

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**THE ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WITHIN
ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY**

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DECLARATION

I, Hazel Nomathemba Langa, declare that:

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ABSTRACT

The local government sphere is mandated with ensuring the delivery of basic services to the citizens as it is the closest to local communities. The delivery of services cannot take place in an efficient and effective manner if there is poor communication between the citizen and municipalities. Accordingly, the government of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) promulgated various pieces of legislation in an effort to strengthen and promote communication in local government. Disregarding the prescripts of legislation has left many local communities feeling despondent as their needs are not prioritised by municipalities which has led to violent service delivery protests across the country that could have been avoided through effective communication in local government. Hence, this study on communication in local government with a focus on eThekweni Municipality looks at the conceptual, theoretical and legislative framework governing communication in local government with the aim to enable local municipalities to strengthen communication with local citizens. A qualitative research methodology was adopted and an interview schedule was constructed targeting senior managers of eThekweni Municipality. From the data collected, the researcher identified themes which were in line with the research objectives and research questions, hence, a thematic analysis of the data collected is presented in the study. The findings revealed three major factors impeding the effectiveness of communication in the Municipality as the poor response and apathy from citizens that stifles participatory communication; political dynamics and cynicism which lead to messages being viewed as propaganda; and budgetary constraints which dictate the level of engagement with local communities. The study recommended strengthening of ward structures as they are the closest to the communities; growing the use of digital and online communication tools in order for the City to keep abreast with the changing communication consumption patterns of the citizens; a concerted effort is required to reach out to despondent citizens as the study discovered that there was a lack of responsiveness to communication efforts; and a need to strengthen the associations with the media is vital as they drive messages to masses.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Auditor General
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DCM	Deputy City Manager
EDP	Economic Development and Planning
GCIS	Government Communications and Information Systems
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
LAP	Local Area Plan
LGTAS	Local Government Turn-around Strategy
LTDF	Long-term Development Framework
MEC	Member of Executive Council
MILE	Municipal Institute of Learning
NERSA	National Energy Regulator of South Africa
PRO	Public Relations Officer
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMS	Short Message System

DEFINITION OF TERMS

City – According to Coombes (2014) and United Nations (2016:1) a city is defined as a place where large numbers of people live and work with economic hubs and governance systems in place. In the context of this study this word city will be referring to eThekweni Municipality when used with C in upper case.

Cluster – This is an administrative sector of eThekweni Municipality that is arranged into ten large groups. In the context of this study the word Cluster will be used when referring to any of the following administrative groups: Community and Emergency Services; Corporate and Human Resources; Finance; Governance and International Relations; Economic Development and Planning; Human Settlements, Engineering and Transportation; Strategic Management; Trading Services; Chief Operations; and Chief Audit (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

Communication – Keyton (2011) cited in Lunenburg (2010) define communication as a process of transferring information from one person to another. In the context of this dissertation this term will be used to describe the dissemination and sharing of information as well as engagements between the municipality and local communities.

Local Community – This term refers to a group of citizens residing within a municipality who are dependent on the municipality for services and comprises members of the business sector as well as civil society. This group shares common norms, values, religion, beliefs and identity (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community>).

Local Municipality – This is a government structure that works closely with the citizens and it is responsible for the delivery of basic services to local communities (www.salga.org.za). In the context of this study this term will be used interchangeably with local government.

Unit – This term will be used when referring to individual sections that form part of the large administrative structures known as Clusters in eThekweni Municipality (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

Ward Committee – This term will be used when referring to an important community structure which facilitates communication between local communities and local municipalities (SALGA 2011:22).

Ward Councillor – This term will refer to the chairperson of the ward committee (SALGA 2011).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

South Africa is in the transformational stage to equalize the imbalances of the apartheid government (RSA, 1998a). Citizens of South Africa have worked hard to transform the country since the establishment of democracy in 1994 when the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela became the first democratically elected President of the Republic after 27 years of political incarceration. The key feature of the democratic South Africa was the introduction and adoption of the Constitution which was approved by its first Constitutional Court, in 1996. The citizens of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) recognize the Constitution as the uppermost legal framework in the Republic as it was crafted with contributions from South Africans who liberated the country (RSA, 1996:1).

The Constitution provides a framework on how the RSA is to be governed through the three spheres of government, that is, the Legislative Authorities, the Executive Authorities as well as the Judicial Authorities. According to RSA (1996), the Executive Authorities comprises of national, followed by provincial and lastly local spheres. Executive Authorities which sit under parliament govern the Republic through national government and they are the law making authority of South Africa. Laws governing the province rest within the provincial legislature. In addition, the local government sphere ensures the provision of essential services to citizens at grass root level (RSA, 1996:77).

The focus of this study is on communication within local government as an important tool that could be used to foster development and basic service delivery, thus reducing the number of protests and dissatisfaction within communities.

1.2 Significance of the study

The study assesses the role of communication within local government with a special focus on eThekweni Municipality. It is mentioned in the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 that it is within the rights of the members of the constituency to provide input in decision-making processes of their cities, in return, to be given prompt responses either verbally or in writing and to be kept update on decisions that impact them. On the other hand

section 6(2), Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 stipulates: The duty of municipality administrators includes provision of accurate information to the citizens and to engage them on the activities of the municipality. Section 195(1) of RSA (1996:103) requires that the government administrator must provide members of the local community with accurate information, timeously. Municipalities like corporate organisations need to adhere to the code of good governance outlined in the King III Report which is underpinned on various principles including the importance of transparent and effective communication in building and maintaining relationships.

Taking cognizance of various pieces of legislation guiding local government, eThekwini Municipality views communication as an important management function which is key to successful running of the municipality. Hence, its Communications Unit uses communication as a strategic tool that demonstrates the Municipality's commitment to engaging meaningfully with its various stakeholders (eThekwini Municipality, 2009:1).

1.3 Background to the study

The prerogative of municipalities is to deliver basic services to the citizens located within close proximity to local communities. However, it would be a challenge for municipalities to fully understand and appreciate the needs of communities if there was a lack of communication between the stakeholders. While parliament has passed many laws on how communication is to be managed at local government level, many municipalities are grappling with this issue due partly to disregard of the regulations or other factors impeding on effective communication. The statistics provided by RSA (2011) and eThekwini Municipality (2017/2018) reveal that eThekwini Municipality services a population of approximately 3.44 million citizens, thus the purpose of this study is to explore how communication efforts are carried out in local government with a special focus on the City of eThekwini.

1.4 Problem statement

Local government is faced with many challenges and one identified in the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 is the need to rebuild relations between municipalities and the local communities they serve. It continues to state that municipalities should particularly pay more attention to the needs of groups within the community who tend to be marginalized (RSA, 1998b). Other challenges facing municipalities were identified by Kanyane (2014:99) as the

failure and incapacity of local government to deliver basic services to constituencies which has led to violent protests due to a collapse in communication between municipalities and local citizens. Kanyane (2014:104) acknowledged that the delivery of services is a complex task, however, it could be achieved through participation and effective communication between multiple stakeholders. Madumo (2015:163) cited the poor management of financial systems by municipalities as a contributor to the lack of service delivery. This phenomenon is manifested in local municipalities including eThekweni Municipality having failed to collect rates for services rendered partly due to poor communication with the rate payers (*The Mercury*, May 2018).

The City of eThekweni is not immune to the challenges facing local government, hence, this study seeks to assess the effectiveness of communication within the eThekweni Municipality and examine the legislative and policy framework for communication in local government.

1.5 The aim of the study

The study aims to assess the effectiveness of communication within the City of eThekweni against the backdrop of the legal and policy framework provided by national parliament.

1.6 The research objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To examine legislation and policy frameworks for communication within local government.
- To determine the flow of information between the various municipal departments and the citizens of eThekweni metropolitan Municipality.
- To identify the various types of communication tools used by eThekweni Municipality when communicating with the citizens.
- To understand the factors that impact on the effectiveness of communication in eThekweni Municipality.
- To suggest approaches that can be used to improve the communication strategy of eThekweni Municipality.

1.7 Research questions

The specific research questions to be answered by the study are closely aligned with the objectives of the study and have been formulated with the intention of addressing the following issues:

- What is the legislative and policy framework governing communication in local government?
- How does information flow between the various municipal departments and the citizens?
- What types of communication tools are used by eThekweni Municipality?
- What are the contributing factors that impact the effectiveness of communication in eThekweni Municipality?
- What strategies can be put in place to promote communication in local government?

1.8 The contribution of the study

A number of scholars have conducted studies in the field of communication, however communication in relation to the local government sphere has been neglected (<https://sacomm.org.za/archive/>). Hence, this study on the assessment of communication in eThekweni Municipality will contribute to knowledge development in the area of communication in local government which is also one of the major reasons for public protests in South Africa. The study is expected to identify the gaps in the literature relating to communication strategies in the local government sector. It will also address the current issues of the eThekweni Municipality in terms of the flow of information which could assist other government institutions facing similar challenges.

1.9 The research methodology

Cooper and Schindler (2003) define research design as the overall approach of the research process from the collection and analysis of data. For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted a qualitative research methodology and an interview schedule was constructed in English. EThekweni Municipality was used as a case study in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the processes used when communicating with stakeholders in this local government.

One-on-one interviews were used as a data collection tool from a purposive sample of senior leaders who play a leading role in the communication process. The interview schedule was aligned to the objectives of the study and senior administrators participated in the study. The participants comprised of Deputy City Managers, Heads of Units, Deputy Heads of Units, Senior Managers and a Public Relations Manager. The researcher used the manual qualitative data analysis techniques noting patterns and trends and drawing conclusions. Research data will be secured, stored and disposed in line with the University of KwaZulu-Natal's research and information management policies and guidelines under the custody of the Graduate School of Business and Leadership as the custodian of the degree for which the study is intended.

1.10 Outline of chapters

Chapter one: This chapter introduces the study and provides a background of the challenges that are evident within local municipalities, problem statement and a summary of the research methodology.

Chapter two: This chapter provides an overview of the study area as well as the state of municipalities in South Africa. It further focuses on the strides made and challenges to be addressed.

Chapter three: An assessment of literature with municipalities focusing on communication is therefore discussed. The legislative framework and scholarly journals were consulted for the general overview of how communication is managed in local government level.

Chapter four: The research design and methodology is discussed while aims and objectives, location, population, sampling strategy, data analysis and research design are covered. Towards the end of the chapter, it is revealed how the research instrument was constructed and administered.

Chapter five: The data collected and its analysis are presented in this chapter taking into account the scholarly work discussed in chapter three as well as the study objectives.

Chapter six: The findings of the study are presented in this chapter and recommendations for strengthening communication in local government are tabled. This chapter also proposes areas to be considered for future research studies.

1.11 Conclusion

This introductory chapter unpacked the intent of the researcher to assess the effectiveness of communication in local government using eThekweni Municipality as a focus area. The chapter highlighted the aim and objectives the study; the conceptual, theoretical and legislative framework that will enable the researcher to understand communication in local government. The research methodology to be applied in the study was also discussed briefly. The next chapter will provide an overview of the state of local government in RSA.

CHAPTER 2: THE STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AND GOVERNANCE WITHIN ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the governance arrangements in eThekwin Municipality in an attempt to provide an outlook of the area researched. The state of affairs within South Africa's municipalities is explored with the intention to recognize the significant strides achieved in the establishment of local government while noting the challenges and gaining an understating of the role of strategies put in place within local government in order to improve the delivery of services to local residents.

2.2 Local government in South Africa

Government's background paper on local municipalities entitled: "Twenty Year Review - South Africa 1994-2014" outlines the advancements towards the realisation of an effective and efficient local government enjoyed by many South Africans today. The journey of transforming and establishing a unified and coherent system of local government from the one inherited from the apartheid regime which was characterized by unfairness and lack of accountability has been a complex one.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 was one of the early pieces of legislation which promoted geographical and racial segregation of South Africans which resulted in a large population being excluded from participating in local government. Local government then was not participatory instead it decided what was to be delivered to the majority of the citizens which was later corrected in 2009 through the establishment of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) whose tagline is: "*Local Governance is Everyone's Business*". This stand was supported by du Plessis (2014) when he heeded that the participation of citizens should translate into policy proposals and actions.

Racial segregation led to the spurt of boycotts initiated by the African National Congress and many local and international human rights groups, sporting bodies, academic bodies, various industries and governments which put the apartheid government under pressure to transform. This prompted the establishment of the Local Government National Forum and later the Local Government Transition Act, 209 of 1993 which provided guidelines for restructuring local

government. During this transitional period the development of the South African Constitution was ongoing until its promulgation in 1996 which was the precursor of the adoption of the White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998a) that provided a vision for local governance to counter the apartheid regime. The introduction of the legislation enabled the consolidation of municipalities from approximately 1200 to 843 municipalities in the late 1990s. This ongoing exercise had established 273 municipalities in 2017.

Despite the rigours of this transition the local government sphere has attained remarkable achievements including the introduction of the electoral system which has promoted accountability, transparency and public participation. Other notable achievements have been realised through initiatives such as Community Development Workers, Batho Pele Principles, Thusong and Sizakala Centres as well as Ward Committees. All these initiatives encourage community participation in decision making and on matters that affect the communities which was never heard of during the apartheid regime.

2.3 Challenges facing local government

While great strides have been attained, a report released in 2009 by COGTA revealed the major challenges facing local government as highlighted below:

2.3.1 Capacity and shortage of skills

Mdlongwa (2014:39) noted that many municipalities in South Africa are faced with the challenge of filling vacancies with suitable candidates who will deliver on its mandate. To mitigate this challenge, municipalities have resorted to engaging the services of consultants which has left local communities disgruntled due to lack of consultation in matters that affect their daily lives. In the long run this problem resulted in poor service delivery linked to the poor understanding of local needs by consultants who often do not have a sincere interest in the wellbeing of local communities but are driven by financial gains (Reddy, 2010).

Over the years national government has attempted to address this problem through the introduction of programmes including the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) and the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) which were aimed at fast tracking the skills of South Africans for economic development and growth. As years progressed the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was introduced as a

strategic remedy aimed at eradicating poverty rates and reducing the unemployment rates through the use of work opportunities coupled with project based training (RSA, 2015:1).

Despite these interventions local government still faces the challenge of skills shortage and capacity in local government. According to RSA (2009a:32) and Ndzelu (2016) problems facing municipalities are exacerbated by the lack of professional associations as well as unstructured connections that exist within municipalities and institutions of higher learning which often occur on *ad hoc* basis. Govender and Reddy (2012:72) acknowledge that RSA has sound policies for a developing state, however, progress is hindered by skills shortages in the form of human resources, financial, knowledge and technological skills needed to strategically develop local government. They raised concerns in that councillors are often lagging behind in important decision making processes. Similar sentiments were shared by the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for COGTA in KwaZulu-Natal, when the 2018/2019 Budget Policy Speech was delivered. The MEC raised concerns that among the 2016 intake of 1846 councillors in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, only 322 had obtained a matriculation certificate, 238 did not have this qualification, others had no basic education (COGTA, 2018/2019). This statement by the MEC revealed the source of most challenges facing local government – the lack of capacity to efficiently and strategically manage the affairs of local municipalities which often manifests itself in under expenditure which means non delivery of services or sees municipalities opting to hire consultants to assist with the delivery of services at exorbitant costs taking away from the needs of local communities.

It is encouraging, however, to see local municipalities attempting to address this issue as eThekweni Municipality has created the Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE) as a vehicle to coordinate its research and learning efforts with neighbouring institutions of higher learning. MILE is built on four pillars being:

- Capacity development;
- Learning collaborations and networks;
- Research partnerships within institutions of higher learning; and
- Technical support for municipalities

The programmes offered by the MILE initiative are targeted at municipal practitioners including officials at a technical and managerial level as well as councillors (<http://www.mile.org.za/Pages/default.aspx>).

2.3.2 Governance

According to RSA (2014a), the government laid a solid foundation for the governance of local government through the promulgation of various legislation and guidelines such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the White Paper on Local Government of 9 March 1998, the Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act 27 of 1998, the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, the Local Government: Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003, to name but a few, as well as various policies which guided the formation of municipal systems (Nkuna, 2013; RSA, 2014a:19).

