Challenges Faced by the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality in Implementing the Back-to-Basics Programme

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by Raymond Mhlaba Municipality in implementing the Back-To-Basics (B2B) programme. The objectives of the study were to identify the challenges faced by Raymond Mhlaba Municipality Manager in implementing the Back-To-Basics programmes; to examine the perception of the community members of the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality on the implementation of Back-To-Basic Programme. The study used a qualitative research design to collect data from 5 (five) participants using in-depth interviews. The finding of the study revealed that some of the challenges faced by Raymond Mhlaba Municipality in implementing Back-To-Basics programme include: corruption and mismanagement of funds; improper understanding of the municipality's IDP and roles of the different government departments; poor communication skills between the municipality ward councillors and the community members; and poor service delivery. Importantly, the community members also revealed that the municipality had not done well in their implementation because of many evidences of water crises, empty promises, and unrealistic/fake promises. Hence, the implementation of the B2B programme in this Local Municipality had failed to meet the people's demands and make their dreams and expectations become reality. The paper recommended that the municipality management should put the interest of communities as greatest priority in their Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and manifestoes.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the 1994 post Republic of South Africa led to the introduction of innovative packages as well as policies for maintenance of the countries visualization of indigenous administration conversion that had over the centuries continued to be the central opinion, which in a way had remain justifiable among other facilities offered by communities (Roux 2002: 419). Moreover, the local government's mandate to deliver facilities to societies remains preserved in the Republic of South Africa's Constitution Act No 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 1996). Furthermore, privileges for communities to be provided with services remain articulated under the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution).

Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) (2017) stated that the main responsibilities of municipalities are the delivery of services to societies within their jurisdiction. Ever since 1994, municipalities have been the main established sites for service delivery in South Africa. Citizen's interface with administration through the Local Government and its initial principles is about helping the society

(Tshetedi 2000; CoGTA 2016). The local government obligation is to be adequately established, well-organized, effective as well as accessible to meet the essentials of their societies. The municipality's administration must plan, accomplish, as well as implement their accomplishments (Tshetedi 2000: 43). However, local government needs to make sure that service delivery is maintained, improvement of socio-economic development is addressed, encourage a safe plus healthy atmosphere that inspires civic involvement (Republic of South Africa 1996).

Problem Statement

Evidence from the literature has revealed that there are many municipalities in South Africa implementing the B2B programme. However, it is sad to state at this moment that many of these municipalities including Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality (RMLM) have failed in their implementation due to poor organization structure, weak human resource management systems, and weak internal controls (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) 2017). These and other impediments such as corruption and mismanagement of funds; improper understanding of

IDP; poor communication skills between the municipality ward councillors and the community members were perceived challenges affecting the implementation of the Back-To-Basics (B2B) programme in Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality. As a matter of fact, these challenges have hindered the municipality from embarking on some socioeconomic capital intensive projects that will alleviate poverty among the community members. More importantly, PMG (2017) stressed that Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality has failed a number of times in focusing their implementation of the B2B programme on procurement, planning and project management infrastructural delivery. Many other problems such as excessive or overspending on unnecessary projects, deception/fraud or dishonesty; poor budgeting maintenance, restoration and also the replacement of ageing organization have resulted in poor quality as well as service breakdown, which have been seen as impediments.

Objectives

- To identify the challenges faced by Raymond Mhlaba Municipality management in implementing Back-To-Basics (B2) programme.
- To examine the perception of the community members of the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality on the implementation of Back-To-Basic programme.

Research Questions

- What are the challenges faced by Raymond Mhlaba Municipality Management in implementing the Back-To-Basics programme?
- What are the perceptions of the community members of the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality on the implementation of Back-To-Basic Programme?

Literature Review

According to the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, the South African government has identified infrastructural development as a priority (South Africa's Constitution Act 108 of 1996). Nevertheless, lack of skilled employees, inadequate funding, as well as routines

that are poor plus maintenance of the infrastructure that is planned are noticeable everywhere like poor sanitation system as well as the poor housing structures raised in an effort towards economic development (Ndzelu 2016:4). In support of this, the Auditor-General South Africa (2016) indicated the level of disobedience in both the supply chain management of municipal resources as well as the quality of financial statements. The Auditor-General further recognized ineffective and inefficient spending in the interior of local government (Auditor-General South Africa 2016-17).

