MEDIATING FACTORS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY

David Lumaile Tshanga, Zeleke Worku and Mammo Muchie

Tshwane School for Business and Society
159 Nana Sita Street, Pretoria 0001

Abstract: The aim of study was to assess and evaluate mediating factors that are known to undermine the quality of municipal service delivery in the City of Tshwane, South Africa. Alinejad and Anvari (2019) have shown that effective leadership and good corporate governance are essential for ensuring satisfactory organisational performance. Bakker (2015) has constructed a framework that is valuable for generating employment opportunities in large metropolitan cities by way of enhancing efficiency in municipal service delivery to tax paying business enterprises. The study was conducted by collecting data from 131 employees of the City of Tshwane who are responsible for municipal service delivery. The results showed that 52% of employees fulfilled their performance requirements. Results obtained from factor analysis and ordered logistic regression analysis showed that the quality of municipal services was undermined by lack of tailor-made and skills based training opportunities, low level of formal education, and lack of job satisfaction.

Keywords: City of Tshwane, Mediating factors, Service delivery, Monitoring and evaluation

Introduction and background to study

Clifford-Holmes, Slinger, de Wet and Palmer (2018) have shown the numerous benefits of using monitoring and evaluation techniques for enhancing the quality and efficiency of municipal service delivery in developing municipalities. The City of Tshwane is home to the seat of the South African Government and Pretoria. The quality of municipal services provided to residents, business enterprises and other stakeholders are known to affect viability in business enterprises. Several researchers have conducted surveys in the past decade with a view to identify obstacles that undermine the quality of municipal services delivered by employees of the City of Tshwane. Deng, Sun, Lei and Yang (2019) have identified key obstacles that undermine efficiency in the implementation of municipal projects. Examples of such obstacles are failure to adhere to good governance and good leadership principles. Worku (2015) has pointed out the need for effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability by all municipal managers and employees. Fuenzalida and Riccucci (2019) have shown that small, micro and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) often fail due to poor or inadequate municipal services, over-regulation, unnecessary bureaucratic procedures, lack of transparency, lack of good governance, lack of efficiency in the administration and management of license applications, inability to assess and evaluate tax, lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of accounting and auditing and bookkeeping skills, inability to draw up business plans, inability to make oral presentations, inability to network with business rivals and competitors, difficulty in securing loans from commercial banks and micro-lending financial institutions and lack of infrastructure.

The study was conducted in order to assess the potential benefits of tailor-made skills based training programmes to improved performance among employees working in the City of Tshwane. The study was conducted by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analyses. A review of the literature shows that there is a significant relationship between providing tailor-made skills based training programmes to employees and improved performance to clients and stakeholders. The City of Tshwane (2019) has received qualified audit reports from the South African Auditor-General (2019) in the past several years due to factors that are known to affect service quality in local governments and municipalities.

Studies conducted by Khale (2015) and Marivate (2014) have shown that the quality of municipal services provided to customers, ratepayers and newly established small enterprises is a key predictor of sustained growth and economic development. According to Govender (2017), there is a statistically significant association between the perception held by residents about service quality and overall economic growth and development in the major metropolitan cities of South Africa. The study by Hussain, Asif, Jameel and Hwang (2019) has shown that it is

impossible to alleviate unemployment and poverty among the urban population without improving the quality of essential municipal services. Jameel, Asif and Hussain (2019) have pointed out that the rate at which small enterprises grow depends upon the quality of municipal services that are provided routinely.

Findings from the study are vital for improving the quality of essential municipal services that are routinely provided to residents, businesses, clients, stakeholders and the general public. The results are vital for developing training and development plans for the City of Tshwane for improving the current quality of municipal service delivery. The study will propose feasible remedial actions for addressing issues such as poor performance and poor service delivery.