Other notable achievements in governance include the establishment of the COGTA, Project Consolidate and the Local Government: Five-year Strategic Agenda – all these initiatives were created to oversee and support municipalities to deliver a better life for South Africans (RSA, 2014a:21).

Although comprehensive systems are in place for good governance, the report focusing on the state of local government (RSA, 2009a:10; RSA, 2014a:30) revealed the following as key contributors to poor governance:

- Existing conflicts between politicians and administrators
- The inability of councillors to manage the local government demands
- Imbalance of power between politicians and the municipal councils
- The division of power between the executive and the legislators
- Poor overall monitoring and oversight.

Reddy *et al.* (2015:167) described good governance as “the best process for formulating and implementing decisions in the public sector” and it is characterised by accountability, transparency, responsiveness and it is participatory in nature. These characteristics are vital components that contribute to effective communication but as has been stated above these are lacking in local government.

2.3.3 Accountability

Local municipalities are required to account to citizens as well as tax payers on the mandate assigned to them and how the financial and other resources are used to deliver the mandate. Legislation such as the Local Government: Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003 is an example of the mechanisms that are in place to account for proper financial management (RSA, 2014a:22). On the other hand, the establishment of statutory institutions including the intergovernmental forums, ward committees and other non-statutory mechanisms are all comprehensive systems aimed at ensuring transparency, accountability and good governance.

The King III Principles on Transparency and Accountability recommend effective communication with stakeholders and reporting that is clear, concise and easily understandable as the back bone of accountability (King III Report, 2009:103). While Govender and Reddy (2014:164) recommend that the monitoring and evaluation strategies are effective management tools that can be used by institutions to improve the manner in which tasks are undertaken to achieve the organisation's vision and mission. Despite having sound systems in place, local government is still struggling in the area of accountability due to poor functionality and effectiveness of ward committees, poor communication with communities and a lack of transparency in mayoral committee work (RSA, 2014a:33).


The Auditor General's (AG) report of 2015-16 revealed minimal improvements within local government audit results and therefore called for leadership accountability. The AG further highlighted the need to improve the management of municipal affairs through prioritizing the demands of local communities, establishing regulatory controls and adequate financial management and compliance for the legislation governing the management of municipalities was crucial in the improvement of municipalities' performance (RSA, 2017:1). The recommendations of the AG will only be achieved by the adherence of local municipalities to legislation.

2.3.4 Financial Constraints

In an effort to introduce controls within local government level, the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 was disseminated by parliament. Even though financial well-being of municipalities has been achieved it is still disheartening to know that many continue to get qualified audits from the AG due to non-compliance with legislation as

well as wasteful expenditure by local officials (Mdlongwa, 2014:39). Table 1 shows the audit outcomes of municipalities by the AG, in 2017.

Table 1: Movement in audit outcomes from 2014-2016

Movement in audit outcomes from 2014-15 to 2015-16				
	42	185	36	15
	Improved	Unchanged	Regressed	Outstanding audits
Unqualified with no findings = 49	2 (DM), 7 (LM)	1 (MET) 12 (DM) 27 (LM)		
Unqualified with findings = 122	3 (DM), 16 (LM) 2 (LM)	2 (MET) 11 (DM) 75 (LM)	2 (MET) 4 (DM) 7 (LM)	1 (MET) 2 (LM)
Qualified with findings = 63	1 (LM) 8 (LM)	2 (MET) 4 (DM) 38 (LM)	1 (LM) 3 (DM), 6 (LM)	3 (LM)
Adverse with findings = 4	2 (DM), 1 (LM)		1 (LM)	
Disclaimed with findings = 25		2 (DM) 11 (LM)	1 (LM) 10 (LM) 1 (DM)	9 (LM)
MET – metropolitan municipality DM – district municipality LM – local municipality Colour of number indicates audit opinion from which municipality has moved				

Source: Auditor General Report (2015-16:4)

According to the expenditure budget municipalities were awarded R378 billion for the period 2015-16. Only 19% of the municipalities had clean audit reports representing R70,9 billion of the budget, on the other hand 57% had unqualified opinions representing R218 billion of the total budget. Local governance with qualified audit reports made up R53,4 billion (14%) of the total budget, while those with contrary and renounced opinions represented R15,2 billion (5%). The municipalities with unresolved audits constitute R20,5 billion (5%) of the total expenditure budget (RSA, 2017:4).

According to Reddy (2010:78), one of the contributors to financial difficulties is that municipalities are often unable to generate adequate revenue from collecting taxes from local citizens and this task is often carried out by national government and through this process the needs of local municipalities are neglected. This problem has become evident in the collection

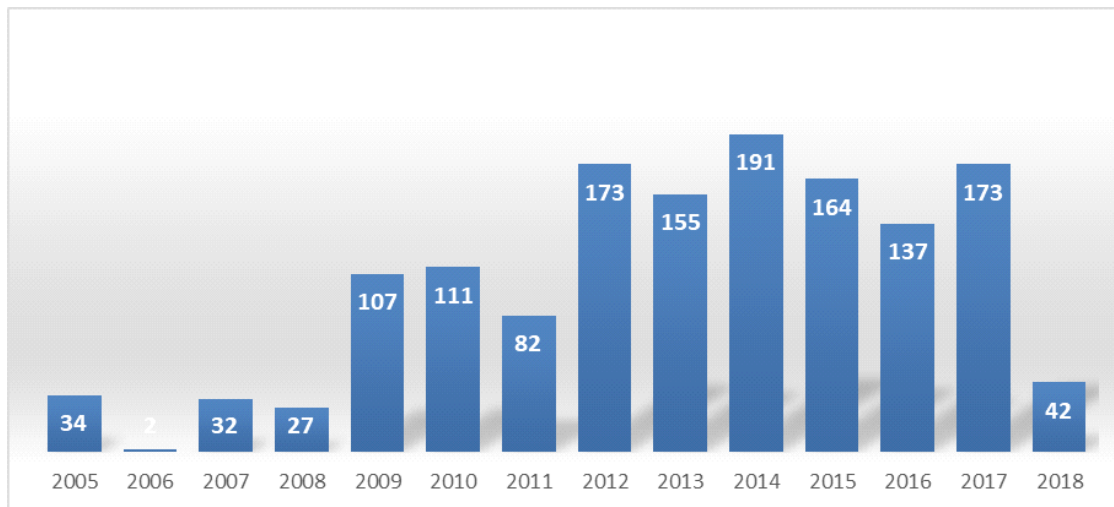
of revenue in certain municipalities in Mpumalanga, Free State and Gauteng which have accumulated the Eskom debt for example which has resulted in power cuts (*Daily Maverick*, February 2018). While eThekweni Municipality is a reasonably managed municipality, it is not immune to the challenge with R9.2billion having been reported as being owed to the municipality by the residents, local businesses and even government departments (*The Mercury*, May 2018). This lack of responsibility and commitment by local citizens to pay for services is detrimental to service delivery and is a contributor to communication breakdown and eventually service delivery protests.

2.3.5 Service delivery problems

Chapter 7, 152(b) of the Republic's Constitution stipulates that local government is to ensure that the delivery of services to local residents occurs in an efficient and sustainable manner. These services are wide ranging from the provision of housing, infrastructure, schools to health services through the collection of revenue from tax payers. It is encouraging to note the great improvement in the lives of local citizens when looking back to the dawn of democracy in 1994; more people have access to clean water, roads, schools, health services, housing and other essential services. However, there are still pockets of poor service delivery as municipalities are inundated by the influx of people moving from the country side to urban areas for economic prospects. Some of the major issues often raised by local communities during service delivery protests include the lack of housing, roads, job opportunities, water, corruption and others (Reddy, 2010:79). RSA (2009a:35) further mentions that within rural areas, a lack of infrastructure and the sudden increase of squatter camps within cities contribute towards protests as municipalities battle with the increasing demand.

Govender and Reddy (2014:163) noted an increase in violent protests as a consequence of poor service delivery. Figure 1 illustrates the number of major service deliver protests in South Africa from 2005 to March 2018 with 2014 recording the highest number of protests and 2017 recording a total of 173 protests.

Figure 1: Protests relating to poor service delivery (2004 – 31st March 2018)



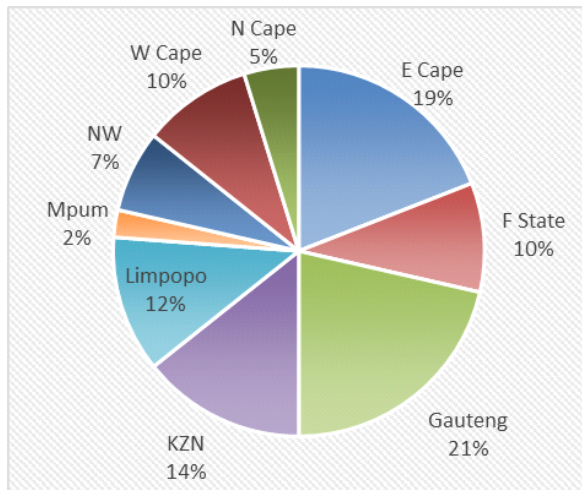
Source: Allan and Heese (2018)

One of the challenges affecting the delivery of services is linked to income distribution of households. This translates to affluent municipalities being able to provide a premium service to its citizens while municipalities characterized by high unemployment are in distress and heavily dependent on state subsidies (RSA, 2014a:39; Statistics SA, 2016:8). The state of service delivery report released in 2016, acknowledged achievements attained in terms of service delivery. According to Statistics SA (2016:1), it is important that service delivery is evaluated in terms of:

- Quality of infrastructure
- The effective functioning of the service
- And accessibility

Figure 2 below demonstrates the percentage of protests by province as at the end of March 2018 with Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo leading.

Figure 2: Statistics of protests relating to poor service delivery protests by province as of 31 March 2018



Source: Allan and Heese (2018)

eThekweni Municipality has had her fair share of these protests especially related to housing as demonstrated below. Shack dwellers from Ridge View embarked on a violent protest in 2015 destroying municipal property while demanding the fast tracking of the housing project (www.durban.gov.za). In May 2018 informal settlement dwellers from Cato Crest were aggrieved by the lack of access to clean water, electricity, flushing toilets and housing and took to the streets. These protesters raised serious concerns including the risk of electric shocks due to illegal electric connections (*Daily Maverick*, May 2018).

2.4 An overview of the study area: eThekweni Municipality

The eThekweni Municipality is situated in KwaZulu-Natal one of nine provinces in RSA. This province is in the south-east of South Africa and borders the Indian Ocean. The geographical location of the province gives eThekweni Municipality a competitive advantage in terms of trade and investments over many provinces as it is surrounded by three provinces, namely, the Eastern Cape, the Free State and Mpumalanga. It also borders three Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, that is, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique.

eThekwini Municipality is home to the Durban Harbour, one of busiest and biggest harbours in the world.

KwaZulu-Natal, where eThekwini Municipality is located, is one of the highly contested provinces during the national and local government elections due to the significant contribution it makes to the gross domestic product of R420 647m after Gauteng which contributes just under R900 000m (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>). The province of KwaZulu-Natal has only one metropolitan municipality, eThekwini which works closely with district municipalities that are distributed into local municipalities – all these structures work together to service local communities (<https://municipalities.co.za>; Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998). According to RSA (2011), eThekwini Municipality is the third major city in South Africa with approximately 3 442 361 residents.

This municipality was established as prescribed in Chapter 7 of the Constitution. According to the Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, this municipality is classified as a **category A** municipality as it features all the characteristics highlighted in section 2 of the Act; such areas need to be highly populated, be centres of economic activities feeding into the entire province and as a gateway to other African states with its busy harbour and a well-run road and rail infrastructure.

2.4.1 The Legislative Framework Governing Communication in eThekwini Municipality

In terms of communication in local government, eThekwini Municipality adheres to the legislative framework governing municipalities in South Africa, for example, the prescripts of the following legislation are upheld: Local Government: Municipal Property Rates Act, Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act, Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act. This list is not exhaustive and a detailed account on some of the key legislation is provided in the next chapter.

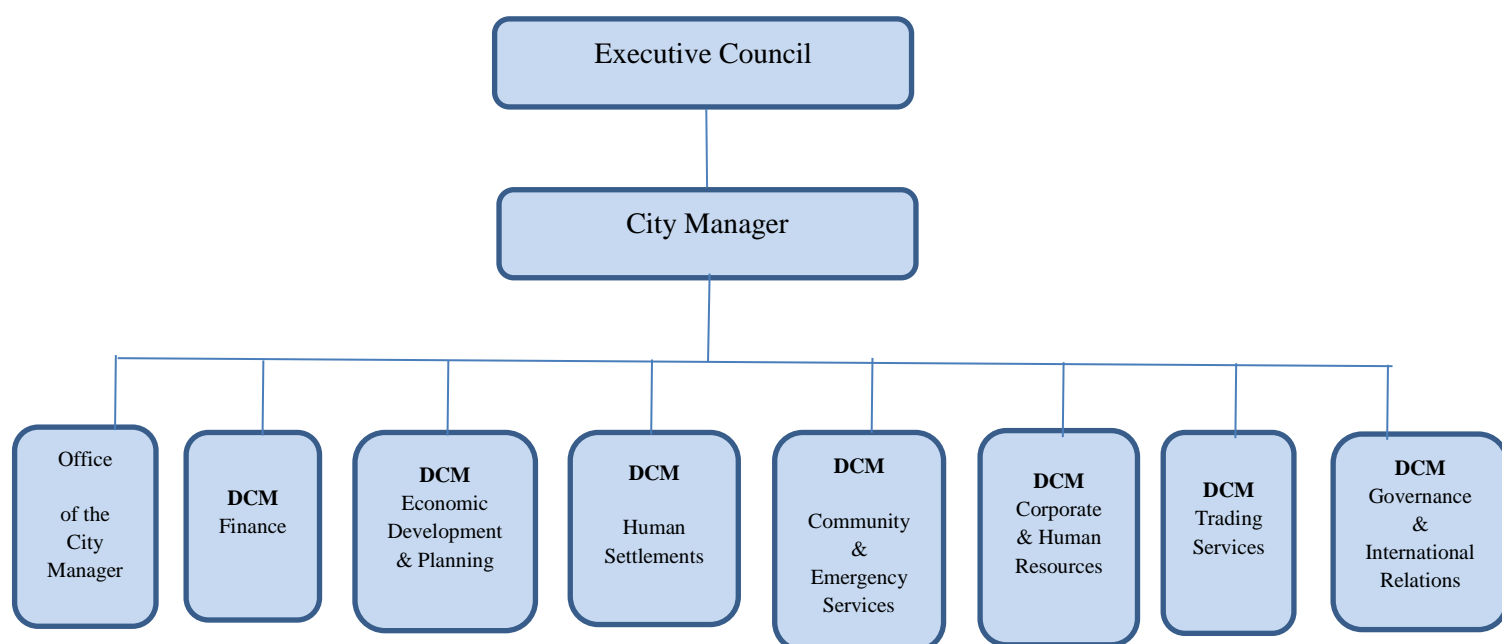
Over and above this framework, eThekwini Municipality has developed internal policies, guidelines and procedures to manage its communication with the local community effectively. Some of the internal documents approved by its Council include the eThekwini Municipality

Community Participation Policy (2006), eThekweni Municipality Communications Policy (2009), eThekweni Municipality: Draft Integrated Development Plan (2017/2018), as well as the eThekweni Municipality Strategic Communications and Marketing: A 5-Year Strategy and Tactical Plan (2014-2019).

