

Water Services Authorities Capacity in Providing Access to Water and Sanitation in Limpopo Province, South Africa

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Abstract:- There has been an on-going debate regarding the effectiveness and capacity of Water Service Authorities in providing quality water service in South Africa to local citizens. As Limpopo province was preferred as a case study, it is evident that the province has been experiencing several violent water service delivery protests in different localities. The methodological approach employed was a qualitative approach reinforced by documentary review as a data source in qualitative research. Purposively, 46 participants were sampled and interviewed. In addition, document analysis of literatures and audit performance of Water Service Authorities in Limpopo province were exploited. The employed data regression investigation to scrutinize the data, containing the Auditor-General of South Africa's (AGSA) amalgamated annual report for municipal for the fiscal years 2009/10 to 2015/16. It gave observable elements which were subjected to regression analysis. The findings show that quality of governance significantly affects the achievement of a clean audit at a significance value which translates into poor service delivery to citizens. In reviewing the existing documents, a better understanding was realised which assisted in formulating questions for interviews or develop an observation guide. The challenges confronting the water service authorities are not limited to inadequate administrative capacity to function and manage finances, lack of skilled technicians, service delivery backlogs; aging of water infrastructure and lack of infrastructure maintenance. These findings underscored a need for Water Service Authorities to assess continuously the level of contentment to their beneficiaries concerning the basic provision of water and sanitation services.

Keywords:- *Technical Skills, Access, Quality Services, Service Delivery, Service Delivery Protests, Water and Sanitation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The slogan, water is life and sanitation is dignity has been employed by Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWA) in the egalitarian South Africa, as the slogan to promote its drive for universal coverage of providing water and sanitation to all citizens. Implying that adequate supply of sanitation and water remains central to life and civilization. Therefore, the provision harmless

imbibing water and elementary public health to inhabitants remains a prominent contest for African regimes. Accessing innocuous water intake and better-quality sanitation are highly prioritized and extensively pronounced by countless internationals, continentals and national guiding principle brochures, decelerations, conventions and tactical credentials. However, population growth and periodic droughts escalated high afflictions of water demand and effective distribution. Consequently, the communities encountered resource scarcity of water and public health occasioning undesirable socio-economic impressions. Therefore, an appropriate resource management pronouncement that takes into account the pertinent capability of service organisations is compulsory to efficaciously address water trials and public health conditions. Hence in the South African context, local municipalities are declared Water Service Authorities while others are Water Service Providers.

However, according to a global study conducted by Pahl-Wostl (2002:394), in Germany, the WSA or the Water Service Sector is undertaking most important alterations currently on indigenous, county and universal scale. Based on the investigations conducted by Frone (2008:293) one of the specific objectives of the Romanian administration has been to commit on the provision water services in line with the best performs and procedures of the European Union (EU) in utmost federations by 2015 was clearly outlined, and by evolving well-organized water management structures that is decentralized.

Grounded on continental Africa, for example, with Benin Water Sector a slow, but balanced improvement in the development of its sanitation sector and water supply was logged. The regime had found significant success in intensifying exposure beneath flawless advanced background, predominantly in underprivileged zones. Currently, Benin had reviewed its nationwide water legislative frameworks to embrace public health stratagem, to stimulate incorporated water resource administration, and to supplementary generate a monitoring intervention with oversight of upping the standard for appropriate delivery of drinkable water and providing decent sanitation services (USAID, 2007:1). Based on a study conducted by Diemand, Geddes, Kalauskas and Ridley (2010:2), the government of Namibian had endeavoured mitigating glitches on the water subdivision by formulating innumerable water guidelines designed at outlining prominent models of water testing

supplies and subjecting the new government to investigate new structures and systems to improve the capacity of water administration and harmless public health.

According to a study conducted by Guerquin, Ahmed, Ikeda, Ozbilen and Schutterlaar (2003:80), the egalitarian government of the Republic of South Africa initiated an all-inclusive rudimentary water legislative framework subsequent 1994, in order to define its urgencies on equal distribution of water and its management and to further improve indigenous groups and nationwide funding resolution to address backlogs for the previously disadvantaged. The national sphere of government was devoted to eradicate the plethora aligned to the provision of water services and decent sanitation; the initial move in this direction was rooted on the provision of basic water services and sanitation services to all citizens of the Republic of South Africa.

Therefore, globally, both the improved provisions of basic water supply and decent sanitation are classified as fundamental human rights. In fulfilment of these rights, an improved public health and civilisation for all citizens would have been attained.

