

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**Evaluating the impact of governance on service delivery in the Zululand
District: Towards a good governance efficiency model**

by

Nkosenye Godfrey ZULU

216075176

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degree of Doctor of Administration in Public Administration**

School of Management, IT and Governance

College of Law and Management Studies

Supervisor: Prof TI Nzimakwe

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DECLARATION

I, **Nkosenye Godfrey ZULU**, declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- (ii) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this academic work to all my young and older children. My children, the completion of this work should say to every last one of you that nothing is impossible when you commit yourself and become single-minded. If your father could do it despite his work schedule, better known to you, so can you achieve your goals and desires.

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ABSTRACT

Municipalities in South Africa face significant governance challenges that undermine service delivery. These challenges arise despite an extensive legal framework that promotes good governance. The Zululand District Municipality exemplifies this local government crisis due to its inefficiencies in financial management, accountability, public participation, and provision of essential services such as water and sanitation. This study investigates how adherence to good governance principles can enhance service delivery efficiency by developing a governance efficiency model tailored to the realities of the Zululand District Municipality. The study employs a qualitative research design and draws on semi-structured interviews with municipal officials, policymakers, and community stakeholders, alongside an analysis of municipal reports and legislative frameworks. Data was analysed using thematic analysis and coding techniques to identify recurring governance challenges and best practices. This approach ensures a comprehensive examination of governance inefficiencies and their impact on service delivery outcomes. Findings reveal that governance failures such as inadequate financial oversight, lack of transparency, and political interference significantly hinder service delivery. The study also identifies public participation and accountability mechanisms gaps and explains how these impede service delivery. The study concludes that addressing these issues requires a structured governance framework that fosters collaboration among key stakeholders, strengthens institutional capacity, and ensures compliance with governance principles. This study makes a novel theoretical contribution by integrating good governance, public value, and agency theories to develop a governance efficiency model. The model proposes a collaborative governance approach that enhances accountability, transparency, and stakeholder participation to improve municipal service delivery. Unlike existing governance frameworks, this model prioritises adaptive governance mechanisms to address the unique challenges of the Zululand District Municipality. The proposed governance efficiency model offers a structured approach for the municipality and its counterparts to enhance operational efficiency, mitigate governance risks, and improve service delivery outcomes. It provides policymakers with actionable insights on fostering accountability and civic engagement while ensuring compliance with governance standards. If adopted, this model has the potential to transform service delivery by promoting institutional resilience and governance sustainability.

Keywords: good governance, service delivery, Zululand District Municipality, accountability, transparency, efficiency, model

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial intelligence
ANC	African National Congress
CoGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COVID	Coronavirus 2019
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
GPSJS	Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey
IDASA	Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Foundation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
MPAC	Municipal Public Accounts Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC	Non-Profit Company
NPM	New Public Management
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
OBI	Open Budget Index

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SABC	South African Broadcasting Cooperation
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAPS	South African Police Service
SDBIP	Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In South Africa, local government comprises eight metropolitan, 44 district, and 205 local municipalities (South African Government, 2023a). These municipalities enjoy immense constitutional and legal autonomy from the provincial and national spheres of government (Fuo & Pallangyo, 2023). This autonomy comes with corresponding duties, one of which is to provide efficient service delivery to the communities that they serve (Chamberlain & Masiangoako, 2021). The obligations in this regard entail an array of concurrent and exclusive functions which must be provided sustainably. These services are outlined in Section 156 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and include the maintenance of local roads and the provision of water, sanitation services and a safe and healthy environment. To provide these services and to meet the developmental duties to local communities, municipalities should be guided by the basic values and principles governing public administration as outlined in Section 195 of the Constitution. Municipalities must act within the rule of law and ensure that their decisions are taken democratically, accountably and through mechanisms that ensure effective community engagement (Pieterse, 2023:306). This is part of the broader requirements for upholding good governance (Thusi & Selepe, 2023:689).

Good governance is the functioning of a government and its administration properly, ethically and in line with generally accepted values and principles of accountability for official acts, responsiveness to communities, and transparency about financial expenditures and related information (Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2012). Good governance also entails respect for the rule of law, public participation in governance, community trust in the government, and perceptions of its legitimacy (Keping, 2018; Sari, 2023). Importantly, good governance entails efficient service delivery, which occurs when public goods and services are provided at the right time, in the right quantities and qualities, and in a cost-effective manner that gives value to the public (Osborne, 2020).

The above definition and elements of good governance make it both a regulatory tool and an instrument for poverty alleviation and development (Maloba, 2015). This is because upholding good governance in municipalities is beneficial to local government for a variety of reasons,

including legitimacy, efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of services (Thusi & Selepe, 2023). It is also essential for creating an environment in which municipalities and organised community members (in the form of civil society), work together to innovate new ways of delivering services and to enhance the quality of services provided by municipalities (Mubangizi, 2022).

However, the last five years show that many South African municipalities are increasingly failing to ensure good governance, as seen by their near collapse due to dysfunction. Many municipalities are increasingly becoming dysfunctional and are unable to provide basic services such as clean drinking water and sanitation (Chamberlain & Masiangoako, 2021). These municipalities are also unable to maintain vital infrastructure, such as roads, resulting in community dissatisfaction and legal liabilities (Chamberlain & Masiangoako, 2021). Furthermore, municipalities are facing protests from communities and a general loss of trust in their abilities (Klaasen, 2020). As a result of these issues, the new Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Velenkosini Hlabisa, recently gave the country's 41 dysfunctional municipalities less than 24 months to return to 'normalcy' (Thorne, 2024). In this context, this study explores the extent to which good governance can enhance service delivery through a governance efficiency model in the Zululand District Municipality.

1.2 Background

Although most municipalities in South Africa face governance challenges, the Zululand District Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal Province has been "facing significant fiscal and service delivery difficulties which undermine the effective and efficient performance of its function and the execution of their mandate" (Zululand District Municipality, 2023:3). The municipality came into this position because of past cash flow problems which arose from several issues. For instance, the Zululand District Municipality is a rural municipality in which the rate of unemployment stands at a significant rate of 32%, meaning that a large portion of the municipality's residents are unable to pay for its services (Zululand District Municipality, 2023:3).

Like most of its rural counterparts, the municipality also faces infrastructure backlogs and asset maintenance challenges which could be traced to the apartheid policy of deliberately impoverishing black-dominated areas (Du Plessis, 2019). The municipality also suffers from a lack of skill among its staff, resulting in a situation in which it heavily relies on private service

providers (Zululand District Municipality, 2023:3). Given that private service providers are driven by profit, the financial resources of the Zululand District Municipality have recently come under pressure, leaving the municipality in a position in which it can hardly end a financial year with a positive balance (Zululand District Municipality, 2023:3).

There are a variety of reasons for the near collapse of the Zululand District Municipality. These are spelt in the municipality's Financial Recovery Plan (2022), which was instituted after the National Treasury flagged concerns about its financial viability, given that it had an unfunded budget, which posed a sustainability risk. In its Financial Recovery Plan, the Zululand District Municipality (2022:8-9) explained some of the reasons for its financial challenges as follows:

A lack of oversight, risk management and control coupled with leadership inefficiencies have created opportunity for misappropriation of funds, non-value for money spending and excessive occurrences of unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

A lack of restraint in budgeting, management and control has resulted in misappropriation of budget and other resources and little linkage between the budget and actual spending could be found (lack of procurement plan, poor planning resulting to irregular expenditure).

Staff members were appointed or promoted on an ad-hoc basis with the total disregard of the Human Resources processes being followed and adding to the unaffordability of the municipal budget employee related costs (double parking).

As a result of its failure to maintain adequate levels of oversight to mitigate risks through sound financial controls and given the lack of restraint in handling municipal finances, the Zululand District Municipality found itself in a situation in which its service delivery commitments were severely compromised. In fact, serviced delivery failed, and infrastructure began to crumble due to a lack of asset and infrastructure maintenance, among other challenges. The failure was so profound that even wastewater treatment plants collapsed, resulting in an unhealthy and unsightly environment. While all these happened, the municipality's staff sat idle due to incapacity to address the challenges and also due to lack of tools of trade, as there was also no money to procure them (Zululand District Municipality, 2023). These problems point to the failure to adhere to principles of good governance in various respects. They may also point to a high turnover of staff from the municipality, a challenge which the government in general grapples with when the necessary systems are not in place to ensure that talent is recognised, utilised and properly remunerated (Nzimakwe & Mbele, 2024).

First, the failures manifest a lack of monitoring and oversight, risk management and control and are also contrary to the prescripts of good governance, which requires strong internal controls on matters involving the public purse (Ngcobo & Malefane, 2017:74). Good governance also requires oversight and effective risk management to prevent misappropriation of public funds and non-compliance with regulations (Mnguni & Subban, 2022). Second, the failures illustrate budgetary mismanagement when considering the growth in unauthorised, fruitless and wasteful expenditure, reported material irregularities and overall poor financial health. Such mismanagement of budgetary resources contradicts good governance, which calls for proper procurements, spending within the available budget, and preventing irregular and wasteful expenditure (Nzimakwe & Biyela, 2021; Zweni, Yan & Uys, 2022). Third, the failures point to a lack of transparent and accountable human resource practices. Without properly qualified and suitable personnel, the municipality cannot expect efficiency of its staff, resulting in poor or no service delivery at all. In her 2022/23 audit outcomes, the Auditor-General of South Africa highlighted poor quality of financial reporting through the annual financial statements that the municipality submitted for the same period. Although there are many other failures, the implication is that the Zululand District Municipality failed to ensure adherence to the core elements of good governance (Mdhluli & Jili, 2023). In this context, this study seeks to examine how good governance can enhance service delivery through a governance efficiency model in the Zululand District Municipality.

However, it must be noted that the Zululand District Municipality is not the only municipality facing governance challenges in South Africa. In fact, local government is perceived to be at risk of total collapse due to its increasing governance failures, which translate into service delivery inabilities. This systematic breakdown is exemplified by, among others, the case of eMalahleni Local Municipality in the Mpumalanga Province. This municipality has been grappling with persistent governance challenges that have significantly compromised its capacity to fulfil its core mandate (eMalahleni Local Municipality, 2022). Particularly evident is its inability to provide basic services such as water, electricity, and sanitation services. These issues are due to several factors, which include governance failures in availing properly serviced refuse collection vehicles and inability to combat illegal dumping, among others (eMalahleni Local Municipality, 2022:4). These governance failures have not only undermined the quality of life for communities but contributed to the erosion of public trust in local government. In the Eastern Cape Province, the Makana Local Municipality has been reported to suffer from similar challenges of failure to collect refuse and provide clean drinking water

to its residents due to relentless corruption within its ranks (Mxube, 2023). In both the Makana and eMalahleni municipalities, the situation deteriorated to such an extent that courts ordered provincial governments to intervene in the affairs of the municipalities to restore good governance and ensure proper service delivery (Chamberlain & Masiangoako, 2021).

In the North West Province, the provincial government had to intervene urgently when Clover (Pty) Ltd, which owns a factory in the Ditsobotla Local Municipality, began closure of its factory in the municipality due to persistent water and electricity issues as well as failure to maintain local road infrastructure (South African Government, 2021). In this municipality, governance deteriorated to such an extent that a provincial government intervention failed to resolve the issues plaguing the municipality. From a good governance perspective, the Ditsobotla Local Municipality has performed poorly to the extent of failing to submit its audited financial statements for 2022/23 and previous years (South African Government, 2024). Failure to publish these financial statements for consecutive years illustrates a failure at accountability and transparency and an inability to adhere to good practices and laws governing the budgeting, expenditure and accounting for public funds.

As recently as September 2024, the Zululand District Municipality found itself among ten municipalities in which the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government intervened in terms of Section 139 of the Constitution. The other municipalities include “Mpofana Local Municipality, uThukela District Municipality, Inkosi Langalibalele Local Municipality, uMzinyathi District Municipality, uMkhanyakude District Municipality, Mtubatuba Local Municipality [and] Umzumbe Local Municipality ...uMhlathuze Local Municipality and Msunduzi Local Municipality” (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2024b). The Zululand District Municipality admits in its own Financial Recovery Plan (2022) that failure to adhere to good governance is the root cause of its current service delivery challenges. In addition to the causes stated above, the Zululand District Municipality identified several additional factors leading to its near collapse, including financial mismanagement (as evidenced by failure to pay creditors, exhaustion of reserves and unspent grants); poor debt collection and credit control mechanisms; unrestrained expenditure on no-value items; conflict between political office-bearers and municipal administrative staff; and failure to implement audit action plans (Zululand District Municipality, 2023). These factors – admitted by the municipality itself – illustrate that there is a need for a return to good governance in the

Zululand District Municipality. Hence, this study considers how good governance can help to enhance service delivery in this municipality through a governance efficiency model.

1.3 Problem statement

The Zululand District Municipality faces severe governance challenges that threaten its capacity to provide efficient service delivery, particularly in water, sanitation, and waste management services. Despite the critical role of good governance in mitigating poor service delivery, there is a gap in academic research on how adherence to the prescripts of good governance can enhance the efficiency of service delivery through a governance efficiency model in the Zululand District Municipality. There is also insufficient scholarly engagement on the root causes and effects of service delivery challenges within the Zululand District Municipality from a good governance perspective. This limits the understanding of how adherence to good governance principles could be operationalised to enhance service delivery and improve the livelihoods of the municipality's communities. In this context, this study explores how inefficiencies in financial management, planning, procurement, and staffing hinder the Zululand District Municipality's ability to meet its constitutional and legal obligations on service delivery. This lack of efficiency has not been adequately examined in the context of good governance frameworks.

In view of the gap in the literature, this study examines the state of accountability mechanisms, transparency, and compliance with the rule of law in the Zululand District Municipality to determine how failure to adhere to these tenets of good governance contributes to inefficient service delivery. The study is further necessitated by the need to explore how a governance efficiency model could improve these areas to ensure effective service delivery. Arguably, an evidence-based framework to address governance inefficiencies and their impact on service delivery can enable the Zululand District Municipality to mitigate the on-going risks of political instability, loss of community trust, and failure to achieve sustainable development outcomes. This study addresses these issues by proposing and evaluating a governance efficiency model tailored to the Zululand District Municipality.

1.4 Aim and objectives

This study aims to examine how good governance can enhance the efficiency of service delivery through a governance efficiency model in the Zululand District Municipality. To achieve this overarching aim, the study pursues the following objectives:

- (i) To examine the theoretical framework for enhancing the efficiency of service delivery through good governance in South African municipalities.
- (ii) To assess challenges to good governance and efficient service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality.
- (iii) To explore how adherence to good governance in the Zululand District Municipality can enhance the effectiveness of service delivery.
- (iv) To develop a governance efficiency model for enhancing the effectiveness of service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality.

1.5 Key research questions

The central questions in this study are: what is the impact of good governance on service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality, and to what extent can the implementation of a governance efficiency model enhance the efficiency of service delivery? In order to answer these questions, the study further seeks to answer the following sub-questions:

- (i) What is the theoretical framework for enhancing the efficiency of service delivery through good governance in South African municipalities?
- (ii) What are the challenges to good governance in the Zululand District Municipality?
- (iii) To what extent can adherence to good governance in the Zululand District Municipality enhance the efficiency of service delivery?
- (iv) What is an ideal governance efficiency model for the Zululand District Municipality, and to what extent can such a model enhance the effectiveness of service delivery?

1.6 Scope and limitations

This study is confined to the analysis of the extent to which good governance can enhance the efficiency of service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. Although it makes reference to realities in South Africa in general, these should not be viewed as a commitment to a full examination of such realities. Instead, the references should be understood from the position it is not entirely possible to examine governance challenges in one district municipality without reference to the general situation prevailing in South Africa. However, there are several limitations to the study.

First, the study faces methodological limitations on the availability of some data, particularly when it comes to up-to-date data from the Zululand District Municipality. This is because

intricate details on financial records, procurement practices and other specific governance mechanisms cannot be readily available to the public, particularly in a municipality that is facing severe governance challenges. This limitation is mitigated through reliance on publicly available state information from the municipality itself and reports of the Auditor-General of South Africa. For instance, the Zululand District Municipality's Financial Recovery Plan (2023) attempts to spell out in clear terms the issues leading to the service delivery challenges facing the municipality. Given that the Auditor-General is obligated to publish its reports on the audit activities in any given municipality, these reports were accessed for the study and utilised.

The second limitation of the study concerns the candidate's positionality in assessing good governance. Since good governance has multiple dimensions, such as transparency and accountability, the examination of these concepts in a study can be subjective, as there are varying perceptions of what constitutes good governance and what qualifies as sufficient transparency and accountability. This limitation is mitigated by engaging in a thorough examination of these concepts within the South African setting to arrive at an objectively acceptable definition of their meaning and ambit. Also, the perceptions of different stakeholders on these concepts are considered and assessed broadly within the confines of the study.

The third limitation of the study concerns possible political connotations and impacts of the study. This is because the Zululand District Municipality is a politically dynamic municipality whose present circumstances require a circumspect approach to understanding its challenges. Given that the candidate conducted semi-structured interviews with political and administrative officials from the Zululand District Municipality, it is accepted that in as much as every effort was expended in guaranteeing their anonymity and upholding the confidentiality of the interviews, they may have been apprehensive about spelling out all the governance issues facing the municipality. This challenge was a possibility, given that some of the political and administrative officials of the municipality were not keen to partake in the study for self-preservation in a municipality that has huge governance challenges. The Zululand District Municipality's Financial Recovery Plan (2022) points to a chilling environment in which political killings are rife to the extent that expenditure on bodyguards for office-bearers is one of the reasons for its crippled finances (Zululand District Municipality, 2023). The other challenges facing the study are spelt out in the methodology chapter.

1.7 Contribution to knowledge

This study comes at a relevant and timely moment in the history of the Zululand District Municipality, which is facing severe governance challenges which are threatening its ability to provide efficient service delivery. The study seeks to contribute new insights into existing knowledge on the governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality and also make novel contributions to the role of good governance in enhancing service delivery in this municipality. This is because, as far as could be ascertained after a diligent search, no study has been conducted at this level on the role of good governance in enhancing service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality through a governance efficiency model. This study utilises the paucity of knowledge in this regard and contributes novel and new insights into knowledge in the following ways.

First, this study addresses the root causes and effects of service delivery challenges in the Zululand District Municipality in a way that seeks to show how good governance can mitigate the municipality's poor service delivery of water, sanitation, and waste management services. Mitigating these failures through good governance can improve the livelihoods of communities and enhance the legitimacy of the Zululand District Municipality's political and administrative leadership, thereby improving relations with the affected communities. Such improvements are necessary for the short- and long-term viability of the Zululand District Municipality. The fact that there is little to no academic study of the governance challenges and how they can be mitigated through a governance efficiency model points to the lack of scholarly engagement with the Zululand District Municipality's challenges.

The second contribution of the study to knowledge lies in how it seeks to suggest measures for improving the allocation of resources and efficiency in the Zululand District Municipality. This is because good governance places emphasis on the efficient allocation of resources and their utilisation in ways which lead to desired outcomes (Ngcobo & Malefane, 2017). Hence, this study contributes to knowledge by revealing how inefficiencies in financial management, planning, procurement and hiring of staff impede the ability of the Zululand District Municipality to meet its constitutional and other legal obligations on service delivery. Given the importance of procurement in government as highlighted by Nzimakwe (2023), this approach will add new insights into existing knowledge.

The third contribution of the study to knowledge concerns the extent to which a governance efficiency model can help to improve accountability mechanisms, transparency and compliance with the rule of law, in general, to reduce corruption and ensure that public resources are utilised effectively and for their intended purpose by the Zululand District Municipality. Through the protection of financial resources from abuse and inefficient use, this study seeks to provide scholarly input on how the municipality can lead itself to a sustainable future, improve the participation of its communities in service delivery, ensure legal compliance, reduce risks and adapt to best practices on good governance at the local level.

1.8 Research methodology

The methodology that guided this study is outlined in Chapter 4 in full detail. For the purposes of this chapter, the method is summarised as follows: The study adopted an interpretivist philosophy to examine the role of governance practices in enhancing service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. Interpretivism emphasises understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of those directly involved, making it suitable for exploring the lived experiences of municipal officials and community stakeholders (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This philosophical orientation aligns with the study's objective of developing a governance efficiency model grounded in local realities. The interpretivist paradigm prioritises qualitative methods and inductive reasoning, enabling the exploration of tenets of good governance such as accountability, transparency, compliance with the rule of law, consensus-oriented decision-making, and public participation. Engaging with subjective experiences and contextual factors through this paradigm ensures that the findings reflect the intricate interplay between governance frameworks and service delivery outcomes.

A qualitative research approach was used in this study to investigate failure to adhere to the tenets of good governance in the Zululand District Municipality and the service delivery inefficiencies that arise in the municipality. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth examination of subjective interpretations and meanings attributed to governance processes by municipal officials and stakeholders in the Zululand District Municipality. As such, semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection tool that enabled participants to articulate their experiences, challenges, and insights on the failures at good governance in the municipality and their impact on service delivery. This flexibility facilitated probing into critical themes such as financial mismanagement, political interference, and traditional authority influences.

The qualitative approach also incorporated a review of secondary data, including municipal annual reports, government publications, and peer-reviewed literature. The integration of primary and secondary data ensured a holistic understanding of good governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality and supported the triangulation of findings through the Atlas.ti software. Generally, this approach is suited to uncovering the systemic and human factors contributing to service delivery inefficiencies within a rural municipal context.

The study employed a case study strategy which entailed focusing exclusively on the Zululand District Municipality. This method is advantageous for examining phenomena in their real-life context and allows for a detailed analysis of good governance challenges and service delivery inefficiencies in the chosen municipality. The case study approach facilitated the identification of unique good governance dynamics within the municipality, including the interplay between district and local governance structures. While case studies inherently limit the generalisability of findings, they excel in providing context-specific insights that can inform tailored governance reforms for troubled municipalities such as the Zululand District Municipality (Kekeya, 2021). Through concentrating on a single municipal district, the research was able to analyse the historical, cultural, and political factors influencing good governance practices and service delivery inefficiencies. This strategy was particularly valuable for developing a governance efficiency model that can be adapted to similar rural municipalities facing analogous challenges in South Africa.

Several ethical considerations guided this study, including upholding the integrity of the research process and safeguarding the rights and autonomy of participants. The study adhered to the Protection of Personal Information Act of 2013 and ensured the anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality of all participants. Identifying details were anonymised using pseudonyms, and data was securely stored to prevent unauthorised access. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, scope, and objectives. In addition, their written consent was obtained before their involvement. To ensure accurate data collection, the research also emphasised voluntary participation and allowed individuals to withdraw at any stage without repercussions. This was particularly important given the sensitivity of the subject matter, which includes political interference and governance inefficiencies in politically volatile municipality. Safeguarding participants from potential harm was prioritised through measures such non-coercive recruitment practices.

During the data analysis stage, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes emerging from the semi-structured interviews. This was achieved with the support of Atlas.ti, a research software package, which enhanced the systematic coding and organisation of qualitative data. This approach facilitated a detailed exploration of key issues such as financial management, accountability, and public participation. Triangulation of primary and secondary data was used in validating findings, reducing bias, and ensuring the credibility of the results. Cross-referencing interview data with documented governance trends enabled the study to produce a reliable analysis of the factors that influence service delivery inefficiencies that arise as a result of failure to adhere to the tenets of good governance in the Zululand District Municipality.

Dependability was achieved through a transparent audit trail, documenting all decisions and processes during data collection and analysis. This was supported with credibility measures such as member checking, where participants reviewed and validated their interview transcripts. Reflexivity was employed to minimise researcher bias. The researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the study to critically assess personal assumptions. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the study context to enable readers to determine the applicability of findings to similar governance settings in South Africa. Confirmability was reinforced through triangulation and peer debriefing. This ensured that the results were grounded in participant experiences rather than researcher biases emanating from positionality.

1.9 Structure of the study

The study comprises seven chapters.

1.9.1 Introduction and overview

Chapter 1 serves as the foundation for the entire study by presenting the research problem and explaining the motivation behind the study. It begins with an introduction that emphasises the importance of governance and service delivery within South African municipalities. The background section outlines key governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality alongside similar issues in municipalities such as eMalahleni and Makana. This background information is meant to highlight poor governance and its impact on service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality, particularly municipalities across the country. The problem statement identifies the specific challenge of inefficient service delivery resulting from weak

governance frameworks and thus establishes the need for this study. The research aim, objectives and questions are also presented in this chapter, as well as the foundation of the study and gravitation towards a governance efficiency model to enhance service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. The scope and limitations section sets the boundaries of the research and clarifies its focus and constraints.

1.9.2 Literature review

Chapter 2 is a literature review. It establishes a basis for the study by pinpointing deficiencies in current research and contextualising the inquiry within the wider scholarly conversation on good governance and service delivery in general and in South African municipalities in particular. The literature review begins by clarifying three concepts in the good governance discourse (governance, government and good governance). It then proceeds to examine the meaning, content, and relevance of specific tenets of good governance. In this regard, the tenets of good governance include accountability; transparency; responsiveness; rule of law public participation; trust and legitimacy; equity and inclusiveness; consensus-oriented decision-making; and efficiency and effectiveness. After discussing the tenets of good governance, the literature review discusses selected measurement standards of good governance, which include the local governance performance management, World Governance Indicators, the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, and the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index.

Despite the clear understanding of good governance and the importance of its tenets, the literature review reveals that there is a deficiency of good governance in South African municipalities. It thus examines the manifestations of the lack of good governance in South African municipalities. It achieves this through exploring unaccountability in local government, irresponsiveness, lack of transparency, and loss of community trust in municipalities. It also examines various manifestations of inefficient service delivery across municipalities in South Africa, such as failure to manage stormwater and prevent flooding, improper management of landfill sites, failure to collect and dispose of waste, and failure to provide clean water for drinking and recreation.

1.9.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study are presented in the third chapter, which lays the foundation for the grounding of the study in theory. This chapter aims to establish the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis of governance practices and their effects on

service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality through the prism of three theories: the Good Governance theory, the Public Value theory and the Agency theory. The chapter is structured as follows: the second section after the introduction discusses the good governance theory, which is based on a framework that emphasises the establishment and maintenance of robust institutions whose structures effectively manage public affairs and resources in line with the tenets of good governance (accountability, transparency, participation, the rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness) (Ekundayo, 2017). This theory can be leveraged to reform the service delivery approach of the Zululand District Municipality through practical strategies that are anchored on good governance.

The third section examines the public value theory, which is based on the idea that people in a particular community are collectively entitled to certain goods and services from their government and that the provision of such goods and services must give them some ‘value’ in terms of the quantities, quality and timing of provision (Barnes *et al.*, 2003). Efficient service delivery is one of the tenets of public value. Hence, this theory can be used to devise strategies to improve service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. The fourth section discusses the agency theory, which explains the relationship between two parties, the principal and the agent (Panda & Leepsa, 2017). This theory explains the relationship between government and the governed (Schillemans & Bjurstrøm, 2020). For the purposes of this study, which centres on good governance in the local government context in the Zululand District Municipality, the agency theory recognises the communities served by the municipality as the principal and the council and administration of the municipality as the agents. The last section concludes the chapter.

1.9.4 Research methodology

The methodology used for this study is presented in the fourth chapter. The discussion of the methodology begins with examining the research philosophy and paradigm to illustrate that the study adheres to interpretivism, positivism, or pragmatism. The discussion of the research design is meant to specify qualitative, quantitative and or mixed method approaches that are relevant to the study. In addition, the fourth chapter delineates data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews and analysis of annual reports of the Zululand District Municipality. To achieve this, the fourth chapter discusses the sampling and participant selection methodologies and details the criteria employed for participant selection. The relevant ethical considerations are addressed, such as privacy, anonymity, and the acquisition of

informed consent. The chapter delineates the data analysis methods, identifies tools such as thematic analysis and the use of software such as Atlas.ti to facilitate systematic data interpretation.

1.9.5 Data analysis and presentation

Chapter 5 of the study presents a comprehensive overview of the data collected through semi-structured interviews and offers interpretations that establish the foundation for the subsequent in-depth analysis in the following chapter. The chapter also provides a detailed profile of the Zululand District Municipality to highlight significant governance challenges in the area. It also examines governance failures established from the semi-structured interviews and analysis of annual municipal reports. This analysis reveals several problems, including financial mismanagement, nepotism, and inadequate planning for service delivery. This chapter also establishes a link between the data it presents and the theories examined in the third chapter to justify its proposed governance efficiency model.

1.9.6 Discussion of findings

Chapter 6 of the study analyses the research findings by situating them within the wider context of the study. It seeks to provide an overview of the principal findings derived from the data analysis and to situate those findings within the discourse by juxtaposing them with the literature and theoretical frameworks examined in the preceding chapters. The discussion chapter also shows the challenges and opportunities by pinpointing areas for enhancement within the governance framework of the Zululand District Municipality.

1.9.7 Findings and recommendations

The last chapter summarises the study by integrating the main findings and proposing measures to enhance service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. This synthesises the insights derived from the research in the previous chapter and proffers recommendations for municipal managers, policymakers, and stakeholders to inform future actions that can enhance service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. The relevant pathways for them to achieve this are set out in the governance efficiency model for the Zululand District Municipality.

1.10 Conclusion

This study comes at an opportunity moment in the history of the Zululand District Municipality, as it faces severe failures at adhering to the tenets of good governance. These failures manifest

in inefficient service delivery, particularly in water, sanitation, and waste management services. The study argues that despite the critical role of good governance in mitigating poor service delivery, there is a gap in academic research on how adherence to the prescripts of good governance can enhance service delivery through a governance efficiency model in the Zululand District Municipality. The study is also motivated by that there is insufficient scholarly engagement on the root causes and effects of service delivery challenges within the Zululand District Municipality from a good governance perspective. As such, there is limited understanding of how adherence to good governance principles could be operationalised to enhance service delivery and improve the livelihoods of the municipality's communities. This study potentially contributes novel ideas and new insights into existing knowledge on how adherence to the tenets of good governance can enhance service delivery through a governance efficiency model in the Zululand District Municipality.

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative and was designed to provide a comprehensive and context-specific understanding of good governance challenges and their effects on service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. This method integrates the interpretivist paradigm, qualitative approach, and case study strategy. Through this method, the research captured the challenges to good governance in the Zululand District Municipality and their impact on service delivery. Ethical considerations, data quality control measures and a multi-method data collection strategy underpinned the reliability and credibility of the findings of the study. The following chapter is a review of the literature on good governance, its tenets, selected measuring standards of good governance and illustrations of the need for good governance in South African municipalities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Many African countries, including South Africa, have vast mineral and other natural resources through which they can improve the livelihoods of their people (Adu Sarfo & Tweneboah, 2024). However, most of them, if not all, are in dire economic straits as a result of poor governance (Frynas & Buur, 2020). In the African continent, bad governance is “the root cause of all evil within our societies” (UNESCAP, 2009). In this context, this chapter examines the literature on good governance and service delivery in general and in South African municipalities in particular to contextualise the study and place it within the discourse. As will be seen in this chapter, good governance entails the exercise of power and the performance of state obligations in ways that are transparent, responsible, inclusive, accountable, effective, and efficient and which adhere to foundational constitutional principles like democracy and the rule of law (UNESCAP, 2009). Although the definition of good governance appears straightforward, there is always a risk of conflation of governance with good governance and the government. Hence, this chapter clarifies these concepts and seeks to define good governance through its tenets. It reinforces this approach by illustrating the need for good governance in South African municipalities, as seen through the literature.

This chapter is structured as follows. After this introduction, the second section defines key themes in the discourse on good governance. These are the distinction between governance, government and the government. The third section is an analysis of the meaning, content, and relevance of specific tenets of good governance. In this regard, the tenets of good governance include accountability; transparency; responsiveness; rule of law public participation; trust and legitimacy; equity and inclusiveness; consensus-oriented decision-making; and efficiency and effectiveness. The fourth section of this chapter discusses selected measurement standards of good governance, which include the local governance performance management, World Governance Indicators, the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, and the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index.

The fifth section of this chapter examines the need for good governance in South African municipalities by examining manifestations of the lack of good governance. It achieves this

through exploring unaccountability in local government, irresponsiveness, lack of transparency, and loss of community trust in municipalities. It also examines various manifestations of inefficient service delivery across municipalities in South Africa, such as failure to manage stormwater and prevent flooding, improper management of landfill sites, failure to collect and dispose of waste, and failure to provide clean water for drinking and recreation.

2.2 Key concepts in the discourse on good governance

2.2.1 Governance

Governance is a process, not a set of rules and controls, about coordination between the public and the private sector (Keping, 2018:3). Governance may be defined as the follows:

The sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest. (Commission on Global Governance, 1995:2-3).

The concept of governance originated from Latin and ancient Greek. UNESCAP (2009) defines it as “the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).” However, this definition is not self-explanatory, as it says a lot without actually giving one clarity. Given the conflation of ‘governance’ with ‘government’ in the discourse, it is ideal to identify the five main propositions that illustrate governance.

According to Keping (2018:2), governance denotes the actions of the collective institutions and individuals who comprise the government. However, it should be noted that governance also includes the actions of the private sector in circumstances where it is increasingly playing a role by providing goods and services that ideally should be provided by the state (Hayes, Chester & King, 2022). When government functions are outsourced or privatised in this way, the acts of the private entities will constitute governance to the extent that such entities exercise public power (Webster, 2023).

In the South African context, the law views the acts of private entities that exercise public power or perform a public function with so much focus that under the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (2000), the decisions of such entities are viewed as administrative

action (South African Government, 2000). This has also been explored by several scholars, including Hoexter & Penfold (2024). The classification of the acts of private entities under governance is an acknowledgement that they wield enormous public power and that if that power is viewed outside the scope of governance, the public interest may be in jeopardy, given the propensity of private entities to pursue profit at all costs (Boeger, 2024; Dadzie, Aboagye-Otchere & Twum, 2022). Within the South African context, there have been concerns about attempts by the private sector to capture the state and siphon public resources into private hands (Klaaren, 2023; Singh & Pillay, 2022). However, there is no denying that the private sector has a role to play in enhancing development (Nzimakwe, 2006). Also, it will be noted that government partnerships do not stop with the private sector but also extend to non-governmental organisations, which also play a role in development (Nzimakwe, 2008).

The idea that governance should not be seen as only referring to the acts of administrative and elected personnel in government leads to the second proposition that distinguishes governance from the government. The proposition is that governance blurs the lines of distinction and the boundary of responsibilities when it comes to responsibility for social and economic issues. This is because, in modern states, the government often gives the private sector immense power in the provision of public goods and services (service delivery) through privatisation and outsourcing. One then wonders whether the profit interests of private entities that perform public functions or which exercise public power can be reconciled with a human rights approach by which the state has given itself the obligation to progressively realise socio-economic rights (Lowenthal, 2022).

Another aspect which distinguishes governance from the government is that it requires state institutions and individuals to work together and depend on each other for various services and functions in order to function as an effective collective. For instance, public finance departments ensure the availability of funds for water departments, while water departments ensure that all government agencies and communities have access to such water. This can be viewed in the spirit of cooperative governance, which is a pillar of governance in South Africa's Constitution. Cooperative governance can be linked to the fourth issue, which is that governance accepts the autonomy of spheres of government from one another to enable them to carry out their obligations effectively (Makoti & Odeku, 2021).

In the South African context, this can be seen from the immense autonomy that local governments have from the provincial and national spheres and how this autonomy enhances

the governance of the local communities. The last but not least issue that should be noted as a distinguishing factor of governance is that it does not require the state to exert its authority in order to get things done (Keping, 2018). This observation is important to this study as far as efficient service delivery is concerned because it implies that collaborative and coordinated efforts between public and private sectors can effectively meet public needs without relying solely on authoritative state intervention.

2.2.2 Government

In democratic and authoritarian states across the world, the government is the most important entity of the modern era because it provides an organised system of making law, resolving disputes and enforcing the law (Raadschelders, 2020). Loosely defined, the government refers to the “administrative and political activities related to national public affairs” (Keping, 2018). This definition implies that the government is the organisation structure through which governance is performed, i.e., the political entity that presides over the state by exercising authority over the population, making governance decisions, making laws and administering policies. In modern democracies South Africa, the government comprises three branches, namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary (Munzhedzi, 2017). The legislature is composed of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2024a). The executive includes the President, Deputy President and ministers (collectively referred to as cabinet (Wehner & Mills, 2022). The judiciary essentially refers to all courts of the Republic of South Africa, including the magistrates’ courts, the High Court, the Supreme Court of Appeal, the Constitutional Court and specialised courts such as the Labour Court, Labour Appeal Court and the Competition Appeal Tribunal (Office of the Chief Justice, 2024).

The above branches of government are found in the national, provincial and local spheres of government (South African Government, 2023b). The legislature at both national, provincial and local levels is responsible for the enactment of laws, which apply according to their hierarchies (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2024a). For instance, Parliament (National Assembly and National Council of Provinces) makes superior legislation which binds even the provincial and local spheres, while municipalities (local sphere) make by-laws which are only binding to each municipality (Sebake, 2015). The executive implements national legislation and makes policies and regulations. The judiciary is responsible for the resolution of disputes among citizens and among branches of government at all spheres of

government. However, the South African judiciary, particularly the Constitutional Court, wields enormous power that borders on law-making and ‘governing’ instead of merely pronouncing legal disputes.

The three branches of government and their different spheres play a role in ensuring adherence to good governance through efficient service delivery. This is because they work together to establish the legal, regulatory and policy framework that defines the standards of public administration and service delivery. To this effect, Section 152 of the South African Constitution outlines the objects of local government as follows:

- (a) To provide a democratic and accountable government for local communities;*
- (b) To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;*
- (c) To promote social and economic development;*
- (d) To promote a safe and healthy environment; and*
- (e) To encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government.*

In terms of Section 151(2) of the Constitution, each “municipality must strive, within its financial and administrative capacity, to achieve the[se] objects.” Also, Section 153 of the Constitution provides that each municipality must ‘structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community.’”

In addition to the constitutional provisions above, the government has also enacted several pieces of legislation that are relevant to local government to ensure that municipalities provide efficient service delivery and that they adhere to good governance. The relevant statutes include the Municipal Finance Management Act, Municipal Systems Act and the Municipal Structures Act, among others. In enacting these statutes, the government sought to ensure transparency and accountability in the making of public decisions regarding service delivery and other municipal functions. They also prevent corruption, foster citizen participation and engagement, and advance equity and inclusivity in local government. As the discussion will show in 2.3, all these are tenets of the rule of law. In summary, the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government at all spheres of government ensure compliance with the rule of law and ensure

that there are persons and institutions responsible for providing basic services to local communities. This is part of good governance, as discussed below.

2.2.3 Good governance

The above discussion has illustrated the distinction and close relationship between governance and government. The question then arises: what constitutes good governance (in general, and for the purposes of this study, in particular)? According to Keping (2018), good governance refers to “the public administration process that maximises public interest. One of its essential features is that it is a kind of collaborative management of public life performed by both the State and the citizens and a new relationship between politicians and civil society, as well as the optimum state of the two.” Good governance is an umbrella term that describes the functioning of the government and its officials in a proper and ethically compliant manner in line with generally defined values and principles (Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2012).

However, the meaning of good governance may differ in different states due to varying political, cultural and institutional factors (Pomeranz & Stedman, 2020). Although good governance holds a lot of promise for people in developing countries in which transparency, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, and respect for the rule of law are lacking, the concept has received a lot of criticism because it appears to uphold neoliberal elements. The argument seemed to be that what constitutes good governance in the developing world may not necessarily result in prosperity for people in those jurisdictions.

