and comprehension of legislation, policies, and procedures among community leaders, who constitute a substantial portion of local councils. This deficiency impedes efficient governance and the execution of developmental initiatives. This situation highlights the need for programmes to develop skills and knowledge to improve the overall effectiveness of local government leadership and management.

### *8.5.2 Literacy and skills deficit*

Literacy and skills deficits in local government can significantly impact service delivery and transformation. Evidence from the literature shows that institutional deficiencies, such as inadequate implementation of financial regulations and a deficiency in skills among local authorities, significantly hampers the provision of services (Koelble and LiPuma, 2010). These deficits encompass fundamental amenities such as electricity, access to clean water and sanitary facilities, and proper waste management. From the analysed data, one sub-theme that emerged is the notion that municipalities’ poor

literacy and skills deficit in the local government sectors limits the prospects of quality service delivery and transformation.

**Matrix 5 Summary of responses regarding the capacity and literacy challenges municipalities face in delivering services and transformation**

Sub-question	Respondents' responses	Sources
What are the leadership impediments facing local government in South Africa?	<i>I'm sure you are all aware of the skills deficit challenge that is currently facing local government in South Africa.</i>	ELM 1
	<i>What we have done in the past two years we embarked on what we call a skills audit... to determine what skills do we have in as far as leadership is concerned.</i>	CoJ 3
	<i>There is quite a big gap if you want to be honest there's not a contribution in terms of skills development taking place at the local municipality.</i>	ELM 2
	<i>There is a lack of capacity in local government. If you look at local government around the engineering field. You will see that there is a dire need to capacitate the personnel that is there.</i>	SALGA 1
	<i>There's poor performance whereby they say that there's a lot of shortage of skills.</i>	ELM 3
	<i>I think for me that's the key one because, without the proper skills, it's not.</i>  <i>It's like you setting people to fail. If you give them responsibilities, but without the skills they need to respond to those</i>	NM 1



	<i>responsibilities, it's impossible to perform.</i>	
	<i>So, leadership was one of the biggest challenges and there were no about 6 to 8 senior managers were the posts were vacant. So, they needed to fill up those posts so that every department could have a vision of how they wanted to change the fortunes of the municipality.</i>	MTN 1

(Source: Focus Group Data 2024)

For instance, one participant stated that the greatest impediment in local government service delivery initiatives and transformation agenda is the lack of literacy among the various leaders that occupy influencing positions. They underscored the issue of literacy among community leaders, saying that poor literacy poses challenges in understanding and implementing service delivery policies and ultimately hampers transformation in local municipalities. A participant from Emfuleni Municipality stressed that:

*Most of the councillors...are from community leaders so most of them are not that literate in terms of being able to understand...the regulations and stuff (EML 1).*

Another participant from Emfuleni Municipality concurs with the above assertion, addressing the widespread issues of skills deficit in their municipality and how it has restricted possibilities of service delivery transformation in that municipality, stating:

*I'm sure you are all aware of the skills deficit challenge that is currently facing local government in South Africa We have seen it in the news in various publications. We have seen people going to the streets complaining and protesting the leadership of various leaders in their municipalities (EML 2).*

While acknowledging that the City of Johannesburg has suffered greatly due to the lack of competent leadership that possesses the skills needed to delivery service

delivery transformation, one participant stressed the initiatives that the City was taking to address the skills gap, saying:

*What we have done in the past two years is embarked on what we call a skills audit... to determine what skills we have as far as leadership is concerned (CoJ 1).*

Similarly, another participant highlighted the lack of skills and skills development initiatives in their local municipality, stating the following:

*There is quite a big gap if you want to be honest there's no contribution in terms of skills development taking place at the local municipality (CoJ 2).*

Another participant from Mbombela Municipality stressed that there was a massive deficit of skills in the municipality. For this participant, such a deficit was detrimental to the municipal leader's efforts to enhance the transformation of municipal service. They also indicated the need for competency assessment to be used to tailor training programs for councillors.

*Let's come up with a skills competency assessment that will be able to assist us in determining if we must develop training programs (MBLM 3).*

A participant from Okhahlamba Local Municipality addressed the challenges of retaining skilled professionals in key areas essential for effective governance in local government.

*In local government the challenge of retaining skills in various fields... leadership, governance, finance, engineering and so on (OKLM 1).*

One participant from Nelson Mandela Municipality reasoned that a skills deficit is a challenge and that having a leadership that lacks capacity is setting up the municipality for failure. They said:

*It's like you setting people to fail. If you give them responsibilities, but without the skills they need to respond to those responsibilities, it's it's impossible to perform (NM 1).*

A participant from Motlosana local municipality stressed that the municipality struggles with the lack of capacity, where several leaders are well equipped for the roles they are performing.

*There is no capacity in local government and there are few specialists of local government (MTN 2).*

Put together, the participant responses presented above emphasise the widespread difficulties caused by inadequate literacy and skills deficiencies in the leadership of South African local government. These obstacles substantially impact the progress of transformation and the delivery of services. The Emfuleni Local Municipality recognises the extensive lack of skills, emphasising the necessity for enhanced capabilities. The City of Johannesburg adopts a proactive approach by conducting a skills audit to identify and rectify any deficiencies in leadership skills. The Emfuleni Local Municipality highlights the concrete outcomes of wasting resources due to insufficient improvement and training, underscoring the advantages of well-executed skills development initiatives.

The identification of a deficiency in skills enhancement at the level of the local municipality highlights a fundamental problem that demands immediate response. Mbombela Local Municipality proposes a strategic approach by advocating for a skills competency assessment to customise training programmes. The recognition that there are no institutional initiatives to enhance the abilities of municipal employees highlights a deficiency in the support system for skill advancement. The correlation between subpar performance and a dearth of expertise underscores the immediate influence on the overall efficacy of municipal administrative functions. The presence of a limited pool of skilled individuals and a lack of external options for additional education highlight the difficulties in acquiring the required skills within the municipal workforce. The City of Johannesburg's establishment of an executive leadership development program demonstrates a proactive approach to correcting recognised deficiencies in skills and abilities. The concern of Ehlanzeni Local Municipality over literacy and emotional intelligence underscores the range of issues that elected council members face, emphasising the significance of softer talents in effective leadership. These participant insights highlight the urgent requirement for comprehensive initiatives to tackle inadequate literacy and skills deficiencies, which are essential for improving the effectiveness of local government transformation and service delivery efforts.

### 8.5.3 Financial capacity and budget constraints

Evidence from existing literature shows that financial capability and budget limitations significantly influence the initiatives of municipal leadership in transforming service delivery in South Africa (Imuezerua and Chinomona, 2015). For instance, Imuezerua and Chinomona (2015) argue that poor financial management in the areas of budgeting and allocation results in insufficient service delivery in municipalities. When asked about the obstacles hindering local government leadership efforts to enhance service delivery transformation, most participants cited struggles with inadequate funding, budgetary constraints, and challenges related to financial mismanagement faced by many municipalities. For the participants, all these factors significantly hinder municipal leaders' ability to deliver service and transformation. Some responses from the participants are highlighted below.

One participant from the City of Johannesburg reflects on the recurrent financial uncertainty and the need for regular budget adjustments owing to unforeseen obstacles, disrupting planned municipal activities and highlighting the instability of municipal financial planning.