II. THEORETICAL EXPOSITION

Notably, extra undertakings were made by the leadership the democratic government that came into being as led by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994. Inclusive of such assurances were the provision of adequate water services, decent sanitation, electricity and housing amongst others. On the contrary, petite advancement had been accomplished. The majority of the local government spheres are uptight in addressing backlogs of services. They are drastically limited in the realization of set targets as laid down by the national sphere of government. Consequently, citizens happened to be infuriated by lack of services and recourse to remonstrations. Awkwardly, such community protest turns out to be violent which leaves government infrastructures and properties such as schools, libraries, clinics damaged. Nonetheless, the living standard of the majority of general public had not improved despite the resources being committed by the egalitarian government to alleviate poverty.

Generally, water is essential for human life. On the other hand, water is declared a scarce commodity. Therefore, water management of remained a topic of great concern for years globally. Laughable water administration and management may result into food insecurity, famines, resource-based encounters, environmental damage, cost of millions of human lives and ultimately causes human distress. Conventionally, the administration of water services was considered a predominantly mechanical dispute, fitting to hydrologists and engineering turfs. Furthermore, it was progressively renowned that suitable water management is required to address the institutional constraints and juridical context. In regard to both the policy circles and academia, robust attention had shifted from water administration towards water governance. This

measures are demanding shared and harmonized determinations of both mechanical (engineers, hydrologists) and non-technical specialists (administrative capacity, legal aspects or attorneys, economists, governmental and societal experts).

Recently, methodical analysis of the water and sanitation moral code conducted by Kowarsch (2011) in Doorn (2013:98) acknowledged nonexistence of all-inclusive water and sanitation moral code. For that reason, some distinct principles of water and sanitation authority is required, hence this had need of the engrossment of partisan theorists and theoretical ethicists. Additionally, an incorporated justification of aquatic and sanitation administration is needed, connecting comprehensions from procedural disciplines, institutional innovative money matters (that recognized “shared impartiality” identified as crucial enterprise moralities for institutional governance), (global) order, pragmatic discipline, engineering and machinery, *and* practical viewpoint. Eventually, being inclusive of these various perceptions, clear conceptual development and convenient ethical administrative ideologies which are firmly persuasive on governance of water and sanitation are comprehended (Doorn, 2013:99)

One of the distinguishing norm on water governance is on its global demand and scarcity. Hence, its flow is only confined within state boundaries. Correspondingly, the flow of some rivers cut across different countries, and cities, creating water management an essential political and a worldwide subject. The upstream management activities of water in one country might have emotional impact of water obtainability on the downstream countries. These might posture a foundation of prospective encounters. Based on global legal gymnastics, equitable and reasonableness principles, diligent prevention of significant cross-boundary conflicts were made known to expedite peaceable collaboration on the supply and distributions of the limited water resources (Dellapenna 2003 in Doorn, 2013:103). The above worldwide engagements give the impression necessary for harmonizing extractions of water with transboundary impression.

On the other hand, the supplementary values adopted by water service providers should ensure addressing water issues to all communities by the same token. Consequently, a significant change on the water sector was noticed. Additionally, water users together with numerous stakeholders working on water gradually committed themselves in working on and with water for the benefit of the societies in need. However, an impending strain persisted in the middle of the need for a meaningful obligation and worldwide provisions, exclusively for the benefits of rural communities. Ultimately, in arresting the sense of balance in the middle of the local and the global engagements and dispersal of responsibilities and answerabilities (between states and different administration authorities) remains a major pressing contest for water governance currently (Hoekstra and Chapagain 2008 in Doorn, 2013:103-104).

According to a study by Montgomery and Elimelech (2007:22) indicates that, amongst developed nation states all over the world, government and the Water Sector's nonexistence of answerability, management inefficiency, mushrooming corruption, deficiency of personnel and striving in implementing fixed ethics fashions state of affairs that limits water and sanitation responsiveness. Further investigation conducted in Romania, revealed its government together with its Water Sector with inexperienced workforce. The study displayed existence of unsuitable legislative framework adopted by the institutions, with roles and responsibilities that remained unclear, effectively leading to incompetent administration. Whereas a study by Hardoy and Schusterman (2000:67) in Buenos Aires, point out that the disappointment of Water Sectors to outspread water services and decent sanitation was influenced by the absence of applicable ordinances and unavailable strategic approach.

Likewise, Parker's (2009:8) study in Kenya in Naivasha detected lack of standing plans by the government for water and sanitation. Moreover, initiatives of developing such a plan is improbably a main concern in a predictable future. The study also indicated limited capacity of government in Lusaka, Zambia to facilitate effective water distributions and on-site sanitation. On investigations conducted by Telmo (2002:95) in Mali government, deficiency of monetary capacity was documented as central hindrance towards improving water services, supply to citizens and provision of decent sanitation. Hence, a study navigated by Mehta and Mehta (2008:45) discovered several African states with common exercise by NGOs to finance investments directly on water services, evading local government financial plans. Consequently, these kind of approach strained positive effect on local government controls. In conjunction with the shortage of dependable and translucent evidence, limitations of local government to plan and budget efficiently remained strange. Therefore, Water Services Authorities in most African states lack the necessary personnel as well as the institutional aptitude and capabilities to make available water and sanitation to their citizens.