In efforts of the programme to provide a well-organized facility distribution, the programme has got plans to complete cities for organization as well as intentions to guarantee that these cities improve at a quick pace. It observes at improving the processes as well as looking after prevailing organization to guarantee stability of facility delivery (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) 2014). It is very important to mention that 7 percent of operational budget allocation seeks to be enforced toward the infrastructure maintenance as well as inspection of the national organization in cities. It also looked at the emerging scheme by the observer in the provision of service disruptions as well as providing sustenance to cities with the expenses of 80 percent of the City Organization Funding (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) 2014).

The Challenges Faced by Raymond Mhlaba Municipality Managers in Implementing the Back-To-Basics Programmes

The Cooperative Governance Department as well as Traditional Affairs (DCoGTA) second phase of Back to Basics (B2B) project, stated that National Government will engage more in active monitoring and accountability measures which include (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) 2017):
- Unexpected municipal visits;
- Supply chain management processes spot checks;
- The forensic reports on implementing recommendations;
- Infrastructural Municipal Grant-funded project site visits; and

- To assist those municipalities struggling due to increased interventions.

There are remaining challenges despite the initiatives as well as efforts implemented by the Government. The B2B project observations revealed a worrying picture (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) 2017):

- In provincial CoGTA departments, weak capacity relates to the extent of regression in civic performances in those particular provinces;
- Political instability is still seen as the reason for the dysfunctionality of municipalities, governance weaknesses as well as poor service delivery;
- Correlation between poor political leadership, rate of senior management vacancies, poor selections also lack municipalities functionality;
- Organogram to core business not aligned, bloated human resource, weak management systems, internal weak controls, non-significance in the management also the responsibility of non-adherence to or disregard to laws as well as principles;
- Eskom owed a debt, as well as the water boards, however, challenge still remains;
- some municipalities still continue to experience perennial systemic challenges which are beyond their control, for example, feasibility revenue base which is low or non-existent, lack of inability to attract qualified expertise, setting of tariff also non-revenue losses on services (electricity and water);
- Section 139 interventions are not yielding desired result due to the lack of sustainability as well as the failure of determination to returning systemic tests;
- Complaints management systems as well as the functionality of the ward committees, engagement of resident is generally weak in municipalities which are categorized as dysfunctional as well as those at risk, in terms of their reporting back to communities;
- Failure to procure, plan, manage the project infrastructural delivery, which is results in the poor infrastructure spending of grants, deception as well as dishonesty;
- Poor maintenance for budgeting, restoration, also the replacement of ageing organization which result in poor quality as well as service breakdown;
- Municipalities are still owed huge amounts by the government while progress is being made in addressing government, households and business debts.

According to PMG (2017), it is also seen from the report released that the government is worried as well as wanting to find-out how municipalities that are dysfunctional will be fixed, which however, notified that a single approach would not work because municipalities have diverse challenges every day.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Raymond Mhlaba Municipality. The municipality is the second-largest local municipality covering 6 474 km², of the surface area of the Amatole District Municipality. According to the Amathole District Municipality Integrated Development Plan (ADM IDP) (2017), Raymond Mhlaba Local municipality is a countryside municipality that sits at the foot of the ever imposing and majestic mountain range of the Winterberg (Intaba ze Nkonkobe). The Raymond Mhlaba area is neighboured by the boundaries of the Makana Local Municipality, Blue Crane Local Municipality, Amahlathi Local Municipality, Ngqushwa Local Municipality, Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality and the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (Amathole District Municipality Integrated Development Plan (ADM IDP) 2017). The municipality has the following satellite offices – Middledrift, Hogsback, Alice, Seymour, Adelaide and Bedford (Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan (RMLM IDP) 2017). The Eastern Cape Province is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa where poverty is aggravated by growing unemployment and limited economic opportunities. However, this study mainly focused on one location within the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, which is Alice town in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The reason for choosing Alice town as a study area is because it is one of the areas that is mostly affected by the challenges of the Back-To-Basics implementation by the municipality and secondly,

it is convenient in terms of time factor because it is few minutes away from the University of Fort Hare (Alice campus) where the researchers work, meaning it is not far, moreover, the cost of travelling was extremely very low when travelling to the study area.