*At the end of every calendar year in November departments get asked... we'll meet the budget that we announced because of these challenges... that throw out... your budgeting plan that you would have had (CoJ 1).*

Another participant from the Emfuleni Local Municipality stressed that the efforts to deliver transformation and services in the municipality were affected by financial constraints. This participant stressed that the budget allocation was so minimal that the municipality could not carry out all its intended projects.

*The issue of financial constraints...we don't have enough resources to implement some of the projects (ELM 1).*

Similarly, another participant from the City of Johannesburg stressed that budget limitations provide a significant obstacle to achieving change and improving service delivery. They propose a clear connection between financial resources and the municipality's capacity to accomplish its objectives, saying:

*The budget is the greatest challenge when it comes to the impediments... how this can be addressed so that we can enhance transformation and service delivery remains a nightmare (CoJ 3).*

A participant from Emfuleni Municipality stressed that budget issues are a universal issue that hinders municipal capacity to deliver services. For this participant, limited budgets reduce the leadership’s ability to implement service delivery initiatives.

*Every year... departments... please cut your budget because there isn’t enough therefore you have to revise what you had planned for the year (EML 4).*

Additionally, another participant indicated that despite having adequate governance structures in the City of Johannesburg, the lack of funding remains a critical barrier to implementation. They said:

*In terms of the framework, governance, and other similar aspects, we are complete and ready to go; however, the only thing is that we lack a sufficient budget (COJ3).*

Another participant from Motlosana Local Municipality stressed how poor financial management practices have impacted the leadership. The participant said:

*So, some of those challenges that were raised concerning financial mismanagement impacted negatively and one of them was on the supplier and delivery of paraffin (MTN1).*

Finally, a participant from SALGA stressed that there is no capacity in the local government. The participants stressed that while in some municipalities there is capacity, most local governments struggle with capacity. They said,

*There is a lack of capacity in local government. If you look at local government around the engineering field. You will see that there is a dire need to capacitate the personnel that is there (SALGA1).*

**Matrix 6 Summary of responses regarding the financial impediments that affect municipal leadership transformation and service delivery**

Sub-question	Respondents’ responses	Sources
What are the leadership impediments facing	<i>At the end of every calendar year in November departments get asked... we'll meet that budget that we announced because</i>	CoJ 1

local government in South Africa?	<i>of these challenges... that throws out... your budgeting plan that you would have had."</i>	
	<i>You then have what you call your three-year budget... we need to radically change that... to say let's have every year a rated or based approach in terms of budgeting.</i>	ELM 1
	<i>Every year... departments... please cut your budget because there isn't enough therefore you have to revise what you had planned for the year.</i>	ELM 2
	<i>Funding is a problem... sometimes we apply to local government.</i>	CoJ 2
	<i>So, some of those challenges that were raised concerning financial mismanagement impacted negatively and one of them was on the supplier and delivery of paraffin.</i>	MTN 1

(Source: Focus Group Data 2024)

The municipal personnel's responses shed light on the enormous financial and budgetary issues encountered by these municipalities and how they limit leadership efforts in service delivery change. In Johannesburg, the city experiences frequent financial uncertainty, requiring budget changes owing to unexpected obstacles. This uncertainty disrupts planned operations and exposes the instability of financial planning. The participants emphasise a clear connection between budget limitations and the obstruction of change and improvement in service delivery, underscoring the crucial significance of financial resources.

The persistent problem of budget reductions compels departments to frequently modify plans, resulting in a detrimental impact on service provision and project execution. Although there are established governance systems, the primary obstacle to implementation is insufficient finance. Moreover, the dependence on external sources for finance brings about unpredictability. The recognition of universal

budgetary challenges in municipalities in Emfuleni Local Municipality highlights the widespread and crucial nature of these difficulties in local administration. The task of ensuring fair allocation of resources is made more difficult by the presence of limited financial resources, as past disparities need to be remedied within restricted budgets. Collectively, these quotations illustrate how towns are struggling with insufficient money, budget reductions, and difficulties in financial management. These issues greatly hinder their capacity to provide services and carry out innovative projects.

#### 8.5.4 Political and administrative interface

The theme of the political and administrative interface in the context of local government in South Africa pertains to the interactive and operational connection between elected political authorities and appointed administrative officials within the local government framework. The interface between political leaders and administrative staff at the local level is essential for the governance and delivery of services. It facilitates the interaction and coordination between policymakers and implementers. In response to the question of what the challenges are that face municipal leadership efforts of service delivery transformation, at least 99% of the participants state that the challenge of political interference and their relationships with local government administrative processes is a huge impediment to the service delivery transformation as shown the participants responses below.

#### Matrix 7 Summary of responses regarding political and administrative interface

Sub-theme	Respondents' responses	Sources
Political and administrative Interface	<i>Putting political heads inside the administrative offices... created a blurring line between politics and administration.</i>	EML 2
	<i>The role of politics... in public accountability space... while administration is responsible for administering and making sure that we implement service delivery.</i>	EML 3
	<i>The political-administrative interface... immediately you are identified to be active in that political environment.</i>	MBLM 1

	<i>The blurry line between political party ideology... and local government... politics influences the processes within the municipality.</i>	MBLM 3
	<i>If you have cadres that come to the municipalities without the needed skills, it sets that municipality to fail.</i>	SALGA1

Source: (Focus Group Data 2024).

A participant from Emfuleni Local Municipality stressed that political appointments lead to the appointment of individuals who lack skills and are incompetent in delivering leadership for service delivery transformation, asserting the following:

*And the issue of appointing political appointees of our competence and uh over professionalism within the municipal sphere, I think it affects transformational leadership because now people, they occupy spaces and positions best on political affiliation and mandate which they get from their political parties instead of getting to the position due to their capability and competence and ability to use their skills and knowledge experience to lead to a transformation (EML1).*

Another participant from the Ehlanzeni Local Municipality mentioned that political interference is a menace to the municipality. The participant questions the relationship that the city managers have with the mayoral committee (MC). They state that the MC shares the office with the city managers, and this setup blurs the relationship between the political office and the municipal administrative office.

*Political interference is quite extensive in the entire local government and our institution. That means that it will not be unique to the situation... why do we have the MC's sitting in the same office as the general managers? That creates a serious conflict because it's like the other one is no longer doing oversight, is policing the other one and it creates difficulty in terms of doing the normal administration, because now it this in a putting of political heads inside the administrative offices of the municipalities created a blurring line between politics and administration in the means, though they must be a proper inter interaction or interface between the two (EhLM 2).*



Another participant from Ehlanzeni Local Municipality stressed that they are dealing with the challenge of political interference in their municipality. They disclosed that the municipality is currently contending with the issue of political appointees, specifically the municipal manager and CFO. The participant said it is difficult to work with these two deployees because they take instructions from the political party and do not follow administrative procedures. This participant illustrated the challenges posed by political appointees in key administrative positions, leading to difficulties in resolving internal conflicts.

*I mean A&MC and then when the Community wants to interact with the political hate, they flock to the office of the general manager in such a way that it's not even ok. So, political interference comes in different contexts. Sometimes you find out that, for instance, currently, the institution is struggling to deal with problems that are emanating between the municipal manager and the CFO, and both of these people are political deployees and the political and institution of the municipalities and able to solve the problem because they had interfered in the development or the appointment of the two officers. Now it's difficult to deal with them. So, for me, and it's a very, very serious challenge and to deal with that, I think it depends on the Internet entire political system that is in the run and whether it is capable to deal to interfering with the local or the regional politics in terms of how they participate in the running of local government (EhLM 4).*

Similarly, another participant from Emfuleni Local Municipality emphasised the negative impact of prioritising political loyalty over competence in appointments, affecting leadership and transformation efforts.