Another criticism of good governance is that it is seen to be used as a pawn by international aid agencies and financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2012:72). For instance, Keping (2018) points out that the World Bank first used the term good governance to refer to the ‘crisis of governance’ in Africa in 1989. Often, these institutions impose good governance as a prescript for rendering financial aid to struggling countries in the developing world. Such a prescription of good governance may not serve the interests of specific states, as their circumstances are unique to their political, economic and historical backgrounds (Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2012). Also, good governance is used by other powerful regional organisations, such as the European Union, to determine membership to its block (Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2012). Although requiring countries which wish to join the European Union to adhere to good governance is laudable, it may result in abuse of the concept, as the very same institutions “use the term in very different contexts”

(Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2012:72), which are tailored to suit their political and economic aspirations for global governance of the West over the world in general and the Global South, in particular.

2.3 Tenets of good governance

Good governance is central to the effective administration of public resources, accountability, and the equitable delivery of services. It is generally defined according to its principles, values and tenets. In this regard, it is seen as the processes and structures that ensure public decisions are made transparently, responsibly, and inclusively. According to UNESCAP (2009), good governance encompasses eight major characteristics, with accountability, transparency, responsiveness, participation, and adherence to the rule of law being among the most critical. The theoretical foundation of good governance is often situated within the broader frameworks of public administration and development studies, emphasising how effective governance contributes to sustainable development. Scholars such as Mansoor (2021) argue that good governance is crucial for ensuring that public institutions function in a manner that prioritises the public interest and enhances service delivery.

Good governance is often criticised for being Western-focused, overly reliant on formal institutions, and applying a one-size-fits-all approach that ignores local contexts, power dynamics, and socio-economic conditions (Beshi & Kaur, 2020). Despite these criticisms, it prioritises processes over outcomes. This makes it lack definitive measurability, potentially resulting in ineffective reforms. For instance, reliance on external donors may compromise local ownership and the sustainability of governance enhancements. However, good governance comprises several tenets that can improve service delivery efficiency by local governments. It can be understood through its eight major characteristics, which the UNESCAP (2009) describes as follows:

Good governance...is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimised, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

This extract introduces the tenets of good governance, whose contextual understanding makes it possible to understand the concept through its connection to human rights, democracy and respect for the law (Androniceanu, 2021). This is because good governance emphasises the

institutionalisation of public participation, the rule of law and accountability to ensure social justice and meaningful development (Addink, 2019). Expressed differently, the main elements of good governance are government legitimacy, transparency, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, public participation in the making of public decisions, sustainability and equity, and importantly, respect for the rule of law (Addink, 2019). These elements are illustrated below.

Table 2-1: Principles of good governance, definitions and main sources

Good governance principles	Definition	Source
1. Inclusivity	All stakeholders have opportunities to participate in and affect decision-making	Lockwood et al. (2010)
2. Fairness	The governing body and decision-making process respects diverse stakeholder views without bias; considers cost/benefit distribution	Lockwood et al. (2010)
3. Performance	Effectiveness and efficiency; processes meet their objectives while making the best use of resources	Graham et al. (2003); Sheng (2009)
4. Transparency	Rationale for decision-making is clearly communicated; information is freely available and accessible	Lockwood et al. (2010); Graham et al. (2003); Sheng (2009)
5. Legitimacy	Governing body given authority to make decisions by rule of law or by stakeholders; authority used with integrity	Lockwood et al. (2010)
6. Accountability	Governing body takes responsibility and is answerable for its decisions; demonstrates fulfilment of responsibilities	Lockwood et al. (2010); Graham et al. (2003); Sheng (2009)
7. Direction	Strategic vision; looking constructively towards the future	Graham et al. (2003); Decker et al. (2016)
8. Capability	Resources, skills, leadership, knowledge of governing body	Lockwood et al. (2010)

Source: Pomeranz & Stedman (2020)

The above general list of the definitional elements of good governance suggests that these are ‘public values’ which comprise good governance. As such, one can conclude that there is a potential connection between the good governance theory, which is discussed below, and the public value theory, which is also discussed below. The convergence of the tenets of good governance in these theories illustrates their importance in achieving desired outcomes, such as effective and efficient service delivery, which is the focus of this study.

2.3.1 Accountability of the government and its officials

2.3.1.1 Meaning of accountability

Accountability refers to the mechanisms that hold public officials responsible for their actions, particularly in financial management. Accountability ensures that deviations from planned actions or budgets are scrutinised and corrective measures are implemented. This is particularly relevant in addressing financial mismanagement, a recurring issue in many South African municipalities, including the Zululand District Municipality. The discourse on good governance is partly premised on the acceptance that certain repercussions must follow failures to adhere to the principles of good governance (Papadopoulos, 2022). Such failures may manifest through making decisions that are detrimental to citizens. They can also manifest through actions that harm the public interest, such as corruption, nepotism, embezzlement, and neglect of public duty, which results in harm to communities. Hence, good governance requires some answerability for the decisions and actions of public officials and institutions (Brinkerhoff, 2017). Answerability denotes that the relevant public officials and institutions will explain and justify their decisions and actions (Gregory, 2012). In the age of disinformation in which modern society finds itself, explaining and justifying government action may enhance its legitimacy by dispelling disinformation and clarifying positions while ensuring that those who make decisions are held to account for them.

Although accountability lies at the core of good governance, its meaning is always contested to the extent that it has always been viewed as a “complex and chameleon-like term” (Mulgan, 2000:555). Modern conceptions of its meaning (in general) stipulate that “accountability involves the power of one actor to make demands upon another to provide information about, or justification for, his/her actions; and the compulsion of the actor subject to those demands to respond” (Brinkerhoff, 2017:282). Hence, accountability refers to the answerability of a

public official for the decisions and actions that they have taken in their official capacities. Keping (2018:5) defines accountability in the good governance context as follows:

In public administration, it refers in particular to the duties related to a certain position or institution and its corresponding obligations. Accountability means that administrators and administrative bodies must fulfill the functions and obligations of the positions they hold. If they fail to fulfill their bounden functions or duties, or if they do so in an inappropriate manner, their conduct constitutes dereliction of duty or lack of accountability. The more accountability the public, especially public officers and administrative bodies have, the higher the level of good governance will be. In this regard, good governance requires the employment of both law and ethics to enhance the accountability of individuals and institutions.

This extract and the foregoing definitions of accountability show at least two aspects to accountability. The first concerns explaining decisions and actions to inform as part of transparency, as discussed below. The second aspect refers to the meting out of sanctions for transgressions. Both aspects of accountability manifest themselves through typology.

In understanding the role of each stakeholder in enforcing accountability, it is necessary to approach the issue of accountability from a questioning perspective. The following questions are often asked in this regard: “Who is accountable? To whom? For what? How (mechanisms of reporting)? For which consequences?” (Bovens, 2010; Callamard, 2012). Another way to look at these questions is proposed by Goetz & Jenkins (2005:3-4) as follows:

Who is seeking accountability? From whom (or what) is accountability sought? Where (in which forums and over what extent of geographic coverage) is accountability being sought? How (through what means) are the powerful being held to account? For what (which actions, and against which norms) is accountability being sought?

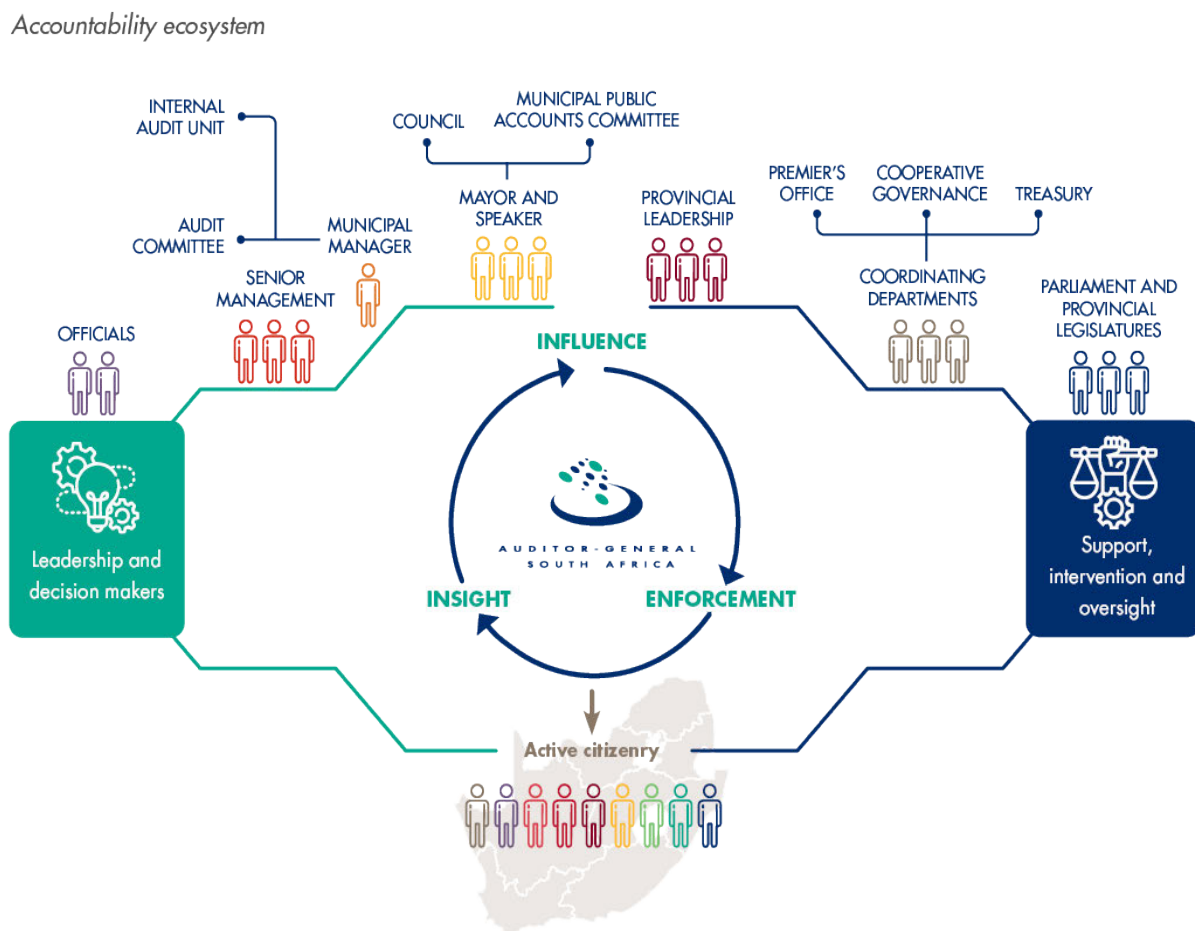
Based on the above questions, can argue that citizens, communities, civil society organisations, the courts, investigative agencies, and, to some extent, political parties are seeking accountability. It is sought from local government officials, municipalities and provincial and national governments. The forums in which accountability is being sought include municipal council meetings, community meetings, the courts, oversight bodies such as the Auditor-General of South Africa, and provincial interventions into failing municipalities. The means of exerting accountability include audits and financial reviews, judicial reviews, public protests, investigations and disciplinary actions. Last but not least, accountability is being sought for

service delivery failures, mismanagement of public resources, corruption, maladministration, unlawful decisions, and, most importantly, inefficiency and non-performance.

2.3.1.2 The local government accountability ecosystem

In the South African local government context, the above accountability questions from Goetz & Jenkins (2005:3-4) are answered through the accountability system in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1: Local government accountability ecosystem



Source: Auditor-General of South Africa (2023)

The accountability system in Figure 2-1 shows the various networks of stakeholders who are responsible for public sector accountability. These are characterised by interdependent roles and mutual reinforcement. The stakeholders collaborate beyond individual mandates to enhance the ecosystems' overall effectiveness. Figure 2-1 illustrates the following main

functions: leadership and decision-making, support and oversight, and enforcement. Pertaining to leadership and decision-making, the ecosystem includes officials, senior management, the municipal manager and council members, all of whom are responsible for making decisions and managing resources effectively within the municipalities. The internal audit and audit committees support these leaders by providing internal checks and advice to maintain standards and prevent governance failures.

The support, intervention, and oversight components in Figure 2-1 illustrate bodies like the provincial leadership, coordinating departments (such as the Premier's office, Cooperative Governance, and Treasury), along with Parliament and provincial legislatures. These bodies provide oversight, which is a critical component of accountability and good governance. They monitor the actions of local governments, offering support and intervening when necessary. These institutions help ensure that leadership decisions align with the law and public interests, and they can step in if issues of mismanagement or inefficiency arise.

The Auditor-General of South Africa and its role is also illustrated in Figure 2-1, which shows that the Auditor-General is central to the ecosystem of accountability, as it provides insight, influence, and enforcement. The insight is that the Auditor-General assesses financial and performance data and provides crucial insights on how well public funds are being used. The influence pertains to the Auditor-General's findings, which help to shape improvements by influencing leaders to adopt better practices and policies. The enforcement aspect is that the Auditor-General can enforce accountability by highlighting non-compliance and requiring corrective actions. In this way, the Auditor-General's work ensures that public funds are spent responsibly. This supports transparency and accountability across the board.

Active citizenry in Figure 2-1 lies at the heart of the accountability ecosystem. The active participation and engagement of citizens create a demand for accountability. Active citizens play this role by voting, raising concerns, and providing feedback to the government. As such, active citizens play a vital role in ensuring that public officials act in their interests. The role of citizens and all the parts of accountability in Figure 2-1 create a structure where municipal leadership is supported, monitored, and held accountable to ensure transparent, efficient, and responsive governance that benefits all citizens. It should be noted, however, that the accountability system in Figure 2-1 does not contain other relevant stakeholders.

2.3.1.3 Types of accountability

There are several types of accountability. These are illustrated in Table 2-2, which shows that they include democratic/political accountability, financial accountability, and performance accountability.

Table 2-2: Types of accountability

Accountability type	Definition	Links to other types
Democratic/political	Oversight of public officials and agencies in terms of their responsiveness to political leaders and to citizens, and of fulfilment of the public trust	<p>To financial: officials and agencies budget and spend resources to discharge their public mandates; dialogue and deliberation on budgets are a core feature of democratic discourse and policy-making.</p> <p>To performance: delivering services and results is a concrete manifestation of responsiveness to citizens' interests and societal needs; judgments about performance influence voter behaviour.</p>
Financial	Examination of compliance of officials and agencies with laws, regulations, and procedures for the transparent allocation, expenditure, and reporting of financial resources.	To democratic/political: financial accountability assures that resources are used for agreed-upon public purposes; transparency in financial accountability

		<p>enhances citizens' ability to participate in oversight.</p> <p>To performance: goods and services cannot be produced without financial resources; many accountability systems join financial and performance accountability.</p>
Performance	<p>Scrutiny of the actions of officials and agencies related to the production of outputs, delivery of services, accomplishment of objectives, and achievement of results and impacts.</p>	<p>To democratic/political: politicians and citizens look at performance to determine whether government is responsive, trustworthy, effective, and democratic. These determinations can affect citizen satisfaction with government and the outcome of elections.</p> <p>To financial: performance links allocation and spending of financial resources to achieving desired results.</p>

Source: Brinkerhoff (2017).

Table 2-2 outlines the three types of accountability within governance and explains how each type connects to the others to create a comprehensive accountability system. Democratic/political accountability ensures that public officials and agencies respond to both political leaders and citizens (Little, Schnakenberg & Turner, 2022). This compels them to fulfil their role in serving the public interest and maintaining public trust. It links to financial accountability because public officials rely on the budgeting and spending decisions made by

officials and agencies to ensure that they align with public mandates (Ozga, 2020). Budget discussions and decisions are part of democratic processes, where transparency and public input are encouraged (Mærøe *et al.*, 2021). Democratic/political accountability links to performance accountability in that the effectiveness of services and results provided by officials is a direct indicator of how well they respond to citizen needs and priorities (Han, 2020). Citizens judge this performance when voting or participating in political processes, as these are ways of holding leaders accountable through electoral influence (Duggan & Martinelli, 2020).

Financial accountability involves ensuring that officials and agencies comply with laws and regulations for transparent management of financial resources (Dharma, 2022). This includes proper allocation, expenditure, and reporting of funds to avoid misuse or inefficiency (Kassouri, Altıntaş & Bilgili, 2020). It links to democratic/political accountability in that financial transparency reassures citizens that public funds are used for agreed-upon purposes (Aden, 2020). This promotes public trust and allows citizens to engage in oversight by knowing how resources are allocated and spent (Sari & Muslim, 2023). It is connected to performance accountability in that financial resources are essential for delivering services and achieving results, meaning that financial accountability systems often overlap with performance accountability to ensure funds are used effectively to meet public needs (Molahosseini & Rajabdorri, 2024).

Performance accountability entails assessing whether officials and agencies achieve their objectives and deliver services effectively (Han, 2020). It is about determining whether they contribute to positive impacts and meet societal goals. It links to democratic and political accountability in that citizens and politicians evaluate performance to determine whether the government is effective, trustworthy, and responsive (Linde & Peters, 2020). This evaluation influences public satisfaction and electoral outcomes, as good performance strengthens democratic trust. Performance accountability is connected to financial accountability in that the performance of elected officials and their administration is closely tied to financial resources, as achieving desired results depends on how funds are allocated and spent. This link ensures that financial planning aligns with performance goals, creating accountability for both spending and results (Muhtar, 2022).

In essence, the democratic/political, financial and performance accountability are interconnected. While democratic/political accountability drives officials to serve the public,

financial accountability ensures funds are managed transparently. Performance accountability checks that goals are achieved effectively. Together, the three forms of accountability in Table 2-2 reinforce a governance system that is transparent, efficient, and responsive to citizens' needs.

2.3.1.4 Typology of accountability

The accountability types above and their corresponding definitions and links can also be viewed through the prism of the typology of accountability and examples below.

Table 2-3: Typology of accountability and examples

	Accountability within government (horizontal)	Accountability outside government (vertical)
High enforcement/sanctions capacity	Supreme audit institutions Courts Controllers general Law enforcement agencies Parliamentary hearings Legislative committees Administrative review councils Anti-corruption agencies	Elections Professional codes of conduct National/international standard-setting bodies Accreditation agencies Referenda Public interest law
Low enforcement/sanctions capacity	Advisory boards Interministerial committees Ombudsman offices Blue ribbons panels Citizen's charters "Sunshine" laws Freedom of information laws	Citizen oversight committees Service delivery surveys Civil society watchdog organisation Policy research (e.g., by think tanks or universities) Investigative journalism (media)

Source: Brinkerhoff (2017:285).

This table illustrates accountability within the government through horizontal means, which constitute the traditional checks and balances within a system of separation of powers. The essence of horizontal accountability is to ensure that state institutions exercise accountability

over one another to maintain the equilibrium of good governance. The table also illustrates vertical accountability, which denotes accountability by institutions and persons outside the government but on the government. Hence, the table identifies elections, litigation, mobilisation by civil society and investigative journalism, among others. Importantly, the table shows that service delivery surveys are some of the vertical accountability mechanisms. Given that accountability requires an explanation of actions and decisions, it goes in tandem with transparency (Brinkerhoff, 2017:282), which is about the disclosure of timely, relevant and complete information about the actions of the government, as discussed below.

2.3.2 Transparency in public decision-making and actions

Transparency involves open access to information, decision-making processes, and financial records. Transparency is a foundation for building public trust and ensuring that citizens can hold their leaders accountable. Worldwide, governmental transparency is regarded as essential for accountability and public confidence. In Western democracies such as the U.S. and the EU, it is frequently associated with open data and public access to information. In African and Asian countries, transparency is regarded as a strategy to mitigate corruption and enhance service delivery, although the execution differs. In authoritarian regimes, transparency is frequently confined to government-sanctioned narratives. In the context of South Africa, the lack of transparency has contributed to public mistrust, particularly regarding the management of financial resources. Good governance requires the timely, accurate, and full disclosure of information that citizens need to be meaningfully informed about regarding the activities of the government, its decisions, and future plans. Information that may be necessary in this regard includes ‘political information’, such as “legislative activities, policy-making, legal provisions, policy enforcement, administrative budget [and] public expenditure” (Keping, 2018:5). According to the Auditor General of South Africa (2023), important information includes financial statements, which serve the following purpose:

The council uses financial statements to hold the Municipal manager to account and to make decisions related to financial management and service delivery. Creditors, banks and rating agencies use them to determine how much risk there is in lending money to a municipality, and the public uses them to see how well the municipality is applying the rates and taxes collected to provide services. It is clear that financial statements are a key instrument for accountability.

The enactment of laws to promote transparency in local government could be seen as the promotion of transparency, which is a good governance tenet (Erkkilä, 2020b). From a good

governance perspective, transparency is about openness through disclosure of information about the workings of the government – its decisions, actions and expected outcomes (Androniceanu, 2021). Transparency enhances accountability and puts citizens in a position in which they know which decisions the government is making and what motivates such decisions (Sofyani, Riyadh & Fahlevi, 2020). This enables citizens, political opposition and law enforcement to guard against patronage, nepotism and fraud when it comes to state resources. As such, transparency is an empowering tool for all persons who are interested in ensuring that governments uphold the principles of good governance.

Good governance requires that when the government releases information about its decisions, actions and future plans, it must ensure that the relevant information is timely, relevant and clear so that even citizens of average intelligence can understand such information (Trautendorfer, Hohensinn & Hilgers, 2024). If the information is not understandable, it is not possible for its users to engage with it meaningfully and assess their options. Hence, there will be distrust in the government (Androniceanu, 2021). For this reason, it can be argued that the release of public information by the government must not be merely formalistic but must be intended to ensure that the objectives of transparency are achieved.

Transparency is important in the broader discussion on good governance as a means of enhancing service delivery. This is because transparency “is often associated with democracy and accountability, but it also carries connotations of responsiveness and efficiency. While transparency is a relevant concept for private corporations and political actors, its roots in many ways lie in access to government information, that is, transparency of public administration” (Erkkilä, 2020b:1). The conclusion one draws from this extract is that without transparency, there can be no democracy, accountability, responsiveness and importantly, efficiency, which is the focus of this study.

2.3.3 Respect for the rule of law

This principle ensures that all government actions are conducted within the framework of established laws, promoting fairness and consistency. It is critical for managing governance challenges like corruption and political interference that can disrupt the delivery of services. The rule of law is one of the principal tenets of good governance. It arises from the realisation that in states where controls on the exercise of public power are weak, government officials have a propensity to misbehave by acting unlawfully, prejudicially and without regard to

procedures (Beetham & Weir, 2002). This challenge is not confined to South Africa but also to other jurisdictions (Srirejeki & Putri, 2023). In the context of the present study, the behaviour of officials in the Zululand District Municipality attests to this reality. For instance, the Financial Recovery Plan (2022) adopted by the municipality flagged the following acts of disregard for the law and its procedures: unauthorised procurement, irregular hiring, unauthorised expenditure, and general neglect of oversight responsibilities. Evidently, these non-compliances place public resources at the peril of squandering and lead to inefficiencies that impede the ability of the Zululand District Municipality to deliver on its legal obligations for service delivery.

The rule of law emanates from the ideal that where laws have been enacted by a competent legislative authority, they must be enforced and complied with for the duration of their existence. In the context of good governance, the rule of law means that the law applies to all (Keping, 2018). It also means that everyone has a duty to obey the law and will face equal repercussions for failure to obey the law. This equality approach to the application and enforcement of the law gives citizens assurance that the government will obey and enforce its own laws. This makes the law predictable, certain and consistent. For this to happen, the laws must be clearly formulated, published for public access, and applied equally and stable (O'Donnell, 2004).

The rule of law enhances good governance in several ways. First, it protects citizens from arbitrary government decisions, thereby protecting human rights and holding public officials to only exercise legal powers that they have been specifically given by the law (Radin, 2017). To this end, government officials cannot lawfully exercise powers that the law has not specifically given them. In other words, government officials cannot assume a power that the law has not specifically given them. The idea behind this is to ensure that the laws are enforced impartially and that human rights are protected, particularly those of minorities and vulnerable groups who deserve greater protection. To this end, the rule of law requires ethical law enforcement and impartial judges (UNESCAP, 2009).

2.3.4 Public participation in government decision-making and implementation

Encouraging citizen involvement in decision-making processes enhances the alignment of municipal policies with the actual needs of communities (Nzimakwe & Reddy, 2008). This is particularly important in the Global South, where community engagement can help bridge the

gap between policy objectives and the expectations of local populations. Global variations exist in public participation in governance. In Western democracies, transparency and accountability are frequently regarded as vital, facilitated by formal mechanisms such as public consultations. In Africa and certain regions of Asia, participation may be constrained by political dynamics and traditional frameworks. For instance, in West African countries where violence and upheavals are rife, citizens experience apathy and fear, despite the emphasis on community engagement. In Latin America, social movements stimulate active civic engagement, whereas in Eastern Europe, participation encounters obstacles due to political centralisation.

To some extent, good governance entails respect for democratic principles, which include public participation in government decision-making. One of the reasons for requiring public participation in service delivery is that representative democracy requires those who govern not to simply govern for the sake of having the power to govern but to govern *with* the communities under their government (Sari, 2023). This is where the definition of public participation as the involvement of all members of the community in the making of governance and administrative decisions that affect them comes in (Katsonis, 2019). Differently expressed, public participation is the “direct – or indirect involvement through representatives of concerned stakeholders in decision-making about policies, plans or programs in which they have an interest” (Quick & Byrson, 2022:158). In this context, stakeholders are people, organised groups of community members and independent organisations which have the capacity to influence and affect government decisions and actions (Quick & Byrson, 2022). Given that citizens comprise communities to which the government owes service delivery, it can be argued that the first and most important stakeholders when it comes to public participation are citizens.

Hence, public participation entails the different mechanisms, processes and platforms through which citizens engage their elected representatives and civil servants in the formulation of government policies regarding service delivery and other decisions (King, Feltey & Susel, 2015). As will be noted below, public participation is part of co-production between the government and communities. As such, it contributes to enhancing public trust in the government, thereby contributing to the government’s legitimacy. In fact, some studies suggest that participation is about enhancing the legitimacy of a democratic government, it being the case that representative democracy is built on the premise “that laws and policies are rendered legitimate because citizens have had opportunities to influence the politicians and parties that

make those policies and because subsequent elections will confer opportunities to judge the effects of those policies and hold politicians accountable” (Fung, 2015:3).

However, developing states often face the challenges of what may be termed as meaningless public participation, which manifests when the government ticks legal boxes by creating impressions that it is engaging in a public participation exercise when, in fact, it is merely creating an illusion of such participation (Cudemus-Brunoli, deWinter & Stapleton, 2019). The problem of formalistic public participation is an old one (Webler, Tuler & Krueger, 2001). Meaningless public participation occurs when those in government view public participation as a burden rather than an aid to their governance (Fung, 2015). Since the law requires them to engage the public, they may merely create the illusion of such participation when, in fact, the public is not properly participating. This circumvention of the right of citizens to participate in the making of public decisions that affect them has necessitated the design of elements of what constitutes meaningful public participation. The table below illustrates the main elements of meaningful public participation based on a case study.

Table 2-4: Meaningful public participation elements and examples

	Example statement
Fairness	The more people that are involved, the better the process will be.
Access to the process	
Power to influence processes and outcomes	If someone makes a compelling case for something, it should change the course of the outcome.
Competence	The Council should gather information about local knowledge and experiences.
Access to information	
Structural characteristics to promote constructive interactions	Skilled facilitators are needed to keep a constant flow and to keep things on centre.
Facilitation of constructive personal behaviours	Rules about what are acceptable behaviours at meetings needed to be enforced.
Adequate analysis	There should be peer review of both expert knowledge and local knowledge.
Outcomes	

Enabling of social conditions necessary for future processes

The process should promote a regional awareness and a regional sense of place.

Source: Webler, Tuler & Krueger (2001:439)

Table 2-4 implies several elements of meaningful public participation. These include accessibility of the processes of public participation to ensure that at the beginning of the process, those who have an interest in participating have the opportunities to do so, regardless of who they are in terms of ableness, education, location and other statuses (Fung, 2015). Hence, access to a public participation exercise also entails inclusiveness to ensure the active involvement of different people, including historically marginalised groups and groups whose representation is limited due to historical, political, social and economic factors, among others (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014). Such groups include indigenous communities, women, children, persons living abilities and other vulnerable members of society. The inclusion of these groups is premised on human rights approaches to ensuring equality of men and women in participating in the affairs of the state, as well as freedoms of association and expression (UNESCAP, 2009).

However, access is in itself inadequate if those who engage in public participation do not have the power to influence the relevant process and its outcomes. Hence, the public participation process must give those who participate the opportunity to influence ultimate decisions so that they are not in the participation process for its sake but really to influence things. This does not necessarily mean that their views must prevail over those of the decision-makers but that their opinions must be considered and given due weight. The second element of meaningful public participation is closely related to access. It refers to access to information. This element entails that individuals who participate in a public participation exercise over the making of a decision must be equipped with the information that they need to make their participation meaningful. As such, this element is linked to transparency, which is seen above as a core tenet of good governance. It should be noted that in addition to transparency, public participation goes in tandem with other tenets of good governance, such as accountability and legitimacy (Quick & Byrson, 2022).

2.3.5 Government responsiveness to the needs and expectations of citizens

A responsive government is one that adapts its services and policies according to the evolving needs of its citizens. This principle is essential in contexts where service delivery needs vary

across different regions, such as in rural and urban settings in sub-Saharan Africa. Responsiveness is associated with accountability and is often viewed as an extension of accountability (Keping, 2018). In South Africa, for instance, the Constitution lays the foundation for a democratic government that is based on accountability, responsiveness and openness. A government attentively considers and responds to the needs and concerns of its citizens, adjusting policies and services to effectively and promptly accommodate evolving demands. It emphasises citizen feedback and modifies its actions to guarantee public satisfaction and welfare. Estonia is recognised for its efficient digital government services. Citizens can utilise the e-government system to access services such as voting, tax filing, and healthcare online, thereby enhancing response times and diminishing bureaucratic delays. This digital infrastructure guarantees that government services are accessible, user-centric, and responsive to the needs of citizens.

This demonstrates the close link between accountability and responsiveness. Generally defined, responsiveness entails the requirement for the public administration to “respond to the demands of citizens in a timely and responsible manner, and that is, it is forbidden to make delays without cause or leave any issue unresolved without response” (Keping, 2018). Differently defined, responsiveness entails “that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe” (UNESCAP, 2009).

The foregoing definitions make it clear that responsiveness requires a commitment by the government to listen to citizens regarding their needs, expectations and priorities and to respond to those preferences in a timely manner (Beshi & Kaur, 2020). This tenet of good governance requires a high level of accountability to citizens and a constant mapping of the needs of communities to ensure that public goods and services are delivered to them at the right time and in the right quantities and quality (Esaiasson, Gilljam & Persson, 2017).

Responsiveness contributes to fulfilling other principles of good governance, such as accountability, trust, and legitimacy, as it gives the governed an assurance that their needs and expectations matter and that the government will respond to them in a timely manner while they persist. Hence, “responsiveness is essential for responsible government” (Linde & Peters, 2020). In democratic states in which the will of the majority rules, responsiveness requires the government to “be minimally responsive to what a majority of people want” (Linde & Peters, 2020), even if doing so may result in a ‘neglect’ of the needs of the few whose preferences are against the popular will. The justification for this is that it is entirely impossible to satisfy

everyone, no matter how one tries, particularly when it comes to entire communities. Also, satisfying the preferences of the majority by showing responsiveness to them actually enhances the legitimacy of the government to some extent (Linde & Peters, 2020).

2.3.6 Trust and legitimacy of the government

Trust and legitimacy in government pertain to citizens' confidence in the government's integrity and authority to govern. Elevated trust levels facilitate more effective policy execution, as citizens are more inclined to adhere to regulations and endorse initiatives, thereby improving governance efficiency. The legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people whom it governs is an indication of good governance. Simply defined, government legitimacy "refers to the state or quality that social order and authority are voluntarily recognised and obeyed" (Keping, 2018:5). Since legitimacy is about public perception of whether the authority of the government should be recognised and obeyed (based on its conduct, competence and accomplishments), legitimacy is more about the political acceptability of the government (and not the state) and is thus divorced from the law. Instances such as New Zealand, Singapore, and Sweden illustrate how trust cultivates collaboration, facilitating efficient public health initiatives, economic strategies, and social services. It is not something that can be legally commanded but is about the degree to which the conduct of the government earns respect and acceptance by the people. In order to earn such respect and acceptance, the government has to demonstrate competence and commitment to service delivery (Keping, 2018).

The legitimacy of the government goes in tandem with the trust that the governed have in it (Faulkner & Kaufman, 2018). In order for people to have trust in the government and believe in its legitimacy, the government in question "must be transparent, accurate, and democratic and negotiate with communities pertaining to their needs and expectations" (Kaywood, 2024:69). Transparency and accuracy of information provided by the government to the governed enable the people to determine for themselves whether the government is doing enough – in terms of its service delivery mandate – to provide public goods and services. Inclusive decision-making that considers the needs of the community also helps to create the necessary trust that enhances the legitimacy of the government.

In local governments that are struggling with public trust and loss of legitimacy as a result of historical poor service delivery, recreating public trust and legitimacy is essential to bring citizens on board about the challenges faced, which measures are being taken to mitigate past

failures, and what options are being pursued to get around obstacles. This may be necessary, particularly in times of austerity when infrastructural backlogs are long and available financial resources are too low to meet immediate demands (Garritzmann, Neimanns & Busemeyer, 2023). In such situations, the people may be willing to wait for their turn, fully believing that the government is “doing the right thing” (Garritzmann, Neimanns & Busemeyer, 2023), even though immediate gains may not be achievable.

Another aspect of trust and legitimacy of the government as a tenet of good governance is the idea that the government must ascertain public perceptions about their trust in it in order to obtain feedback that is necessary for adapting the provision of public goods and services. Such feedback may be obtained through public opinions, which can be gathered through surveys (Hitlin & Shutava, 2022). To this end, Statistics South Africa conducted a survey on public trust in the government and observed that “access services, levels of trust government and public institutions, and individual experiences of corruption significantly impacts the overall well-being of a society” (Maluleke, 2023). The survey found that “The level of trust in all three spheres of government has decreased regardless of the metro status between 2019/20 and 2022/23. The proportion of individuals in non-metros who trusted the national government decreased by 15,4 percentage points in 2022/23” (Maluleke, 2023:18). In local government, the survey found a notable decrease in public trust in local government – including KwaZulu-Natal, in which this study is based. Figure 2-2 shows the decline in public trust in local government.

Figure 2-2: Decrease in public trust in local government in 2022/23.

Over 60% of those in Limpopo and Eastern Cape provinces trusted the three spheres of government. There was lower trust levels (52,5%) in the local government compared to the other spheres of government.



Source: Maluleke (2023:21).

The decline in public trust in government is linked to rising levels of corruption, inaccessibility of services, poor service delivery and general inefficiency in government, particularly in municipalities (Maluleke, 2023).

2.3.7 Equity and inclusiveness

Equity and inclusiveness emphasise the legal and social preference that all individuals, regardless of their social status or material background, should have fair access to community resources, opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes. When this composite term is divided, equity refers to fairness in distributing public goods, services, benefits, resources, and responsibilities, while inclusiveness refers to ensuring that all voices are heard and considered in governance structures (Fukuda-Parr, 2020). In historically divided societies such as South Africa, in which colonialism and apartheid create inequality among the people, equity and inclusiveness are important to building systems that are responsive to diverse populations and promote trust and engagement within the community (Gray Group International, 2024).

Recent studies such as Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock (2017) reiterate that equitable governance leads to greater social cohesion and enhances government legitimacy (which is another tenet of good governance). As such, incorporating equity and inclusiveness in

governance can help to address social and economic disparities, prevent conflict, and create an environment where all citizens can thrive (OECD, 2020). This can be seen in line with the commitment of the South African Constitution (1996), which is to create a society that frees the potential of each individual. Beyond the specific colonial and apartheid circumstances which saw the deliberate creation of inequality and exclusion among South Africans in enjoying access to services from municipalities and the national government in general, research shows that equity and inclusiveness in governance have a long history in societies that have a pressing need to address social and economic disparities (Angelucci, Meraglia & Voigtländer, 2017).

Hence, social movements and advocacy groups for human rights have been putting pressure on governments worldwide to adopt more inclusive practices so as to break down barriers (Nelson & Dorsey, 2007). At a global level, organised associations of states, such as the United Nations, have been promoting inclusive policies as part of the sustainable development agenda with the aim of reducing inequalities and promoting social justice (United Nations, 2015). This has translated into the prioritisation of equity in individual countries, thereby fostering trust in local governments and enhancing stability and social stability. As part of fulfilling their commitment to good governance, modern states have been using targeted laws, regulations and policies to help disadvantaged communities overcome historical barriers such as access to service delivery (United Nations, 2015). For instance, inclusive budgeting practices allocate more resources to areas with higher poverty rates, while equitable hiring practices in public institutions aim to ensure diverse representation (Stacy, Fedorowicz & Dedert, 2022).

Inclusive decision-making enhances equity by ensuring that all voices, especially those from underrepresented and marginalised groups, have a place in shaping policies and practices (Bell & Reed, 2022). From this perspective, the general approach is that good governance not only ensures the representation of the majority but also actively seeks the perspectives of minorities and vulnerable groups (Andrew-Amofah, Flynn & Wood, 2022). From the local government perspective, inclusive decision-making can be achieved through public consultations, community forums, participatory budgeting, and other outreach mechanisms (Wampler & Touchton, 2017). These platforms empower members of local government communities to voice concerns and provide feedback to their municipalities, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of other tenets of good governance such as accountability, participatory governance, transparency and responsiveness.

Importantly, inclusive decision-making connects local authorities with the public and thus reduces alienation and enhances social cohesion (Matasick, 2017). Hence, inclusive decision-making can improve policy outcomes by incorporating a broader range of experiences and knowledge, leading to more effective and adaptable solutions for service delivery and other challenges (Wampler, McNulty & Touchton, 2021). Studies show that when people feel fairly represented and believe their voices are heard, they are more likely to support and adhere to public policies (World Bank, 2006). Based on the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that equity and inclusiveness are tenets that strengthen good governance systems and create environments where all individuals can contribute and thrive.

2.3.8 Consensus-oriented decision-making

Consensus-oriented decision-making is closely related to equity and inclusiveness in that it seeks to achieve a generally agreed outcome by stakeholders on policies and other decisions and actions of the government (Ganghof, 2010). This may be viewed through the lens of democracy, which is the foundation of the modern South African state (Issacharoff, 2008). The foundation of democracy is to ensure that the will of the majority prevails (Horowitz, 2023). However, democracy under the South African Constitution also recognises that the needs, expectations and preferences of the minority also matter and that, as a consequence, they must be part of government decision-making (Lafont, 2020).

Consensus-oriented decision-making is a central tenet of good governance, as it emphasises inclusive and collective decision-making aimed at achieving broad agreement within a community (Tan, Mahula & Cromptvoets, 2022). It is defined as a process through which diverse stakeholders collaborate to reach a solution that, while not necessarily satisfying everyone fully, is acceptable to all parties involved (Dong *et al.*, 2020). This approach is distinguished from majority-rule or hierarchical decision-making in that it requires meaningful dialogue, consideration of all viewpoints, and compromise (Liu *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, consensus orientation supports governance that is participatory, transparent, and inclusive and recognises that a decision arrived at through consensus has a higher likelihood of fostering stability and legitimacy within a community.

The consensus approach to good governance requires several practices, including open forums for discussion, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and iterative rounds of negotiation until a decision that balances multiple interests can be achieved (Du, Yu & Xu, 2020). This model

recognises that societal interests are diverse, especially on issues such as urban planning, economic reforms, and policy-making at the community level (Gai *et al.*, 2020). Thus, a consensus-oriented approach to good governance acts as a tool for minimising conflict. It addresses the concerns of various groups, especially those of minority or historically marginalised voices, by embedding their perspectives into the decision-making process (García-Zamora *et al.*, 2022). This inclusivity in governance aims to create outcomes that are broadly supported and sustainable in the long term.

