

PROJECTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: The fundamental function and responsibility of any government, aside the protection of lives and properties, is the provision of qualitative services through projects management and implementation. Conversations on projects management systems and service delivery at the local level of governance with emphasis on the eThekweni municipality of South Africa is still largely sparse. The study addresses this gap by interrogating projects management systems and service delivery at the level of local government with purposive recruitment of 14 units' managers. The increasing demands for qualitative service has provoked a need to interrogate how projects management systems can be harnessed for the delivery of qualitative service at the local level of governance. The novelty of this study can be unpacked from the scarce conversations on project management systems and service delivery discourse in the eThekweni municipality of South Africa. In other words, this study has been able to provoke a unique and fresh discussions to the literature by examining the responsiveness of the eThekweni municipality to service delivery measures through projects management initiation and implementation. The qualitative research method with the exploratory research design were used to advance the limit of the research knowledge. The NVivo (v.12) qualitative software was used to identify themes and the content analysis employed to make sense of these themes. The study showed the challenge of poor financial allocation and time frame for the release of funds as hindrances to effective project management systems. In addition, the challenge of political interference and the politicization of projects were shown as factors constraining effective service delivery. The study calls for the effective monitoring and inspection of projects and appropriate mechanism for addressing the challenges of political interference and politicization of projects.

Key words: projects management, service delivery, local government, municipality, implementation

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Introduction

One of the responsibilities of any government is the provision of basic amenities and infrastructure that represent qualitative service delivery. These responsibilities have continued to dwindle with the envisaged benefits of democracy gradually going into extinction in many African countries (Morris, Pinto & Söderlund, 2010). The poor delivery of qualitative service through the implementation and management of projects is gradually leading to an undesirable consequence for the government with

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heightened cases of strike and protests across many South African cities in recent times (Martinsuo & Lehtonen, 2007; Statistics South Africa, 2021). These continuous deprivations provoked the need for this study. The problem of poor management of projects has remained a cog in the wheel of Africa's economic development. A number of studies have identified the failure of many African countries towards the effective management of public projects (Golini, Kalchschmidt & Landoni, 2015; Lapsley & Ríos, 2015). In the case of South Africa, there are existing dilemmas relating to the high incidence of poverty, lack of social amenities as a result of poor service delivery, especially among the black population (Martinsuo & Lehtonen, 2007).

The most fundamental service delivery challenge in South Africa is not unconnected to the many years of infrastructural mismanagement which has climaxed into the deterioration of existing ones (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). The lack of qualitative service in South Africa cannot be separated from the challenge of poor governance, political interference, poor maintenance culture and the high incidence of corrupt practices at the local level of governance (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). These challenges are further compounded by the poor understanding of qualitative service delivery through the management and implementation of projects. Research evidence has shown that municipality managers lack the appropriate skills to unravel and understand the service delivery plights of their constituents through project management initiation and implementation (Morris, Pinto & Söderlund, 2010). In other words, the lack of essential service delivery affects community members' health status, welfare, social capital development and overall quality of life (Hall, 2012). The high expectations that welcomed the new democratic South Africa, especially with the provision of basic services to millions of South Africans who have been previously marginalized and denied access to basic amenities are yet to be addressed.

The financial budgets of Municipalities are being affected by disruptions caused by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic globally (Statistics South Africa, 2021). For instance, financial allocation and budgetary expenditures are negatively impacting on the quality and timely projects implementation and execution for qualitative service delivery in this epoch of COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the future, responsibilities and functions of municipalities as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic escalates looks doubtful (Statistics South Africa, 2021). To be sure, the far-reaching impact of this disruption on the future of municipalities will depend on a number of policy and strategic interventions including ensuring the independence and financial autonomy of municipalities.

The argument pursued in this paper is the need to understand the role of financial resource allocation on projects implementation for qualitative service delivery on the one hand, and the constellation of challenges constricting the realisation of effective service delivery at the local government of governance level. The eThekweni municipality has been witnessing increase in population since the last ten years with an approximate 3.176 million populations as at 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021).

This population increase has continued to engender poor project management and implementation measures with ensuing service quality conundrums (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Thus, the interrogation of projects management systems and service delivery is justified with the case of the eThekweni municipality in a bid to understand the link between increase in population growth, project management and service delivery.