Objectives of study

The research study aims to achieve the following objectives:
- To identify and quantify key predictors of satisfactory municipal service delivery by employees of the City of Tshwane; and
- To assess the degree to which a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme could be used for performance monitoring and evaluation;

Rationale of study

Kundu, Kumar and Gahlawat (2019) have shown the relationship between good leadership and improved performance in service delivery institutions such as the City of Tshwane. The authors have pointed out that monitoring and evaluation techniques must be used for ensuring acceptable service delivery results. The overall quality of essential municipal services provided by employees of the City of Tshwane depends upon socioeconomic factors such as level of education, the provision of skills-based and tailor-made training programmes to employees and the implementation of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme to employees. Khale (2015) has reported that small, micro and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) often fail due to poor or inadequate municipal services, over-regulation, unnecessary bureaucratic procedures, lack of transparency, lack of good governance, lack of efficiency in the administration and management of license applications, inability to assess and evaluate tax, lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of accounting and auditing and bookkeeping skills, inability to draw up business plans, inability to make oral presentations, inability to network with business rivals and competitors, difficulty in securing loans from commercial banks and micro-lending financial institutions and lack of infrastructure. The study aims to assess the degree to which skills based and tailor-made training programmes are helpful in ensuring satisfactory and efficient service delivery by employees of the City of Tshwane.

Literature review

Ma and Zheng (2019) have shown that the ability of small, micro and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) to make a meaningful contribution to the national economy is often undermined in developing municipalities due to lack of good corporate governance, lack of good leadership and lack of accountability to residents and ratepayers. The authors have shown that about 20% of all units exported by South Africa are produced by small and medium-sized enterprises. Although it is generally accepted that growing the SMME sector of the economy is vital for the alleviation of poverty and unemployment, the support provided to the sector since April 1994 has been grossly inadequate (Marivate, 2014). The South African SMME sector is characterized by lack of entrepreneurial skills (Lee, Choi, Kim & Jung, 2018). The effective use of electronic and online municipal service delivery is vital for shortening waiting time in the course of municipal service delivery. Lien, Cao and Zhou (2017) have shown that municipal service quality depends upon the use of performance appraisal systems and procedures on a regular basis. Cumbersome bureaucracy, red tape, lack of managerial skills and lack of accountability to ratepayers are key causes of protests over poor municipal service delivery (Khale, 2015).

Lanford (2020) has shown that over-regulation and lack of good governance stifle growth and sustained profitability in start-up enterprises. The author has identified barriers to effective municipal service delivery in most developing nations. According to the author, lack of basic entrepreneurial skills, difficulty in securing loans, cumbersome bureaucracy and corruption hinder profitability in the SMME sector. Lungisa, Nzewi and Olutuase (2019) have illustrated the mediating role of planned behaviour on deterrence initiatives aimed at managing local government and workplace requirements for adequate service delivery. The authors have argued that it is essential to provide

tailor-made skills based training opportunities to aspiring entrepreneurs as a means of addressing the critical shortage of business and entrepreneurial skills among black Africans. Reports published by Khale (2015) and Marivate (2014) have shown that poor service delivery by local governments and municipalities as well as lack of adherence to good governance principles stifle sustained development in SMMEs.

Accountability is a key requirement for ensuring value for money. In the absence of accountability to residents and ratepayers, municipal employees often fail to meet performance related goals and objectives. This often leads to protests over poor service delivery standards. The task of ensuring adequate service delivery by all municipal employees and managers can be adequately met by rolling out monitoring and evaluation techniques that are used in large metropolitan cities for ensuring satisfactory municipal service delivery. In order to ensure profitability and viability in SMMEs operating in the City of Tshwane, it is necessary to ensure highly efficient municipal service delivery. Mahmood, Hee, Yin and Hamli (2018) have shown that the assessment of performance at the workplace on a regular basis must be conducted by using clearly defined key performance areas (KPAs) and key performance indicators (KPIs). There are KPAs and KPIs that are directly relevant to the basic needs of SMMEs. It is possible to reduce the high rate of failure and bankruptcy in SMMEs by enhancing the quality of municipal service delivery in the City of Tshwane. Marivate (2014) has shown that addressing the underlying causes of failure in start-up SMMEs in the City of Tshwane requires the enhancement of municipal service delivery.