2.4.2 The structure of eThekweni Municipality

As prescribed in the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, No 32 of 2000, the City of eThekweni is led by the Mayor, who is supported by other political party representatives, the administrative sector as well as community representatives. As South Africa is a democratic state, the eThekweni Municipal Council is composed of various political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) which is the governing political party, the Democratic Alliance as the official opposition, the Minority Front (MF), the National Freedom Party (NFP), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the Independent Democrats (ID), the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), Truly Alliance (TA), Azanian People's Convention (APC), the Congress of the People (COPE) and independent parties respectively (<http://www.durban.gov.za>). The administration of eThekweni Municipality is arranged into clusters which are headed by Deputy City Managers (DCM) as depicted in figure 3 below and in section 2.4.3 of the study.

Figure 3: The organogram of eThekweni Municipality



Source: eThekweni Municipality (2017/2018)

Deputy City Managers provide oversight in various clusters with support from Heads, Deputy Heads, Managers and Deputy Managers of various units within a particular cluster. An example of how a cluster is arranged in eThekweni Municipality is demonstrated in figure 4 of this dissertation.

2.4.3 The delivery of services in eThekweni Municipality

As the government structure closest to the citizens it is the mandate of the City of eThekweni to provide services to voters. Key priorities of the City are identified in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) a five year strategy of the eThekweni Council and a prerequisite of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 from local municipalities. The IDP is a tool that is aimed at transforming local governments towards the facilitation and management of development within their areas of authority. In eThekweni Municipality the preparation of this document is delegated to the City Manager by the Council of eThekweni Municipality (eThekweni Municipality, 2017/2018).

In eThekweni Municipality the accomplishment of priorities identified in the IDP and the delivery of services is made possible by the various strategic clusters including the City Manager Cluster; Economic Development and Planning Cluster; Trading Services; Human Settlements, Engineering and Transportation Cluster; Community and Emergency Services Cluster; Corporate and Human Resources Cluster; Finance Cluster; and Governance and International Relations Cluster (eThekweni Municipality, 2014/15 IDP). The abovementioned clusters are headed by Deputy City Managers and a brief description of the services rendered by each is outlined below:

2.4.3.1 City Manager Cluster

This Unit is headed by the City Manager who is tasked with the responsibility of the administration and governance of the City through various policies and guidelines as well as City Integrity and Investigations. This office is the heart of the City's administration and it is responsible for providing strategic direction to the City through the Chief Strategy Officer, Chief Information Officer and Chief Operations Officer (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

2.4.3.2 Economic Development and Planning Cluster

The Deputy City Manager heads this Cluster which comprises of the following units: Development Planning, Environmental Management and Management Unit; Economic Development and Investment Promotion; and Business Support, Tourism and Markets. This Cluster is mandated to uplift, sustain and promote economic development which will drive job creation and economic transformation within the City (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

2.4.3.3 Trading Services Cluster

Electricity, water and sanitation as well as cleansing and solid waste removal are rendered by this Cluster. EThekwini Electricity is the licensed electricity distributor of the Municipality and governed by the Electricity Regulation Act of 2006. The EThekwini Water and Sanitation department is tasked with the provision of clean water and human waste removal for private households, businesses, farms and industries. EThekwini Cleansing and Solid Waste Unit provides a comprehensive waste management service to approximately 3.5 million residential, industrial and commercial customers. Their services range from the collecting and transporting of domestic, commercial and industrial waste. This Cluster has been in the spotlight on many occasions due to external forces which include the shortage of energy in South Africa, global warming and the drought affecting the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and its communication skills have been tested (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

2.4.3.4 Human Settlements, Engineering and Transportation Cluster

The eThekwini Human Settlements Unit is a conduit of the City responsible for the establishment and expansion of human settlements needed by a developing smart city in Africa. In an effort to fix the injustices of the apartheid government, the Unit is also responsible for providing housing opportunities to qualifying citizens who have never owned houses before. However, the project of delivering sustainable houses to local citizen has become the City's major challenge resulting in violent protests due to the perceived slow progress in the delivery of housing for poor communities. Despite this, the Unit has managed to roll out major integrated housing projects including the Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu as well as Cornubia projects in the northern side of the City (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

The Engineering Unit is the backbone of the City as it is responsible for providing infrastructure that stimulates growth and regional and local economic development. Some of the projects delivered by this Unit include the construction and maintenance of roads that link the City to vital trade routes leading to job creation that benefits the local citizens and reduces the burden of social services and also makes eThekweni Municipality an attractive investment destination (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

The Transport Unit is tasked with providing a full range of public transport services aimed at giving passengers access to different areas of eThekweni. This Unit also regulates the public transport business and the contracting of subsidised services. This Unit has faced many challenges related to the tensions between Metro Police and the taxi and bus sector. The Unit is commended for the development of the Rapid Bus System that will improve the service offered to passengers (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

2.4.3.5 Community and Emergency Services Cluster

The City is obligated to provide health care services, ensure that the security and safety arrangements are in place, the management of emergencies needs to be adhered with the aim to create safe cities for local communities and business to prosper – through the Community and Emergency Services Cluster the City is able to deliver on this mandate. For example, according to eThekweni Municipality (2012/2017:44) the provision of public health services in eThekweni Municipality is done in collaboration with the Provinces Department of Health. The Health Unit provides a vital service to the local community and this was evident in a survey on living conditions in eThekweni Municipality which revealed that 52% of the respondents utilized health services provided by the City on a monthly basis and almost 76% of the respondents utilized the service once or more in a year (eThekweni Municipality, 2017:66).

2.4.3.6 Corporate and Human Resources Cluster

The Units falling under this Cluster are: Human Resources, Skills Development, Management Services and Organizational Development as well as Occupational Health and Safety (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

2.4.3.7 Finance Cluster

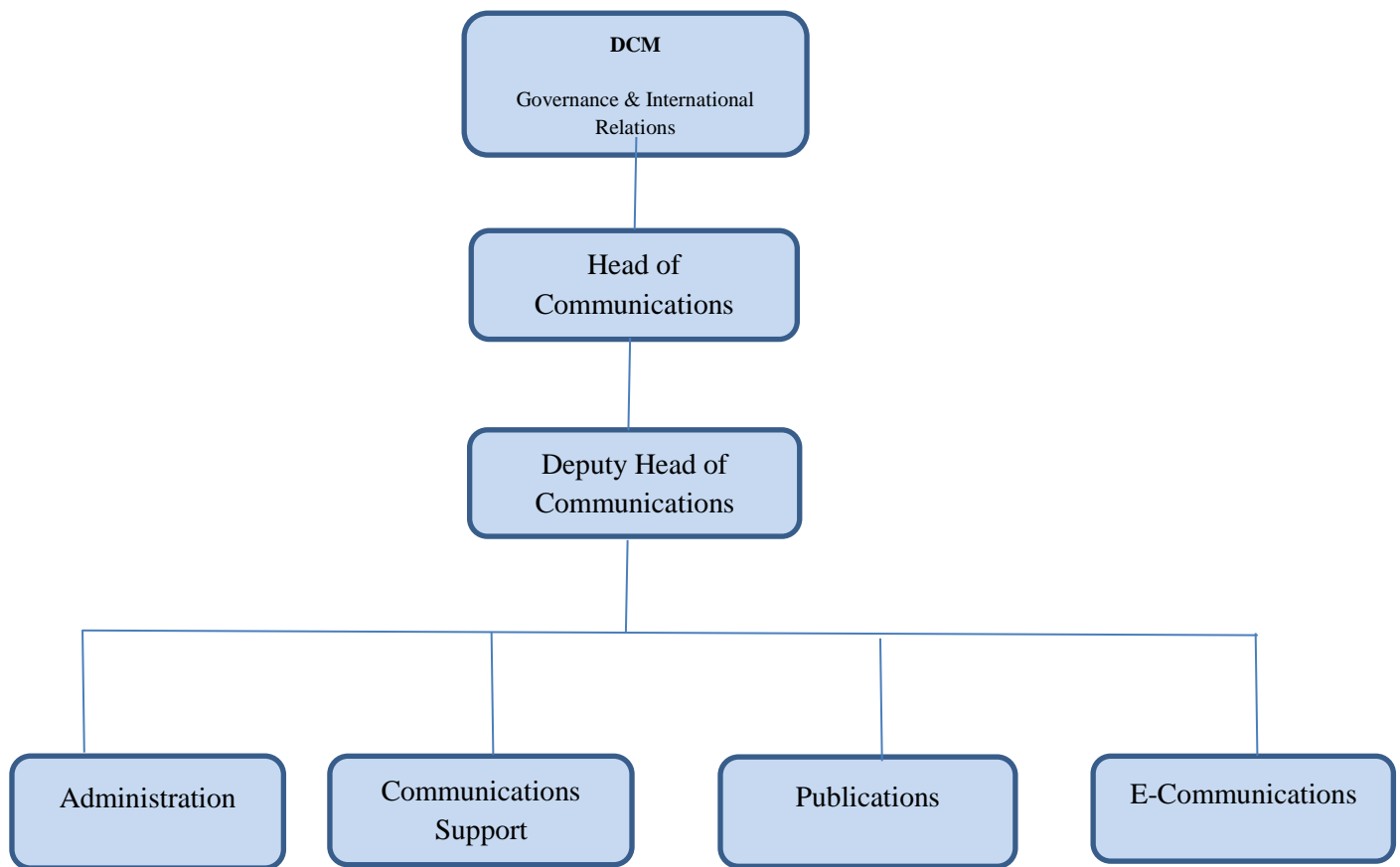
The Finance Cluster is controlled by the Chief Finance Officer whose mandate is to deliver efficient and effective management of finances. The Unit manages the City's budget and makes sure that this is distributed according to the dictates of the IDP. The revenue management Unit of this Cluster is responsible for the collection of revenue from various customers including private households, business and other government departments – over the years this has become a challenge with the City being owed billions of rands for services rendered (<http://www.durban.gov.za> and *The Mercury*, May 2018).

2.4.3.8 Governance and International Relations Cluster

The following Units are found under this Cluster: Communication, Community Participation and Action Support, International and Governance Relations, City Hall Administration, City Hall Secretariat, Sizakala Centres as well as the Mayoral Parlour. This Cluster is responsible for ensuring that communication happens in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner in eThekweni Municipality. The Communications Unit is tasked with communicating official messages of the municipality while Sizakala Centres service the needs of the users of municipal services. The Community Participation and Action Unit is responsible for activations and mobilizing the local community to participate in municipal programmes (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

In an effort to streamline messages conveyed by eThekweni Municipality, the Communications Unit is the official department responsible this task. This means that all Clusters rely on the Communications Unit for communication needs which are taken care of by four departments within the Communications Unit. Figure 4 depicts the organisational arrangement of eThekweni Communications Unit.

Figure 4: Organogram of eThekweni Municipality Communications Unit



Source: eThekweni Municipality (2017/2018)

The four departments of the Communications Unit of eThekweni Municipality include the Administration Department which provides support services to the Unit and its departments in relation to human resources, financial management and procurement of services; the Communication Support Department has personnel responsible for the communication needs of each Cluster; the Publications Department comprises of writers and graphic designers who are responsible for the production of publications and provides photographic and graphic design services; lastly, the E-Communications Department comprises of the website and audio visual teams and they provide electronic platforms for the dissemination of information (<http://www.durban.gov.za>).

2.5 The Local Government Turn-Around Strategy

Upon realizing the challenges discussed above despite great improvements since 1994, government recommended a comprehensive tool that will counteract the negative impact,

hence, the Local Government Turn-around Strategy (LGTAS) was conceived to encourage local government to effectively and efficiently deliver on its mandate. According to RSA (2009:4) the LGTSA is designed to get a buy in from all stakeholders in order to embark on concerted effort in addressing the issues that undermine Local Government and therefore improving performance. The LGTAS promotes the concept that local government is for everyone and therefore emphasizes the importance of a concerted effort from both government and society.

RSA (2009:5) describes the characteristics of an ideal municipality as the one that:

- *Is independent and accountable to local citizens*
- *Responds to the needs of its citizens*
- *Ensures that services are provided sustainably*
- *Promotes community and economic development*
- *Promotes healthy and safe environments*
- *Encourages communities to participate in matters that affect them*
- *Has a staff culture of public service and accountability and*
- *Promotes a culture of Batho Pele amongst administrative units.*

The sixth characteristic on the LGTAS, as mentioned above, is the backbone of this study. A breakdown in communication has resulted in violent service delivery protests across South Africa. Therefore a buy-in from local communities is key to the smooth running of municipalities.

2.6 Conclusion

It is within this chapter that an overview of the study area highlighted structures as well as the functions of various units of eThekweni Municipality. This was against the backdrop of the state of local governance in South Africa where evidence exists, showing that many municipalities were grappling with issues related to governance, transparency, accountability and the delivery of services which stem from poor communication. The lesson to be learnt by the democratic government from the apartheid past is the importance of consultation and engaging with communities. However, many challenges facing local government today are still linked to poor communication. It was reassuring to note that the LGTAS is in place to ensure the promotion of a joint effort by both government and citizens to work together towards the

realization of effective communication in local government. The next chapter will focus on the conceptual, theoretical and legislative framework that regulates communication in local government.

CHAPTER 3: LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION: CONCEPTUAL, THEORETICAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines an assessment of the conceptual, theoretical and legislative framework governing communication in local government. Academic journals were consulted for the general overview of how communication is managed at local government level. In accordance with the objectives of the study, this section provides a contextual background on communication, the communication tools and the factors that affect the effectiveness of communication as well as the flow of communication in local government are investigated. The literature on the strategies that can be applied to strengthen communication in local government is explored.

3.2 Communication

Communication is the backbone of any good relationship and it is an integral part of public administration. In government, it demonstrates the commitment to an open and effective relationship within local communities. In the South African local government context, Muthambi (2014) described communication as an important driver between mutually beneficial relationships between citizens and local government. On the other hand Kwame (2015) stated that communication enables meaningful engagement of citizens, provides accountability, supports good governance and improves the delivery of services to local communities. Singh (2014:68) advocates that “communication should be viewed as an instrument for harmonious participation towards meaningful goal realization”.

Government communication is therefore used to keep constituencies abreast of developments within their communities and to engage with the electorate regarding its needs and concerns (Vos and Westerhoudt: 2008). Glenn (2014) views communication as a major tool that can be utilized by organisations to manage communication between various stakeholders. Similar sentiments were shared by Liu *et al.* (2012) in that the success of any government policy relies on how effective the communication is internally and externally. Florea (2014) likened the role of communication within an organization to the role played by blood in the human body, meaning that communication is the essence of the organization without which it would collapse.

Msibi and Penzhorn (2010:1) view communication as a critical tool that could contribute meaningfully to social change in order to ensure sustainable development in local government. The King III Report on Governance in South Africa (2009) includes proactively managing the relationships an organization has with its stakeholders; and highlights transparent and effective communication as crucial for building and maintaining relationships.

Four of the eight principles of the Batho Pele Vision (RSA, 2014b) encourages municipalities to provide citizens with information that is accurate in an open and transparent manner. It further highlights that this should be done through a consultative process between local municipalities and their constituencies. In line with the Batho Pele Principles, Reddick *et al.* (2016) state that transparency in government is only possible if there is proactive dissemination of information by government and engagement through public meetings amongst other channels.

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 advises local municipalities to formulate an inclusive system of governance wherein constituencies are motivated to participate in the affairs of their municipalities. It is very difficult to service clients or customers if the supplier has not engaged with the stakeholders in order to ascertain their needs. Hence a study on service delivery in local government by Pretorius and Schurink (2007) revealed that ineffective communication within government structures was one of the obstacles contributing to poor delivery of services.

3.3 Participatory Communication

Democracy goes hand in hand with participation as a means of redressing the imbalances of apartheid South Africa where the majority of the citizens were not involved in the matters that affected their lives (Vivier *et al.*, 2015). Zondi and Reddy (2016) see public participation that encourages the public to raise concerns about their so that they can be addressed at municipal level. Hence, with democracy, local municipalities are strategically positioned to promote community participation when playing a developmental role. All spheres of government promote public participation which empowers local communities to actively participate in day-to-day matters that have an impact on their lives.