What's more, focus was directed in the direction of organized proficiency, ability and outcome performance as imperative determining factor for the management of and provision of water and sanitation infrastructure in South Africa towards its citizens (Saleth and Dinar, 2005; World Bank, 2010; Karar, Mazibuko, Gyedu-Ababio and Weston, 2011; Van Koppen and Schreiner, 2014). The exertions appear understandable, however, the logical scrutiny lacked the principles and values that links robust institutions with better outcomes; explicitly with comprehensive admittance, services of advanced superiority, and efficiency in financial amenities. Besides, there were innovative thoughts around the possibilities for institutional restructuring of management regarding water in Republic of South Africa. Precisely, on the advancement of water infrastructure schemes, its development, management, operation and maintenances (RSA, 1997; DWAF, 2004, 2007; DWA, 2013; RSA, 1998; Ruiters, 2013). It was further recognised

by the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) that the institutional legislative contexts required adjustments. Moreover, the department initiated plans meant to embrace the 184 water service establishments with mandatory water agencies, water service providers, water services authorities, and water-user associations (DWA, 2012b). Hence, several institutional alternatives are assigned for management and development of water structures, such as, dams, bulky raw-water ditches like channels and waterways, as well as reticulation and dissemination networks (DWA, 2012b, 2013).

While Mazibuko and Pegram (2004) contend that institutional collaboration remains crucial for the effectiveness and efficiency on development, management and implementation of policy. Particularly, on areas where establishments partake on collective inter-reliant or associated responsibilities. The institutional systems required necessary provisions that had to be established deprived of conceding any organisational directives, roles and authorities. The South African government departments are delegated by the constitution to toil cooperatively and circumvent reduplications. However, there are practical lines which are still strained stuck between departments and on occasion inside departments (Van Koppen, Smits, Moriarty, Penning de Vries, Mikhail, and Boelee, 2009).

In principle, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) had been delegated to act in aid of the government of the Republic of South Africa as guardian for all water resources. The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998) make available the delivery of water amenities as both the accountability and responsibility of local sphere of government. Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) basically, entitles the local authority as providers of water and sanitation amenities, in addition to storm water provisions. Actively, the water segment surpasses upright disintegration with national, provincial and local spheres of government, intricate in diverse facets of water and sanitation on one hand (Elazegui, 2004; Mazibuko and Pegram, 2004). On the other hand, it transversely cuts plane disintegration given the complex scenario for advancement scheduling and administration of resources. Therefore, diverse government departments accordingly handle sectoral constituents of water, which predictably primes to jurisdictional intersection in the interrelated functionality (Elazegui, 2004; MacKay and Ashton, 2004).

Grounded on poor or non-existent of infrastructure with the set up municipalities at risk, led to various encounters triggered by the devolution of water and sanitation amenities. Eighty percent of entirety WSAs have been categorized as "excessive susceptibility" because of inadequate technical and monetary capacities (DWA, 2012b). This remained of substantial anxiety, even though projects have been instituted targeting the capacity enhancement of the WSAs. However, this inventiveness had in general taken the short-term interventions which resulted into little or no transfer of skills nor to shape and preserve capability inside the WSAs (DWA, 2012:8). The

Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (2002:51) directs at the handiness of extensive discrepancy in structuring the capabilities of Water Services Authorities (WSAs) and Water Service Providers (WSPs). Even though there had been a varied disproportion in the capabilities of WSAs and WSPs throughout the country. This ranges from comparatively sound resourced WSAs and WSPs in metropolitan municipal areas and several cities, towards precise under-capacitated and under-resourced establishment covering the urban and rural areas. The national government will make available the support system for the setting up operative WSAs and WSPs. Wherein water services authorities are explicitly feeble it would translate into non-effective water service providers, in case where national water services assets are shifted to water services institutions. Therefore, in developing the capability of water service suppliers it requires a multi-dimensional stratagem (DWAF, 2002:51).

Nonetheless, the scarce capability of water amenity suppliers in accomplishing their responsibilities remained a thorn to live with. Moreover, the operation of new infrastructure to deliver services further involves complex undertakings. Proficient skilful personnel are not available or inaccessible, as it is difficult to attract their services to serve in rural areas. Based on the current tendency concerning the general public corporations with local authorities begun to produced positive results. However, maintenance of this tactic was frequently susceptible (SAICE, 2011:11). The Department of Water Affairs during 2013, conducted self-assessment on WSAs wherein their exposure on planning, capability, administration and enactment. Conclusively, only 3% of WSAs are presently operating satisfactorily, while 46% operated on catastrophic state (DWA, 2013:35). Regressively, the greatest devastating glitches concerned a severe nonexistence of capability at local sphere of government (unpretentious or shoddier ever since 2006). Several poorer or rural local authorities required backing of constructing their capabilities to manoeuvre as Water Services Authorities and Water Service Providers” (SAICE, 2011:15).