The study used a qualitative research approach in order to investigate the challenges faced by Raymond Mhlaba Municipality in implementing the Back-To-Basics programmes and perception of communities on the implementation. This study used in-depth interviews that involve face-to-face interviews in the collection of the data from 1 (one) of the management team from the Raymond Mhlaba, and 4 (four) community members of the same Municipality. The data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires. Open-ended questions were used by the researchers to obtain information from the participants in this study. The study employed a purposive sampling technique in selecting the participants used in the study. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Faced by the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality Management in Implementing Back-To-Basics Programme

The researchers asked the participant about challenges faced by the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality in implementing the Back-To-Basics Programme. The response from the participant shows the communities' non-adherence/non-compliance/disobedience to the important manifestoes of the municipal management and poor community' attendance at several municipality's meetings were identified as some of the challenges faced by the municipality management in the successful implementation of the B2B programme . Below was the participant response:

"Challenges that we are still facing is the community which still doesn't want to listen to us when we plead to address them in meetings as well as poor attendance that we always receive from the communities when we are having meetings. It becomes very sad because the meetings are meant to give feedback to them about the IDP programme actions we are about to take."

These challenges mentioned are discussed below:

Poor Communities' Attendance at Several Meetings

Attendance at the municipality meetings is very necessary. This is true because, from these meetings, many issues affecting the communities are raised, debated, discussed and addressed. This was also noted from many studies conducted by several scholars on the implementation of the B2B programme among many municipalities in South Africa. The participant interviewed revealed that for the municipality to move forward, it is very important to mention that attending the municipalities' manifestoes or the B2B programme is very essential. This is because, through these manifestoes the municipality is able to present B2B programmes agenda to the communities. However, the sad part of this was that, once these calls are made by the municipalities requesting the public to attend their meetings, very few community members attended the meetings. It is on this note that the participant interviewed revealed that non-adherence/non-compliance/disobedience to the important manifesto of the municipal management was another biggest challenge faced by the municipality in implementing effective service delivery in the Raymond Mhlaba municipality apart from poor attendance at the meetings.

Community's Non-adherence/ Non-compliance/Disobedience to the Important Manifesto of the Municipality Management

As revealed above, during the interview section, one of the participant stated that many community members do not often attend the municipality's manifestoes or programmes and that disobedience or non-compliance to the important manifesto of the municipal management has affected the municipality from disseminating effective information that could be of great benefit to all communities. The participant interviewed further revealed that even with the people that heeded to the invitation of the municipality's B2B programme or manifestoes, those in attendance in the meetings did not com-

ply to all told by management at the meeting. The interviewee further mentioned that all efforts made to update, inform or address the community members at several meetings were abortive.

The Way Forward for Overcoming the Identified Challenges Faced by the Management and Other Stakeholders in Implementing B2B Programme in the Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality

The researchers asked the participant to suggest what should be done to overcome the challenges identified faced by the Municipality. In one of the interviews section conducted in the municipality, one participant revealed that the communities should show signs of appreciation to all municipality activities, they should be supportive and show a lot of interest and willingness in attending the municipality's manifestoes. The interviewee further mentioned that, if the community participation or turnouts in the meetings are increasing, many challenges confronting the communities such as poor service delivery would be presented by the communities, debated and addressed in the meetings. Hence, the municipality would be able to extend their services delivery to some other communities which are still lacking the benefits of the municipality's B2B programme. Thus, this participant response was presented below as

"The only way for these challenges to be overcome is by the community members to be more supportive by being willing to support the vision of the municipality and availing themselves to come to the meetings so that they can also raise their concerns and can give suggestions. Even if we are called managers or management we are also human we need to be corrected and advised."

The findings above were similar to Fung's (2015) study, which also emphasised that the municipality management has failed to follow proper implementation process in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the Back-To-Basic programme and this has resulted in huge corruption. As a matter of fact, this hindered the municipality from embarking on some socioeconomic capital intensive project that will alleviate poverty among the community members. More

importantly, PMG (2017) stressed that the Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality has failed a number of times in focusing the implementation of the B2B programme on procurement, planning, and project management infrastructural delivery. These and many more problems have resulted in poor infrastructure, spending of grants, deception as well as dishonesty; poor maintenance for budgeting, restoration as well as the replacement of ageing organization which results in poor quality as well as service breakdown.

Positive Support from the Community Members on the Vision of the Municipality

Knowing that the municipality's vision is very important, it is revealed by the participant in one of the interviews conducted that the municipality should ensure that their vision is made available and clear to the community members. In order to effectively and efficiently work together with municipality, the communities should also show their support to the municipality's vision in order to achieve the municipality goals and objectives.

Regular Participation in the Municipality's Manifestoes/Meetings

In order to address the challenges faced by the municipality in implementing the B2B programme, as indicated by one of the participants during the interview section, regular participation in the municipality's manifestoes should be considered as one of the ways of solving some these challenges. The regular participation of community member would assist them to express their grievances to the municipality, and the municipality in return should take an urgent or drastic action to address the pressing demands of the communities.