Msibi and Penzhorn (2010:10) argues that the involvement of the people within initiatives that aim to bring development cannot be possible without proper communication. For example, it would be impossible for any municipality to truly understand what the needs of the local community are if the community is excluded from participating in processes like the IDP. They also believe that the concept of participation has many benefits including the empowerment and emancipation of the local communities; and it promotes knowledge sharing and strengthens honesty, trust and commitment by both the voters and local government. They acknowledge that this does not happen overnight but it requires commitment and investment in time.

Hafer and Ran (2016:208) argue that public participation must involve all stakeholders throughout all the different stages within policy formulation. On the other hand Msibi and Penzhorn (2010:11) view participatory communication as a process of two-way communication that encourages dialogue and is solution driven. Similar sentiments are shared by Heinze *et al.* (2013:371) who state that an approach that is dialogue oriented has the potential to improve trust in government institutions, and their contribution in policy making by citizens.

Kugonza and Mukobi (2015) recognize participation, transparency and accountability as key pillars of good governance further highlighting that the involvement of communities within government processes results in local administrators being responsible for their role in the development of their communities. According to Vivier *et al.* (2015:82), the concept of public participation requires the input of citizens in decision-making, the provision of services, or basic monitoring of service delivery and government performance. While Zondi and Reddy (2016) view public participation as instrumental in facilitating local democracy through formal municipal structures.

The benefit of participatory communication is evident in a study by Sharma (2010) which noted that in the relatively peaceful neighbouring country of Botswana, the public's involvement in the policy making process, development planning and the implementation phase was growing steadily. Another benefit noted by Hafer and Ran (2016) is that public involvement offers public officials the opportunity to benefit from indigenous knowledge which could result in them being able to resolve complex issues.

The Strategic Plan (2015/16-2019/20) of the Western Cape Local Government takes into cognizance poor communication between its municipalities and the communities it serves and has put in place systems that will deepen its support to municipalities to ensure that communities are at the centre of their communication. In this regard, engagement between municipalities and the communities they serve is critical as outlined in their strategic objective 2.2 which speaks to strengthening of public participation through effective communication between municipalities and communities.

eThekweni Municipality takes public participation very seriously and this is evident in the existence of a Community Participation and Action Support Unit which facilitates public involvement in the City as well as the existence of the Community Participation Policy (eThekweni Municipality, 2006). A 2016/17 survey looking at Municipal Services and Living Conditions in eThekweni revealed that the citizens were satisfied with the consultations prior to the drafting of strategic documents such as the Integrated Development Plan (eThekweni Municipality, 2017:9).

3.4 Local government communication

To ensure that there is coherence in communication amongst the three (3) spheres of government, South Africa therefore established the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) in 1998. This body is responsible for guiding government communicators at various levels. According to the Government Communicator's Handbook of the GCIS, government communication performs three basic functions (GCIS, 2014-2017):

- *Informing the citizens;*
- *Advocating/persuading (for policies and reforms); and*
- *Engaging the citizens.*

The Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 stipulates that communities have a right to access accurate information hence local government is expected by law to deliver on this mandate. Howlett (2009) describes government communication as an instrument that has the means to give effect to policy goals and recommends differentiating between procedural and substantive communication tools that are a first step in arriving at a reasonable degree of uniqueness of such instruments which can inform empirical analysis and theory-building.

3.5 The laws and policies governing communication

As mentioned in the introduction of the study, local governance structure is the closest to communities. The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000 stipulates that a municipality as a structure of state within the local sphere of government exercising legislative and executive authority within a specified location. Chapter seven of RSA (1996) states that the executive and legislative authority of a municipality rests upon Municipal Council. In line with this constitutional democracy, the eThekweni Municipality Council consists of various political parties – this multiparty council is good in that the majority party is always under scrutiny of the opposition when it comes to the provision of services; however, this also poses a challenge in communication of government programmes as different political agendas may sometimes be seen at play which then dilutes the messages to be conveyed to local citizens.

The strength of municipalities lies in strong partnerships and engagements with its local communities. This is evident as the White Paper on Local Government (1998) encourages municipalities to proactively engage local citizens as voters; as contributors within policy development processes, as customers and users of various services offered by the municipality; and as organized partners involved in the mobilization of resources through other stake holders who might have a vested interest.

With regard to the passing of laws affecting citizens, local municipalities are guided by various key legislative pieces including Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996. Over and above the legislation, eThekweni Municipality is also guided by its Communications Policy which sets principles and guidelines for communication within the city. In its Policy Statement, it endeavours to timeously convey accurate information to its stakeholders. It has committed to being answerable to the citizens which encourages a two way communication (eThekweni Municipality, 2009). Below are some of the legislative pieces that govern communication:

3.5.1 White Paper on Local Government

The White Paper on Local Government, published in 1998 as an outline for the management of local government. This paper provided an overview of processes where communities were to be consulted in governance matters which included the planning, implementation and

monitoring of performance, and review all which is unpacked in various legislative pieces discussed below.

3.5.2 Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act 27 of 1998

Guidelines as well as procedures that determine civic boundaries are governed by this Act. Therefore, it is crucial for local administrators to adhere to the guidelines documented in this piece of legislation in order to get a buy in from the voters. In terms of communication related to the determining and marking off of the boundaries of municipalities, the Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act 27 of 1998 advises the Demarcation Board to inform the citizens of the planned changes through the use of print, electronic media and community meetings. It further states that adequate time should be allocated for written and oral submissions wherein local citizens will be expressing their views on the matter. When this two way communication is neglected, it leads to a breakdown in communication which could lead to violent demarcation protests as witnessed in 2015 in the Vuwani district located under Makhado Municipality in the Province of Limpopo.

3.5.3 Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 was established in order to provide for the formation of municipalities. In the introductory chapter, it was established that eThekweni Municipality is a category A municipality as it features all the characteristics highlighted in section 2 of the Act including being a highly populated area which is a centre of economic activities feeding into the entire province and as a gateway to other African states with its busy harbour and a well-run road and rail infrastructure.

On the establishment of a municipality, Chapter 2 (4a) of the Act further recommends that Members of the Executive Council responsible for local government must engage with various communities to be affected and after such consultation there after releases details of the proposed notice for public scrutiny. Once the Municipal Council has been established, Chapter 3 (19) of the Act states that consultation processes with the local community must be developed as part of executing and exercising their mandate. These executives are expected to submit regular reports on a yearly basis on the participation of the communities and local organizations in municipal affairs.

3.5.4 Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

This statute outlines the values, mechanisms and processes needed for the successful management of municipalities and it addresses the imbalances of non-democratic government.

Some of the duties of municipal councils outlined in chapter 2, 4e(i) of the Act is the consultation with the local citizens on a range of matters related to service delivery while section 5, 1(a) says it is the right of local communities to be engaged when decisions are taken within their municipalities. Chapter 4 of this Act promotes the cultivation of a culture of community participation through political structures as it can be seen as multiparty governance of eThekweni Municipality. This has given access for local citizens including the media to even attend certain meetings of the council. Chapter 6 (42) of the Act further promotes the involvement of local communities in matters related to the monitoring of performance to the extent of developing appropriate key performance indicators and targets for the municipality.

3.5.5 Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000

This law gives all RSA citizens a constitutional right of access to any information held by any government institution and any other person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. It also promotes accountability and transparency as well as effective control of all public and private entities by emancipating citizens through information sharing which leads to participation in decision making.

3.5.6 Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003

The objectives of this Act are to protect and foster accountability and transparency when it comes to financial management. It further outlines how municipalities should account for the use of taxpayer's funds and also underscores how communities can be informed on and be involved in the financial matters and budgetary processes of the municipality.

3.6 The flow of information in local government

In an effort to encourage a cordial relationship between government and local communities, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 provided for the establishment committees with the respective wards as a vital link in the promotion participation within municipal decision-making processes and supports municipalities with the development of

their communication strategies. According to Putu (2006:4) Ward Committees chaired by Ward Councillors act as community structures linking communities with the municipalities playing a critical role in the flow of information as they communicate with the municipality about the needs, goals, potential and the challenges of the communities.

Sibeko *et al.* (2005) outlined in the Handbook for Ward Committees the role of ward committees as ranging from advising the ward councillor to getting involved in community events. They are inducted by municipalities but they fulfil these tasks on a voluntary basis without any remuneration for their services except for costs incurred on travel and catering. Ward Committees work closely with the Speaker's Office of their local municipality where they will table developments and the needs of the local community. They act as a community resource structure which advises local business and community organization on resources available to them. They make the municipality aware of the special interest groups that exist within their communities – this information becomes useful to municipalities when seeking input before introducing new projects.

These special interest groups play a meaningful role in the establishment of community structures that complement the efforts of the municipality, for example the Community Policing Forum works closely with law enforcement; and Local Youth Organizations enable the municipality in the implementation of various youth programmes (Sibeko *et al.*, 2005). On the other hand the duty of the municipality is to empower the ward committees with various tools and resources including the legislation, its integrated development plan, municipal contacts, projects and initiatives and how the committee could contribute towards the realization of local goals.

However, Vivier *et al.* (2015:83) caution that the effectiveness of ward committees may be limited due to many challenges such as the lack of skills and resources of committee members, political party influences, limited autonomy and lack of knowledge of roles and responsibilities. Chapter 7, 55 (1j) of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 dictates that it is the responsibility of the municipal manager to manage communication flows within the different structures within the municipality and all other relevant stakeholders. Where strategic and operational issues are concerned, the City Manager assumes the role of the spokesperson. However, the City's Communications Unit is responsible for communicating with the media and handling media relations. It is important to note that the Communications

Unit responds to the media after consultation with the relevant Head of Unit the query is directed to. In an effort to create an informed workforce the eThekweni Municipality uses internal communications and shares relevant information with its staff (eThekweni Municipality, 2009).

3.7 Communication tools in local government

Different types of communication tools are used by governments to effectively convey messages to constituencies. The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, stipulates the various tools available to municipalities when communicating with stakeholders including the local newspapers, radio broadcasts in the official languages used by the local communities. It further adds that communications should be published in the provincial publications and a provision should be made for citizens who are illiterate or with disabilities to be heard through assistance from the relevant municipal officials.

Pretorius and Schurink (2007) recommend the communication strategy currently in use, must operate on two levels; conventional and strategic. Furthermore, Glenn (2014:6) identified other options such as: information laws, public opinion research and stakeholder consultations as front end communication tools and also municipal websites, issue management, media relations and spokespersonship as other communication tools used to supplement communication tools. Heinze *et al.* (2013) also recognise the traditional tools for communication; however, cautions governments to take cognizance of the growing trends in online dialogue especially when communicating with the younger citizens. They further advocate ‘dialogical communication’ between government and citizens as they believe it may alleviate breakdown in communication and bridge the gaps related to understanding, participating, and involvement in government programmes.

On the other hand Hafer and Ran (2016:208) identified public participation as a form of direct and authentic participatory process that involves citizens making substantive contributions at various stages of the policy process. This is vital in terms of getting a buy in from local citizens as this form of engagement makes them feel part of the decision making which has a direct impact on everyday living – this is demonstrable at local government through the IDP process.

3.7.1 Online Social Networks

The consumption of information happens at a rapid pace with citizens having access to digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, websites to name but a few. These communication tools are also available to local government. However, Heinze *et al.* (2013:370) caution that it is crucial for government spokespersons to be accessible online instead of just posting press releases which could be viewed as one way communication. Kugonza and Mukobi (2015) see information communication technology as a tool which could be utilised to improve traditional communication channels and further improve the way in which mass media circulates information affecting local communities. According to Heinze *et al.* (2013:376) digital platforms can be powerful when municipalities are reaching out to the younger citizens while Reddick *et al.* (2016:259) believe that information communication could be used to promote government transparency as it reaches a wider audience and attracts civic engagement.

3.7.2 Advertising

The participants of a study by Heinze *et al.* (2013:377) revealed that the high costs associated with advertising in newspapers, glossy magazines, billboards and others was not well received by citizens as they viewed it as lacking credibility and a waste of tax payer funds. Newspapers are used to advertise tenders and similar announcements by the municipality. Television as a medium for communicating is effective however it is costly to use. The coordination and advertisement of all activities is the responsibility of the Communication Unit (eThekweni Municipality, 2009).

3.7.3 Radio

In Msibi and Penzhorn (2010), the use of radio advertising or announcements especially through community radio stations is perceived as an accessible and effective communication medium with an ability to attract a wide listenership using indigenous languages which are easily understood by local citizens. EThekweni Municipality is surrounded by various commercial and community radio stations including Ukhozi FM which is the largest radio station in South Africa (SAARF, 2016; <https://businesstech.co.za>).

3.7.4 Brochures

Brochures form part of marketing tools and are used by organizations for information sharing purposes, they usually contain text that is accompanied by graphics to enable the reader to get a better understanding of the message (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com>). The challenge with brochures though is that they are considered by citizens as unsolicited mail and they tend to be skipped when delivered as inserts in local newspapers. The participants of a study by Heinze *et al.* (2013:377) perceived brochures as uninteresting, content heavy out-of-date, whereas others perceived them as informative. Therefore, to grab the reader's attention the message contained in the brochure, the content needs to be carefully planned with useful information or the exercise of producing this tool becomes futile.

3.7.5 Face-to-face

This tool is viewed by Heinze *et al.* (2013:378) as a much more personalized communication tool which could be used by municipalities to engage with local citizens. A 2010 study by Msibi and Penzhorn on the Municipality of Kungwini proved that the following interpersonal communication channels and methods were effective in getting a buy in from local citizens, that is, Community meetings or *Izimbizo*: These have become the major method of communication the members of the community. *Izimbizos* as they are commonly known have been adopted as an important communication model especially in underdeveloped areas; Door-to-Door campaigns are utilized by Ward Committee structures to mobilize or inform community members on development issues; while loudhailers are used to make announcements within townships (Msibi and Penzhorn, 2010).

3.7.6 Internal Communication tools

Internal communication tools enable the organization to disseminate useful information to its staff such as new developments, policies and strategies. EThekwini Municipality is a large organisation with staff spread across the City which makes face-to-face meetings with senior leadership impossible hence the City communicates with its internal stakeholders through newsletters, intranet, staff meetings as well as workshops (eThekwini Municipality, 2009).

3.7.3 External Communication tools

External communication tools enable the organisation to reach masses in an efficient manner using above-the-line communication tools. EThekwini Municipality uses the following external communication tools to convey messages to its constituencies: *eZasegagasini* Metro newspaper, Intranet, Workplace, Internet, Face book, Twitter, You-tube, eThekwini Municipal Television, Radio programme and Info Info (eThekwini Municipality, 2009).

3.8 Factors affecting the effectiveness of communication

Local government may adhere to all the legislation and follow best practice governing communication but their communication efforts may be dampened by various factors that could affect the effectiveness of communication in local government, some of which factors are discussed below.

3.8.1 Politics

Communication efforts may be hampered when the jobs of communication officials are dependent on political power. This could also be the case when local officials are aligned to political parties and they end up using the resources of the municipality to benefit their specific political party. This could result in communication professionals acting as professionals of political marketing or strategic communication than as journalists at the service of the rights of the citizen (Heinze *et al.*, 2013). EThekwini Municipality is not immune to this phenomenon as it has a multiparty Council with the opposition that could detract the citizens from hearing about the positive developments around the City. This leads to the communicator's role changing to that of managing the damage to the image of the municipality instead of being a facilitator of effective communication.

3.8.2 Budgetary processes and constraints

RSA (2000a) in its chapter four provides a framework of how municipalities should consult with local communities during the budgeting process which is required to start with the identification of priorities in the IDP stage. The neglect of consultations during the budgeting period could be detrimental to local development projects which could end up being unbudgeted for at national or provincial levels (Reddy, 2010:75). Poor communication at the budgeting stage could also result in municipalities being viewed as corrupt and not transparent

which often leads to communities rebelling through violent public demonstrations. On the other hand, the economic meltdown and recession have affected the size of the budgets allocated to communication in various organizations including local government. This then limits the communication efforts that could be explored by municipalities (Schlachter *et al.*, 2013).

