CAPACITY BUILDING AS A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: *In South Africa, local government is responsible for administering various activities in municipalities, towns and cities. The effectiveness of governance at a local level is based on the delivery of essential services and the management of public affairs. Many municipalities in the country face several challenges, such as lack of administrative capacity, shortage of skills and lack of essential service delivery. These challenges have presented an opportunity to improve governance and delivery of services. In order to mitigate these challenges and maximise these opportunities, capacity building is a tool that can be used to develop the ability of local government to effectively deliver essential services by enhancing human capital. In this paper, the concept of local government is introduced in section 2; a background follows this on the state of local governments in South Africa and a summary of the challenges faced and opportunities available for local governments. In section 3, capacity building is introduced, and theoretical frameworks and models for capacity building are discussed. Section 4 of the essay consists of the discussion, which links section 3 and section 2. The identified theories are linked to background on local governance in South Africa, and the section demonstrates how capacity building can be used as an effective tool for local governance. Recommendations and conclusions are documented in section 5 of the essay. This section includes closing remarks on the discussions made and a summary of suggested critical points for consideration by local governments on how to proceed further by using capacity building to strengthen governance at the local level.*

Keywords: South Africa, local government, governance, service delivery, capacity building

Introduction and background

Local governance refers to the administration, decision-making, and management system of public affairs at the local level, including cities, towns, and municipalities. It involves coordinating various activities, services, and resources to address the needs and interests of the local population, such as provision of water for domestic, commercial or industrial areas; hospitals, clinics, ambulances, schools, libraries; provision of housing and transport facilities; construction and maintenance of drains, sewers, bridges, parking; cleansing and

refuse removal disposal; prevention of air, land and water pollution; police services and street lighting (Miller, 2002; Murimoga & Musingafi, 2014).

Critical components of local governance include local authorities, decentralisation, community participation, service delivery, resource allocation, urban planning and development, policy innovation, and accountability and transparency. Local authorities are responsible for developing and implementing policies and regulations and promoting their communities' social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being (Javier & Elazigue, 2011). Local governance often involves decentralising certain powers and responsibilities from national and provincial governments to local authorities to enable specific and responsive decision-making that considers the unique requirements of the local community (Miller, 2002). Active participation by the public in decision-making processes relating to local governance is vital (Lee & Kim, 2014). Public participation can involve consultations, community forums and meetings to gather input from residents (Yang & Callahan, 2005). Local governance is responsible for service delivery by providing essential public services within the local area, such as education, healthcare, waste management, transportation, water supply, and sanitation (Haq, 2013; Haque, Hossain, & Haque, 2023). Local governments manage local resources, including finances, infrastructure, and human resources, to meet the community's needs and promote local development (Reddy, Nemec, & de Vries, 2015). Local governance is vital in urban and regional planning, zoning regulations, land use policies, and infrastructure development to ensure orderly growth and sustainable development (Burby, Deyle, Godschalk, & Olshansky, 2000). Local governments are also responsible for developing innovative policies and initiatives to serve the community (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012). Local governance ensures accountability and transparency in decision-making processes, resource utilisation, and service delivery to foster trust and maintain the public's confidence (Azfar, Kahkonen, Lanyi, Meagher, & Rutherford, 2018).

The structure of local government in South Africa

The Constitution of South Africa outlines the principles and structures of local government in the country. It emphasises the importance of local government in delivering services and fostering community participation in decision-making. The local government in South Africa comprises metropolitan, district and local municipalities, and the local government's election occurs once every five years. The elected council comprises members who approve policies and by-laws for their area. The council's function includes review and approval of the annual municipality budget, conception of development plans and provision of service delivery for those municipal areas (www.cogta.gov.za, 2022). Service delivery, governance, financial management, infrastructure development and fighting corruption are essential focus areas for the local government in South Africa. These areas were chosen to expedite the strategy's implementation to provide better community service through responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local governance (www.gov.za, 2022).