Within the context of this study's approach to good governance, consensus-oriented decision-making is essential for enhancing other tenets of good governance. This is because it strengthens the democratic legitimacy of government institutions, such as local government, by ensuring that decisions reflect a diversity of interests and are not skewed toward particular factions. In this way, consensus decision-making supports the other definitional elements of good governance - equity and inclusiveness. This support, in turn, also enhances accountability (another tenet of good governance, as shown above) by requiring leaders to consider and integrate the feedback of multiple stakeholders rather than enforcing top-down directives (section 2.3.1). In supporting accountability, consensus-oriented decision-making also promotes transparency (another tenet of good governance). This is because it is not possible to genuinely pursue consensus-oriented decision-making without ensuring transparency pertaining to information that informs decisions that must be made collectively.

In South Africa and in municipalities in particular, consensus-oriented decision-making is a challenge which demonstrates shortcomings in upholding the tenets of good governance. This is because municipalities often experience political contestation and diverse social dynamics as a result of the proliferation of political parties (Mbandlwa, Dorasamy & Fagbadebo, 2020). However, the increasing numbers of political parties may also inadvertently enhance good governance in that most municipalities are governed by coalitions of political parties which come together because of the failure of any one of them to obtain an outright majority in elections (Nzimakwe & Zondi, 2024). To this end, coalitions are political arrangements in which two or more parties govern together for the purpose of securing enough votes or combining a sufficient number of parliamentary seats to govern (Kadima, 2006). The main benefit of party coalitions to good governance is that parties in local government have to govern with the consent of their smaller rivals, whose views they must listen to in order to remain in govern. This is itself an indication of a shift towards consensus-oriented decision-making in

local government. Recent collapses of party coalitions in metropolitan municipalities (the City of Tshwane and the City of Johannesburg in particular) as a result of the refusal of some larger coalition partners to listen to their rivals is testament to this (Pholoma *et al.*, 2024).

Although South African municipalities may aspire to consensus-oriented decision-making, albeit under the coercive environment of party coalitions, they face internal strife in the form of entrenched political competition within councils. Deep divisions among non-coalition partners often disrupt decision-making and delay service delivery (Zindi & Ndhlovu, 2023). This challenge reflects difficulties in balancing diverse community needs in the context of political fragmentation. Nonetheless, building consensus based on negotiation and trade-offs may enhance adherence to good governance by creating more responsive, accountable, transparent and inclusive governance structures that could address the developmental needs of communities more effectively and equitably.

However, it must be noted that the need for consensus-oriented governance in municipalities also reveals itself beyond coalition party democracy in that municipalities often face pressures from business interests, lobby groups and community organisations, all of which have competing priorities (Khaile, Roman & Davids, 2021). Despite these challenges, consensus-based decision-making mechanisms, such as public consultations, stakeholder workshops, and multi-party deliberations, can help municipalities ensure good governance. These practices can, however, be hampered by political rivalry, resource constraints, and, at times, corruption, which complicate the realisation of genuine consensus.

2.3.9 Efficient and effective provision of public goods and services

Given that this study examines good governance as a means of enhancing service delivery in the local government context in South Africa, this tenet of good governance is crucial. In fact, the study is anchored on the ‘efficiency of service delivery’, which is the particular aspect of service delivery that it explores. Often, efficiency and effectiveness go in tandem and could be defined as the supply of public goods and services at the lowest cost possible while maintaining quality, standards and impact (Reddy, 2016). The public has immense benefits to derive from efficient and effective service delivery, as it lowers costs, reduces timeframes and ensures that quality and safety standards are met. This serves the public money in rates and taxes and ensures that essential goods and services are received with minimal effort.

In order for service delivery to be efficient and effective, there is a need to fine-tune the inner workings of the government to eliminate unnecessary bottlenecks and to ensure that those who are entrusted with providing public goods and services have the space and support to do so (Osborne, 2020). Also, such persons must possess the necessary expertise and technical know-how to do things. This translates to ensuring that the hiring process in government is non-partisan and devoid of nepotism and other forms of manipulation, which result in less qualified people occupying positions in government. According to (Kaywood, 2024:51):

Achieving effective and efficient service delivery requires several key strategies, such as aligning available resources with public needs, expectations and preferences; responsiveness to these priorities; and regular assessment of the relevance of such priorities and necessary adaptation in both scope and timing of the provision of goods and services to meet such priorities. It also entails the adoption of best practices and innovative approaches that can enhance the quality and efficiency of service delivery. Innovative approaches in this context include leveraging technology and digital solutions.

This extract shows that providing efficient and effective service delivery requires a convergence of several other principles of good governance, including accountability and responsiveness. It also requires streamlined processes that ensure that the government achieves its service delivery mandate by leveraging the necessary technological tools. Ultimately, it is noted that it is not possible to examine the efficiency of service delivery as a tenant of good governance while discussing other tenets, such as accountability, transparency, rule of law, public participation, responsiveness, trust and legitimacy, equity and inclusiveness, and consensus-oriented decision-making. This reality guides this study.

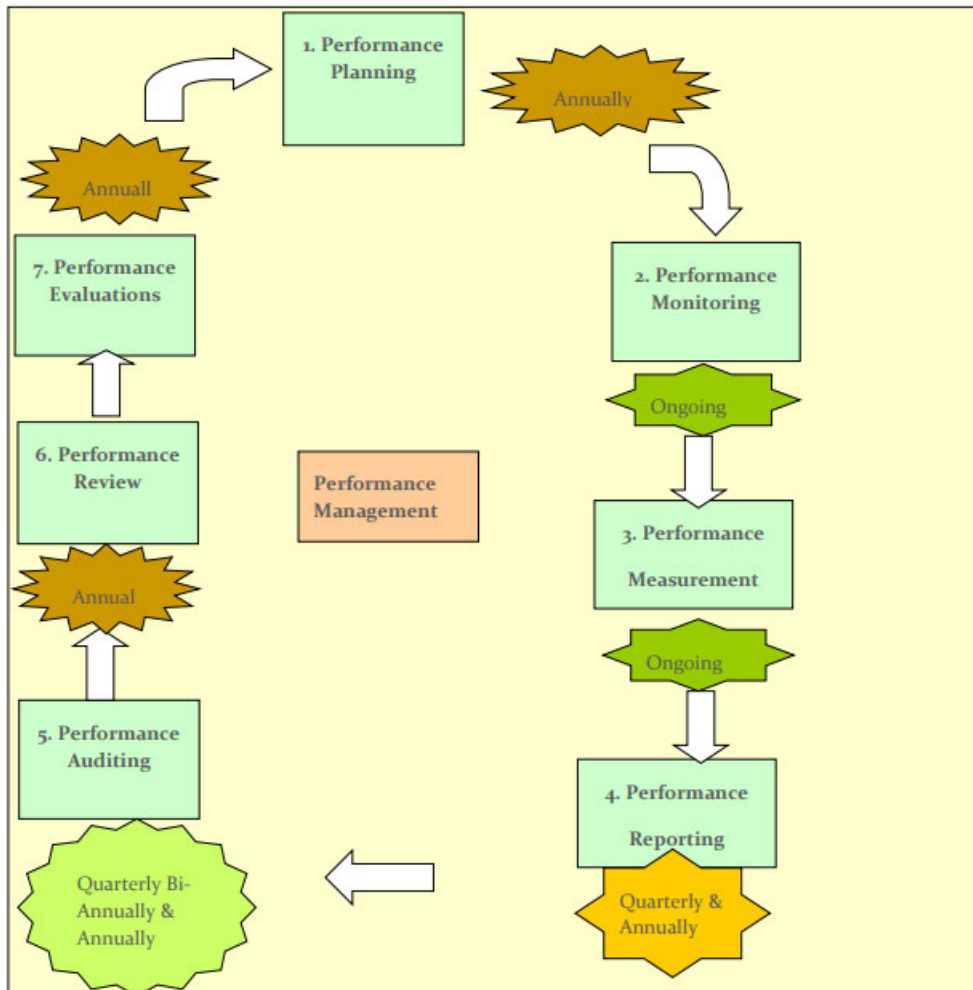
2.4 Selected standards and methodological tools for measuring adherence to good governance

2.4.1 Local governance performance management

Performance management in local governance entails the systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of a municipality in fulfilling its responsibilities (Mkhize, Nzimakwe & Mthuli, 2021). It is premised on setting specific objectives to be met within a stipulated timeframe, tracking the outcomes in a measurable way and making informed adjustments to municipal services. South African municipalities recognise the need for performance management frameworks, as illustrated by the Lekwa Local Municipality (2023), which says the following:

A performance management framework is the way the Municipality collects, presents and uses its performance information. It is a practical plan, made up of mechanisms and processes, for the Municipality to collect, process, arrange and classify, examine and evaluate, audit, reflect on and report performance information. These mechanisms and processes work in a cycle which must be linked to the Municipality's normal planning (IDP and otherwise) and the annual budgeting cycle.

Figure 2-3: Municipal performance management framework

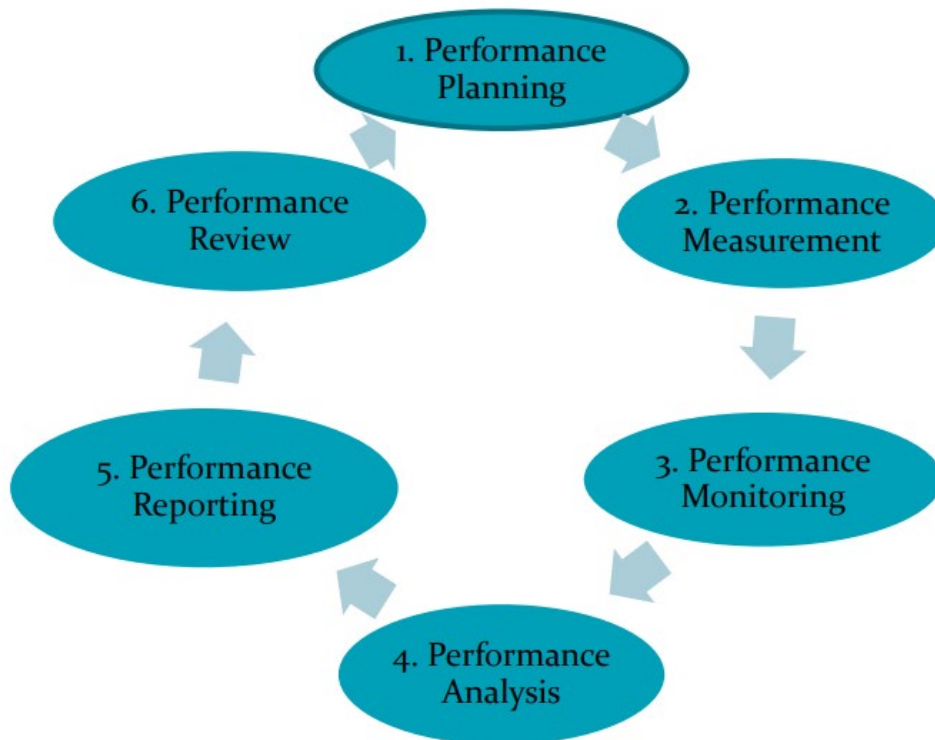


Source: Lekwa Local Municipality (2023:16)

This model allows municipalities to translate governance principles like accountability, transparency, and responsiveness into tangible actions and results. Its focus on the achievement of goals such as improved sanitation services, infrastructure maintenance, and citizen engagement, enables municipalities to prioritise resources and streamline their operations to meet community needs and expectations. This systematic approach is essential for ensuring

that governance is not only well-intentioned but also impactful and measurable. In order for a performance management framework to bring fruition in a municipality, it must be ideally composed of the indicators depicted in the following figure.

Figure 2-4: Elements and steps for performance management in a municipality



Source: Lekwa Local Municipality (2023:17)

Performance management is implemented through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the municipality in providing public goods and services to its community. KPIs vary but often include measurement standards such as response times to complaints by citizens, the quality of public infrastructure, and the accessibility of public services, among others (Parmenter, 2015). Given that the KPIs will be delivered towards the specific communities and their needs, they help municipalities gauge their performance in service delivery and give them the opportunities to reflect on their practices and devise measures to improve on them. The establishment of such KPIs is itself a manifestation of a commitment to fulfilling the tenets of good governance, such as providing

efficient service delivery, accountability, community satisfaction and transparency (Khawaja, 2011).

Transparency is one of the most important aspects of local governance performance management, as it requires municipalities to report on their progress in fulfilling set targets and on their performance outcomes (Røge & Lennon, 2018). As such, transparency in this context entails regularly publishing performance reports to enable members of local communities to assess the achievements and areas of improvement for their local government (Ingrams, 2018). It helps to fulfil other tenets of good governance, such as public trust, community engagement and participation in municipal affairs (Seetharam Sridhar *et al.*, 2020). In this regard, it can be argued that an informed community is in a better position to contribute ideas, provide feedback and actively participate in its governance. Such community participation fulfils accountability and related tenets of good governance, such as responsiveness (Matasick, 2017).

Municipality responsiveness to the needs, expectations, and preferences of their communities is greatly enhanced by performance management (Draai & Zazi, 2021). This is because regular updates on performance inform decision-making and provide a platform for continuous improvement of service delivery. It also enables municipal officials to identify areas with pressing needs and to devise measures to respond to their needs quickly. An example in this regard is that if the performance metrics indicate an increase in road repair requests, the municipality can allocate additional resources to this area to improve service levels. Responding to evidence-based insights is thus one of the ways through which performance management ensures that municipal actions are aligned with the needs, expectations and preferences of the community.

2.4.2 World Governance Indicators

It has been noted above that the concept of good governance is attributed to the World Bank. The World Bank views good governance as an essential requirement for development and says that good governance “helps countries increase economic growth, build human capital, and strengthen social cohesion” (World Bank, 2023). To this end, it saw it necessary to devise a measurement index for good governance, which it called the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), which are used to measure governance based on six dimensions: voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Thomas, 2010). The indicators are based on data that the World Bank

compiles from “more than 30 think tanks, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and private firms around the world” (World Bank, 2023). The aggregate indicators of the governance include economies of more than 200 countries over the period covering 1996 to 2023 (at the time of writing this thesis) (World Bank, 2023). The methodology and analytical issues considered in the context of the indicators have been the subject of scholarly interest (Apaza, 2009; Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2011; Langbein & Knack, 2010). However, it must be noted that the components of the indicators are not fixed but are subject to change from time to time (Gallego-Álvarez, Rodríguez-Rosa & Vicente-Galindo, 2021).

The six indicators are discussed below:

2.4.2.1 Voice and accountability

The voice and accountability indicator measures citizen perceptions of the extent to which they participate in choosing their leaders through elections and the extent to which they can exercise their rights to freedom of speech, expression, association and media (World Bank, 2023). This indicator covers a wide range of issues, including the country’s democratic index, vested interests, accountability of public officials, and respect for human rights (Erkkilä, 2020a). The main questions asked when preparing this index are wide and include the following (World Bank, 2023):

Are electoral processes flawed?

Do the representative institutions (e.g., parliament) operate in accordance with the formal rules in force (e.g., Constitution)?

Is the State economic policy (e.g., budgetary, fiscal etc.)...communicated?

Is the State economic policy (e.g., budgetary, fiscal etc.)...publicly debated?

Also, this index measures confidence in Parliament, public management, access to information and openness (World Bank, 2023). It can be concluded that this index measures good governance from the perspective of reducing corruption, public trust in state institutions, enjoyment of political rights and freedoms, and human rights in general (Dutta, 2010). The voice and accountability indicator is related to the next index, which is political stability and the absence of violence/terrorism.

2.4.2.2 Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism

Poor governance can lead to social unrest and strife when people protest against a government that is unable to deliver basic services or which has lost its legitimacy (Mamokhere, 2020). Hence, the political stability and absence of violence/terrorism indicator measures public perceptions of the likelihood of the occurrence of political instability and or commission of politically motivated violence (Handoyo, 2023). The issues considered for this indicator include whether there is an orderly transfer of power in the state, whether the state is in peacetime or conflict, and whether there are social unrests or tensions (World Bank, 2023). It also measures the stability of the government, ethnic tensions, protests and riots (World Bank, 2023). Protests and riots are particularly relevant in the South African context, in which violent protests are increasing, and individuals are seen mobilising against democratic institutions. Protests of such nature often result in destruction of public property (leading to interrupted and inefficient service delivery), disruption of business and loss of private property. The indicator also measures the extent to which political instability obstructs business (World Bank, 2023). Generally, one can conclude that this indicator measures the extent to which the public has trust and confidence in the government and whether the people believe that the government is legitimate. An illegitimate government or one that engages in poor governance is bound to face discontent and social unrest.

2.4.2.3 Government effectiveness

It has been noted above that the effectiveness of the government in delivering public goods and services is an essential tenet of good governance. To this end, the government effectiveness indicator measures the quality of the public services provided by the government, the extent to which the civil service is independent of political pressure, the quality of the formulation and implementation of policy, and how credible the government is when it comes to the implementation of its policies – it being correct that formulating a policy does not necessarily mean a commitment to implement it (World Bank, 2023). This indicator measures various issues on government effectiveness, including institutional effectiveness, whether there is a bureaucracy that is exercised, the quality of the road infrastructure, primary education, the public transportation system, the extent of coverage areas that provide public schools, basic healthcare services, drinking water and sanitation, the electricity grid and maintenance and waste disposal (World Bank, 2023). If the public believes that these issues are ineffective, then one can conclude that good governance is lacking.

2.4.2.4 Regulatory quality

The commitment of the government to the implementation of its policies is directly related to the regulatory quality indicator, which assesses public perceptions of the government's ability to formulate and implement policies and regulations that are sound and which enable the private sector to thrive (World Bank, 2023). As such, the indicator measures whether there are unfair competitive prices, discriminatory taxes, burdensome regulations, financial freedom, trading policies and many others.

2.4.2.5 Rule of law

It has been noted above that the rule of law is a core tenet of good governance. As such, the rule of law indicator measures public perceptions of the ability of the government to adhere to the law that it has made and to ensure that citizens respect it as well (World Bank, 2023). As such, the rule of law indicator measures security, the independence of the judiciary, protection of private property, public confidence in the courts, the degree of enforcement orders and many more issues related to perceptions of security and safety (World Bank, 2023).

2.4.2.6 Control of corruption

Last but not least indicator measures the extent to which the public perceives the government to control corruption. It looks at "perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruptions, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests" (World Bank, 2023). To measure this indicator, emphasis is placed on corruption by public officials, diversion of public funds for personal gain, the prevalence of corruption in government, the degrees of transparency, accountability and corruption in the public sector, specifically in the presidential, judicial and administrative offices of the government (World Bank, 2023).

2.4.3 Mo Ibrahim index of African governance

This index measures governance performance across African countries. Its focus is on security and safety, participation, accountability and transparency, respect for human rights, the rule of law and justice, social protection and welfare, inclusion and equality, and anti-corruption (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024). The self-explanatory components of its index are illustrated below in Table 2-5.

Table 2-5: Components of the Mo Ibrahim index of African governance

OVERALL GOVERNANCE	
Security & rule of law	Participation, rights & inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security & safety • Absence of armed conflict • Absence of violence against civilians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Freedom of association & assembly • Political pluralism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of forced migration • Absence of human trafficking & forced labour • Absence of crime • Public perception of security & safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil society space • Democratic elections • Deliberative & participatory governance • Public perception of political participation
Rule of law & justice	Rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive compliance with the rule of law • Impartiality of the judicial system • Judicial processes • Equality before the law • Law enforcement • Property rights • Public perception of the rule of law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal liberties • Freedom of expression & belief • Media freedom • Digital freedom • Protection against discrimination • Public perception of freedom of speech
Accountability & transparency	Inclusion & equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional checks & balances • Absence of undue influence • Civic checks & balances • Disclosure of public records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal political power • Equal political representation • Equal civil liberties • Equal socioeconomic opportunity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of public records • Public perception of accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal access to public services • Public perception of inclusion & equality
Anti-corruption	Women's equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-corruption mechanisms • Absence of corruption in state institutions • Absence of corruption in the public sector • Public procurement procedures • Absence of corruption in the private sector • Public perception of anti-corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political power & representation of women • Rights & civil liberties for women • Socioeconomic opportunity for women • Access to public services for women • Laws on violence against women • Public perception of female leadership
FOUNDATIONS FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
Public administration	Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil registration • Capacity of the statistical system • Effective administration • Tax & revenue mobilisation • Budgetary & financial management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to healthcare • Access to water & sanitation • Control of communicable diseases • Control of non-communicable diseases • Child & maternal health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public perception of easiness to obtain an identity document • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health quality • Public perception of health provision
Business & labour environment	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional integration • Economic diversification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality in education • Education enrolment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business & competition regulations • Access to banking services • Labour relations • Secure employment opportunities • Public perception of economic opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education completion • Human resources in education • Education quality • Public perception of education provision
Infrastructure	Social protection & welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport network • Access to energy • Mobile communications • Internet & computers • Shipping & postal network • Public perception of infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social safety nets • Poverty reduction policies • Socioeconomic inequality mitigation • Decent housing • Food security • Public perception of social protection & lived poverty
Rural economy	Sustainable environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural land & water access • Rural market access • Rural economy support • Rural representation & participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of environmental sustainability • Enforcement of environmental policies • Air quality • Sustainable use of land & forests • Land & water biodiversity protection

Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2024:8-9)

The Mo Ibrahim index of African governance has been used to assess the state of governance in many African countries, including Nigeria and Lesotho (Amah, 2023; Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2023;

Kariuki, 2023). In the South African context, the 2024 IAG shows that good governance is deteriorating in South Africa, in that the country has registered the largest decline in anti-corruption and public perception of anti-corruption. However, the index also shows that South Africa has improved in terms of equality for women, public perceptions of female leadership, and representation of women. It has also improved public procurement procedures and internet and mobile communications (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024).

2.4.4 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index

2.4.4.1 Overview of the WJP rule of law index

It has been noted that respect for the rule of law is one of the most important tenets of good governance. The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index assesses respect for the rule of law based on constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, and fundamental rights. The Rule of Law Index measures these metrics based on several criteria using data drawn from a general population poll and the questionnaire responses of qualified experts. The idea behind the use of these sources is that they “provide current, original information reflecting the experiences and perceptions of the general public and in-country legal practitioners and experts in 142 countries and jurisdictions worldwide” (World Justice Project, 2024). South Africa is one of the countries.

The WJP Rule of Law index measures the extent to which the government of each country adheres to the rule of law in practice. This is achieved by ascertaining the extent to which policy outcomes implement the rule of law in practice. For instance, “whether people have access to courts or whether crime is effectively controlled” (World Justice Project, 2024). As such, the focus is not merely on the law and policies but whether they are, in fact, implemented in practice. This entails looking at whether there is an absence of corruption, human rights abuses and the experiences of ordinary people with the rule of law. The idea behind the rule of law index is explained by the index as follows (World Justice Project, 2024:13):

Effective rule of law reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices large and small. It is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights. Traditionally, the rule of law has been viewed as the domain of lawyers and judges. However, everyday issues of safety, rights, justice, and governance affect us all; everyone is a stakeholder in the rule of law.

To this effect, the WJP Rule of Law Index uses four universal principles of the rule of law as a measurement standard. These are outlined below.

2.4.4.2 Universal principles of the rule of law

The four universal principles of the rule of law used by the WJP Rule of Law Index are accountability (to determine whether the government and private entities are accountable under the law); just law (whether the laws have been enacted clearly and whether they are publicised, clear, stable and applied equality – to ensure the protection of human rights); open government (whether the legal processes for the formulation of laws are accessible, fair and efficient); and accessible and impartial justice (whether the courts are competent and capable of delivering justice timely, ethically and independently, taking into account the need for legal representation) (World Justice Project, 2024). In order to measure adherence to the law using the four universal principles in the preceding paragraph, the WJP Rule of Law Index contains a conceptual framework that comprises eight factors to measure the rule of law. These are outlined below.

Table 2-6: Conceptual framework of the rule of law

Factor	Components
Constraints on government powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government powers are effectively limited by the legislature • Government powers are effectively limited by the judiciary • Government powers are effectively limited by independent auditing and review • Government officials are sanctioned for misconduct • Government powers are subject to non-governmental checks • Transition of power is subject to the law
Absence of corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government officials in the executive branch do not use public office for private gain • Government officials in the judicial branch do not use public office for private gain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government officials in the police and military do not use public office for private gain • Government officials in the legislative branch do not use public office for private gain
Open government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicised laws and government data • Right to information • Civic participation • Complaint mechanisms
Fundamental rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal treatment and absence of discrimination • Right to life and security of the person is effectively guaranteed • Due process of law and rights of the accused • Freedom of opinion and expression is effectively guaranteed • Freedom of belief and religion is effectively guaranteed • Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy is effectively guaranteed • Freedom of assembly and association is effectively guaranteed • Fundamental labour rights are effectively guaranteed
Order and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime is effectively controlled • Civil conflict is effectively limited • People do not resort to violence to redress personal grievances
Regulatory enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government regulations are effectively enforced • Government regulations are applied and enforced without improper influence

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative proceedings are conducted without unreasonable delay • Due process is respected in administrative proceedings • Government does not expropriate without lawful process and adequate compensation
Civil justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can access and afford civil justice • Civil justice is free of discrimination • Civil justice is free of corruption • Civil justice is free of improper government influence • Civil justice is not subject to unreasonable delay • Civil justice is effectively enforced • Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are accessible, impartial, and effective
Criminal justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal investigation system is effective • Criminal adjudication system is timely and effective • Correctional system is effective in reducing criminal behaviour • Criminal system is impartial • Criminal system is free of corruption • Criminal system is free of improper government influence • Due process of law and rights of the accused

Source: World Justice Project (2024)

Although aimed primarily at measuring adherence to the rule of law, the WJP rule of law index is a relevant and effective metric for measuring good governance in any country. This is because of the following reasons. First, it provides a structured framework for assessing

governance in a state through tenets of good governance such as openness, transparency, and access to justice. As such, the factors that it measures are, in themselves, tenets of good governance (Botero & Ponce, 2011). Second, the WJP Rule of Law Index measures accountability, which is another tenet of good governance in that it seeks to measure the constraints on the government to use its power (Ramanujam & Farrington, 2022). In this way, it seeks to highlight mechanisms for the limitation of executive, judicial, legislative and military power to ensure that all persons who exercise such immense power are answerable for their conduct (Michel, 2020). Ultimately, this metric protects human rights by ensuring that the government acts within its lawful authority and that it does so transparently and responsibly. The third mechanism through which the WJP Rule of Law Index measures adherence to good governance is through its assessment of anti-corruption efforts in a particular country. It identifies instances of abuse of public office for private gain, thereby pinpointing acts of bribery and embezzlement of public funds. Fourth, the index measures a host of other issues, which, if lacking, will point to a failure to adhere to good governance (World Justice Project, 2024). These are criminal justice standards, access to civil justice, the fairness and efficiency of regulatory enforce, public safety and stability, and respect for fundamental rights (including socio-economic rights are directly impacted by poor service delivery pertaining to water, waste and refuse collection, among others) (World Justice Project, 2024).

2.5 The need for good governance in municipalities

It has been observed in the first chapter of this study that South African municipalities are in a severe crisis as a result of what may be termed bad governance. This situation resonates with the proposition that bad governance is “the root cause of all evil within our societies” (UNESCAP, 2009). The service delivery failures of many municipalities in South Africa and their inevitable collapse illustrate that there is a need to instil good governance in local government. To illustrate the need for good governance in municipalities, this study identifies the following effects of bad governance and proposes good governance may be the antidote to these said challenges: corruption, nepotism, dysfunctional policy implementation, failure to account for public funds, failure to maintain infrastructure, poor responsiveness to community needs, and inefficiency in service delivery. These are discussed in no particular order below.

2.5.1 Lack of accountability

This study argues that most of the manifestations of bad governance can be traced to unaccountability to some extent. Accountability manifests itself in municipalities mainly

through corruption, nepotism, embezzlement of municipal resources, collusion of municipal officials with suppliers, tender fraud and unauthorised uses of public resources such as unlawful investment of municipal funds in institutions where they should not be invested (Kaywood, 2024). According to Corruption Watch (2022:2), a civil society organisation, the statistics on corruption are as follows:

The most common forms of corruption at a local level are bribery (28%), procurement irregularities (24%), employment irregularities (11%), abuse of power (9%), and embezzlement of funds (8%).

According to whistle-blowers, most corruption occurs within the office of the Municipal Manager (34%), or relates to local/metro police (30%), housing and human settlements (10%), transport (5%), and the office of the executive (5%).

These challenges are immense and are intensified by improper financial reporting, which leads to a further lack of accountability in that internal audit controls miss them to the extent that they only get exposed after auditing by the Auditor-General of South Africa (2021). The challenge with poor financial also is that members of municipal audit committees are often not skilled enough to oversee municipal finances, resulting in wasted resources (IDASA, 2024). The impact of corruption is that it elevates a few individuals to the detriment of broader society, resulting in situations in which their narrow financial interests are elevated about the service delivery needs of communities.

2.5.2 Lack of responsiveness to community needs, expectations and wants

It has been noted above that the responsiveness of the government to the governed is an extension of accountability and that its essence is to ensure that the needs and expectations of local communities on efficient service delivery are met. Responsiveness also entails working with communities to ascertain their needs and to meet them. However, South African municipalities are irresponsible to their communities, as seen from various forms of protests (Alexander, 2010). Protests often turn violent and result in the destruction of municipal infrastructure and the environment on which communities depend (Khambule, Nomdo & Siswana, 2019). An example is the torching of the service centre and a fire rescue vehicle by protesting community members of the Swellendam municipality who were unhappy with an electricity tariff hike (Hirsch, 2023).

The protests in Swellendam occurred against the background of a massive loadshedding rollout, which left many households struggling for alternative energy sources while contending

with increasing electricity tariffs. Although the load shedding issue is not entirely a fault of municipalities, as Eskom is responsible for past failures to provide a reliable and consistent supply of electrical power, the paradox is that the South African Constitution stipulates that the provision of electricity is a competency of local government (Lekunze, 2024). Based on this fact of the status of the law, one can conclude that communities have the right to voice dissatisfaction with municipalities through protests when they are unhappy about electricity issues.

While this is counterproductive, one cannot ignore that protest is often seen as the only avenue through which communities can be listened to and responded to by their municipal leadership (Ndasana, Vallabh & Mxunyelwa, 2022). There is much debate on this. For instance, the Institute of Security Studies (2016) organised a discussion on whether municipalities are actually listening to protests and concluded that:

Research shows that communities typically use multiple official channels to air their concerns, often with little or no satisfaction. In some instances, violent protests are the last resort when people feel their voices are not being heard. South Africa's high levels of structural violence, inequality, unemployment and corruption underpin these dynamics.

Another form of protest manifests in littering and illegal dumping, which is a result of community frustration with municipal failure to collect waste. According to Southall (2018), "littering in protest is indicative of a discordant society, and a culture of littering can tell us a lot about a society's ethos." Although protest is a constitutional right, it erodes human rights, such as the right to a healthy and clean environment, when it is undertaken through extreme measures such as littering. This is because littered waste gets washed into rivers by rainwater, polluting rivers and causing unsightly scenes (Mabuza, 2022).

2.5.3 Lack of transparency in municipal decision-making and actions

Although the nouns unaccountability and irresponsiveness accurately capture the lack of accountability and responsiveness by local government, respectively, there seems to be no other noun to describe the lack of transparency other than opacity. Hence, this subsection uses the noun opacity to describe the reality that in some municipalities, information about decisions, actions, and processes is hidden or unclear to the public, leading to difficulty in understanding or gaining access to critical details about the conduct of municipal officials. Such opacity arises when municipalities fail to timely, accurately and fully disclose information

that citizens need in order to make informed decisions about the legality, desirability and necessity of municipal decisions and actions and other processes. For instance, the failure of the Ditsobotla Local Municipality to disclose its audited financial statements for at least two years illustrates opacity in that the public is unable to scrutinise whether the municipality followed the law and procedures in utilising the budget (South African Government, 2024).

Given that the Ditsobotla Local Municipality has been facing severe governance challenges, it is likely that the disclosure of its audited financial statements will reveal severe irregularities. The audit reports are likely to point to misuse and abuse of government funds, patronage, nepotism and cronyism, among others. This is because some individuals suspected of defrauding the municipality have already been arraigned in court on serious charges of abuse of the public purse (Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, 2024). Fear of these repercussions and the desperate need to avoid legal accountability could explain why the municipality has not released its financial statements.

As noted above, failure to disclose critical municipal information, such as audited financial statements, is a red flag both in terms of the law and from the public view, which treats such failure as an indication that something is amiss and that some illegality or other irregularity is going on in the municipality. The reality on the ground is that although several laws provide for the disclosure of this information by local governments, some municipalities are not very keen to disclose such information as they fear public scrutiny and backlash. This is often the case where disclosure of budget and expenditure information, for instance, can reveal inefficiencies, wastage and corruption, such as in Ditsobotla Local Municipality.

Failure to disclose ‘political information’ could also be a result of the desire of the political and administrative leadership of a municipality to protect vested interests. Disclosure of such information may reveal officials who are doing business with the state, political patronage and personal networks that lead to a conflict of interest. It is then conceivable that as part of a strategy to control the narrative around achievements and failures at financial stewardship, municipalities would want to conceal critical public information. However, this is not always possible, as South African law has several statutes which mandate the disclosure of public information. The relevant laws, such as the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000, are intended to neutralise confidentiality claims, bureaucratic inefficiencies around the disclosure of public information, weak administrative oversights and corruption.

However, it should also be noted that from a good governance perspective, most municipalities disclose their financial statements within legal timeframes, although this does not mean that they have been fully transparent about their decisions and actions. Thus, it is easier for some municipalities to merely disclose a portion of the issues, which is often considered, than to disclose nothing at all. This selective reporting, which manifests in misstatement of information in financial statements, is often the case when the Auditor-General of South Africa issues qualified, adverse and disclaimed opinions. In a report on *The State of Local Government*, the Auditor General of South Africa (2023) noted the following partial disclosures, which are seen as manifestations of a lack of transparency in municipalities:

***Revenue:** 40% of municipalities did not have adequate documentation to support the revenue they billed; and they had not billed all the revenue they should have for services rendered. In some cases, amounts billed for services rendered were recorded incorrectly.*

***Receivables:** 28% of municipalities did not know the correct amount owed to them and whether they were still entitled to receive those amounts. In some cases, the amounts recorded were not accurate.*

***Property, infrastructure and equipment:** 24% of municipalities could not properly account for their assets because they had not updated their asset registers with assets that they had bought, were busy building or had disposed of, or that had been stolen or vandalised. In some cases, the value of the assets recorded was incorrect despite consultants being used to assist.*

***Irregular expenditure:** 24% of municipalities did not report all the irregular expenditure they should have in their financial statements. In some cases, the amount of the irregular expenditure reported was incorrect.*

***Expenditure:** 23% of municipalities did not have adequate documentation to support the expenditure they reported. In some cases, they did not record all the expenditure they should have.*

From a good governance perspective, these are massive indications of lack of transparency in local government, as they show that “decisions, analyses and monitoring on key matters such as service delivery could be based on unreliable information, which would have a negative impact on [service delivery]” (Auditor General of South Africa, 2023).

2.5.4 Loss of community trust and perceptions of illegitimacy

It has been seen above that adherence to the principles of good governance, such as accountability, transparency, responsiveness and efficient service delivery, among others, builds community trust in local government and enhances the legitimacy of municipalities.

However, the many manifestations of poor governance (and perhaps, bad governance) described above have eroded the trust of local communities in their municipalities, resulting in perceptions that municipalities are illegitimate and should not govern. This could be the reason why so many municipalities are under administration by provincial governments (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2024b). According to Nxumalo (2022):

Many municipalities have failed to meet the basic needs of their constituents, including providing adequate access to water, sanitation, housing and electricity. Consequently, faith in the system has been eroded, as reflected by the very low voter turnout in the November local government elections.

It appears that these service delivery failures have a knock-on effect on many aspects of South African life and have severely eroded public trust in government, as exemplified by the rate payment protests which manifest when residents of a municipality boycott the payment of municipal rates and taxes as an expression of their lack of trust in municipalities (ENSight, 2024). In the eThekweni Municipality, for instance, an association of residents threatened the municipality to withhold the payment of their rates and taxes unless the municipality to these grievances (ENSight, 2024):

- *615 million litres of water was lost daily, equating to R2 billion;*
- *outstanding municipal debt had increased by R4.7 billion;*
- *despite Umgeni Water's proposed tariff increase of 5%, the Municipality proposed a 15% tariff increase to ratepayers; and*
- *there was a growing number of informal settlements.*

These grievances show that the municipality was dismally failing at efficient service delivery and that this was causing its communities to suffer. The severe loss of trust in a municipality to the extent of a rates payment boycott can only be regained through adherence to precepts of good governance, such as accountability (Nxumalo, 2022). Hence, there is a need for a return to good governance in municipalities.

2.5.5 Inefficient service delivery

Service delivery pertains to the provision of public goods and services to communities by local government as part of the fulfilment of constitutional obligations bestowed on local government by Schedule 4 Part B of the South African Constitution. The Constitution identifies the following functional areas of local government, among others: “stormwater management

systems in built-up areas; trading regulations, water and sanitation services limited to potable water supply systems and domestic wastewater and sewage disposal systems.” The Constitution further obligates local government to ensure “refuse removal, refuse dumps and solid waste disposal.” Despite these constitutional obligations, local communities in many municipalities face severe service delivery inefficiencies. These are discussed below with reference to several examples.

2.5.5.1 Failure to manage stormwater and prevent flooding

Although stormwater management is part of the service obligations imposed on local government by the Constitution, communities in municipalities across the country recently suffer from increased stormwater damage as a result of the failure of municipalities to efficiently manage drainage infrastructure to prevent stormwater flooding (De Villiers, 2024; Opperman, 2024; SABC News, 2024). Stormwater damage has left many households without homes and in dire financial straits as their entire properties have been damaged as a result. Stormwater also destroys roads and exposes critical infrastructure to weather elements while also placing communities in danger of electrocution. A classic example of these dangers manifested in the Mogale City Local Municipality, where the municipality failed to mitigate and prevent stormwater flooding, resulting in litigation by the Featherbrooke Homeowners Association. The circumstances of the issue were as follows:

Since 2010, flooding and stormwater placed pressure on the river embankments and beds, corroded them, and made them highly unstable and dangerous, resulting in flooding. Between March and April 2020, the applicant experienced flooding, which threatened the security of the fence adjacent to the riverbed. It exposed state infrastructure such as sewer pipes and electrical lines. Flooding exposed the infrastructure for weeks, heightening the threat of pollution, contamination and electrocution. This put lives at risk.

Although the homeowners’ association brought the municipality’s attention to the impending calamity, the Mogale City Local Municipality refused to act. When the matter landed in court, the judge found the municipality to be at fault for failing to mitigate and prevent the stormwater damage despite its constitutional obligations to do so. The court found that the municipality’s failure to act violated its “positive duty to mitigate stormwater against its climate change policies” *Featherbrooke Homeowners Association NPC v Mogale City Local Municipality* (2020). The reference to climate change policies seemed to stem from the court’s recognition that in as much as there are many explanations for increased flooding in South Africa –

including climate change – there is a duty on municipalities to mitigate and prevent such damage by adequately managing and maintaining drainage infrastructure to protect properties in built-up areas. There are several other cases in which the courts have found municipalities in breach of their stormwater prevention and mitigation measures. In all the cases, municipalities would have prevented liability by ensuring proper drainage, constructing and maintaining stormwater systems, and implementing flood mitigation infrastructure. In this regard, it can be argued that efficient service delivery regarding stormwater management entails increasing the capacity of existing stormwater infrastructure to handle larger volumes, implementing proactive planning and risk management around stormwater, implementing early flooding warnings, and implementing integrated disaster management.