The literature is awash with studies on projects management on the one hand and service delivery on the other hand in South Africa including the role of single-project management in achieving portfolio management efficiency (Martinsuo & Lehtonen, 2007); making sense of government budgeting: an internal transparency perspective (Lapsley & Ríos, 2015); e-procurement management in state governments: diffusion of e-procurement practices and their determinant (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012) and project management developments and research opportunities (Hall, 2012). In other clime Ofori and Deffor's (2013) study assess project management maturity in Africa. However, in the broad canon of projects management systems and service delivery studies especially within the South African context, hardly has any study examined projects management systems and service delivery from the context of local level of governance. This study seeks to address this by bridging the existing research gap in South Africa.

The main contribution of this study is the interrogation of the nexus between projects management systems and service delivery in the context of the municipality. It is no doubt that existing studies on projects management and service delivery are hardly jointly interrogated, especially through the analysis of the municipality in South Africa. By advancing this debate, it is probable to ignite a fresh discussion on how service quality of municipalities can be improved upon through projects management systems.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing project management

The conceptual understanding of projects management cannot be effectively explained without first explaining the concept of project. Project can be explained as the classification of activities and tasks guided by specific objectives for completion within a defined period of time (Patience & Nel 2021; Besner & Hobbs, 2012). Projects are constrained with a start and finish projection and executed with the utility of both human and material resources (Gobeli & Larson, 2013). The outputs are guided by time, budget, quality and human and material resources (Cova & Holstius, 2014). Broadly, the definition of a project integrates an exceptional scope of implementation that is controlled by cost, budget and time.

The conceptual understanding of projects management can be explained as the combination of knowledge, capabilities and technique for the actualization of project with regards to the commencement and end date and expected outputs. The actualization of project management captures important criteria including organization, execution, and assessment and monitoring functions (Chih & Zwikael,

2015). The discourse of projects management is more applicable to the public sector organisations. For instance, studies have shown the importance of project management for policy makers (Cova & Holstius, 2014; Cserhádi & Szabó, 2013). There are collections of studies that have shown the significance of a strong organizational culture and proficient public officials who must be positioned for the effective management of public projects for the public good (Dalcher, 2012; Coobms, 2015). In other words, an effective projects management execution summarizes the accumulation of skills and competency on the part of public officials for effective service outcome.

Projects management can be understood as a collection of tools and techniques engaged to direct the use of diverse resources with the intent of completion within a specific period of time (Kolanda & Govender, 2021; Golini, Kalchschmidt & Landoni, 2015). This definition explains the importance of planning and organizing as critical to the effective accomplishment of projects. For instance, Cserhádi and Szabó (2014) argued that the fundamentals of project management can be extracted from the importance of planning, organizing and controlling every aspect of a project with the support of all stakeholders. Institutions and agencies of government are frequently involved in varied projects execution. However, the arrays of these projects demand relevant skills and procedures that complement technical skills and the competency to manage a sparsely available budget for effective service delivery (Dalcher, 2012; Cserhádi & Szabó, 2014).

Financial resource allocation and service delivery

The need for developing a high-level financial management practice represents one of the fundamentals towards ensuring qualitative service delivery (Ludin, Zakiah & Mohammed, 2017). Quality service delivery can be harnessed through different approaches. However, within the context of the public service, the importance of human resource signposts a critical tool for the realization of effective service delivery. It suffices to argue that the appropriate management of human and financial resource as an essentials consideration for service delivery performance at the level of local governance (Hope, 2014). There have been several arguments about the judicious use of public financial resources for developmental projects at the local level of governance (Armenia, et al., 2019). While emphasis on stimulating environment where development can strive cannot be over-stretched, the need for local government managers to be judicious and efficient in the use of public finance have remained a public debate in the Global South (van Dooren & Bouckaert, 2015). Lapsley and Rios (2015) argument reflect on the need for suitable financial budgeting in a manner that financial resource allocation and the envisaged expenditure are in tandem with the proposed projects for the good of the public. The contention, however, is the necessity to plan, budget and implement actions that guarantee qualitative service delivery (Blumentritt, 2006). Cech and Lenort's (2021) study examined the role of financial resource allocation for increasing the supply chain resilience of public organisation in Czech Republic. In South Africa, Tsheletsane and Fourie (2014) argue that financial resource allocation represents an

important component of public sector functionality and operations. The authors argued further that without the operational utility of public funds for addressing government operational and running cost, the delivery of service for members of the community will remain a mirage. The crux of this argument, however, is not a search for the means of acquiring funds on the part of the local government, but a close integration of how such funds are utilised to transmute into effective service delivery (Ma & Yu, 2012).