The state of local governance in South Africa: challenges and opportunities

Challenges in local government

According to Mashamaite and Lethoko (2018), poverty, unemployment, lack of services, shortage of skills, lack of administrative capacity, inability to implement policies, and

perishing local economies are some of the challenges facing local municipalities in South Africa. A third of South African municipalities' finances are inoperable (Brand, 2018). Factors that have led to this situation include a lack of financial and management skills, political interference and the failure to appoint individuals to crucial positions. Financial distress in municipalities has led to a backlog in providing housing, electricity, water and sanitation and other essential basic services (Mbanyele, 2021a). The lack of top-performing leaders in municipalities leads to the inability to deliver essential services to communities. Factors which were found to lead to substandard performance by leaders in these positions include lack of support within the organisation, squabbling for authority, excessive regulation, political interference, bureaucracy, inadequate administration system, poor organisational culture, improper use of human resources, poor oversight, and working in silos (Masiya, Davids, & Mangai, 2021). Corruption Watch (2021) reported that municipalities in South Africa have been adversely impacted by corruption over the last decade. This corruption has led to the failure of local governments to provide essential services to communities. The main drivers of corruption in the local government were abuse of power and resources and leaders looking after personal and private interests. Bribery, procurement and employment irregularities, misappropriation of funds, nepotism and disregard of policies were found to be the manifestation of corruption in local government. According to Mbanyele (2021b), corruption has also led to maladministration due to the absence of credible accountability structures. Other factors that lead to delays and compromised service delivery include extended turnaround time and lengthy decision-making processes (Ndevu & Muller, 2018).

Opportunities in local government
Many strides have been taken to ensure the provision of services to all communities since the dawn of democracy. Some milestones that can be celebrated and opportunities that can be explored have been reached. There has also been an increase in access to services such as water, sanitation, electricity, solid waste and roads to historically neglected communities based on racial lines, and local government played an essential role in delivering social welfare to these local communities.
A report by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (2015) has identified several opportunities for improvement in local development. These items are listed below:
1. The need to Improve Governance
2. Improving cooperative governance
3. Improving accountability and participatory governance
4. Increased and improved municipal management
5. Improved delivery of services
There is also an opportunity for provincial and national governments to assist municipalities. Assistance can be done through training, technical support and capacity-building workshops. Provincial and national governments can also monitor the service delivery and financial performance to eliminate misappropriation of funds and resources. Audits can be performed to identify the root cause of challenges experienced by local governments and make recommendations for corrective and preventative actions for challenges facing municipalities. The public must also hold government officials accountable (Brand, 2018).

According to Kesson (2022), the local government must consider the following areas to ensure success. Resolution of energy crisis through the energy transition, improving municipal infrastructure, this can include roads, drainage systems, etc., and commitment for greater permissions for broadband to enable access to opportunities through the digital medium; this can assist with local economies and reduce the unemployment rates, provision of infrastructure for water delivery through the elimination of bureaucracy and using efficient mechanisms and lastly, ensuring stimulation of economic activity, this will create opportunities of employment and generation of fiscal revenues (Kesson, 2022).

Review of literature
Capacity building refers to developing an organisation's ability to deliver efficient services by enhancing the human capital through activities designed to improve or develop the employees' knowledge, skills and attitudes. This process can improve an organisation's capacity and reputation in communities (Merino & de los Ríos Carmenado, 2012). According to (Mufidah, Susanti, Yunus, & Iva, 2022), capacity building can also strengthen management and governance so that organisations achieve their targets (Mufidah et al., 2022). The capacity pyramid is a model by Potter and Brough (2004) that shows how capacity building can be approached by demonstrating the interdependency of levels of capacity building. The model is depicted in Figure 1 below.