*Appointing political appointees over competence... affects transformational leadership. And the issue of appointing political appointees of our competence and uh over professionalism within the municipal sphere, I think it affects transformational leadership because now people, they occupy spaces and positions best on political affiliation and mandate which they get from their political parties instead of getting to the position due to their capability and competence and ability to use their skills and knowledge experience to lead to a transformation (ELM 3).*

A participant from SLGA bemoaned the cadre deployment of municipal councillors into municipalities, stating that they were not equipped for the job. What their role is to serve the political interest of their political party. The state that,

*We need to relook at the nature of the councillors that are deployed in the municipalities by the political parties. Most of them are not equipped for the job. They don't have the required skills (SALGA1).*

Finally, a participant from Mbombela Local Municipality suggests that political affiliations can influence administrative roles, leading to a biased or politicised administrative environment.

*So, the political-administrative interface and it's very important, especially from the site of assets administrators, because immediately I reveal all seem to be politically participating and, in the party, even if it's in the party where the political leader resides. But there are camps in those parties and immediately you are identified to be active in that political environment. You are normally seen as an ally or an administrator within that environment because I think it's knowledge. It's common knowledge that there are no permanent friends and permanent enemies in politics. So, and I have created an environment where I am an administrator, I ensure that the political leader accepts me as an administrator (MBLM 1).*

The presence of political influence in the management of service delivery has been identified as a significant issue, characterised by unwarranted political intervention and tense relationships between political and administrative personnel. The uMlalazi Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal has had a decline in service delivery due to political meddling, as highlighted by Mngomezulu (2020). Furthermore, deficient leadership and governance at both the political and administrative tiers have been recognised as elements that contribute to insufficient service provision and a dearth of responsibility, resulting in governance breakdowns in numerous municipalities (Ngumbela, 2022).

#### *8.5.5 Systemic and structural limitations*

The theme of systemic and structural limitations in the context of local government in South African municipalities encompasses a range of challenges and constraints that affect the effective functioning and development-oriented goals of these municipalities. Local governments in South Africa have transitioned from exclusively prioritising

service delivery to assuming a more comprehensive developmental function. The broadened scope of responsibilities encompasses tackling poverty and inequality and promoting equitable socio-political engagement for individuals of lower socio-economic status. Nevertheless, the ability to carry out these responsibilities is frequently restricted by difficulties in execution and a scarcity of resources (Fuo, 2013).

The responses of the participants highlight the systematic and administrative obstacles that impact the efforts of municipal officials in transforming service delivery. The absence of robust institutional support for capacity building in Ehlanzeni Local Municipality poses a substantial obstacle, impeding the municipality’s ability to achieve effective development and transformation. The presence of an institutional vacuum and ambiguous delineation of responsibilities within local government exacerbates inefficiencies in governance and the provision of services. The challenge encountered by training officials in recognising and cultivating the essential skills and capabilities inside the municipality highlights underlying systemic problems in administration and service delivery. Furthermore, the difficulty also affects the way individuals engage with the local government sphere, hence influencing overall effectiveness. The participants in Mbombela Local Municipality have identified a discrepancy between theoretical structural designs and their actual implementation, suggesting a lack of coordination in planning and budgeting processes. There is a strong emphasis on the comprehensive evaluation of the structural frameworks in local governments to ensure optimal performance.

Furthermore, the demand for structural modifications in particular industries, such as transportation, highlights the significance of aligning administrative frameworks with sector-specific requirements to enhance efficiency and efficacy. These responses highlight the crucial need to tackle structural and administrative obstacles to improve municipal leadership’s efforts in transforming service delivery.

**Matrix 8 Summary of responses regarding systematic and structural impediments affecting municipal leadership transformation and service delivery**

Sub-theme	Respondents’ responses	Sources
Systemic and Structural Limitations	<i>Training officers... find it difficult without the capacity to research and find out the type of capacity that is needed by the municipality.</i>	ELM 1

	<i>We can't talk about a structural design that looks at the coordination of planning, budgeting etcetera... that becomes like only a talk show.</i>	MBLM 3
	<i>There is a need for structural change... in the sector of transport where I work.</i>	MBLM 1
	<i>We can't talk about a structural design that looks at the coordination of planning, budgeting etc.... that becomes like only a talk show.</i>	MBLM 2

Source: (Focus Group Data 2024).

A participant from the City of Johannesburg narrated how various structural and legal instruments pose a threat to service delivery efforts and limit transformation in the local government. This participant stressed that municipal leaders' jurisdictional and systematic challenges are a huge impediment to service delivery and transformation.

*[There are] cases of roads that you cannot service because they are government roads... and there will be potholes... you cannot service them because they are not your roads (CoJ 1).*

Similarly, a participant from Ehlanzeni Local Municipality emphasised a systemic obstacle in capacity building caused by the absence of institutional backing and collaboration, hindering the municipality's ability to achieve effective development and transformation.

*In terms of capacity building...without strong institutional capital... the lack of other institution[s]... to assist in capacity building... creates a capacity building challenge (ELM 3).*

A participant from Ehlanzeni Local Municipality suggests that there is a structural problem where the roles and responsibilities within local government are not clearly defined, leading to inefficiencies and challenges in governance and service delivery.

*There is a serious existence of institutional void in local government... there is a blurring line between a person who's in a local government institution and the person who's outside (EhLM 2).*

Additionally, a participant from Mbombela Local Municipality highlighted a disconnect between theoretical structural designs and their practical implementation, indicating a gap in the effective coordination and execution of planning and budgeting processes, stating:

*We can't talk about a structural design that looks at the coordination of planning, budgeting etc.... that becomes like only a talk show (MBLM 1).*

Overall, the participants' replies collectively illustrate a situation in which local municipalities are struggling with systemic and structural obstacles that impede their capacity to provide services and undergo essential changes efficiently. The issues encompass a lack of proper support from institutions, ambiguous delineation of roles and duties, insufficient efforts to enhance capabilities, and ineffective structural frameworks.

## **8.6 Transformational Leadership Challenges in South African Local Government: Competencies, Mechanisms, and Policy Alignment**

This section explores different viewpoints from participants who highlight the significance of flexibility and adaptability in leadership positions. They promote a flexible approach to leadership, one that is not bound to a singular style but can adjust to many difficulties and circumstances. The participants emphasise the importance of working together with a wide range of stakeholders, such as educational institutions and the private sector, to improve the delivery of services. Leadership qualities are crucial for effectively managing the intricacies of local governance and ensuring a responsive, efficient, and ethical administration. This part offers a thorough comprehension of the essential traits of transformational leadership required to bring about progressive change in the local government sector.

