

Reconfiguring local government institutions in South Africa to facilitate successful service delivery: Management by Projects on a strategic level

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Abstract

Twenty one years of transformation account for major victories in the South African Local Government sphere. Such conquests are recognised as a de-racialised local government, consolidated municipal jurisdictions, a deeply embedded developmental philosophy and a renewed inter-governmental fiscal system that enables financial resources directly to the municipal level of government. Despite these noteworthy achievements, insurgent South African citizens engage in violent protests against: continued “municipal ineffectiveness in service delivery; poor responsiveness of municipalities to citizen’s grievances, and a conspicuous consumption entailed by a culture of self-enrichment on the part of councillors and staff.” (Atkinson, 2007: 53).

This article substantiates data gathered from a comprehensive literature research that depicts the normative, strategic disposition of local government institutions that are positioned for successful service delivery. The normative data was measured against data accumulated during an empirical research in a South African local government institution. A comparative analysis was conducted to ascertain the strategic character of such an institution against the following aspects: the strategic drivers in local government; strategic goals and objectives; an institutional structure; a Programme Management Unit (PMU); governance, leadership, management and capacity; institutional systems and processes; performance reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; and Critical Success Factors (CSF’s). An 11-item questionnaire directed a focus group session and semi-structured interviews that were conducted amongst senior management, performing on a strategic administrative and management level, in a local government institution. Considering whether the local government institution was configured to deliver effective, efficient and economic services to its community, the findings demonstrated that there is a disconnect between the structure of the institution, strategic drivers, programmes and projects which result in inferior service delivery patterns.

Key words: Local government institutions; service delivery; Management by Projects; strategic level.

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Introduction

“We should be deeply concerned about the political and governmental environment (sic.) in which the decisions are taken that affect our daily lives. This is nowhere more true than in municipalities, which form the level of government at which large numbers of essential services are delivered to the public.” (Van der Waldt, 2007:x)

Incited by Van der Waldt (2007:x), Atkinson (2007: 53) and many other scholars such as Powell, O'Donovan & De Visser (nd.), and citizen's disquieted apprehension on the state of local government in South Africa, this research and subsequent article seeks to establish a solution to inept service delivery by analysing the manner in which a local government institution is configured on a strategic level. This article therefore finds effect within the context of the South African Local Government sphere.

The constitutional mandate and legislative responsibility bestowed upon government officials, and more so local government officials, as they find themselves nearest to the citizens and their needs, clearly outline the boundaries and expectations required from such officials (RSA, 1996: Chapters 7, 10). Contrary to the aforementioned lucid directive, the Auditor-General of South Africa sketched an unambiguous picture on the state of the local government in South Africa by means of its Consolidated General Report on the audit outcomes of local government (RSA, 2012:online). Even though a salute may be offered to one hundred and thirty eight auditees, (41%), that received a financially unqualified opinion with findings from the Auditor-General, the attention-grabbing concern lies in the fact that fifty-nine auditees, eighteen per cent of the municipalities in South Africa, displayed an inability to provide the required evidence that would enable the auditors to perform tests to satisfy themselves in the fair presentation of the financial statements.” (RSA, 2012: online).

Beyond the claims of municipal ineffectiveness, poor responsiveness to citizen's grievances, a culture of self-enrichment and financial mismanagement, which are all clear indications of symptomatic local government institutional ails, the question remains begging, does the current structure of local government institutions enable local government officials to achieve the institutional strategy and objectives successfully?

Chandler's (1962), illustrious theory of "structure follows strategy", once again proves indispensable for consideration, as it finds denotation in the notion that the restructuring of an institution flows from a strategic shift, driven by new technologies and transformed environments. Deliberating upon Chandler's (1962) theory in the context of local government institutions, it becomes evident that a gargantuan strategic shift took place during the transitional period in South Africa when this nation transformed from an authoritarian, *apartheid* driven strategy to an inclusive, democratic developmental form of state in which public institutions began to embrace a developmental philosophy. Nel (2001: 606) advised that "efficient and effective implementation of development programmes requires local authorities to undertake a series of interrelated and interdependent development projects". Van der Waldt (2007: 250) added that: "[T]eam work and a project and programme based approach is critical in redirecting the public service towards a new paradigm of service excellence. Therefore, municipalities can apply management by projects as a significant technique to improve the attainment of developmental programmes with an optimal utilisation of scarce public resources for service delivery improvements." (Van der Waldt, 2007: 250). Van der Waldt (2009: 36) furthermore advised that a sustained and successful connection between policy implementation, programme and project management is meant to create a value chain for service delivery by using scarce resources in an effective, efficient and economic manner.

A cogent point for deliberation is the concept of management by projects which is a management strategy that directs project-oriented institutions that conduct small, large and complex, as well as internal and external projects (Gareis, 1991: 71). Institutions apply management by projects as a management strategy to deal with 21st century, service delivery dynamics and challenges (Gareis, 1991: 71). Management by projects is furthermore supported by a suitable, supportive structure and culture in a project-oriented institution (Gareis, 1991: 71). The entire institution is therefore engaged at all levels in the implementation of strategies through to programmes and projects (Van der Waldt, 2007:

253). In line with the above assertions, management by projects is defined as “the use of projects by institutions to implement objectives and policy programmes of institutions” (Van der Waldt, 2009: 36). The successful implementation of management by projects, at municipal level, may be aided by introducing certain basic features in the structure of the institution at strategic, tactical and operational levels. For the purposes of this article, attention is paid only to the strategic level of the institution.

Background and Literature Review

In search of data that would offer a strategic frame of reference to the topic under discussion, literature revealed the following elements for consideration in the normative position of a public sector institution, tasked to render basic services within the volatile and developing local government sphere of South Africa that is structured to support management by projects.

Strategic drivers in local government

The functioning of any government department may never be observed, dislodged from legislative and policy directives. Legislation and policy directives that are fundamental to include in this research and that are simultaneously observed as the strategic drivers of local government institutions in South Africa are outlined as follows:

- the Millennium Development Goals, (UN, 2000);
- the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, (RSA, 1996);
- the National Development Plan: Vision for 2030 (RSA, 2011);
- the White Paper on Local Government, 1998 (RSA, 1998a);
- the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003, (RSA, 2003);
- the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000);
- the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Programme, 2007, (RSA, 2007);
- the Five Year Local Government Strategic Agenda/Priorities, 2006, (RSA, 2006).

Strategic goals and objectives

Knipe, Van der Waldt, Van Niekerk, Burger and Nell (2002: 4) define strategy as “the process whereby certain policies, strategies and resources are used to achieve the main

objectives of the institution.” This entails a process to ensure that the most suitable plan is put in place to achieve institutional objectives, despite changing environments. Morris and Pinto (2007: 116) define a strategy as “the institution’s response to external or internal pressure to change”. Morris and Pinto (2007: 116), in support of earlier research conducted by Mintzberg and Waters (1985: 257), distinguished deliberate and emergent poles as two ends of a continuum within which real world strategies can be located. In the continuum of strategy formulation, where the opposite poles are deliberate and emergent, Mintzberg and Waters (1985: 257-269) outlined different types of strategies that either take a format of a deliberate, emergent strategy, or a combination of the two, depending on what the institution wishes to achieve. Subsequently, some of the different types of strategies are expounded below:

- Planned strategy occurs when intentions are properly formulated and followed by planning, budgets and schedules which will help realise the implementation of the institutional strategy (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985:257-261). This type of strategy is commonly used in local government institutions by implementing the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) projects and other service delivery initiatives that are prioritised in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP). This is done through consultative meetings with communities and the allocation of resources by the municipal council (RSA, 2000).
- Ideological strategy is when individuals have a common vision with which they identify and which they pursue as an ideology (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985: 262). An example of such strategies are mainly found in the formulation of policies for political parties, responding to a need in the external environment and which ultimately find their expression in the political party’s manifesto during election campaigning (ANC, 2007: 17).
- Umbrella strategies are found where members in an institution are allowed to operate or behave according to certain general guidelines and within clear boundaries (Mintzberg & Waters 1985: 263).
- Process strategy occurs when the leadership in an institution indirectly influences the process of strategy-making while allowing individuals to decide the content of the strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985: 262).
- Unconnected strategy is found where sub-units in an institution are given the liberty of pursuing their strategies, which are independent of other units in the same institution (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985: 265).

- Consensus strategy occurs when members in an institution discuss alternative methods and agree on the best possible method that will yield the intended results (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985: 267).
- Imposed strategy is found where the external environment, or a person with great influence, can impose a strategy upon the institution by restricting the available options (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985: 268).