2.5.5.2 Improper management of landfill sites

It has been seen above that refuse removal, management of refuse dumps, and solid waste disposal are part of the service delivery obligations of local government. However, recent times have seen communities suffer as a result of the failure of municipalities to manage landfill sites properly. There are two examples in this regard. The first one is Msunduzi Local Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. In the Msunduzi Local Municipality, the Auditor General of South Africa (2022:8) reported failure to manage a landfill site as follows in 2022:

The New England landfill site is not operated in terms of the minimum requirements and its waste management license of 2017. This is evidenced by:

- *poor access control and inadequate separation of waste disposed at the site,*
- *lack of compacting and cover to limit gas emissions impacting on air quality;*
- *spontaneous combustions and other fires resulting in accidents, other safety risks and air pollution; and*
- *lack of/ poor leachate and storm water management to prevent continued contamination of the soil and water resources.*

These failures were laid bare in a court case by the South African Human Commission against the Municipality and summarised as follows by Diedericks, Dube & du Plessis (2023).

- (a) *inadequate assessment and classification of waste, illustrated by the disposal of 'hazardous chemical containers, paint containers and paint products, whole tyres and motor oil containers';*
- (b) *failure to regulate access to the landfill site, resulting in the presence and permanent residence of people at the landfill site, as seen by the presence of beds and sleeping areas at the site;*

- (c) *failure to record entry and exit from the landfill site;*
- (d) *servicing and maintenance of vehicles at the site, resulting in oil seeping into the soil and storm water washing off the oil into the Msunduzi River;*
- (e) *failure to prevent leachate from the site from seeping into the environment;*
- (f) *excessive storage of water at the landfill site, resulting in flies and odour; and g. failure to prevent informal recovery of waste and recycling at the landfill site.*

These failures had massive implications on the environment and the health of the residents of the municipality due to soil and underground water contamination and air pollution (Auditor General of South Africa, 2022). As a result of the neglect of the landfill, a series of fires broke out at the site, releasing thick smoke that engulfed the area and shutting down schools and the section of the N3 passing through it. Despite these dangers to its community, the Msunduzi Local Municipality continued to engage in bad governance by failing to remediate the issue and to “heed the outcomes of the monitoring and supervisory engagements with the national government” (Auditor General of South Africa, 2022).

However, the Msunduzi Local Municipality is not alone in its neglect of its landfill sites. In the Eastern Cape, the Makana Local Municipality was dragged to court by its residents after having failed to manage its landfill site (Chamberlain & Masiangoako, 2021). The failure of the management of the Makana Local Municipality in operating its landfill sites and ensuring proper waste disposal was amplified by its ‘lackadaisical’ approach, which left the court with no choice but to sentence the executive mayor and the Municipal Manager to imprisonment (wholly suspended) unless they complied with its conditions to urgently address the issues (MacLennan, 2020). In the same province, a court fined the Walter Sisulu Local Municipality R1 million for failure to manage a landfill site that is opposite to an informal settlement. The municipality’s failure exposed residents of the informal settlement to severe health challenges of a magnitude greater than those experienced in Msunduzi (Sgqolana, 2021).

2.5.5.3 Failure to collect and dispose of waste

Although the failures of the Msunduzi, Makana and Walter Sisulu local municipalities are only the tip of the ice bag when it comes to poor landfill site management, the problem of improper waste disposal is wider than landfill sites. In fact, some municipalities are derelict in their service delivery obligations on waste disposal to the extent of not collecting waste that should go to landfill sites. For purposes of clarity, it should be noted that as a service delivery

obligation, waste disposal (also known as refuse collection) refers to “the cleaning of litter or illegally dumped waste which may have been caused by spillages, torn black plastic bags and illegally dumped waste on a public open space” (eMalahleni Local Municipality, 2022).

This failure of municipalities to collect waste manifests in littered streets, illegal dumping and polluted rivers. In the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, litter is a huge problem due to littering and ineffective waste collection. The litter problem is so intense that former Minister of Finance and Governor of the Reserve Bank of South Africa, Mr Tito Mboweni, described the streets of Johannesburg as “filthy and embarrassing” (SAFM, 2018). This situation prompted the former Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Mr Mashaba, to launch the *A Re Sebetseng* campaign, which sought to enhance cleaning efforts and encourage proper waste disposal (Stokes & Lawhon, 2024). This campaign can be seen as an admission of the failure of the state to provide service delivery to its people.

In addition to the City of Johannesburg, there are many other municipalities that are failing to collect waste effectively and collect it at all. These include the Makana Local Municipality, whose service delivery failures have been outlined above in relation to the failure to manage solid waste disposal in landfill sites. In the Mpumalanga Province, for example, there is the eMalahleni Local Municipality, where illegal dumping is rife. According to its records, the eMalahleni Local Municipality has “more than 350 illegal dumping spots which are cleaned on a regular basis but not sustained” (eMalahleni Local Municipality, 2022). This problem arises not just because the people of eMalahleni are not committed to keeping their environment clean, but because the municipality is failing to provide service delivery through waste collection. The municipality admits that “these illegal dumping areas occur in the areas which are not receiving a full level of service” (eMalahleni Local Municipality, 2022). Seen differently, this means that the municipality is inefficient in service delivery.

2.5.5.4 Failure to provide clean water for drinking and recreation

The provision of clean water for drinking and recreation is one of the service delivery obligations of local government. However, many communities suffer from inadequate access to such water, pointing to inefficient service delivery due to the lack of good governance regarding municipalities’ priorities and competencies. As a result of pollution and the failure of municipalities to efficiently discharge their efficient service delivery obligations, evidence suggests that “rivers and freshwater bodies in South Africa are highly polluted” (Webster &

Iqani, 2024:109). This high pollution also occurs as a result of the discharge of untreated wastewater into rivers, particularly the Jukskei and Vaal Rivers in the Gauteng provinces (Webster & Iqani, 2024). Some of the untreated wastewater passes through homes in informal settlements (SAHRC, 2021; Tempelhoff, 2021).

Although sewage contamination of rivers is prevalent in municipalities that are generally known to suffer from poor governance, it is also manifested in the City of Cape Town, which is regarded as one of the best-performing municipalities in the country. According to Webster & Iqani (2024), “Cape Town’s sewage works are under pressure, too, with raw waste contaminating marshlands, river tributaries and the ocean, rendering these spaces unused for recreation (“recreation” in Johannesburg’s rivers, meanwhile, being a far-off concept).” The observation that water ‘recreation’ is a “far-off concept” in Johannesburg serves to illustrate the sheer extent of the pollution. However, it should be noted that while water recreation is important, most communities in South Africa contend with the pressing challenge of accessing clean drinking water, resulting in situations in which they have to drink the same water which livestock and wild animals drink (Thoka, 2024).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the literature on good governance and its necessity in South African municipalities. The literature review shows that governance pertains to the rules, processes and practices in which governments exercise authority in society, while good governance pertains to ethical, transparent, participatory and accountable conduct of public affairs through ways which promote efficiency, equity and responsiveness to the needs, expectations and preferences of citizens. The analysis also shows that good governance is often defined according to its tenets, principles and values, which include accountability of the government and its officials; transparency of the government in public decision-making and actions; respect for the rule of law; public participation in government decision-making and implementation; government responsiveness to the needs and expectations of citizens; public trust and legitimacy of the government; equity and inclusiveness; consensus-oriented decisions-making, and efficiency and effectiveness of the government in the provision of public goods and services. The review of the literature in this chapter also shows that the government is the formal political institution that is vested with authority in the national, provincial and local spheres. In the context of this study, the government refers to municipal councils and the administrative offices that comprise

them and which are responsible for service delivery and meeting the other needs of the communities that they serve.

This chapter also discussed several measurement standards that are used to gauge whether a particular country adheres to good governance. These include local governance performance management, World Governance Indicators from the World Bank Group, the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, and the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index. While these do not constitute all the measurement standards of good governance, they shed light on the importance of good governance and the components of it that should be measured. Although this chapter demonstrates the importance of adhering to the tenets of good governance, it also shows that there is an increasing failure of South African municipalities to do so, resulting in concerning manifestations of the lack of accountability; lack of responsiveness to community need, expectations and preferences; lack of transparency on municipal affairs, decisions and actions; and a loss of trust in local government, leading to public perceptions of illegitimacy. These issues are shown in this chapter to have led to inefficient service delivery, which manifests in failure to provide public goods and services such as cleaning drinking water, collection and disposal of waste, management of waste disposal sites and increased instances of flooding. As such, the review of the literature shows that it is imperative for South African municipalities to consider governance efficiency models to improve service delivery. This is applicable to the Zululand District Municipality, which is the subject of this study. The following chapter examines the theoretical framework for enhancing service delivery through good governance.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY OF SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a review of the literature on how good governance, its tenets, importance and measurement standards. It also discussed the need for good governance in South African municipalities, as seen from the failures of municipalities across the country to adhere to the prescripts of good governance. This chapter introduces the theoretical framework from which to understand the importance of adherence to good governance in ensuring efficient service delivery. To this end, this chapter analyses three applicable theories, namely, the good governance theory, the public value theory and the agency theory. The chapter is structured as follows: the second section after this introduction discusses the good governance theory, which is based on a framework that emphasises the establishment and maintenance of robust institutions whose structures effectively manage public affairs and resources in line with the tenets of good governance (accountability, transparency, participation, the rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness) Ekundayo, 2017). This theory can be leveraged to reform the service delivery approach of the Zululand District Municipality through practical strategies that are anchored on good governance.

The third section examines the public value theory, which is based on the idea that people in a particular community are collectively entitled to certain goods and services from their government and that the provision of such goods and services must give them some ‘value’ in terms of the quantities, quality and timing of provision (Barnes *et al.*, 2003). Efficient service delivery is one of the tenets of public value. Hence, this theory can be used to devise strategies to improve service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. The fourth section discusses the agency theory, which explains the relationship between two parties, the principal and the agent (Panda & Leepsa, 2017). This theory explains the relationship between government and the governed (Schillemans & Bjurstrøm, 2020). For the purposes of this study, which centres on good governance in the local government context in the Zululand District Municipality, the agency theory recognises the communities served by the municipality as the principal and the

council and administration of the municipality as the agents. The last section concludes the chapter.

3.2 Good governance theory

3.2.1 Overview of the good governance theory

The good governance theory is based on a framework that emphasises the establishment and maintenance of robust institutions whose structures effectively manage public affairs and resources in line with the tenets of good governance (accountability, transparency, participation, the rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness etc. (Ekundayo, 2017). The good governance theory relies on basic principles according to which a good government runs/ The principles in question are the tenets of good governance that have been discussed in the preceding chapter. Within the context of this study, whose aim is to develop a governance efficiency model for effective service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality, the good governance theory is essential and relevant in that it sets the framework from which the government can provide public goods and service efficiently by optimising the allocation of resources and reducing waste and other losses of resources. For this reason, the good governance theory is seen as a theoretical foundation for analysing the factors that influence service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. This is because this theory can be leveraged to reform the service delivery approach of the Zululand District Municipality through practical strategies that are anchored on good governance.

3.2.2 Historical development of the good governance theory

The good governance theory has a history that dates back to its emergence in the late 1980s to the early 1990s in global financial institutions like the World Bank. This is because the very idea of good governance was popularised by the World Bank in 1989 in its report on *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (World Bank, 1989). In this report, the World Bank identified poor governance as the main stumbling block to development and progress in sub-Saharan Africa. It proposed that to resolve poor governance and its ills, it was essential for states to adhere to “good governance – a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to its public” (World Bank, 1989). It appears that the main thinking behind the World Bank’s perspective was to improve the public sector to enhance accountability, instil respect for the rule of law, and ensure transparency in government decision-making (Leftwich, 1993). Hence, the focus was on

administrative reforms as a prerequisite for economic reform and development, it being the case that creating a conducive environment by eliminating corruption and other manifestations of bad governance would ultimately lead to economic development.

In the 1990s, the World Bank's approach to 'good governance' as a prerequisite for economic development gained traction across the United Nations system and agencies. The UNDP (1997:2) noted after the release of the World Bank's report, "the search for a clearly articulated concept of governance has just begun." it further observed that societies across the developing world faced a challenge "to create a system of governance that promotes, supports and sustains human development – especially for the poorest and most marginal" (UNDP, 1997:2).

The UNDP (1997:2) defined good governance as "participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources." The UNDP (1997) adopted and expanded on the World Bank's views on good governance by including public participation, consensus-oriented decision-making, and equity and inclusiveness. As such, it introduced the idea that good governance is not a matter to be left to the state and its institutions but that the private sector has a role to play in achieving its ideals. This is because the United Nations, its financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and aid agencies viewed good governance as a condition for providing development assistance (Santiso, 2001). This could be the reason why new tenets of good governance, such as democratic governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law emerged and were infused into the definition of good governance.

Several 'good' governance indicators were developed in the 1990s and early 2000s to measure governance across different countries (Kaufmann, Kraay & Zoido-Lobaton, 1999). These indicators measured dimensions such accountability, political stability, effectiveness of the government, regulatory clarity and quality, respect for the rule of law and commitment of the state to end corruption. Quantitative measures were also used for comparative analysis of good governance in each country and to benchmark with global practices. The idea behind all these indicators and dimensions was to influence policy decisions by leveraging developmental aid. The impression that one gets is that if a state were to be perceived as having bad governance,

its developmental aid would be limited or removed entirely (Santiso, 2001), making good governance both a carrot and a stick with which to punish ‘errant’ African regimes.

3.2.3 Good governance and sustainable development

It has already been noted that institutions like the UNDP did not view good governance in isolation but as a tool for sustainable development. The thinking behind this is that the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), also known as the Brundtland Commission, had released its report on *Our common future*, in which it proposed the idea of sustainable development as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The Brundtland Commission proposed tripartite elements of sustainable development, which are interdependent and which need balancing. These are economic development, social protection and environmental protection. In line with the proposals of the Brundtland Commission, the (UNDP, 1997:5) said that good governance requires the convergence of the state, the private sector and civil society in “promoting sustainable human development.” It further argued that “unresponsive government and unrelenting economic and social pressure have forced people to organise in new ways” and that to prevent such mobilisation, there is a need for governments to adhere to good governance.

Within the United Nations systems, sustainable development continued to gain momentum and culminated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise good governance as an essential ingredient for the achievement of global ambitions towards a transformed and sustainable future. For instance, SDG 16 (United Nations, 2015) seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies by reducing all forms of violence and unnecessary deaths. It further seeks to provide access to justice for all and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. This SDG is relevant to good governance because it emphasises the need for states to create institutions that are efficient and effective in delivering public goods and services, thus aligning with the good governance tenet of effective and efficient service delivery. SDG6 is also relevant to good governance because of its emphasis on accountable and transparent institutions whose role is to reduce corruption and bribery and ensure answerability (United Nations, 2015). This links with another tenet of good governance, which is the rule of law. The reference to inclusive decision-making is also relevant as it encourages inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels of government (including the local sphere).

Regionally, the African Union (to which South Africa is a member) adopted Agenda 2063, whose Aspiration 3 seeks to create “an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law” through, inter alia, participatory development and local governance. This fits into the good governance discourse in that it effectively commits African states to uphold constitutionalism (which is the limitation of government powers for the protection of the populace (Stone & Weis, 2021)), regular and free elections (Mlambo, Thusi & Ndlovu, 2022). This can be linked to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which echoes similar sentiments (African Union, 2007). The guarantees to protect the rights of all citizens that are enumerated in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (OAU, 1981) can be seen as an attempt to establish and strengthen national human rights instruments, thereby ensuring accountability for the actions of the government, as opposed to impunity. Also, the rule of law and justice in Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 ensure equal access to justice and respect for the rule of law, as opposed to the arbitrariness of the whims and caprices of those in power. Ultimately, the sub-elements of Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 enhance tenets of good governance, such as accountability and transparency, as it also incorporates the implementation of anti-corruption measures and openness in government decision-making (Ndizera & Muzee, 2018).

3.2.4 Connecting the good governance theory to service delivery in South African local government

The theoretical underpinnings of the good governance theory discussed above are linked to specific mechanisms, challenges and opportunities for enhancing service delivery efficiency in the local government context in general and in the Zululand District Municipality in particular. This is because the relevance of the good governance theory to efficient service delivery lies in its emphasis on institutional effectiveness, accountability, public participation, responsiveness, transparency, and several other tenets of good governance, which are discussed in chapter 2 of the study at 2.3. As seen in chapter 2, the tenets of good governance provide a foundation for addressing issues and behaviours that cause systemic inefficiencies in local governments such as the Zululand District Municipality. Also, the tenets of good governance help to foster sustainable service delivery models (Massey, 2022).

The good governance theory fits into the discourse on enhancing the efficiency of service delivery also in that poor governance is often attributed to poor service delivery. Hence, the good governance theory addresses this shortcoming by closing deficits in governance,

including corruption, lack of transparency, weak accountability mechanisms, and ineffective implementation of policies (Salihu, 2022). Arguably, embedding the elements of good governance into the operational framework of local municipalities such as the Zululand District Municipality can mitigate instances of failure to adhere to the prescripts of good governance. For example, transparency in financial management can reduce corruption, while public participation in the municipality's decision-making process can ensure equitable allocation of resources in line with the needs, expectations, and preferences of the municipality's constituency.

The good governance theory is also relevant to efficient service delivery in that it highlights the need for alignment of political will, administrative capacity and public accountability. This alignment is only achieved through adherence to the tenets of good governance. Hence, the good governance theory requires institutions to be designed not only to provide basic services such as water and sanitation but also to advance equity, inclusivity and sustainability (Denters, Ginther & de Waart, 2023). The design of local governance institutions, such as in the Zululand District Municipality, will require a shift from a top-down approach to governance that is citizen-centric and that includes all stakeholders in the municipality's decision-making processes.

In the specific context of the Zululand District Municipality, the rest of the chapters of this thesis will show that the good governance theory provides a framework through which to identify gaps in service delivery. The discussion will also show that the municipality can leverage the tenets of good governance, such as effectiveness and efficiency, to improve service delivery. This will be achieved by optimising the allocation and utilisation of resources through accountability mechanisms such as monitoring and public monitoring to ensure that municipal officials are held responsible for service delivery outcomes. In this regard, public participation opportunities in the municipality can give members of the community a sense of ownership of the initiatives, successes and challenges facing the municipality, thereby increasing public trust in the municipality and enhancing its legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

Conclusively, the utility of the good governance theory in this study and specifically in enhancing the efficiency of service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality is twofold. First, the good governance theory serves as a diagnostic tool for evaluating the municipality's current governance framework. Second, the good governance theory serves as a prescriptive model for reforming the frameworks of municipal governance to enhance service delivery

efficiency. This study applies the theoretical insights from the good governance theory to develop a governance efficiency model for the Zululand District Municipality. It is hoped that this model will integrate the tenets of good governance into the operational strategies of the municipality to ensure that service delivery is not only effective but also adaptive and resilient to eventualities. Although the good governance theory holds a lot of value for this study, there are other applicable theories, one of which is the public value theory discussed below.

3.2.5 Legal frameworks implementing the good governance theory in South African municipalities

3.2.5.1 *The South African Constitution (1996)*

3.2.5.1.1 Founding values and principles

The foregoing discussion shows that the good governance theory provides a solid theoretical foundation through which to improve service delivery in municipalities and the Zululand District Municipality in particular. This section takes the discussion further by examining whether the theoretical aspirations of the good governance theory find any application in the constitutional, statutory and policy frameworks of local government in South Africa. As a point of departure, it is noted that the South African Constitution (1996) is the overarching law that governs everything to the extent that any law or conduct by any person (including local government officials) is null and void to the full extent that such law or conduct is inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution (Romeo, 2020). This extends to legislation, which must conform with the Constitution as well, per Section 2 of the Constitution (Van Staden, 2020).

The Constitution also spells out founding values that do not necessarily bestow distinct constitutional rights, but which must guide the national, provincial and local governments, as well as the courts and all persons in South Africa (Woolman, 2021). These are found in chapter 1 of the Constitution and include the following:

- (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms.*
- (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism.*
- (c) Supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law.*
- (d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.*

In relation to this study's focus on good governance and service delivery, all these values are relevant. This is because service delivery of public goods and services such as water, sanitation and refuse collection helps to protect dignity and should be done within a system that does not promote discrimination of any kind, including in terms of sex, gender or other defining characteristic that has been used to divide South Africans (Modise, 2020). Founding values such as constitutional supremacy and the rule of law fulfil the good governance tenet of respect for the rule of law, instead of the arbitrary whims and caprices of individuals, as discussed in 2.3.3 above. These go hand in glove with the constitutional vision to "ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness", all of which are tenets of good governance as discussed in 2.3. This has been affirmed by various scholars as well, including Klug (2015); (Okpaluba, 2018).

3.2.5.1.2 Basic values and principles governing public administration

The South African Constitution also outlines basic values and principles that should govern public administration, including local government. These are outlined as follows in Section 195(1) of the Constitution and are reproduced as they are below:

Basic values and principles governing public administration

195. (1) Public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution, including the following principles:

- (a) A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.*
- (b) Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.*
- (c) Public administration must be development-oriented.*
- (d) Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.*
- (e) People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.*
- (f) Public administration must be accountable.*
- (g) Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.*
- (h) Good human-resource management and career-development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated.*
- (i) Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.*

(2) The above principles apply to—

(a) administration in every sphere of government;

(b) organs of state; and

(c) public enterprises.

(3) National legislation must ensure the promotion of the values and principles listed in subsection (1).

(4) The appointment in public administration of a number of persons on policy considerations is not precluded, but national legislation must regulate these appointments in the public service.

(5) Legislation regulating public administration may differentiate between different sectors, administrations or institutions.

These basic values of public administration have been discussed at length by various scholars, including Mamokhere, Musitha & Netshidzivhani (2022); Molobela (2024); Raleting & Nzimakwe (2022). When looked at closely, these basic values and principles for public administration reinforce all the tenets of good governance. Hence, one can argue that there is a constitutional duty to implement the tenets of good governance in the public administration in South Africa, including in local government.

3.2.5.1.3 Objects of local government

Although the South African Constitution generally applies to all spheres (national, provincial and local) and branches of government (executive, legislature and judiciary), it contains specific provisions that impose clear obligations on local government. These obligations are outlined in Section 152 of the Constitution and are reproduced as they are presented below:

152. (1) The objects of local government are—

(a) to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;

(b) to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;

(c) to promote social and economic development;

(d) to promote a safe and healthy environment; and

(e) to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

It is clear from the above that the objects of local government impose various duties to implement the elements of the good governance theory, including providing a democratic

government, ensuring accountable municipalities, providing sustainable services to local communities, promoting public participation, and a safe and healthy environment (through such services as water and sanitation). Hence, it is argued that South African municipalities, including the Zululand District Municipality, have a clear constitutional obligation to implement good governance in service delivery.

3.2.5.1.4 Developmental duties of municipalities

In addition to the founding values, basic values and principles governing the public administration, and the objects of local government, the South African Constitution imposes specific developmental duties on municipalities. These are reproduced as follows:

Developmental duties of municipalities

153. A municipality must—

- (a) structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community; and*
- (b) participate in national and provincial development programmes.*

These developmental obligations are clear in implementing transparency in local government budgeting in order to fulfil the service delivery obligations of municipalities. Hence, there is a further constitutional obligation for municipalities to implement the elements of good governance.

3.2.5.2 Local government legislation

Several local government statutes were enacted to clarify municipalities' duties in running local governance affairs, such as service delivery. These are outlined in principal statutes such as the Municipal Systems Act (2000), the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003) and the Municipal Structures Act (1998). The intention of this study is not to analyse in detail each statute but to merely highlight the legal position as far as efficient service delivery obligations of municipalities are concerned. The Municipal Systems Act requires municipalities to sustainably provide basic services to their local communities from a financial and environmental perspective. It further requires them to consult their communities about the level, quality, range and impact of basic services provided to them. Importantly, it obligates

municipalities to give their communities equitable access to municipal services to which they are entitled, including water and sanitation services (Kaywood, 2024).

3.3 Public value theory

3.3.1 Conceptualising public value

The public value theory is based on the idea of public value, which is neither legal nor political (Makanyeza, Kwandayi & Ikobe, 2013). Public value is a public administration and management concept which emanates from the idea that people in a particular community are collectively entitled to certain goods and services from their government and that the provision of such goods and services must give them some ‘value’ in terms of the quantities, quality and timing of provision (Barnes *et al.*, 2003). The concept of public value and the theory underpinning it are attributable to Moore, a public administration and management scholar who argued that the public (as important stakeholders in the provision of public goods and services) equals shareholders in the corporate setting (Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg, 2015). This equation means the public is entitled to beneficial value from the provision of public goods and services, just as shareholders of a corporation are entitled to from its board and management (Moore & Khagram, 2004:1).

To achieve the level of value communities, the public value theory requires political and administrative officials of the state to provide effective and efficient service delivery, which ensures that public goods and services reach the communities that they are intended for and that they are in the correct quantity and quality and that they arrive timely (Moore & Khagram, 2004:1-3). For this to be possible, it is clear that the government must make strategic decisions that ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Importantly, it means that government officials must be ethical and committed to ensuring that government resources are spent in a timely, accountable, transparent, and within their limitations so that there are no budget overruns (Maulana, Alim & Djasuli, 2024).

In this context, achieving public value in service delivery ultimately entails respect for ethics in public administration, integrity of public officials and zero tolerance for corrupt activities by public officials (Ahmad, Hashim & Latiff, 2024). One of the benefits of infusing the public value theory in service delivery issues (from a good governance perspective) is that it provides a blueprint for the efficiency in the provision of public goods and services to achieve outcomes

that are desired by members of communities to which they are provided (Gegana & Phahlane, 2024). The table below illustrates several constellations of public value.

Table 3-1: Constellations and public values

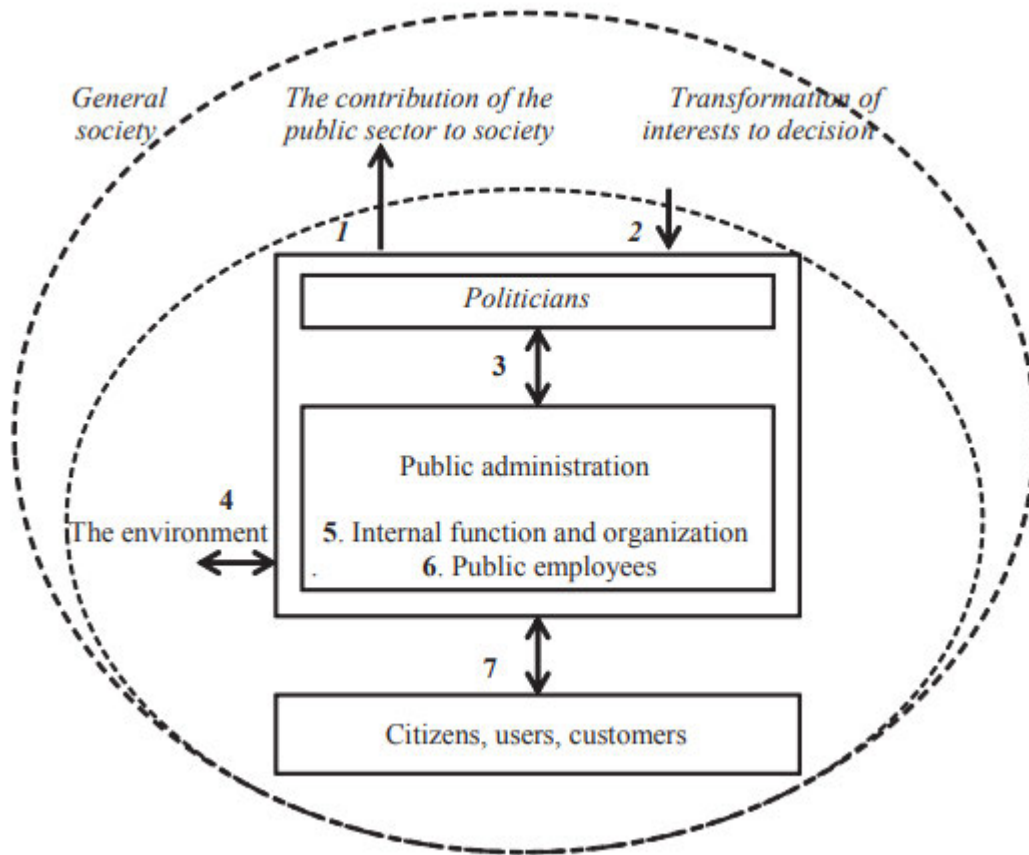
<i>Value constellation</i>	<i>Public values</i>
1. Public sector's contribution to society	Public interest, common good, social cohesion Altruism, human dignity Sustainability, voice of the future Regime dignity, regime stability
2. Transformation of interests to decisions	Majority rule, democracy, will of the people, collective choice User democracy, local governance, citizen involvement Protection of minorities, protection of individuals
3. Relationship between administrators and politicians	Political loyalty, accountability, responsiveness
4. Relationship between public administrators and their environment	Openness, responsiveness, listening to public opinion, secrecy Neutrality, impartiality compromise, balancing interests, advocacy
5. Intraorganizational aspects of public administration	Competitiveness, cooperativeness Robustness, adaptability, stability, reliability, timeliness Innovation, enthusiasm, risk-readiness Effectiveness, productivity, parsimony, businesslike approach Self-development of employees, good working environment

6. Behaviour of public sector employees	Accountability, professionalism, honesty, moral standards, ethical consciousness, integrity
7. Relationship between public administration and citizens	<p>Rule of law, legality, protection of individual rights, equal treatment, justice</p> <p>Equity, reasonableness, fairness, professionalism</p> <p>Dialogue, responsiveness, user democracy, citizen involvement, citizen's self-development</p> <p>User orientation, friendliness, timeliness</p>

Source: Jørgensen & Sørensen (2012:76)

The above table illustrates the importance of understanding the political environment's influence on good governance, which demonstrates the convergence of the public administration, politicians and citizens in enhancing service delivery and other governance obligations through public values. In South Africa, the relationships between constellations and public values are essential, as they directly connect public interest and governance. For instance, the first constellation (contribution of the public sector to society) links good governance to "impartiality, innovation, effectiveness, transparency, altruism, democracy and legality". This shows that without good governance, one can expect partiality, stagnation in innovation, inefficiency, secrecy around government decision-making, autocracy and outright disregard for the law. No modern society can provide efficient service delivery under such circumstances, as there will be a lack of accountability, and the people's interests will not be placed first. Another example is the third constellation, which explains the relationship between administrators in the public sector and politicians. This constellation illustrates the importance of having a democratic environment that defines the relationship between political authority and the civil service.

Figure 3-1: Structure of public values universe.



Source: Jørgensen & Sørensen (2012:75)

The public value theory provides a solid foundation for understanding good governance as a framework for efficient service delivery. This is illustrated in Figure 3-1, which depicts the “structure of public values universe” and how a public value approach to good governance leads to desired outcomes for citizens. This illustration presents a systemic view of governance where politicians, public administration, and public employees work in tandem to serve society. Good governance would ensure that each link in this chain is accountable, transparent, responsive, and inclusive, fostering trust and efficiency in the public sector.

3.3.2 Elements of public value

The above discussion of the concept of public value and the theory that underpins it reveals that it is anchored on several elements, values and principles which collectively ensure that the public obtain the goods and services to which it is entitled from the government and that such goods and service are fit for purpose, delivered on time and in the correct quantities. The main elements of public value are accountability, transparency, responsiveness, public participation,

trust and legitimacy, human rights and sustainability as some of the core elements, values and principles of public value (Kaywood, 2024). It must be noted that while these are also the same elements of good governance, they have independent standing as tenets of public value, thereby justifying the proposition that the public value theory is one of the most important theories underpinning good governance to enhance service delivery.

It must be noted that in the context of public value, accountability is an all-encompassing element that seeks to ensure that public officials and the institutions they preside over are answerable to the public for the decisions that they make and for the actions that they take (Kaywood, 2024). Such answerability provides better outcomes for service delivery because those who are responsible for specific performance are identified and held to account by the public, thereby enhancing transparency and responsiveness to public needs. Without accountability, there can be no respect for the rule of law and no commitment to perform efficiently (Laebens & Lührmann, 2023). Given that good governance requires accountability, it can be argued that accountability alone can provide a framework for ensuring the fulfilment of the ideals of public value regarding the efficient provision of public goods and services.

3.3.3 Public value and the evolution of public administration and management

The historical development of the public value theory is important to this study to contextualise the need for good governance in local government in general and in the Zululand District Municipality in particular. This is for various reasons, including the one discussed in the preceding section, which is that the elements of public value are also the tenets of good governance (although it is important not to view this interpretation as a conflation of good governance with public value). As a public administration and management concept, public value is relevant to this study, as municipalities such as the Zululand District Municipality are tasked with legal powers and responsibility for managing local government affairs through legislated approaches and policies which inform how they must manage public resources and the principles that must guide them in fulfilling their service delivery obligations to their communities. For these reasons, this subsection discusses the historical development of public value. Early conceptualisation of the public value concept and the theory that underlies it first emerged in practice and in the literature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Fukumoto & Bozeman, 2019).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, bureaucracy was the main approach to public governance and was particularly attractive because it gave governments structures through which they presided over the populations using laws, rules, procedures and policies with which they had to strictly adhere (Brunetto, Xerri & Farr-Wharton, 2024). Hence, bureaucracy was about rules and procedures and did not consider the rights and interests of communities such that compliance with rules and procedures might as well have gone against the needs, expectations and preferences of communities and there was nothing that they could do about. Also, the bureaucratic approach to doing things in government placed obstacles in the making of time-sensitive and crucial decisions such that it led to inefficiency, including in service delivery (Peeters & Campos, 2023). Bureaucracy also led to lack of accountability and thus created fertile avenues for corruption in the public sector (Rich, 2023). These shortcomings of bureaucracy led to the need for a new approach to public administration and management in the 20th Century.

This approach was a behavioural one in that it combined public administration with psychology theories (Hassan & Wright, 2020). The basis of the behavioural public administration approach was that human bias and behaviour affect the public sector either negatively or positively (Oliver Kasdan, 2020). Although at first glance one may wonder about the connection between such behaviour and service delivery, the behavioural public administration approach explained this from the lens that it is important to understand the thinking and motivations of individuals, managers and the governed so that appropriate solutions can be created and tailored to address those attitudes (Tummers, 2020). In the good governance context, which is the focus of this study, behavioural public administration would explain the factors motivating and discouraging public administrators in local government from adhering to the tenets of good governance such as accountability, transparency, respect for the rule of law, public participation etc.

Given that psychology is scientific study of behaviour, mental processes, and the factors that influence them, including biological, social, and cultural aspects, the behavioural public administration was not likely to survive its times, given that this field had not developed as much it is today (Colman, 2016). As such, behavioural public administration was ahead of its time and could not be sustained due to limited scientific knowledge and data to fully develop it. As such, it had to be discarded from public administration. Although there were attempts to revive it in the 21st Century, those attempts did not succeed for the same reasons that the

approach did not succeed in the first place i.e., lack of scientific knowledge and data (Kettl, 2015). A less scientific-intensive and more palatable approach was needed to replace behavioural public administration. This was the New Public Management, which emerged in towards the end of the 1970s (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020).

The New Public Management approach arose as a result of economic forces which required the modernisation of the public sector and its governance to ensure efficiency, increase productivity and enhance accountability in public administration (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020). As such, one can argue that the New Public Management approach was a neoliberal economic response to public governance. This is because it called for structural economic reforms, motivated for the professionalisation of the public sector, requires clear standards for measuring performance in the public sector, and emphasised the need for competitiveness in the public sector (Li & Yang, 2022). In the 1980s, it was clear that the public sector across different states was inefficient. Hence, the New Public Management theory emerged under the influence of public choice theory and agency theory. It advocated for market-oriented reforms and managerial autonomy in the public sector to ensure that governments addressed economic challenges of the times and mitigated public dissatisfaction with inefficiency (Ferlie, 2017).

In the above context, New Public Management was characterised by several elements. First, introduced market principles that are generally perceived to be confined to the private sector, such as competition and contracting out. These were introduced to the public service to improve quality and reduce costs of doing state business (McGann, 2021). Second, the New Public Management approach introduced managerialism in that it sought to empower public sector managers to exercise greater discretion and accountability as part of the emphasis on performance measurement and results-oriented management (Dutta, Knafo & Lovering, 2023). It was hoped that such empowerment would lead to efficiency in the public sector. Third, the New Public Management approach introduced decentralisation by calling for a shift in decision-making authority to bring it closer to service delivery points in order to enhance responsiveness and adaptability (Greer *et al.*, 2021). In the South African context, decentralisation was enshrined in the Constitution, which gives local government autonomy from the provincial and national spheres of government and prescribes specific functional areas for municipalities in order to enhance service delivery (Munzhedzi, 2021). The last principle introduced by the New Public Management approach was customer-orientation, which viewed

citizens serviced by the government as customers. This approach intended to focus on the needs of citizens and their preferences for service delivery (Coffie & Hinson, 2022).

Although the New Public Management approach significantly reformed the public sector by advocating for the application of private sector management principles in the public sector, it also reached a point in which it was replaced by public value. The reforms that it had introduced with the aim of enhancing efficiency and responsiveness in the public sector did not go unchallenged, as there was debate regarding the balance between managerial efficiency and the preservation of public sector values (Funck & Karlsson, 2020). Public sector employees were particularly unhappy with the introduction of private sector approaches, which also inadvertently reintroduced bureaucracy and reduced satisfaction (Diefenbach, 2009). For this reason, there was a need for a new approach that would balance things out through a performance approach.

Performance management replaced New Public Management at the end of the 20th Century through an approach dedicated to improve outcomes (Dixon, 2021). Like New Public Management, it was dedicated to improving efficiency of the public sector, effectiveness of public sector employees, and ensuring accountability.

The performance management approach was defined by various measures adopted to increase performance, such as incentives for promotions, availability of learning opportunities to employees, and celebration of success. The main driver of performance management was the technological shift from pen and paper to dynamic and efficient systems that leveraged the internet for communication (Kaywood, 2024).

This extract show that performance management did not only consider increasing efficiency and productivity but also considered the importance of giving public sector employees incentives to perform better. It rewarded them for their hard work, thereby instilling a culture of efficiency and good results. For this to be possible, performance management emphasised strategic planning, the use of feedback systems and coordination (Fenwick & De Cieri, 1996). It was envisaged that these strategies would lead to inefficiency. However, performance management suffered a similar fate as its predecessors, as many viewed it as ineffective. This shortcoming led to the emergency of the public value approach, which was advocated by Moore (1995), as discussed above. The public value approach was particularly attractive due to its emphasis on accountability, efficiency, collaboration and partnerships within the public sector and between the public sector, civil society and the private sector. Hence, it offered what New Public Management could not offer i.e., focus on engaged and empowered communities who

could play a vital role in enhancing the government's efficiency in the provision of public services. However, the public value theory has its own criticism, which are outlined below.

3.3.4 Criticisms of the public value theory

Although the public value theory holds a lot of 'value' for improving efficiency in service delivery, it has been criticised for placing too much emphasis on the ethical commitment, integrity and resistance to corruption of administrative officials and ignores the role of politics and the influence of political leaders on service delivery (Prebble, 2024). Also, the public value theory is criticised for equating the provision of public goods and services to the work of the private carries neoliberal connotations (Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg, 2015). This is particularly problematic in the South African context in which neoliberalism has a firm grip on socio-economic affairs and could be seen as the reason for the country's struggles with service delivery (Hellberg, 2020).