**Table 6: Competencies of the transformational leadership instrumental in changing the outlook of the local government sector**

<b>Competencies of the transformational leadership instrumental in the changing of the</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
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<b>outlook of the local government sector</b>					
Emotional Intelligence	6.8%	14.6%	47.6%	23.3%	7.8%
Ethical Leadership	8.7%	12.6%	18.4%	39.8%	20.4%
Resilience	5.8%	15.5%	35.0%	24.3%	19.4%
Visionary Leadership	6.8%	10.7%	25.2%	37.9%	19.4%
Critical thinking and decision-making	6.8%	14.6%	30.1%	31.1%	17.5%
Conflict management	3.9%	15.5%	17.5%	36.9%	26.2%
Innovation and Creativity	7.8%	16.5%	27.2%	31.1%	17.5%
Change Management	5.8%	18.4%	28.2%	32.0%	15.5%
Communication Skills	4.9%	12.6%	23.3%	33.0%	26.2%
Team Building and Flexibility	7.8%	11.7%	22.3%	34.0%	24.3%
Financial and Administrative Acumen	6.8%	13.6%	35.0%	31.1%	13.6%
Project Management	4.9%	10.7%	29.1%	35.9%	19.4%
Legal and Regulatory Compliance	7.8%	11.7%	28.2%	34.0%	18.4%
Continuous Learning and Development	7.8%	6.8%	29.1%	36.9%	19.4%
Stakeholder Engagement, Networks and Partnerships.	6.8%	12.6%	31.1%	30.1%	19.4%

Source: (Survey Data 2024)

The data above shows the competencies of transformational leadership instrumental in changing the outlook of the local government sector in South Africa. The most reported competencies were ethical leadership (39.8%), visionary leadership (37.9%), and communication skills (33.0%). Other competencies included conflict management (36.9%), stakeholder engagement, networks, and partnerships (30.1%), and critical thinking and decision-making (31.1%). The literature suggests that transformational leadership can be an effective approach to improving service delivery in local government and that competencies such as emotional intelligence, resilience, and

change management are important for successful transformational leadership. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees to work towards a common goal, and they are characterised by their ability to communicate a clear vision, build relationships, and foster innovation and creativity.

The competences such as management, financial acumen, visionary leadership and flexibility, stakeholder engagement, networks and partnerships that featured from the quantitative results are supported by findings from the interview perceptions with the various municipal personnel. The following section describes the interview responses.

**Matrix 9 Summary regarding the competencies of transformational leadership instrumental in changing the outlook of the local government sector**

Sub-theme	Respondents' responses	Sources
What are the key competencies of transformational leadership instrumental in changing the outlook of the local government sector?	<i>I think my leadership approach is to be more flexible and adaptive to different situations.</i>	EhLM 4
	<i>I would rather opt to coin a concept of adaptive leadership as opposed to being fixed on a particular style.</i>	MLM 1
	<i>We need to adapt to the changing environment, engage with stakeholders, and be open to collaboration.</i>	ELM 1
	<i>So, we found out that most of our leaders do have a lack of people management skills.</i>	MBLM 3
	<i>I think my leadership approach is to be more flexible and adaptive to different situations. But I still understand that there should be rules of the game, and the rule of law is always followed. That would cover my approach to leadership and decision-making</i>	CoJ 1
	<i>What COVID-19 has taught us is that you need transformational leadership that has a vision and know what they are doing. Leadership that is adaptable to change</i>	SALGA1

Source (Focus Group Data 2024).

The matrix above highlights some of the participant responses regarding the competencies of transformational leadership instrumental in changing the outlook of the local government sector. The general response from the participants is that adaptive leadership styles that are flexible are an overarching competency required for transforming service delivery in local government.

#### *8.6.1 Adaptive and collaborative competencies*

Transformational local government leadership requires leaders who can adapt to changing settings and work well with stakeholders. Collaboration with educational institutions, the private sector, and community organisations is needed to solve problems and improve service delivery. The participants highlighted the varied aspects of effective transformational leadership in local government through the sub-theme of “Adaptive and Collaborative Competencies”. Participants stressed the need to be adaptable and reject a leadership style that is inflexible and applies universally. Adaptive competences encompass the ability to discern the appropriate times to demonstrate leadership, work with others, and empower individuals within the organisation, as perceived from their viewpoints. In addition, participants emphasise the fluidity of leadership, acknowledging that issues differ and require varied approaches. The notion of adaptive leadership recognises that a single leadership style may not be universally effective in addressing intricate challenges within a certain organisation. An adaptive leader should possess the ability to switch between authoritative and transformative leadership styles, depending on the specific issues encountered and their complexity.

A participant from the City of Johannesburg underscores the necessity of adaptability in leadership, recognising the significance of flexibility in effectively handling various scenarios. The adherence to regulations and the principle of legal governance is consistent with the overarching concept of skills in transformational leadership, guaranteeing ethical and lawful administration.

*I think my leadership approach is to be more flexible and adaptive to different situations. But I still understand that there should be rules of the game, and the rule of*



*law is always followed. That would cover my approach to leadership and decision-making (CoJ 1).*

Another participant questions the idea of a universal leadership style and promotes the concept of adaptive leadership. The participant acknowledges the ever-changing character of challenges inside institutions, which corresponds to the sub-theme of adaptable abilities. The prioritisation of adaptability reinforces the concept of customising leadership strategies to different circumstances.

*I don't believe in an approach that says only one leadership style can consistently solve the ever-evolving problems within a particular institution. I would rather opt to coin a concept of adaptive leadership as opposed to being fixed on a particular style (EhLM 1).*

Similarly, another participant emphasises the importance of adaptability in leadership, proposing a transition between authoritative and transformative methods depending on the complexity of an issue. This thinking is in line with the sub-theme of adaptable capabilities, which highlights the significance of responsive leadership in effectively dealing with intricate organisational difficulties.

*One style cannot be replicated in the different levels of a problem, so you might want to change from being authoritative at some times to becoming transformative at a particular time. We don't have agile leadership that will look at and have a bit of an overview of the organization and how we can then close that gap.... That's why I'm saying to you, in my view, I would rather opt to coin a concept of adaptive leadership as opposed to being fixed on a particular style of leadership (MBLM 1).*

Another participant emphasises the importance of adaptability in leadership, proposing a transition between authoritative and transformative methods depending on the complexity of an issue. This reasoning is consistent with the sub-theme of adaptable capabilities, which highlights the significance of responsive leadership in effectively dealing with intricate organisational difficulties.

*Because one style cannot be replicated in the different levels of a problem, you might want to change from being authoritative with some time to becoming transformative with time (ELM 3).*

Another participant supports a dynamic leadership approach, emphasising the need for ongoing evolution and adaptability. The reference to interacting with stakeholders and cooperating corresponds to the sub-theme of collaborative competencies, underscoring the significance of partnerships in the leadership strategy.

*I believe leadership should not be rigid; it should evolve. We need to adapt to the changing environment, engage with stakeholders, and be open to collaboration. Our approach should be a blend of various leadership styles, depending on the situation and context (ELM 4).*

A participant from the City of Johannesburg emphasises the correlation between flexibility and collaboration, pointing out the necessity of utilising external expertise for efficient leadership. This notion aligns with the sub-theme of collaborative competencies, highlighting the significance of external alliances in tackling complex situations.

*So that is also leaning to say we don't have agile leadership that that, you know will look have and a bit overview of the organization and how can we then close that gap.... Being adaptive means understanding that challenges vary, and that one leadership style may not be effective across the board. Collaborating with external entities, such as educational institutions and private sectors, is essential to tap into diverse expertise and resources (CoJ 2).*

Another participant from SALGA emphasised the need for transformational leadership is adaptable to the changes that are happening in local government, stating that the leadership should be able to adjust swiftly to changes such as those brought by COVID-19.