3.8.3 Rumour-spreading

The circulation of unverified information is one of the factors affecting communication in government. Xu *et al.* (2016) argue that rumour spreading is sometimes used by members of the opposition to divert the focus of local communities from the good work being done by the leading political party. On the other hand Reddick *et al.* (2016) views silence of local political leadership as a trigger of false rumours which could be detrimental to effective communication. Reddick *et al.* (2016) recommend that municipalities take ownership of the messages they want their constituencies to obtain.

3.8.4 Service delivery protests

Over the years the number of service delivery protests escalated and have become the norm in many South African municipalities. In accordance with the Regulation of Gatherings Act 205 of 1993, it is every citizen's right to demonstrate and protest peacefully. Hence, a study by Steyn (2015:7) revealed that from time-to-time communities use protests as a communication channel to display their dissatisfaction when they feel that the municipalities are unresponsive to their needs. Steyn (2016) cautioned that protests are detrimental to the wellbeing and economic development of local communities as it diverts financial resources which could be spent on service delivery and fixing damaged council property.

EThekweni Municipality accounted for 10% of the protests over 2012 and 2014 with Johannesburg and Cape Town leading with 14% each. This study also revealed that the instigators of protests in local government were the unemployed youth over various reasons including poor service delivery and lack of communication between the local council and residents. 52.9% of local municipalities interviewed believed that protests could be reduced through improving the meaningful participation of voters in council decision making (Steyn, 2016).

Similar sentiments were shared by researchers from the University of Johannesburg through their study which revealed that communities involved in the 2009 spurts of protests in Johannesburg and Mpumalanga were caused by community frustrations which included poverty and unemployment over and above lack of service delivery (Sinwell *et al.*, 2009:1). The other major reason for protests can be attributed to a communication breakdown between the citizens and their local municipalities (Govender and Reddy, 2012:74). These researchers concluded that the underlying cause of protests was the failure by local government leaders to engage the community (Sinwell *et al.*, 2009:9).

Allan and Heese (2011) concurred with the abovementioned scholars pin pointing the ward councillors and local officials as the weakest links to the communication chain. They also attributed this problem to the fluidity of informal settlements which are often not recorded on the official municipal databases – this leads to the lack of access to information and frustration. Steyn (2016) shows that the other contributor to protests is attributed to ward committee members politicking to undermine serving councillors in order to gain popular votes from local communities for their personal political gains.

One of the recommendations of a study by Steyn (2015) was that an improvement in engagements with local communities was the key in the reduction of protests. Later Steyn (2016) added the need for engaging communities before projects are planned as a strategy for reducing protests. Allan and Hesse (2011) recommend the development of focused and inclusive communication strategies aimed at all citizens including those in informal settlements to be delivered by local councils through ward councillors and local officials.

3.8.5 Lack of information and awareness

According to Steyn (2016) the biggest problem in communication at local government level is the lack of knowledge by the community. This leaves communities in a state of confusion when it comes to the delivery of services. A lack of transparency and awareness of government communication instruments are named by Heinze *et al.* (2013:375-6) as major barriers in effective communication. Hence, it is important for municipalities to acknowledge the sophistication of local citizens who have continuously been disgruntled when government only intensifies communication efforts when elections are approaching leaving them feeling

overwhelmed. They caution that the habitual media can distort the communicated material and thus result into confusion as the fear of political influences can arise.

3.9 Strategies to strengthen communication in local government

The GCIS acknowledges the many voices and messages existing in the communications sphere and recommends communication that is done in a coordinated manner. Therefore, having a sound communication strategy is key in an environment that is clouded with many competing messages where citizens have a large volume of information to digest on any given day. It is evident that local government appreciates the importance of forward planning of communication, hence, most municipalities have a strategic communications plan that links with the provincial and national communication needs (GCIS, 2014-2017).

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter explored the existing literature on communication and the various legislative frameworks on communication within local government. The section therefore focused on the factors that impact on effective communication, the various communication tools available for local government and strategies for communication in local government. It is important to note sentiments shared by Vivier *et al.* (2015:81) that the challenges that communities are currently faced with make it difficult for local municipalities to understand and meet the needs of all their residents. This therefore requires that innovative communication and engagement strategies be employed or utilized in order to strengthen communication with local government.

The next chapter will focus on the research methods used to gather and analyse data collected for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The aims and objectives, location, population, sampling strategy and research design are discussed in this chapter. Towards the end of the chapter, it is revealed how the research instrument was constructed and administered. One might ask what the significance of conducting research is for organisations. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010:9) state that it is vital for public and private institutions to critically analyse issues that have or may have an impact on the business so that business executives can make informed decisions based on the intelligence gathered through research. Similar sentiments were shared by Cooper and Schindler (2008:4) as they mentioned business research as a process of planning, acquiring, analysing and disseminating all relevant data and insights to inform decision making. Hence this chapter demonstrates how different research methods can be used to gather data that will enable business leaders to make informed decisions.

4.2 The aim of the study

The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of communication within local government with a specific focus on eThekwini Municipality.

4.3 The objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the research were:

- To examine the laws and policies for communication in municipalities.
- To determine the information flow between the various municipal departments and the citizens of the eThekwini Municipality.
- To identify the various types of communication tools used by eThekwini Municipality when communicating with the citizens.
- To understand the factors that affect the effectiveness of the communication in eThekwini Municipality.
- To suggest strategies that can be used to improve the communication of eThekwini Municipality.

4.4 The location of the study

eThekweni Municipality is the third major city in South Africa with approximately 3 442 361 residents (RSA, 2011). The study was conducted within eThekweni Municipality located in KwaZulu-Natal, RSA. A detailed account of the location was discussed in chapter two of this study.

4.5 The population of the study

The population is the combination of people or items relevant to the study which the researcher wishes to understand (Richards, 2009; Quinlan, 2011; Zikmund, *et al.* 2013). On the other hand Salkind (2014:185) defined a population as a group of potential participants to whom the researcher wants to generalize the results of a study on. Therefore, for this study the researcher intended to use a population of 20 participants comprising of the Head and Deputy Head of Communications, seven Deputy City Managers and eleven Heads of Administrative Clusters. However, due to municipal commitments, some of the participants were not available and delegated the interview to other senior personnel. A detailed list of participants is presented in chapter five of this study.

4.6 Research design and methods

Research design is defined as a practice of collecting, measuring and analysing data in order to answer research question (Cooper and Schindler, 2008:140; Sekaran and Bougie, 2014:95). While Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010:54) define research design as the overall approach or framework of the research process for the gathering and data analysis. When embarking on research there are three main research approaches that can be used for data collection, hence, Creswell (2014:12) mentioned the following types of research designs: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed methods. The nature of the research questions will guide the researcher the research design, methods and techniques to be applied to the study (Johnson and Harris, 2002:100; Marshall, 1996). However, Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010:54) caution that “poorly formulated research questions will lead to misguided research design”. Therefore, it is vital for the researcher to understand this before embarking on research. A brief description of the three main research approaches is outlined in the next section.

4.6.1 Quantitative Method

The quantitative method approach tests pre-determined hypothesis and produces inferred results (Marshall, 1996:522). This method uses numerical measurements to address research objectives. The researcher focuses on measuring concepts with scales that could be directly or indirectly provide numeric values (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Johnson and Harris (2002) explain that the researcher has three broad types of quantitative research to select for a study and these are descriptive, comparative and prescriptive. Creswell (2009:15) described this method as pre-determined and as tools which enables the researcher to provide a statistical analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

4.6.2 Qualitative Method

The qualitative research approach provides the researcher with an understanding of complex psychosocial issues (Marshall, 1996). Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to gain deeper insights of the subject or a situation without the use of numerical measurement (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Cooper and Schindler, 2008). This method is less structured and it is driven by the researcher. Hence, some business leaders view its data as too subjective and prone to human error (Cooper and Schindler, 2008:162). The following strategies can be utilised within a qualitative approach: ethnography, phenomenological research, case studies, grounded theory and narrative research (Creswell, 2009:13).

4.6.3 Mixed Methods

The approach involves the integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods when collecting research data (Creswell, 2014:43). According to Creswell (2009:14) the use of this method originated in the 1950s when researchers discovered the limitations of either quantitative or qualitative methods. Hence, the use of mixed methods to make up for the shortfalls of the two methods. Johnson and Harris (2002:101) viewed quantitative and qualitative methodologies as complementary to each other.

4.6.4 The selected research design of the study

The researcher considered all three research design methods. However, for this study the qualitative research approach was followed because the researcher aims to obtain more in-depth knowledge of the subject. EThekwini Municipality was selected as a case study due to

its size and complexity as well as its proximity to the researcher. The researcher prepared open-ended questions for one-on-one interviews with participants. Appendix 5 contains the interview schedule that was used to collect data.

4.7 The sampling strategy of the study

Choosing a study sample is one of the most critical steps of any research project. Marshall (1996:522) explains that it is not always practical, efficient or ethical to study the whole population hence carefully selecting a sample is key. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010:138) also acknowledge that including all units or elements in a study may have financial and time constraints which could prohibit the researcher from completing the study hence sampling a portion of the population is the most effective and efficient way to conduct research.

Quinlan (2011) and Salkind (2014:185) define a sample as a small subset of a population while Babbie and Mouton (2006) describe sampling as being where observations are selected. On the other hand Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010:138) views the sampling frame as the listing of units from which a sample can be selected. In order to select the subjects for research, probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two methods of sampling available to the researcher (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010:54). The two sampling strategies are discussed below.

4.7.1 Probability sampling

In this method the researcher selects the sample randomly from a large representative sample and is based on chance selection procedures (Babbie and Mouton, 2006; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). According to Salkind (2014:186) the likelihood that the sample will truly represent the population is increased when using the probability sampling strategy because the sample is selected in a non-systematic way which gives all potential participants an equal chance to be selected. There are four types of probability sampling procedures at the disposal of the researcher namely: simple random sampling, stratified sampling systematic sampling, and cluster sampling (Johnson and Harris, 2002:104; Salkind, 2014:186; Cooper and Schindler, 2008:388). A discussion on the four sampling procedures follows:

4.7.1.1 Simple Random Sampling

This technique involves simply selecting a sample from a sampling frame. The sampling frame could be a class list or a database of rate payers which could be used by the researcher to randomly select a sample to be interviewed (Quinlan, 2011). Johnson and Harris (2002) acknowledged that for this technique to be effective an exhaustive list of all potential respondents is required even though it might not be practical to obtain it at times. In random sampling the nature of the population is defined and the researcher needs to ensure that an element in the population has an equal and independent chance in being included in the study (Marshall, 1996; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:396; Salkind, 2014:186).

4.7.1.2 Systematic Random Sampling

Johnson and Harris (2002) stated that this technique is simpler than random sampling as it enables the researcher to only sample every *n*th person. Quinlan (2011:210) concurs with Johnson and Harris, further explaining that systematic random sampling “involves selecting items at systematic or regular intervals from the sampling frame.” Unlike simple random sampling, systematic random sampling is less unbiased because it “reduces the chances of certain participants from being selected” (Salkind, 2014:190). Cooper and Schindler (2008:389) named simplicity and flexibility as major advantages of systematic sampling which makes the task of a field worker much easier.

4.7.1.3 Stratified Random Sampling

Marshall (1996:522) explained that stratified random sampling is an alternative of random sampling and allows for subgroups to be studied in better. In this technique the researcher selects a sample based on some known characteristic of the population which will have an impact on the study (Quinlan, 2011:210). According to Salkind (2014:191) the researcher uses stratified random sampling to match the profile of the sample to the profile of the population which in turn ensures fair representation of the population.

4.7.1.4 Cluster Random Sampling

According to Johnson and Harris (2002) this sampling technique is useful when the population is geographically dispersed. Quinlan (2011) further elaborated that this sampling technique is “used when the population of the study can be divided into discreet groups based on any

particular characteristic”. This technique becomes useful when the investigator wants to study the characteristics of a population subgroups (Cooper and Schindler, 2008:390).

4.7.2 Non-probability Sampling

Contrary to probability sampling, the non-probability technique is used for small scale sampling (Babbie and Mouton, 2006). In non-probability sampling, there are four sampling techniques available to the researcher i.e. judgemental or purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and convenience sampling (Quinlan, 2011; Babbie and Mouton, 2006; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Even though it might be easy to draw a sample using non-probability sampling, Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010:140) caution that they may provide misleading results if, in spite of the researcher’s judgement, the sample is not representative of the population.

4.7.2.1 Judgemental or Purposive Sampling

According to Marshall (1996) the researcher selects the sample based on its capacity to inform the research. This sampling technique is based on the researcher’s judgement, the purpose of the study as well as his knowledge of the research area (Babbie and Mouton, 2006). The researcher is solely responsible for choosing the units he thinks are representative of the population (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010:139). The selected participants are referred to as key informants as they shape the research (Quinlan, 2011). Johnson and Harris (2002:105) cautions researchers to carefully apply their minds when using this technique it also comes with considerable threats which could have a negative effect on the “validity of the results and the generalizability of any conclusions”.

4.7.2.2 Snowball Sampling

As the snowball forms this type of sampling is used when it is difficult to locate the population to be sampled. The researcher relies on referrals from participants to reach even more participants and it is suitable for qualitative studies (Babbie and Mouton, 2006). However, Quinlan (2011:214) cautions that “participants must fit the inclusion criteria of the research project”.

4.7.2.3 Quota Sampling

This is another type of sampling which addresses issues related to representativeness. This sampling procedure ensures that different subgroups of the population are represented based on pertinent characteristics desired by the researcher (Babbie and Mouton, 2006:167; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:394). In this technique “the researcher fills a sample of participants in the research using different quota criteria” (Quinlan, 2011:214).

4.7.2.4 Convenience Sampling

In this sampling technique the researcher selects the units he finds conveniently and the participants may even include people known to him personally (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010:139). The researcher has the freedom to choose a sample convenient to him for example a sample could be a captive audience that could be used in exploratory stages of the research (Cooper and Schindler, 2008: 397; Salkind, 2014:193).

4.7.3 The selected sampling technique of the study

The researcher used a non-probability sampling method because the population to be sampled was not a very large one. Hence, in the case of eThekwini Municipality, a purposive sampling technique was used because all the targets were key informants on the study. Therefore, the researcher intended to interview the Head of Communications; Deputy Head of Communications, all Deputy City Managers and Heads of Administrative Clusters however, due to time constraints some of the selected participants were not available and instead delegated the task to senior managers within their sections. The database was obtained from the eThekwini Municipality’s Corporate and Human Resources Cluster and individual appointments were secured for personal interviews with the available participants.

4.8 Permission to conduct research

The researcher wrote to the executive of the eThekwini Municipality seeking permission to conduct the research within the municipality. Permission was therefore granted in writing by MILE as well as the Deputy Head of Communications with the hope that the findings of the research study will contribute towards the improvement of communication in eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality. This permission was forwarded to the Research Office of the

University of KwaZulu-Natal where ethical clearance was approved for the study (see Appendix 2).

4.9 Construction of the research instrument

The interview schedule was used as data collection methods (see Appendix 5). In the instruments all questions of the schedule were written in English as the language used in eThekweni Municipality to communicate. An interview schedule was prepared with probing questions which were structured to the objectives of the study. The advantage of using interviews for data collection is that the participants are given an opportunity to express themselves in greater detail and also enables the researcher to probe even further in order to get a better understanding of the situation and to improve the quality of data received (Cooper and Schindler, 2008:223).