Given the reality that public administration cannot be entirely separated from politics and that politics often influences the law, it can be argued that, to an extent, there is merit in the criticisms against the public value theory. However, such criticisms do not necessarily mean that there is no 'value' in the public value theory. To the contrary, this study adopts the view that the public value theory does not necessarily have to explicitly account for political influence on service delivery, as other theories can easily accomplish this. This study adopts the approach that matters of service delivery cannot be adequately understood outside the context of the political environment in which they occur. This is because "politics influences administration in that politicians appoint public servants, and they would want to appoint people on whom they have some influence and leverage in making policy and administrative decisions" (Kaywood, 2024:26). For this reason, the study argues that the appointment of public servants by the political administration is itself an act of creating public value. If those appointees do not fulfil their obligations to provide efficient service delivery, they can be said to be failing at creating public value.

3.3.5 Connecting the public value theory to service delivery in local governance

The above discussion shows that the elements of the public value theory double as the tenets of good governance, although it should be reiterated that public value and good governance are not one and the same. The discussion shows that accountability, responsiveness, transparency, respect for the rule of law, public participation and government efficiency and effectiveness in

service delivery are some of the tenets of the public value theory (see 3.3.2). Adherence to these elements of the public value theory can inform and enhance service delivery within the framework of good governance in municipalities. Unlike traditional models of public administration that emphasise compliance with rules and procedures (bureaucracy) or market-based models (such as New Public Management) that are discussed in 3.3.3, the public value theory focuses on efficiency in service delivery and offers a holistic approach that centres on creating outcomes that align with the collective interests and aspirations of citizens. This orientation makes it particularly relevant in addressing the service delivery challenges of the Zululand District Municipality.

The discussion above under 3.3 shows that the public value theory reframes service delivery as not merely a transaction between government and citizens but as a process of co-creation where public officials, politicians, and community members collectively contribute to societal well-being. This co-creative process aligns with the principles of good governance, particularly inclusivity, accountability, and transparency, as it encourages collaboration and shared responsibility. For instance, participatory governance, which is one of the elements of the public value theory, is meant to ensure that communities are actively involved in identifying their service delivery needs and priorities, thereby enhancing the responsiveness and relevance of government service delivery interventions.

Another factor connecting the public value theory to good governance and service delivery within the framework of this study is that this theory also underscores the importance of measuring the efficiency of service delivery not solely by quantitative outputs but by the qualitative impact on societal well-being. This approach integrates with the focus of good governance on effectiveness and equity, as discussed in 2.3.7. The public value approach advocates for a public sector that goes beyond basic compliance to actively address the broader social, economic, and environmental dimensions of development (Raleting & Nzimakwe, 2022). In this context, the public value theory helps to assess whether service delivery systems genuinely contribute to improving the quality of life for citizens.

It has been noted above in 2.3.1 that the accountability of the government and its officials is perhaps the most important tenet of good governance – if not the foundation of good governance. Accountability is a shared tenet of both good governance and public value and is thus central to bridging the theory and service delivery. In this regard, the public value theory suggests that government institutions and officials must be answerable not only for the

resources they utilise but also for the societal outcomes they achieve (Cruz Dallagnol, Portulhak & Cezar Severo Peixe, 2023). This means implementing mechanisms to monitor performance, evaluate outcomes, and engage citizens in oversight processes in service delivery. For example, public reporting and community scorecards can ensure that service delivery aligns with public expectations and enhances trust in governance structures.

The emphasis of the public value theory on ethical governance reinforces the insistence of good governance on integrity and resistance to corruption (Sami *et al.*, 2016). Public sector ethics are indispensable for efficient service delivery, as corruption and mismanagement undermine the delivery of quality services and erode public trust. Since good governance advocates for moral standards, honesty, and professionalism, the public value approach seeks to ensure that public goods and services are delivered with fairness, equity, and respect for human dignity, as discussed in 2.3 above. Also, the public value theory connects to good governance and service delivery in that it recognises the role of political, administrative, and community actors in legitimising and supporting service delivery initiatives. This aligns with the principle of consensus-oriented decision-making, which seeks to harmonise competing interests for the benefit of society, as discussed in 2.3.8 above. This implies that service delivery improvements in municipalities like the Zululand District Municipality require collaboration among municipal officials, political leaders, private sector partners, and civil society organisations. Such partnerships enhance resource mobilisation, foster innovation, and ensure that services are not only effective but also sustainable.

The public value theory may also be useful in explaining what is needed to enhance the efficiency of service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. In this context, incorporating public value into service delivery also calls for a rethinking of performance management systems. Rather than focusing narrowly on efficiency, the public value theory may be used to call for an evaluation of the broader societal impact of service delivery to ensure long-term sustainability and equity. For instance, delivering water services to underserved communities should be measured by cost efficiency and its contribution to public health, economic opportunities, and social cohesion.

Ultimately, public value theory complements good governance by providing a normative framework for designing and implementing service delivery systems that are citizen-centred, inclusive, and outcomes-oriented. In the Zululand District Municipality, where governance challenges such as inefficiency and resource misallocation persist, adopting the public value

approach can transform service delivery into a collaborative and impactful process. Arguably aligning municipal objectives with public aspirations and leveraging the principles of good governance, the municipality can optimise its resource use, foster trust, and deliver services that genuinely improve the lives of its constituents. The following section discusses the application of the agency theory to this study.

3.4 Agency Theory

3.4.1 Synopsis of the agency theory

The agency theory explains the relationship between two parties, the principal and the agent (Panda & Leepsa, 2017). This theory has its roots in the delegation system in economics and organisational theories, which recognise that the principal cannot always do everything for themselves due to time and expertise limitations and that in order to get the job done, they delegate the work to the agent who fulfils the duties on behalf of the principal but who remains accountable to the principal (Matinheikki *et al.*, 2022). In the governance context, the agency theory explains the relationship between the government and the governed (Schillemans & Bjurström, 2020). For the purposes of this study, which centres on good governance in the local government context in the Zululand District Municipality, the agency theory recognises the communities served by the municipality as the principal and the council and administration of the municipality as the agents. In this context, the agency presupposes that the people elect the municipal council which governs them based on the laws that the people have enacted, starting with the Constitution and flowing down to local government legislation such as the Municipal Finance Management Act, the Municipal Structures Act and the Municipal Systems Act. As such, the agency theory has democratic connotations in that those who exercise municipal public power do so through the will of the people, which is expressed in regular and free local government elections (Michaud & Audebrand, 2022).

The agency theory assumes that individuals are motivated by self-interest and that if agents of the principal (in this case, members of the municipal council) are not monitored adequately, they may make decisions that benefit themselves to the detriment of the public interest (Moloi *et al.*, 2020). Such self-interest creates a potential conflict between the government and the governed. Hence, the agency theory proposes a well-defined principal-agent relationship through which principals (the people) delegate governance tasks to agents (the municipal council, municipal manager and administrative personnel in the municipality) to act on their

behalf in an environment of mutual trust and which is tightly regulated by local government legislative framework to prevent the pursuit of self-interest (Bosse & Phillips, 2016).

In the local governance context, the agency theory applies through measures that ensure that government officials and public servants act in the interests of the communities that they serve. To ensure that there are no deviations from the trust relationship between the principals (the people) and the agents (the public officials), the agency theory supports increased transparency, regular audits and accountability measures for the purposes of good governance (Rehman, 2021). Although some criticise the agency theory for its ‘distrust’ of the self-interest motivations of agents, this theory is relevant to this study because its emphasis on transparency, regular audits and accountability advances good governance. It achieves the very same tenets of good governance that have been explored in the literature review.

3.4.2 Core concepts of the agency theory

3.4.2.1 Information asymmetry

This concept refers to a situation in which an agent possesses more information and expertise about the subject matter than the principal (Raimo *et al.*, 2021). Generally, information asymmetry creates a knowledge imbalance between the principal and the agent (Liu & Ma, 2021). It explains the idea of the principal-agent relationship in the first place in that the principal would generally not involve an agent if they had the time and expertise to complete the task at hand. Hence, the principal leverages the expertise of the agent to carry out tasks and make decisions on behalf of the principal, but only on the condition that the agent is entirely transparent to the principal about the decisions that they are making and the motivations behind them (Davis *et al.*, 2021). In the good governance context, this emphasises the tenets of accountability, transparency and effectiveness.

In the public sector and within the municipal governance context, information asymmetry applies in that officials and managers of municipalities have access to detailed information that community members and oversight bodies such as the Auditor-General of South Africa lack. This imbalance hinders effective decision-making and accountability because the principals may not have a full understanding of local conditions, challenges and actions that must be taken (Raimo *et al.*, 2021). For instance, members of the community know that they need access to clean and potable drinking water, but they do not have the expertise or information on how such water reaches their taps. They also expect municipalities to arrange their financial affairs

to ensure sustainability in the provision of public goods and services such as water and refuse and waste collection, but they do not know how to prepare financial statements, make financial models to predict risks and how to manage municipal budgets. Since it is entirely impossible for all members of the community to participate in their government, they regularly vote in free and fair local government elections to elect officials who will act as their agents in governing the respective municipalities.

However, information asymmetry creates risks for principals such as local government. Such risks occur because of the propensity of human beings to pursue their own narrow interests at the expense of the broader interests of society (De Villiers & Hsiao, 2017). The pursuit of narrow self-interests is often manifested in embezzlement of public funds, corruption, and misuse of public resources such as municipal vehicles, among others (Dorasamy, 2021). In order to curb these abuses, the agency theory calls for transparency in the reporting of the activities of the agent (the municipal council and leadership) to enable the community to exert accountability (Gierlich-Joas, Hess & Neuburger, 2020). Processes such as internal audits, audits by the Auditor-General and disclosure of public information about municipal decisions enable citizens to verify the extent to which the decisions and actions of their agents reflect the pursuit of public interests and the fulfillment of the needs, expectations and preferences of the community (Raimo *et al.*, 2021).

3.4.2.2 Moral hazard

The agency theory recognizes that when agents have the opportunity to pursue their personal interests over those of the principal, they are likely to pursue them if there are no accountability measures to curb such pursuit (Cowden *et al.*, 2020). Hence, it calls for constant monitoring and verification of the decisions and actions of the agents to ensure that they align with the principal's interests (Moloi *et al.*, 2020). In the local government sphere, moral hazards occur when public officials prioritise their own needs, such as political gain, financial incentives and career advancement, over the collective welfare of the community that they must serve. To prevent this, there is a need for more transparency and for the establishment of sufficient checks and balances to ensure that no self-interests are pursued at the expense of community needs. Hence, preventing moral hazard requires good governance, which manifests when accountability mechanisms are established (Mathobo & Mathobo, 2024). These mechanisms may include independent oversight by State Institutions Supporting Constitutional Democracy

under the South African Constitution (such as the Auditor-General of South Africa), audits and strong legal and regulatory frameworks such as local government legislation outlined above.

3.4.2.3 *Adverse selection*

The concept of adverse selection refers to the phenomenon whereby principals lack sufficient information to assess the qualifications, intentions and suitability of their agents during the hiring process (Chrisidu-Budnik & Przedanska, 2017). When information like this is hidden, the principals may select agents who are not fully aligned with the goals of the principals and who may not possess the skills that are necessary to serve the principal effectively. In the local government context on which this study is based, adverse selection manifests when officials are not well-suited to serve the public interest or who lack the expertise to provide or oversee the provision of public goods and services to local communities (Ali, Mihm & Siga, 2018). The mismatch in this regard potentially undermines public trust in local government, erodes the legitimacy of municipalities, and reduces their effectiveness in providing quality public goods and services in the right quantities and at the times that they are required. Such deficiencies in service delivery do not align with the prescripts of good governance (Warliana & Abdullah, 2021).

3.4.3 Mitigation of agency problems

Given the acceptance of the risk posed by agents in the pursuit of self-interest, even to the detriment of principals, the agency theory recognizes incentive structures that remove or minimize the need for such self-interest (Liu & Lam, 2017). These include rewards for performance outcomes (Pepper & Gore, 2015). The argument in this regard is that a direct connection between the actions of the agent and their compensation can be made by the principal to encourage the agent to act in a way that prioritizes organizational goals over personal gain. Rewards such as bonuses reduce agency problems. Performance-based pay is particularly attractive as agents know that positive outcomes result in better pay (Panda & Leepsa, 2017).

In the local government context, linking rewards to performance outcomes in service delivery incentivizes officials to act in the public interest and ensure that they are accountable, transparency and efficient in service delivery. Although public finance regulations and the law may not permit other financial incentives beyond bonuses, local government officials can be encouraged with developmental opportunities, career advancement to provincial and national

structures, and public recognition, all of which enhance reelection prospects. Another mechanism for mitigating agency problems identified above is through enhancing oversight mechanisms, adopting measures for regulatory compliance, and designing contracts for officials to ensure that they meet targets for renewed contracts. This is particularly relevant for both elected and non-elected officials when it comes to service delivery, as failure to provide efficient service delivery may be used as a basis for removal. If one takes the local government elections as an opportunity for local communities to mitigate agency problems, then one can accept that the removal of a party from power for failing to provide efficient service delivery in a municipality is in itself a mitigation measure.

3.4.4 Connecting the agency theory to service delivery in local governance

As has been noted above, the agency theory provides a framework through which one can examine the relationship between citizens (who are the principals in the context of this study) and public officials and elected representatives (who are agents) in municipalities (Schillemans & Bjurstrøm, 2020). The idea behind the application of the agency theory to local government is that citizens delegate authority to local government officials through elections and thus expect them to act in the best interests of their communities in the effective management of resources and delivery of essential services (Schillemans & Bjurstrøm, 2020). To this end, the agency theory highlights issues of misalignment between the goals of public officials and the citizens who elected them to power due to the propensity of individuals to abuse power for their own narrow self-interests, even if the pursuit of such interests harms the public interest in efficient service delivery.

To mitigate instances of abuse of public resources and to deal with ineffective service delivery, the agency theory proposes designing the contracts of public sector employees and officials in a manner that ties them to service delivery milestones in order to enhance performance standards and exert penalties for failure to meet the minimum standards (Panda & Leepsa, 2017). This can be applied to service providers as well. For example, local governments can use performance-based contracts when outsourcing public services, like waste collection or road maintenance, to ensure that service providers meet established standards (Bendickson *et al.*, 2016). Among other things, this will foster a culture of responsiveness and accountability, thereby ensuring adherence to the tenets of good governance (Gennari, 2023).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the theoretical framework from which to understand the importance of adherence to good governance in ensuring efficient service delivery. It examined three applicable theories, namely, the good governance theory, the public value theory and the agency theory. The chapter first discussed the good governance theory, which is based on a framework that emphasises the establishment and maintenance of robust institutions whose structures effectively manage public affairs and resources in line with the tenets of good governance. The applicable tenets of good governance in this regard are built from the previous chapter and include accountability, transparency, participation, the rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness. The analysis revealed that the good governance theory can be leveraged to reform the service delivery approach of the Zululand District Municipality through practical strategies that are anchored on good governance.

They also revealed that the public value theory is relevant to the discourse on enhancing efficient service delivery through adherence to the tenets of good governance in the Zululand District Municipality. This is because the public value theory is based on the idea that people in a particular community are collectively entitled to certain goods and services from their government and that the provision of such goods and services must give them some ‘value’ in terms of the quantities, quality and timing of provision. The discussion revealed that efficient service delivery is one of the tenets of public value and that it doubles as one of the tenets of good governance. For this reason, this chapter concludes that the public value theory provides a framework for designing strategies to improve service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality.

The discussion of the agency theory in this chapter explains the relationship between two parties, who are the principal (community members served by the municipality) and the agents (municipal officials). This theoretical approach explains the relationship between government and the governed in general and in the Zululand District Municipality in particular. For the purposes of this study, which centres on good governance in the local government context in the Zululand District Municipality, the agency theory recognises the communities served by the municipality as the principal and the council and administration of the municipality as the agents. The following chapter presents the research methodology used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to investigate whether good governance can enhance service delivery efficiency in the Zululand District Municipality through a governance efficiency model. As such, this chapter discusses the research design, data collection methods and analytical strategies that were applied to respond to the main objective of understanding the relationship between tenets of good governance and service delivery outcomes. This chapter is structured as follows: the second section, which comes after the introduction, presents the research philosophy that informs the study, while the third section discusses the research paradigm that is selected for the study. The research approach is presented in the fourth section, while the case study research strategy is outlined in the fifth section.

The description of the study area, which covers the land mass of the Zululand District Municipality, is presented in the sixth section, which is followed by the description of the population used for the study. The participant selection criterion is analysed in the eighth section, and the ethical considerations are discussed in the ninth section. The data collection procedures and quality control mechanisms appear in the tenth and eleventh sections. The conclusion sums up the chapter and presents a glimpse into the data analysis that follows in the next chapter.

4.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy is a term used in research to refer to the fundamental belief system that influences the process of knowledge creation, interpretation, and comprehension within a study (Mbanaso, Abrahams & Okafor, 2023). Several fundamental presumptions influence the research philosophy (Mkansi & Acheampong, 2012). These include those concerning the nature of reality (ontology) and the means by which one obtains knowledge of that reality (epistemology) (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Positivism and interpretivism are the two most prominent models of research philosophy (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

Positivism is a philosophical school of thought that asserts reality is objective and can be understood using observable facts and quantitative measures (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023). Researchers who adhere to the positivist philosophy frequently employ deductive reasoning in

order to recognise patterns or laws that shed light on human behaviour (Park, Konge & Artino Jr, 2020). There is a correlation between positivism and research that requires statistical analysis and favours quantitative research methods (Zyphur & Pierides, 2020). Positivism prioritises objectivity, quantifiable data, and scientific rigour in order to make research dependable, reproducible and capable of delineating explicit cause-and-effect relationships (Patankar, 2024). The emphasis on quantification facilitates statistical analysis and generalisation across extensive populations.

However, emphasis on quantification and statistical analysis always fall short in interpreting social dynamics as it may oversimplify complex social phenomena by distilling them into quantifiable variables. The result is that it frequently overlooks subjective experiences and social contexts (Lim, 2024). Positivism overlooks significant issues in human behaviour and provokes ethical dilemmas in specific instances (Zyphur & Pierides, 2020). In this instance, understanding the complexities of service delivery inefficiencies in the Zululand District Municipality may be quantified. However, understanding personal experiences on how the municipality got into the position in which it fails to draw reasons which cannot be quantified. Although it is effective for objective analyses, it may not entirely encompass the complexity of human and social experiences, as evident in this inquiry.

On the other hand, interpretivism emphasises the subjective character of reality (Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022). According to Creswell & Poth (2016), social phenomena are both influenced by human experience and context. This suggests that to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a particular matter, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth investigation of individual perspectives. The interpretivist research approach typically uses qualitative methods and inductive reasoning – as its primary objective is the extraction of meaning from detailed descriptions of the experiences that individuals have lived through (Cuthbertson, Robb & Blair, 2020).

An interpretivist approach is used in this study to examine whether adherence to the tenets of good governance can enhance service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality through a governance efficiency model. This approach is chosen because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of governance challenges through in-depth interviews and case studies. This understanding enables a detailed investigation of context and human behaviour (Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014). Interpretivism presents many benefits, including insights into subjective experiences and the ability to capture diverse perspectives (Thorne, 2014). This renders it

suitable for comprehending intricate social phenomena such as good governance, political interference, and traditional influence in the Zululand District Municipality. It facilitates comprehensive qualitative data that examines the subtleties of human interactions and meanings within governance dynamics (Altheide & Johnson, 2011). Nevertheless, it has its own drawbacks, such as restricted generalisability owing to its context-specific characteristics and the possibility of researcher bias in data interpretation (Welch *et al.*, 2020). Notwithstanding these constraints, interpretivism is appropriate for this study as it emphasises the lived experiences of municipal officials and communities. As such, it is ideal for providing an in-depth understanding of good governance challenges.

4.3 Research paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm is the most appropriate research framework for examining how effective governance can improve service delivery through the governance efficiency model in the Zululand District Municipality. This paradigm is relevant and necessary because it prioritises the comprehension of social phenomena from the viewpoints of individuals who encounter them (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Governance and service delivery are linked and context-dependent - thus necessitating comprehension of how individuals within the municipality perceive and engage with governance frameworks (Alford & O'flynn, 2012). The interpretivist approach has been chosen because it enables the researcher to investigate the subjective meanings and interpretations that local government officials and stakeholders ascribe to their governance experiences rather than pursuing objective, quantifiable data (Ahmad, Aibinu & Stephan, 2021).

The significance of the interpretivist paradigm is reinforced by its congruence with qualitative research methods, which emphasise the examination of the contextual realities of participants (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This study employs semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Hendren *et al.* (2023) note that it enhances the interpretivist framework by allowing in-depth exploration of the experiences of participants with governance challenges, such as accountability, transparency, and public participation. This framework is particularly adept at the formulation of a governance efficiency model that is customised for the Zululand District Municipality. This is because emphasises the subjective perspectives of individuals directly engaged in governance and service provision. Examining the complex and yet detailed perspectives can yield insights and context-specific recommendations. It also renders the interpretivist paradigm the most justified and coherent approach for this research.

4.4 Research approach

The qualitative research approach is used in this study because it offers a comprehensive understanding of governance issues and their effects on service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. Qualitative research coupled with the interpretivist paradigm is effective for examining social phenomena such as governance, where subjective experiences, interpretations and meanings are crucial for comprehending the underlying dynamics (Hirose & Creswell, 2023). The qualitative method enables the researcher to obtain comprehensive insights from essential stakeholders who experience and work in the district or context under study (Alam, 2021). Thus, key municipal officials such as municipal managers, mayors, speakers and ward counsellors provided content-specific insights relevant to understanding the dynamics of governance and service delivery inefficiency in the Zululand District Municipality.

Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express their views on their own terms and enabled the researcher to probe more for clarity and understanding of abstract opinions. This approach enhances the qualitative method and is pertinent to this study as it facilitates the examination of complex governance challenges, including accountability, transparency, and responsiveness, and their impact on the effectiveness of service delivery (Levitt *et al.*, 2021). Developing a governance efficiency model is also supported and grounded in the lived experiences and contextual realities of the Zululand District Municipality. The qualitative approach emphasises subjective aspects, ensuring that findings capture the complexities of governance and service delivery, offering more meaningful and actionable recommendations for improvement (Robichau & Sandberg, 2022).

4.5 Case study research strategy

The study utilised a case study methodology. This method is effective in offering an in-depth, contextually rich examination of a phenomenon, in this case, the governance issues and service delivery challenges within the Zululand District Municipality. Schoch (2020a) emphasises that case studies hold significant value due to their capacity to explore complex phenomena within their authentic contexts. This methodology facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the governance mechanisms that are influencing service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. The case study method offers a significant advantage in its capacity to provide detailed insights into the local manifestations of governance inefficiencies. These insights may be overlooked by alternative methods such as surveys or quantitative approaches. As such, case

studies reveal the complex relationships between governance frameworks and service delivery performance. This means that they are capable of providing valuable qualitative data that aids in formulating practical solutions that can influence effective policies (Eakin & Gladstone, 2020).

Nonetheless, case studies present certain limitations concerning the challenges associated with generalisability (Welch *et al.*, 2020). Results derived from an individual case may not necessarily extend to all municipalities or regions. Moreover, an exclusive concentration on a single municipal district in the Zululand District Municipality can prove to be labour-intensive and may fail to encompass wider trends without additional investigation. In light of the challenges of case studies, the strategy was selected for this investigation because it can produce contextually rich insights. The study yields findings that are particularly pertinent and specifically adapted to the distinct governance and service delivery challenges faced by the Zululand District Municipality. Moreover, the insights derived from this case can enhance governance efficiency frameworks that could be tailored for other municipalities encountering analogous challenges.

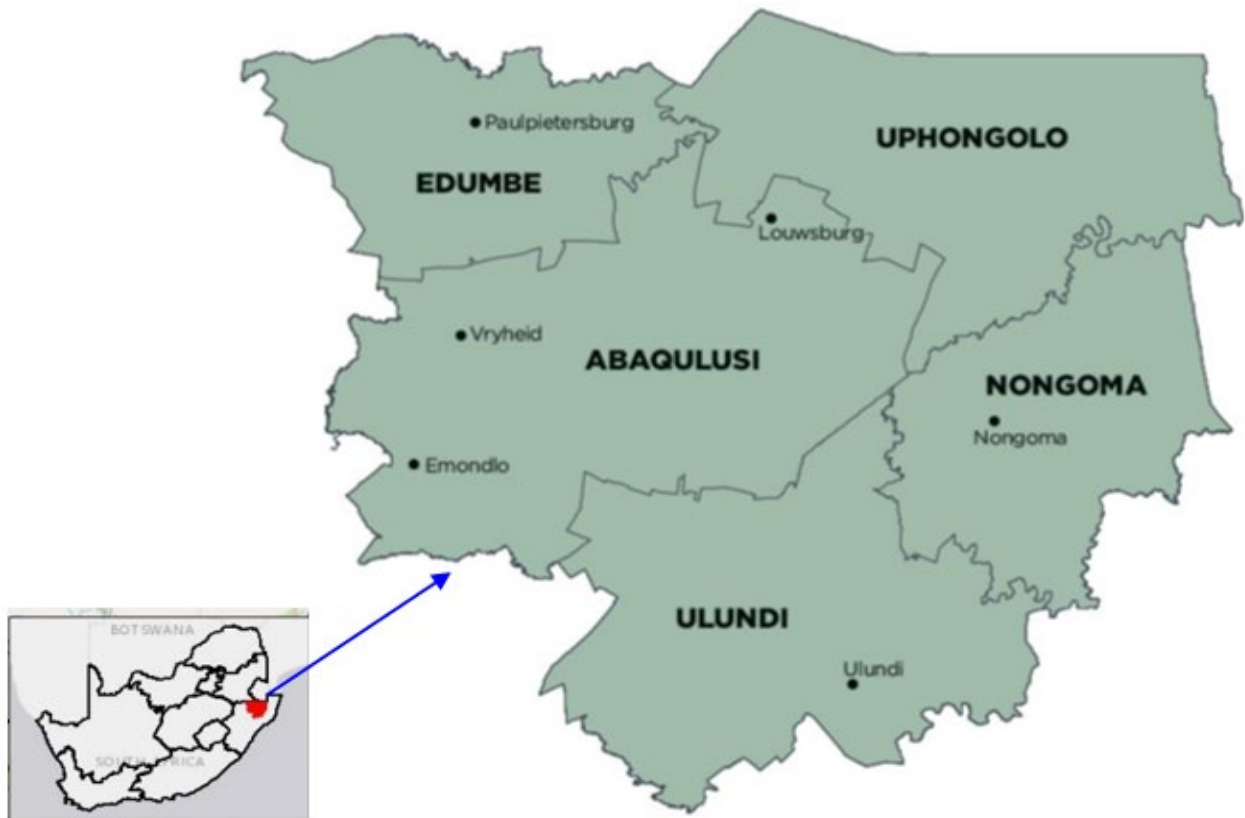
4.6 Description of the study area

The Zululand District Municipality is a rural, Category C municipality located in the northeastern region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. A Category C municipality is a district municipality tasked with the coordination of several local (Category B) municipalities within a designated region (Magagula *et al.*, 2022). It supervises regional planning and service provision and offers technical and financial assistance to local municipalities for infrastructure and governance (Mazele & Amoah, 2022). The Zululand District Municipality covers an area of 14,810 km² and has a population of 942 794. The area is predominantly rural, with 178 516 households (CoGTA, 2023). There are 2,034 child-headed households, of which 33.4% are led by women, which is a significant poverty determinant of the household (Sharaunga & Mudhara, 2021). Furthermore, the Zululand District Municipality is one of the municipalities in South Africa with the least piped water (35%) connected to households, flush toilets (36%) and weekly refuse collection standing at 38% (Sharaunga & Mudhara, 2021). These figures show its status when it comes to basic services, which could reflect why there are such consistent inefficiencies in service delivery.

The Zululand District Municipality's economic activity is predominantly influenced by agriculture, community services, and trade (CoGTA, 2023). However, economic disparities among municipalities pose additional governance challenges. The district consists of five Category B local municipalities, which are Abaqulusi, eDumbe, Nongoma, Ulundi, and uPhongolo (CoGTA, 2023).

Like many other rural district municipalities in South Africa, the Zululand District Municipality faces significant challenges in service delivery, especially regarding water, sanitation, and electricity access (Mamokhere, 2022), which is also recorded in the Zululand District Municipality reports. Mazele & Amoah (2022) indicate that inefficiencies in financial management and administrative problems further complicate rural municipalities' challenges. Numerous municipalities encounter service delivery backlogs, with Abaqulusi and eDumbe currently under provincial intervention as a result of governance failures (Mamokhere, 2022). South African municipalities undergo provincial intervention due to financial mismanagement, insufficient service delivery, political interference, corruption, and non-compliance with legislation, especially the MFMA (Mamokhere, 2022). Interventions pursuant to Section 139 of the Constitution seek to re-establish governance, ensure adherence to legal standards, and enhance service delivery to fulfil constitutional mandates and restore public confidence.

Figure 4-1: Local municipalities within the Zululand District Municipality



Source: CoGTA (2023)

4.7 Population of the study

The study population was comprised of local government officials and practitioners working in the Category C Zululand District Municipality and its Category B five local municipalities. A research population describes the entire group of individuals or entities pertinent to a particular study from which samples can be extracted (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). Defining the population is essential as it guarantees that the research focuses on the appropriate group, resulting in relevant, accurate, and generalisable findings that represent the broader population of interest (Levitt, 2021). The population of local government officials and practitioners was selected due to their direct involvement in governance and service delivery processes in the Zululand District Municipality. This means that they are well-positioned to offer insights into the challenges and inefficiencies in these domains. Local government officials are essential in executing governance policies, maintaining accountability, and meeting the service delivery requirements of their communities (Onyango, 2020). This corresponds with the objective of this study, which is to develop a governance efficiency model.

The selection of this population is essential for obtaining firsthand accounts of governance practices, such as transparency, public participation, and responsiveness, and understanding how these elements affect service delivery outcomes. According to Amadi (2023), populations directly involved in the studied phenomena can yield rich, relevant, and context-specific data, thereby enhancing the validity and applicability of research findings. The officials and practitioners represent diverse stakeholders, from senior officials to residents. This enables the study to examine various perspectives and identify potential areas for enhancing the district's governance and service delivery practices. Within the limits of the challenges of getting administrative personnel and political appointees to 'speak up' about the governance challenges bedevilling the Zululand District Municipality, the sample size represents the relevant population of the intended participants to the study. It is augmented by the candidate's positionality, as discussed in this chapter.

4.8 Participant selection criterion and recruitment

Seventeen participants took part in one-on-one interviews for this study. Eleven of the participants were male, and six were female. Only males and females volunteered to participate in the study. This was to ensure gender inclusion. Gender inclusion in this study was aimed at guaranteeing diverse perspectives, fostering equity, yielding more precise findings, and guiding policies that cater to the needs of all genders, resulting in more effective solutions (Hattery *et al.*, 2022). The sample comprised nine participants in managerial positions and three in the financial and audit portfolios. This was crucial to understanding the financial management conditions for all service delivery in the district and local municipality.

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants based on their expertise, experience and ability to offer comprehensive insights into governance practices concerning accountability, transparency, and public participation (Bakkalbasioglu, 2020). The selection criteria ensured that there were representatives from each local municipality (Category B) and the Category C District municipality (the Zululand District Municipality). This was to ensure that views were collected from all levels of management and residents to reduce bias. Officials and practitioners from the Zululand District Municipality were selected due to their direct involvement in governance and service delivery, rendering them essential informants on the challenges and inefficiencies in these domains (Andrade, 2021).

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial in research as they safeguard participants' rights and uphold the research process's integrity (Pietilä *et al.*, 2020). Ethical standards direct researchers to secure informed consent, maintain confidentiality, and prevent harm, guaranteeing that participants engage voluntarily and comprehend their role fully (Kang & Hwang, 2021). Ethical considerations augment trust between the researcher and participants, enhancing the study's credibility (Closa, 2021). Compliance with ethical guidelines mitigates misconduct, including fabrication, falsification and misrepresentation of data (Yeo-Teh & Tang, 2024). This compliance guarantees the validity and reliability of research findings (Chen *et al.*, 2024). Also, ethical research promotes transparency and accountability and enhances the acceptance and trust of results among stakeholders (Drolet *et al.*, 2023). In the absence of these considerations, research outcomes can be undermined.

4.1.1 Permission to conduct the study

One of the first issues to be attended to after the approval of the research for this study was obtaining permission to conduct the study. Formal authorisation to conduct this study was secured from all pertinent authorities before commencing data collection activities. This involved obtaining ethical clearance from the institutional review board at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to ensure rigorous compliance with ethical standards, especially concerning informed consent, confidentiality, and safeguarding the rights of the participants. The ethics clearance to this effect is attached as Appendix 3.

Furthermore, written authorisation was obtained from the Zululand District Municipality and relevant local municipalities, permitting the researcher direct access to municipal officials, community members, and other stakeholders engaged in governance and service provision. This is depicted in Appendix 2. The procedure for acquiring authorisation entailed engaging with municipal authorities to convey the research explicitly aims, methodologies, and prospective advantages for enhancing local governance and service provision. This cooperative method enhanced transparency and bolstered trust between the researcher and participants. The formal authorisation guaranteed that the study adhered to the necessary legal and ethical standards, conformed to municipal regulations and honoured local governance frameworks during data collection. Data collection comprises physical interviews with pivotal individuals to maximise the impact of the engagements. Prior consent was acquired, and the participant

verbally affirmed the authorization to record conversations before the commencement of the interviews.

4.1.2 Ethical considerations observed

The following considerations were observed in this study.

4.9.1.1 Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality

Anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality were meticulously upheld as ethical considerations in this study to safeguard participants' personal information. Anonymity denotes the practice of maintaining the confidentiality of participants' identities during the research process (Moriña, 2021). To accomplish this, the names of participants and other identifying details were either substituted with pseudonyms or entirely excluded. This guaranteed that responses remained untraceable to particular individuals, thereby protecting their identities, particularly given their positions and insecurity issues plaguing political and administrative officials of the Zululand District Municipality.

Anonymity is essential in research, as it promotes honest participation, enabling respondents to disclose sensitive information without fear of consequences (Dougherty, 2021). In upholding anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality, the study aligned with the Protection of Personal Information Act of 2013, which stipulates that personal information gathered for research must be processed legally, fairly, and transparently (Swales, 2021). The Protection of Personal Information Act mandates that participants should provide informed consent and must be informed about how their information is collected and how it will be used and safeguarded against unauthorised access or misuse. Personal information must be collected solely for defined research objectives, and researchers must maintain confidentiality, implement anonymisation when feasible, and protect data integrity (Adams *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, personal data must not be retained beyond necessity and should be securely disposed of post-usage (Thaldar & Townsend, 2021). Thus, privacy and confidentiality were rigorously upheld to safeguard the integrity of the personal information of participants.

Privacy pertains to participants' entitlement to regulate access to their personal data (Nissenbaum, 2020). In this study, all participants were thoroughly apprised of the purpose and scope of the study prior to their involvement. Their consent was secured, confirming their comprehension of the intended use of their data. Confidentiality guarantees that information shared by participants remains undisclosed to unauthorised individuals (Ibbett & Brittain,

2020). Data was securely stored, and access was limited. This was essential for establishing trust with participants, promoting candid responses, and maintaining the ethical standards of the research process.

4.9.1.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation in the study

Informed consent and voluntary participation were maintained in the study to uphold the ethical integrity of the research process. Participants received comprehensive information regarding the study's purpose, scope, and objectives prior to consenting to participate. This guaranteed that they possessed a comprehensive comprehension of the research and the expectations imposed upon them. Consent was acquired through written forms, wherein participants were appraised of their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any repercussions. This practice adheres to ethical standards that emphasise respect for autonomy and guarantee that individuals can make informed choices regarding their participation (Knott *et al.*, 2022).

Voluntary participation was underscored to guarantee that no participant felt compelled or pressured to engage in the study. Participation was voluntary, and measures were implemented to ensure that participants were informed of this. This was especially crucial in fostering an environment where participants felt secure and liberated to share their experiences and insights. Ensuring voluntary participation safeguards individual rights and enhances research credibility by ensuring that the collected data is authentic and unbiased (Karunarathna *et al.*, 2024).

4.9.1.3 Protection of participants from harm

Safeguarding participants from harm was a fundamental aspect of the ethical considerations in this study. After acknowledging the inherent risks associated with data collection, the researcher implemented intentional measures to safeguard participants from physical, psychological, or social harm. Participants were given comprehensive information regarding the study, its aims, and the specifics of their involvement. This allowed them to make an informed decision regarding their participation, thereby ensuring voluntary involvement. The study upheld the principle of confidentiality by anonymising responses and securely storing data to protect participants' identities and personal information. Safeguarding the privacy of participants was crucial for establishing trust and reducing potential harm, especially in a study concerning sensitive governance matters where political views and traditional connotations were emerging.

Moreover, the study noted non-coercive practices to guarantee that participants experienced no pressure or obligation to engage. Participants were informed of their right to disengage from the study at any time without repercussions. The researcher also instituted measures to safeguard the well-being of at-risk populations, acknowledging that certain participants might encounter repercussions for articulating dissenting opinions regarding governance and service provision. Consequently, pseudonyms and secure data management protocols were implemented to avert the risk of political or social retribution, illustrating a dedication to ethical research methodologies and participant protection.

4.9.1.4 No reciprocity offered

In this study, no reciprocity was provided. This decision was based on ethical considerations related to impartiality and bias reduction. Reciprocity in research typically entails offering participants incentives or benefits in return for their involvement (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2022). While this may improve participant recruitment and retention, it poses a risk of introducing bias or coercion, as individuals might engage not from a genuine interest in contributing to the study but due to the incentives provided (Afkinich & Blachman-Demner, 2020). This may compromise the integrity of the collected data, particularly in sensitive areas such as governance and service delivery, where participants' honest and voluntary opinions are essential (Kaplan, Kuhnt & Steinert, 2020).

The decision to avoid reciprocity ensured that participation was voluntary and not influenced by external rewards. This is consistent with fundamental ethical principles, including autonomy, integrity, and non-coercion (Li, Gurrin & Mol, 2022). The researcher did not provide compensation to ensure that the motivations of participants were based solely on their interest in the research objectives, which helped maintain the validity of the findings.

4.9.1.5 Respect for equity and justice

In conducting this study, equity and justice were essential ethical considerations to ensure fairness and inclusivity in the research process. These principles are upheld by guaranteeing that all participants, irrespective of socio-economic background, gender, or municipal position, receive equal treatment and opportunities to express their experiences and perspectives (Vetter *et al.*, 2022). The recruitment process aimed to guarantee diverse stakeholder representation, encompassing municipal officials, local leaders, and community members. This approach ensured that no group was unjustly excluded, allowing the findings to represent diverse

perspectives, thereby enhancing the understanding of governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality.

Respect for equity and justice was maintained by ensuring that power dynamics within the municipality did not affect the research process. Participants were assured that their contributions would be respected, and confidentiality was upheld to mitigate any potential repercussions from sharing critical insights. Participants were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring negative consequences. The study maintained ethical standards, ensuring that the research process was fair, transparent, and dedicated to advancing social justice and accountability within the municipality.

4.1.3 Positionality

The researcher's role as an internal technocrat with over a decade of experience in the South African local government sphere provided substantial benefits for the study. This comprehensive background provided a profound comprehension of governance frameworks, service delivery obstacles, and internal operations. It also facilitated more objective data collection and enhanced access to high-profile municipal officials. The researcher's enduring relationships and trust within the municipality fostered open participation, enabling respondents to disclose sensitive and entrenched governance issues comfortably. Bukamal (2022) notes the mutual comprehension of the local context in research, giving profound views from participants through researchers probing deeply. In this case, it allowed participants to express themselves openly, confident that the researcher could comprehend the complexities they encountered, thereby significantly enriching the authenticity and depth of the collected data, as noted.