*What COVID-19 has taught us is that you need transformational leadership that has a vision and know what they are doing. Leadership that is adaptable to change (SALGA1).*

The findings focus on the sub-theme of “Adaptive and Collaborative Competencies” and emphasise important elements of leadership within the local government setting. The participants emphasised the significance of being flexible, adaptable, and governed by ethical principles. Their viewpoints indicate that inflexible commitment to a solitary leadership approach is inadequate for the ever-changing and varied

difficulties encountered in local government. Alternatively, they endorse an adaptable approach in which leadership styles are sensitive to the distinct requirements of each circumstance. This stance encompasses a transition from authoritative to transformative forms of leadership and emphasises agile leadership to traverse intricate organisational difficulties effectively. In addition, the participants acknowledge the importance of working together, especially with external organisations such as educational institutions and the commercial sector, to make use of a wide range of knowledge and resources. This strategy is consistent with the concept of transformational leadership, which is defined by its capacity to inspire and encourage followers to achieve shared objectives while promoting a culture of innovation and ongoing enhancement.

Moreover, the participants' notion that leadership is a dynamic and developing concept aligns with the existing research on leadership in the public sector. Mao et al. (2023) argue that it is crucial for leaders, especially Chief Information Officers in local government, to establish flexible leadership systems that possess robust coordination capabilities. This thinking is consistent with the idea that adaptable leadership is crucial in the swiftly evolving environment of local government. Additionally, the participants' suggestion of agility in leadership aligns with the findings of Getha-Taylor and Morse (2013), who investigate the necessary competences for collaborative governance, highlighting the importance of strategic thinking and group facilitation abilities. Leaders must adapt their styles, ranging from authoritative to transformative, depending on the specific demands of each setting.

#### *8.6.2 People management skills*

The theme of "People Management Skills" in leadership emphasises the importance of efficiently overseeing human resources in an organisation. The significance of leadership and management abilities in keeping skilled staff and contributing to both people and financial management is highlighted by participants. People management skills in leadership are vital for the success of local government. Effective people management is not only about retaining skilled personnel but also about nurturing talent, improving service delivery, and enhancing overall organisational performance. This theme is well-supported in the literature, which highlights the importance of

leadership in developing and managing human resources for organisational success (Carter, 2009; Popovici, 2012).

A participant from the City of Johannesburg emphasised the significance of people management skills within the organisation. The participant connects the flight of skills to the lack of effective people management, highlighting the importance of leadership and management skills in retaining skilled personnel and contributing to the people and financial management. The participant said:

*However, it would be things like people management came through and that is why Prof when you mentioned that you know we have a flight of skills, people go overseas or they live for the private sector and it is not about the organization itself, but the organization is made by people, it's leadership and management skills (CoJ 2).*

Moreover, another participant from Ehlanzeni Local Municipality identified a common challenge – the lack of people management skills among leaders. The mention of mentoring, coaching, and talent management underscores the need for comprehensive leadership skills in managing human resources effectively. The participant stated:

*So, we found out that most of our leaders do have a lack of people management skills. You know things like mentoring and coaching, how to manage people, how to identify talent within your directorate or your department, and how to nurture that talent and keep it active (EhLM 3).*

A participant from Mbombela Local Municipality highlighted the leadership's responsibility to identify capable individuals who can effectively contribute to service delivery, emphasising the crucial link between effective people management and improved service delivery outcomes:

*The leadership, I believe, identifies capable people, can manage needs, and can give better service delivery (MBLM 1).*

From Ehlanzeni Local Municipality, a participant stressed the importance of talent management in enhancing organisational performance. The connection between skills shortages and poor performance emphasises the need for educational and development initiatives.

*So, if you have proper talent management and then it can enhance the means match perform, I think we are aware that measurements, parties, there's poor performance whereby they say that there's a lot of shortage of skills. It is education to those who are at least senior management, while we also advocate that everyone who's in a management position must get management development courses from a renowned university (EhLM 4).*

Put together, the study participants identify a common challenge in leadership: a lack of people management skills. This lack includes deficiencies in mentoring, coaching, and talent management, which are essential for nurturing and retaining talent within an organisation. This result aligns with the findings of Carter (2009), who notes that leadership is primarily about providing feedback and suggestions for improvement, implying a need for continuous development of people management skills.

The link between effective people management and improved service delivery outcomes is also highlighted. Leaders have a responsibility to identify capable individuals who can contribute effectively to service delivery, emphasising the crucial link between people management and organisational performance. This understanding is supported by scholars who emphasise the importance of leadership and management in the education system, indicating that acquiring leadership and management skills can significantly improve performance. The participants further stress the importance of talent management in enhancing organisational performance. They note that skills shortages and poor performance can be addressed through educational and development initiatives, underlining the need for comprehensive leadership skills in managing human resources effectively. This stance is consistent with the work of Phuthi (2016), who describes the distinctions between management and leadership, emphasising that leadership involves influencing and guiding behaviour to achieve organisational goals.

### *8.6.3 Decisiveness, planning, monitoring, and evaluation*

The sub-theme “Decisiveness, Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation” encompasses the participants’ viewpoints on the fundamental leadership skills necessary for efficient governance in local government. As per the participants, decisiveness is highlighted as a crucial attribute, underscoring the significance of making definitive judgements to

uphold stability and consistency in municipal operations. Planning is recognised as a crucial ability, emphasising the need for leaders to formulate strategies and establish explicit goals. In addition, the participants highlight the importance of M&E, emphasising their role in guaranteeing the proper implementation of plans and the achievement of municipal objectives. Talent management is implemented as a crucial component of leadership, emphasising the significance of recruiting capable people to enhance the municipality's achievements. In summary, this sub-theme highlights the diverse range of abilities that local government leaders need to effectively handle the intricacies of decision-making, planning, and overseeing the successful implementation of services and change.

The participant referenced below underscores the crucial significance of decisiveness in leadership and decision-making. Indecisiveness can result in frequent alterations in fundamental stances and decision-making, impeding efficient governance. This stance is consistent with the sub-theme and highlights the significance of resolute leadership for the stability and uniformity of municipal operations.

*Secondly, leadership is decisiveness and decision-making. It's important to have leadership, which is very decisive, how they make decisions within the municipalities because if there's no decisiveness, you'll find that there's constant change of core positions and decision-making (CoJ 1).*

Another participant emphasises the adverse consequences of indecisiveness, such as the need to reconsider decisions. This view underscores the need for leaders to make judicious and definitive decisions to increase municipalities' functioning. Decisiveness is considered a vital factor in achieving good leadership in local government.

*Sometimes even, yeah, going back on some decisions and they like, so that type of leadership in terms of making a decisive decision, it can enhance how the municipality perform and then also another skill is in terms of talent management, the municipality needs to higher and make use of a competent and variable person (CoJ 2).*

This response introduces the importance of talent management skills in leadership, where a participant emphasises the need to hire competent and versatile individuals who align with the sub-theme. Talent management is presented as a crucial skill for leaders to ensure they have a capable workforce contributing to municipal goals.

*Other skills are in terms of talent management. The municipality needs to hire and make use of competent and variable persons (EhLM 2).*

This participation presents the essential competencies of strategic planning, oversight, and assessment in leadership. The participant believes that effective leaders must have the capacity to create and implement strong monitoring and evaluation systems strategically. These skills are crucial for attaining municipal goals and objectives.

*And then lastly, I think the other skills which are needed, depth of leadership is in terms of proper planning, there must be able to plan and monitoring and evaluation as well (ELM 1).*

The following participant emphasises the consequences of poor monitoring and planning, stating that it leads to municipalities failing to reach their goals. This viewpoint highlights the direct link between effective planning, monitoring, and achieving municipal objectives. The importance of having proper plans is underscored as a foundational aspect of successful local government leadership.