The public institutions budgeting portfolio can be described from two component parts; the political and economic respectively (Kessy, 2020; Tsheletsane & Fourie, 2014). From the political perspective, Ma and Yu's (2012) thesis explains the allocation of scarce financial resources for project implementation to a few individuals (politicians) who turn out depriving and denying the majority of the masses essential quality services, while the economic component explicitly captures the utilization, evaluation and monitoring functions of public funds for developmental objectives (Gonçalves, 2014). Financial resource allocation provides decision makers with the appropriate decisions in the area of service provision through intense stakeholders' participation. In other words, the involvement of citizens and stakeholders not only transforms the nature and extent of interactions between government and citizens, but also impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of projects delivered (Halttova, 2018). Conclusively, from the context of local government, financial resource allocation reflects the provision of accessible health care facilities, education, infrastructure and other important amenities for the welfare of the general public (Blumentritt, 2006).

Constraints in the implementation and management of projects for service delivery

Hope (2014) argued that the implementation of public projects and programmes are held and executed in a fluid political environment with poor and inapt outcomes. Other studies revealed the challenges of poor monitoring and evaluation functions by public sector officials of projects for the public good (Gonçalves, 2014). Mapulanga (2015) study explains that the consistent investment in the human capital development of public sector officials have not engendered the desired outcome as many project managers lack the appropriate skills and competency for project management and implementation. Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012) opine that with the introduction of training and retraining activities, there is still a large crop of public sector officials lacking the requisite skills for the effective management of public projects.

The African public sector space is overwhelmingly constrained with the challenge of corruption and embezzlement of public funds set aside for the execution of projects by the political class (Martinsuo & Lehtonen, 2007). The dilemma of corruption is not only addressed within the national boundaries of a country, but more checked by an array of international anti-corruption movements. Assessment and indicators are frequently on the financial assessment of government in the area of financial allocation for projects management and service delivery, including public officials and institutions' accountability towards promoting financial integrity

(Sabau, 2013). For instance, it is not uncommon to hear the diversion of public funds by the political class for personal aggrandizement at the expense of service delivery. The lack of appropriate measure and responsibility of public officials to ensure smooth and effective execution of project are pointers to the provocation of corrupt practices with consequences for social amenities deprivation for members of the community (Mapulanga, 2015).

The project management literature also explains the challenge of poor budgeting and planning activities (Roehrich, Lewis & George, 2014). The importance of budgeting and planning represents an important phase of projects management activities where projects managers are expected to be well-informed with the intricacies and cost effectiveness of project execution. Other empirical studies have shown that government institutions still grapple with appropriate budget and planning in terms of project management for service delivery (Petkovsek, Hrovatin & Pevcin, 2021; Martinsuo & Lehtonen, 2007). This has consistently engendered a fallout in the quality of service delivered to members of the community (Roehrich, Lewis & George, 2014). In contrast, other evidence reports that project management are influenced by the assessment of quality management rather than the assessment of financial or budgetary implications. Therefore, the effectiveness of municipal service delivery is not directly linked to the budgetary revenue but the level of quality management exerted on projects (Czapalk, 2016). However, the argument pursued in this paper is that the role of budgetary allocation cannot be over-emphasized, especially in the management of projects within the confines of public sector establishments. For instance, the significance of budget can be harnessed to the construction of roads, hospitals, schools and other amenities in tandem with service delivery.

The challenge of inadequate strategic planning capacity often results in uncoordinated service delivery activities, thus engendering superfluous wastage of scarce resources and often times policies that contradict national objectives of service delivery (Marumahoko, et al., 2020; Martinsuo & Lehtonen, 2007). Other constraints include the lack of vision, policies and strategic plans required to implement and manage local government projects effectively for optimum service delivery. For instance, many operational units lack the essential authority and responsibilities in vital areas of finance and procurement needed to provide prompt service delivery (Hope, 2014).

Aim and Research Questions

With the need to strengthen projects management and service delivery literature, the main aim of this study is the roles of finance in projects management initiation and implementation and identify challenges affecting projects management systems and service delivery. With this in mind, the following research questions are answered in this study:

-RQ1: What is the role of financial resource in projects management initiation and implementation in the municipality?

RQ2: What are the challenges of projects management systems for effective service delivery in the municipality?