The researcher utilised critical reflexivity throughout the study to ensure objectivity and mitigate personal bias. This involved consistently interrogating personal assumptions and ensuring the research was anchored in the participants' viewpoints rather than the researcher's biases (Folkes, 2023). Through ongoing reflection on their positionality and the application of meticulous analysis, the researcher guaranteed that the findings authentically represented the respondents' experiences and insights, untainted by personal biases (Olmos-Vega *et al.*, 2023). This reflexive methodology preserved the objectivity and credibility of the research, thereby

enhancing a balanced and trustworthy representation of governance dynamics in the Zululand District.

4.10 Data collection procedures

This study utilised data from two primary sources: primary data and secondary data. Research data may be gathered from various forms of evidence, thereby offering a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Qiu *et al.*, 2021). Integrating data from multiple sources improves the depth and validity of the findings, facilitating triangulation that bolsters the credibility and reliability of the study's results (Fusch, Fusch & Ness, 2018). The utilisation of multiple sources of evidence addresses the limitations inherent in relying on a single data type, allowing the researcher to encompass both broad theoretical perspectives and specific empirical insights.

4.1.4 Data collection tools

Secondary data collection tools used in this study included document analysis, online databases such as Google Scholar, South African government websites, library catalogues, and media analysis. A semi-structured interview guide was used for primary data and is attached to the study as Appendix 1. These are further explained below.

4.1.5 The interview guide

The interview guide was essential for collecting primary data and ensuring that the research objectives were thoroughly addressed. The study aimed to collect comprehensive qualitative data, concentrating on the fundamental aspects of governance and service delivery within the Zululand District Municipality. The guide facilitated organised discussions with 17 selected municipal stakeholders to ensure alignment with the study's objectives. Incorporating open-ended and probing questions allowed for the flexibility to investigate complex themes, including good governance frameworks and service delivery challenges, and helped formulate an ideal governance efficiency model. The systematic approach ensured that the interviews produced consistent and relevant data among participants.

The design of the interview guide was closely aligned with the research objectives and questions. The study included questions that examined the theoretical framework for good governance in municipalities (Objective 1), enabling participants to express their views on the impact of governance practices on service delivery enhancement. Additional enquiries sought

to evaluate the challenges to governance within the municipality (Objective 2), concentrating on matters such as financial mismanagement, accountability, and coordination between local and district authorities. Participants were also queried regarding their perspectives on how adherence to governance principles (Objective 3) might enhance service delivery, along with their recommendations for an ideal model for the municipality (Objective 4). The alignment of the guide with the research objectives facilitated a coherent approach to data collection.

The researcher used probing techniques during the interviews to better understand participants' experiences and perspectives. For example, when participants recognised political interference as a challenge, follow-up questions like "Can you provide an example of how political interests have influenced service delivery in your municipality?" were employed to elicit more detailed responses. In a similar vein, when participants addressed adherence to governance principles, the researcher encouraged deeper inquiry by enquiring, "Based on your experience, what measures could enhance accountability and transparency within your municipality?" The probing questions enabled participants to offer specific examples and suggestions, thereby enhancing the qualitative data and facilitating a comprehensive response to the research questions.

4.1.6 Primary data

Primary data were obtained via semi-structured interviews with 17 local government officials and practitioners in the Zululand District Municipality. Semi-structured interviews are advantageous for qualitative research due to their flexibility, allowing interviewers to seek more detailed responses and enabling participants to articulate their experiences in their own terms (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). This method was selected because it provides a detailed understanding of the particular governance inefficiencies and challenges the municipality encounters. The integration of primary and secondary data collection was chosen to provide a comprehensive examination of the research issue, as secondary sources highlight existing literature gaps, while primary data contribute new, context-specific insights (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

4.1.7 Secondary Data

This research employed secondary data sources to enhance the context and substantiate the primary data gathered. Secondary data, as noted by Sharp & Munly (2022), denotes publicly available information that researchers and other stakeholders can utilise to deepen their

comprehension of the research topic. The study examined the Zululand District Municipality's annual reports between 2015 and 2024 to assess governance trends, service delivery issues, and operational efficiency. The study records governance patterns, changes, and developments over time. This historical context helped to explain governance evolution and how past decisions, policies, and interventions have affected service delivery (Meuleman, 2021). Analysing these reports ensured that the study's findings were supported by empirical data, boosting their credibility and validity. Selecting reports from 2015 to 2023 gave the researcher deep insights into the governance performance and how it has been going over the years. This helped to give a much more objective conclusion, which was further cemented by interviewing staff that has served for more than five years in the municipalities.

Other sources were used together with the annual reports. The secondary data sources were from peer-reviewed articles from reputable journals, primarily those accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Reports from Statistics South Africa, the South African Local Government Association, the Department of Corporate Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), and the Auditor-General of South Africa provided valuable information to help the researcher understand the status of the Zululand District Municipality municipal governance. This data, policy insights, and performance assessment are helpful for governance and service delivery in the country (Katrina & Wantchekon, 2020). The study used these documents to evaluate governance practices objectively using credible frameworks and findings. This validates the research by aligning it with standards and providing a solid foundation for the Zululand District Municipality governance efficiency analysis.

4.11 Data quality control

In qualitative research, data quality control is essential for authenticating the validity and reliability of the findings of the study to ensure that results are credible, robust, and impartial (Mays & Pope, 2020). Quantitative research typically depends on numerical metrics, whereas qualitative research prioritises the richness and depth of data to elucidate complex social phenomena (Lim, 2024). To maintain trustworthiness, the researcher, acting as the principal instrument for data collection, employed essential strategies to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings. These strategies were based on the foundational research of Lincoln & Guba (1985), which emphasises four essential components: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. All of these elements are crucial for guaranteeing that the data accurately represents the participants' experiences and can be reliably utilised in wider

contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study seeks to generate reliable and relevant findings to analogous contexts by incorporating these elements into the research design.

4.1.8 Credibility

The study ensured credibility through the application of multiple established qualitative research strategies. Triangulation was employed to validate findings by utilising various data sources, such as semi-structured interviews and secondary data from municipal reports, national government reports, and peer-reviewed articles on local governance and efficient service delivery. This approach helped reduce bias and improve trustworthiness, as postulated by Fusch, Fusch & Ness (2018). According to Levitt *et al.* (2021), the research value of leveraging the researcher's deep contextual knowledge, trust with participants, and access to nuanced insights leads to more authentic and accurate data collection.

Thus, the researcher's extended involvement as municipal personnel over a decade in various portfolios yielded significant insights into governance issues, enhancing both authenticity and accuracy. Member checking, a procedure wherein participants verify transcript accuracy and offer feedback, was used to enhance credibility (Birt *et al.*, 2016). This technique improved credibility, reduced researcher bias, and fostered trust between the researcher and participants. Furthermore, Bettez (2015) notes the importance of applying reflexivity through a reflective journal to reduce personal biases. The researcher further applied this technique to remain anchored in participants' perspectives. This robust approach to ensure credibility was further enhanced by peer debriefing, where the researcher allowed external reviewers to examine the research methodology and findings and gave critical comments, thereby increasing objectivity and trust in the results.

4.1.9 Dependability

Dependability was achieved by carefully applying various qualitative methodologies, including interviews and consultation with municipal audit reports. The researcher upheld an audit trail, meticulously recording decisions and procedures during data collection and analysis, enhancing transparency and enabling future researchers to replicate the study under analogous conditions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation was utilised by amalgamating various data sources, such as interviews, secondary data, and thematic analysis through Atlas.ti. Thus, cross-validating results reduce discrepancies and improve reliability (Fusch, Fusch & Ness, 2018). The study highlighted reflexivity. This reduced biases and ensured that the findings accurately

reflected the participants' experiences rather than being swayed by personal assumptions (Olmos-Vega *et al.*, 2023). These strategies collectively ensured the research's consistency, rigour, and reliability, enhancing the study's capacity to produce trustworthy insights into governance challenges and their effects on service delivery.

4.1.10 Transferability

Transferability was secured by employing critical descriptions and the case study methodology. This comprehensive contextualisation gives readers an essential background on governance challenges, stakeholders, and local governance structures. The study provided a framework for comprehending the applicability of its findings to other municipalities encountering analogous governance challenges by meticulously detailing the district's distinctive governance context and obstacles (Levitt *et al.*, 2021). The researcher employed purposive sampling to identify essential municipal officials and stakeholders whose experiences were pertinent to governance processes, ensuring that the insights gathered were rooted in local realities. This intentional selection enhances the probability that results are pertinent to similar contexts, consistent with qualitative research's focus on applicability rather than generalisability (Priya, 2021). This enables future researchers and practitioners to ascertain if the findings can guide governance reforms in other municipalities. The emphasis on a singular Zululand District Municipality exhibiting governance inefficiencies, substantiated by detailed descriptions, augments transferability by providing a framework that can be examined in alternative rural municipal settings (Schoch, 2020b).

4.1.11 Confirmability

Using interviews and secondary literature, such as municipal reports, for triangulation strengthened the confirmability of the study, as it is not rooted in the researcher's experience or biases. By comparing perspectives, this method reduced bias and confirmed findings (Fusch, Fusch & Ness, 2018). The researcher's reflexive journaling helped maintain awareness of personal assumptions, ensuring that data interpretation aligned with participants' perspectives rather than preconceptions (Olmos-Vega *et al.*, 2023). By inviting colleagues to review the emerging themes and conclusions and provide constructive feedback to eliminate subjective influences, peer debriefing increased confirmability.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter described the research methodology used to examine governance and service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. The chapter highlighted that the study of the interpretivist paradigm emphasises understanding governance from the perspective of those directly involved. The chapter presented a qualitative approach to capture participants' detailed, subjective experiences, which is necessary to create district-specific governance models. The chapter also shows that the methodological rigour came from semi-structured interviews, case study design, and secondary data analysis. Purposive sampling of critical stakeholders like municipal officials ensured diverse perspectives and expertise, enriching the depth and relevance of the results. Ethical research principles, such as informed consent and participant confidentiality, met the POPI Act. Validity and reliability were improved by emphasising and upholding data quality control measures such as credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Integrating primary and secondary data sources strengthened the research by providing a comprehensive view of district governance dynamics and service delivery challenges. This chapter offered a solid foundation for studying governance inefficiencies and their effects and developing a governance efficiency model that is specific to the Zululand District Municipality. The following chapter outlines the data analysis and presents findings.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative data analysis from interviews with municipal officials as well as secondary data derived from the annual reports of the Zululand District Municipality. The analysis is based on the use of Atlas.ti software, which was handy in systematically organising and interpreting the results. The analysis corresponds with the research objectives by scrutinising governance frameworks, audit results, financial difficulties, political interference, and public engagement, among others, with the ultimate aim of proposing a governance efficiency model for the Zululand District Municipality. Principal themes include the ramifications of financial mismanagement and irregular expenditures, political motivations influencing service delivery, and deficiencies in accountability and transparency. The results are corroborated with secondary sources, including audit reports and financial recovery plans, to ensure thoroughness and dependability.

The question answered in this chapter is: how do governance practices and financial management frameworks affect service delivery outcomes in the Zululand District Municipality, and what enhancements are necessary to improve efficiency? The analysis uses data presentation and thematic coding and identifies governance impediments - including procurement irregularities and leadership deficiencies – in examining solutions suggested by participants. The insights acquired guided the formulation of a governance efficiency model to synchronise budgeting, service delivery, and leadership accountability, ensuring sustainable development and reinstating public trust within the municipality.

This chapter is structured as follows: the second section, which follows this introduction, outlines the analysis process conducted through the Atlas.ti software and covers issues such as thematic coding procedures and triangulation. The third section outlines the demographic profiles of the participants. The fourth section presents an overview of the governance structures and constitutive municipalities that comprise the Zululand District Municipality. The fifth chapter focusses on the analysis of the results pertaining to challenges to good governance and efficiency in service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. This paves the way for the discussion of good governance practices and their contribution to service delivery in the

Zululand District Municipality. The seventh section presents the proposed governance efficiency model for the Zululand District Municipality. The last section summarises the findings from the data analysis and concludes the chapter.

5.2 Outline of the analysis process

The data collected for this study was analysed using a thematic approach through the Atlas.ti software. This software leverages machine learning and artificial intelligence to facilitate the identification, categorisation and coding of common themes that help to answer the research questions (Gupta, 2024). It is one of the most renowned modern research tools (Mohammad *et al.*, 2023). The analysis process entailed thematic coding of primary interview transcripts and triangulation with secondary data (reports, financial documents, and municipal records) to furnish a comprehensive overview of governance practices in the Zululand District Municipality. The results were also linked to the good governance theoretical framework delineated in Chapters 2 and 3, which specify tenets of good governance and principles such as accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and community participation.

5.1.1 Thematic coding procedure utilising Atlas.ti

The annual reports of the Zululand District Municipality from 2015 to 2023 and the results of the 17 interviews conducted were uploaded on Atlas.ti for analysis. The interview data were imported into Atlas.ti, and a systematic line-by-line coding process was utilised to identify recurring themes consistent with the theoretical framework of good governance. The systematic approach enabled the researcher to categorise responses into significant classifications grounded in accountability, transparency, public participation, and service delivery efficiency. Participants expressed concerns regarding financial mismanagement and the lack of adequate monitoring systems, underscoring accountability and the importance of oversight. Transparency issues arose from reports of delayed and inaccurate reporting, which contributed to public mistrust. Inconsistent public participation emerged as a recurring theme, indicating limited community engagement in the decision-making processes of the Zululand District Municipality. Service delivery deficiencies were apparent in persistent water provision, sanitation, and waste management challenges. This thematic approach ensured alignment between the research objectives and findings, allowing the study to effectively address research questions concerning governance challenges, public involvement, and solutions for improving service delivery.

Segments of the interview responses were categorised under the themes “political interference,” “skills shortages,” and “financial mismanagement,” which directly illustrate good governance challenges affecting service delivery. Atlas.ti enabled the cross-referencing of codes, uncovering patterns such as postponed project execution attributable to political instability and inadequate coordination between municipal departments and traditional authorities. The cross-referencing provided that the data was deeply rooted and highlighted the interconnectedness of specific themes, revealing more profound insights into how governance and service delivery concepts are related within the dataset.

5.1.2 Triangulation

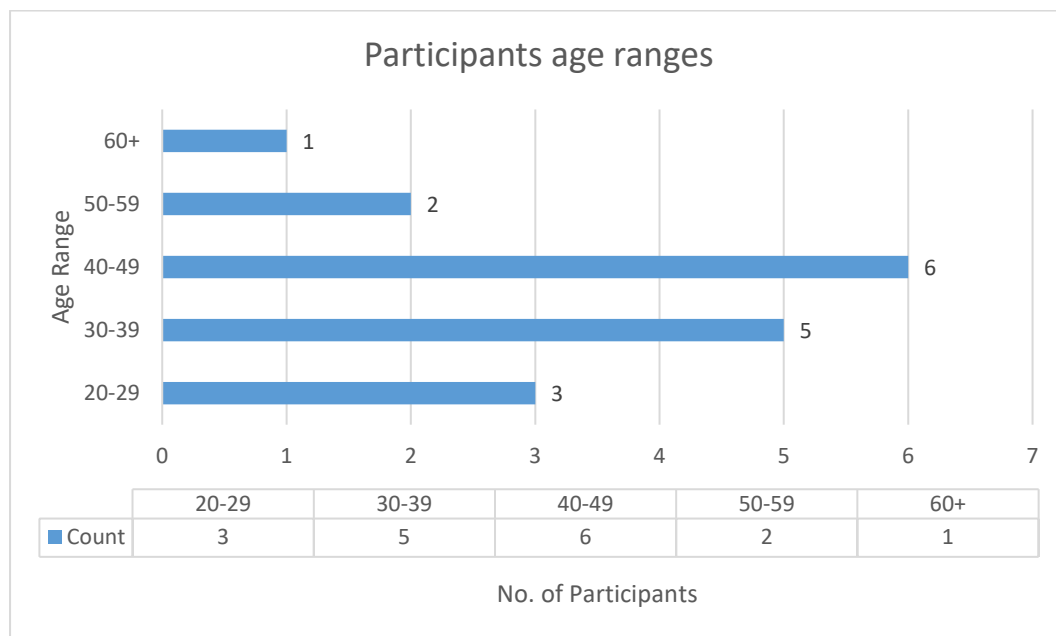
Secondary data sources, such as annual reports and financial recovery plans from the Zululand District Municipality, supported the interview findings, enhancing the research’s reliability. Supplementary data, including audit results from the Auditor-General of South Africa, underscored persistent governance challenges that corresponded with participants’ apprehensions regarding financial mismanagement and accountability failures. Relevant legislative frameworks, particularly the Municipal Finance Management Act, contextualise these governance issues within the legal expectations for municipal operations. The primary and secondary data triangulation validated the research findings by demonstrating a strong correlation between governance failures identified through interviews and the municipality’s documented financial and operational challenges. The lack of accountability identified by participants corresponded with the municipality’s failure to address persistent audit findings, as detailed in its Financial Recovery Plan (2022). The convergence of data sources emphasised the systemic characteristics of governance issues and illustrated the municipality’s challenges in fulfilling regulatory and service delivery responsibilities.

5.3 Demographic of participants

The sample comprised ten males (58.82%) and seven females (41.18%). This offers an equitable representation of viewpoints, featuring an approximate 60-40 gender distribution, thereby ensuring the fair inclusion of both male and female voices. This ratio is crucial for deriving insights that represent participants’ varied experiences in the Zululand District Municipality, particularly in comprehending governance and service delivery issues. Incorporating both genders enabled a more inclusive and representative examination of the governance issues, thereby enhancing the generalisability and accuracy of the findings about the actual population demographics of the region.

Study participants were age distribution, as shown in Figure 5.2. Their job titles in Figure 5.3 reflected a well-balanced and representative sample for understanding governance and service delivery issues within the Zululand District Municipality. The age distribution ensured perspectives from different career stages, with the 40-49 age group being the largest, followed by 30-39, suggesting most participants were in their prime professional years and occupying key governance roles. Younger participants aged 20-29 bring fresh perspectives, while those aged 50-59 and 60+ contributed significant experience, offering insights across municipal governance. This diversity in age is crucial for comprehending the range of governance challenges the municipality faces.

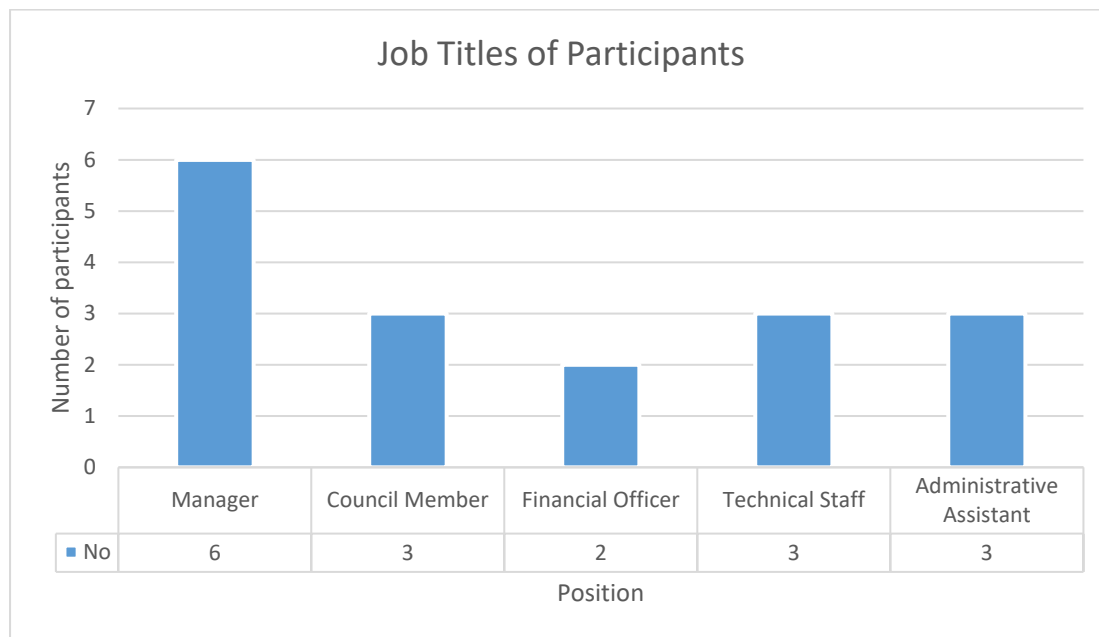
Figure 5-1: Participants’ age distribution



Source: Author’s construct (2024)

In terms of job roles, the largest group of participants were managers (6), followed by council members, technical staff, administrative assistants (3 each), and financial officers (2). This variety ensured that leadership, policy formulation, operational execution, and financial governance were all represented. Managers provide high-level strategic insights, while council members contribute to policymaking. Technical staff and financial officers offer practical and operational perspectives, and administrative assistants represent the support structure, ensuring both decision-makers and implementers are included. This distribution enriches the study, providing a holistic view of the municipality’s governance structures and service delivery.

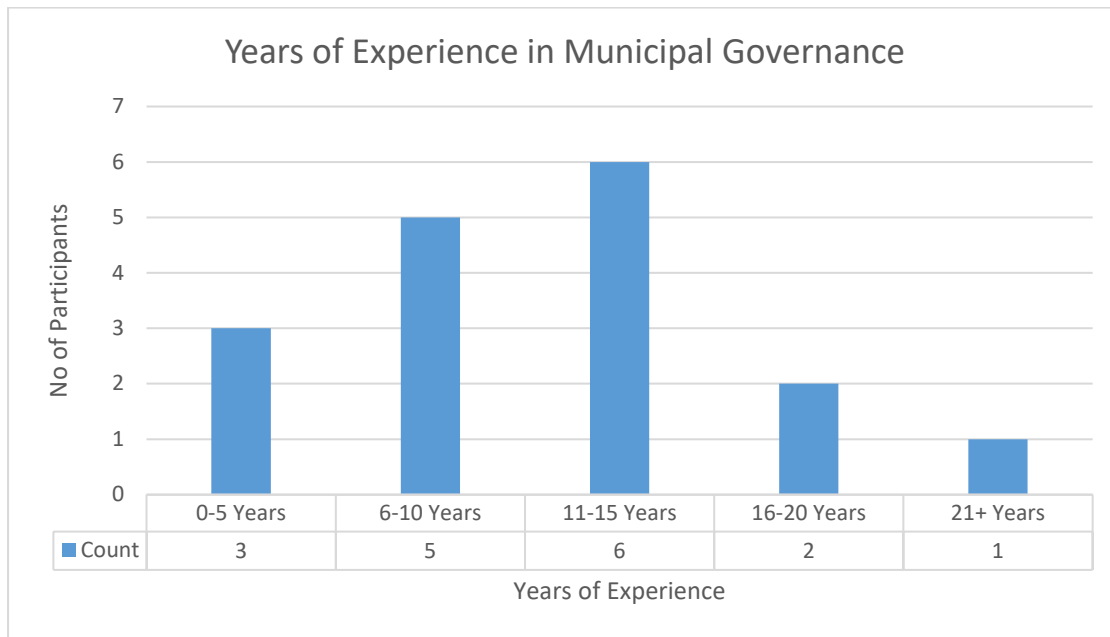
Figure 5-2: Job positions for participants



Source: Author’s construct, 2024

Figure 5.4 shows the years of experience in municipal governance among the study participants. Most participants possess 11-15 years of experience (6 participants), followed by five participants with 6-10 years of experience. There are three participants with 0-5 years of experience, two with 16-20 years of experience, and one with more than 21 years of experience. This distribution is equitable and representative, encompassing a broad spectrum of experience levels and ensuring the inclusion of junior and senior staff in the study. The significant presence of individuals with 6-15 years of experience is noteworthy, as these professionals are typically in mid-career stages, actively participating in governance processes and decision-making. The inclusion of participants with over 20 years of experience enhances the depth and context of the insights, while newer participants provide fresh perspectives. This variety guarantees a thorough understanding of governance challenges and service delivery from seasoned professionals and newcomers to municipal governance.

Figure 5-3: Participants years of experience in municipal governance



Source: Author’s construct, 2024

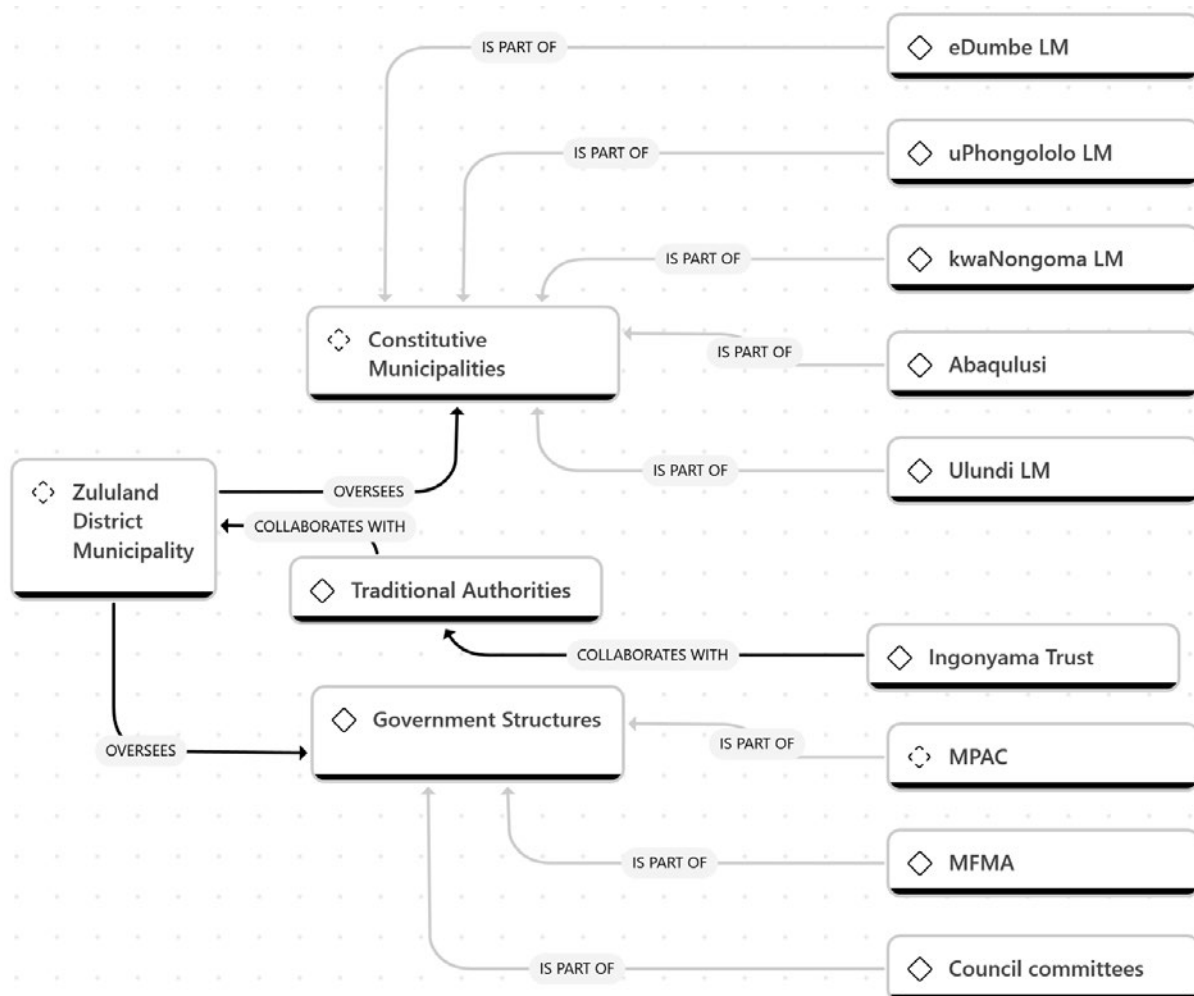
5.4 Overview of governance structures and constitutive municipalities in the Zululand District Municipality

Figure 5.5 comprehensively depicts the governance frameworks within the Zululand District Municipality, illustrating its oversight and collaboration with diverse entities to facilitate governance and service provision throughout the district. The municipality oversees five local municipalities: eDumbe, uPhongolo, kwaNongoma, Abaqulusi, and Ulundi, constituting the essence of its duties. Alongside these municipalities, the Zululand District Municipality collaborates closely with traditional authorities, including the Ingonyama Trust, which is essential for administering rural regions where traditional leaders oversee land and community relations.

The figure illustrates internal governance structures such as the MPAC and compliance with the MFMA, which are essential for financial oversight, accountability, and adherence to regulatory frameworks. Council committees are crucial to the governance framework, offering enhanced oversight and involvement in decision-making procedures. This network emphasises the interdependence of governance entities, illustrating the collaboration necessary among the district, local municipalities, and traditional authorities to achieve effective governance, coordination, and service delivery. It illustrates the hierarchical framework of governance in

the district, highlighting the significance of oversight, collaboration, and accountability at all tiers.

Figure 5-4: Overview of the network of governance structures and constitutive municipalities in the Zululand District Municipality



Source: Author’s construct (2024)

The Zululand District Municipality functions within various governance frameworks to enhance accountability, transparency, and efficiency in public administration. The MFMA is a crucial framework regulating municipalities’ financial management, promoting fiscal discipline, regular audits, and accountability for public funds. The district employs oversight committees, including the MPAC, to examine expenditures and improve financial governance. The frameworks are designed to establish a governance environment consistent with South African municipal legislation and promote effective service delivery.

The district municipality comprises various governance bodies and committees, including a council of representatives from local municipalities and standing committees tasked with overseeing essential sectors such as finance, infrastructure, and community services. The MPAC is vital in overseeing financial operations and managing irregular expenditures, as the MFMA requires. The governance structure incorporates traditional authorities, including the Ingonyama Trust Board, which manages substantial land areas and impacts municipal planning, particularly in rural regions. Additionally, the relationship between the district and local municipalities is essential, as the Zululand District offers regional coordination, bulk water, and waste services to its five constituent local municipalities Abaqulusi, eDumbe, Nongoma, uPhongolo, and Ulundi. These municipalities are presented in detail below.

5.4.1 Abaqulusi Local Municipality

This local municipality is the largest in the Zululand District Municipality, making up a third of its area. Towns such as Louwsburg and Vryheid are located in Abaqulusi Local Municipality and have a range of economic activities such as wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, finance, agriculture and forestry, transport and community services, all of which depend on efficient service delivery. This municipality has been experiencing service delivery challenges to the extent that it is unable to fulfil some of its constitutional duties, leading the provincial government of KwaZulu-Natal to place it under provincial administration as provided in the Constitution of the Republic.

The service delivery challenges and failures to fulfil constitutional obligations by Abaqulusi Local Municipality have been ongoing for a long time and date back to the 2011/2012 financial year. According to the (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2014):

However, there were some challenges which remained unresolved, these included the regression from an unqualified audit opinion to a disclaimer audit opinion for the 2011/12 financial year; governance challenges in relation to compliance with laws and regulations. On that basis, [the provincial government] resolved to extend the intervention until 30 September 2014. The intervention was further extended from 10 September 2014 until 31 March 2015 due to outstanding key intervention priority areas being prevalent.

The regression from an unqualified audit opinion to a disclaimer highlights that Abaqulusi Local Municipality faced “significant deficiencies in financial management, performance management and compliance with laws and regulations which reflected a clear failure to fulfil executive obligations” (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2014). In addition to this, Abaqulusi Local Municipality failed to raise and correctly account for interest on arrears, contrary to the provisions of Section 64(2)(g) of the MFMA. To make matters worse, the municipality’s annual report failed to comply with legislative provisions and refused to receive support from the provincial department (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2014). Evidently, good governance was not observed in this municipality.

In 2013, the provincial government placed the municipality under intervention due to failure to exercise executive functions (CoGTA, 2019). This intervention was terminated in January 2015 after some progress on the implementation of a recovery plan. However, the executive failures of the municipality resurfaced in the aftermath of the 2016 Local Government Elections, which resulted in a hung council. Due to this political instability, the municipality began to face “serious governance, institutional, financial and service delivery challenges.” (CoGTA, 2019), which worsened due to its failure to appoint relevant persons to fulfil its mandate. The governance challenges affecting Abaqulusi Local Municipality continued until February 2019, when the provincial government issued a new intervention and cited many failures to adhere to the prescripts of good governance. One of the managers who participated in the study provided evidence of a letter to Abaqulusi Local Municipality, Dube-Ncube (2019), which outlined the following reasons for the provincial intervention:

- 1.1 The holding of an illegal meeting on 22 January 2019 and the subsequent failure by the Speaker and Council to remedy the situation despite advice from COGTA;*
- 1.2 The implementation of Illegal decisions taken at the above unlawful meeting and the risk of exposure to serious financial and governance obligations*
- 1.3 The apparent failure by the Abaqulusi Municipal Council to observe the rule of law as prescribed and in compliance with Item 2A of Schedule 1 of the Local Government; Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000;*
- 1.4 The failure by the municipality to Implement a Tariff Policy as required in section 74 of the Municipal Systems Act.*

- 1.5 The failure by the Abaqulusi council to exercise oversight on management with particular reference to revenue collection and management of grants.*
- 1.6 The continued insistence by the municipality to act beyond the scope of powers assigned to it by the legislative framework by performing and incurring costs for the water function, without a written agreement with the Water Services Authority being the Zululand District Municipality.*
- 1.7 The provision of security services to certain members of the Council and the administration without threat and risks assessment reports as prescribed.*
- 1.8 The failure to take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised expenditure of R108.46 million and irregular expenditure of R41.86 million in accordance with section 62 (1) (d) of the MFMA.*
- 1.9 The failure by the Council to investigate the unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure in accordance with section 32 (2) (a) and (b) of the MFMA.*
- 1.10 The failure by the municipal council to investigate the appointment of the Director of Community Services and to lodge a criminal complaint with the SAPS in that regard; and*
- 1.11 The failure by the municipal council to investigate nepotism allegations against the Speaker of Council as prescribed.*

These transgressions illustrate varying degrees of failure to adhere to good governance. First, they point to a failure to respect the rule of law, which requires all actions and decisions of municipalities to comply with the law and its procedural requirements. The holding of an illegal meeting on 22 January 2019, the implementation of illegal decisions taken at that unlawful municipality and the failure of the Abaqulusi Local Municipality Council to comply with the Municipal Systems Act are examples of failure to respect the rule of law, which is a vital tenet of good governance as discussed in section 2.3.3.

Second, the failures outlined in the notice of intervention point to a lack of accountability in that they illustrate the propensity of municipal official to be unanswerable for their decisions and actions. This unaccountability is exemplified by the failure of the Abaqulusi Local

Municipality's council to exercise oversight on the management of revenue collection and grants. This failure to exercise proper oversight shows financial mismanagement, which is itself an example of failure to adhere to good governance. The failure to investigate unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure further amplifies the breach of accountability obligations. The failure to investigate the appointment of the Director of Community Services and lodge a criminal complaint with the South African Police Service is another manifestation of the council's lack of accountability.

Third, the above failures illustrate the failure to adhere to good governance by breaching the transparency obligations of Abaqulusi Local Municipality. Two examples illustrate this. The first concerns providing security services to council members without threat and risk assessments. Such action points to using municipal funds without justifiable and disclosed reasons. The second concerns the failure to investigate allegations of nepotism against the Speaker of the Council. This omission undermines transparency, preventing scrutiny and accountability within the decision-making process.

The fourth principle of good governance breached by the failures of Abaqulusi Local Municipality, which is outlined in the written notice of intervention above, is responsiveness, which, as seen in the previous chapter, is directly linked to accountability. In this regard, the municipality failed at responsiveness by failing to implement a tariff policy per the prescripts of Section 74 of the Municipal Act, thus demonstrating a lack of responsiveness to legislative requirements on handling the financial affairs of a municipality. Also, the insistence of the municipality's council on performing functions beyond its legislative mandate, as demonstrated by the provision of water without an agreement with the water authority, reflects a profound disregard for responsiveness to both legislative requirements and service delivery standards. This failure can be linked to a nepotistic approach to doing things, as the municipality felt entitled to bring whomever it wanted into its administrative ranks. Therefore, one cannot expect individuals brought through nepotism to adhere to fairness and equity, as both are linked to responsiveness.

5.4.2 EDumbe Local Municipality

EDumbe is the smallest of the five municipalities at 1,943 km², accounting for 13% of its geographical area of the Zululand District Municipality (CoGTA (2023:8)). The location of the head office is in Paulpietersburg, which is 50km north of Vryheid and 59km south of Mkhondo

(previously Piet Retief). The municipal area of jurisdiction is demarcated into eight wards that are predominantly rural in nature. Key drivers of the economy are agriculture, forestry and fishing (22.42%), wholesale and retail trade, catering and accommodation (15.38%), mining (14.76%), general government services (13.30%), finance and business services (9.93%), manufacturing (8.07%), community, social and personal services (7.39%), and construction (6.44%) (CoGTA, 2023:8).

Like its counterparts within the Zululand District Municipality, eDumbe Local Municipality has been experiencing serious issues, including financial challenges, as a result of a combination of factors such as poor governance and its rural nature. These challenges have persisted over the years, resulting in its “reserves depleted long time as were financing long contracts, capital and operational projects internally. The Municipality is experiencing a service delivery backlog, and financial intervention is from National Treasury” (EDumbe Local Municipality, 2023:156). As a result of its challenges, the municipality has been consistently falling short of its “performance on good governance and public participation targets,” as shown in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: EDumbe Local Municipality’s performance on good governance and public participation

Good Governance and Public Participation	2021/22	2022/23
Total targets	20	17
Achieved targets	10	15
Failed targets	10	2
Percentage of achieved targets	50	88

Source: EDumbe Local Municipality (2023)

The financial challenges experienced by eDumbe Local Municipality are amplified by several factors, including failure to manage its debtors, as these are increasing monthly; failure to exercise control and oversight on its movable assets as it does not verify them quarterly as

required; and failure to pay its creditors with the result of increasing debt due to interest accumulation, among other factors (EDumbe Local Municipality, 2023:183).

5.4.3 Nongoma Local Municipality

This municipality is the most populous municipality in Zululand and covers 2 182 km² (CoGTA, 2023). Like its counterparts, the Nongoma Local Municipality faces good governance challenges stemming from a lack of accountability. In a statement, the mayor of this municipality stated that “fraud and corruption represent a significant potential risk to Nongoma Municipality’s assets, service delivery efficiency and reputation” (Nongoma Local Municipality, 2023:6). These manifestations of unaccountability add to other evidence of failure to adhere to good governance, as shown in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2: Failures in adhering to good governance at Nongoma Local Municipality

Office	Failure in good governance
Municipal Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective implementation of Organisational Performance Management Systems • Ineffective implementation of Individual Performance Management Systems
Budget & Treasury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-billing and incorrect billing of customers • Failure to timeously and accurately prepare and report on the municipal Annual Financial Statements • Inadequate systems for debt collections • Misalignment between the approved annual budget • Failure to spend the budget allocated and per planned activities
Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate storing, safekeeping and retrieval of municipal records • Inability to recruit and employ high-performing municipal employees
Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to respond timeously and effectively in the event of a disaster

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to provide adequate security measures to councillors, employees and municipal assets
Planning & Infrastructure development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to provide maintenance to municipal infrastructure assets • Non-alignment between identified economic nodes, Infrastructure Plans and Spatial Development Framework • Failure to process business licence application within the stipulated timeframes

Source: Nongoma Local Municipality (2023:10)

Table 5-2 illustrates the failures of the various functionaries of the Nongoma Local Municipality in adhering to good governance. These are interpreted as follows: Pertaining to the Municipal Manager (the municipality’s accounting officer in terms of the MFMA), there are failures in accountability, transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness. This is because the Municipal Manager has failed to hold municipal staff accountable for the performance of their obligations and to ensure that the public has insight into the efficiency and effectiveness of the municipality’s operations. In this regard, the Municipal Manager has failed to implement an Organisational Performance Management System and Individual Performance Management System, thereby undermining the good governance principle of transparency.