Mishra and Geleta (2020) have shown that skills based training programmes are essential for improving service quality standards in areas such as water and lights, road maintenance, finance, tax collection and waste management. According to the authors, the training of employees must be aligned to key performance areas and indicators. Such a goal could only be achieved by assessing the training needs of employees. In this regard, Olanipekun, Xia, Hon and Darko (2018) have proposed a guideline that could be used for aligning the training needs of employees with key performance areas. The author has pointed out that performance monitoring and evaluation should be used as a tool for aligning the training needs of employees with key performance areas of employees.

The City of Tshwane is home to a large number of businesses and government departments. The City of Tshwane has been operating as a metropolitan municipality since 2000. It is located in Gauteng Province and includes Pretoria. The City of Tshwane is a result of a merger between various local municipalities such as Metsweding, Cullinan and Bronkhorstspruit, and is the largest metropolitan municipality in Southern Africa. It comprises 7 regions, 105 wards, 210 councillors and residents estimated at 3 million (City of Tshwane, 2019). Because of its size and composition, it is classified as Category A Grade 6 Urban Municipality under the Municipal Demarcation Board in terms of Section 4 of Local Government Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998). Its management comprises an executive mayoral system (City of Tshwane, 2019).

The formation of the new City of Tshwane was consistent with the Gauteng Global City Region Strategy aimed at reducing the number of municipalities in the province and instituting new structures by 2016. In line with the new structures, the Mayoral Executive System combines with a ward participatory system along with Section 2 (g) of the Determination of Types of Municipality Act, 2000 (Act 1 of 2000). These change processes were geared towards local government transformation and aimed at enhancing the performance of employees in their positions of providing service delivery (Patel, Burns, Dhingra, Tarver, Kohrt & Lund, 2018). The authors have shown the significant relationship between poor overall economic growth and poor municipal services. According to the authors, it is essential to improve and maintain the quality of municipal services in order to successfully grow SMMEs and other economic activities. Ranchordas (2020) has shown that smart cities are based on highly efficient municipal services in which the performance of municipal employees is monitored, assessed and evaluated at regular intervals. The authors have argued that the provision of essential municipal services to ratepayers and residents on regular basis is a key requirement for promoting social and economic development in developing municipalities.

The efficient provision of municipal services remains a key priority as stated in the South African Municipalities Charter (City of Tshwane, 2019). Walker (2016) has shown that local municipalities often fail to provide satisfactory services to residents and ratepayers due to lack of accountability, lack of good governance, lack of skills, and failure to respect the basic needs of tax-paying SMMEs operating in local municipalities. Wasserman, Chuma and Bosch (2018) have shown the need for performance appraisal at every local municipality as a means of alleviating protests over poor municipal service delivery. The authors have pointed out that South African Local Government Association (SALGA) needs to adopt a policy that promotes the use of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system in every local municipality in order to minimise the abuse of public resources and money. Webster and

Leleux (2018) have shown the benefits of smart governance systems and applications for cities such as the City of Tshwane. According to the authors, it is essential to use KPAs and KPIs for assessing the quality of municipal service delivery in every local municipality on weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Training and mentorship should be provided to employees who lack skills and efficiency at the workplace. It is also helpful to prioritise the basic needs of SMMEs that pay tax and employ people. For this reason, it is essential to assess, evaluate and scrutinise the performance of employees working in local municipalities.