The Department of Water Affairs (2013) indicated that the former homelands were not limited to the 46 per cent of WSAs in crisis. It means that the municipalities were suffering more than those historically poor. That, in effect, generated additional inequalities within the provinces. Non-functional WSAs were problematic, as inadequate management of infrastructure leads to non-provision of utilities and non-functional water schemes (DWA 2013). South Africa's water services infrastructure were deteriorating and thus adversely affected the quality of the service. Thus, one of the most effective capacity-building mechanisms is the proper transfer of knowledge and experience between water services authorities. The key structures for this are organized forums such as the Local Government Association of South Africa (SALGA), Institute of Municipal Financial Officers (IMFO), Water Institute of South Africa (WISA), Municipal Engineering Institute of Southern Africa (IMESA) and informal

interactions between municipalities facilitated by these or other structures (DWAF, 2002:51-52).

A Makgoka study (2005:12) indicated that while the South African government has supplied water to rural communities, multiple problems remain. The service provision suffered from a lack of administrative resources, financial mismanagement and human resource shortages and resources, resulting in inadequate Water Services Authorities delivery of services. Peters (2010, n.d) suggests that the issue of local government service delivery is that it has been hindered by local government's limited capacity, corruption, and political control, as well as the lack of political accountability, and transparency.

A similar study conducted by Dlamini and Cousins (2009:23) found that water services authorities had low performance in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality due to poor efficiency, lack of human resources and lack of strategic management, resulting from a lack of leadership and strategic management skills. Planning was not realistic and there was a tendency to concentrate on compliance with regulations, rather than efficiency. A further report by Raab, Mayher, Mukamba and Vermeulen (2008:114-116) notes that Bushbuckridge Local Municipality does not have the financial resources needed to build water services and that the municipality suffers from a lack of accountability. According to Dlamini (2007:1), Bushbuckridge 's lack of service delivery was due to systemic uncertainty that resulted from changing water supply mandates. Peters (2010: n.p.) noted that the issue of government service delivery is generally compounded by a lack of public involvement, a lack of knowledge and uncertainty among municipalities that are writers of water services.

This study introduces the theory of true access and contingency to build on how policymakers and government officials should conceptualize access and contingency to water and sanitation services provision. While it is remarkable that the South African government constitutionally guarantees the right to water and sanitation, account must be taken of the dynamic network of factors affecting a user 's true access to water and sanitation while designing government policy on redistributive or poverty alleviation. The theory of true access developed here serves as a guide by which to define systemic, relational, and ideological structures that affect true access. Within the applicable theory of true access to water and sanitation, South African guidelines laid down by the DWAF as well as national legislation describe a minimum quality of water. The 2001 DWAF Free Basic Water Campaign designates that municipal authorities will provide 6kl of water per household each month for each family, irrespective of income (Smith and Hanson, 2003:1530). Which amounts to approximately 25l per person per day for a household of eight people. The 1997 Water Services Act authorizes the DWAF Minister to set national requirements for minimum service rates (RSA, 1997). Such requirements were set to describe simple access within 200 meters of one's dwelling as referring to piped water.

Administrative and political office bearers will therefore negotiate the eventuality of meeting the people for water and sanitation. Therefore, situation theories as contingency theory was put forward by Fred Fielder, who notes that the relationship between leadership style and leadership efficiency is based on whether or not the leadership style fits the context of leadership (Oc and Bashshur, 2013). In addition, he isolates relationships between leader and member (user), which is the extent to which followers trust, respect and trust their leaders as a key foundation for successful leadership (Oc and Bashshur, 2013). In fact, large organizations like WSAs often need to understand how their various components need to rely on their specific strengths and work together and meet citizens' needs. Meeting citizens' needs therefore includes specialized skills which are not usually present in a utility organisation. Choosing to establish the expertise within the company (vertical integration) or to out-contract the operation depends on the type of skills that are required for the role, and where those skills reside. One approach to understanding the skills needed and the mode of organization appropriate for making the best use of them is known as contingency theory, i.e. the organization should be structured to be "contingent" on its environment and the type of product it supplies, as well as on how it supplies the product (Weitz and Franceys, 2002:27).

It also describes the leadership and confidence problem at the level of local government. Northouse (2007) describes three strengths of contingency theory: Firstly, it has empirical support, as it has been tested and found to be accurate by many researchers; Secondly, it has broadened leadership awareness from concentrating on a single, best form of leadership to stressing the value of leadership style and the demands of various situations; Thirdly, it offers predictive information on the style of leadership that is most likely to be successful in specific contexts (Northouse, 2007). Furthermore, the principle of contingency is flexible in addressing situational decision-making, which can be generally realistic for local government.