Research Methodology

The interpretivist research philosophy is employed to qualitatively understand how project management systems are harnessed for effective service delivery in the context of local government of governance (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). It also gives room for the integration of human element for a holistic understanding of a research problem (Creswell, 2014). The exploratory research becomes crucial to amplify the frontier of knowledge on project management systems and service delivery (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). For precision, when the knowledge about a social problem is scarce, the exploratory design becomes fundamental to qualitatively uncover answers to such problems. The rationale for the exploratory research design is to unearth answers to the social problem of project management systems and service delivery through qualitative interpretation of the data.

The study population comprised a total of 14 units' managers selected from the community and emergency services, human settlement, engineering and transportation and trading services of the eThekweni municipality, South Africa. The selection of these units' managers does not take into consideration any known skills, rather the structure and flow of interaction between the interviewer and respondents further enhance the understanding of their perceptions and opinions of project management systems and service delivery discourse (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). The recruitment procedure commenced with the identification of units' managers across the broad space of the eThekweni municipality. Coming down to specifics, referrals were suggested for the recruitment of managers with a broad base understanding of projects management and service delivery discourse.

The semi-structure interview was employed. This is justified to allow for the revealing of complementary questions and ensure clarity to all responses (Yin, 2016). An interview guide was employed to monitor the flow of questions and responses (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). There are known conundrums specific to the interview method of data collection such as the challenge of clarity in responses and the likelihood of misconstruing the questions and responses supplied (Kumar, 2012). These challenges were controlled by designing the interview questions in the English Language as understood by all respondents and the structure of questions were worded to minimize any misinterpretations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The procedures employed for data collection complied with the non-pharmaceutical interventions in the prevention of the COVID-19 pandemic and all interviews were conducted through the telephone.

The interview lasted for two months between November 30, 2020 and January 31, 2021. The respondents were selected units' managers who functioned in the capacity of monitoring and supervising their individual units across the sampled clusters of the municipality. Specifically, their job characteristics were to supervise the delivery of services emanating from these units to members of the community and give

progress reports to the head of clusters. The specific questions included how has financial resource allocation improved project management? What are the challenges of service delivery at the local government level of governance? Have project management systems upturned the quality of service delivered among others? etc. Trochim and Donnelley's (2004) four indicators of reliability credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were employed to ascertain the reliability of the qualitative data. For credibility and transferability, it was ensured that respondents' opinion reflected in the results of the study and that the results are transferable to other setting. On dependability and confirmability, all important ethical considerations were followed and it was ensured that results synchronized with the data set. The transcripts data were analysed with NVivo (v.12) qualitative software for the identification of themes. After the identification of these themes, the qualitative content analytical tool was employed to make meaning of the different themes and sub-themes as they related to the research objectives (Yin, 2016). The study complied with the research ethics of the University of KwaZulu-Natal with approved protocol number HSSREC/00000797/2019.

Data Analysis and Interpretations

The role of finance in project management

The impact of human and financial resource allocation cannot be overemphasized in the actualization of a robust service delivery initiative. The South African case is not an exception as many of these appropriations are often misappropriated by politicians for self-aggrandizement. The political structure and environment of many local governments are volatile without appropriate checks and balances thus yielding many cases of financial misappropriation of resources meant for developmental objectives. These trends have continued to engender poor management and implementation of projects at the peril of members of the community (Tsheletsane & Fourie, 2014). The majority of the respondents explained several financial resource allocation impact on project management including the opinions on financial resource allocation from the national treasury to units of the eThekweni municipality; the constraints of time frame for the release of funds from the treasury to the unit and its impact on project management and service delivery, the impact of financial resource allocation on the improvement of service delivery and the mechanism in place for continuous project delivery (see figure 1).

