

Challenges Confronting Amathole District Municipality Managers in Implementing Socioeconomic Strategies in Rural Communities

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ABSTRACT The paper examines the challenges confronting Amathole District Municipality (ADM) managers in implementing the socio-economic strategies on the rural communities in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The objective of this paper was to examine the challenges confronting the ADM managers in implementing the socio-economic strategies in rural communities and analyse the needs to effectively improve on their district socio-economic policies. This paper used a literature review methodology to unpack the challenges faced by the ADM managers and its local municipalities in achieving an effective implementation of socio-economic policy goals. In addition, the finding of the study shows that most of the District Managers are incompetent to implement an effective Local Economic Development (LED) strategy, inappropriate national and provincial government policies, practices and burdensome requirements; socio-economic conditions prevailing in many municipalities that are not been adequately addressed through macro, micro-economic and industrial policies and plans of the State; a breakdown of values at a societal level that is breeding unethical behavior, corruption, culture of non-payment, and lack of accountability were some of the major challenges faced by the ADM managers in implementing socio-economic policy in the district. There is a need for the government and her policy-makers to urgently adhere to rural communities needs in order to avoid the rural-urban migration in the country. The study recommends that the ADM managers should ensure that municipalities meet the basic service needs of communities.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment and poor social infrastructure such as housing, transport and communication networks, electricity and water supplies, education among others have been seen from many municipalities' protests and demonstrations in South Africa as some of the factors affecting both social and economic standard of living and sustainable livelihood of the people in the rural and remote communities. Turn-around strategies are required to ensure that rural areas provide economic and social opportunities for local communities (Meyer 2013: 1). Local Economic Development (LED) and spatial plan-

ning initiatives are seen as two possible tools for rural recovery or improvement (Rogerson 2009: 9 cited in Meyer 2013: 1). "Various attempts are being made by governments in South Africa to improve the rural communities through socio-economic policy formulation and implementation of strategies, programmes and projects that aim at achieving this objective." This policy framework is required to improve the 'rural communities' socio-economic situation.

ADM has a significant role to play in the implementation of socio-economic strategies of its rural communities in South Africa (Phaswana-Mafuya 2006; Municipal 2010; Sikhakane and Reddy 2009; Benya 2012). The good implementation of socio-economic strategies if well and appropriately or properly executed can provide the innovative system of native authority on which the rural communities can rely on and build up their own confidence to believe and adhere to without any doubt of betraying their loyalties within the district (Sustainability 2007;

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Bawumia and Appiah-Adu 2015; Witbooi 2015). In addition, the implementation of the socio-economic strategies can provide better infrastructure and technological facilities on which complicated rural communities can be sustained (Terluin 2003; Sirohi 2007; Kirubi et al. 2009; Schaffers et al. 2011).

According to Madhanpall (2008), the implementation of the socio-economic strategies brings in both quantitative and qualitative methods and usefulness of the strategies that would alleviate rural poverty, inequality and improve standard of living among the rural communities in the ADM. The implementation of the socio-economic strategies cannot be concluded as good or bad, perfect or imperfect task when the implementation strategies that augment and develop the rural communities efficiency is lacking within the ADM. The systematic implementation of the socio-economic strategies on the provision of infrastructure to the rural communities is of paramount importance to improve the effective operation and administration of ADM competency.

Study has indicated that surveys of the majority of district municipality failure in South Africa especially in the area of implementing socio-economic strategies maintain that the government and policymakers often have ideas but they do not have clear understanding on the utmost effective implementation of the socio-economic strategies or policy procedures in delivering qualitative services to the rural communities and as a result, this has hindered their operations and improvement (Pretorius and Schurink 2007; Boshoff 2008).

Most importantly, the implementation of the socio-economic strategies can therefore bring about innovative, empowerment and development of qualitative skills and potentials to reduce the level of poverty in the rural and remote areas (Martinez 2011). In fact, it must be emphasized at this point that the existence of the implementation of new socio-economic strategies into the rural communities within the ADM will undoubtedly and vibrantly augment the rural dwellers potentials to access numerous social infrastructural facilities.

This study assessed the effect of socio-economic strategies implemented by ADM managers on the rural and remote communities in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and explores the challenges and its context, with the

aim of recommending strategies to stimulate socio-economic growth and contributes towards the alleviation of unemployment and poverty.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the challenges confronting the ADM managers in implementing the socio-economic strategies on rural communities.

Research Question

What are the challenges affecting the ADM managers in implementing socio-economic strategies?

Problem Statement

Although LED as observed as a local-base response has played a crucial role in responding to various challenges of globalisation and local-level opportunities and crisis (Nel and Rogerson 2005: 1), yet there are still some gaps that need to be adequately addressed. In similar fashion, Swinburn (2007: 2) states that micro-economic stability and a favorable national business-enabling environment are both necessary pre-condition for successful and sustainable development in the rural and remote communities although different countries have their own different LED approaches to form their own economy fortune and each needing to be nurture with a unique set of government involvement. In fact, no matter how rich or poor rural dwellers in a worldwide economy are, they all have to face the impediment and opportunity to shape their own economy purposes.