4.10 Data collection and administration of the instrument

In line with the data collection process outlined in Salkind (2014:224) the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the Head and Deputy Head of Communications, seven Deputy City Managers and eleven Heads of Administrative clusters using a structured interview schedule with questions based on the study objectives (see Appendix 5). The researcher utilised an audio recording device to capture the interviews. However, due to the unavailability of some of the participants, only the Head and Deputy Head of Communications, five Deputy City Managers and seven Heads of Administrative Clusters participated. Interviews were conducted during the months of November and December 2017 with each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. Appointments with the participants were scheduled in advance through their personal assistants. At the beginning of each interview the participants were given a brief overview of the objectives of the study and consented to participating in the study by signing an informed consent form (see Appendix 4). Signed copies of the informed consent forms were collected by the researcher for storage in accordance with the guideline of the Research Office of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

4.11 Data analysis

Data analysis is a technique of transforming the data collected into useful information that will enable sound decision making (<https://study.com/>). Quinlan *et al.* (2015:323) identified four stages of data analysis as the descriptive analysis of the data, the interpretation of the data,

drawing up of conclusions and the theorisation of the data. In the context of this study, the researcher collected data through one-on-one interviews with the support of a digital recorder. The responses were captured into Microsoft word and analysed. The researcher was able to identify themes which were in line with the research objectives and research questions. The findings and discussion of the results are presented in chapter 5 of this study while the conclusions and recommendations are tabled in chapter 6.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter is a summary of the research design which was guided by the research questions. The sampling strategy and technique selected for the study were explained. An overview of the research instrument, collection of data and the administration of the research tool was provided while the ethical considerations were addressed. The next chapter focuses on the presentation and discussion of the data collected.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data collected and to discuss findings. This data was gathered through interviews with thirteen senior administrators comprising two Deputy City Managers (DCM), two Heads of Units, and five Deputy Heads of Units, three Senior Managers and one Public Relations Officer responsible for communication within various sections of eThekweni Municipality.

During the interviews five open-ended questions were posed to the participants with the aim to get insight on five broad themes, namely the laws and policies for communication in municipalities; the flow of information between the various municipal departments and the citizens of the eThekweni Municipality; the various types of communication tools used by eThekweni Municipality when communicating with the citizens; the factors that affect the effectiveness of the communication strategy in eThekweni Municipality; and strategies that can be used to improve the communication strategy of eThekweni Municipality (see Appendix 5).

As outlined in chapter four, only the qualitative research approach was adopted for the study to obtain more in-depth exploration of processes used when communicating with stakeholders in eThekweni Municipality (Creswell, 2009:13). A non-probability sampling method was utilized when selecting the sample because the population to be sampled was not a very large one. Hence, in the case of eThekweni Municipality, a purposive sampling technique was used because the researcher felt that all the targets were key informants on the study. Initially the researcher aimed to work with the Head of Communications; Deputy Head of Communications, all DCMs and Heads of Administrative Clusters as participants in the study but due to demanding work schedules only the abovementioned thirteen participants were available for the study. Hence, in some instances the responsibility was delegated to the relevant senior administrator as explained above and as illustrated in table two. The database was obtained from the eThekweni Municipality's Corporate and Human Resources Cluster and individual appointments were secured for personal interviews with the thirteen participants.

Table 2: List of participants

Name	Unit	Position
Respondent 1	Communications	Deputy Head
Respondent 2	Economic Development and Planning	Deputy City Manager
Respondent 3	Transport Authority	Deputy Head
Respondent 4	Revenue	Head
Respondent 5	Sizakala Customer Services	Deputy Head
Respondent 6	Human Settlements	Senior Researcher
Respondent 7	Community Participation and Action Support	Deputy Head
Respondent 8	Water and Sanitation	Deputy Head
Respondent 9	Economic Development	Head
Respondent 10	Human Settlements	Public Relations and Support Officer
Respondent 11	Fresh Produce Market: Operations and Marketing	Senior Manager
Respondent 12	Fresh Produce Market: Operations and Marketing	Marketing Manager
Respondent 13	Finance	Deputy City Manager

5.2 Background of the participants

The City Manager heads the administrative structures of eThekweni Municipality with assistance from seven Deputy City Managers (DCM), a Chief Strategy Officer, a Chief Operations Officer and a Chief Audit Executive. The DCMs are responsible for various administrative clusters as explained in Chapter three and each is assisted by the Heads and Deputy Heads of different strategic functions of the City. These senior administrators are strategically placed in municipal buildings across the City and are responsible for driving service delivery

The communication function in the City is the responsibility of the Communications Unit which falls under the Governance and International Relations Cluster. Also housed under this

cluster are Sizakala Centres and Community Participation and Action Units. These three Units complement each other in terms of driving communication within the City. However, the Deputy City Managers of other Clusters as well as other senior managers are also responsible for communication at various levels internally and externally. For example, managers are expected to communicate the strategy, decisions and developments from various structures of the City to approximately 24 000 staff members; others are required to initiate public meetings with the community through ward councillors; when there are specific developments within each function, press releases detailing all the technical and key information are prepared by the relevant Deputy City Managers because they understand the root of the issues much better than the Communications Unit (<http://www.durban.gov.za>). Hence, the responses from the thirteen participants below are relevant and useful to the study.

5.3 A thematic analysis of data collected

As discussed in chapter 4 of this study, the researcher collected data through one-on-one interviews and the responses were captured into Microsoft word. The researcher was able to identify themes which were in line with the research objectives and research questions hence a thematic analysis of the data collected is presented below:

5.3.1 The legislative and policy framework governing communication in eThekweni Municipality

From the interviews with the participants, it can be seen that the senior leadership has a good understanding of the legislative framework governing communication in local government. The respondents specifically highlighted the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 as the overarching driver of communication and transparency in local government. Other important pieces of legislation were viewed by the participants as giving reason for the existence of communication in local government and having a similar spirit that consultations with local communities is key to effective communication. The legislation mentioned by the respondents included the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000; the Public Financial Management Act 1 of 1999; Batho Pele principles; the Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000); the National Road Traffic Act, 93 (1996); the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa Act 13 of 2000; The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1995; White Paper on Local Government of 1998; the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003; and the GCIS.

To demonstrate a good understanding of the legislative framework governing communication at municipal level, Respondent 2 said: *“Without engaging and consultation with the communities, I will not be able to contribute towards the development of the Long Term Development Framework (LTDF), Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as well as Local Area Plans (LAP).”* Similar sentiments were shared by Responded 13 when he stated that as the custodian of the City’s tax payer’s funds, he has a constitutional obligation as DCM to communicate on a regular basis in order to provide regular feedback on the status of the finances. *“It is also important to understand that citizens have a right to know about issues beyond the elections. Therefore, ongoing communication between the City and its citizens enables the public to gain a better understanding and appreciate the challenges of the municipality,”* added Respondent 13.

The study revealed that the Communications Unit of eThekwini Municipality also has internal policies, guidelines and procedures that are designed to support the legislative framework. Respondent 1 stated that since eThekwini Municipality is a complex organization with approximately 24 000 employees spread across the City, the Communications Policy outlines how communication should be managed and by whom. *“The existence of the eThekwini Communications Policy is as a result of the national framework. So the local policy exists because the national framework which dictates that there has to be a framework for local communication which will guide the communication between the local government and member of the public. So the two are linked,”* commented Respondent 1.

It was clear from the responses that while the City has internal guidelines on communication, these are not in conflict with the national guidelines, instead they complement each other (Respondent 4, 2017 and Respondent 9, 2017). Respondent 3 added: *“The internal policies and standards such as the Internal Charters and Bylaws are derived from the national legislation. These are prepared in consultation with the community.”*

5.3.2 The flow of information between municipal departments and the citizens of eThekwini Municipality?

The study sought to understand the flow of information between various municipal departments and the local community of eThekwini Municipality. The findings of the study revealed that there are two **streams of information flow** within the Municipality, namely, internal

communication which is institutional communication from City Managers to Deputy City Managers to Heads of Departments, Head of Units, and Departmental Managers then to staff members, the flow is based on the hierarchy of the Municipality. Hence, every manager who has people reporting under them has a responsibility to communicate organizational matters to the staff members that report to them (Respondent 1).

The other stream of the flow of information is through the official spokespersons of the Municipality, namely, the Mayor and the Head of Communications. However, the spokespersons rely on the information shared by the different DCMs and Heads of Clusters. This usually includes the communication of developments, clarifying policies, addressing challenges affecting certain projects through mass media (eThekweni Municipality, 2009; Respondents 2, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 13).

While the two streams of information flow exists, the respondents believed that the City leadership as well as community leadership shared the responsibility to ensure effective communication. Respondent 5 said that Heads of Units, Managers, Senior Customer Care Officers, different municipality departments, ward committees, councillors and local leadership all have a responsibility to communicate especially when issues to be discussed pertain specifically to a particular ward. Respondent 3 stated that Public Facilitators are used to set up public meetings to discuss issues, however, he pointed out that the attendance was often very poor. The issue of attendance was also noted by Respondent 7. With this challenge in mind, it is important for eThekweni Municipality to acknowledge that the lack of communication skills, political party influence compounded with a possible lack of knowledge of roles and responsibilities could affect the flow of information between the City and local communities (Vivier *et al.*, 2015:83; COGTA, 2018/2019). More effort is required to get the community structures to play a meaningful role in the facilitation of the flow of information (Putu, 2006:4).

From the findings of the study the researcher established that the flow of information was also determined by **the nature of the Unit and its mandate**. For example, the flow of communication in the Human Settlements Unit comes from all directions in that it could be initiated by the community through calls, emails, or initiated by the Unit itself (Respondent 10). On the hand, in the Durban Market, communication is initiated by senior managers in consultation with the Communications Unit. The messages communicated by the Durban

Market are slightly different to those of units that are responsible for the delivery of core services. For instance, when targeting farmers and buyers the message focuses on convenience; the fact that it is cheaper for local businesses to do business with Durban Market; great facilities including cold rooms and clean trading halls; savings on bulk purchases; savings on insurance; a cashless society (Respondent 11 and 12).

The data collected showed that the **frequency of information** shared between the City and local communities is in some instances structured to take place at different intervals, however, the Communications Unit is always ready to communicate instantly when the need arises, for example, during power outages and water restriction periods. The Cluster affected will inform the Communications Unit and a statement will be prepared and shared with affected stakeholders (Respondent 1 and 5). The Economic Development Unit strives to be proactive by initiating and holding regular meetings on progress made on projects. Respondent 9 said: *“This is achieved through packaging information for various stakeholders, for example, quarterly forums are held with political leadership, the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Growth Coalition, and the diplomatic community with the aim to update them on the progress on various economic development projects, allay any fears on the progress of the project and discuss new initiatives.”*

5.3.3 Communication tools utilised by eThekweni Municipality

The review of the literature on communication tools in local government revealed a number of tools available to municipalities including online social platforms, advertising, radio, brochures, face-to-face communication, internal and external communication tools (Heinze *et al.*, 2013; Msibi and Penzhorn, 2010; Reddick *et al.*, 2016; eThekweni Municipality, 2009). From the interviews with the senior managers it was found that eThekweni Municipality is aware of all conventional communication tools and that the choice of tool utilised is determined by the target audience and whether communication is aimed at internal or external stakeholders.

As discussed in previous sections of this study communication in eThekweni Municipality is coordinated and managed centrally through the Communications Unit. According to Respondent 1, eThekweni Municipality utilises **10 official communication tools** to disseminate information to various stakeholders, the official tools are as follows:

- a) A bi-weekly newspaper titled *ezaseGagasini* is aimed at the general public of the City. 600 000 copies are printed and distributed through Sizakala Centres, clinics, libraries, and Municipal offices.
- b) The radio programme: airtime is purchased and Municipal officials use this airtime to unpack various programmes of the City.
- c) A weekly bulletin which takes the form of an electronic newsletter aimed at the business sector and other key stakeholders of the municipality.
- d) *Izimbizo* form part of face-to-face communication. These are organized public meetings used by City Officials to address the citizens. These meetings are coordinated and managed by the City's Community Participation and Action Unit.
- e) Social media platforms are also utilised to disseminate information to a wider audience. The tools used include Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
- f) The internet is a tool utilised to disseminate information externally and internally.
- g) *The Workplace* is a 24 page monthly newsletter aimed only at the staff of eThekweni Municipality.
- h) *NewsFlash* is a one page bulletin used to share any breaking news with the staff.
- i) *Staff meetings* are used to disseminate information and they are effective in reaching staff who do not have access to computers. Approximately 50% of the staff do not have access to computers due to the nature of their work out in various site
- j) The short message system (SMS) is used to communicate with stakeholders

Taking into account the various official communication tools available to Clusters, Respondent 2 emphasized the importance of **differentiating** between destination marketing and corporate communication (which is done by the Communication Unit) when selecting the appropriate tool to utilise in EDP. He listed other unique communication tools that are appropriate to the EDP Unit as follows: *"The communication tools and resources utilised by the two differ drastically. For instance, the communication related to destination marketing will be carried out by EDP and tools such as national and international trade exhibitions (Tourism Indaba, Rand Easter Show) and international platforms such as National Geographic, Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC) and other international agencies will be used to attract potential visitors and investors to the Municipality. These tools goes beyond promoting the Municipality but include hotels, theme parks, cultural villages and other amenities that are not necessarily owned by the Municipality,"* Respondent 2.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that senior managers have a good understanding of their stakeholders, for example, the Durban Market employs a specialised electronic newsletter aimed at farmers, buyers and market agents. This publication communicates new developments and improvements. They also conduct monthly visits to farmers and suppliers in order to sustain relations. They also take advantage of events arranged by different associations such as the Potato Association, Maize Association, World Union of Wholesale Markets and have local and international membership to some of these organizations in order to keep the communication channels open (Respondent 12, 2017).

Other practical tools that are used by units such as Revenue Unit include communicating through the billing statements that are posted to ratepayers. However, Respondent 4 acknowledged that this communication tool has its **limitations** in that it only reaches approximately one million citizens with a utility account whereas there are many citizens who are using prepaid utilities. The other effective tool is the SMS, however, it also has shortcomings as it is a challenge to keep up with the pace in which consumers change their cellular network providers and mobile devices which could mean that at some point the communication gets lost (Respondent 4). It is therefore also critical for eThekweni Municipality to take cognisance of a 2016 study by Heinze *et al.* which revealed that written communication tools could be perceived by readers as text heavy and out-of-date especially when producing publications such as *ezaseGagasini* and *The Workplace*.

Another important tool of engaging the citizens include 35 walk-in centres (Sizakala Centre) that are spread across the City which encourage one-on-one interactions between the Municipality and its various stakeholders (Respondent 5).

Over and above all the tools utilised by the City, the Community Participation and Action Unit favour below-the-line communication tools including loud hailers, public transport advertising, door to door visits with the aim to distribute pamphlets, activation campaigns on trains and taxi ranks, meetings (Masakhane) and forums to communicate. Respondent 7 said: “*Loud hailing is conducted by 80 Community Mobilizers attached to different wards. Community Mobilizers plan, organize and mobilize people to participate in the municipal programmes.*”

5.3.4 Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Communication in eThekweni Municipality

From the interviews with the participants, it was clear that senior management in eThekweni Municipality had a sound understanding of the legislative and policy framework governing communication in local government. Their understanding has enabled them to maintain a good flow of information using various communication tools at their disposal. However, various scholars have indicated in chapter three of this study that there are many factors that could hinder effective communication in local government. Some of these barriers to effective communication cited by scholars include politics, budgetary constraints, service delivery protests, rumour-spreading, lack of information and awareness (Heinze *et al.*, 2013; Reddy, 2010; Steyn, 2016; Allan and Heese, 2011; Sinwell *et al.*, 2009; Govender and Reddy, 2012; Xu *et al.*, 2016). Communication in eThekweni Municipality is also affected by various challenges discussed below.

The findings of the study indicated that the senior management is concerned about the **low response** the City received when messages are conveyed. Respondent 13 said: *“The responsiveness of the citizens is very low and it is done by the same people. It is not clear whether the general audience is absorbing the messages conveyed which makes it difficult to measure return on investment when it comes to communication efforts.”* On the other hand Respondent 4 and 7 noted as a concern selective listening among the citizens who only tend to engage when they want to complain. The low response to communication efforts is a challenge as it leaves the citizens lacking knowledge and awareness of government programmes that could have a negative impact in their lives (Steyn, 2016; Heinze *et al.*, 2013:375).

Apathy in affluent sectors of the community was noted by Respondent 1 as a hindrance to effective communication, he said: *“We publish notices calling for public comments whenever there are new projects to be initiated or perhaps the municipality wants to develop a new bylaw policy. However, the citizens do not respond.”* Respondent 8 shared a similar sentiment stating that the affluent consumer is disengaged and has a negative attitude towards Municipal programmes due to lack of information.