The potential benefits of skills based training opportunities to employees of large municipalities such as the City of Tshwane have been shown in studies conducted by YuSheng and Ibrahim (2019) in Ghana. The authors have shown that the ability of the retail industry to grow and create jobs depends on the degree of efficiency in municipal service delivery. The study has shown that SMMEs often fail due to poor or inadequate municipal services, over-regulation, unnecessary bureaucratic procedures, lack of transparency, lack of good governance, lack of efficiency in the administration and management of license applications, inability to assess and evaluate tax, lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of accounting and auditing and bookkeeping skills, inability to draw up business plans, inability to make oral presentations, inability to network with business rivals and competitors, difficulty in securing loans from commercial banks and micro-lending financial institutions and lack of infrastructure. Zarychta, Andersson, Root, Menken and Grillos (2019) have assessed the consequences of failure to adhere to good governance and good leadership principles in local municipalities, and have found that participatory leadership is highly valuable for enhancing the quality of municipal services that are provided to SMMEs operating in large metropolitan municipalities.

Methods and materials of study

The quality of leadership was assessed by using a composite index developed by Zhang, Kang and Hu (2020). The design of study was cross-sectional and descriptive. The sample size of study was equal to 131 (119 questionnaires + 12 in-depth interviews). Purposive sampling was used for selecting eligible respondents working for the City of Tshwane in various Departments. A structured, pre-tested and validated questionnaire of study was completed by 119 municipal employees. In-depth interviews were conducted with an additional 12 municipal managers, directors and deputy directors working for the City of Tshwane. Quantitative data analyses were performed by using frequency tables, cross-tab analyses, factor analysis and ordered logistic regression analysis (Daniel & Cross, 2018). Qualitative data analysis was performed by using coding, tallying, text analysis and triangulation (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013).

Results of study

Table 1 shows the general characteristics of the 131 respondents who took part in the study. The table shows that 49% of respondents have had past training opportunities. The percentage of employees with satisfactory performance was equal to 52%. It can be seen from the table that 60% of respondents have matric level academic qualifications. The percentage of respondents with degree level qualifications is only 14%. The table shows that 60% of residents rent property. The table shows that 61% of respondents earn salaries of 10, 000 Rand or less. It can be seen from the table that respondents who took part in the study are characterized by low level of skills, low level of formal education, and lack of expertise in areas that require advanced operational competence in municipal service delivery.

Table 1: General characteristics of respondents (n=131)

Characteristics of respondents	Frequency and percentage
Past training opportunity	Yes: 64 (49%)
	No: 67 (51%)
Performance in most recent quarter	Adequate: 68 (52%)
	Inadequate: 63 (48%)
Job satisfaction	Satisfied: 79 (60%)
	Not satisfied: 52 (40%)
Highest level of education	Matric or below: 71 (54%)

	Certificate or diploma: 30 (23%)
	Bachelor's degree: 22 (17%)
	Master's degree: 4 (3%)
	Doctorate or more: 4 (3%)
Gender	Male: 68 (52%)
	Female: 63 (48%)
Age category	20 years or less: 4 (3%)
	21 to 30 years: 33 (25%)
	31 to 40 years: 49 (37%)
	41 to 50 years: 35 (27%)
	51 years or more: 10 (8%)
Duration of service	Less than 5 years: 16 (12%)
	5 to 10 years: 34 (26%)
	11 to 20 years: 29 (22%)
	21 or more: 52 (40%)
Race	Black or African: 116 (89%)
	White: 8 (6%)
	Coloured: 5 (4%)
	Asian: 2 (2%)
Marital status	Single: 56 (43%)
	Married: 42 (32%)
	Divorced: 5 (4%)
	Windowed: 4 (3%)
	Others: 24 (18%)
Perception of low salary	Yes: 62 (47%)
	No: 69 (53%)
Perception of lack of appreciation	Yes: 29 (22%)
	No: 102 (78%)
Perception of poor career development	Yes: 31 (24%)
	No: 100 (76%)
Perception of low salary	Yes: 42 (32%)
	No: 89 (68%)
Perception of lack of incentives	Yes: 51 (39%)
	No: 80 (61%)
Negative perception of performance evaluation	Yes: 47 (36%)
	No: 84 (64%)
Total	n = 131 (100%)

Table 2 shows results obtained from cross-tab analyses. At the 5% level of significance, the results show that inadequate performance is significantly associated with lack of training opportunities, low level of formal education, lack of job satisfaction, lack of performance monitoring and evaluation, short duration of employment, perception of low salary, perception of poor employee benefits, perception of poor career development, perception of lack of incentives for employees, and perception of lack of appreciation from customers, in a decreasing order of strength.

