HOW SHOULD LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BE MANAGED AND DEVELOPED THROUGH UNIVERSITY BASED PROGRAMMES: AN EVALUATION MODEL PROPOSED

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Abstract

South Africa, in the post 1994 era, has concentrated on building projects and training for the implementation of Local Economic Development (LED). The KwaZulu-Natal Government Department and a local university signed a Service-Level agreement wherein both parties are committed to the development and delivery of a systematic professional and institutionalized capacity building competency in LED, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The aim of this research was to evaluate the development and delivery of a systematic professional and institutionalized capacity building competency in LED. The research question that underpinned this research is: Has the LED Training and Capacity Development Plan/Programme enhanced the capacity, growth and delivery of LED in the province? A pragmatic, mixed methods, multi-case approach was used. Convenient, purposive sampling methods were employed to select participants for the evaluation research, the individuals involved in the six initiatives of the programme: project management staff, current and degreed/diplomate students (LED practitioners), the lecturers facilitating/coordinating the modules, the municipal management staff and members of NGOs, the community that the LED practitioners interacted with and the journal editor. A log frame matrix was developed to be used as an evaluation tool for evaluating the six programmes. The matrix development and structure is presented and discussed.
Key words: *economic development, multi-case study methodology, municipal management, South Africa.*

Introduction

The practice of Local Economic Development (LED) in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, is in line with the global practice in developed countries. This practice entails action, both by the government and the community as a response to locality-specific development problems (Rogerson, 2009). In South Africa, a "striking historical divide has been observed between the early LED activities… [from] concentrating on issues of poverty alleviation… [to] the promotion of economic growth" (Rogerson, 2007, p. 4). Sadly, the former is still the case for many government officials who do not understand the extensive nature of LED and its importance for economic development and the implications of this on social and environmental development of communities.

Within the African context, planning for LED in South Africa is the most advanced and longest established (Nel, 2007). South Africa, in the post 1994 era, has concentrated on building projects and training for the implementation of LED. Local government was

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viewed as "the sphere of government that interacts closest with communities, is responsible for the services and infrastructure so essential to our people's well-being, and is tasked with ensuring the growth and development of communities in a manner that enhances community participation and accountability (Department of Constitutional Development, 1998, p. 6). The policy that entrenched this thinking was, The White Paper on Local Government (Department of Constitutional Development, 1998, p. 23) introduced the concept of "developmental local government", which is defined as:

> Local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs, and improve the quality of their lives". The policy document makes it quite clear that local government is not responsible for creating jobs. Instead, it will be responsible for ensuring that overall economic and social conditions of the locality are conducive to the creation of employment opportunities.

This localization of planning and action is critical to the development of LED in the province of KZN. Furthermore, the implementation of LED has been elevated from a focus just on "isolated local development intervention, mainly in cities, to an obligatory mandate for all local authorities in terms of the National Constitution" (Rogerson, 2007, p. 1). It is, therefore, assumed that when strategically planned, LED in rural and urban contexts could provide a more flexible and effective approach to enhance economic growth and simultaneously reduce poverty for all SA citizens. The "Developmental local government" has four interrelated characteristics: Maximising social development and economic growth; Integrating and coordinating; Democratising development and Leading and learning (Department of Constitutional Development, 1998).

The KwaZulu-Natal Government Department and a local university signed a Service-Level agreement wherein both parties are committed to the development and delivery of a systematic professional and institutionalized capacity building competency in LED, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The LED Training and Capacity Development Plan/Programme (LTCDP) was developed for implementation from 2012 to 2015. This plan entails a four year capacity development partnership to groom the skills and the thinking behind LED driven growth and development within the province, by providing a significant through-flow of students specialising in (Regional) LED. By means of this process all LED institutions and structures have an equal opportunity to advance and build LED capabilities in pursuit of economic development in their localities. Hence, the project action title: Professional and Institutional Capacity Development Project.

An evaluation was commissioned by the two parties to evaluate the development and delivery of a systematic professional and institutionalized capacity building competency in LED, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The main evaluation research question is: Has the LED Training and Capacity Development Plan/Programme enhanced the capacity, growth and delivery of the LED in the province? This evaluation therefore focussed on two broad areas: (1) the extent to which the purposes are being achieved, and (2) the impact of developing the competency and capacity of LED stakeholders, to build effective partnerships, and implement LED processes and initiatives that promote sustained economic growth, in their contexts.