The Corporate Services office failed at good governance by inadequately storing, safekeeping and retrieving municipal records, thus illustrating failures at adhering to transparency and integrity. Without proper keeping of records, there is no assurance that information about the municipality will be accessible and accurate. This leads to the erosion of trust in the municipality. The failures also violate the good governance principle of the rule of law in that there is a failure to comply with the legal requirements to keep people records of this nature. It can also be argued that the Corporate Services office has failed to adhere to the principle of responsiveness by failing to recruit competent employees who can effectively respond to the needs of the residents of Nongoma Local Municipality. The inability to hire such employees directly undermines the municipality’s ability to meet the expectations and needs of its community.

The Budget and Treasury Office failed to adhere to accountability owing to its inaccurate billing, which undermines public trust in the municipality. Overcharging some residents also deprives the municipality of accurate service cost information, which makes it difficult to

budget for the future properly. The failure to prepare financial statements in a timely and accurate manner violates the good governance principles of transparency and accountability. It impairs the ability of the public and oversight bodies, such as the Auditor-General, to assess the financial health and needs of the municipality. The failure to establish and implement adequate debt collection measures further underscores the municipality's lack of efficiency and financial prudence.

The Planning and Infrastructure Development office has also failed to adhere to the prescripts of good governance, such as efficiency, in that it has failed to maintain municipal infrastructure assets, thereby putting the municipality in a position in which it cannot provide sustainable service delivery. This is because neglecting infrastructure maintenance compromises current and future municipal operations, leading the municipality to an unsustainable position. This office has also failed at adhering to the good governance principles of efficiency and responsiveness in that it has failed to process business licence applications within the stipulated timeframes. This is an indicator of administrative inefficiency and a lack of responsiveness to the needs of the local business community. The delays are in themselves manifestations of poor service delivery and undermine public confidence in the municipality.

5.4.4 UPhongolo Local Municipality

UPhongolo Local Municipality is located in the north of the Zululand District Municipality and lies closer to the border with the Kingdom of eSwatini and the Mpumalanga Province (CoGTA, 2023). Like the other municipalities in the Zululand District Municipality, this municipality faces severe governance challenges, which point to a lack of adherence to the principles of good governance. In its 2022/23 annual report, the municipality dedicates many pages to describing what it terms 'service delivery shortfalls', the analysis of which points to a failure to adhere to the principles of good governance in several ways. These are discussed below.

The 2022/23 annual report shows a lack of accountability, particularly regarding budget allocation and financial management. For instance, the insufficient budget for repairs and maintenance (below the 8% norm) reflects inadequate financial planning and prioritisation of service delivery. Additionally, the failure to collect consumer debts or manage Supply Chain Management challenges shows a lack of accountability in ensuring effective revenue generation and expenditure control (uPhongolo Local Municipality, 2023). This lack of accountability is amplified by transparency issues. The report notes a delay in developing or

implementing key plans, such as the Integrated Local Transport Plan (ILTP) and by-laws for traffic management. The lack of an information centre, delays in obtaining zoning certificates, and incomplete lease agreements reflect poor transparency, as stakeholders do not have clear insight into municipal operations, regulations, and the decision-making process. The slow process of obtaining essential certificates and approvals also reflects bureaucratic inefficiency that undermines transparency and public trust (uPhongolo Local Municipality, 2023).

Also, the report shows failure at adhering to the good governance principles of efficiency and responsiveness in that many interventions, such as insufficient yellow machinery, inadequate support for SMMEs and Co-Ops, and the slow development of critical infrastructure (e.g., bulk services for water and electricity), point to inefficiency. The shortage of technical staff and office space further exacerbates this problem, leading to delayed and poor service delivery. Furthermore, the failure to adopt green economy initiatives, address local economic development issues, or respond to infrastructure demands reflects a lack of responsiveness to the pressing needs of the community (uPhongolo Local Municipality, 2023).

The lack of accountability, transparency and responsiveness in the uPhongolo Local Municipality builds into breaches of the rule of law, which is further evidenced by a lack of compliance with key policies and by-laws, particularly the absence of traffic-related by-laws and the failure to address illegal trading (uPhongolo Local Municipality, 2023). Additionally, the need for legal action to correct unfavourable lease agreements with tenants reflects poor legal governance and a failure to uphold contractual and regulatory standards. These transgressions of the rule of law are further evidenced elsewhere. For instance, in early 2024, uPhongolo Local Municipality was flagged among the municipalities that will soon be removed from the National Treasury's Debt Relief Programme due to its failure to make payment arrangements with creditors like Eskom (the national power utility), whom it owes huge amounts (Miya, 2024). Given that municipalities obtain bulk postpaid electricity and reticulate it to local residents at a profit in circumstances in which collection rates for electricity are above 70%, there is likely no reason why uPhongolo Local Municipality will then fail to pay Eskom its due. The failure to pay illustrates breaches of several good governance principles discussed below.

First, the failure to pay for bulk electricity is an indication of a lack of accountability on the part of uPhongolo Local Municipality. This is because municipal officials, like all public officials, are responsible for managing municipal resources effectively and accounting for their

actions. To this end, failure to make payment arrangements while collecting more than 70% in revenue indicates a lack of accountability in ensuring that the municipality is financially sustainable by taking advantage of debt relief programmes that can help cushion it. It thus shows unsound financial management.

Second, the failure breaches transparency, a good governance principle requiring openness and providing accurate information to stakeholders. In this regard, the failure of uPhongolo Local Municipality to provide clear communication regarding its inability or unwillingness to pay its outstanding debt despite a high collection rate shows that the internal management and transparency of the financial processes of the municipality are not responsive to the prescripts of good governance and thus undermines public trust in the municipality and erodes confidence in the leadership of the municipality. The lack of responsiveness to Eskom by making debt payments undermines the obligation of every public institution to honour its financial and operational obligations, both detrimental to service delivery for the community and undermining Eskom's sustainability. It can be argued that this irresponsiveness borders on disregard for municipal obligations and threatens the stability and security of the electricity supply, not to mention the risk of losing a lifeline from the National Treasury. It can also be argued that this contradicts the prescripts of the rule of law and points to inefficient use of available resources and opportunities. Ultimately, it may lead to inefficient service delivery.

5.4.5 Ulundi Local Municipality

Ulundi Local Municipality is located in what was King Cetshwayo's capital in the 19th Century (CoGTA, 2023). As such, it lies at the heart of KwaZulu-Natal and carries the royal heritage. Unlike its counterparts, Ulundi Local Municipality seems to be doing well on the good governance front, although it is not entirely effective at adhering to its principles. Looking at the 2023 annual report, the following areas of improvement can be identified.

- (a) Ulundi Local Municipality is experiencing performance gaps. While its recent mid-year annual report indicates an 82% overall achievement of targets across its departments, some sectors have lower achievement rates. For instance, Planning and Development has a success rate of 67%, while Technical Services has 76% (Ulundi Local Municipality, 2023). These lag far behind performance and could indicate limited issues with effective management and monitoring, both of which are essential to good governance.

- (b) The 2022/23 mid-year report shows that although Ulundi Local Municipality is committed to risk management through the submission of monthly risk register progress reports, some of the targets in that regard were not achieved (Ulundi Local Municipality, 2023). From a good governance perspective, delays in verifying assets could be reflective of gaps in effecting accountability and oversight.
- (c) The 2022/23 mid-year report for Ulundi Local Municipality also shows limited budgetary issues and implementation delays. The report notes that certain electrification projects were impacted by the lack of funding approval from the Department of Energy, leading to the removal of those indicators in the middle of the year (Ulundi Local Municipality, 2023). Such budgetary constraints and implementation delays point to financial governance and planning challenges, although one cannot entirely fault the municipality for it.
- (d) Finally, Ulundi Local Municipality experiences good governance issues pertaining to communication and transparency with its local community. This is because the report notes that while some efforts towards communication with internal and external stakeholders were documented, there were delays in the submission of key templates, such as the CoGTA Circular 88 template, due to the late receipt from the department (Ulundi Local Municipality, 2023). Although not entirely the municipality's fault, the delay illustrates intergovernmental coordination and communication weaknesses.

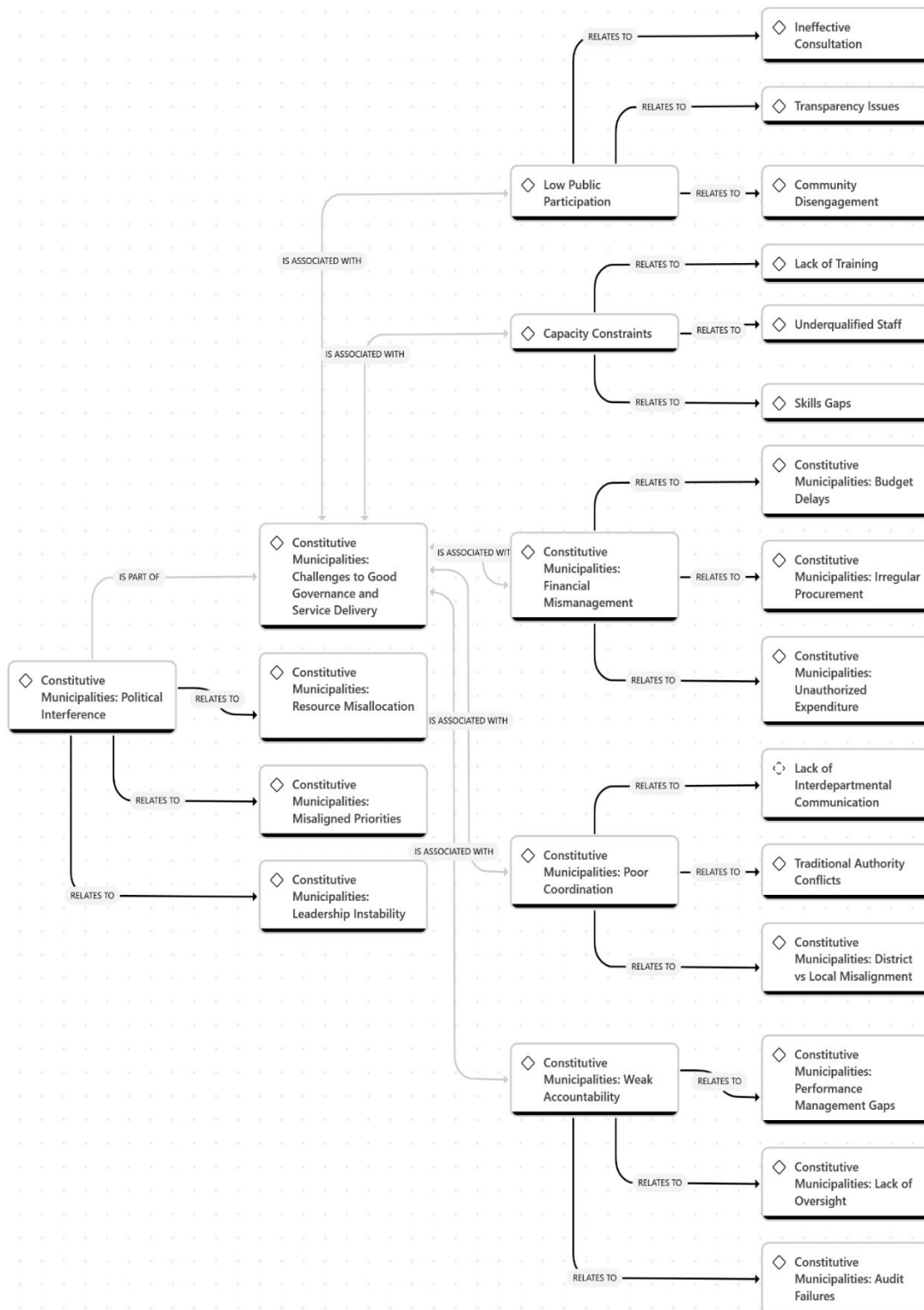
Besides these limited good governance issues, Ulundi Local Municipality seems to be doing well in adhering to the principles of good governance.

5.5 Challenges to good governance and efficient service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality

Figure 5-6 illustrates the interrelated challenges to effective governance and efficient service provision within the Zululand District Municipality. It demonstrates that political interference results in resource misallocation, leadership instability, and misaligned priorities, all of which impede governance. Likewise, financial mismanagement leads to issues such as budgetary delays, irregular procurement practices, and unauthorised expenditures, which exacerbate challenges in service delivery. A significant challenge is inadequate coordination, resulting in conflicts with Traditional Authorities and a deficiency in interdepartmental communication. Moreover, capacity constraints, including underqualified personnel and skills deficiencies, hinder public participation and obstruct effective community engagement. Ultimately,

insufficient accountability is evidenced by audit deficiencies, performance management shortcomings, and a lack of adequate oversight, permitting governance inefficiencies to endure. These issues collectively compromise service delivery and governance, resulting in systemic inefficiencies throughout the municipality.

Figure 5-5: Network diagram representing challenges to good governance and efficient service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality



Source: Author's construct (2024)

Despite the presence of governance frameworks, the Zululand District Municipality continues to encounter service delivery challenges attributed to inadequate compliance with governance principles. The audit requirements of the MFMA reveal persistent issues, including irregular expenditure, unauthorised use of funds, and mismanagement, as documented in the Financial Recovery Plan (2023). Abaqulusi Local Municipality, the largest municipality in the district, has repeatedly been placed under provincial administration due to financial mismanagement and non-compliance with governance regulations. Political instability, ineffective leadership, and the appointment of unqualified personnel have led to these failures, intensifying the difficulties related to accountability and oversight.

Furthermore, governance initiatives are compromised by insufficient coordination between district and local municipalities. Insufficient communication and operational collaboration with Traditional Authorities result in planning conflicts and project delays, especially in regions governed by the Ingonyama Trust. The lack of dependable financial records and postponed reporting has diminished trust between residents and the municipality. Furthermore, local municipalities face challenges in generating revenue, resulting in a dependence on provincial grants that are frequently delayed. Governance failures in council committees and the MPAC hinder the municipality's capacity to address audit findings effectively, thereby reducing financial control and public participation.

The interview participants highlighted several governance challenges within the frameworks and structures of the Zululand District Municipality, including political interference, weak accountability, poor coordination, financial mismanagement, procurement irregularities, low public participation, and strained collaboration with Traditional Authorities. These issues collectively hinder service delivery, creating operational inefficiencies across both the district and its local municipalities. Below is an analysis of these challenges and verbatim excerpts from the interviews that substantiate the findings.

The Zululand District Municipality faces several governance challenges, including weak governance structures, political interference, poor coordination, financial mismanagement, procurement irregularities, and limited public participation. Despite the presence of governance frameworks such as the MFMA and oversight committees like the MPAC, the municipality continues to encounter difficulties with service delivery and governance compliance. Audit reports highlight irregular expenditure, unauthorised use of funds, and a lack of financial control, all of which are documented in the Financial Recovery Plan (2023).

Political interference frequently disrupts governance, with leaders prioritising visibility over sustainable service delivery. As one interviewee noted that:

The finance committee wanted to divert funds allocated for infrastructure maintenance to host a sports event—purely for political gain. I told the mayor, ‘Legally, we can’t do this.’ But he responded, ‘This is politics—we need visibility.’ (P17).

This kind of political agenda-setting results in resource misallocation and erodes residents’ trust. Additionally, changes in political leadership cause frequent disruptions, with some projects prioritised according to political interests instead of community needs:

“Some projects are prioritised based on political interests rather than community needs, which undermines the trust residents have in us as their representatives. (P9).

The lack of accountability and financial oversight is another critical issue. Despite recurring findings in audit reports, no corrective actions are taken, which normalises financial mismanagement:

Audit findings reveal the same issues every year, but nothing is done. This sends the message that mismanagement is acceptable. (P12).

There is also a lack of performance management systems with no real consequences for poor performance:

We need performance management systems that are tied to consequences for poor performance... Right now, there are no real consequences. (P14).

5.5.1 Coordination challenges and operational inefficiencies

Poor coordination between the district and local municipalities leads to duplicated efforts, resource wastage, and service delivery backlogs. For instance, mismatches in project priorities result in wasted resources:

The district approved funding for a community hall when what we really needed was money to repair water infrastructure. This misalignment wastes resources. (P17).

In addition, strained collaboration with Traditional Authorities creates further delays:

Without better alignment between municipal and traditional priorities, we end up with fragmented service delivery.” (P14).

Procurement irregularities are also a major concern. Contracts are often awarded to politically connected contractors, leading to incomplete or abandoned projects:

Contracts worth millions of rands are awarded to companies with no track record of service delivery... When I raised this issue, the response was, The contractor is politically connected—there's nothing we can do. (P17).

5.5.2 Barriers to public participation and capacity constraints

Limited public participation weakens the municipality's ability to align priorities with community needs. Residents feel disengaged from governance processes, resulting in low attendance at public meetings:

We hold public meetings and consultations, but attendance is low because people feel their input doesn't matter." (P12).

Moreover, disregard for public input discourages participation:

People need to see results from these engagements. If their input is ignored, they stop participating, which weakens governance frameworks further. (P14).

Capacity constraints and skills gaps among municipal staff further compromise governance efficiency. Staff members are often overwhelmed, resulting in avoidable mistakes:

Our team is small, and many staff members are overwhelmed or underqualified...This leads to avoidable mistakes. (P17).

Despite efforts to address these challenges through training workshops, insufficient support limits the effectiveness of such initiatives:

I've proposed training workshops on financial regulations, but training alone isn't enough—we need more consistent support. (P17).

5.5.3 Financial dependency and delays in receipt of grants and service delivery

The municipality's overreliance on national and provincial grants exacerbates financial challenges, especially when grant funding is delayed:

Around 30% of our budget comes from grants...When those grants are delayed, everything comes to a standstill. (P15).

These cash flow issues prevent effective project planning and execution. How can we manage funds that we don't even get on time? (P16).

The governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality, including political interference, weak financial oversight, poor coordination, irregular procurement, low public participation, and capacity gaps, undermine service delivery across essential areas such as water, sanitation, and infrastructure. The operational inefficiencies identified result in community frustration, protests, and weakened public trust. Addressing these issues will require stronger accountability mechanisms, enhanced collaboration with Traditional Authorities, and more effective capacity-building initiatives. Reducing political interference and improving procurement processes are also critical to ensuring sustainable governance structures and restoring service delivery standards.

The Zululand District Municipality faces multiple governance challenges that directly contribute to service delivery failures. These challenges, identified from the 17 interview transcripts, are grouped into key thematic categories with s to support the findings. Below is a detailed analysis of these challenges.

5.5.4 Political interference and leadership failures

Political interference disrupts governance by prioritising political agendas over service delivery. Leadership instability creates fragmented governance, affecting long-term planning and project implementation:

Political interference plays a role. Some projects are prioritised based on political interests rather than community needs. This undermines the trust that residents have in us as their representatives.” (P9)

The finance committee wanted to divert funds allocated for infrastructure maintenance to host a sports event—purely for political gain. I told the mayor, ‘Legally, we can’t do this.’ But he responded, ‘This is politics—we need visibility. (P7).

Political instability leads to misallocated resources and delays essential services, weakening public trust in governance.

5.5.5 Weak accountability and financial mismanagement

Poor accountability structures allow financial mismanagement to persist. Many departments fail to follow up on audit findings, contributing to wasteful expenditure and non-compliance with financial regulations.

“Audit findings reveal the same issues every year, but nothing is done. This sends the message that mismanagement is acceptable.” (P12).

“We need performance management systems that are tied to consequences for poor performance... Right now, there are no real consequences.” (P14).

Failure to address financial discrepancies delays service delivery and inconsistent service quality.

5.5.6 Poor coordination between district and local municipalities

Poor collaboration between the district and local municipalities leads to duplication of efforts and misaligned priorities. This weak coordination limits the municipality’s ability to provide essential services efficiently.

The district approved funding for a community hall when what we really needed was money to repair water infrastructure. This misalignment wastes resources. (P17).

Disjointed coordination creates service delivery backlogs and disrupts infrastructure development.

5.5.7 Procurement irregularities and corruption

Procurement processes are plagued with irregularities, with tenders awarded to politically connected contractors who fail to deliver. This undermines transparency and service efficiency.

Contracts worth millions of rands are awarded to companies with no track record of service delivery... When I raised this issue, the response was, ‘The contractor is politically connected—there’s nothing we can do. (P17).

Corruption in procurement results in poor quality of services and abandoned uncompleted projects.

5.5.8 Limited public participation and engagement

Public engagement is inconsistent, with residents feeling disconnected from governance processes. Consultations are perceived as token gestures with minimal decision-making.

We hold public meetings and consultations, but attendance is low because people feel their input doesn’t matter. (P12).

People need to see results from these engagements. If their input is ignored, they stop participating, which weakens governance frameworks further. (P14).

Lack of public participation reduces community trust and limits effective service prioritisation.

5.5.9 Capacity constraints and skills gaps

Municipal staff often lack the technical skills required for effective service delivery. Staff shortages and inconsistent training contribute to errors and delays in project implementation, as illustrated in the following observation:

Our team is small, and many staff members are overwhelmed or underqualified... This leads to avoidable mistakes. We proposed training workshops on financial regulations, but training alone isn't enough—we need more consistent support. (P17).

Skills gaps lead to inefficient service delivery and project delays.

5.5.10 Tensions with traditional authorities

Collaboration with Traditional Authorities is often strained, leading to land use and planning conflicts. This misalignment slows down the delivery of essential services in areas under traditional jurisdiction.

Without better alignment between municipal and traditional priorities, we end up with fragmented service delivery. (P14).

Tensions between the municipality and Traditional Authorities disrupt service delivery and cause delays in infrastructure development.

5.5.11 Wasteful expenditure on nonessential projects

Funds are frequently diverted from essential services to nonessential projects, driven by political agendas. This misallocation leaves critical infrastructure underfunded.

Millions were spent on events that had no real benefit to the community, while critical infrastructure like water pipes remained broken. (P17).

Wasteful spending worsens service delivery backlogs and contributes to infrastructure deterioration.

The governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality—political interference, weak accountability, poor coordination, procurement irregularities, capacity gaps, and financial dependency significantly undermine service delivery. These challenges result in service disruptions, delayed infrastructure projects, abandoned waste management systems, and

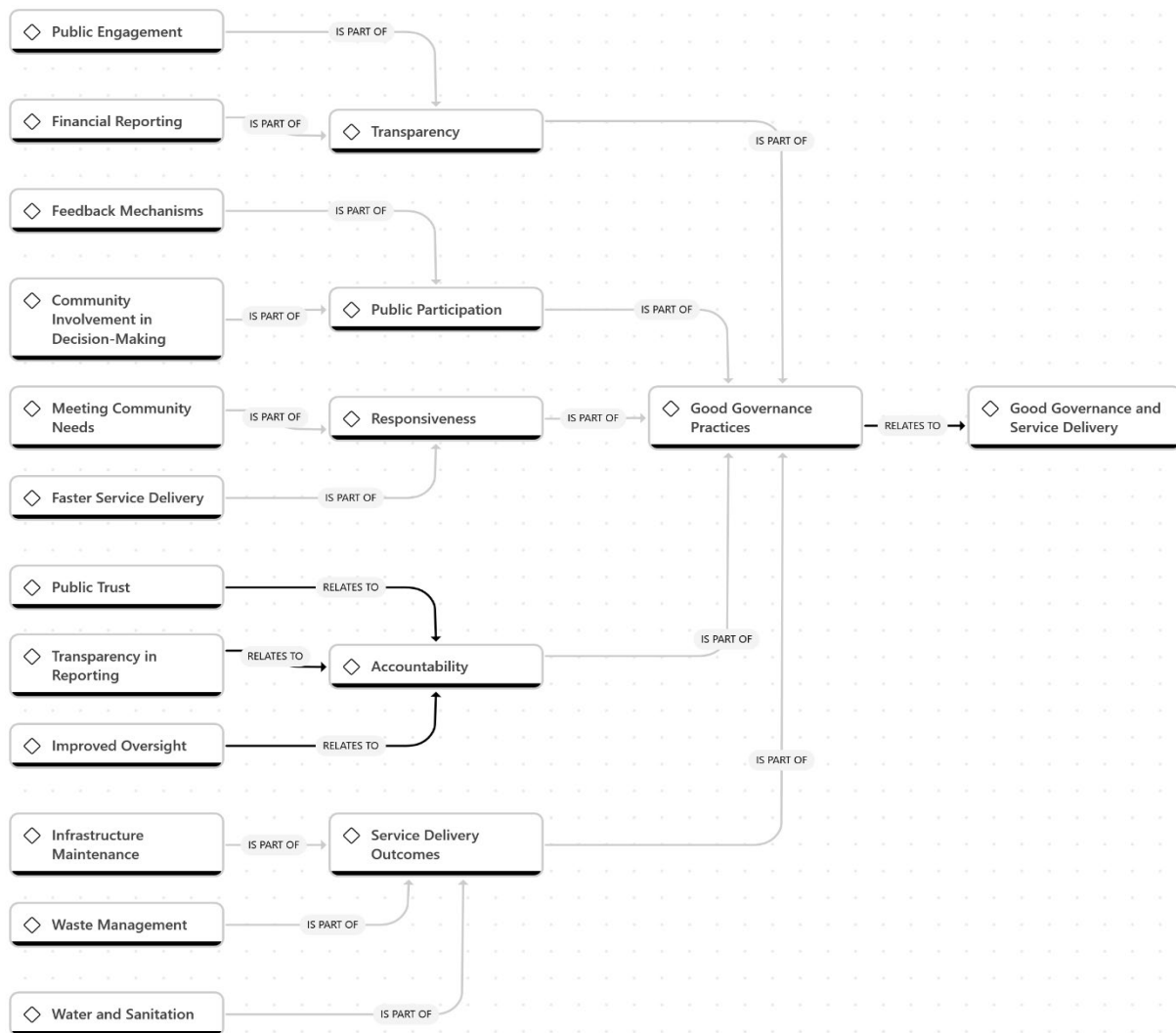
community unrest. To restore effective governance and service delivery, the municipality must address these systemic issues by strengthening accountability mechanisms, improving coordination with Traditional Authorities, implementing transparent procurement processes, and enhancing staff capacity.

5.6 Good Governance practices and contribution to service delivery

Figure 5-6 provides a correlation between effective governance practices and service delivery outcomes. It emphasises essential governance components, including transparency, public participation, responsiveness, and accountability, which are crucial for enhancing governance. Transparency is facilitated by efficient financial reporting and public feedback mechanisms, whereas public participation is associated with community engagement in decision-making. Responsiveness emphasises addressing community needs and expediting service delivery, ensuring governance is in accordance with public expectations. Accountability, bolstered by public trust, transparency in reporting, and enhanced oversight, guarantees that leaders and institutions are responsible for their actions.

These effective governance practices are directly linked to service delivery outcomes, especially in infrastructure maintenance, waste management, and water and sanitation domains. The diagram illustrates that enhancing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness can result in improved and prompt service delivery, thereby benefiting the community through good governance. The figure illustrates the significance of integrated governance practices in improving the quality and efficiency of municipal services.

Figure 5-6: Good governance practices and contribution to service delivery



Source: Author’s construct (2024)

The interview transcripts reveal various perceptions among municipal officials and community representatives regarding the link between governance practices and service delivery outcomes in the Zululand District Municipality. The responses highlight how principles like accountability, transparency, financial management, and stakeholder engagement influence service delivery in positive and negative ways. Below is an analysis of key themes identified in the interviews.

5.6.1 Accountability and performance management

Interviewees repeatedly emphasised the importance of accountability mechanisms in achieving timely and effective service delivery. They highlighted that weak oversight and a lack of consequences for poor performance led to governance failures that disrupted essential services.

Officials suggested that regular audits and improved accountability frameworks would enhance operational efficiency.

Audit findings shouldn't just be filed away—they must lead to corrective actions. There also needs to be quarterly audits rather than just annual ones. This way we can catch financial discrepancies early and fix them before they snowball into bigger problems (P15).

The lack of follow-up on audit recommendations means that financial mismanagement and poor performance persist, resulting in service delays, such as uncompleted infrastructure projects.

5.6.2 Transparency and trust

Transparency emerged as a central factor influencing public trust and the municipality's internal cooperation. Interviewees noted that the absence of clear communication and financial disclosures has eroded residents' confidence in the municipality's governance, which negatively affects tax compliance and civic engagement.

Transparent financial reporting builds trust—not just among residents but also within municipal departments. When employees see that their work contributes to a system that functions fairly and transparently, morale improves (P15).

Without transparency, the public loses trust in government services, leading to diminished participation in local initiatives and reduced tax collection rates.

5.6.3 Political interference and governance efficiency

Political interference was highlighted as a significant challenge undermining good governance. Officials reported that resource allocation decisions are often guided by political agendas rather than community needs, leading to inefficiencies and neglected service delivery priorities.

Funding is often redirected to areas that will win the most political favour rather than areas with the most urgent need. This politicisation makes it difficult to operate efficiently (P10).

Misalignment between community needs and service priorities results in delayed or incomplete projects, such as unmaintained water infrastructure or pothole repairs left unfinished.

5.6.4 Public participation and community engagement

The interviewees pointed to inconsistent public participation, especially in rural areas, as a challenge that limits the municipality's ability to align services with community needs. Poor attendance at meetings was attributed to residents' disillusionment with unresponsive governance.

People feel disillusioned—they've attended meetings in the past, given input, and seen no changes. Why bother participating when nothing ever comes of it? (P13).

Limited public participation weakens governance frameworks, leading to poor service delivery outcomes and a disconnect between local governments and their communities.

5.6.5 Role of traditional authorities in governance

Interviewees stressed the need to redefine the relationship between municipalities and traditional authorities. Collaboration with these stakeholders is seen as critical for delivering services in rural areas, yet tensions between governance structures often result in fragmented efforts.

Traditional leaders help us engage with remote communities, but their involvement isn't always consistent. If we don't align our efforts, we end up duplicating projects or neglecting communities entirely. (P13).

A lack of collaboration between municipalities and traditional authorities hampers service coordination, delaying critical services in underserved rural areas.

5.6.6 Financial management and resource allocation

Interviewees acknowledged that good governance practices, such as prudent financial management, are essential for maintaining steady service delivery. However, financial dependency on grants creates cashflow issues, especially when funding is delayed.

Around 30% of our budget comes from national and provincial grants. When those grants are delayed, everything comes to a standstill (P15).

The delays in grant funding significantly hinder the capacity of the Zululand District Municipality to strategise and implement its operational plans with efficacy. The delays impede the prompt distribution of resources necessary for vital infrastructure initiatives, including water supply, sanitation, and road maintenance, all of which are crucial for the welfare of

locals. Consequently, the municipality is confronted with considerable project backlogs, resulting in numerous essential services being either inadequately funded or insufficiently maintained. This situation not only intensifies the difficulties in service delivery but also hampers the municipality's capacity to address community needs, thereby eroding public trust and satisfaction with local governance.

The interviews revealed that the interviewees perceive good governance as essential for effective service delivery, with accountability, transparency, and efficient resource management at the core of municipal success. However, persistent issues such as political interference, weak public participation, and poor financial oversight undermine these governance principles, resulting in service delivery failures. Addressing these issues will require stronger accountability frameworks, enhanced transparency measures, and meaningful collaboration between municipalities and traditional authorities. A governance efficiency model that integrates these elements could transform service delivery outcomes in the Zululand District Municipality, as presented below.

5.1 Conclusion

The data analysis and presentation of results in this chapter revealed multiple interrelated themes that emphasise the correlation between adherence to the tenets of good governance and efficient service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. However, it revealed that political interference, fiscal mismanagement, and inadequate institutional coordination, among many other manifestations of poor governance, negatively impact service delivery. In addition, inefficient oversight systems have led to recurrent interruptions in service provision, notably in water supply, waste management, and infrastructure maintenance. The Zululand District Municipality's dependence on national and provincial grants exacerbates these issues, resulting in delays in project execution when funds are not allocated in a timely manner.

Notably, the analysis revealed the absence of accountability and transparency in the Zululand District Municipality, as audit results indicated that ongoing financial irregularities remain unaddressed. Interview participants underscored the necessity of performance management systems linked to repercussions for non-compliance to promote accountability. The discord between district and local priorities, coupled with disjointed relationships with Traditional Authorities, can be attributed to inefficiencies in planning and execution and subsequent poor service delivery.

The results of the analysis further show that efficient governance is crucial for sustainable provision of services. Such a governance model is currently inadequate without effective implementation, oversight, and alignment with community requirements. Study participants recognised transparency, community engagement, and accountability measures as essential components for enhancing service delivery results and restoring public confidence in the Zululand District Municipality. This stems from perceptions that when residents are involved, municipal initiatives better reflect community priorities, resulting in enhanced trust in governance. In contrast, inadequate financial oversight and politically driven decisions undermine accountability and restrict the municipality's capacity to provide essential services. The interplay among governance, accountability, and service delivery indicates that mitigating political interference, enhancing procurement processes, and improving coordination with Traditional Authorities are essential for reinstating service delivery efficiency. A governance efficiency model centred on these elements will improve service delivery outcomes and promote sustainable governance in the Zululand District Municipality.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings outlined in the preceding chapter to place the findings within the theoretical framework in the second chapter and the literature discussed in the third chapter. In this context, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an interpretation of the findings by utilising theoretical frameworks such as the good governance theory and the public value theory. Additionally, the chapter assesses how manifestations of poor governance, such as financial mismanagement, political interference, and inadequate public participation, align with or differ from previous research on local governance and the impact on service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. Further investigation into how these systemic governance failures impede service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality is presented in this chapter in the context of the study's findings and within the larger South African and global contexts. For this reason, the chapter addresses the research questions and highlights how good governance deficiencies impede service delivery.

This chapter also identifies areas that require reform and presents the governance efficiency model as a strategic framework that has been developed to address the challenges that are associated with governance. To resolve governance inefficiencies and improve service delivery, the model incorporates proposed improvements in financial oversight, enhanced collaboration with Traditional Authorities, and mechanisms for increasing public participation. All of these are essential components of good governance in the rural context. This chapter concludes by establishing a connection between the empirical findings and the theoretical insights, as well as by presenting strategies that can be implemented to inform future governance reforms in the Zululand District Municipality and in similarly placed municipalities that are grappling with good governance challenges and inefficient service delivery. For this reason, this chapter contributes to the larger academic and practical discourse on enhancing the efficiency of service delivery through adherence to the tenets of good governance in South African municipalities.

6.2 Discussion of key findings

This section discusses the findings on good governance failures and inefficient service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. It achieves this by drawing comparisons with the existing literature on governance in South African municipalities and aligning the results with the good governance and public value theories. The most prominent challenges to good governance discussed in this chapter include a lack of accountability, financial mismanagement, and opposition from political actors. Based on these findings, this section will identify potential opportunities for improving governance practices and discuss possible areas for reform as suggested in the form of the governance efficiency model.

Given that the objective of this study is to enhance the understanding of complex phenomena, such as how failure to adhere to the tenets of good governance results in service delivery inefficiency in the Zululand District Municipality, this study confirms the gaps identified in existing literature and offer different and deeper insights into potential solutions to governance and service delivery challenges facing South African municipalities. According to Munzhedzi & Makwembere (2019), some of the prevalent challenges of good governance that affect municipalities are financial mismanagement, political interference, and inadequate public participation. In the same vein, Mudzusi, Munzhedzi and Mahole (2024) allude to the inefficiencies of rural municipalities in the Vhembe District, situated in the northern part of South Africa, which has led to a backlog in road service delivery, water, and basic facilities such as sanitation and hygiene. These challenges are further observed in many other municipalities, seen from the literature (Mbandlwa, Dorasamy & Fagbadebo, 2020; Sibanda, Zindi & Maramura, 2020). While acknowledging the same challenges in the Zululand District Municipality, this study presents a novel perspective by emphasising the systemic characteristics of these challenges, especially within the Zululand District Municipality.

This study extends beyond merely corroborating previous research by demonstrating that the challenges to good governance are woven into the local governance framework and persist across various municipalities. This indicates that they are not isolated occurrences but rather pervasive challenges within South Africa's municipal governance system, as observed by (Beshi & Kaur, 2020; Fourie & Malan, 2022). The originality of this study resides in its capacity to evaluate these dynamics and suggest solutions specifically suited to the context of the Zululand District Municipality while offering broader implications for governance reforms in analogous nationwide municipalities. The systemic governance failures, especially

regarding political interference and financial accountability, highlight the necessity for targeted interventions that can be adapted across various cities. Such interventions can enhance the practical aspect of theoretical discussions on governance inefficiencies. This reflection underscores the pervasive nature of the challenges and the imperative for innovative, context-specific solutions.

The findings of this study closely align with previous research by Glasser & Wright (2020), who highlight ongoing challenges faced by South African municipalities in complying with financial regulations, specifically the MFMA. These findings on municipal failures for over a decade reflect a great need to identify these challenges and suggest intervention strategies that municipalities may consider. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that, despite laws like the MFMA, the enforcement of accountability mechanisms is inadequate at the local government level and that this creates a conducive environment for the continuation of financial irregularities. Hence, this study proposes a collaborative framework that could integrate all stakeholders and offer an active participatory approach to resolving the municipalities' challenges in municipalities. Although local government legislation, such as the Municipal Finance Management Act, seeks to increase transparency and fiscal responsibility, the study finds that the Zululand District Municipality faces ongoing challenges related to substantial financial mismanagement and insufficient oversight. This illustrates a significant disparity between policy and implementation.

The findings of this study reflect on the systemic nature of governance failures in the Zululand District Municipality. The ongoing audit failures and unauthorised expenditures in the Zululand District Municipality, as highlighted by the Auditor-General of South Africa (2023), indicate that these problems are not isolated incidents but rather reflect a fundamental institutional weakness that compromises the effectiveness of regulatory oversight in local governments. Thus, Mkhize & Mlambo (2022) also provide suggested remedies to address these challenges. However, no municipality seems concerned about adopting such solutions because they are generalised. Thus, this study contributes to the discourse by underscoring the persistent nature of governance failures and the necessity for more effective and flexible accountability systems that extend beyond essential compliance to actively promote financial discipline with specific reference to the Zululand District Municipality. This indicates that existing law is inadequate without substantial reforms focused on enhancing enforcement mechanisms and improving capacity within municipal governance structures. This reflection

reinforces existing research and advocates for a more nuanced and critical approach to addressing governance inefficiencies at the local government level.

Political interference was also a significant theme in the study's findings, aligning with earlier research by Mngomezulu (2020). In a different study, Masuku & Jili (2019) also found political interference to be a significant issue in local governance. The researchers argue that political dynamics frequently undermine the administrative functioning of South African municipalities. However, this does not seem to be an issue that is isolated within South Africa. Instead, Resnick (2021) refers to this problem as a Sub-Saharan political problem. In a different study, Kurebwa (2021) found that the same challenges of political interference persist in Zimbabwe. Although these are verified findings, local government, to some extent, is hugely affected by these interferences. Often, managers pile everything into this problem to sanitise their own administrative inefficiencies. In the Zululand District Municipality, this study discovered that political agendas contributed to the skewing of resource allocation, giving visibility more weight than sustainable development. This substantiates earlier research findings suggesting that political instability and interference can result in inefficiencies and service delivery backlogs. This is because decisions driven by politics frequently conflict with the community's requirements.