Table 2: Results obtained from Pearson's Chi-square tests of associations (n=131)

Inadequate performance	Observed Pearson chi-square value	P-value
Lack of training opportunities	16.9754	0.000***
Low level of formal education	16.2946	0.000***
Lack of job satisfaction	16.0558	0.000***
Lack of performance monitoring and evaluation	14.3888	0.000***
Short duration of employment	13.4939	0.000***
Perception of low salary	13.3229	0.001**
Perception of poor employee benefits	13.3229	0.002**

Perception of poor career development	11.3609	0.004**
Perception of lack of incentives for employees	11.3295	0.007**
Perception of lack of appreciation from customers	10.9430	0.017*

Legend: Significance levels at * P<0.05; ** P<0.01; *** P<0.001

Results obtained from ordered logistic regression analysis

Table 3 shows results obtained from logit analysis. At the 5% level of significance, the results show that inadequate performance is significantly associated with lack of training opportunities, low level of formal education, and lack of job satisfaction, in a decreasing order of strength.

Table 3: Results obtained from ordered logistic regression analysis (n=131)

Factors that affect inadequate performance	Odds Ratio	95% C. I.	P-value
Lack of training opportunities	6.80	(4.87, 8.36)	0.000
Low level of formal education	4.12	(2.89, 6.02)	0.000
Lack of job satisfaction	3.76	(2.28, 5.69)	0.000

The odds ratio of the variable lack of training opportunities is equal to 6.80. This indicates that an employee who is not trained on the job is 6.80 times as likely to underperform in comparison with another employee who is trained on the job. The odds ratio of the variable low level of formal education is equal to 4.12. This indicates that an employee who has a low level of education (matric level or less) is 4.12 times as likely to underperform in comparison with another employee whose level of formal education is high (above matric level). The odds ratio of the variable low level of job satisfaction is equal to 3.76. This indicates that an employee who has no job satisfaction is 3.76 times as likely to underperform in comparison with another employee who has job satisfaction.

Results obtained from factor analysis

Factor analysis (Loewenthal and Lewis, 2018) was used for identifying and quantifying key predictors of inadequate performance among employees. The following procedures were followed while performing factor analysis (Computation of the correlation matrix for all variables, Extraction of initial factors, and Rotation of the extracted factors as a terminal solution). Factor analysis produced 3 influential predictor variables that influenced inadequate performance by employees. Factor analysis is useful in cases where the correlation among the variables of study is significant. The correlation matrix in this study showed that several pairs of variables had correlations exceeding 0.3, thereby showing that factor analysis was appropriate. In this study, a cutoff point of 0.3 was used as is recommended by Loewenthal and Lewis (2018). The Cronbach Alpha test for internal consistency was used for testing the suitability of the 29-item structured questionnaire of study. The test gave a value of 0.881 and an associated level of significance that was smaller than 0.001. Furthermore, Bartlett's test of Sphericity was used for testing the adequacy of the correlation matrix, and gave an estimate of 0.848, a figure that was greater than the cut-off point of 0.5, thereby confirming the suitability of factor analysis.

Table 4: Estimates obtained from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy	**0.848**
Observed value of chi-square statistic for KMO test	1108.07
Bartlett's Test of sphericity degrees of freedom	248
P-value for Bartlett's Test of sphericity degrees of freedom	0.000

Table 5 shows the total variance explained by the top 3 influential variables of study.