As mentioned in chapter two of this study, eThekweni Council is composed of various political parties and thus the City is governed in a democratic manner (<http://www.durban.gov.za>). However, **political dynamics** and cynicism could hinder effective communication in the City

especially when opposition parties view public information from the Municipality as propaganda (Heinze *et al.*, 2013). Respondent 1 said the challenge was visible in instances where the councillor's offices are used as distribution points for publications such as *ezaseGagasini*. *"So if the councillor is from the opposition they might not help to distribute the publication as they believe it is a propaganda machine,"* Respondent 1.

Budgetary constraints were quoted by respondents as having a negative impact on effective communication. The poor economic climate has led to organisations reducing the financial allocation towards communication efforts (Schlachter *et al.*, 2013). Respondent 1 concurred stating that a limited budget hinders the effectiveness of communication because it dictates, for example, how much airtime or advertising space one could purchase in order to convey messages. The study found that financial limitations could also prevent Clusters and Units from reaching their targeted audiences, for instance, the Durban Market is sometimes unable to host trade shows aimed at engaging with the farming community (Respondent 12). Similar sentiments were shared by Respondent 7 when he said: *"Budgetary constraints affect communication, for example, there are 110 wards and yet only approximately 75 Community Mobilizers. This means that one Community Mobilizer may deal with more than one ward which could be detrimental to effective communication."*

EThekweni Municipality is a **large and complex organization** with approximately 24 000 employees. Thus, the respondents acknowledged that sometimes the information coming from the top could get distorted intentionally or unintentionally by the time it reaches the intended recipient especially if it is verbal, hence, the Municipality uses different tools to disseminate messages in order to mitigate the risk of miscommunication. This distortion of information could hinder the effectiveness of communication within the Municipality (Respondent 1).

The study found that communication by Human Settlements Unit is often hindered by **organised and unorganised groups** who have a vested interest in the beneficiaries. For example, the shack lords often distort communication by the Unit because any development affects their 'rental income' from shack dwellers. Organized groups such as *Abahlali Basemjondolo* may also have a negative impact on effective communication as they do not represent the interests of all the beneficiaries within the Municipality, however, their voice is noticed by the media. The tension between councillors and the community or between proportional representation councillors and ward councillors may also hinder effective

communication (Respondent 6, 2017). Therefore, it is important for the Municipality to work closely with ward structures in an effort to strengthen participatory communication (Vivier *et al.*, 2015; Reddy, 2016; Hafer and Ran, 2016).

Other challenges identified by Respondent 10 is that the communication driven by the Communications Unit and tends to **focus on positive stories** – this was viewed as a hindrance to other day-to-day messages which could be conveyed by Human Settlements during a crisis, for example, when Human Settlements wants to create awareness and educate the community of unscrupulous individuals who could rob them of their houses. **Ward councillors can be gatekeepers** and hinder communication because sometimes the message could be negative, for instance, about why the Municipality has not been able to deliver or on why the expectations cannot be met. The study found that the City found it easier to communicate positive messages compared to managing expectations as ward councillors do not like to convey negative messages – this leads to a communication breakdown and later to violent protests (Steyn, 2015:7). *“It is only fair to make the citizens aware that the backlog for housing is 380 000 households but the budget can only deliver 5000 per annum due to the problem being a long term and multi-generational challenge,”* said Respondent 10.

5.3.5 Strategies to Strengthen Communication in Local Government

Some of the communication challenges facing eThekweni Municipality are as a result of poor communication at grass root level. Therefore, **ward councillors** are vital in strengthening communication in local government through regular meetings with local communities (Sibeko *et al.*, 2005). Hence, Respondent 13 recommended a strategy to drive the responsibility of being information soldiers of the municipality as key. *“People believe in hearing from their leadership, it should be through councillors and not the Communication Unit to mitigate against information being viewed as propaganda. The councillor would have to come and talk their language, talk out the issues, explain the programmes. So, it is one responsibility with a collective effort,”* (Respondent 1, 2017). However, ward committee structures need to be capacitated with communication skills in order to be able to convey both positive and difficult messages to local communities (Vivier *et al.*, 2015:83). Councillors are the key to effective communication as prescribed by the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 37 of 2000 (Respondent 10). Capacity building was also supported by Respondent 7 when he said: *“Introducing minimum human resource requirements for all stakeholders responsible for*

communicating with the citizens could also strengthen communication in local government. This should also include the training of councillors and setting up standards of communication.”

The study revealed that the respondents would like to see an improvement in the use of electronic and online communication that could reach millions of citizens instantly and in a cost effective manner which could save local government printing and mailing costs. Kugonza and Mukobi (2015) viewed information communication technology as a tool that could be used to strengthen communication in local municipalities. Digital communication could also enable municipalities to connect effectively with the youth (Heinze *et al.*, 2013: 376). Respondent 4 said: *“Bills can be emailed or can be viewed online and queries can be logged online.”* While Respondent 11 added that the use of technology in communication could enable the Durban Market to attract new stakeholders.

The findings of the study revealed that senior management is cognisant of the fact that the communities being targeted are not homogeneous, thus, a simplified proactive communications strategy could enable the Municipality to package specific information and to communicate interests that are targeted (Respondent 7, 2017). A strategy to move away from mass communication to a **targeted and personal approach** could improve communication in local government. *“The community will start to engage with the municipality in a meaningful way is there is less communication clutter which has led to despondency and apathy,”* said Respondent 9.

Respondent 5 believed that communication could be improved through the use of an in-house television station or large digital screens at all Municipal buildings including the 35 Sizakala Centres, clinics, parks and libraries. He said: *“This will enable the Municipality to develop and tell good stories about the progress in the City and also share factual information. This project could also generate an income for the Municipality as the costs of running the television station will be covered through advertising by the private sector leading to profit sharing between the municipality and the service provider.”*

5.4 Discussion of the results

Effective communication is the backbone of a healthy relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. If managed effectively it becomes an instrument that promotes “harmonious participation towards meaningful goal realization” and should turn policy proposals into actions (Singh, 2014:68; du Plessis, 2014). During the apartheid era this was not achieved because local government decided what was to be delivered without any consultation with local communities. It was encouraging to note that communication is one of the important functions in eThekweni Municipality, this was revealed when all the respondents cited the importance of engaging with all stakeholders when preparing the IDP and LTDF which are plans that guide municipal departments on priority areas to be focused on annually. It was clear from the findings that when agreements on priorities are reached at the beginning with constant updates on the progress of the projects then there is very little room for a communication breakdown between the citizens and the local municipality.

In local government, communication is also vital as it keeps the tax payers abreast of developments and how their taxes are spent – a prescript of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003. It was reassuring to see that this Act is one of the guiding documents used by the Finance Cluster (Respondent 13). This piece of legislation enables eThekweni Municipality to maintain accountability and transparency at all times which means that the City is applying the recommendations of the LGTAS with the aim to improve the state of local government in RSA. The literature discussion in chapter three of this study revealed that when less emphasis is placed on communication it has led to the detriment of effective management of affairs in local government (Pretorius and Schurink, 2007; Steyn, 2015; Steyn, 2016). The findings of the study confirmed that effective communication in local government is even more critical as it promotes meaningful engagements between the citizens and their local municipality. While eThekweni Municipality is managing this area in a satisfactory manner, the findings revealed that there are factors that hinder effective communication in this regard. Thus, the section below discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions.

5.4.1 The legislative framework governing communication in local government

In chapter one of this study the governance structure in RSA was previously briefly discussed. There is interconnectedness between these structures with the local government sphere being the closest to local communities and is tasked with the delivery of services. The introductory

chapter as well as chapter three indicated that the Constitution of RSA is the main framework for all spheres of government and all other pieces of legislation are derived from this source. From the study it was established that all the respondents were well aware of the legislative framework governing communication in local government as presented in chapter three and from sections 5.3.1 to 5.7.5 of this study. It can be seen from findings that the leadership of the eThekweni Municipality is well versed even on legislation that applies specifically to their Clusters for, example, the Finance Cluster also adheres to the prescripts of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003; the Community Participation and Action Support Unit is closely guided by the Principles of Batho Pele as well as the GCIS Communicator's Handbook; the Transport Authority Unit relies on the National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996 as well as the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa Act 13 of 2000 (Respondent 13; Respondent 7; Respondent 3).

It is evident that the senior leadership of eThekweni Municipality has sound knowledge and understanding of the legislative framework governing communication within their Clusters. The City's Communication Strategy has also enabled this complex organization to manage its communication effectively. From the interactions with the respondents it was clear that there is harmonious flow of information internally between the Clusters and the Communications Unit, the roles are clearly defined and there is mutual respect. Infighting could be detrimental to effective communication and fortunately eThekweni Municipality is not plagued by this challenge which could derail the delivery of services to local communities.

5.4.2 The flow of information between municipal departments and the citizens

The review of literature in chapter three introduced the **ward committee structure** as an important link in the flow of information between relevant stakeholders. This structure, chaired by a ward councillor is key in the dissemination of information and enhances "participatory democracy in local government" (Putu, 2006; RSA, 1998b). According to Sibeko *et al.* (2005) the role of ward committees includes playing an advisory role to the ward councillor as well as participating in community projects and events. This structure was viewed by some respondents as gatekeepers who might hinder effective communication if not empowered with communication skills which will enable it to convey messages on why expectations cannot be met by the municipality at certain times as opposed to only relaying positive messages

(Respondent 10). *“The tension between councillors and the community or between proportional representation councillors and ward councillors may also hinder effective communication,”* (Respondent 6). Hence, most respondents cited that there would be no breakdown in communication if the ward committee structure was strengthened through the empowerment of ward councillors and recommended training of ward councillors to become effective communicators.

As ward councillors are elected by communities, as prescribed in RSA (1998b), they may not necessarily have all the requisite skills such as coordination, communication, management and leadership which could impact negatively on effective communication. Sibeko *et al.* (2005) highlight the aspects included in the induction of ward committees including sensitizing them about the legislation governing their existence. However, it is necessary for municipalities to identify skills gap and to provide specific training including effective communication skills which could be provided by the Communications Unit. A full understanding of the role of communications in local government could enable councillors to appreciate that this is not just the task of the Communications Unit but that everyone has an important in explaining the bottlenecks within municipalities and helping communities to have a good sense of the value chain of projects instead of looking at figures or the amount spent in isolation of the hidden benefits for local economic development for instance.

5.4.3 Communication tools

The study established that the Communications Unit of eThekweni Municipality uses up to ten official communications in an effort to reach its citizens according to the prescripts of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. With rapid changes in media consumption patterns in recent years, it is vital for the Communications Unit to take stock and evaluate the effectiveness of its communication tools. For example, a 2016 study on the landscape of social media in South Africa by World Wide Worx and Fuseware revealed an huge increase on the use of social media platforms with Facebook used by a quarter of the population and accessing it on their mobile devices. The study also showed that major brands are using Instagram for marketing purposes and they have been successful (www.webafrica.co.za). This is an important communication tool for eThekweni Municipality to consider as it could enable the City to reach the citizens that have moved away from print media tools and also keep up with the latest technological developments. There is definitely room for improvement if one considers that

eThekwini Municipality has a population of approximately 3.4m residents (RSA, 2011) and yet its Facebook page has just over 117 000 followers which represents only less than 4% of the population. Therefore, a reflection on the communication tools used could enable the City in strengthening its communication. This evaluation will establish the effectiveness of tools such a bi-weekly print publication titled *ezaseGagasini* in light of the decline in the consumption of print media.

5.4.4 Factors affecting the effectiveness of the communication strategy

A number of factors perceived to be affecting communication were cited by the respondents, however, apathy and despondency, budgetary constraints and politics featured highly on the list hence the discussion below will only focus on these main factors hindering communication in eThekwini Municipality. While not evident from the review of the literature, **apathy and the prevalence of despondency** was raised as a concern by most respondents. The respondents cited the lack of input from local communities when a call is made for input on major decisions and proposals. The calls are usually made as per the prescripts of chapter 2, 4e (i) of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. The City Council ends up concluding decisions based on a few responses that are not a true representation of the local community. *“We publish notices calling for public comments whenever there are new projects to be initiated or perhaps the municipality wants to develop a new bylaw policy. However, the citizens do not respond,”* (Respondent 1). *“The attitude of the affluent consumer is disengaged, this has led to ignorance on the developments by the Municipality with consumers ending up with a negative perception of the Municipality,”* (Respondent 8). The lack of acknowledgement of good work by the Municipality was also mentioned by the respondents as disheartening. It was noted that this challenge is prevalent in the middle class and amongst the affluent residents of the Municipality.

To mitigate against this disconnect, it might be useful for the Communications Unit to devise a communication strategy with tailor made and personalized messages aimed at the different levels of consumers of services. The use of technology could assist in targeting and segmenting messages; this method will eliminate wastage when purchasing airtime and space in various media platforms. Personalized messages that are communicating area specific information may receive more attention and reaction as they will be affecting the users directly unlike generic messages that are communicated using mass media.

An **inadequate budget** has dire consequences on effective communication as it determines the reach and frequency of messages (Schlachter *et al.*, 2013). This was named by many respondents as a major factor that hinders various Clusters from communicating effectively with local citizens. The general feeling of the respondents was that council viewed communications as a soft issue when compared to burning issues related to service delivery. Respondent 7 noted that the municipality has 110 wards which are serviced by 75 Community Mobilizers which means that one person could end up looking after more than one ward which could be detrimental to effective communication. *“Budgetary constraints also prevents the Durban Market to engage effectively with its stakeholders as we sometimes are unable to host trade shows – a platform which enables communication,”* (Respondent 12).

It is important to note that budgetary constraints are not a phenomenon that is unique to eThekweni Municipality but a business challenge that requires budget holders to be critical of what the tax payers funds are spent on (Respondent 2 and Respondent 13). For instance, the use of radio programmes is a powerful communication tool which enables the municipality to reach large audiences using minimal human resources, however, it is costly and its effectiveness is dependent on the frequency of the message. In the same breath, the production of 400 000 copies of the City’s fortnightly newspaper *ezaseGagasini*, as an example, could be reviewed if one considers that there is a decline in the consumption of print media due to the rise in the consumption of news through digital platforms. The statistics on table 3 substantiate the statement above.

Table 3: Newspapers Circulation Figures Analysis Q3 2017

Total newspaper circulation decreased by 1.5% from the previous quarter, by 6% on the previous year. Daily newspapers also dropped by 3.9% quarterly, and by 11.9% on the year prior. Weekly newspapers increased by 3.8% on that previous quarter, but decreased by 6.5% on the year prior. Weekend newspapers declined by 3.4% on the previous quarter, and by 12.1% on the year prior. Local newspapers remained static compared to the previous quarter, but declined by 6.6% on the year prior.

Daily newspaper circulation fell to 1 126 532 from 1 242 958 during the previous corresponding reporting period (Q3 2016); pdf replica editions totalled 6 957, while single-copy sales came in at 829 047. Circulation at the weeklies fell, too — total circulation declined to 486 616 from 521 678; weekend newspapers declined to 1 356 674 from 1 526 592; and local papers dropped to 333 884 from 357 629. Free sheets fell to 6 139 426, from 6 383 491.

Source: <http://www.marklives.com> 8 November 2017

While the majority of the publications making up the statistics above are paid for, it is also disturbing to see a decline even in free sheets - publications similar to *ezaseGagasini*. Therefore, it might be worthwhile for the Communications Unit to investigate the effectiveness of its communication tools in general in order to establish if there is a return on investment. This sentiment was shared by one of the respondents: *“The responsiveness of the citizens is very low and it is done by the same people. It is not clear whether the general audience is absorbing the messages conveyed which makes it difficult to measure return on investment when it comes to communication efforts,”* (Respondent 13). The lack of evidence as in the return on investment could influence the decisions at budgeting stages.