In developing an evaluation for this programme a number of issues had to be addressed: the processes of marketing the programme and participant access and selection; examining the extent to which the programme has achieved its intended purposes (objectives); identification of the reasons for achieving or not achieving the purposes (objectives); to understand challenges and lessons learnt as a result of the implementation and evaluation of the project and to give recommendations for future improvements.

Evaluation Purposes and Methodology

This section outlines the purpose and the methodology selected for the evaluation of the programme. The methodology section comprises the paradigm, approach, strategy, sampling process and unit of analysis. A description and justification for each aspect is presented. Included in the methodology section is the evaluation framework for the LTCDP.

The purpose of the evaluation takes the overall objective of the LTCP into account. This objective is to develop the competency and capacity of LED practitioners, institutions and role players from the business, public and civil society sectors through an accredited training programme at provincial, district and local municipal levels to be able to identify, conceptualise, build effective partnerships and implement LED processes and initiatives that promote sustained economic growth, in their localities. The evaluation of this project is used to assess the extent to which the purposes have been achieved and the impact on developing LED stakeholders, in building effective partnerships, and implementing LED processes and initiatives for sustained economic growth, in their contexts. The focus was on examining the extent to which the programme (four modules for year one students, four modules for year two students of the PG Diploma; four modules for year one, four modules for year two for the students in the Masters in Commerce, the Young Researchers programme, the Winter School, the Regional LED Initiative (RLECI), the programme for the LED Champions and the annually published LED Journal.

This evaluation used a "pragmatic paradigm" (Morgan, 2007, p. 65) to investigate if the LED Training and Capacity Development Plan/Programme enhanced the capacity, growth and delivery of the LED in the province, with particular focus on the identified phases and the criteria. The pragmatic approach matches the work in this programme as it is concerned with actual behaviour ("lines of action"), the beliefs that stand behind those behaviours ("warranted assertions"), and the consequences that are likely to follow from different behaviours ("workability") (Morgan, 2007, p. 67). A pragmatic paradigm attempts to understand the context and totality of each situation, the behaviour in context, by employing a variety of qualitative and also quantitative approaches.

A mixed methods approach was used to evaluate the impact of the programme provided by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), to enable Local Economic Development (LED) practitioners to perform their respective activities in an effective and appropriate level. Mixed methods are formally defined as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). For greater clarity and application, this meaning is extended to include: "the investigator collects and analyses the data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both quantitative and qualitative approaches or methods in a single study" (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006, p. 15).

A multi-case study methodology was used as it explored the nature of the LTCDP programme and how it enhanced the capacity, growth and delivery of the LED in the province. Nisbet and Watt (2008) view a case study as a specific instance used to illustrate a general principle. According to Bassey (1999), one of the characteristics of a case study is that it concentrates on a particular incident and attempts to locate the story of a certain aspect of behaviour in a particular setting, including the factors influencing the situation. In this study, employing a case study strategy included looking in-depth at how each of the six programmes enhanced the capacity, growth and delivery of LED. The case study penetrated the situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) to provide in-depth thick data, comprising both qualitative and quantitative data. Case studies are preferred strategies when the 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 1994). According to Bassey (1999), another advantage of a case study research is its uniqueness; its capacity for understanding complexity in particular

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contexts. However, the disadvantage of a case study is the fact that the results may not be generalisable except where other researchers see its application. This evaluation study adopted a multi-case study as it worked with year three (2014) of phase two and focused on the six LED programmes.

Convenient, purposive sampling methods were employed to select participants for the evaluation research. The participants in the evaluation report are the individuals involved in the six initiatives of Phase two, i.e. project management staff, current and degreed/diplomate students (LED practitioners), the lecturers facilitating/coordinating the modules, the municipal management staff and members of NGOs, the community that the LED practitioners interacted with and the journal editor. Each participant was asked to volunteer to participate in the evaluation project (seek consent) and to respond to the research instruments. The sample composition together with the methods and findings for each initiative are presented in the findings section, in the form of the Log Frame Matrix.