Morris and Pinto (2007: 66) argue that strategic management has two interrelated elements namely: strategic planning and strategic implementation. In line with this view, Gray and Larson (2006: 24), and Aubrey, Hobbs and Thuillier (2007: 329) argue that the main reason why strategies fail in many institutions is the lack of integration between strategy formulation and implementation and consequently between strategy, programmes and projects. The National School of Government, (2009:8) suggests the following activities related to a strategic management process: strategy formulation; strategy implementation and strategy evaluation. This process entails scanning both the external and internal environment of the institution, setting long-range goals and objectives, analysing and formulating strategies, and implementing strategies through programmes and projects.

Building on the strategic management process, outlined above by Gray and Larson (2006: 24) as well as Knipe et al. (2002: 43), a local government institution is required to develop strategic objectives in line with the strategic directives, outlined in documents such as the Millennium Development Goals; the Constitution, 1996; the National Development Plan; and the Five Year Local Government Strategic Agenda/Priorities. The effective implementation of strategic objectives within a local government institution requires the creation of a suitable structure that enables management by projects throughout the institution. The effective implementation of institutional strategic objectives occurs when such objectives are translated into workable programmes.

Public institution programmes

A programme can be observed as framework for a grouping of existing projects (McElroy, 1996: 328; Pellegrinelli, 1997: 141), or “a collection of change actions (projects and operational activities) (Morris & Pinto, 2007: 118); or “a group of projects, managed in a coordinated manner (PMBOK, 2000: 6); or “the institutional capabilities implemented through a series of interrelated projects (Williams & Parr, 2006: 31). A programme therefore

in the context of the South African government is defined as “a set or group of related projects, which collectively deliver on a strategic objective of a department or government” (RSA, 2010c: 23). A shared element in the aforementioned definitions of a programme is that it includes a group of projects with a common objective and the management of which provides synergy and greater benefits than what individual projects would offer.

Lycett, Rassau and Danson (2004: 289) point out that a programme is a way of closing the gap between project delivery and institutional strategy. Programmes are furthermore demarcated or configured into portfolio, goal-oriented or heartbeat programmes on the basis of their advantages, range and diversity as explained below (Pellegrinelli, 1997: 142):

- *Conceptualisation of a portfolio programme*

A Portfolio programme is the grouping of projects which have a common theme such as physical resources, technology or human resources, but which are relatively independent from one another (Pellegrinelli, 1997: 143). A portfolio programme is considered for its effective and efficient use of resources and skills (Pellegrinelli, 1997: 143). The following National Development Plan (NDP) priorities can be classified as portfolio programmes: human settlements; improving education; innovation and training; and promoting health (RSA, 2011: 233-294).

- *Conceptualisation of a Goal-oriented programme*

A goal-oriented programme entails the grouping of projects to manage a situation of uncertainty and gathering information to achieve an objective or goal. It can also be used in a situation where the final outcome is unknown or the process of implementation is not known beforehand (Pellegrinelli, 1997: 143). An example of a goal-oriented programme, implemented by the South African government to address specific goals is noted as e.g. the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) Programme that was pioneered in 1996 to increase growth and stimulate job creation (Leibbrandt, Van der Berg & Bhorat 2001: 16; Adato, Carter & May, 2006: 227; Berk, 2007: online).

- *Conceptualising a heartbeat programme*

Heartbeat programmes are those programmes that allow for the regular and gradual improvement of existing systems, processes and infrastructure in order to ensure a functional

public service institution (Pellegrinelli, 1997: 143-144). Examples of a heartbeat programme in the context of South Africa are the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS), (RSA, 1995), the *Batho Pele* document (RSA, 1997), and the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Programme (MIG), (RSA, 2007). In accordance with the above description of a heartbeat programme the MIG, for example, is used to expand service delivery to poor households and to alleviate poverty in the local government sphere, guided by the Division of Revenue Act (DoRA), (CoGTA, 2007: 31). The next section will explain the critical role of a local government institutional structure that grounds management by projects in a public service institution.

A local government institutional structure that grounds management by projects

Institutional structures suggested by authors of project management are: functional institutional structure, project type institutional structure or institution by projects, and lastly a matrix institution (Clements & Gido, 2006: 390; Aubrey, Hobbs & Thuillier, 2007: 330). The matrix institutional structure can be subdivided further into a weak, balanced or strong matrix structure depending on the balance of influence between functional and project-type institutional structures (Clements & Gido, 2006: 390; Aubrey, Hobbs & Thuillier, 2007: 330). The following section will outline the different types of institutional structures:

- *A Functional Institutional Structure*

A functional institutional structure consists of individuals with the same skills or expertise, who are located in the same functional component within the same institution such as engineers, marketers, manufacturers and those responsible for procurement (Clements & Gido, 2006: 391). Programme and project management tasks are therefore performed and managed within the normal hierarchy of an institution (Gray & Larson, 2006: 56). Meredith and Mantel (2010: 191) argue that in a functional institution, projects can be allocated to a functional component that will ensure that the project is delivered. However, certain functions and roles within the project will be allocated to different components that have relevant skills and expertise to complete the project successfully (Gray & Larson, 2006: 56). The project manager has authority over the project but the technical and administrative authority over the human resources, assigned to the project will always remain with the functional manager (Clements & Gido, 2006: 393). A functional institutional structure in government will exclude a Project Management Unit (PMU) that is responsible for all

projects in the institution. Instead, projects are carried out as part of the normal functional structure (Gray and Larson, 2006: 56).

Meredith and Mantel (2010: 191-192) argue that the functional institution allows for flexibility in the use of staff and expertise in different projects as well as knowledge and experience. The client or customer in a functional institution is not the primary focal point, seeing that the components have to focus on their functional duties as well (Kerzner, 2003: 93; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 193). This is a significant aspect for consideration as the primary focal point in government is citizens.

- *The Project-type Institutional Structure*

Project-type institutional structures are also called Project Based Institutions (PBO) or management or managing by projects as stated by Aubrey, Hobbs and Thuillier (2007: 330). According to Hobday (2000: 874), a PBO is “one in which the project is the primary unit for production, innovation and competition”. Projects are managed parallel and are therefore conducted as a mini-institution (Clements & Gido, 2006: 393). In a project-based institutional structure, each component is assigned a programme manager who maintains overall authority of the project. This function include allocation of resources, as well as reporting and communication with members of the project (Hobday, 2000: 875; Kerzner, 2003: 99; Gray & Larson, 2006: 60; Meredith & Mantel. 2010: 194).

In some instances the interface between the parent institution and the project team may vary in administrative and financial control over the project (Gray & Larson, 2006: 60). The main disadvantage of project-based institutional structures is that it is costly to maintain. The reason is that these structures do not allow sharing of officials and their expertise between a number of projects, which can lead to duplication of functions (Kerzner, 2003: 101; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 194). According to the National School of Government Programme and Project Management Research Guide (RSA, 2010c: 36), project-type institutional structures in government will consist of a dedicated PMU that will have access to resources and whose project manager will have authority over the project. Such a structure will consist of functional units or directorates that provide support to different programmes and projects, concurrently (RSA, 2010c: 36).

- *The Matrix Institutional Structure*

Gray and Larson (2006: 63) describe a matrix institutional structure as “a hybrid institutional form in which a horizontal project management structure is overlaid on the normal functional hierarchy”. The purpose of introducing a matrix structure is to combine and maximise the advantages of both the pure functional structure and the PBO structure (Kerzner, 2003: 102; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 196; PMBOK Guide, 2010: 29). A matrix structure can be subdivided into three types that differ in the degree of the project manager’s authority over resources and project activities (Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 196; PMBOK Guide, 2010: 29). According to Gray and Larson (2006: 56), the matrix institutional structure can be further divided into the following forms: weak, balanced and strong. These types of matrix structures are discussed below to explain their unique features and differences.

- Weak matrix structure

The weak matrix structure resembles a functional institutional structure (PMBOK Guide, 2010: 29), except that a project manager is in place to coordinate the activities of a project while the functional managers are responsible for their portion of the project (Tomczyk, 2005: 56; Gray & Larson, 2006: 65; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 196; PMBOK Guide, 2010: 29). In a weak matrix structure, functional managers have more authority over resources and the pace at which the project is completed than what the project managers have (Tomczyk, 2005: 56; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 196).

- Balanced matrix structure

In a balanced matrix structure, the project manager sets schedules and plans for the project and determines and monitors progress (Gray & Larson, 2006: 65-66; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 197). The functional managers’ concern is to carry out their project activities according to schedules provided by the project manager (Tomczyk, 2005: 56). The technical and operational decisions of the project are agreed upon by the project and functional managers (Gray & Larson, 2006: 65-66; and Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 197).