Suggestions from the Communities Could Also Assist in Improving the Implementation of B2B Programme

To avoid community riot/protests or demonstration in any municipality in South Africa, it is very important that the voice of the community should be heard by the municipality management. One of the participants during the inter-

views section indicated that communities should participate in the municipality's manifestoes or the B2B programme at any time there is a call for a meeting. In addition, the participant indicated that their participation would assist the municipality to really know the direction in which the implementation of the B2B programme should focus. The interviewee further mentioned that community participation is very crucial because issues raised by the members of the communities would be urgently looked into and appropriately addressed. Hence, the researchers are of the opinion that one of the reasons why the communities were not attending the municipality programme could be due to various empty promises made by the municipality. Although, this was also confirmed by one of the participants during one of the interviews section that they were tired and bored of the municipality tricks of using them to achieve their selfish ends or motives. This could be addressed only if the municipality could change their orientation, be honest and deliver qualitative services to communities.

Perception of the Community Members with Regards to the Implementation of B2B Programme in Raymond Mhlaba Municipality

The findings from four participants on their view concerning the implementation of the B2B Programme in Raymond Mhlaba Municipality was as follows: the implementation is quite good though there are some challenges; the implementation is a better way in ensuring that the municipality performs their basic responsibilities and functions without compromise; the programme aims to bring changes and lessen corruption; the implementation has brought a great initiative by the government to the communities but is an avenue for corruption; the programme makes it easy for the municipality management to monitor the present progress and evaluate its future progress; implementation of the B2B programme has improved the collection of waste removal in the communities; and it has assisted the municipality to stick to its aims and objectives, goals and vision in improving services. The responses below were obtained from the participants:

Participant One

"My view concerning the implementation of the Back-To-Basics programme is that it is a great initiative the government introduced but I would like to believe that there is a lot that needs to be done so that it can be improved. In my opinion, I think the programme has opened more doors for corruption as the programme itself has a lot of aims to achieve, taking from what the president said in his speech when he was introducing the programme."

Participant Two

"One part of me is impressed with the implementation of the Back-To-Basics programme in RMLM because the programme makes it easy for the municipality heads to see the progress and evaluate how it is going. On the other hand, another part of me believes and thinks that it won't work if there is still corruption which I strongly believe it won't end anytime soon."

Participant Three

"I don't even see the use of the implementation of the Back-To-Basics programme in the RMLM. If you take a good look at the roads, it's been years and the roads still have potholes. The municipality officials give empty promises, as for other services like the provision of water which they are also failing to properly deliver. There should be a provision made for gutters and drains that store the water when it rains so that it doesn't go waste and also to avoid floods. The only thing in the implementation of the B2B that the municipality is still doing well is the collection of waste removal."

Participant Four

"The implementation of the programme is actually a great idea, as it will also assist the municipality to stick to its goals and vision about the improvement of services that need to be provided to the communities within the municipality. The B2B programme will serve as a reminder to the municipality officials to never forget the objectives and aims of the programme."

The finding above is relevant and related to the study conducted by the Cooperative Governance Traditional Affairs. Cooperative Governance Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) 2016:5) revealed that in order to improve the living conditions in South Africa, it is the responsibility of the government or municipalities to create different employment opportunities for the people, provide basic facilities or infrastructural facilities such as quality street light, good transport and communication networks, sanitation, electricity, clean water, good health/clinic facilities, as well as removal of refuse at a local level. This is initiated by the government in providing qualitative service delivery to the people in the country.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the B2B programme in this Local Municipality has failed to meet the people's demands and make their dreams and expectations become reality. As a matter of urgency, there is a need for the municipality management to come up with effective strategies and mechanisms that would improve the implementation of the B2B programmes in their community areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommended that the municipality management should put the interest of communities as the most priority in their manifestoes. Each ward councillor should move closer to their communities, listen to their complaints, and make provisions that would alleviate their challenges. Nepotism or favouritism is very common among the municipality's officials in South Africa, hence, the municipality should avoid nepotism or favouritism in awarding tenders or contracts, especially to unqualified people either known or unknown to them. The principle of nepotism should be condemned as its effect would weaken the progress of the municipality in the Eastern Cape and entire municipalities in South Africa. In addition, in order to implement the B2B programme in the municipality, the ward councillors must work together with the communities, and they must ensure that all the activities of the municipality in providing services to the communities are effective and must be monitored by them.

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