The levels of capacity building are tools, skills, staff and infrastructure and structures, systems and roles. Tools require skills to be used effectively. Skills are obtained from staff and infrastructure. Appropriate staff and infrastructure enable the effective use of skills; structures, systems and defined roles are required for an organisation to accommodate appropriate staff and infrastructure. This infrastructure will enable effective use of staff and infrastructure.
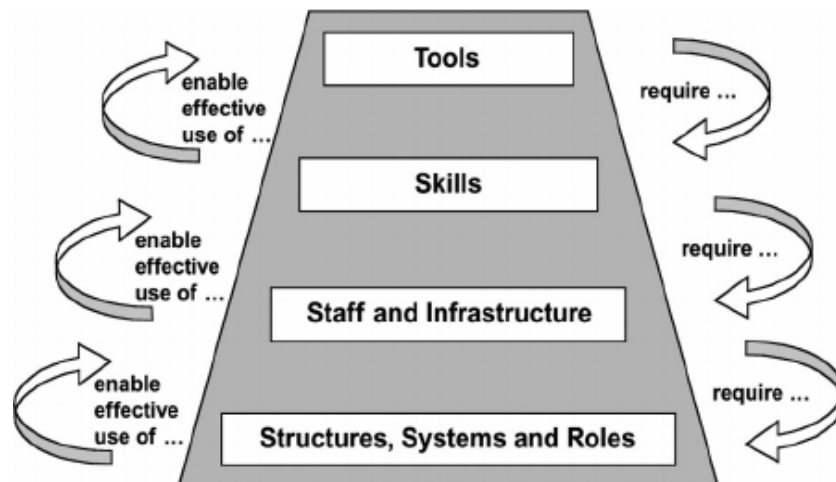
Figure 1: Capacity Pyramid (Potter & Brough, 2004).

According to Potter and Brough (2004), nine capacity-building components exist. Namely, performance capacity, personal capacity, workload capacity, supervisory capacity, facility capacity, support services capacity, systems capacity, structural capacity and role capacity. Kirchhoff (2006) further associated these components with the capacity levels in the capacity pyramid. The association is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Levels of capacity building and associated components (Kirchhoff, 2006).

Level of capacity building	Associated component(s)
Tools	Performance capacity
Skills	Personal capacity
Staff and infrastructure	Workload capacity Supervisory capacity Facility capacity Support services capacity
Structure, system and roles	Systems capacity Structural capacity Role capacity

Performance capacity refers to the resources a skilled individual requires to carry out their duties. These resources include equipment, instruments, etc. Personal capacity refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals. It includes personal motivation, technical skills, interpersonal skills, etc. Workload capacity refers to the availability of skills in an organisation to handle the available workload. Supervisory capacity refers to systems and processes for reporting issues and monitoring compliance and performance. Facility capacity refers to the practicality of the workspace if it is safe and conducive to operating and delivering on the available workload. Support services capacity refers to the availability of external facilities and organisations that can support the operations when required. Systems capacity refers to how information flows within the organisation and documented processes to ensure that work is carried out effectively and efficiently. Structural capacity refers to the presence of committees and decision-making boards to ensure accountability and make decisions on disciplinary matters. Lastly, role capacity defines individual and team responsibilities (Kirchhoff, 2006; Mufidah et al., 2022; Potter & Brough, 2004).

Strategies for capacity building
Strategies for capacity building include capacity assessment and capacity development. Capacity assessment assesses various capacity dimensions within organisations by structured and analytical processes. Capacity development is expanding the capabilities of individuals and teams to ensure efficient delivery of core functions, improved problem-solving skills, and achieving organisational objectives (Enemark & Williamson, 2004). The approach for capacity building will follow the adapted analytical framework in Table 2 below. Capacity assessment will also be assessed using the capacity pyramid model mentioned above.

Table 2: Analytical framework for capacity building (adapted from Enemark and Williamson (2004)

Level	Dimension of capacity assessment	Dimension of capacity development
Systems level	1. Policy, Social and institutional dimension 2. System dimension 3. Legal and regulatory dimension	1. Policy issues 2. Organisational administration vision 3. Organisational administration system 4. Organisational and legal principles

Organisational level	1. Organisational culture 2. Managerial and resource issues 3. Institutional issues and processes	1. Organisational infrastructure
Individual level	1. Professional competence 2. Human resources needs 3. Educational resources	1. Educational programs 2. Training programs 3. Education and research centre

This model presents the three levels of capacity building, systems, organisational and individual, to demonstrate the capacity assessment and development dimensions for consideration. The system-level dimensions are concerned with processes that ensure an organisation is effective, efficient and sustainable. The organisational level dimensions are concerned with system management to ensure optimal output. The individual-level dimensions focus on developing staff skills to manage and operate the systems within the organisation. As such, capacity building can be directed at these levels (Enemark & Williamson, 2004).

