

Analysing the Effectiveness of a Water Services Authority: The Case of Modimolle-Mookgopong Local Municipality

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This study analyses the effectiveness of a Water Services Authority (WSA) in delivering its water supply mandate. Based on an investigation of the phenomenon of water supply, the study employed a qualitative design to understand the context of how effective the Modimolle-Mookgophong Local Municipality (MMLM) is in delivering water to its community members. Using primary and secondary literature, it was established that MMLM is faced with several service delivery challenges related to delivering water. Although the local government has the primary constitutional obligation to deliver basic services such as water provisioning, the national and provincial government must play a significant role in supporting the municipalities such as MMLM to fulfill these obligations. This is often most clearly demonstrated in the management of WSAs. Many WSAs struggle to fulfill their service delivery obligations. However, according to the study findings, most of the challenges that the MMLM is facing are not linked to the water service authority per se, rather they are more community based and require interventions at a community level. Challenges such as theft, vandalism, pollution, population growth, and illegal connections. It appears there is a need for community mobilisation programmes in MMLM to deal with such problems that are not directly linked to the water service authority.

Keywords: Local government, Services, Water supply, Water service management, Effectiveness.

Introduction

Provisioning of adequate basic services is the responsibility of the Local Government according to Schedule B of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996. Water supply services in particular are managed by dedicated institutions and trained individuals with the appropriate knowledge on how to take care also of water-related infrastructure. In most societies, this arrangement ensures the effective and constant supply of water services to sections of society that need it. The MMLM is a Local Municipality (Category B) in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, and like many other similar post-apartheid institutions is faced with several challenges concerning service delivery. One such challenge is the supply of safe and potable water to cater to the needs of people and institutions under its

jurisdiction, which is a typical challenge experienced among other similar municipalities in modern South Africa (Edokpayi, Rogawski, Kahler, Hill, Reynolds, Nyathi & Dillingham, 2018:159). It is against this background that this chapter analyses the Water Services Authority in MMLM. The article thus focuses on MMLM with the intent to analyse the effectiveness of WSAs.

A qualitative approach was employed in the research study. This approach was selected due to its capacity to give the possibility to acquire data that can be used to observe changes in performance levels in the provision of basic services for various sectors of South African municipalities. The study employed desktop research to obtain answers to research questions and objectives. Desktop research, also known as secondary research or library study, is obtaining information from both published and unpublished sources, such as pertinent books, articles, archive material, and significant use of the internet. According to Delaney Woods and Associates (2005:18), desktop research has various advantages since it is less expensive than original research. It makes use of already done research, saves time and money, and may be presented in either electronic or hard copy form. Official documentation was used to collect data through an existing literature review. Secondary data was collected through journal articles, academic books, government legislation, and government circulars from MMLM, internet sources, and other recent materials such as newspaper articles and other related communication. The recurrent themes emanating from these stated sources were then used in making informed conclusive remarks toward relevant recommendations.

An Overview of MMLM

As the branch of government closest to the people, local government (LG) is recognised as the heart of service delivery (Jacobs, 2019:10). The focus of the local government has increasingly switched to the crucial concerns of leadership and governance to enhance the delivery of public services (Maserumule, 2011). According to Phago (2013:693), who supports this claim, the ultimate objective of local government is to deliver essential public services and commodities to the community fairly and competently. The local government fulfills this administrative function by providing goods and services, as well as by representing and participating residents in identifying particular local public needs and ways in which these local requirements might be satisfied. Equally, the MMLM is a duly authorised WSA and has the responsibility to partake in all planning and implementation of its mandate to guarantee that basic water services are rendered to its surrounding communities (MMLM, 2019/2020).

According to Chapter 7 section 155 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, municipalities in South Africa are divided into three categories:

- (a) Category A: a municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area.

- (b) Category B: a municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a category C municipality within whose area it falls.
- (c) Category C: a municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality.

Local municipalities share municipal executive and legislative authority with a district municipality in whose area they are located, and metropolitan municipalities have exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in their area.

MMLM is a category B municipality located in the province of Limpopo. MMLM was created and formally declared by section 12 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998, titled: Notice in respect of s512. Disestablishment of Existing Municipalities and Establishment of New Municipalities, issued by a member of the Executive Council on July 22, 2016. With a population of 110 000 people and an area of 10 497 square kilometres, the Municipality makes up 20.2% of the district's total population. After the merger, the Municipality continued to be a grade 3 municipality (MMLM IDP, 2019/2020). The Waterberg District Municipality, which is part of the province of Limpopo, is where MMLM is situated. According to Statistics South Africa's 2016 community survey, 28 977 people were living in MMLM and 107 699 people overall in the Waterberg District Municipality. There are 642 households without access to piped water, compared to 17 265 families having access to water and 6 266 households with piped water inside their homes. In addition, the water backlog is 4.7% amounting to 930 households needing water connections (MMLM IDP, 2019/2020). Water access must be guaranteed in both urban and rural areas. Figure 1 on the next page shows a map displaying the study's focus area.

Water Service Management in South Africa

Access to water is a fundamental human right and is necessary for the advancement of humanity. However, most water utilities in developing countries, including South Africa, continue to have difficulties in providing water services. Thompson and Tapela (2019:43) claim that access to water is defined as a human right to guarantee access to clean water, which might significantly lessen the burden of disease on the environment and prevent the privatisation of water. Nevertheless, not everyone has access to water, and climate change is changing weather and rainfall patterns globally, leading to shortages that will both exacerbate water scarcity and jeopardise the quality of the current water supply. Everyone has the right to sufficient, safe, easily accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic usage (Majuru, Jagals & Hunter, 2012:479).

Given the importance of water for reducing poverty and promoting human health, managing water services becomes crucial for society. Corcoran (2010:18) claims that a wide range of stakeholders, as well as an inclusive policy designer and regulator, are

Figure 1: Municipal Demarcation



Source: Municipal Demarcation Board (MBD), 2021, MBD Annual Report, 2021: Municipal boundary redetermination process

involved in South Africa's water provision and management system. The South African Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is in charge of national and international resource planning, as well as the administration of all institutions working in the water sector. Additionally, it sells raw water to 15 bulk water service providers (WSPs) or water boards across the country (van Rooyen, 2017). South Africans can get water from a variety of places. Meters measure the amount of water that is delivered per household per litre in rural regions where piped water systems, also known as reticulated systems, have been installed (Jacobsen, Webster & Vairavamoothy, 2013:16). The authors go on to say that some households have water pipes running inside, while others simply have a single pipe connection leading to their yards. Historically, most rural regions relied only on communal standpipes to offer water services to the entire village, which resulted in an inadequate water supply for rural areas. The situation has not much improved, since certain residents of most rural areas still do not have access to water services at their particular homesteads (StatsSA, 2018).

Water Service Delivery Challenges in MMLM

Water services management and related delivery are widespread issues in South African municipalities. Local or category B2 municipalities are often those in South Africa (SA)