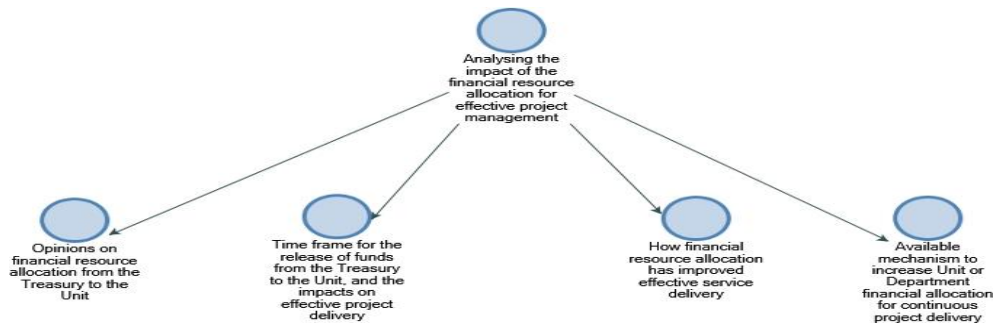


Figure1: Financial resources allocation and projects management
(*Emerged from data analysis*)

It was submitted that one of the ways through which projects are implemented for service delivery is allocation from the national treasury down to the local government level of governance. The large components of the opinions shared captured increasing disappointing roles of the national government in terms of budget set aside for the implementation and execution of project for service delivery. One of the respondents explained as follows:

The issue of financial allocation has remained a long term problem for the municipality. The national focus of the government with respect to project implementation and management have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic. This has affected the prioritization of projects by the municipality and the quality of service delivered to the members of the community. The national treasury financial allocation to the municipality is low and affecting the responsibilities and functions of the municipality to members of the community

The majority of the respondents explained that the time frame for financial allocation depends on the specific initiation of the projects. In other words, time frame is reinforced by the priority and significance of the project for the immediate members of the community. To an extent, it was agreed that swift and timely financial response to a project depends on the motivation of the project leader at the municipality. One of the respondents interviewed shared the following view-point as follows:

The time frame for financial resource allocation depends on the nature of project and its initiation and implementation date. The significance and essence of such project are conditions that determine the time frame for the allocation of finance such that its output will greatly affect the conditions and livelihood of members of the community. What I can say about the time frame of releasing finance for project is that the projects that get a quicker response for implementation and execution are often given a motivation lead by the project group leader who is responsible to explain the objectives and the envisaged benefits of such project for members of the community

Allocating finance in the context of public organizations is generally conceived as an intention for the management and execution of projects for the overall welfare of members of the community. These finances are structured by ensuring their appropriation for a sense of belonging and the provision of the dividends of democracy through the initiation, implementation and execution of projects. A number of the respondents interviewed explained the importance of finances at the local level of governance. For instance, the financial resource of the eThekweni municipality was allocated for addressing societal issues ranging from education, health to basic infrastructure at the local government level. In South Africa, the campaign for continuous and swift financial allocation for the execution of projects has continued to make important headlines.

I can tell you fact that the allocation of financial resources has greatly improved project delivery in a manner that community members in remote are now feeling the presence of services in their locality. We have also seen cases where dilapidated infrastructures are being renovated through the allocated finances. Also, several units of the municipality are working round the clock in ensuring projects are completed with the availability of finances

The arguments captured the consistent decrease in financial allocation from the central government due to the impact of the COVID-19 on economic performance and industrial growth. Finance allocated to the municipality is periodically being reduced and this is impacting on the completion of existing and proposed projects for the interest of members of the community.

In my opinion, at the moment, it is highly unlikely we complete existing projects as the periodic finances allocated to the municipality are being reduced and this has been creating delay in the delivery of services. The current global health pandemic has caused the poor flow of allocation with many projects being abandoned. As it is, there is no known mechanism that can increase the municipality financial allocation, especially with the current impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Challenges of project management and service delivery

Managing projects for effective service delivery represents an important component of the dividends of democracy in any known democratic setting. The delivery of these services constitutes basic amenities for the welfare of members of the community. However, several challenges are hindering these realisation on many grounds. For instance, the majority of the respondents agreed that projects management and service delivery narrative within the context of the municipality are constrained by many factors including awarding contracts to service providers with poor expertise, contractors cutting corners to save costs and maximizing profits, lack of resources and inadequate inspection after project completion and incessant interference from political leaders and the problem of politicization of projects by different political stakeholders among others (see figure 2).