*If there's poor monitoring, if there's poor planning, then the municipalities fail to reach their goals and objectives of what they plan to do. You'll find that some insecurities they don't have those proper plans (CoJ 4).*

The last response provides depth by delineating the requisite training for senior executives. The participant underscores the importance of executive-level training in diverse domains, encompassing strategic planning and human development. This stance is consistent with the sub-theme and highlights the significance of ongoing skill enhancement for leadership in local government.

*Senior managers must get at least executive management and training or those training that are given to executives or senior managers such as strategic planning, operations management, marketing, human development, and human (EhLM 2).*

The preceding participant responses highlight the importance of decisiveness in ensuring stability and consistency in municipal operations. This thinking aligns with Wotela (2017) emphasis on effective M&E in development interventions and public policy. The participants' mention of the importance of strategic planning and clear goal setting aligns with the findings of Phuthi (2016), which highlight a positive correlation between leadership quality and organisational success. The effective implementation

of monitoring and evaluation processes influences this link. Moreover, the participants' emphasis on talent management corresponds with Aithal (2015) analysis of the leadership's responsibility in guaranteeing the implementation of policy statements and action plans to achieve institutional objectives. This sub-theme highlights the need for local government leaders to possess a wide range of skills to make effective decisions, plan strategically, and successfully implement services and changes.

### **8.7 The Role of the LGSETA in Enhancing Transformational Leadership and Capacity Building for Effective Local Government Services in South Africa**

The LGSETA plays a role in facilitating the transformation of leadership and enhancing the capabilities within South Africa's local government sector. This section explores the LGSETA's role from the perspective of the participants, who are focused on cultivating transformative leadership traits and improving the capabilities of municipal employees to provide local government services effectively. A dominant theme among participants is that the LGSETA provides local government officials with the required skills to manage governance and service delivery in a fast-changing society effectively. This outcome is achieved through customised training programmes, collaborations, and ongoing learning opportunities. The section describes both quantitative and qualitative responses concerning the question of the role of the LGSETA in facilitating transformative leadership.

**Table 7: Illustration of the role played by the LGSETA in enhancing transformational leadership and capacity building for effective local government services in South Africa.**

LGSETA plays a role in:	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Leadership development	4.5%	12.7%	42.7%	24.5%	15.5%
Collaboration and Partnership	5.5%	8.2%	31.8%	39.1%	15.5%
Knowledge management and information	5.5%	10.9%	36.4%	31.8%	15.5%



dissemination					
Technology adoption and Innovation	5.5%	14.5%	25.5%	40.0%	14.5%
Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability	5.5%	14.5%	33.6%	29.1%	17.3%
Capacity building and training programs.	4.5%	12.7%	26.4%	38.2%	18.2%

Source: (Survey Data 2024)

The table presents the role of the LGSETA in various areas, along with the corresponding percentage of respondents who strongly disagree, disagree, are neutral, agree, or strongly agree with the role. The areas include leadership development, collaboration and partnership, knowledge management and information dissemination, technology adoption and innovation, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability, as well as capacity building and training programs.

Of the respondents, 42.7% remain neutral. In comparison, 24.5% agree, and 15.5% strongly agree with the LGSETA's role in this aspect, suggesting a noteworthy portion of undecided respondents regarding the LGSETA's contribution to leadership development. Additionally, a notable 39.1% of respondents agree, with 15.5% strongly agreeing, indicating a relatively robust level of support for the LGSETA's involvement in fostering collaboration and partnership. However, 36.4% of respondents remain neutral, while 31.8% agree with the LGSETA's role in this area, revealing a mixed perception of the LGSETA's effectiveness in knowledge management and information dissemination. Conversely, a significant 40.0% of respondents agree, along with 14.5% strongly agreeing, signalling a strong endorsement of the LGSETA's role in driving technology adoption and innovation. Notably, 33.6% of respondents are neutral, with 29.1% in agreement with LGSETA's role in this domain, indicating a degree of uncertainty among respondents regarding the LGSETA's monitoring, evaluation, and accountability performance. Lastly, 38.2% of respondents agree, with 18.2% strongly agreeing, demonstrating a relatively high level of support for the LGSETA's involvement in capacity building and training programs.

The roles of LGSETA described in the survey data reflected in the table above were supported by qualitative data from the interviews. For instance, the role of capacity building and training programs and the promotion of ethical leadership and governance featured prominently in the interview data. The section below describes the interview data.

### 8.7.1 Capacity building and skills development

The theme of capacity building and skills development describes the various roles that the LGSETA plays in bolstering transformation leadership and capacity building within South Africa’s local government sector. Participants stressed that the LGSETA is vital in creating capacity-building and skills development programs, collaborations, knowledge dissemination, technology innovation and training programs. Moreover, the participants also emphasised the LGSETA’s impact on enhancing skills and ethical governance, highlighting its importance in driving effective local government services. It brings to light LGSETA’s commitment to equipping local government officials with the necessary competencies to address contemporary issues and challenges and improve services.

**Matrix 10 Summary of responses regarding the role of the LGSETA in enhancing transformational leadership and capacity building for effective local government service in South Africa**

Sub-theme	Respondents’ responses	Sources
What is the LGSETA’s role in enhancing transformational leadership and capacity building for effective local government services in South Africa?	<i>LGSETA is a good one and I think very clarified responsibility, which is the development of skills in the local government sector.</i>	EhLM 4
	<i>My view is that the local government said that it is a very important structure to ensure that the design of training programs is. Change of you know or understanding of processes that local government, you know there are more focusing on you know knowledge relating to legislation principles and all this.</i>	MLM 1

	<i>My view is that the local government said that it is a very important structure to ensure that the design of training programs is.</i>	ELM 1
	<i>So local government centre training programs should be able to provide training that has got innovative ideas into it without only focusing on training people on what are the municipal structures ECT.</i>	MbLM 1
	<i>I think it will start with developing the skills for that. For instance, if you talk about monitoring and evaluation. Require specific skills; you need to have a certain knowledge of how to do that.</i>	NM 2

Source: (Focus Group Data 2024)

A participant from Ehlanzeni Local Municipality stated the importance of skills development:

*LGSETA is a good one and I think very clarified responsibility, which is the development of skills in the local government SECTOR. Now, to improve transformational leadership, I think GCC should invest much, in research to start with (EhLM 4).*

Another participant mentioned the role of encouraging continuous learning and a culture of accountability:

*For the LGSETA to promote a culture of continuous learning, especially looking at transparency and accountability and also reinforcing monitoring and evaluation in local government (EhN 2).*

A participant from Mbombela Municipality mentioned the role of the LGSETA in designing relevant and productive curricula and training that are responsive to the needs of local government challenges, saying:

*My view is that the local government said that it is a very important structure to ensure that the design of training programs is. Change of you know or understanding of processes that local government, you know there are there are there are more focusing on you know knowledge relating to legislation principles and all this (MbLM 1).*

Participant MbLM2, while acknowledging the role of the LGSETA in skills development and capacity building, criticised the training and approaches of the LGSETA, saying:

*Perhaps they have consistently observed that your training sessions only scratch the surface, focusing solely on topics like sandwiches. Perhaps, we introduced a specialized qualification that specifically delves into local leadership within the context of local government, not necessarily a formal legal qualification, but perhaps a certificate of some kind (MbLM 2).*

A participant from the Nelson Mandela Metro stressed that the LGSETA could focus on developing skills and identifying skills gaps.