- Strong matrix structure

The strong matrix structure resembles a project team within a functional setting, where the project managers make the overall technical and operational decisions on the project. This

implies that functional managers will have control over their human resources (Gray & Larson, 2006: 65-66; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 197; PMBOK Guide, 2010: 29).

In view of the institutional structures outlined above, the question remains as to how public institutions should succeed in using project management as a means to implement public institutional strategy and improve services to communities? Or: Which type of institutional structure will be most appropriate to be used by public institutions to employ management by projects for service delivery improvements?

Andersen and Jessen (2003: 457) and Van der Waldt (2009: 43) maintain that project-based structures must be introduced gradually in institutions in order for it to be successful. Gareis and Huemann (2000: 712) suggest the inclusion of the following elements as pivotal in a project-based institutions: “institutional structure (temporary and permanent); culture (project management), and strategy (management by projects)”.

Building on the assertions made by Gareis and Huemann (2000: 712), Andersen and Jessen (2003: 457), Knodel (2004: 49), Modig (2007: 807-814), as well as Van der Waldt (2009: 39), the success of project management in institutions would require specialised skills and competencies by project leaders to ensure improvements in service delivery. The next subsection, therefore, investigate a project governance structure, recognised as the Project Management Unit (PMU) that aid the successful application of the basis theory management by projects.

Project Management Unit (PMU)

The establishment of a dedicated Project Support Office (PSO) is regarded as a strategic directive that should support management by projects in public service institutions (Van der Waldt, 2007: 255); and (CoGTA, 2007). The successful application and implementation of management by projects would require public institutions to create the correct platforms, structures and systems to support such an endeavour (Van der Waldt, 2009a: 36). According to Thiry and Deguire (2007: 654), a Project Management Office (PMO) ensures that projects are successful delivered in time, within an allocated budget and according to clearly stipulated quality requirements. The PSO or PSO is perceived as a central structure that offers expertise, skills and support to all projects managed by different departments and directorates in a public service institution (Aubrey, Hobbs & Thuillier, 2007: 329).

Thiry and Deguire (2007: 654) caution that PSO's/PMO's or PMU's role should not only be limited to "monitoring, reporting, standardising processes and procedures" as far as management by projects is concerned, instead PSOs, PMOs or PMU's should be seen as a link between institutional strategy, programmes and projects, to which extent the PSO's, PMO's or PMU's become governance structures that supports public institutional management in the strategic management of management by projects. Van der Waldt (2009: 36) adds that the following structures would create interfaces between public institutional structures, programmes and projects with dedicated Steering Committees, Project Directors, Project Sponsors and Project Coordinators. It can be deduced that the above structures, as outlined by Thiry and Deguire (2007: 654) as well as Van der Waldt (2009: 36), are necessary mechanisms that supports efficient and effective management by projects at local municipal level. The next sub-section, investigates governance, leadership, management and capacity that aid the successful application of the basis theory management by projects.

Governance, leadership, management and capacity

Governance, leadership, management and capacity are significant elements for consideration in the configuration of a public institution's successful achievement of strategic objectives as elaborated upon below.

- *Governance*

Governance is a contemporary concept used in the public service to ensure that the needs of clients, customers, citizens and stakeholders are met by means of "accountability, transparency and measuring performance in the implementation of policies" (Crawford & Helm, 2009: 73). Governance can be defined on many levels, e.g. globally (United Nations, Institution for Economic Co-operation and Development), regionally (African Union) and locally (South Africa), as well as a combination of private and public governance (Klakegg *et al.*, 2008: S27). In the sub-Saharan African countries, governance is measured by means of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, sponsored by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation with the aim of advocating good governance in Africa (Farrington, 2009: 251; McFerson, 2009: 261; Delapalme, 2011: 1).

The Ibrahim Index assesses and analyses governance by focussing on Basic Categories (BC) (Farrington, 2009: 251; McFerson, 2009: 262; Delapalme, 2011: 2) which can be compared

with the features of governance mentioned by other scholars of governance and as indicated in **Figure 1.1** below.



Figure 1.1: Comparison of the features of governance

(Source: Klakegg et al., 2008: 29; Farrington, 2009: 251; McFerson, 2009: 262; and Crawford and Helm, 2009: 73).

According to the scholars cited in **Figure 1.1**, a state that espouses good governance should show the following attributes: “accountability, transparency, responsibility, have rules and laws that embrace human rights, systems, tools and processes, and institutional structures that encourages participation of citizens” (Klakegg et al., 2008: 29; Farrington, 2009: 251; McFerson, 2009: 262; Crawford & Helm, 2009: 73; Delapalme, 2011: 2; Aliza et al., 2011: 1932;). In terms of these features, governance can be defined as “the formal and informal arrangements that determine how public decisions are made and how public actions are carried out, from the perspective of maintaining a country’s constitutional values in the face of changing problems, actors and environments” (Klakegg et al., 2008: S28). Aliza et al. (2011: 1930) defines governance as “a non-hierarchical form of steering, where state and non-state actors participate in the formulation and implementation of public policy”. The definition of governance by Aliza et al. (2011: 1930) emphasises an interaction between the government and its citizens in the formulation and implementation of policies, which means that concepts of accountability and transparency are implied in the interaction, as directed by the definition advanced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Klakegg et al., 2008: 28).

Good governance in the context of South Africa is advocated through the promulgation of the Constitution 1996, (RSA, 1996) and the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service, 1995 (WPTPS), (RSA, 1995). In view of the features and definitions discussed

above, good governance in the context of South Africa finds expression in Section 195(1), Chapter 10 of the Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996), which calls for the public service to be accountable and uphold a high standard of professional ethics. The Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996) further encourages participation of citizens and community based institutions in the affairs of government. This is regarded as one of the means to hold government officials accountable for the distribution and use of government resources for improvements in service delivery (Pillay, 2004: 591). To strengthen good governance, Chapter 9 of the Constitution, 1996 further prescribes institutionalised mechanisms such as the Public Protector, the Auditor General and the Constitutional Court, to ensure high levels of accountability by the state (RSA, 1996; Pillay, 2004: 591).

The White Paper on Transformation in the Public Service (RSA, 1995) was introduced to transform service delivery in South Africa towards a citizen based approach, anchored in the implementation of the *Batho Pele* principles of “consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money” (RSA, 1997). Over and above implementing the *Batho Pele* principles, government institutions are required to formulate a Service Delivery Improvement Programme (SDIP) indicating how service delivery will be improved (Fourie, 2005: 679). The SDIP should be incorporated into the strategic plan of local government institutions and should establish the service standards which will provide a basis for judging performance by the public service as well as provide an opportunity for citizens to be informed about the type of services and the quality they should expect from the public service in their community (RSA, 1997; RSA, 2005: 5).

Governance at local government level is anchored in a system of participatory governance (RSA, 1998c; RSA, 2000). Participatory governance ensures the participation of local communities in the affairs of the municipality through IDP processes as entrenched in the Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996), the Local Government Municipal Structures Act, 1998, (RSA, 1998c) and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, (RSA, 2000). The governance features and principles as espoused by the Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996), the WPTPS, 1998 (RSA, 1998c), the Local Government Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (RSA, 1998c) and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000) are therefore in line with the features of governance as outlined in **Figure 1.1**.

A governance framework is furthermore a mechanism to ensure that government is held accountable for services rendered to communities (Fraser-Moleketi, 2000: 3; Pillay, 2004: 589). Such a mechanism will help to promote the improvement of people's lives (Fraser-Moleketi, 2000:3; Pillay, 2004: 589) as expected from the Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996), and simultaneously ensure the achievement of local government's developmental goals (Fraser-Moleketi, 2000:3; McEwan, 2003: 472; Pillay, 2004: 589). Governance is also regarded as the main factor contributing to projects success (Klakegg et al., 2008: 27; Simpson & Rayner, 2011: 59). The Association for Project Management (APM) (APM, 2002: 3) and Naidoo (2005: 114) maintain that a governance framework that holds features such as outlined in **Figure 1.1** are pivotal to the planning, management and implementation of programmes and projects, and would lead to effective service delivery. The following section will narrow the viewpoint down and document governance in the context of projects.