Respondents further argued that the increase in the award of contracts to service providers with low expertise is becoming a norm rather than an exception in the public sector. For instance, a number of these practices include awarding contracts

to family members, relatives or allies who are not having the requisite competency. It was reported that many of the projects implemented and executed at the community level comprised of so many arranged contract with the intent to give kickbacks to the awardees of such contracts. Overall, the outputs from these projects are often characterized by sub-standard outputs leaving community members with poor service delivery. One of the respondents explained as follows:

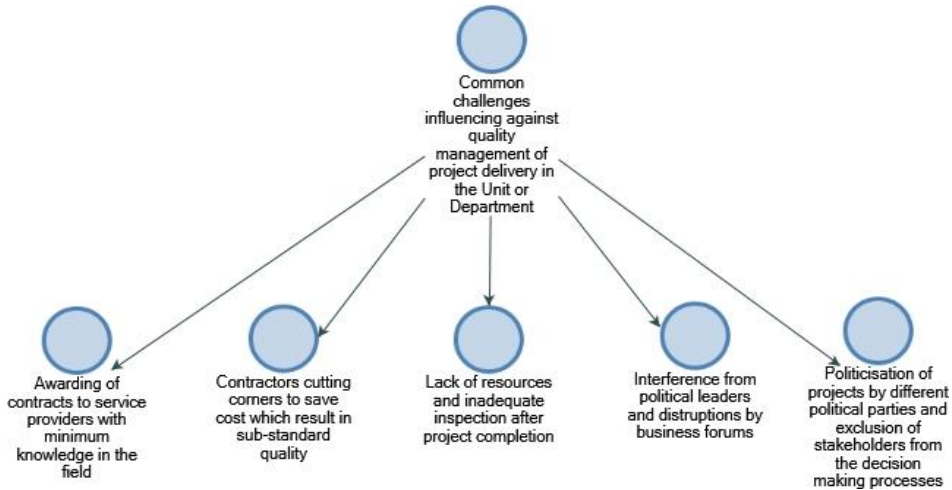


Figure 2: Conundrums of project management and service delivery
(Emerged from data analysis)

I think one of the challenges affecting projects management and service delivery is the practice of awarding contracts to incompetent contractors who end up delivering a not too good project for members of the community. This practice is so common in the public sector establishments such as the one we are here. You will discover that those at the helm of affairs are the ones perpetuating this practice and since it is like this, no one can talk. You will see where projects are being awarded to close relatives and friends alike in return for bribes. This practice has remained a big problem and it is the grass that always have to bear the effect- the community members with poor service delivery

The challenge of lack of resource and inadequate inspection of projects is also signposted. For instance, the emergence of the COVID-19 global health pandemic has affected the financial growth of many nations with consequential effect of low funding of public projects. In addition, the majority of the respondents agreed on the lack of proper inspection of projects after completion as another puzzle affecting projects quality in South Africa's public sector. To support this position, one of the problems common with Africans is the challenge of maintenance culture where projects are left to decay without consistent maintenance. There was a consensus among many of the respondents interviewed that the lack of projects inspection on

the part of government officials has done more harm than good to members of the community. One of the respondents reported:

I would want you to agree with me that the lack of resources in the implementation and execution of projects still remains a big problem hindering the delivery of quality service to the members of the community. For instance, the challenge of COVID-19 has reduced government budget and allocation and it is expected that so many projects will be stalled. This in return will affect the service delivered to members of the community

An overwhelming majority of the respondents also confirmed the challenge of lack of maintenance culture after project completion. It was explained that the practice of lack of project inspection has crippled many projects resulting in poor service delivery. Specifically, a respondent reported:

I think the challenge of quality management of projects is lack of maintenance culture that has characterized the public sector. It is a common practice here that when a project is completed and for the next ten years or so there will not be any inspection on that project. I am not sure how quality management and effective service delivery can be achieved through this attitude. I think projects should be inspected from time to time when completed to ascertain the level of quality and if repairs are needed or not

The responsibility of any government is hinged on the provision of services and other amenities for the development of the State. These responsibilities are often implemented by politicians who are elected into different political offices. However, in the case of South Africa, and as obtainable in other part of the world, politicians are not just saddled with the responsibility of providing services and initiating projects for members of the community, they are more inclined to interfere in the distribution of projects, hence posing challenges to the actualization of services to the members of the community. The respondents showed severe concerns with the increase in political interference in project implementation and execution at the eThekweni municipality. Other vital concerns raised include lobbying projects for specific political comrades or parties, while community members are left to suffer the poor handling of such projects. In addition, the challenge of political interference is also connected to increase in the rate of pressure from the ruling political class to reserve projects for party faithful/members. One of the respondent's recounted as follows:

I can tell you that the impact of interference from political leaders remains a very strong challenge to the actualization of quality management and service delivery to public members. On several occasions, you will see politicians coming to interfere in the municipality activities on how projects should be initiated and executed. On several occasion, they will come and tell you the number of projects that should be diverted to them not considering the effect on the welfare of the majority of the people. You can imagine how politicians interfere in the task of service delivery. It is indeed a serious situation