*I think it will start with developing the skills for that. For instance, if you talk about monitoring and evaluation. Require specific skills; you need to have a certain knowledge on how to do that” Again is to what will be maybe two. I’ll just say what LGSETA could do is to do a gap analysis... Do a gap analysis and in my belief, everyone in management should be able to process those skills (NM 2).*

Nevertheless, another participant from the Nelson Mandela Metro emphasised the need for skills development programs, saying:

*And another thing that LGSETA can do is sort of umm oh goodness I’m strategic planning sessions and team building literal team began where people go out they they wear shorts they go to the outside of the office they play they drink if they need to drink wine and they talk about the problems of the institution (NM 3).*

The analysis of survey data and qualitative interviews demonstrates that the LGSETA has made substantial contributions in multiple domains, such as leadership development, teamwork, and knowledge management. Respondents demonstrate robust endorsement for LGSETA’s training programmes and its endeavours in fostering ethical leadership, underscoring its crucial impact on improving service delivery and governance. Attendees from various municipalities emphasise the

efficacy of the LGSETA in tackling difficulties faced by local governments, emphasising its pivotal role in fostering skill enhancement and promoting ongoing education and responsibility.

This acknowledgement reflects the prevailing patterns in South Africa, where the demand for proficient governance and efficient leadership are crucial for local economic development (LED) and inclusivity. According to Reddy (2014), the enhancement of municipal service capacity is essential not just for attaining Millennium Development Goals but also for guaranteeing the national control of local development actions. The model proposed by Kirk and Shutte (2004) highlights the significance of community leadership capacity-building programmes in empowering marginalised and disadvantaged communities, which is in line with the aims of the LGSETA.

Furthermore, the obstacles faced in attaining health Millennium Development Goals in South Africa, as examined by Chopra et al. (2009), emphasise the immediate requirement for proficient leadership and governance at every level, including local government. LGSETAs' endeavours to promote a proficient workforce through focused training initiatives help to achieve this objective by improving the administrative and operational capabilities of local governments.

## **8.8 Summary**

This section's findings illuminated the pivotal role municipal leadership plays in expediting service delivery and instigating transformation within the local government sector. Transformational initiatives have a profound impact on service delivery, enhancing its quality, accessibility, and responsiveness. Insights from South African municipalities reveal diverse approaches to advancing transformational service delivery, yet the sector grapples with significant leadership impediments such as bureaucratic inertia and political interference. Overcoming these challenges necessitates a nuanced understanding of local dynamics and proactive measures to develop leadership capacities, streamline governance processes, and align policies with community needs. LGSETAs' role in enhancing transformational leadership and capacity building emerges as crucial, offering training and support to equip leaders with the skills needed to navigate complex challenges and drive meaningful change, ultimately fostering a culture of excellence and responsiveness within the local government sector.

## **SECTION 9: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1 Introduction**

The section delves into a spectrum of policy recommendations designed to address the inherent weaknesses, bureaucratic hurdles, and leadership impediments that have long hindered the realisation of effective service delivery and transformation. From the cultivation of transformative leadership competencies to the strategic realignment of governance frameworks, these recommendations are crafted with the overarching goal of fostering a more dynamic, responsive, and efficient local government landscape in South Africa. The recommendations presented herein serve not only as a call to action but also as a testament to the potential for positive change when informed, collaborative, and forward-looking strategies are embraced.

### **9.2 Policy Recommendations Emerging from the Role Played by Municipal Leadership in Accelerating Service Delivery and Transformation in Local Government**

- With regards to the role played by municipal leadership in accelerating service and transformation in local government, the analysis of findings has pointed to various institutional weaknesses that have long been derailing transformation in the local government sphere. These relate to, among others, political interference, lack of accountability, fear of change and unreformed bureaucratic institutions attached to red tape, which in most cases delay crucial decisions and compromise municipal departments to function effectively. Based on this analysis, the study recommends municipal leaders to adopt servant leadership traits, where they implement empathy while having a bigger vision to ensure that services are delivered to communities in a less costly but effective manner.
- Allowing a platform of continuous learning and free interaction and being perceptive to ideas from recruits is of the essence in the transformation phase, as challenging bureaucracy requires innovative ideas beyond the existing status quo.
- The study further recommends the LGSETA to strengthen municipal leadership through various training programmes that enable leaders to become more

effective change agents, investigate ways to improve service delivery and encourage public engagement in local government affairs.

- Furthermore, since the LGSETA is the custodian of learning and skilling of local government officials, there is a need to embark on advanced skills research in order to determine the type of intervention required by municipal leaders.
- Investing in research is vital for assessing leadership deficiencies in the ever-changing public sector landscape and ensuring that municipal policies are aligned with what leadership requires to transform local municipalities. Targeted interventions, in this case, must come from evidence-based research, which is crucial to enhancing municipal leadership in service delivery matters.

### **9.3 Policy Recommendations Emerging from the Extent to Which Transformation Impacts the Service Delivery in the Local Government Sector**

- The review of the literature indicated that transformation has become a common phrase in local government. However, its implementation is complex due to multiple competing factors that exist in local government. Although local government is run by leaders who tend to follow rules and regulations and codes of conduct such as Batho Pele Principles, the analysis of findings has unearthed various obstacles associated with a transformative agenda in South African local government. The bureaucratic contestation that includes the existence of coalition governments, limited funding, and minimal skills to implement budgets and municipal plans are just a few acts against the expected capacity of transformation in local government. We therefore recommend local government in South Africa to 'walk the talk' as transformation is indeed required among municipal leaders to enhance their competencies.
- The researchers further recommend the LGSETA to promote the capacitation of local government officials through regular in-house training which are in enhancing the existing skillset while tapping into some of the training and skills development programmes administered by the LGSETA and SALGA.
- The LGSETA should prioritise training initiatives that focus on the practical aspects of transformation in service delivery, emphasising leadership skills that promote procedural simplification, optimisation of resource allocation, and the

integration of innovative technologies. Given the mixed responses on the effectiveness of leadership transformation, the LGSETA must ensure these training programs are comprehensive, addressing both the strategic and operational dimensions of leadership in local government. Collaborations with institutions of higher learning could be leveraged to enhance leadership skills further.

- Additionally, to develop proper budgeting skills, the study recommends targeted capacity-building efforts through developing specialised budget training for local government officials and senior managers which is fundamental in driving transformation and improving municipal finance management.
- The research findings revealed that brain drain within municipalities has long term effects on the transformation of municipal leadership in South Africa. To retain the skilled expertise local government leadership, need to provide attractive rewards which may to a greater extent motivate the skilled employees to stay and become instrumental in driving transformation in service delivery.

#### **9.4 Policy Recommendations Emerging from Local Leadership Insights on Effective Governance for Improved Municipal Service Delivery**

- The main objective of this recommendation is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in local municipalities in South Africa. This measure involves implementing extensive reforms to enhance the effectiveness, availability, and dependability of crucial community services, such as water, sanitation, energy, waste management, and healthcare. The target audience for these recommendations includes policymakers, local government officials, and stakeholders within the LGSETA framework. These parties have a pivotal role in executing and supervising transformation programmes within local municipalities.
- Local municipalities encounter difficulties in providing services due to historical inequalities, constraints in resources, and the changing requirements of various populations. Significant enhancements in institutional capacity, governance structures, and systemic processes are required to increase service delivery and governance effectiveness.