However, the practical reality is that the life of a municipal leader is full of what can be described as the often boring activities. Ensuring water and sanitation supply, street lighting and road gravelling aren't really "defining moments of global significance" that involve significant decisions. Such decisions, however, often require the full engagement, skill and expertise of the chief, as it concerns or impacts people or users. To accomplish these tasks, given their perceived low level of importance, builds trust between the leader and his/her followers, especially in accessing the services required. This theory is an excellent description of modern leadership but it does not tackle problems at the level of local government. It is largely because follower control is not properly recognized. In addition, as its power, the theory of contingency is diligent in handling relationships between followers and leaders; This is close to providing a reasonable answer to the issue of bad performance on the part of elected officials as it addresses the challenge versus the orientation of relationship-leadership. Nevertheless, it cannot be universally believed

that leaders with a strong mission focus are always performing poorly professionally, and neither is the absolute opposite. Contingency theory's drawback is in its emphasis on what can be called "a decisive moment" at which leaders will make significant course-altering decisions.

A number of areas also need basic services such as water and sanitation; these communities have major concerns about accessibility of water and sanitation quality, highways, libraries, and other needs. Such groups can also have different ways to engage leaders and affect the form of relationship they share and, as a result, trust. The needs of the followers will demand that the same leader deliver on multiple mandates. That means leaders will have to move their leadership between various conditions to deliver on their mandates. The same leader could not be appropriate for two very different cases, as posited by contingency theory. It may illustrate the problems facing service delivery in local government. This implies, therefore, that it is only the leaders, and only the leaders, who are responsible for implementing those mandates. Consumers' efforts to achieve true access to services are limited; Therefore, people are significant stakeholders in the practice of leadership in the public sector, since they possess leadership capacity. They provide leadership legitimacy; this can be described as a dynamic in which they "borrow" their power to the leaders. Therefore, it is critical that the theories of leadership be clear and explicit on a common vision between leaders and followers or consumers. Contingency theory in this respect is not sufficient for the job. This downside makes the theory weak on the issue of trust, and is therefore inadequate for this analysis as a theoretical context.

III. KEY FINDINGS

In relation to the current water and sanitation services rendered, the interviews conducted with community participants revealed that WSAs are under stress. In this regard, one of the community participants said the following: *In my view, the municipality does not have capacity to supply quality water and sanitations to all citizens. We are drinking dirty water that runs through our taps and we are struggling to control diarrhoea in this area. The water infrastructure and sewerage system has aged. There is only rubbish laying all over the township and nobody cares.* The majority of the community participants demonstrated an understanding of the concept of a lack of institutional capacity in the context of access to clean water and decent sanitation. Many communities in the Limpopo province face serious challenges related to access to water and decent sanitation, hence, service delivery protests have mushroomed. This view is consistent with a studies conducted by Thacker (2006) and Ng, Whiz and Lee (1999), in Lourens (2012:12), which indicate that from a service perspective, capacity management is the ability to balance the demand from customers and the capability of the service delivery system to satisfy said demand. Therefore, from a functional perspective, it is apparent that capacity management provides practitioners with guidance on how to plan, justify and manage appropriate levels of resources as required for a given solution. Improper planning for capacity

can lead to wasted resources, which results in unnecessary costs, or a lack of resources, which leads to poor performance.

Therefore, radical institutional reforms are required to improve the capacity of the WSAs to effectively deliver basic services, water and sanitation to citizens. To begin with, there must be accountability and credibility on the part of these WSA institutions in order to achieve good governance, which realises citizens' rights to access water and decent sanitation services. To achieve more accountable and credible institutions, formal rules must be changed to address the societal problem of barriers to the supply of clean drinkable water and decent sanitation for all. Interviews with most of the participants from Administration revealed additional shared contests related to the institutional competence in respect of the provision of water and sanitation services. One of the participants alluded to this as follows: *Local government is the recipient of substantial investment capital for Infrastructure Development, Operations and Maintenance. The challenge is that funds are not spent properly owing to non-compliance with the Division of Revenue Act (DORA) framework governing financial management and controls. We are unable, at the end of the day, to account for money spent or fail to spend on what it was meant for due to political interference.*

This view is consistent with that of Josie (2008:10), who outlined the challenges arising from fiscal decentralisation (specifically the formula used for MIG allocations), which affected water and sanitation backlogs and the state of water and sanitation infrastructure in the country. On the one hand, some municipalities continue to underspend, as they do not have the capacity to comply with the onerous reporting mechanism and the business planning required in order to access funding. On the other hand, other municipalities overspend but there is no demonstrable evidence regarding the reduction of backlogs (Josie, 2008:10). However, a professional evaluation led by the South African Institute of Civil Engineers revealed the very serious problems now facing South Africa (SAICE, 2011:14). Rated on a scale of "A" to "D", the water infrastructure class received a "D" rating; this indicated that it was in a serious condition and needed urgent attention, although it was deemed sufficient for South Africa's current and immediate future needs.