Log Frame Matrix

Logical Framework', or 'logframe', describes both a general approach to project or programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, and – in the form of a 'logframe matrix' – a discrete planning and monitoring tool for projects and programmes (Kaplan, 2015, no page number). A wide range of log frame formats exist, varying from organisation to organisation and there is no standardised template (Levine, 2007)). A generic log frame matrix is formed around a 4 x 4 table. A minimum, four categories, arranged horizontally by rows or vertically by columns, which contain information on the programme's "*Goal, Purpose, Activities*, and *Output*" (Kaplan, 2015, no page number).

The log frame presented below in Table 1 was specifically designed for this programme and drawn up in a participatory manner, with the project director and evaluator and discussed with project stakeholders. All suggestions and comments were considered and the resultant structure where the frame matrices were developed at the beginning of the project and served as a resource for the evaluation of the programme. It serves as an evaluation tool for evaluating the six programmes. The Log Frame Matrix is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. The evaluation framework for the LED training and capacity development plan/programme (LTCDP).

The logic of the components	Indicators	Resources and capacity to extend and grow LED in the province – enhance people and provide the capacity for effective, efficient LED initiatives								
		Postgraduate Diploma	Master of Commerce (LED Specialisation) (Coursework) Graduates/LED	Young researchers	Winter school	RLED Champions	Journal	Evaluation	The Integrative mechanisms	
Develop the competency and capacity of LED practitioners, institutions and role-players Business, public and civil society sectors.	Purpose (What is done?)	For LED practitioners to acquire an introduction to LED strategy and management theory	LED practitioners focus on more relevant and real-world problem solving projects	To further attract knowledge development for LED	Increase capacity building and institutional development	To attract and capacitate social entrepreneurs	Knowledge development and dissemination in scholarly journal Indicators two articles per year	Is the plan for what is to be done applicable, practicable and appropriate?	Equip people with intellectual and professional skills	
	Rationale (Why is it done?)	Bridge the gap between knowledge production and dissemination of knowledge to benefit the wider community	Keep abreast with development theories and strategies and LED application – more confident leaders	Extend the Emergent research agenda for LED support and competency in the province.	LED practitioners should actively participate in and lead long-term development strategies	Develop their capacity to work with economic and community development	LED actions informed by research. Case study of LED initiatives published in the journal	Explore the underlying reasons and the emergent reasons for the particular programmes etc.	Connectivity; Visioning opportunity; Boundary crossing	
	Relevance (Does it meet the needs and priorities of the direct and indirect beneficiaries). Are the strategic goals of funder met?	Can LED practitioners use/apply the theoretical understanding to their contexts	Has the research positively contributed to stimulating the required knowledge to enhance the LED process in KZN?	Is a strong network, developed between these researchers (nature of it To what extent is LED embedded across the university?)	Content and strategies used should be linked to the contexts of the LED practitioners Generic examples included	Activities linked to the interest and actions of the social entrepreneurs	Articles address issues from KZN that are LED related and illustrate the diversity and growth of projects	Explore the needs of the participants and the community, goals of funders – are these met, how, why, to what extent, what should be done for this to be met?	Inter-relational skills	
	Effectiveness (The extent to which the project has achieved desired outcomes)	LED practitioners and wider community acting on decisions and solving problems	Relevant research projects that can be translated into practical applications in the province	Increased number of students registering, the pool of new appointments in LED, support projects and consultancy	Can the LED practitioners apply theories and skills to engage in LED activities in the community	The number and level of engagement of the social entrepreneurs in community and economic development	Two articles per journal publication per year	What are the outcomes? Were they achieved? In what ways were they or were they not achieved and why?		