The majority of respondents also express how projects are being politicized and the exclusion of relevant stakeholders from partaking in decision making process of projects implementation and execution. For instance, it was explained that there had been several instances where politicians exclude stakeholders from a meeting that has to do with project implementation and service delivery. Several of the respondents argued that the political class always have a way of excluding officials that could hinder them from politicizing the implementation of projects. One of the respondents reported:

I can confidently tell you that the tactics of the politicians are to ensure that they exclude stakeholders from any decision-making process of project implementation and service delivery for them to fully have their way with respect to the projects. These politicians are the major problem why so many of our projects are yet to be initiated and some are not even completed. They have to use politics to ensure these projects favour them at all costs

Discussion

The focus of this study has been to interrogate how projects management systems can evoke effective service delivery initiatives at the local government level of governance beyond the conventional discourse of implementation and execution. South Africa's case no doubt offers a robust empirical example for understanding the overlapping concept of service delivery, especially with its long history of apartheid reigns characterized by black exploitation and denial of effective service delivery. Projects management systems in this context is used as a symbolic concept to understand government intervention in the area of dispensing the dividends of democracy through service delivery to members of the community at large. Its strategic importance has helped to frame the country's service delivery policy agenda since the ushering of South Africa into a new democratic dispensation in 1994.

A number of financial resources allocation issues were uncovered hampering the effective management of projects. Results showed the constraints of low budgetary financial allocation from the national treasury, the time frame for the release of funds from national treasury and consistent disruptions in project implementation and completion due to the emergence of the COVID-19 global pandemic. For instance, available evidences show the depleting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial resource of many government establishments with consequences on the number of projects to administer and the level of service delivery that can be engendered (Kolanda & Govender, 2021; Marumahoko et al., 2020). Importantly, the local government's level of government is mostly affected. Patience and Nel's (2021) study for example argued that the dependence of many local governments on the national treasury for projects initiation and service delivery was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, local government independence and financial autonomy represent one of the vital components of municipality's financial sustainability. In most African countries for instance, local governments are dependent on the financial strength of the central governments in terms of

implementing and managing projects in the interest of the members of the community. Therefore, for local government's financial development in post COVID-19 era, appropriate mechanisms must be constituted in ensuring the financial viability of local governments (Petkovsek, Hrovatin & Pevcin, 2021). These concerns are often manifested in the nature and quality of service delivered. These corroborate the structure and workings of many public organisations where finances are either mismanaged or diverted for personal aggrandizements. Existing studies have shown the impact of finances in the management and implementation of projects for public good (Tsheletsane & Fourie, 2014; Ludin, Zakiah & Mohammed, 2017).

Results show a number of institutional problems constraining the effective implementation of projects for maximum service delivery including the release of contracts to incompetent contractors including municipality officials' relatives, families and friends (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss 2012; Mapulanga, 2015). Many municipality projects have been destroyed and poorly executed with the indulgence of incompetent hands. This concern again reflects one of the practices that characterise the public sector organisations where public servants mismanage public funds for personal gains (Mapulanga, 2015). This analysis clearly exudes the timely importance for local government's leaders to stem the tide of mismanagement towards ensuring accountability of public funds in this epoch of economic downturn engendered by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. These sentiments are predicated on the forecast that local government's responsibilities and functions might go extinct if financial misappropriation continues unabated in this post COVID-19 era (Kessy, 2020).

The consistent interference of political leaders in projects implementation and management demonstrate another challenge. For instance, many public organisations are known with the politicization of projects where public servants are excluded from its implementation and execution. The political ruling class has hijacked the due process of project implementation and execution with consequential effect on the quality of service rendered to members of the community (Gonçalves, 2014).