Similarly, there are indications that some WSAs are effectively able to provide water services to consumers, however, there are major obstacles in this process. One of the participants from Administration confirmed this: *The primary obstacle the WSA is faced with is lack of sufficient water from the main source in Limpopo Province and at the same time, the little water that is there is interrupted by illegal connections of water pipes that are mushrooming in informal settlement from the main pipes.* The earlier extract is consistent with the argument put forward by Watkins (2006:9), that is, that water scarcity is becoming one of the most critical risks threatening social and economic development throughout the world. South Africa is currently

classified as a 'water stressed' country. This is largely due to climatic and human settlement patterns. South Africa is characterised by relatively low annual average rainfall combined with high evaporation rates. Grey and Sadoff (2007:547) assert that the scarcity of water is widely perceived as the key feature undermining water security. Water security is understood as "the reliable availability of an acceptable quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods and production, coupled with an acceptable level of water-related risks" (Sadoff and Muller, 2009). Despite these challenges, institutional capacity is an infinite process because changes in structural conditions over time require constant modifications to meet ever-emerging challenges. In this respect, the literature agrees that it is neither an output nor project but a continuous process (Alaerts, Hartvelt, Partoni and Balkema, 1996, in Bos, 2006:7; GTZ, 2005, in Bos, 2006:7).

However, the strength of the institution is based on what it needs to fulfil and what it has been mandated to do, as well as what it has planned and promised to do. Water losses and sewage spillages are common complaints in all local municipalities. These concerns emerged during the interviews with political participants. One of the councillor participants held similar views: *In my understanding, the municipality is spending more in the maintenance of leaking water pipes and sewage spillages due to infrastructure that is very old or aged. The water and sanitation infrastructure is more than 30 years old and this problem is exacerbated by an increasing population growth and the mushrooming of informal settlements. Community members are occupying vacant land with traditional leaders giving sites to citizens without communicating with the local municipalities for the provision of services.* This aforesaid resonates with Van der Walt's (2003:57) argument that municipalities in South Africa are facing the dilemma of reduced local funding, increased demand for services and the obligation of additional service-delivery functions not previously associated with municipalities. Local government infrastructure management is, without doubt, more complex than it is at the provincial level (National Treasury, 2006:18). Local government is marked by some dramatic deficiencies in terms of its capacity-related and structural demands of service delivery (Nyalunga, 2006:4). Furthermore, Kroukamp (2005:19) suggests that another challenge relates to the extension of services to areas not previously serviced. Municipalities are also expected to address skewed spatial settlement patterns, which are functionally inefficient and costly, with huge backlogs in service infrastructure in historically underdeveloped areas.

The interviews in WSAs in the more rural areas revealed that exposed pit toilets were located very close to housing (often within 5 metres). One observed that these pit latrines were constructed properly, by government or by consumers. The majority of the community participants are troubled by the state of sanitation. One community participant argued the following: *We are still using pit latrines in our community, as there are no alternatives to date to relieve ourselves. We solely depend in underground water. During certain seasons, we happen to find ourselves*

struggling with diarrhoea in the whole family. We were informed it is caused by these latrines. In addition, there are households in this community that are involuntarily using the open-field to relieve themselves, hence, the majority of the community in the whole village depend on these communal boreholes for water. This is congruent with the suggestion put forward by Nhapi (2009) and Manase and Fawcett (2010), both cited in Mukonoweshuro (2014:78), that the chances for contamination of underground water is far higher due to the close proximity of most pit toilets to water sources. This posed a considerable health risk, especially due to the risk of flooding and groundwater pollution of wells, wetlands, springs and rivers. Nhapi (2009) and Manase and Fawcett (2010), in Mukonoweshuro (2014:78), recommend that the facilities must be built a significant distance from any water source, so that contamination could be avoided.

The administrative office bearers are mandated to drive service delivery. They are seen as role players in and contributors towards the successful implementation of the service delivery projects of local governments, WSAs included. During the interviews, it was revealed that the institutions are struggling to hire and retain skilled personnel. One of councillor participants made the following point on this matter: *We are totally not doing well in this area in my view. There is a tremendous shortage of appropriate skilled personnel with technical and administrative knowledge which is a major challenge in both management and implementation of resolutions for water services and sanitation.* This view is consistent with that of Cadogen (2008:38) when he indicated that it is the people (both appointed officials and elected councillors) and their ability to manage the organisational dynamics, the systems and processes at hand as well as social development project management capability that will make the constitutional objectives to be met. Municipalities, as the local sphere of government, should conduct their government business in accordance with constitutional values. These values are critically important to guiding the behaviour of municipal councillors and officials in the execution of their local government duties. These values include transparency, community orientation, accountability, integrity, non-racialism and non-sexism (Maserumule, 2008:442).