- *Project governance*

Klakegg et al. (2008: 29) and Bekker and Steyn (2009: 81) respectively maintain that the application of the concept of governance in management disciplines such as project management, received attention only recently, unlike in the case of corporate governance that has been in use for over a decade. Project governance, according to Bekker and Steyn (2009: 84-85), was used as a result of the failure of the concept of corporate governance to address issues of accountability in managing large engineering and construction projects. Klakegg et al. (2008: S29) defines corporate governance as “a set of relationships between an institution's management and stakeholders. It provides the structure through which the objectives of the institution are set, and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance are determined”. Aliza et al. (2011: 1929) define project governance as “a subset of corporate governance focussing on the areas of corporate governance related to project activities, including: portfolio direction, project sponsorship, project and program management and efficiency, and disclosure and reporting”. Bekker and Steyn (2009: 81) argues in favour of the assertion by Crawford et al. (2008: S43) that a lack of support and sponsorship role by top management of institutions, as well as an increased focus on corporate governance, contributes to the failure of many projects.

In addition to these conceptualisations, Crawford and Helm (2009: 77), and Van der Waldt (2010: 251) highlight certain features of project governance in a public service context. These features are provided in **Table 1.1** below.

Table 1.1: Features of project governance

Crawford & Helm (2009: 77)	Van der Waldt (2010: 251)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “accountability; and transparency; • control and compliance; • risk management; • consistency in delivery; • value for money; and • engagement of stake holders.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “resource allocation; • authoritative decisions; • performance monitoring; • oversight; • Accountability; and • powers of the project manager.”

(Source: Crawford & Helm (2009: 77; Van der Waldt, 2010: 251)

Considering the features of project governance as outlined by Klakegg et al. (2008: S29), Crawford and Helm (2009: 77) and Van der Waldt (2010: 251) the effective governance of projects should ensure that the right projects are selected and delivered in an efficient and sustainable manner by avoiding resource wastage and achieving the objectives of an institution. The features of project governance as listed in **Table 1.1** are similar to those of governance depicted in **Figure 1.1**, except that Crawford and Helm (2009: 77), and Van der Waldt (2010: 251) emphasise two aspects: the powers and authority that should be allocated to the project manager, and the management of risks when implementing a project. The assertion by Klakegg et al. (2008: 29) is relevant to the South African government in view of the Constitution, 1996, (RSA, 1996); the MFMA, 2003, (RSA, 2003a); and the PFMA, 1999, (RSA, 1999) stating that public servants should manage scarce resources in an effective and efficient manner and thereby constructively address service delivery backlogs.

Project governance in the context of government’s policies refers to “the rules, processes and behaviour that affects the way in which powers are exercised in programmes and projects, particularly regarding openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence” (RSA, 2010c: 63). The features of project governance, outlined above, are also in line with the definition of project governance in the context of government’s practice, which emphasises the authority and powers allocated to the project manager over the projects (RSA,

2010c:63). In support of the above assertion, project governance therefore ensures that the project manager is held responsible by the project stakeholders due to his or her responsibility to ensure that the right projects are selected; delivered efficiently and are effectively sustained at operational level (Knodel, 2004: 45; Aliza et al., 2011: 1930-1932). On the basis of the above features of project governance, the following section will explain characteristics and qualities of leadership that strengthens management by projects.

- *Leadership*

Van der Waldt (2010: 255) defines leadership as “the capacity of an individual to rally other people to a common purpose, to achieve a result through people, and having a character which inspires confidence”. Taylor (2006: 61) asserts that the basic responsibilities of a project leader are to ensure that a project is completed within budget, in line with a specified schedule and according to the quality requirements of the users of the product. Leadership and management within projects should direct the following project role-players: “the project team, external stake holders, project clients, host institution management, internal suppliers, regulators, end users, and external suppliers” as explained by Orr (2004: 162) and Cobb (2012: 137-142). At local municipal level the focus of project leadership and management should be on the following stake holders: the community as the primary stakeholder, the PMU, contractors and service providers, as well as the officials of the municipality responsible for the implementation of the projects as outlined in the municipal IDP (RSA, 2003b; McEwan, 2003: 473; RSA, 2007: 6). Cobb (2012: 143) further advises that project leaders should take cognisance of political role-players within the host institution who may influence the project.

A project leader is therefore expected to be “honest, competent, forward looking and inspiring” to all role-players in a project (Taylor, 2006: 65-67). Cobb (2012: 172) proposes that “situational leadership theory” advocates different kinds of leadership that could be used as team members in a project grow and gain experience through different stages or phases of a project. In that case the project would require different leadership styles during its life-cycle and the leadership and management style of a project leader may depend on the stage of a project according to its life-cycle (Cobb, 2012: 172). These styles may include “directive

leadership, selling leadership, participative leadership and delegative leadership” Cobb (2012: 17). Taylor (2006: 65-67) and Cobb (2012: 137-142) states that in relation to external role-players, a project leader would be required to assume the following roles in different stages of the project life-cycle: “figurehead, liaison and monitor, champion and negotiator, and controller”, whereas for internal stakeholders different roles would be needed such as: “a planner, coordinator, problem solver and above all a team leader” (Taylor, 2006: 65-67; Cobb, 2012: 137-142).

In addition to these leadership attributes of a project leader, the concept of maturity as explained by Andersen and Jessen (2003: 460) can be applied to project leadership and management. Andersen and Jessen (2003: 460) outline three dimensions of maturity within an institution as follows: a total “sum of action (ability to act and decide), attitude (willingness to be involved), and knowledge (an understanding of the impact of willingness and action)”. Naidoo (2005: 103) adds that leadership in the public service should be able to respond faster to the needs of the immediate communities they serve, and should be knowledgeable about how management by projects can be employed successfully. The aim would be to address service delivery backlogs, using scarce resources in an effective, efficient and economical way to achieve the developmental objectives of local government (Fraser-Moleketi, 2005: 6). Strategic management attributes simultaneously play a pivotal role in management by project endeavours as will be outlined in the following section.

- *Strategic management*

Strategic management is a continuous process of decision making that considers two main foci as the external and internal environments. The external and internal environments of an institution are explained as follows:

- The external environment of government refers to the analysis or assessment of the threats and opportunities that exist in the immediate environment of a government and which may pose challenges for government to reach its objectives and goals on a socio-political, socio-economic, political-economic and technological level, including the national and international environments (Rossouw, le Roux & Groenewald, 2003: 31-57). The external environment of a municipality will include the global arena, the provincial and national spheres of government and the communities that it has to serve.

- The internal environment refers to the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the public service institution, such as resources, capacities, skills and expertise (Rossouw, le Roux & Groenewald, 2003: 31- 57). The internal environment of a municipality will include, *inter alia*, the local municipality's strengths and weaknesses in terms of a well defined strategic direction and strategy, institutional structure, governance, leadership, management and capacity, systems and processes.

An assessment of both environments is conducted to improve the competitive position of an institution and to ensure the institution's ability to achieve its objectives (Knipe et al., 2002: 5; Gray & Larson, 2006: 22; Morris & Pinto 2007: 66). The achievement of institutional strategic goals and objectives will be realised through integration between strategic management as strategy formulation and implementation, strategy and projects (Gray & Larson, 2006: 24, Aubrey, Hobbs & Thuillier, 2007: 329; Morris & Pinto, 2007: 66). Knipe et al. (2002: 43) and Gray and Larson (2006: 24) highlight the fact that the reviewing and defining of an institutional mission are important strategic management processes. Such processes entails scanning both the external and internal environment of the institution, setting long-range goals and objectives, analysing and formulating strategies, and implementing strategies through programmes and projects.

The analysis of the internal environment of a public service institution outlined above should, in addition, consider the capacity as required by a public service institution which will be explained below.

Capacity

The NDP (RSA, 2011: 365) envisions that by 2030 South Africa should be a state that is able to "implement its developmental role with public institutions at all levels of government that are effectively managed and coordinated by a highly skilled and capacitated workforce which is able to deliver services of high standard to communities". This vision of the NDP (RSA, 2011: 365), has long been advocated by Section 195(1) (h) of the Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996), namely that the state should have "good human resource management and career development practices", which would ensure the correct skills and capacity of local government staff. In this regard the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000) maintains that the capacity of municipal staff should be enhanced to a level

where they are able to carry out the developmental role of local government in an effective, efficient, economical manner. This assertion is further supported by Maserumule (2008: 441) who states that the human resources at local municipalities should have skills and capacities that are equal to the developmental tasks of local government.

To achieve these results, the senior managers of the municipality, which include the Municipal Manager (MM) and the managers accountable to the MM should possess the following managerial competencies according to Notice 347 of 2007 in terms of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000): “strategic capability and leadership, programme and project management, financial management, change management, knowledge management, service delivery innovation, problem solving and analysis, people management, client orientation and customer focus, communication and accountability, and ethical conduct”.