Dimensions of capacity at the systems level
This level's capacity assessment and development considers factors such as policies, systems, legal and regulatory frameworks and socio-economic context. Review of policies, the organisation's vision and administration and assessment of legal principles can be used as tools for capacity building at this level.

Dimensions of capacity at the organisational level
At an organisational level, capacity assessment considers the Organisational culture, Managerial and resource issues and Institutional issues and processes. Capacity development at this level includes adjusting the existing institutional infrastructure, which can be done by clarifying roles and responsibilities and lines of reporting.

Dimensions of capacity at the individual level
This level considers essential skills an individual requires to perform effectively and efficiently. Individual skills can be assessed by assessing professional and technical competencies, human resources, and educational gaps. Educational programs, training programs, the establishment of education, and research centres can be used as tools to build the capacity of individuals.

Discussions
It is essential to acknowledge that local government is necessary. It is an entity established to be led by community members to serve the communities they come from. That is important because only community members who live in these municipalities know the challenges, gaps, and opportunities they're facing. Provincial and National governments are not within reach of communities, tiny rural communities in remote areas. That is the essence of local government, a community-accessible decision-making part of government.
Therefore, when you have such a component of government, it must work very well. It must deliver on its mandate to serve communities. Proper service delivery, resource

allocation, urban planning and development, policy innovation, and social, economic, and environmental sustainability require the appointment of local authorities who are skilled, qualified and experienced to champion these aspects of local governance. There are also other skills, such as accountability, responsibility, and integrity, which are personal attributes of ethical leaders, which are required to ensure individuals appointed to decision-making positions are well equipped to make the right decisions, to serve the community and not themselves.

Looking at South Africa now, there are different spectrum of local governments. Local governments such as The Cape Agulhas Local Municipality, the Bergrivier Local Municipality and Saldanha Bay Local Municipality are regarded as the top-performing municipalities in the country based on administration, planning and monitoring, and service delivery. Whereas in municipalities such as Msinga Local Municipality, Ingquza Hill Local Municipality and Tokologo Local Municipality, where there is poor planning, lack of essential services and mismanagement of resources has led to unemployment and higher poverty levels, these are regarded as poor-performing municipalities (Corruption Watch, 2022; www.gga.org, 2021).

In properly governed municipalities, things work. There is visible policing, roads are maintained, waste is collected, water is constantly running, there are employment opportunities, schools are correctly running, and hospitals are equipped to cater to the communities. The absence of these services in poorly run local governments leads to high levels of crime; because of unemployment and lack of policing, there are often riots and protests, which are mainly for service delivery. This absence of services affects the operation of schools and businesses, often leading to the demolition of public and private infrastructure. Inflicting more damage to an already damaged community. It is, therefore, essential to reflect on the difference between top and poor-performing local governments.

In a democratic country like South Africa, political parties are elected during local elections every five years, and the party with the majority votes from the community comes into the municipality's governance. The elected council and its members become responsible for those municipalities' policies, budgets and developmental plans. Some mayors and councillors are at the forefront of the execution of plans and ensuring service delivery. Municipal and district managers are also significant critical players in the performance of local governments.

The structures are there. It is who is appointed and how they are appointed that is often the difference between good and bad governance in municipalities. This type of leadership is essential. However, governance is a political function, and the political party that governs by obtaining majority votes during elections is the kingmaker and decides who to appoint to leadership positions. There is a concept of cadre deployment: appointing party patriots to key leadership positions. There are many reasons for that; it could be to avoid sabotage if they employ an individual affiliated with another party or appoint someone who will push the party's political agenda in that position. Both reasons are good enough; the problem is when the agenda is to loot state funds, self-enrichment, or have a mascot serving the selfish interests of the people who appointed them.