It is very important to state that there are some forces of nature, "the study of statistics such as births, deaths, income, or the incidence of disease, which illustrate the changing structure of human populations", knowledge or competence, and commerce such that no native economy can necessarily be guaranteed of accomplishing and sustaining a position of security and stability. However, it is quite interesting to state that despite of all these boundaries, South Africa in its current democratic dispensation, is still using and applying the principle of LED in its development programme (Nel and Rogerson 2005: 1). The implementation needs of socio-economic strategies and their challenges to the rural communities will be assessed. Given the sce-

nario of the implementation of the socio-economic strategies and their challenges confronting ADM Managers in providing qualitative service delivery to the rural communities within the ADM, there is a need to analyse the problems facing the ADM Managers in the implementing socio-economic strategies on the rural communities of the ADM; What are the challenges affecting the ADM managers in implementing socio-economic strategies?

METHODOLOGY

This paper used a systematic review of literature from journals, books, conference reports, dissertations and internet sources. The researchers' intuitive experience and knowledge in Public Administration, Government, United Nations' Development Programme publications to raise debates and discourses on issues pertaining to the impact of implementation of socio-economic strategies on the rural communities of ADM in the Eastern Cape Province were also used.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Various studies have examined the reason behind the implementation of socio-economic strategies as a means or yardstick to hasten socio-economic, growth and development in the rural communities and providing solutions to the rural community's development in South Africa. The categorisation of factors considered before the implementation of socio-economic strategies differed among various researchers. Some researchers group these factors into cultural, developmental and external factors while others categorize them into benefits and drawbacks of socio-economic strategies. Some researchers also suggested conceptual model of introduction of socio-economic strategies and implementation. A large percentage of these studies on the socio-economic strategies will be based on the Classical Economic Development theories.

From some of the related literature review, issues discussed mostly are those issues related to the effective utilisation of socio-economic policies from the government sectors by looking at the external factors and the role performed by the Municipality Managers in formulating and implementing LED strategies and the IDP review process in order to provide quality ser-

vices delivery to the public. However, another study was also carried out investigating the importance of social and economic strategies in the Government Administrations (GA) by considering some major government departments namely, Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Development and Centre for Rural Development as well as Department of Education in which both internal and external assessment was carried out. Similarly, related research focused to this scenario was that various studies have been conducted on the socio-economic strategies in the LGA and some district municipalities but only focused on the external service delivery to the urban areas although very few studies have also been conducted in the rural areas but not much studies have been conducted on the implementation of socio-economic strategies and their impact on rural communities development in order to ensure good service delivery in the ADM area of jurisdiction in the Province of South Africa. The implementation of socio-economic strategies and their impact in enhancing the rural communities' participation on the majority of government projects and encouragement of rural communities' engagement in small businesses in South Africa has become the focus of external assessment in this study. The ultimate objective of this study is to identify the capacity of ADM on how to implement socio-economic strategies used for rural communities.

Legal Framework or Informative Regulation, Guideline and LED Strategies in South Africa

The South African government has been trying tremendously for some years back in developing many rural areas in South Africa and investing hugely on Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) ever since 1994. In addition, African National Congress (ANC) (1994: 83) concluded that the RDP is based on the assumption that, to address the LED needs of the people in the communities and to temporarily maintain growth and development of local economies in South Africa, there is a need for a wide establishment of representative institutions to be put in place by the government in order to also support her in providing some essential basic needs to the rural communities. It is equally important to say that RDP has been well structured to the extent that it positions many people

at the middle of development, informing the people about the need to also enhance their own lives as well as those living within their communities.

Moreover, the review of literature has also showed that the chapter 7 of the South African Constitution of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) also reveals an essential functions and role of Local government (LG) in facilitating Local Economic and Social Development (LESD). In fact, section 152(1) of 1996 Constitution reveals the objectives of Local government in improving and ensuring that participation on economic and social development are maintained and sustained (Magwa 2011; Khumalo and Thakathi 2012). More so, section 153 states that a municipality must structure and manage its budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community; and promote socio-economic development of the communities (Magwa 2011: 22). In the same way, the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998), also stipulated that, there is a need for the local government to be growing and to always ensure that communities are engaged or involve in their activities or programs. Nonetheless, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996), chapter 2, Section 7-39 of the Bill of Rights and in some its sub-sections (ss.) such as ss. 11: which stipulated that every citizen should equal right to life, ss. 23-24: right to live in a good and conducive environment, ss. 26-28: also states that everyone has the right to have access to housing, health care, food, water and social security and ss. 29: states that everyone has to quality education among others.”