Furthermore, the implementation of local economic development requires senior managers in the municipality with skills such as “project development and management, development and economic planning, monitoring and evaluation” (Koma, 2012: 65-66). The National Capacity Building Framework (NCBF), (CoGTA, 2008) and Maserumule (2008: 441) envisage that the local government should have the following categories of capacity to respond effectively to its developmental roles:

- Strategic capacity – the ability of the local government to provide leadership and direction, and encourage communities to use programmes in order to reach developmental goals (CoGTA, 2008; Maserumule, 2008: 441).
- Institutional capacity – the efficiency and effectiveness of systems, structures and processes within the institution to accomplish developmental goals (CoGTA, 2008; Maserumule, 2008: 441).
- Technical capacity – the ability of the local government to convert the strategic objectives of the developmental local government into programmes and projects (CoGTA, 2008; Maserumule, 2008: 441).

To help provide the above-mentioned competencies and capacities required by public service managers, the National School of Government (NSG) was launched on 21 October 2013 to ensure that the South African government continues to professionalize the public service through human resource development in requisite skills as indicated above (RSA, 2013a: 2).

By applying these skills the government aims to realise its developmental goals through sustainable growth, development and effective service delivery (Sisulu, 2013: 3; Mokgoro, 2013: 6; RSA, 2013a: 2). The vision of the NDP (RSA, 2011), is elaborated upon further and unpacked in terms of the competencies, skills and capacities public service managers should possess. This vision is echoed by Notice 347 of 2007 in terms of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000). The NCBF (CoGTA, 2008), and Koma (2012: 65-66), emphasise the use of programmes and projects as a technical skill that strengthens the ability of government institutions in all spheres in delivering quality services to the citizens of South Africa (RSA, 2010a: 12). The following section will expound on the systems and processes required by a public service institution in order to support management by projects.

Systems and processes of institutional management by projects

An earlier version of the PMBOK Guide (2000: 29) defines a process as “a series of actions bringing about a result”. A later version of the PMBOK Guide (2008: 37) defines process as “a set of interrelated actions and activities performed to achieve a pre-specified product, result, or service”. In line with these definitions, Burke (2010: 62) understands a process as “a linear sequence of steps which are carried out to achieve defined objectives”. When applying these definitions to a project it refers to those actions which are performed by a project team and are critical to successful project implementation (PMBOK Guide, 2008: 37). Processes are outlined differently depending on whether the focus is on management in general, or on project management in particular. Management processes and project management processes can be conceptualised according to two designs (Burke, 2010: 63-66):

- Fayol’s management process: “planning, organising, commanding, directing, and controlling”, and the
- Eastonian Process: “Input, process, and output”.

The APM document outlines the following stages in such a process: starting and initiating, defining and planning, monitoring and controlling, learning and closing (Burke, 2010: 63-66). The PMBOK Guide (2008: 40) delineates the following project process: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, closing.

It is worth noting that the PMBOK uses the structure of the Eastonian process as “input – output” or “input-process-output” (Burke, 2010: 66). The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000) and the Local Government Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations (RSA, 2001) assert that, in line with the performance management system, a municipality should set input, output, outcome and impact indicators according to the priorities outlined in the IDP. This assertion implies that municipalities’ actions or processes of performance management are in accordance to the Estonian process. The only difference is the inclusion of the outcome and impact processes for municipalities.

Performance reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that support the notion of management by projects

Monitoring of a project entails gathering, capturing, analysing, recording and reporting the relevant project information to the stakeholders (Crawford & Bryce, 2003: 366; RSA, 2005: 4; Portny et al., 2007: 317). This aspect of the process, therefore, focuses on the efficiency of the project, *i.e.* “doing the things right” (Crawford & Bryce, 2003: 366). On the other hand, evaluation is an assessment process that takes place periodically to learn and make adjustments. This aspect focuses on effectiveness, *i.e.* “doing the right thing” (Crawford & Bryce, 2003: 366). Crawford and Bryce (2003:366), and Portny et al. (2007: 318) also point out that monitoring is more concerned with cost, time and quality of the project, *i.e.* how the inputs are converted into outputs, whereas evaluation focuses on the justification, worthiness or validity of the project.

Crawford & Bryce (2003: 363) state that project performance is about “balancing demands for efficiency and effectiveness”. Project performance is, therefore, about communicating information on the status of a project to all stakeholders in a verbal or written format. This is done through meetings, stakeholder engagements by comparing the progress of the project against the project expectations (Thompson et al., 2007: 197; Wideman, 2007: 3).

In line with the above assertions, municipalities are obligated to develop a system for performance management in consultation with the community. Such a performance management system requires: clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) addressing the priorities set out in the IDP (RSA, 2000; and RSA, 2001). Following the project-management systems and processes, the monitoring of a project’s performance can be conducted at the following levels within a project life-cycle:

- **Input:** Monitors the use of resources in a project such as budget, personnel (RSA, 2000; RSA, 2001; RSA, 2005a: 8).
- **Activity:** Focuses on activities of a project during the implementation phase and the fact that they are carried out according to a specified schedule (RSA, 2000; RSA, 2001; RSA, 2005a: 9).
- **Output:** The monitoring of services or results, i.e. the translation of inputs into outputs (RSA, 2000; RSA, 2001; RSA, 2005a: 9).
- **Impact:** – Monitors the objectives of the project, i.e. whether the project achieved its objectives and has developmental impact on the beneficiaries (RSA, 2000; RSA, 2001; RSA, 2005a: 9).
- **Assumption/risk:** Focuses on external factors to the project and related risks (RSA, 2000; RSA, 2001; RSA, 2005a: 9).

Project performance, and monitoring and evaluation should be in “line with the priorities, objectives, indicators and targets” as outlined in the IDP of the municipality (RSA, 2000). This implies that it remains the municipal council’s responsibility to ensure that developmental programmes and projects are identified and implemented according to set targets and indicators. Where performance is not on target, corrective measures should be set up (RSA, 2000). Performance reports should be discussed with the municipal council, officials, political structures and staff, in other words, all stakeholders to the programme and project. The municipality should put in place proper mechanisms and systems to ensure that the community is involved in reviewing the municipality’s performance in this matter (RSA, 2000). In line with the project monitoring levels indicated above, the next section will present the critical success factors that contribute to the success of public service institution management by projects.

The Critical Success Factors

Many authors of project management in different fields point out that Critical Success Factors (CSFs) of projects are an area that did not receive much attention in the early periods of research on project management (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005: 237; Khang & Moe, 2008: 72; Ika et al., 2012: 105). Muller and Jugdev (2012: 758) differentiate between two components of project success, outlined as follows:

- Project success factors – “the elements of a project which, when influenced, increase the likelihood of success and are therefore referred to as independent variables” (Muller & Jugdev, 2012: 758).
- Project success criteria – “are the measures used to judge on the success or failure of a project, are therefore regarded as dependent variables” (Muller & Jugdev, 2012: 758).

Fortune and White (2006: 53) refer to the conceptualisation of CSFs as “the limited number of areas in which results, if they are satisfactory, will ensure successful competitive performance for an institution”. Muller and Jugdev (2012: 761) revisit the original definition of project success as outlined in the first edition of the PMBOK Guide (PMBOK, 2000), which conceptualised it as “meeting or exceeding stakeholder needs and expectations by balancing competing demands among scope, time, cost, quality, stakeholders with different needs and expectations, identified requirements (needs) and unidentified requirements (expectations)”. Furthermore, Westerveld (2002: 412) cautions scholars of project management about a narrow perception that criteria for project success means satisfying the time, cost and quality constraints.

Yu and Kwon (2011: 889) contend that the identification and understanding of CSFs in a project will aid the monitoring and control of a project assignment effectively. As the nature of project types differ, it becomes difficult to enlist and apply the same CSF across all project types. The CSFs will depend on the project type and size, as well as the complexity and environment of the project (Westerveld, 2002:412; Gudiene et al., 2013: 25). Muller & Jugdev (2012: 758) assert that some CSF’s can be applied to different project types that have a commonality.

Literature on project management has suggested different lists of CSFs depending on the type of the project (Westerveld, 2002: 412; Cook-Davies et al., 2009: 117; Muller & Jugdev, 2012: 761; Ika et al., 2012: 107). According to Ika et al. (2012: 112) and Westerveld (2002:412), some authors list CSFs relating to the project, project manager and team, institution and external environment. Ika et al. (2012: 105), listed the following as CSFs: “project mission, top management support, project schedule, client consultation, personnel, technical tasks, client acceptance, monitoring and feedback, communication”. Westerveld (2002: 412) refers to criteria for project success as result areas, and to CSFs as institutional

areas. Westerveld (2002: 412) applied a model for project excellence to outline the following institutional areas: “leadership and team, policy and strategy, stakeholder management, resources contracting and project management”.