Similarly, one of the senior administration outlined the administrative and workforce challenges he encountered as the accounting officer within the local sphere. The participant said: *Eish! The truth is, the municipal officials that I found here lack requisite capacity to manage water and sanitation services. Their responses to the needs of the institution and citizens are stagnant, hence they are politically connected. There are no operations and maintenance plans for the services, so everything is done on an ad hoc basis, hence unsustainable. There are no funds ring-fenced for operations and maintenance and officials are resultantly, and of course inadequately, attending to repairs.* Bos (2006:9) argues that human resource development accomplishes the improvement and maintenance of the quality of personnel resources within an

organisation. This includes the way in which people develop and focus their knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation within their daily routine and their work within the organisation. Therefore, Bos (2006:9) argues that human resource improvement can be divided into four main categories: management; technical; attitudes and motivation. According to Jackson and Hlahla (1999:10), the challenge facing municipalities is that many new councillors do not understand their roles and have inadvertently demotivated the officials through interference in their professional duties and responsibilities.

The interviews conducted with community participants brought to light serious concerns regarding the capacity of municipal employees to fulfil their service delivery mandate. One of the community participants shared the following: *There are troubles with municipal officials. It seems they are unable to operate and maintain anything. The water and sanitation infrastructure is not up to standard because of high water leakages and sewage spillages. It seems there are no maintenance plans that is being implemented. This can be seen on the amount of effluent flowing into local streams and rivers daily.* This impression is consistent with the argument put forward by Shipalana and Phago (2014:330) who claim that public service institutions are often characterised by an uncontrolled shortage of professional and technical skills, such as administrative management, at all levels. These authors further acknowledge that the public service sector is struggling to attract and retain skilled personnel due to a lack of incentives and poor working conditions. Motshekga (2008:2) concurs with this argument by asserting that many local government structures suffer from a shortage of skills, particularly in financial and administrative areas, which compromise their ability to change their approach to development and to deliver public services effectively and efficiently. This is confirmed by a number of events in South Africa, most notably protest action against the actual or perceived lack of service delivery, which works to put pressure on municipalities to improve service delivery.

The aspect of political and administrative will surfaced during the interviews with community participants who were asked to comment on the provision of water and sanitation to citizens. One of the community participants said the following: *Yaah! Mandela must be turning in his grave; everybody is turning a blind eye as all service standard is deteriorating day by day. We failed to maintain or sustain and/or improve what had been acquired from the apartheid government. The state of this town comparatively is getting worse. Water linkage and sewage is all over.* The Provincial or National Treasury report (2011:14) which indicates that there has been under-investment in the maintenance and refurbishment of infrastructure, which is evident in the number of service delivery failures across the country today, shares these views. Furthermore, the high volume of technical water losses, due to pipe bursts, leakages, and so on, also results in substantial revenue losses for municipalities – revenue that could have been used for further maintenance.

During the interviews with a number of senior administrative office bearers, the lack of oversight on the part of political office bearers also became known. It was also revealed that leadership oversight issues are further crippled by political interference. One of the participants from Administration shared these sentiments: *According to my experience, poor or lack of provision of clean water and decent sanitation always breed serious challenges that are affecting the quality of life and has a direct effect to the trust of communities towards municipal services and all system of governance. Cadre deployment exposes the administration to unskilled personnel deployed to lead those with knowledge. It is my observation that these challenges are contributing to the low morale of staff and communities that result into loss of interest to pay for services. The blame is embedded on the oversight role.* This view is consistent with that of De La Harpe, Risken and Roos (2008:2) who propose that the debate on good governance started in reaction to the inefficient and corrupt administrative structures of developing countries that were eligible for financial loans. This was confirmed by Van Wyk (2004:412) who indicated that the reality in post-1994 South Africa is the demand for new public management, which aims not only to improve administrative output technically, but also to develop public relations techniques based on communication skills, simplified administrative formalities and procedures, cooperation in public affairs, safeguarding public interest, developing partnership practices, transparency, fighting corruption, promoting a code of ethics and conducting citizen participation in public affairs and consultation. Mashinini (2008:96) writes that economic performance, financial management, democracy, social equity and institutional capacity are the basic indicators of good governance.