Cadre deployment is also dangerous because there is no assessment of an individual's credentials. Appointments are not based on merit but rather on loyalty. The bottom line is that ethical and competent leadership is critical to govern municipalities properly. Since we cannot change how and whom political parties choose to appoint, I think that capacity

building is a tool that can be used to ensure good governance despite the use of cadre deployment.

Capacity building can be used to develop the knowledge and skills of individuals appointed to key positions in local government. The council in local government can adopt the capacity pyramid model discussed in section 3 above to strengthen management and governance in municipalities. Firstly, elected parties need to reflect on their structures and systems to ensure that processes are documented, such as processes for budgets, appointments, measuring performance, etc. Committees must be established to ensure these processes are adhered to and take disciplinary actions against members who do not follow them.

The second step would be identifying areas requiring urgent attention in their municipalities. It could be eradicating crime, creating job opportunities or expediting the delivery of essential services. Prioritising these tasks can assist them in identifying how to allocate resources. Lastly, appointing leaders to drive the implementation of their strategy. At this point, the parties need to consider individuals' knowledge, skills, experience, and attitudes and ensure that sufficient resources are required for that individual to carry out their duties successfully.

To demonstrate a practical example of how good governance can be used for effective local governance using Porter's capacity pyramid model and the analytical framework for capacity building, I will look at Alfred Nzo district municipality as a case study. In this municipality, approximately 47% of the people are unemployed, 16% have access to running household water, and there are several corruption and fraud cases, leading to a loss of hundreds of millions of state funds (Du Plessis, 2016; Dayimani, 2022; Onlinetenders.co.za, 2021).

The vision must be clear for the municipalities on a systems level: Where does the leadership endeavour to take the municipality? Their policies must be clear and guide how to achieve the vision, and the municipality's administration must comply with the policies to ensure the execution of the vision. Given the state of the Alfred Nzo district municipality, the vision of the local government could be to transform the municipality into a performing one. The critical policy issues would address are corruption, essential services and creating economic opportunities.

Once this has been outlined in the vision and policies, the organisation level is essential for ensuring implementation. There must be an assessment of institutional processes that may hinder job creation and delivery of essential services. The managerial resources must be assessed to determine if there are enough resources to support the implementation of the roles. Lastly, the organisational culture, if there is a culture of urgency, efficiency or complacency and address that. On an individual level, the people who are employed, what are their professional competencies? Educational and training programs can address any skills gaps. Accountants can do competency assessments to ensure no miscounting of state funds, etc.

Lastly, appointed individuals must have the right tools to conduct their jobs. Appropriate individuals with the right skills must be appointed, and there must be continuous training and competency assessments. The environment in which these individuals work must also enable them to work well. This can be achieved by addressing defined processes, support from managers and a collaborative organisational culture. The local government's policies must speak to the desired outcome the organisation seeks to obtain.

Recommendations and conclusions

In essence, capacity building requires an organisation's holistic reflection and introspection to identify its shortcomings and develop strategies to improve and strengthen the resources, infrastructure and policies. This exercise will ensure effective and efficient output delivery. Capacity building can be exercised at all levels, from the men on the ground to the decision-makers at the top. It is also beyond the people but looks at the resources and infrastructure. Due to the nature of leadership and its influence on the actions and behaviours of followers, it is crucial that leaders set a standard of proper conduct. Leadership in an organisation is vital because it can jeopardise the organisation's reputation and impact the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation. Therefore, the capacity building of leaders in critical positions can lead to effective local governance by ensuring leaders have the appropriate tools, skills, infrastructure and systems to execute their tasks.

Recommendations to local government

Political parties should implement a meritocracy policy when deploying individuals to key positions in local government. The candidate's capacity must be assessed to see if they have the right skills, qualifications and experience to do the job. Capacity development can be used to support appointed individuals to ensure they address any skills shortcomings identified.

Local governments must also ensure that the infrastructure and resources provided to appointed leaders are sufficient. There is no use appointing technically gifted individuals who cannot do their tasks because of a lack of resources and infrastructure.

Lastly, policies must be clear, and they must be specific to the challenges that are facing the municipalities in which they govern.

Local government must invest in continuous training and competency assessments for employees to ensure everyone has the appropriate skills and abilities to perform their duties.

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