In view of these scholarly contributions, the research adopted the conceptualisation of CSFs that extend beyond the narrow definition of the management of time, cost and quality. The success of a project will therefore depend on project managers being fully aware of the broader definition CSFs. Such a definition includes: competing demands among scope, time, costs, quality, project mission, support from top management, project schedule, client consultation, personnel, technical tasks, monitoring and feedback, communication, as well as stakeholder needs and expectations (Morris and Pinto, 2007: 118); Westerveld, 2002: 412; Ika et al., 2012: 112; and Muller and Jugdev, 2012: 761). This definition of CSFs should enable managers in the public service and in particular local government to put in place remedying mechanisms and strategies to ensure the delivery of projects in institutions.

Thus far the article outlined features of efficient management by projects that are critical at strategic level. Comparing the various theoretical elements that support the manner in which a local government institution needs to be configured in order to obtain management by project success against the actual configuration of a local government institution, this article shares the following findings.

Purpose and scope

Christensen, Lægreid, Roness and Røvik (2007: xi) advised that “[A]n organization-theory approach to the public sector presupposes that one cannot understand the content of public policy and decision-making in public organizations without analyzing the organization and operational modes of the public administration.” Considering the advice from Christensen *et al.* (2007: xi), this research firstly aspired to analyse the configuration of a local government organisation on a strategic level against normative data, gathered from a comprehensive literature review, and secondly, to suggest a configuration that supports a management by project organisational approach. The research endeavours to suggest an innovative configuration to the strategic level of local government organisations in order to transform local government to a new paradigm of service excellence.

Definition of terms

The following conceptualisations of the key terms are explained as it will be understood and incorporated into this article.

Local government institutions: Chapter 7, Section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996) define local government institutions as follows: (1) The local sphere of government consist of municipalities, which must be established for the whole of the territory of the Republic. (2) The executive and legislative authority of a municipality is vested in its Municipal Council. (3) A municipality has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the Constitution. (4) The national or provincial government may not compromise or impede a municipality's ability or right to exercise its powers or perform its functions.

Public Service delivery: The South African Public Service Commission (RSA, 2005: 23) conceptualises public service delivery as that it is services that should be delivered to citizens in an impartial, fair, equitable and non-bias manner. It should furthermore include the following values as prescribed in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*), (RSA, 1997): “consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money”.

Management by projects: Management by projects is an approach that is applied by management throughout entire project-oriented institutions with apposite, enabling structures and cultures to facilitate, navigate and guide such an institution through complex, contemporary phenomena towards the achievement of institutional priorities by means of programme and project management (Gareis, 1991: 71) and (Van der Waldt, 2007: 253).

Strategic level: The strategic level within an institution has its roots in the Weberian theory of bureaucracy. The theory of bureaucracy determines the hierarchy of offices in which each office is controlled and supervised by a higher ranking office. The strategic level is the highest administrative and managerial level within a public institution. However, the line of authority goes beyond an administrative level to a political level (Swedberg, R. & Agevall, 2005).

Research methodology and design

In order to address the problem under examination in this article, the research adopted an interpretive style. The aim was to determine the extent to which features of management by projects can suggest possible improvements in service delivery by a local government institution in its area of operation. The research utilised a qualitative research design to collect information in terms of the manner in which the basis theory that grounds management by projects is used for service delivery improvements. A qualitative research design supported the researchers to research the phenomenon in its natural setting without interpreting it in terms of statistical measurements. The researchers were then able to interpret only the phenomenon according to subjective meanings or the understanding that people attribute to it (Maxwell, 1996: 17; Fossey et al., 2002: 717; Thomas, 2003: 1; and Auriacombe & Mouton, 2007: 441).

The data collection methods relevant to this research included a literature review, focus group sessions and semi-structured interviews. In order to respond to the research objectives and subsequent questions, relevant data was collected to establish the drivers of management by projects in the South African Public Service, as well as data on the basis theory of management by projects. This was done by means of a literature review, using primary sources. The literature review aimed to find a conceptual frame of reference that would guide the research and establish a relationship between the research and existing theoretical knowledge.

Instrumentation

The research used a focus-group session as a data-collection tool, based on the fact that focus-groups provide qualitative data in a manner that is flexible, while researchers gain insight into how others think in terms of a particular phenomenon. The focus-group discussion assisted participants to express different viewpoints and opinions. Large amounts of data were gathered on the extent to which features of management by projects can be used to improve service delivery.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews assisted the researchers to explore and follow up on specific ideas and impressions that emerged from the focus-group discussions. In this way the researchers were able to get an in-depth view of the experiences, thoughts, emotions and meanings that the participants attach to the basis theory under investigation (Fossey et al., 2002: 727; Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007: 351; and Whiting, 2008: 35).

The application of these two methods of data collection allowed the researchers to compare and observe converging or diverging views on specific topics regarding the research (Fossey et al., 2002: 728). The interviews were used to elicit data from senior managers within a local government institution at a strategic institutional level (Whiting, 2008: 35). In line with findings deduced from a research conducted by Fossey et al. (2002: 727), the researchers were sensitive to the participants’ choice of language and which assisted in obtaining detailed information from interviewees.

The unit of analysis that supports this research is located in a South African local government institution, and comprised twelve senior managers within the institution who are responsible to enable an environment within which management by projects can be implemented successfully. The sample size was therefore a hundred per cent.

Limitations

The research was delimited by its focus on the appropriate use of management by projects, in order to remedy various causes of poor service delivery at local municipal level. The outcomes of the research can therefore provide much needed guidelines to local municipalities where poor service delivery exists due to ineffective application of the basis theory for management by projects.

Data analysis and Findings

The findings that emanates from this research are summarised in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1.2: Features at strategic level in a South African local government institution

No.	Features extracted from the literature review	Features in a local government department (South Africa)
1	Drivers of management by projects.	Strategic objectives of the local government institution are informed by policies, guidelines and priorities of National and provincial departments, the District municipality, the Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996); MDGs (UN,2000); the NDP (RSA, 2011:154); Five Year Local Government Strategic Agenda (RSA, 2006b).

No.	Features extracted from the literature review	Features in a local government department (South Africa)
2	Strategic objectives of the institution.	There are five strategic objectives in the local government institution. In addition the strategic objectives of the local government institution are in line with the Five Year Local Government Strategic Agenda (RSA, 2006b).
3	Programme management.	There are no programmes (programme management) linked to strategic objectives in the local government institution.
4	Link between strategic objectives, programmes and projects.	There is no link between strategic objectives, programmes and projects.
5	Project-type institutional structure or strong matrix structure.	Functional institutional structure.
6	Management and leadership structures.	Project management unit (PMU) was established in April 2014.
7	Project management systems (input; output; outcome and impact) & processes (initiating; planning; executing; monitoring and controlling; closing).	Project management systems that are used are at input and output levels and a process used is only initiating process.
8	Performance management system.	Performance management system is not in place for all employees, only for Section 56 managers.
9	Project performance modalities at input monitoring; activity monitoring; output monitoring; impact monitoring; assumption/risk	Performance monitoring takes place at input level by the local government institution and at activity and output by the consultant.

No.	Features extracted from the literature review	Features in a local government department (South Africa)
	monitoring.	
10	Critical Success Factors (CSFs) which are inclusive of factors within the project, institution and beyond (external).	CSFs are not inclusive of factors within the institution and beyond (external). Some factors within the project are considered.

Discussion

Semi-structured interviews and a focus group session were employed to collect data at the strategic level of a local government institution. The empirical data was analysed by using an interpretive data analysis strategy in order to make inferences and draw a conclusion.

A strategy of triangulation was employed between the literature research, a governmental legislative framework and empirical data to ascertain the inconsistencies, if any, to determine the extent to which the local government institution applied the features of the basis theory of management by projects, to improve service delivery. The next section will therefore present a discussion on the comparative analysis of the features of this basis theory at strategic level of a local government institution.

Comparative analysis of the features of management by projects on a strategic level

The comparative analysis will focus on the following three items included in the triangulation:

- features of management by projects at strategic level – identified from the literature review;
- features of management by projects from a legislative and regulatory angle of incidence; and
- the findings of the data on how the basis theory of management by projects is applied in practice.