As discussed in chapter three of this study **politics** could also hamper effective communication when communications officials fail to separate their political standing from the administrative task as communication agents of the municipality (Heinze *et al.*, 2013). As a multiparty council, eThekweni Municipality is affected by this phenomenon. The respondents revealed that often members of opposition parties view messages from the municipality as propaganda and do not cooperate in terms of assisting in the dissemination of vital information especially at ward level. Respondent 1 said: *“So if the councillor is from the opposition they might not*

help to distribute the publication as they believe it is a propaganda machine.” This cynicism often casts doubt on communication efforts by the municipality. Therefore, it is vital for administrators in the Communications Unit to guard against being perceived as biased to a specific political party and to refrain from using the limited resources to promote the agenda of their party at the expense of the ratepayers. Professionalism at all times is what will enable them to successfully separate their roles as administrators and members of political parties.

5.4.5 Strategies to promote effective communication in local government

The study revealed that while communication efforts are organized centrally through the Communications Unit, this responsibility should not be left entirely to the administrators within this Unit. Hence, the role played by councillors at ward level was cited as key in strengthening communication at grass root level. Respondent 1 said: *“People believe in hearing from their leadership, it should be through councillors and not the Communication Unit to mitigate against information being viewed as propaganda. The councillor would have to come and talk their language, talk out the issues, explain the programmes. So, it is one responsibility with a collective effort.”* Similar sentiments were shared by Respondent 6 when he said: *“Councillor participation is key at ward level – they could manage the Facebook page at ward level and reduce the burden on the corporate account.”*

While the role played by councillors at ward level is key to effective communication in local government, one need to keep in mind that they may not necessarily be good communicators. Therefore, a concerted effort in capacitating them through communication skills training will be vital in preparing them to unpack difficult decisions to the citizens, managing a local ward Facebook page for instant communication, and the general maintenance of communication. Although communication in eThekweni Municipality is conducted in an organized fashion through its Communications Unit and more efforts are made to reach previously disadvantaged communities, a strategy to engage the citizens in affluent areas and those that have disengaged is needed as it is the responsibility of the City to ensure that all citizens are included in all activities that have an impact on their lives.

5.5 Conclusion

The discussion of the results revealed a correlation between the scholarly work on the importance of engaging the community in all matters that will affect them at local government

level and what is happening in various Clusters and Units in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality (Msibi and Penzhorn, 2010; Kugonza and Mukobi, 2015; Zondi and Reddy, 2016). As shown in chapter three, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) is the overarching legislation that governs communication in local government and all the other laws were developed in line with its prescripts. It was reassuring to note that all the respondents understood this mandate. While all managers are responsible for communication within different hierarchical levels, it was encouraging to note that all managers do this in consultation with the Communications Unit and in line with the Communications Strategy and that they comply with the Communications Policy of eThekweni Municipality. The respect between the Clusters, Units and the Communications Unit is vital as it enables the municipality to communicate with one voice to avoid miscommunication. However, certain Units would prefer to have a dedicated communications team responsible for Unit specific needs as there is competition for the use of communication tools amongst the units. The need for communicators with Unit specific business acumen could enable the units to convey messages that would appeal to despondent and disengaged citizens.

It was evident from the results that there is a need for strengthening communication at ward level, as all respondents expressed a view that if this structure is capacitated, improvement in communication between the citizens and the Municipality will be achieved. Almost all respondents cited budgetary constraints as an impediment to effective communication however they were forging ahead to the best of their ability with this limitation. In terms of communication tools it was also clear that it is necessary to maximise the use of social media in an effort to promote meaningful engagements between the citizens and the Municipality. The next chapter discusses the recommendations in relation to the findings.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study was undertaken in order to assess effectiveness of communication within eThekweni Municipality. This study was intended to contribute to knowledge development in the area of communication in municipalities in South Africa. It also identified impediments to effective communication in local government which could assist other government institutions facing similar challenges.

6.2 Has the problem been solved?

As outlined in chapter one of (RSA, 1998a) revealed that local government is faced with many challenges including the rebuilding of relations between municipalities and the local communities. It continued to state that municipalities should particularly pay more attention to the needs of the community.

On the other hand, the 2009 Report on the State of Local Government in South Africa released by COGTA revealed that great strides had been attained. However, there were still major challenges facing local government which were linked to transparency, accountability, community participation and effective communication. As a result, the LGTAS was devised as a tool to enable municipalities to effectively and efficiently deliver services. According to LGTAS (2009:5) one of the key characteristics of an ideal municipality is encouraging the participation of communities and organisations within matters of local government. This characteristic has been the backbone of this study because a breakdown in communication has often resulted in violent service delivery protests across South Africa. Hence, a meaningful engagement between local communities and municipalities is key to the smooth running of local government.

As with many municipalities in South Africa, eThekweni Municipality is not immune to these challenges, hence, this study enables the municipality to take stock of its communication efforts and to work on strengthening it.

6.3 The aim of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of communication within eThekweni Municipality. The aim was achieved through engagements with the respondents as presented in the section on objectives below.

6.4 The objectives of the study

A summary of the findings for each objective are presented below:

6.4.1 First objective:

To examine the laws and policies for communication in local government.

This objective sought to examine the level of the understanding of the legislative framework governing communication in local government by personnel that is responsible for communication in eThekweni Municipality. The findings revealed that there is a great understanding of the policy framework with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as the basis from which rest of the legislation is drawn. This is discussed in detail in chapter three.

From the study it was noted that each Cluster or Unit also understood legislation that was specific to their operations and ensured compliance in their daily activities. For example, the Finance Cluster also adheres to the prescripts of the Public Financial Management Act 1 of 1999; the Roads Systems Management Unit complies with the National Road Traffic Act, 93 (1996) as well as the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa Act 13 of 2000 (due to the traffic light signal requiring the use of telecommunications); the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service Delivery (1995) is the national framework guiding communication within the Customer Services Unit.

Internally, the Communications Unit of eThekweni Municipality provides strategic direction in the form of a Communications Policy and Strategy. These two documents provide guidance on how communication should be carried out by Clusters and Units. This has enabled eThekweni Municipality to communicate in a coordinated manner and with one voice.

6.4.2 Second objective:

To determine the flow of information between the various municipal departments and the citizens of eThekweni Municipality.

Through this objective the researcher sought to understand who the initiators of communication were, who it was intended for and the frequency of the interactions between municipal departments and the citizens.

As discussed in chapter five, the study revealed that there are two streams of communication, that is, internal communication with approximately 24 000 staff members and external/institutional communication that is targeted at approximately 3.5million citizens of eThekweni Municipality. All managers are responsible for initiating communication at various hierarchical levels with both internal and external stakeholders. This means that the Communications Unit is ultimately responsible for conveying the messages which stem from the Clusters. This is evident when for example the City Budget is to be tabled, the first draft of the statement is prepared by the DCM responsible for Finance with his team and it is passed on to the Communications Unit for input and approval before it is released to the citizens.

The study noted that the Municipal departments are open to two way communication as they are receptive to communication initiated by the citizens through emails, WhatsApp line, SMS line, telephone calls and walk-ins at Sizakala Centres (Respondents 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 13). The study also revealed that some communication is conducted in a structured manner in the form of quarterly report back meetings to stakeholders, *iZimbizo* which are often addressed by the Mayor as well as the Masakhane programme, driven by the Community Participation and Action Unit, which takes all municipal departments to the communities with the aim of sharing information.

The Communications Unit is always readily available to communicate whenever the need arises, for example, when there is unplanned power shortages or burst pipes and other pressing issues. Ward committees and councillors play a leading role in terms of facilitating communication at grass roots level between communities and the municipality, however, the respondents felt that this structure needed to be strengthened in order to improve communication as they are the first port of call when issues arise.

6.4.3 Third objective:

To identify the various types of communication tools used by eThekwini Municipality when communicating with the citizens.

As discussed in chapter five, the Communications Unit utilizes eleven different tools to convey messages to internal and external stakeholders. These tools include print publications, online publications, public broadcast, digital platforms and face-to-face engagements. All Clusters and Units have access to these tools, however, some respondents raised concerns as they sometimes feel that there is competition between agendas to be prioritized and sometime feel neglected. The Clusters were also concerned about the return on investment on communication efforts and suggested a mechanism to evaluate the tools in order to gauge their effectiveness. All respondents felt there was an urgent need to maximize the use of social media and digital platforms.

6.4.4 Fourth objective:

To understand the factors that affect the effectiveness of the communication in eThekwini Municipality.

Below are the three major factors affecting the effectiveness of communication mentioned by the respondents:

- The poor response and apathy from the citizens were cited by most respondents as key factors hindering effective communication in eThekwini Municipality. There was a view that there is selective listening among the citizens who only tend to engage when they want to complain. Since only the Communications Unit is responsible for conveying the messages the respondents were of the view that communication by specific Units may be affected as there is competition for space and attention from the Communications Unit which sometime leads to the agenda of certain units being prioritized over other Units.
- On the other hand, eThekwini Municipality is a complex organization hence sometimes the messages to be conveyed get distorted intentionally or unintentionally by the media, members of the opposition parties. Political dynamics and cynicism also have a negative effect on communication especially when opposition parties view public information from the Municipality as propaganda.

- Budgetary constraints were listed by respondents as hampering effective communication in that it determines the frequency of engagements with communities. For example, the airtime that can be purchased will be determined by the budget no matter how complex the issue to be presented to the listeners is. The number of personal visits/meetings with key stakeholders are also dependent on the availability of funds. This phenomenon is not unique to eThekweni Municipality but it is prevalent because of the global economic meltdown (Schlachter *et al.*, 2013).

6.4.5 Fifth objective:

To suggest strategies that can be used to improve the communication in eThekweni Municipality.

The researcher was able to identify the following four strategies to improve communication in local government:

- The role played by ward councillors was cited by all respondents as crucial in strengthening communication in local government. In Sibeko *et al.* (2005) the structure of ward committees and councillors is viewed as a vital conduit which brings closer the municipality to the people and vice versa. The respondents stated that poor communication at ward level is the root cause of service delivery protests in eThekweni Municipality. Scholars have noted the prevalence of this problem in other local municipalities across the country (Sinwell *et al.*, 2009; Allan and Heese, 2011; and Steyn, 201). Hence, the development of a focused and inclusive communication strategy to get ward committees to work in an efficient and effective manner could enhance communication within municipalities.
- Citizens are living in an era where they are exposed to information in a rapid manner due to technological advancements. Reddick *et al.* (2016) quoted in chapter three of this study believes that information communication could enable municipalities to promote transparency through reaching a wider engaging audience. The respondents understand the benefits of online communication as reaching millions of citizens instantly in a cost effective manner saving local government printing and mailing costs. It also gets the citizens to engage on a personal basis which could address the problem of apathy and unresponsiveness of the community as mentioned in objective four above. Therefore, a simplified and proactive digital communication strategy could also contribute towards strengthening communication in local government.

- Members of the media community were identified as impeding effective communication due to a tendency to sensationalize controversial issues tabled at council meetings. As gatekeepers of information, news agents, could be used by eThekweni Municipality as contributors as promoters of communication in local government. For example, this could be achieved through proactively assisting the journalist understand the items to be tabled at council meetings by unpacking the value chain of projects and simplifying controversial matters prior to meetings. Therefore, an intensive and proactive strategy to form a partnership with the media could improve communication in local government.
- The despondency and unresponsiveness of the citizens leaves them disengaged with municipal programmes and projects. The respondents revealed that more effort is made to reach indigent communities, hence, they are aware of the developments taking place around them. However, attendance of meetings in affluent areas is very poor leaving communities unaware of vital information from their local municipality. Therefore, a personalised communication strategy to get all citizens keen to participate in municipal engagements could be devised in order to strengthen communication in local government.

6.5 Limitations of the study

- 6.5.1 The researcher only sought input from the senior employees of eThekweni Municipality; however, there is a need to investigate the views of the ward councillors and the local community. The local community could further be segmented into the affluent category and the indigent category as the study revealed that these two groups are not treated the same way in the way information is disseminated to them.
- 6.5.2 The second limitation is that the researcher is not in a position to initiate and effect change as per the recommendations but the findings of the study will be presented to MILE and the Communications Unit for consideration.
- 6.5.3 The third limitation is that not all the DCMs were available to participate in the study and due to time constraints, the researcher had to proceed with the senior administrators delegated by the offices of the DCMs.
- 6.5.4 The fourth limitation is that there are more provinces in South Africa and the study was only conducted within eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. More

insights and depth on the topic could be obtained from other metropolitan municipalities.

6.6 Recommendations of the study

The researcher recommends the following for consideration by eThekweni Municipality:

- ***Strengthen ward committees structures.***

The Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 and the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 clearly outline the significant role played by ward committee structures in local government. This is vital as revealed by the respondents that these structures act as facilitators of communication between the municipality and the citizens. The neglect of the role of these structures has led to violent service delivery protests in RSA (Sinwell, 2009; Allan and Heese, 2011). This also means that the ward committee structures need to be capacitated to share negative information and to manage expectation. Therefore, the development of a focused and inclusive communication strategy to get ward committees to work in an efficient and effective manner is recommended.

- ***Capitalize on the use of digital and online communication.***

It is important for local government to keep up with technological developments in order to remain relevant. As discussed above, more and more citizens have access to technological devices which enable them to consume information at a rapid pace. Hence, a digital communication strategy is recommended in order to maximize the mileage of online communication tools.

- ***A concerted effort to reach out to disengaged citizens.***

As revealed in chapter five of this study, the municipality pays more attention in terms of communication efforts directed to indigent citizens. This is evident in various tools used by the Community Participation and Action Unit, however, the engagement levels are very low from the rest of the local citizens. So, equal communication efforts should be applied to all citizen as it is the main driving force in fostering a healthy relationship between the municipality and communities (Muthambi, 2014) Therefore, a concerted

effort in energizing local residents to get them keen to participate in municipal programmes is recommended.

- ***Strengthen relationships with the media.***

As discussed above, the media houses are conduits through which information is disseminated. However, if the relationship between them and the municipality is not managed well, their communication efforts about the municipality could be detrimental. Therefore, more effort should be made to get the media to understand complex or controversial municipal programmes through the understating of the value chain of each project.

6.7 Recommendations for future research

In an effort to develop knowledge in the area of communication in local government the researcher recommends the following themes for consideration for future studies:

- An assessment of the effectiveness of communication by international municipalities could be explored in order to learn best practice from the global context.
- A comparison of communication efforts by metropolitan municipalities in South Africa.
- The measurement of the effectiveness of communication efforts in local government in an effort to ascertain the return on investment.
- The role of ward committees in strengthening communication in local government.

6.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess communication's effectiveness within communities with a focus on eThekweni Municipality. Scholarly journals and publications together with various pieces of legislation revealed how communication in local government should be managed with strong emphasis on the importance of the role played by ward committee structures. It was also clear that communication is the backbone of a healthy relationship between the municipality and the citizens. Hence, it is vital for local government to adhere to good governance by maintaining a good flow of information. It was encouraging to note that the senior personnel interviewed for this study had a good sense of what was expected from them in terms of communication. The findings showed that communication happens in a

coordinated manner with the Communications Unit taking the lead in eThekweni Municipality. However, the participants felt there was room for improvement especially in strengthening communication efforts at ward committee level as this is the closest structure to the community. Hence, the study recommends a concerted effort to engage with all citizens, strengthen ties with the media and maximize the use of digital and online communication in order to improve communication in local government.

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Respondent 6, (2017). Senior Researcher: eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa – 24 November 2017

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Respondent 10, (2017). Public Relations Officer: eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa – 7 December 2017

Respondent 11, (2017). Senior Manager: eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa – 7 December 2017

Respondent 12, (2017). Marketing Manager: eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa – 7 December 2017

Respondent 13, (2017). Deputy City Manager: eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa – 20 December 2017

8 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Letter from the editor

Appendix 2 – Ethical clearance letter

Appendix 3 – Gate keepers' letter

Appendix 4 – Informed consent form

Appendix 5 – Interview questions

Appendix 6 – Turnitin report