Conclusion

The discourse of service delivery had long remained an issue of contest before the emergence of the new democratic South Africa. The study concluded that with evidence of challenges hindering the realization of effective project implementation in the eThekweni municipality, there are serious concerns for the welfare of the majority of the community members. The study calls for a robust strategic risk identification effort for more positive management and implementation outlook. This suggests the need for the municipality to embrace a more conventional way of identifying and addressing project management and service delivery challenges. The study concludes that the different financial allocation challenges must be effectively addressed by ensuring that the national government releases funds timeously for the

implementation of projects. The study recommends the constitution of a monitoring committee at the level of the eThekweni municipality where projects lobbying and interference by politicians can be put to check for effective service delivery. A more practical recommendation is the need for a robust community engagement in the management of projects for effective service delivery. This can be achieved through massive awareness of the necessity of engaging community members in the decision-making process of projects initiation and implementation. In addition, political pressure and interference on projects management from politicians must be addressed for effective service delivery efforts. This can be actualized with the constitution of a committee where projects lobbying can be addressed with appropriate sanctions. On suggestion for further studies, the study recommend a comparative analysis of two municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal province for a fuller understanding of project management systems and service delivery discourse.

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SYSTEMY ZARZĄDZANIA PROJEKTAMI I ŚWIADCZENIE USŁUG NA POZIOMIE SAMORZĄDU W POŁUDNIOWEJ AFRYCE

Streszczenie: Podstawową funkcją i odpowiedzialnością każdego rządu, oprócz ochrony życia i mienia, jest świadczenie wysokiej jakości usług poprzez zarządzanie projektami i ich realizację. Rozmowy na temat systemów zarządzania projektami i świadczenia usług na szczeblu lokalnym, z naciskiem na gminę eThekwini w Republice Południowej Afryki, są nadal w dużej mierze rzadkie. Badanie uzupełnia tę lukę poprzez badanie systemów zarządzania projektami i świadczenia usług na poziomie samorządu przy celowej rekrutacji kierowników 14 jednostek. Rosnące zapotrzebowanie na usługi wysokiej jakości wywołało potrzebę zbadania, w jaki sposób systemy zarządzania projektami mogą być wykorzystane do świadczenia usług wysokiej jakości na lokalnym poziomie zarządzania. Nowość tego badania można wydobyć z nielicznych rozmów na temat systemów zarządzania projektami i dyskursu o świadczeniu usług w gminie eThekwini w RPA. Innymi słowy, badanie to było w stanie wywołać wyjątkową i nową dyskusję na temat literatury poprzez zbadanie reakcji gminy eThekwini na środki świadczenia usług poprzez inicjowanie i wdrażanie zarządzania projektami. Do poszerzenia granicy wiedzy badawczej wykorzystano jakościową metodę badawczą wraz z projektem badań eksploracyjnych. Oprogramowanie jakościowe NVivo (v.12) zostało użyte do identyfikacji tematów i analizy treści zastosowanej w celu

zrozumienia tych tematów. Badanie wykazało wyzwanie, jakim jest słaba alokacja środków finansowych i ramy czasowe uwolnienia funduszy, jako przeszkody w skutecznych systemach zarządzania projektami. Ponadto jako czynniki ograniczające efektywne świadczenie usług wskazano wyzwanie, jakim są ingerencje polityczne i upolitycznienie projektów. Badanie wzywa do skutecznego monitorowania i kontroli projektów oraz odpowiedniego mechanizmu reagowania na wyzwania związane z ingerencją polityczną i upolitycznieniem projektów.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie projektami, świadczenie usług, samorząd, gmina, realizacja

南非地方政府层面的项目管理和服务交付

摘要：除了保护生命和财产之外，任何政府的基本职能和责任是通过项目管理和实施提供优质服务。关于地方治理层面的项目管理和服务交付的对话，重点是南非的 eThekweni 市，仍然很少。该研究通过询问地方政府层面的项目管理和服务交付来解决这一差距，有目的地招聘 14 个单位的经理。对定性服务日益增长的需求引发了对如何利用项目管理系统在地方治理层面提供定性服务的需求。这项研究的新颖性可以从南非 eThekweni 市关于项目管理和服务交付话语的稀缺对话中解开出来。换言之，本研究通过检查 eThekweni 市政府通过项目管理启动和实施对服务提供措施的反应，能够引发对文献的独特而新鲜的讨论。采用探索性研究设计的定性研究方法来提升研究知识的极限。NVivo (v.12) 定性软件用于识别主题和用于理解这些主题的内容分析。研究表明，资金分配不畅和资金释放时间框架是有效项目管理系统的障碍。此外，政治干预的挑战和项目的政治化被证明是限制有效服务提供的因素。该研究呼吁对项目进行有效的监督和检查，并建立适当的机制来应对政治干预和项目政治化的挑战。

关键词: 项目管理, 服务交付, 地方政府, 市政府, 实施