Strategic drivers

The Background to this article outlined the strategic drivers of management by projects that should be considered by a local government institution when developing strategic objectives for the institution. The institution under discussion drew from a Municipal Strategic Agenda as strategic driver as well as the Constitution, 1996 (RSA, 1996); the White Paper on Local Government, 1998 (RSA, 1998a); the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2000); Notice 347 of 2007 in terms of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (RSA, 2000); and the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Programme, (RSA, 2007).

Strategic goals and objectives of the institution

According to the literature review conducted for the purposes of this research, the strategic goals and objectives of a local municipality in South Africa are informed by the Five Year Local Government Strategic Agenda/Priorities (RSA, 2006b), which is in line with the Key Performance Areas of local municipalities.

The respondents at strategic level of the institution could not outline its strategic objectives but instead referred the researchers to the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) of the institution (SDBIP, 2014), the Constitution (RSA, 1996) and the Millennium Development Goals. On the basis of the above assertion, the following conclusion can be drawn: While the strategic objectives of the institution are in line with the Five Year Local Government Strategic Agenda/Priorities (RSA, 2006b) and are known by tactical level respondents, respondents at the strategic level of the institution do not lead the institution by recognising these strategic objectives or by means of an in-depth knowledge of these objectives.

Programmes (programme management)

The literature advocates a strong link between strategic objectives, programmes and projects within a local government institution (Knipe et al., 2002: 43; and Gray & Larson, 2006: 24). The strategic objectives of a local government institution require a demarcation of various programmes according to the needs and attributes of projects as indicated by Pellegrinelli (1997: 142). Programmes are managed through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), whereas at the strategic level of the institution, respondents indicated the SDBIP as the programme. It became evident that respondents at strategic level could not identify

distinct programmes in the institution. From this observation, it can be inferred that the strategic objectives are not translated into programmes in this local government institution.

Institutional structure

The literature indicates that a desirable structure to support programme management is a project-based institutional structure or strong matrix institutional structure, (Hobday, 2000: 874; Clements & Gido, 2006: 393; Aubrey, Hobbs & Thuillier, 2007: 330). Literature indicates that programme management in the institution is supported by a functional institutional structure. Such an inference was made from responses at the strategic level of the institution, that the institutional structure is connected to directorates and departments. Respondents furthermore asserted that the managers responsible for each directorate can be identified as: “the Director for Engineering Services, Director Technical Services; Director Community Services and Director Finances” (Strategic interview). The descriptions above by respondents are in line with the features of a functional institutional structure, as outlined by Clements and Gido (2006: 391) when they assert that a functional institutional structure is based on individuals with the same skills located in the same directorate. Furthermore, the literature indicated that a functional institutional structure is not the best choice to support programme management as it leads to complexities in the coordination of programme and project management. A functional institutional structure furthermore requires additional project time based on the fact that functional duties compete with programme- and project-related duties (Kerzner, 2003: 93; Meredith & Mantel, 2010: 193). This institutional structure is clearly functionally driven in contrast to a programme driven structure.

Management and leadership structures supporting programme management

The literature indicates that a municipality should establish a Project Management Unit (PMU) to fulfil the developmental role at a local municipal level (Thiry & Deguire, 2007: 654; the Municipal Infrastructure Grant document (CoGTA, 2007); and Van der Waldt, 2009: 36). The empirical research indicated that the Director: Engineering; and the Manager: Project Management Unit (PMU) are the management and leadership structure supporting programme management in this local government institution. The respondents at the strategic level indicated that the PMU was established in April 2014 to support programme management. Furthermore, a project is implemented by an external consultant, due to the fact that the PMU is not fully capacitated. According to the MIG document (CoGTA, 2007), the

PMU should include the following personnel for it to be fully capacitated to implement projects within a local government institution: Project Manager; Engineer; Technician; Secretariat; Financial personnel; Legal personnel; Administrative personnel; Occupational Health & Safety personnel; Data Capturers; Information Technology personnel; and Community officer/communications personnel.

According to Klakegg et al. (2008: 29); Crawford and Helm (2009: 77), and Van der Waldt (2010: 251), a lack of capacity in the PMU implies that the PMU and the institution at large are still lacking in terms of the following features of a project governance structure (PMU): “the rules, processes and behaviour that affects the way in which powers are exercised in programmes and projects, particularly regarding openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence.” Furthermore, the appointment of consultants, due to a lack of capacity in the institution contradicts the directives enshrined in the Constitution, 1996, (RSA, 1996), and the MFMA, 2003, (RSA, 2003a). The challenge is that resources such as financial allocation (MIG) to the institution are not handled in an effective, economic and efficient manner to address critical service delivery backlogs.

Location of the management and leadership structures (PMU) supporting programme management in a local government institution

According to Van der Waldt (2009: 36) public institutions should create platforms and structures that support management by projects. These include PMUs which can be located strategically according to the needs of the institution. In the case of the institution under discussion, and indicated by respondents at strategic level of the institution, the PMU is located in the office of the Director: Engineering.

The institutional systems and processes used to support programme management in the local government institution

According to the literature research, a municipality that fosters a performance management system should set input, output, outcome and impact indicators according to the priorities outlined in the IDP (RSA, 2000; RSA, 2001). In addition, the following process phases should be inculcated in project implementation: initiating phase; planning phase; executing phase; monitoring and controlling throughout the project, and closing or hand-over phase (PMBOK Guide, 2008:43; Burke, 2010: 66). In the case of this institution, systems include

“design; specification and quality of material and procurement”. At the strategic level of the institution, the response in terms of systems and processes only referred to a “financial management system” (Strategic interview). The systems mentioned in the findings above (“design; specification, quality of material and procurement”) are classified as systems at input and output levels as they relate to resources and activities leading to the end product (e.g. a project). Even though the institution is responsible for all phases in a project life cycle, empirical findings revealed that the institution is only involved in the initiating phase (i.e. identify needs and drawing up a budget). The institution initiates and plan projects but execution, monitoring and evaluation have been transferred to two other institutions as the implementing agents. The institution only assumed the role of a beneficiary.

Performance management systems

The literature relevant to this article points out that local government institutions are obliged to develop a performance management system in consultation with the communities. This system should have clear Key Performance Indicators addressing the priorities as set out in the IDP (RSA, 1996; RSA, 2000; RSA, 2001; DPSA, 2003; CoGTA, 2007). Such a performance management system should be in line with the programme management systems and processes as prescribed by the literature and outlined in the Background of this article.

In the case of the institution under discussion the input of the respondents’ at the strategic level of the institution, the following process becomes evident: managers appointed in terms of Section 56 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000) sign performance contracts. However, the institution is not at a stage where performance agreements “are signed with lower level employees”. Targets set by Section 56 Managers are discussed with lower level employees “as they are expected to achieve them as well”. Managers who are not appointed in terms of Section 56 “do not have performance contracts and as a result do not receive performance rewards”. A “performance management policy, that is still in a draft format, needs to be adopted by the Council”. Based on scholarly efforts from the literature research, the institution does not have a performance management system that includes all officials employed within the institution.

Modalities to monitor the performance of programme management

According to the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000), the Local Government: Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, 2001 (RSA, 2001), and the National Treasury Regulations, 2005 (RSA, 2005a), project performance monitoring should be conducted at the following levels within a project life cycle: input monitoring, activity monitoring, output monitoring, impact monitoring and assumption/risk monitoring. In the case of the institution under discussion, the following modalities to monitor programme-management performance were indicated: “project schedule; planning; procuring the contractor and execution”. “Assessment is being done on a quarterly basis” in the institution.

The researchers noted during the strategic semi-structured interviews that senior managers recognise project modalities in the institution as: project schedule; planning; procuring the contractor and execution; and assessment. It is evident that these are modalities at input, activity and output levels. The discussion points did not indicate modalities related to impact monitoring and assumption/risk monitoring. Based on the literature and the findings above it can be inferred that performance monitoring of projects in the institution does not cover all the mentioned phases in the project life-cycle. Project monitoring takes place at only the input, activity and output levels.

Critical Success Factors (CSFs) used to evaluate programme success

The literature indicates that the successful implementation of a project relies on an institution’s ability to identify and outline the CSFs of programmes and projects that extend beyond a narrow definition of time, cost and quality. It should also include other factors located outside the project and the institution (Westerveld, 2004: 412; Cook-Davies et al., 2009: 117; Muller & Jugdev, 2012: 761; Ika et al., 2012: 107). CSFs that would ensure a successful completion of projects within a programme according to community needs, should cover a great variety of attributes such as “project mission, top management support, project schedule, client consultation, personnel, technical tasks, client acceptance, monitoring and feedback, communication” (Morris & Pinto, 2007: 118; Westerveld, 2003: 412; Ika et al., 2012: 112; Muller & Jugdev, 2012: 761; PMBOK Guide, 2008: 43).