According to the interviews conducted with the community participants, there were general expressions of frustration with the general services by the local government, especially with the provision of drinking water and sanitation. One of the community participants said the following: *We are generally neglected by the government we elected. We never expected that after more than 20 years we are not counted amongst citizens of this country because we are sharing drinking water with donkeys and other animals from the nearby river. We are struggling with toilet facilities as people use the bush or open fields to relieve themselves. Where is our dignity?* This view resonates with that of Tsatsire (2008:334) who argues that the recent widespread protests against poor provision of goods and service delivery is an indication that the government's efforts at promoting service delivery have collapsed. Donaldson (2002:21) who indicated that, with the high quality of Performance Management Systems (PMS) and the ability to have a clear understanding of the environment, both internally and externally, the municipality should be in a better position to respond efficiently and effectively in order to address the needs of its constituency supported this.

The aspect of human resources in the local sphere also came under the spotlight from most of the community participants. One of the community participants expressed their frustration as follows: *Re bona matata fela! (We only detect problems unfolding). The municipal officials, from labourers to administrative staff, there is no commitment to serve the government and to provide services for the community. They are failing the government and the communities. Nothing is improving year in year out and term in and out of councillors. Batho pele, dololo! The government has collapsed.* These views are consistent with the work of Mpehle and Qwabe (2008:258) who agree with the sentiment by stating that, in order for the public sector to achieve its objectives, systems need to be in place, such as a performance audit, to oblige the labour force to prioritise acceptable quality performance. The only concern raised by some of participants is the required institutional capacity to align all available systems with *one* local municipality vision.

The other most common concerns voiced by senior administration was about the service level agreement (SLA) between the Water Services Authorities (WSA) and Water Service Providers (WSP). The guiding principles for the provision of quality service should be stipulated in the SLA between the district municipalities (WSAs) and local municipalities (WSPs). However, the SLA was never there nor had it ever been signed. One of the participants from Administration who held similar views indicated the following: *There is a thin layer separating the WSAs and WSPs (municipalities). Lack of the Service Level Agreement add more confusion. There are no guiding principles that dictates the approach that should be followed by the District municipality and local municipality and other stakeholders. The water grants that are transferred to the district for water and sanitation for a specific local municipality is fully controlled by the district. For a delay or no implementation of the project, the local municipality has limited authority to enquire, hence some water and sanitation projects remain incomplete. This is caused by human element and compromises quality services.* This is in line with the findings of Mufamadi (2008:11) who notes that municipalities continue to face challenges posed by the reality of having a significant number of households that are without easy access to critical life-sustaining resources. It is the Municipal Systems Act (2000) which “set out the local government obligations to provide basic municipal services. However, the focus is on the basic needs of the community and the promotion of social and economic development of the community” (Tissington, 2011:68). Local government was given the role of Water Services Authorities (WSAs), which oversee water services provision. The WSAs can outsource service delivery to other capable entities, which then become the Water Service Providers (WSPs) (WSP, 2007:38). With the poor or non-existent infrastructure found in at-risk municipalities, the decentralisation of water and sanitation services has had various challenges. Eighty percent of all WSAs can be classified as “very high vulnerability” due to insufficient technical and financial capacity (DWA, 2012:14). “This is of significant concern, and although programmes have been instituted to boost the

capacity of WSAs, these have generally taken the form of short-term interventions that did little to transfer skills and build and retain capacity within the WSAs” (DWA, 2012:8).

Consequently, it is human resource capacity that has a greater impact on the institutional capacity of any organisation to attain quality service delivery. A skilled workforce, in administration, finance, technical matters, and so forth, translates into organisational success. Moreover, the operational and maintenance of the provision of water and sanitation will be purposefully and appropriately implemented if the organisational resource capacity of WSAs is enhanced with critical skills.

Therefore, incapability of regular supply or a slow pace of service delivery in the provision of drinkable water and decent sanitation to citizens is a violation of people’s human rights. The majority of service delivery protests existed due to a lack of water and sanitation provision. The participants noted that the high level of corruption deprives them of good quality services. Due to the unavailability of skilled personnel in WSAs and WSPs, institutional capacity was dismally in disarray. More importantly, it surfaced that the financial mismanagement in all municipalities is unacceptable, especially unauthorised, irregular and fruitless expenditure. Year in and year out, the Auditor General raised similar challenges regarding financial management; surprisingly, both the political and administrative office bearers showed no interest in addressing these challenges of maladministration. In addition, there is continuous disharmony between administration and political office bearers. These led to the poor coordination between WSAs and WSPs for the provision of drinkable water and sanitation services. Hence, employees with no knowledge are deployed in local municipalities due to their political connections. Professionalism and quality performance remain at a low, with no improvement of service provision.

IV. CONCLUSION

Arguably, there is underperformances of the institutional and human resource capacity within the Water Service Authorities in Limpopo province towards the provision of water and sanitation to citizens. Consequently, violent service delivery protests mushrooming in the province is an indication of lack of access by citizens to basic services. To this end, an integrated capacity building of WSAs and water and sanitation artisans is crucial and could enhance the improvement of water and sanitation service delivery in various communities.

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