Table 5: Results estimated from factor analysis

Factors that affect inadequate performance	Eigen value	Percentage of explained variance in viability	Cumulative percentage of explained variance
Lack of training opportunities	5.119	39.159	39.159
Low level of formal education	4.708	27.308	66.467
Lack of job satisfaction	3.619	13.650	80.117

The results shown in Table 5 provide estimates for the percentage of variance explained by the 3 factors that were extracted by using the principal axis factoring method. Each of the 3 extracted factors has an Eigen value of magnitude greater than 1, thereby indicating its level of importance in terms of accounting for viability in business. The 3 extracted factors collectively account for 80.117% of the total variability in viability (the dependent variable of study). Based on the estimates shown in Table 5 above, it can be concluded that inadequate performance is significantly associated with lack of training opportunities, low level of formal education, and lack of job satisfaction, in a decreasing order of strength. The 3 factors listed above accounted for 80.117% of total variability. This figure is above 75%.

Summary of key results obtained from in-depth interviews

The key findings obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with 12 employees of the City of Tshwane could be summarised as follows:

- Providing training opportunities to employees on a regular basis is vital, and needs to be adequately planned, resourced and funded so that all employees could benefit from such training programmes.
- Training programmes must be modelled after key performance areas and key performance indicators as a means of saving valuable resources and time.
- Promotion opportunities must not be given to employees who fail to improve their performance after taking a training opportunity.
- A comprehensive performance monitoring and evaluation programme must be implemented with a view to identify the training needs and priorities of employees.
- All sorts of complaints made by customers on poor service delivery must be duly investigated by suitably qualified and independently appointed bodies in order to address performance-related problems promptly and efficiently.
- Employees who had a training opportunity were relatively more productive and better motivated at work in comparison with employees who did not have training opportunities. Training and development opportunities provided to employees by the City of Tshwane were not aligned to the skills needed for performing Key Performance Areas (KPAs). Although the municipality continues to provide training via its respective departments, its training academy and external service providers, there is rampant service delivery protests in City of Tshwane particularly in the townships.
- The evaluation of performance of employees was plagued by the perception of racism, partisanship and political interference.
- There was an acute shortage of adequately trained experts in key areas of service delivery. Although the City of Tshwane has initiated internship and learnership programs that are aimed at offering training and development programmes, such efforts were not implemented vigorously.
- Performance monitoring and evaluation was not done in the context of seeking to improve service delivery but to increase salaries and determine whether bonuses could be awarded.
- There was insufficient follow-up after training and development programs to determine if the performance of trainees has improved significantly.
- Regionalisation was hampered by lack of trained, suitably qualified and dedicated personnel.

Key findings of study

The study has shown that inadequate performance is significantly associated with lack of training opportunities, low level of formal education, and lack of job satisfaction, in a decreasing order of strength. Results obtained from in-depth interviews have also shown that the City of Tshwane lacks effective monitoring and following up systems for training and development. Training and development programmes need to be aligned to the key performance areas of employees. The City of Tshwane is characterized by erratic and inept approaches to training and development which result in the absence of accountability and necessary resources for ensuring employees are given power to and adequately prepared to deal with the service delivery challenges. There is a need for a strategic, well-planned, needs-based, outcomes-based and competency-based approach to training and development which is closely linked to the expected performance of municipal employees as stated in the IDP and allied policy documents.

Recommendations of study

Based on findings obtained from the study, it is recommended to the City of Tshwane to develop and implement a comprehensive performance monitoring and evaluation programme as a means of ensuring adequate performance and service delivery by all employees of the City of Tshwane. It is strategically beneficial for the City of Tshwane to provide employees with career growth paths and development programmes. Tailor-made and skills based training opportunities should be provided to employees as a means of providing them with incentives and motivation at work. The training programmes must be aligned with the operational and business needs and requirements of customers of the City of Tshwane. The City of Tshwane should forge strategic partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders such as research and academic institutions with a view to acquire suitable training and development programmes.

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