CSFs at a strategic level within the institution were indicated in terms of the project as “Hundred percent spending; project completion certificate; and time”. The CSFs listed by the respondents do not include factors such as project mission; leadership, technical skills; top

management support, and sufficient and skilled personnel. In addition, respondents indicated the following CSFs: “socio-economic factors in terms of job creation and contract participation goal”. The institution became the beneficiary due to a “lack of capacity”. The CSFs in the institution do not include factors such as the programme, project, institution and external factors. Moreover, there is no coherence between the institutional, programme and project CSFs. It is furthermore recognised that there is no informed relation between the CSFs that respondents identified for the institution and defined programme and project management principles, cycle and processes identified from the literature. It is also interesting to note that the institution is the beneficiary and not the community.

Translation of strategies into programmes and programmes into projects

It is clear from the literature that a programme is viewed as an assemblage of a group of projects to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of strategic objectives of an institution such as the local government institution under discussion (McElroy, 1996:328; PMBOK, 2000: 6; Williams & Parr, 2006: 31; Morris & Pinto, 2007: 118; and RSA, 2010:23). A programme furthermore should create a link between institutional strategy and objectives and projects. This link then serves as a structure to combine projects with common objectives and resources to ensure the successful implementation of strategies (RSA, 2010: 23).

Considering the empirical data collected from the strategic level of a local government institution, respondents could not outline a particular method by which institutional strategy and objectives are translated into programmes, and programmes translated into projects. Based on the literature and empirical findings, it can be inferred that the institution has no clear link between institutional strategies and objectives, programmes and projects.

Recommendations

The research investigated the current configuration of a local government organisation on a strategic level against normative data, gathered from a comprehensive literature review and measured it against the data gathered in a focus group session and semi-structured interviews on a strategic level of a local government institution in South Africa. Based on the discrepancies found between normative and empirical data the research made recommendations and suggested a configuration that supports a management by project

organisational approach which results in solutions to the dilemma of a lack of service delivery at a local government institution. The research also considered the situation according to which the local government institution recently (2014) emerged from a Section 139 1(b) (RSA, 1996) administrative intervention due to challenges such as: a deterioration of service delivery, poor administrative leadership and management, lack of administrative capacity within the municipality, and the fact that the institution received a disclaimer due to an audit report for the period 2006 – 2013 (AGSA, 2013: online). These recommendations were furthermore observed against the developmental role that the local government institution needs to fulfil in realising the five strategic agenda or Key Performance Areas (RSA, 2006).

Considering the disparities between the current features of management by projects as applied by the institution, and the lacking features that can provide possible service delivery improvements, the following recommendations are made:

1. Managers on the strategic level should consider the relevant strategic drivers that inform management by projects as institutional configuration when developing the institution's strategic objectives.
2. The institution should introduce programmes and programme management that are in line with the strategic drivers and Key Performance Areas as prescribed nationally and provincially, and discussed in this research.
3. Projects should be packaged under the programmes according to the mentioned unique features and in line with the strategic objectives of the local government institution.
4. The institution should consider revising its institutional structure to enlarge the existing PMU (established in April 2014) and to include an institutional Risk Office. The PMU should be capacitated sufficiently to include the following personnel in order to implement projects within the municipality to its full capacity (RSA, 2007: 8): Project Manager; Engineer; Technician; Secretariat; Financial personnel; Legal personnel; Administrative personnel; Occupational health and safety personnel; Data-capture personnel; IT personnel; and Community officer/communications personnel. Some of these officials could be sourced from within the municipality. A full staff complement of the PMU will decrease the amount of funds spent on consultants to perform some of the responsibilities (feasibility research, terms of reference, project charter and business plan) of the municipality that are delegated to the PMU. A fully capacitated (trained and

skilled) PMU will subsequently ensure that the PMU is not only limited to monitoring, reporting, and standardising processes and procedures as far as project management is concerned. The PMU should rather be seen as a critical link between institutional strategy and projects, to which extent the PMU becomes a governance structure that supports efficient management by projects as emphasised by Thiry and Deguire (2007: 654) and Van der Waldt, 2010: 260) on a strategic level of the institution.

5. The institution should accelerate the process of approving a performance management policy in order to develop an inclusive Performance Management System (PMS) for all employees within the institution.
6. The institutional systems should be defined at the input; output; outcome and impact levels, according to the priorities outlined in the IDP. The processes used to support management by projects when implementing the project life-cycle should be outlined in terms of the following process-phases: initiating; planning; executing; monitoring and controlling, and closing. These institutional systems and processes will ensure that a fully established PMU does not backtrack but takes on responsibility for entire projects, implemented within the institution.
7. The PMU should outline in the project charter or business plan, the Critical Success Factors which include factors within the projects, and factors within the institution and beyond (external). When all these CSF's are considered, it will ensure a successful implementation of the projects – within its time-frame and the allocated budget, as well as its outcome and impact on the communities.
8. The use of project knowledge areas and project life-cycle phases in the implementation of projects is the responsibility of the PMU. However, the extent to which project knowledge areas and the project life-cycle phases are used in the implementation of projects in the institution by the PMU depends heavily on whether the PMU is fully capacitated. If the PMU is understaffed, then the institution will have to continue to rely heavily on the consultants.
9. The establishment of a PMU in the institution is highly recommended. In order to ensure that the municipality carefully manages the transition to management by projects, project management practices must be introduced gradually by employing a Project Management Maturity Matrix according to Andersen and Jessen (2003: 457), and Van der Waldt (2009: 43). Such a Project Management Maturity Matrix implies that the institution should firstly focus on applying project-management principles and processes and using team efforts when implementing individual projects. Secondly, the institution

should use the skills and competencies obtained to manage a collection or a group of related projects effectively within a program. Examples are projects within the MIG programme, which may need a process of restructuring in an institution or its component. Lastly, such a matrix entails simultaneous implementation or management of projects that do not necessarily share the same objectives and goals, but still help achieve the overall strategy and objective of an institution at strategic level. Examples are: projects under basic service delivery positioned as a strategic objective/key performance area/programme of the institution (Andersen & Jessen, 2003: 457).

10. The Project Management Maturity Matrix, should gradually phase in the following variables in order to ensure that the institution moves smoothly towards fully employing project management as an institutional strategy. In this sense, the inclusion of the PMU should facilitate the process of creating a temporary (PMU) and permanent (institutional) structure. In essence, a process is needed to ensure that project management becomes a culture in the institution, and lastly that a strategy is followed, grounded by management by projects that becomes a vehicle to render improved service delivery by the institution to the citizens in its community (Gareis & Huemann, 2000: 712).
11. The Project Management Maturity Matrix and the variables will only become a reality if the entire institution understands and apply the link between strategic objectives (strategic level or institutional structure); programmes (tactical level) and projects (operational level). This should take place through the following interfaces, which must become a culture in the institution:
 - **Institutional:** Different branches or directorates within the institution have to establish formal and informal institutional communication systems with one another by conjoining relevant resources to projects. These components should be: Engineering, Community Services, Corporate Services, Office of the Chief Whip, Office of the Mayor, Financial Department (RSA, 2010: 38; Van der Waldt, 2009: 39).
 - **Technical:** When officials from different segments and components or programmes with specialised skills and expertise interact to provide reciprocal assistance on the skills required to complete the project (RSA, 2010: 38; Van der Waldt, 2009: 39).

- **Interpersonal:** When officials from the different projects and programmes interact formally and informally to share best practices (RSA, 2010: 38; Van der Waldt, 2009: 39).
12. The recommendations above should be combined with the following dimensions of maturity expected from the leadership who manages a public service programme: “sum of actions (ability to act and decide), attitude (willingness to be involved), and knowledge (an understanding of the impact of willingness and action” (Andersen and Jessen, 2003: 460; Naidoo, 2005: 103).

The combination of such structural changes can suggest possible measures to improve the service delivery from the local government institution in its area of responsibility.

Conclusion

In final reflection, the successful implementation of the recommendations on the features of management by projects can therefore suggest effective, efficient and economically viable measures in a strategy for sustained and improved service delivery. In the first place this applies to a local government institution in its area of operation, but also to other local government institutions in South Africa. These recommendations can assist in the construction of a national strategy for enhanced service delivery. This article may furthermore inspire discussions to include the alignment of tactical and operational levels within local government institutions to support the transformation of a new service delivery paradigm in local government institutions.

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