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (Amathole District Municipality Integrated Development Plan (ADM IDP) 2015-2016; Republic of South Africa 2000) outlines the importance of drawing up a comprehensive Integrated Development Plan (IDP) to guide the process of a developmental local government. In 2001, the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) drew up an LED Paper entitled “Refocusing Development on the Poor” (Republic of South Africa 2001), which sought to give a pro-poor perspective and approach to LED. In 2005, policy guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa (Republic of South Africa 2005) was compiled with the aim of eradicating poverty and promoting economic growth. (A number of other legal and policy documents

have been made since 1994 which will be fully examined within the scope of the subsequent chapters of this study). A more comprehensive policy, the LED Framework of 2006, called the National Framework for Local Economic Development in South Africa (2006-2011) (Republic of South Africa 2006), is a product of a technical team from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the DPLG. The framework advances the idea that economic decision-making and the implementation of decisions are defined by shared values, norms, beliefs, meanings, rules and procedures of the formal and informal institutions of society (Republic of South Africa 2006: 3).

The LED Legal Framework comprises of:

- Improving good governance, service delivery, market and public confidence in municipalities;
- Spatial development planning, and exploiting the comparative advantage of district municipalities and metros;
- Intensifying enterprise support and business infrastructure development in local areas; and
- Introducing sustainable community investment programmes focusing on organizing communities for development and maximizing circulation of public money spent in local economies.

Local Government System Act of 2000

Undoubtedly, the executive summary document of 2013/2014 draft reviewed of IDP reveals the preparation and adoption made by ADM in fulfilment of the Municipal’s legal obligation in terms of section 32 of the Local Government: Municipal Act 32 of 2000 (ADMIDP2013/2014: 7). This document states that, as part of the legal requirement for every municipality to compile an IDP, the Local Government System Act of 2000 (Magwa 2011:22) and Municipal system Act 32 of 2000 also requires that (ADMIDP 2013/2014: 7):

- the IDP be implemented;
- the Municipality monitors and evaluates its performance with regards to the IDP’s implementation;
- the IDP be reviewed annually to effect necessary changes and improvements; and

- the municipality move progressively towards the overall social and economic upliftment of communities in harmony with their local environment (Magwa 2011: 22).

Section 25 of the Municipal Systems Act deals with the adoption of the IDP and states that:

“Each municipal council must adopt a single, inclusive and strategic plan for the development of the municipality which – links, integrates and co-ordinates plans and takes into account proposals for the development of the municipality; aligns the resources and capacity of the municipality with the implementation of the plan; forms the policy framework and general basis on which annual budget must be based.”

Section 34 further states that:

“A municipal council must review its IDP annually in accordance with an assessment of its performance measurements and to the extent that changing circumstances so demand.”

The Root Cause of Municipal Failure

The root cause of municipal failure has been determined as being due to (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) 2009: 18):

- Inappropriate national and provincial government policies, practices and onerous requirements;
- Socio-economic conditions prevailing in many municipalities that are not been adequately addressed through macro, micro-economic and industrial policies and plans of the State;
- Political parties that are undermining the integrity and functioning of municipal councils through intra and inter-party conflicts and inappropriate interference in councils and administration;
- A breakdown of values at a societal level that is breeding unethical behaviour, corruption, culture of non-payment, and lack of accountability;
- Communities that are engaging in destructive forms of protest including withholding of payment for local taxes and services;
- Those municipalities that are not geared for delivering basic services and are not responsive and accountable enough to residents; including to failure to involve communities in their own development; and
- Absence of communications resources (people, technology, equipment process-

es) and no accountability for how and when municipalities communicate to communities.

These realities have led to many negative responses towards those municipalities that are struggling with complex social and legacy-based issues, or that are failing with performance or governance issues. The turnaround strategy is therefore a high-level government-wide response to stem this tide. It is an effort to stabilize local government and put municipalities back on a path of responsive and accountable service delivery.

CONCLUSION

The objectives, research questions and problem statement have been described. The challenges faced by the ADM managers in implementing socio-economic strategies and its impact on rural communities have been identified. The researchers of this study are therefore, advocating to the government and her policymakers to urgently adhere to the rural communities needs in order to avoid or reduce the rural-urban migration in the country; embark on proactive implementation of the socio-economic strategies such as LED strategies, that will generate employment opportunities such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and alleviate poverty among people in rural communities in South Africa. In addition, the study has examined the effect of the implementation of socio-economic strategies and their impact on rural communities in ADM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address these entire roots causes, five strategic objectives are identified that will guide the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LG-TAS) interventions and support framework. These are aimed at restoring the confidence of the majority of the people in the municipalities, as the primary expression of the developmental state at a local level.

These are:

- Ensure that municipalities meet the basic service needs of communities
- Build clean, effective, efficient, responsive and accountable local government
- Improve performance and professionalism in municipalities
- Improve national and provincial policy, oversight and support

- Strengthen partnerships between local government, communities and civil society
These objectives have been identified as the key drivers in order to rebuild and improve the basic requirements for a functional, responsive, effective, efficient, and accountable developmental local government.

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