- The LGSETA could improve its skills development programmes by integrating training modules that emphasise institutional capacity building, encouraging efficient governance systems, and cultivating strategic alliances. Priority should be given to programmes that support the implementation of systemic changes and promote the removal of political influences from local government activities. Aligning training objectives with practical demands for enhanced service delivery, such as introducing new governance models and increasing stakeholder engagement, may greatly enhance the LGSETA's role in developing a competent and flexible local government workforce. This approach is in line with its directive and also meets the urgent requirement for a skilled workforce capable of managing the intricacies of local government service provision in South Africa.
- Illustrative examples from nations such as Rwanda and Brazil, where substantial local government reforms have resulted in enhanced service provision, underscore the potential advantages of embracing comparable transformative approaches in South Africa. Implementing these recommendations can result in measurable enhancements in the standard of living for South African communities through improved availability of vital services, strengthened governance, and diminished disparities.
- Prompt intervention is crucial to rectify the existing shortcomings in service provision and governance within local municipalities. Postponed reforms have the potential to worsen current inequalities and impede South Africa's development objectives. The implementation of these guidelines necessitates a cooperative endeavour involving all parties involved, such as local governments, the LGSETA, and the people they cater to. Local municipalities may greatly enhance service delivery and contribute to the nation's development and prosperity by prioritising the improvement of institutional capacity, implementing systemic reforms, and encouraging effective governance.

## **9.5 Policy Recommendations Emerging from Leadership Impediments Faced by the Local Government Sector**

- The findings of this research indicate that there are major obstacles in local government leadership, such as limited capacity, problematic interactions between politics and administration, including bureaucratic restrictions associated with red tape within the local government systems and structures. These difficulties jointly impede the efficiency and efficacy of service delivery and reform activities in local communities.
- The researchers recommend the LGSETA to prioritise initiatives that directly tackle the identified impediments to leadership and service delivery. Skills training and upskilling programs should be strategically designed to address capacity and literacy challenges among local government officials, focusing on improving comprehension and application of policies, regulations, and governance principles.
- Furthermore, the researchers recommend LGSETA to place special emphasis on enhancing financial management skills at local government level which is key in overcoming fiscal restrictions, thereby enabling effective budgeting and resource allocation. Additionally, the LGSETA should foster programs aimed at cultivating accountability and addressing political dysfunction, ensuring that leadership roles are filled based on competence rather than political affiliation. By aligning its training interventions with the practical needs for systemic reform, LGSETA can significantly contribute to overcoming the structural limitations within municipalities, thereby improving service delivery and fulfilling its mandate to enhance the skills and capabilities of local government workers in South Africa.
- The study further recommends the LGSETA to foster collaborations between the public and commercial sectors, and implementing adaptable approaches based on successful models from other countries. Borrowing from the best practises in other countries is critical in enhancing local governance and service delivery in South Africa. Examples like Brazil's participatory budgeting and Rwanda's community-based health insurance plan demonstrate successful approaches to enhancing capacity and delivering services, which might be used in South Africa.

## **9.6 Policy Recommendations Emerging from the Competencies of Transformational Leadership Instrumental in Changing the Outlook of the Local Government Sector**

- This study set out to determine the competencies of transformational leadership instrumental in changing the outlook of the local government sector in South Africa. The findings of the study revealed that to promote growth of transformative leadership within the local government sector leaders should be flexible, adaptable, and effectively collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, to enhance service delivery. Drawing from the analysis of findings various stakeholders such as LGSETA, policymakers, local government officials, and educational partners should engage in a variety of advancement programmes to leverage the competencies of local government leaders in service delivery.
- The LGSETA is advised to prioritise development programs that enhance transformational leadership competencies, such as emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, resilience, and visionary leadership, which have been identified as key to changing the local government sector's outlook. Practical recommendations include establishing partnerships with educational and private sector entities to bolster service delivery, focusing on adaptive leadership training that emphasises flexibility and innovation, and enhancing stakeholder engagement strategies. Additionally, the LGSETA should invest in continuous learning and development opportunities to foster a culture of innovation and responsiveness within local government, directly aligning these efforts with its mandate to upskill employees and stakeholders within the local government sphere, thus contributing to the overall improvement of service delivery in South Africa.
- Considering the budgetary limitations, training programmes must be efficient in terms of cost, utilising available resources and partnerships to achieve maximum impact without significant financial expenditure. These proposals align with South Africa's overarching objectives for enhancing local governance, as articulated in the NDP and other pertinent policies, to bolster the local government's ability to provide efficient service delivery.

- The researchers noted that South Africa can gain significant insights by studying global best practices, such as the adaptable leadership models in countries like Singapore and the collaborative governance techniques observed in Denmark. By bolstering the skills and abilities of transformational leadership, local governments have the potential to greatly enhance the results of service delivery. This measure can lead to the promotion of innovation, increased involvement of stakeholders, and, eventually, an improvement in the overall quality of life for communities in South Africa.
- The analysis of findings has shown that developing transformational leadership within the local government sector is essential for effectively managing the intricacies of governance and service delivery in South Africa. The proactive involvement of the LGSETA in assisting this growth will play a crucial role in attaining sustainable changes and promoting a more dynamic, responsive, and efficient local government landscape. Developing transformative leadership skills is crucial for the progress of local government in South Africa. By implementing these suggestions, the LGSETA can have a crucial impact on improving service delivery and governance, thereby contributing to the overall growth of the country.

#### **9.7 Policy Recommendations Emerging from the Role of the LGSETA in Enhancing Transformational Leadership and Capacity Building for Effective Local Government Services in South Africa**

- To further enhance transformative leadership and capacity building within South Africa's local government sector, a comprehensive policy recommendation to LGSETA should prioritise and intensify its efforts in these vital domains. Key recommendations may involve expanding training programmes to address the changing requirements of local government, strengthening partnerships with public and private entities to increase the exchange of knowledge and availability of resources, and improving M&E frameworks to ensure the effectiveness of implemented programmes. Moreover, giving greater importance to innovation and the adoption of technology could greatly enhance the mechanisms for delivering services. By incorporating ethical leadership and

governance standards, the LGSETA may enhance its influence in the transformation of local government services throughout South Africa.

- Additionally, to effectively enhance transformational leadership and capacity building within South Africa's local government, the LGSETA should concentrate on implementing customised training programs aimed at improving governance and service delivery. This measure involves instilling ethical leadership principles, fostering innovation through technology adoption, and ensuring accountability through robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Strengthening partnerships for knowledge exchange and focusing on contemporary governance challenges will also be pivotal. These efforts will align with the LGSETA's mandate to develop skills that bolster local government efficiency and meet the nation's service delivery and constitutional mandates.

## **9.8 Summary**

This section describes the various recommendations that are targeted at the LGSETA. The recommendations across the discussions emphasise its strategic role in enhancing local government through targeted training and capacity building. Key suggestions include customising programs to improve governance, ethical leadership, and service delivery, fostering innovation and technology adoption, and strengthening partnerships for knowledge sharing. These actions aim to equip local government officials with the skills necessary for effective service delivery, aligning with the LGSETA's mandate to develop a skilled workforce, thereby fulfilling South Africa's constitutional mandates and improving citizens' lives.

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