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Efficiency (Management and use of resources to realize desired outputs)	Design and implementation of modules by university staff, LED practitioners plan and implement LED actions in the community	Have all the registered students completed their research projects and are all the projects relevant to this context?	Increase in LED staff and consultants	LED practitioners as leaders in the LED initiatives in the community	Community and economic development initiatives - range and diversity of these	Masters students converting research into publishable articles, academics descriptive curricular and evaluation article	What are the desired outputs? Were the resources and materials appropriate, and relevant for this to be achieved?
Impact (The resultant change in persons, processes and products)	LED practitioners adapt to the contexts in which they work – change in the community	Student – change agent from the research experience – disseminate research for greater change and impact – submission of dissertations	Research student – Academic staff or consultant – number and levels – over the time duration	LED practitioner before the engagement and after – network and action in LED within the community	Social entrepreneurs actively initiating and engaging in the community and economic initiatives/ projects	Number of articles and the use of these during the modules to enrich the literature making it more relevant and research informed	What changes were experienced if any, by participants? Were there changes in the knowledge and action of the community? Were there any process changes and if there were what was the impact of this?
Sustainability (Capacity to operate beyond its capital and start-up funding)	Continuation of programme beyond the four years and continued LED practitioner work in the community	Continuation of the programme with an increase in the number of students registered. 100% graduation output.	The research programme – number of students joining and completing, graduated students, the duration of the programme	Action of LED practitioners extending into the wider community over and beyond the Winter school	Successful as a result of their engagement = communities and entrepreneurs Duration and intensity of this programme	Continued publication from Masters students, diploma students mentored to publish	Duration and extent – what has enabled this to take place in the way it has?

The overall outputs of the project (Direct measurable results of activities undertaken)
An effective, efficient, sustainable LED delivery in KZN through the increase in the growth and capacity of LED practitioners (municipalities), engagement of social entrepreneurs, and increase in LED scholars who will disseminate research and initiate research informed projects through scholarly publications and actions in the field – wider community. This is possible through the funding received from the Government department.

The overall outcomes of the project (changes resulting from such activities)
The increase in knowledge and awareness, attitudes, skills, empowerment of all stakeholders engaged in the LED Training and Capacity Development Plan/ Programme (LTCDP)

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As a methodology, the 'Logical Framework Approach' (LFA) because of its systematic and visual approach was used to evaluate the programme. Of particular significance is the relationship that was considered between the logic of the components and the Integrative mechanisms. The logic of the components, since it is focused on the development of the competency and capacity of LED practitioners, institutions and role-players, business, public and civil society sectors, this may be in a direct or indirect manner. The direct manner would be in terms of the persons engaged in the LED activities in the university context. The integrative mechanisms are concerned with equipping people with intellectual and professional skills of connectivity, visioning opportunity, boundary crossing and inter-relational skills. As future LED persons in the South African context, the focus on the individual in the context is pertinent. Since LED is still regarded in many sectors as an activity to relieve poverty it is incumbent on the LED practitioners to educate and act in accordance with the localised planning and action in that area for co-creating conditions for economic and social development in the locality, which are conducive to the creation of employment opportunities and thereby improving the living standards of the communities.

At the core of the LFA is the phenomenon of change and according to Kaplan (2015, no page number) at its core is a theory of change management, which presents the logical flow of causal outcomes between achievement of a project/programme's activity targets, and the delivery of intended results. The matrices were set up to be aligned to the activity and the intended results. The indicators and their corresponding evaluation questions were developed to respond to the ultimate outcome being measured – is the programme effective, efficient, sustainable in LED delivery in KZN, through the increase in the growth and capacity of LED practitioners and the engagement of social entrepreneurs, an increase in LED scholars who will disseminate research and initiate research informed projects through scholarly publications and actions in the wider community. Examples of these indicators and the evaluation questions appear in the table in columns two and nine, for example, purpose (what is done?) is evaluated by asking the question - Is the plan for what is to be done applicable, practicable and appropriate? For effectiveness (the extent to which the project has achieved desired outcomes), the questions to be responded to are: What are the outcomes? Were they achieved? In what ways were they or were they not achieved and why?

Conclusions

The programme is extensive in that it ventures into the academic, private (business), government and community sectors. The underlying rationale and goal in engaging this diversity of sectors is for socioeconomic transformation in KZN. This transformation cannot be achieved by the development and implementation of policy alone. It is the action and interaction of the stated role-players that is pivotal for any change to be actioned. Local Economic Development (LED) is more than just a set of words for university staff and students, including government officials engaged in the RLED Programme. While the depth of the meaning of the LED among persons stated, varies from the community focused sustainable related aspects to poverty relief aspects (even though this is not appropriate), the words are not meaningless and unknown, there is a buzz and appropriate action, in this regard.

The evaluation indicators of purpose, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability are used to provide further details re this programme, is it achieving what it is meant to achieve? The log frame used for the evaluation of this programme has been used for three successive years in the reporting of the evaluation of the programme. Positive feedback has been received on the use of this log frame as the details and the extensive impacts of these actions in the programme can be identified, described and evaluated.

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