On the other hand, some findings contradicted the existing literature. This study found that the most pressing issues in the Zululand District Municipality were not solely related to technical capacity but also to governance structures and the failure to enforce accountability mechanisms. Previous studies, such as those conducted by van der Waldt, Fourie & Malan (2024) and Munzhedzi & Makwembere (2019), focused on capacity deficits in municipalities as a root cause of poor service delivery. However, this study discovered that the most pressing issues in the Zululand District Municipality were not connected to technical capacity alone. The lack of transparent governance and the political manipulation of municipal functions were identified as more significant contributors to service delivery failures. This was even though capacity constraints were mentioned as a contributing factor, particularly among financial staff.

Examples of successful local governance in Switzerland, as explained by Keuffer & Horber-Papazian (2020), highlight a practical bottom-up approach that has maintained effective service delivery. Talanow *et al.* (2021) provide a case in the Western Cape province where community inclusion offers a better understanding of governance issues and provides a platform where citizens voice their concerns and suggest adaptable strategies to address challenges they face.

Considering this, it appears that while capacity building is an important endeavour, the more pressing requirements for the Zululand District Municipality and other municipalities alike are to reform governance structures and reduce political interference. In fact, politics should play a significant role in uniting people and helping to understand the needs of the grassroots. They have most of the muscle when it comes to mobilising rural residents.

This study's findings align closely with the principles of good governance theory and public value theory, previously examined as essential frameworks for understanding municipal governance and service delivery in chapter 2 of this study. The good governance theory underscores the importance of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and participation, all of which are necessary for ensuring good governance. The public value theory emphasises the role of the government in generating public value by ensuring that services align with citizen needs through efficient resource allocation and public engagement. The alignment of the findings with these frameworks underscores substantial opportunities for enhancing service delivery through the proposed governance model.

The proposed governance efficiency model seeks to rectify identified deficiencies in adhering to the tenets of good governance, particularly those pertaining to financial mismanagement and the misalignment between budgetary processes and service delivery mandates. The findings indicated that the Zululand District Municipality's lack of financial accountability enforcement and failure to align budgets with strategic service delivery objectives substantially impeded service outcomes. Integrating enhanced financial oversight mechanisms into the governance efficiency model aims to ensure close monitoring of budget allocations, alignment of expenditures with planned service delivery objectives, and reduced unauthorised spending.

The governance efficiency model would promote the establishment of real-time financial tracking systems and the implementation of KPIs that connect budgetary expenditures to service delivery results. This has the capacity to ensure that municipal financial resources are allocated and utilised in alignment with community needs, as determined through participatory governance mechanisms. The model necessitates quarterly audits and financial reviews to align municipal expenditures with long-term strategic plans and immediate service delivery objectives. This alignment minimises the likelihood of funds being misallocated to politically driven projects that fail to benefit the community directly.

The proposed model enhances fiscal transparency through the implementation of digital monitoring tools, enabling municipal officials and the public to track the utilisation of financial resources. Pittaway & Montazemi (2018) highlight the advantages of promoting smart data-driven cities to enhance effective service delivery. Increasing transparency enhances accountability and restores public trust, all of which have been frequently undermined by ongoing audit failures and financial mismanagement in the Zululand District Municipality. This can be addressed from the prism of the public value theory, which advocates for governance that aligns with the priorities of the public, asserting that financial decisions ought to benefit the collective good (Taylor, 2021).

The governance efficiency model emphasises community engagement in budgeting processes, ensuring that financial resources are planned with the community voice and can be utilised efficiently and allocated to projects that genuinely address the needs and priorities of the population. Participatory budgeting and ward-based consultations enable the governance efficiency model to incorporate community input in resource allocation, thereby improving the responsiveness of the governance system. The alignment of public participation with financial management is essential for ensuring that budgetary decisions address local service delivery needs, thus enhancing overall outcomes. The proposed model could improve service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality by aligning financial oversight with governance principles of transparency, accountability, and public participation. The relationship between fiscal discipline and service delivery efficiency guarantees the effective utilisation of municipal resources to address public needs, fostering a more responsive and accountable governance framework.

The good governance theory, articulated by scholars such as Brown & Marsden (2023) and Pomeranz & Stedman (2020), emphasises the principles of accountability, transparency, and public participation as essential components for effective governance. As a result of the persistent lack of accountability and financial transparency in the Zululand District Municipality, these principles are directly violated, which exemplifies a governance structure that does not meet the fundamental principles of good governance. The research that Brown & Marsden (2023) conducted on governance as a significant component of development highlights the importance of enforcing regulatory frameworks, such as the MFMA, to guarantee that resources are managed effectively and that public officials are held accountable for any instances of mismanagement. Brown & Marsden (2023) contend that good governance

needs to be strengthened to achieve developmental outcomes, which is supported by the fact that the Zululand District Municipality has failed to address recurring audit findings, reflecting the absence of such enforcement.

The public value theory contends that municipalities are obligated to generate value for the general public through effective service delivery, collaboration with the general public, and the accomplishment of collective objectives. The findings indicate that there is a disconnect between the policies of the municipality and the requirements of the community of the Zululand District Municipality. This is primarily the result of inadequate public participation and responsiveness. According to Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg (2014), the public value theory proposes that governance structures should be designed in such a way as to invite citizens to participate in decision-making processes and to guarantee that public services are reflective of the priorities of the community. There is a lack of public participation in the Zululand District Municipality. When combined with political interference, it undermines the ability of the municipality to create public value. This supports the theory's assertion that citizen engagement is essential to efficient governance (Bryhinets *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, the findings of the study regarding financial mismanagement and a lack of oversight are consistent with the theoretical framework of fiscal transparency, which is an essential component of both the good governance theory and the public value theory (Cuadrado-Ballesteros & Bisogno, 2022). It has been argued by academics such as Chen & Neshkova (2020) that fiscal transparency is not only to guarantee public accountability but also to cultivate trust between citizens and the government. In this context, the public's confidence in the Zululand District Municipality has been eroded due to persistent financial mismanagement and the failure to address audit discrepancies. Public value theory attests that increasing transparency and engagement can only remedy this situation (Quick & Bryson, 2022). Through digitalisation, the Zululand District Municipality can operationalise these platforms and enhance transparency to win back confidence from its local communities.

6.3 Addressing research objectives

This section consolidates how the entire research addressed the objectives of the study as set out in chapter 1. This discussion will analyse the research objectives by reviewing empirical findings from the study on good governance in the Zululand District Municipality. Each

research objective is examined to illustrate the originality and contribution of the study to the discourse on governance and service delivery.

6.3.1 Objective 1: Analysing the theoretical framework for enhancing service delivery through good governance

The study sought to analyse the theoretical framework of enhancing service delivery through adherence to the tenets of good governance in the Zululand District Municipality. The interviews revealed the importance of accountability, transparency, public engagement, and responsiveness to this. The objective was accomplished by critically examining the governance structures and processes within the Zululand District Municipality and assessing the influence of these principles, or their lack thereof, on service delivery outcomes.

The findings of this study on objective 1 are consistent with the theories of good governance theory and public value, which are discussed in chapter 2, as they emphasise the significance of accountability and transparency in public institutions. This study identified financial mismanagement, political interference, and inadequate public engagement as significant barriers to effective governance in the Zululand District Municipality. These challenges impede essential service delivery, such as water provision, sanitation, and infrastructure maintenance. These service delivery mandates are fundamental issues to the municipality's performance. The empirical evidence gathered throughout this study supports the theoretical claim that effective governance is crucial for enhancing service delivery outcomes.

This study adds to the existing literature by demonstrating that the MFMA, which is the principal legislation intended to promote financial discipline in South African municipalities, has been inadequate in addressing pervasive financial mismanagement in practice. This study builds on prior reporting by SALGA (2020), demonstrating that frameworks such as the MFMA are insufficient without consistent enforcement and robust accountability mechanisms. This study indicated that inconsistent financial reporting, persistent audit failures, and a lack of solid performance management systems persistently undermine the intended impact of regulatory frameworks.

This study presents several novel insights compared to previous research. It emphasises that although existing literature often attributes poor service delivery to capacity constraints or technical deficiencies, the reality is that structural and governance-related failures are more to blame. Without adequate enforcement of financial oversight mechanisms, it is not possible to

have an efficient service delivery, as the municipal accountability systems will be weakened, giving no motivation for those who hold public funds to ensure that such funds are available for the service delivery needs of the community.

The findings indicate that although technical capacity building is essential, the more significant challenge in Zululand is the reform of governance structures to enhance financial transparency and ensure accountability for mismanagement among officials. The study indicates that political interference remains a significant obstacle to effective governance in Zululand, corroborating findings from earlier research. In this context, this study advances the discourse by demonstrating how political motivations distort the allocation of resources for service delivery and postpone projects. Often, political interference creates an environment where service delivery mandates are frequently overlooked for political advantage. This is inconsistent with good governance theory, which emphasises the importance of delineating political oversight from administrative functions to ensure governance decisions prioritise community interests over political expediency (Kjaer, 2023).

Public engagement represented a significant area in which the findings of this study differed from existing literature. Previous studies have recognised insufficient community involvement in municipal governance (Blanchet-Cohen & Torres, 2024; Butt *et al.*, 2021; Mamokhere, 2022). This research emphasises that there is a gap between community needs and municipal governance processes, especially during budgeting and resource allocation. The misalignment increases the municipality's service delivery challenges, as decisions are frequently made without sufficient input from the communities most impacted by them. The research highlights the necessity of incorporating public participation in financial planning and governance, aligning with public value theory, as highlighted by Lapuente & Van de Walle (2020).

This study validates existing literature on governance challenges in South African municipalities and provides new insights into the specific failures of the Zululand District Municipality's governance structures. This study examined challenges using good governance theory and public value theory, contributing to a deeper understanding of how effectively implementing accountability, transparency, and public engagement can improve service delivery. The study advocates for enhancing the MFMA and related governance frameworks by implementing regular audits and performance management systems and establishing clear distinctions between political and administrative roles to promote effective governance and improve service delivery outcomes.

6.3.2 Objective 2: Evaluating governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality

The study identified significant governance challenges within the Zululand District Municipality in achieving objective 2 and seeks to offer empirical evidence that aligns with and expands upon the existing literature. The study identified three primary challenges: failures in financial oversight, political interference, and insufficient coordination between municipal departments and traditional authorities. This study provides novel insights into the unique interactions and compounding effects of these challenges on governance inefficiencies in the Zululand District Municipality, particularly concerning service delivery outcomes, despite their broad acknowledgement in prior studies.

The findings regarding financial mismanagement corroborate previous reports in South African local governance research, including those by the Auditor-General of South Africa (2022). A different report from the Auditor General of South Africa (2023) further emphasises ongoing audit failures and unauthorised expenditures within municipalities. This study provides a new understanding by elucidating the specific mechanisms through which financial shortcomings impact service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. This study diverges from prior research that primarily examines technical failures in financial management. Instead, it pinpoints that the absence of proactive financial planning and real-time tracking systems directly contributes to delays in service delivery, especially in critical areas such as water provision and infrastructure maintenance. The disparity between financial accountability and operational efficiency arises not solely from insufficient controls. It indicates systemic governance weaknesses, which this study reveals through qualitative data from interviews with municipal officials.

This research highlights the intersection of political dynamics and financial oversight failures in South African municipalities. It reveals how these factors contribute to the misallocation of funds. However, this topic has been underexplored in existing literature on financial mismanagement. The study establishes a direct connection between audit failures and political interference. In doing this, it presents empirical evidence that indicates financial mismanagement in the Zululand District Municipality is caused by administrative incapacity and intentional resource diversions towards politically motivated projects. These failures at adhering to good governance compromise service delivery.

Political interference represents a significant governance challenge in the Zululand District Municipality because political dynamics often distort resource allocation and hinder municipal operations. The fact that the interviewee viewed political interference as a long-standing problem illustrates that there has not been a practically implementable solution to these problems. While they cannot be eliminated, reducing their occurrences and promoting good governance may improve service delivery.

This study corroborates these findings while providing new insights by emphasising the depth and persistence of political interference in the Zululand District Municipality. The research indicates that resource allocation decisions are frequently swayed by immediate political advantages instead of the long-term requirements of the community. This phenomenon is insufficiently addressed in existing literature. The research indicates that political actors often divert resources from critical service delivery initiatives, like infrastructure development, towards projects that offer greater political visibility, thereby sustaining systemic inefficiencies. This finding corroborates Brown & Marsden (2023) while further elucidating the specific impacts of these political decisions, demonstrating their contribution to delayed projects and service delivery deficiencies, especially in waste management and basic utilities.

This research demonstrates that political interference undermines financial management and disrupts collaborative governance structures essential for effective service delivery. This study offers a detailed analysis of political interference, demonstrating how political motivations result in misaligned service delivery priorities. It positions the Zululand District Municipality as a case study illustrating the distortion of governance by non-technical factors. This deeper understanding highlights the necessity for stricter regulatory frameworks that mandate the separation of political and administrative functions within municipal governance.

A notable finding is the insufficient coordination between municipal departments and traditional authorities, especially in rural regions. While acknowledged in the literature, this challenge has not been adequately investigated in terms of its specific effects on service delivery. This study addresses the gap by demonstrating that insufficient coordination among these rural authorities, especially in rural municipalities that are closely linked to their traditional rule that local governance results in duplicated efforts, misaligned priorities, and delays in project execution. Traditional authorities exert considerable influence in rural areas; however, their roles in municipal planning frequently lack clarity, resulting in fragmented governance structures. This fragmentation poses significant challenges for land use and

infrastructure projects, as the lack of well-defined collaborative frameworks between traditional authorities and municipal departments leads to inefficiencies and deficiencies in service delivery.

The study presents a novel contribution by suggesting that the observed lack of coordination is not merely an administrative oversight but is rooted in the structural disconnect between formal governance frameworks and the traditional systems of authority that continue to exert influence in numerous South African municipalities. This insight indicates that future governance reforms should extend beyond the improvement of formal structures to include traditional governance mechanisms, ensuring defined and collaborative roles for both traditional and municipal leaders. The findings indicate that enhancing coordination may directly improve service delivery, especially in sectors like housing and rural infrastructure, where traditional authorities are crucial in decision-making processes.

This study reinforces existing literature on the governance challenges of South African municipalities while introducing new insights that emphasise the interconnectedness of financial oversight failures, political interference, and inadequate coordination. These findings extend beyond a superficial comprehension of governance inefficiencies, uncovering the fundamental political and institutional dynamics that sustain inadequate service delivery. The study confirms prior research and provides a deeper contextual analysis of how these challenges manifest in the Zululand District Municipality, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding governance failures in South Africa.

The governance efficiency model presented in this study tackles these interrelated challenges by providing solutions that enhance financial accountability and diminish political interference through proper consultation and inclusion. Fostering collaborative governance with traditional authorities. This research enhances academic discourse by presenting actionable strategies for improving governance and service delivery in municipalities such as the Zululand District Municipality, distinguishing it from existing literature that primarily identifies problems without proposing integrated solutions.

6.3.3 Objective 3: Investigating whether good governance can lead to efficient service delivery

The findings of this study on the lack of accountability and transparency in local governance are consistent with existing literature but also offer novel insights into the context of local

government. Previous research, including that of Kulal *et al.* (2024), highlights the effects of technology in enhancing service delivery. This study builds on these insights by demonstrating that regular audits, use of technological applications and performance assessments serve as mechanisms to mitigate financial mismanagement and as essential tools for reinstating accountability in municipalities experiencing ongoing governance failures (Lebese, Motubatse & Legodi, 2024). This study reveals that despite the existence of laws such as the MFMA aimed at improving transparency, their implementation remains inconsistent, and audit outcomes are frequently disregarded in municipalities like the Zululand District Municipality. The study concluded that financial oversight mechanisms are insufficient; a commitment to enforcing audit recommendations and an ongoing review process that extends beyond annual evaluations is necessary. This insight indicates that frequent financial performance evaluations, along with real-time monitoring tools, may enhance transparency and resource utilisation, resulting in more sustainable service delivery as envisaged by the proposed governance efficiency model.

Quick & Byrson (2022) indicate that public involvement in governance is crucial for aligning service delivery with the genuine needs of the community. Community engagement is vital to promoting a responsive and inclusive governance framework (Ansell *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, the findings of the study indicate that public participation in the Zululand District Municipality tends to be superficial. A significant number of respondents to this study perceive that their input during public consultations or budgetary meetings is overlooked, leading to a decline in trust towards local government. Therefore, while the records indicate that the municipality conducts public consultations, there seems to be a disagreement with this assertion. This could suggest that the continued mismanagement of financial resources and failure to deliver what is planned could be emanating from plans adopted without public consultation.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by emphasising the significance of participatory budgeting and ward-based consultations as potential solutions to the deficiency in meaningful public engagement. The study revealed that although frameworks for public participation are in place, their implementation is insufficient, leading to disillusionment and disengagement among residents. Integrating structured and regular participatory mechanisms into governance processes could enable municipalities to gather public input and incorporate it meaningfully into decision-making. This finding suggests that local governments ought to

implement more structured methods for citizen engagement, potentially resulting in increased public satisfaction with service delivery.

The research identified the significant role of responsiveness in governance. The research indicated that effective governance frameworks, characterised by rapid responsiveness to community needs, markedly enhance service delivery outcomes in domains such as water supply, sanitation, and infrastructure upkeep. This finding corroborates prior research while further demonstrating that a lack of responsiveness is frequently associated with systemic governance failures, including political interference and financial resource mismanagement.

This research's significant contribution lies in its focus on real-time responsiveness. Conventional governance frameworks are primarily reactive, responding to issues only after they have intensified. The study recommends that municipalities implement a proactive governance strategy that anticipates community needs and adjusts service delivery mechanisms accordingly. Using digital tools may facilitate tracking service delivery progress and community feedback in real time, ensuring that service delivery is timely and aligned with local needs. Integrating responsiveness into governance frameworks allows municipalities to restore public trust and ensure sustainable and reliable service delivery.

The enforcement of audit recommendations has been predominantly examined in relation to the existence of audit systems as indicators of transparency. This study emphasises the significant deficiency in the enforcement of audit recommendations, indicating that these mechanisms alone are inadequate without ongoing follow-up and the implementation of corrective measures. The research highlights that public participation frameworks, although theoretically robust, frequently exhibit a lack of depth in practical application. This study demonstrates that, contrary to earlier research, which categorises public engagement as binary, the quality of engagement, specifically the valuation and utilisation of community inputs, significantly influences public trust and service alignment. Thus, the governance efficiency model provides an inclusive approach that could bridge these irregularities and enhance public confidence by addressing their challenges.

6.3.4 Objective 4: Proposing an ideal governance efficiency model to improve service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality

As alluded to in the previous sections, citizen participation in governance decisions is vital for aligning service delivery with community needs. It is a critical mechanism for tackling the

distinct governance challenges encountered by municipalities such as the Zululand District Municipality. The governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality have eroded public trust and obstructed effective resource allocation and effective service delivery. Public participation provides a direct means to rectify these deficiencies by establishing a feedback loop between citizens and the government, ensuring that municipal services are pertinent and responsive to local priorities.

In the Zululand District Municipality, where water, sanitation, and infrastructure constitute essential services that are least provided to communities, citizen engagement is crucial for customising service provision to the distinct requirements of various areas. Recognising and integrating the distinct challenges encountered by rural communities, particularly those under traditional governance, public participation guarantees that policies are not solely top-down but also rooted in local realities. This will enable the Zululand District Municipality to circumvent the one-size-fits-all methodology, a recurring challenge in service delivery throughout South Africa, as indicated by findings by (Ahmad, Hashim & Latiff, 2024) and the Auditor General of South Africa (2023).

A distinctive benefit of public engagement, especially through grassroots participatory budgeting and public consultations, is the improvement of transparency and accountability in the distribution of municipal goods and services such as bulk water, sanitation and electricity. The proposed model is enhanced by the continuous monitoring and evaluation. When communities participate in the formulation of municipal budgets and the allocation of funds, the likelihood of misallocation of resources is reduced. For the Zululand District Municipality, this will be significant in curbing financial mismanagement. Engaging citizens directly in budgetary decisions ensures that resources are allocated to areas of greatest necessity, such as mitigating water shortages or enhancing road infrastructure, rather than being misappropriated for politically motivated initiatives.

This study advances previous literature by illustrating the distinct relevance of public participation to the governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality. This research demonstrates how public involvement can directly mitigate specific governance inefficiencies that have affected municipalities such as the Zululand District Municipality in contrast to other studies such as Foroughi *et al.* (2023) that concentrated on the theoretical advantages of public participation. In such areas as the Zululand District Municipality and other rural municipalities in South Africa, where public input has traditionally been overlooked, service delivery has been

adversely affected by insufficient responsiveness to genuine community needs. Arguably, implementing formalised public participation mechanisms, such as regular ward-based consultations and participatory budgeting, can help the Zululand District Municipality to enhance the efficiency of its service delivery while also restoring trust with its citizens.

This study presents a new perspective by associating public participation with enhanced financial oversight. Current literature predominantly emphasises public participation to enhance decision-making and service alignment. However, the study also indicates that citizen engagement can additionally function as a safeguard against financial mismanagement. When the public actively participates in overseeing the allocation and expenditure of resources, the municipality is held accountable not only by internal mechanisms but also by the citizens themselves. This establishes a more resilient and transparent governance framework, which is then suggested as governance efficiency model, wherein the likelihood of financial mismanagement is markedly diminished.

Although participatory budgeting has been effectively executed in other regions such as Latin America (Wampler, McNulty & Touchton, 2021), its capacity to revolutionise governance in municipalities such as the Zululand District Municipality (which is characterised by a distinctive blend of urban and rural governance), represents a novel domain of research. In the Zululand District Municipality, the incorporation of traditional authorities into participatory governance processes exemplifies a novel implementation of this concept, aiming to reconcile formal municipal governance with traditional leadership structures, which hold significant sway in rural regions. This governance efficiency model, wherein traditional leaders and local governments collaborate with citizens, may serve as a paradigm for other municipalities encountering comparable governance and service delivery issues.

For the Zululand District Municipality, public participation in governance decisions has the capacity to fundamentally transform the municipality's provision of essential services. The involvement of the community in decision-making processes can help the Zululand District Municipality tackle the discrepancy between governmental priorities and local requirements. This study demonstrates that public participation can serve as a mechanism to better align service delivery with the varied needs of different regions within the municipality, thereby enhancing outcomes in critical sectors such as water provision, road infrastructure, and waste management, which have been identified as underperforming.

The study's focus on structured and substantive public engagement offers an innovative and pragmatic resolution to the governance challenges encountered by the Zululand District Municipality. This method enhances service delivery while incorporating a dimension of financial oversight and community-based accountability that is grey in existing governance structures. By implementing these participatory mechanisms, the Zululand District Municipality can advance towards a more transparent, responsive, and citizen-focused governance model, establishing a new benchmark for municipal service to communities. This novel contribution enhances the existing literature on public participation by illustrating its concrete advantages in tackling actual governance issues in areas such as Zululand.

Although public engagement is crucial for effective local governance, it can become a hindrance in certain circumstances, primarily when inadequately managed or organised. A significant impediment occurs when public engagement processes become excessively bureaucratic or lack explicit guidance, resulting in delays in decision-making and execution. In these instances, collecting extensive public feedback can impede essential service delivery initiatives, as municipalities may find it challenging to integrate varied and occasionally contradictory community viewpoints. For instance, Wamuyu & Ndiege (2018) note that public participation in Kenya, in Nairobi County, delayed the finalisation of the formulation of the Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan. Extensive public participation resulted in delays in finalising the master plan, attributed to conflicting demands from various community groups and stakeholders. Public engagement was essential for collecting feedback on land use, housing, transportation, and environmental sustainability. However, the process was prolonged due to the differing perspectives of various interest groups, including informal settlement residents, business associations, and environmental activists. The prolonged consultation period hindered the decision-making process and postponed the execution of essential urban development projects aimed at enhancing infrastructure and service delivery in the city.

Although Wamuyu highlights public participation hindering progress, the problem was with the organisation of these participation approaches. This suggests that public engagement needs to be guided accordingly so that citizens understand. It should also be disassociated with political agenda, which is why various projects fail to get public demand, especially in third-world countries where public participation is used to fulfil political agenda, as alluded by Moreover, public engagement may be influenced by vocal minority factions, leading to biased decision-making that does not accurately represent the needs or priorities of the larger community, for instance, in the South African political terrain where the African National

Congress (ANC), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and Umkhonto WeSiwe are locking horns in the KwaZulu-Natal province. This distortion can result in inefficiencies, as resources are allocated to appease minor yet powerful factions instead of addressing the most urgent service delivery requirements. To address these challenges and guarantee that public engagement significantly enhances municipal success, it is essential to implement a systematic and equitable strategy. One method to accomplish this is by employing targeted consultation frameworks that guarantee a comprehensive representation of the community rather than depending exclusively on the most vocal or affluent participants. Digital engagement tools can facilitate the process, enabling expedited feedback collection and alleviating the demands of protracted in-person consultations. Furthermore, municipalities may establish prioritisation mechanisms that balance community feedback with service delivery requirements and resource availability, guaranteeing that engagement results in tangible outcomes without delays. By establishing explicit protocols for public involvement and ensuring transparency regarding the incorporation of feedback in decision-making, municipalities can alleviate the risks linked to ineffective engagement, transforming potential obstacles into opportunities for more responsive and inclusive governance.

6.4 Application of the findings to framing a governance efficiency model for the Zululand District Municipality

The findings indicate that the Zululand District Municipality functions within a governance framework established by national legislation, including the MFMA, the Municipal Systems Act, and oversight structures such as the MPAC. These frameworks enhance accountability, financial transparency, and efficient resource management. Nonetheless, the data reveals multiple implementation challenges, including fragmented coordination between the district and local municipalities and insufficient collaboration with Traditional Authorities. These issues undermine decision-making and service delivery processes. Interview participants highlighted that although council committees exist to offer governance oversight, they frequently encounter obstacles due to political interference and misaligned priorities, which impede their effective functioning of service delivery mechanisms.

The audit outcomes reveal ongoing financial mismanagement within the Zululand District Municipality. Unauthorised expenditures, irregular procurement practices, and unresolved audit findings characterise this. The identified issues have led to backlogs in service delivery, especially concerning water infrastructure, sanitation services, and waste management.

Participants observed that the municipality has consistently failed to implement corrective measures based on prior audit findings, resulting in ongoing governance issues. Politically connected contractors received tenders lacking adequate oversight, leading to the abandonment of infrastructure projects. Interviewees associated budget delays and cash flow issues, stemming from the municipality's dependence on national grants, with frequent disruptions in service delivery.

Despite governance challenges, the findings indicate that adherence to good governance principles such as accountability, transparency, and public participation can enhance municipal performance. Participants emphasised the necessity for improved performance management systems that ensure accountability for inadequate performance and the implementation of regular audits to verify financial compliance. Collaboration between the municipality and traditional authorities was identified as a critical area for enhancement, as improved alignment of priorities could mitigate project delays and improve service delivery outcomes. The data indicate that prioritising community participation enhances the alignment of service delivery outcomes with residents' needs, thereby fostering trust between the municipality and its constituents.

The findings indicate that although the Zululand District Municipality functions within established governance frameworks, considerable challenges—including political interference, inadequate financial oversight, and insufficient coordination—compromise service delivery. Enhancing accountability mechanisms, ensuring transparent procurement processes, and improving collaboration are essential for aligning governance practices with the municipality's service delivery objectives.

6.4.1 Overview of the proposed governance efficiency model

This section presents the proposed governance efficiency model. The governance efficiency model is conceptualised from the findings of the interviews and analysis of annual reports of the Zululand District Municipality to address the pertinent governance inefficiencies obstructing effective service delivery within the municipality. These encompass challenges such as financial mismanagement, political interference, inadequate coordination with Traditional Authorities, and restricted public participation, all of which have intensified the obstacles in delivering essential services, including water supply and infrastructure maintenance, in both urban and rural regions.

The principal objective of the governance efficiency model is to be used to improve governance processes by instituting measures that foster accountability, transparency, and efficiency within the Zululand District Municipality. The model highlights several critical components, which include enhanced financial oversight through regular audits and performance assessments to guarantee the appropriate utilisation of public funds; collaborative governance frameworks that formalise the relationship between the municipality and Traditional Authorities (to improve coordination); and community participation mechanisms aimed at augmenting public involvement in insufficient decision-making processes. By focusing on these issues, the governance efficiency model seeks to cultivate a governance framework that is more responsive, transparent, and attuned to community requirements.

The governance efficiency model is designed as a systematic tool for addressing the challenges identified in the study. It illustrates how each component of the model directly pertains to rectifying specific governance inefficiencies identified above. Political interference is a substantial contributor to service delivery delays and is addressed by delineating the separation between political oversight and administrative duties. This guarantees that administrative decisions remain free from excessive political influence and that the allocation of resources is optimised. Financial mismanagement is mitigated through proactive financial planning, which includes quarterly audits and enhanced resource management processes to prevent unauthorised expenditures and ensure the fulfilment of service delivery priorities. The implementation of digital governance tools will enhance transparency by enabling real-time monitoring of municipal budgets and projects. It is anticipated that this will foster public trust in the government of the Zululand District Municipality.

The governance efficiency model addresses immediate governance challenges while fostering long-term, sustainable enhancements. The model integrates monitoring and evaluation systems that utilise KPIs to assess governance performance consistently and implement requisite adjustments. The ongoing enhancement process is essential for sustaining governance efficiency and ensuring the model adapts to changing governance requirements.

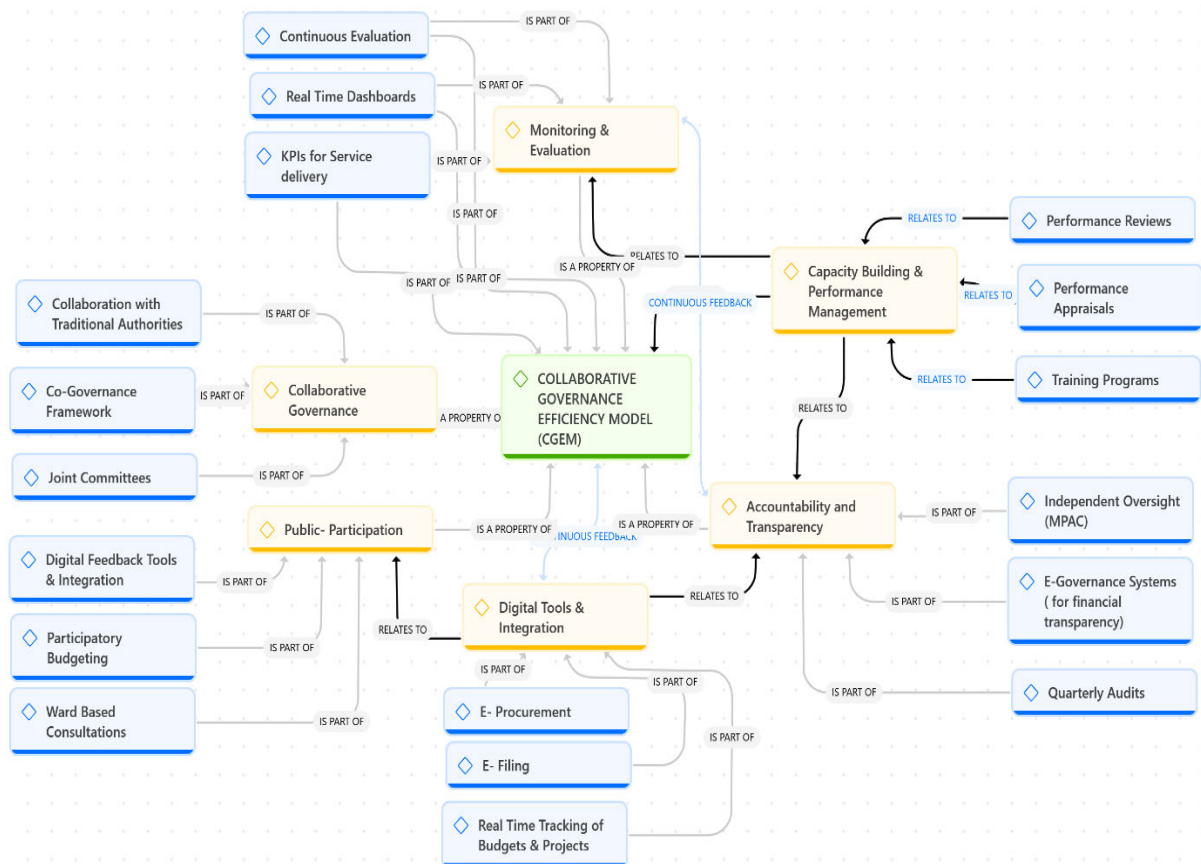
The research objectives set out in section 1.4 guided the creation of the governance efficiency model in this study. The objectives encompass analysing the current governance frameworks in the Zululand District Municipality, identifying principal challenges associated with governance and service delivery, investigating the significance of effective governance practices, and recommending a governance efficiency model to improve service delivery. The

governance efficiency model is designed with these objectives in mind to deliver a solution specifically designed for the governance context of the Zululand District Municipality to ensure practical significance and applicability.

It must be noted that the governance efficiency model is proposed as both a theoretical solution and a critical evaluation of its practical application and potential impact on service delivery. Its elements are aligned with the empirical evidence from the preceding chapters. This illustrates that the governance efficiency model tackles the fundamental causes of bad governance and inefficient service delivery identified throughout the research process. Every component of the model is intended to enhance a particular facet of governance, ranging from financial management reforms to collaborative governance frameworks that incorporate Traditional Authorities into decision-making processes. The congruence between theory and practice is essential for the effective implementation of the governance efficiency model within the Zululand District Municipality.

The governance efficiency model illustrated in Figure 5-8 addresses the distinct governance issues within the Zululand District Municipality. The model incorporates various governance elements to establish a comprehensive strategy focused on enhancing financial oversight, increasing public engagement, and promoting collaboration with Traditional Authorities. It emphasises essential tenets of good governance such as accountability and transparency, collaborative governance, public participation, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity building and performance management. This approach is meant to ensure that the governance efficiency model provides a thorough remedy for service delivery inefficiencies.

Figure 6-1: Illustration of the proposed governance efficiency model



5.6.7 Tenets of good governance addressed by the governance efficiency model

5.6.7.1 Accountability and transparency

This principle underscores the necessity for mechanisms that guarantee the municipality functions transparently and that public resources are administered efficiently. The model incorporates quarterly audits, an independent oversight body such as MPAC, and the implementation of governance systems to monitor financial transactions in real time, thereby augmenting accountability at all levels.

5.6.7.2 Collaborative governance

The call for collaborative governance acknowledges the significance of Traditional Authorities in rural governance in the Zululand District Municipality. Hence, the governance efficiency model advocates for the creation of governance frameworks and joint committees to enhance coordination between municipal entities and Traditional Authorities. This integration mitigates conflicts which were identified as emanating from the exclusion of these traditional structures and improves service delivery in rural areas.

5.6.7.3 Public participation

The proposed governance efficiency model highlights the importance of organised community involvement through mechanisms such as participatory budgeting, ward-based consultations, and digital feedback platforms. Although these entities are established, their practical implementation and active engagement are still constrained. Enhancing and promoting substantial participation is crucial to ensure these mechanisms transcend formalities. Participatory budgeting enables residents to directly impact the allocation of public funds, ensuring that municipal expenditures align with the community's genuine needs and priorities. Ward-based consultations facilitate the collection of grassroots input by local representatives, establishing a direct connection between municipal decision-makers and the communities they serve. Furthermore, digital feedback mechanisms offer a contemporary and accessible platform for continuous public engagement, enabling residents to express concerns, provide suggestions, and track the municipality's performance in real time.

Participation is crucial as it fosters transparency, accountability, and trust between the municipality and its residents. Active involvement of communities in the decision-making process enables the municipality to align policies and projects with the actual needs and concerns of residents, thereby enhancing service delivery outcomes. Moreover, participatory governance can result in a more equitable distribution of resources, diminish conflicts, and improve community satisfaction. The benefits of such involvement are numerous. This approach empowers citizens, cultivates a sense of ownership regarding public resources, and guarantees that residents' lived experiences inform municipal decisions. Strengthening public participation enhances the democratic nature, responsiveness, and efficiency of governance systems, thereby improving their capacity to address the challenges the Zululand District Municipality encounters.

5.6.7.4 Continuous monitoring and evaluation

This component monitors and evaluates service delivery using KPIs and real-time dashboards. It is recommended for the Zululand District Municipality to use KPIs to evaluate water, waste, and road maintenance services. Municipal officials can efficiently assess progress and address emerging issues using real-time dashboards. Governance procedures should be continuously evaluated using these tools to remain effective and adaptable. Regular evaluation helps identify inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and improvement opportunities. Municipalities can quickly address

emerging challenges through continuous governance process evaluation and adjustment, improving service delivery efficiency and effectiveness.

The main benefit of continuous monitoring and evaluation is that it encourages stakeholder participation. Publicising real-time service delivery data boosts transparency and citizen engagement. Public participation lets the community weigh in on decisions, provide feedback, and hold local government accountable. This builds trust between the municipality and its residents, ensuring that services meet their needs. Active participation allows precise and context-specific governance process changes, ensuring community-compliant service delivery. This inclusive approach improves municipal service efficiency and effectiveness, resulting in more sustainable and responsive governance.

5.6.7.5 Capacity building and performance management

Training and performance evaluations are crucial to improving municipal employee skills and proficiency (Nzimakwe & Utete, 2024). This is also relevant in terms of the proposed governance efficiency model. The municipality will have to prioritise training programmes to equip its staff for changing governance and service delivery needs. This will improve employee competency and the municipality's ability to provide quality services. This approach emphasises service delivery performance evaluations. These evaluations hold municipal employees accountable for the quality and efficiency of their services. By comparing performance to service delivery results, the municipality can identify areas for improvement, set clear targets, and foster a results-oriented culture that drives continuous improvement.

There are several benefits of capacity building and performance management. First, continuous training fills skill gaps and prepares employees for new challenges. This improves service and efficiency. Second, performance evaluations tied to service outcomes establish accountability, motivating employees to prioritise results and achieve municipality goals. This approach promotes continuous improvement, which improves public trust and satisfaction with municipal services and governance.

5.6.7.6 Digital tools and integration

The proposed governance efficiency model shows that properly implementing e-procurement, digital filing, and real-time budget and project tracking can improve municipal governance transparency and accountability. These digital tools automate and streamline administrative processes and make procurement, financial management and project tracking transparent. E-

procurement systems help officials, oversight bodies and the public track resource allocation and spending by providing real-time budgetary and project information. Since these digital tools can quickly identify and address irregularities and unauthorised expenditures, enhanced transparency reduces corruption. Digital tools also boost citizen and stakeholder engagement. Good governance requires public participation for accountability, inclusivity, and responsiveness. Digital platforms enable citizens to monitor municipal activities and decision-making by providing easy access to information. This ensures that community needs and priorities are met with public funds.

Such systems improve governance efficiency by reducing manual errors and delays and promote openness and trust between the municipality and its constituents. Real-time tracking and digital accessibility can help the Zululand District Municipality improve service delivery and public confidence through more effective, transparent, and participatory governance.

6.4.2 Uniqueness of the governance efficiency model from current solutions

Although the foregoing discussion has analysed the importance of adopting a governance efficiency model to improve service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality, it is necessary to highlight some of the issues requiring this model and how it differs from current solutions. The governance efficiency model is essential as it addresses the fundamental causes of service delivery inefficiencies that arise because of poor governance in the Zululand District Municipality. Inefficiencies and manifestations of bad governance, such as financial mismanagement, political interference, and insufficient collaboration with Traditional Authorities, have resulted in service delivery failures and public discontent. The governance efficiency model presents a systematic method for enhancing financial accountability, promoting collaboration, and augmenting public participation, thereby establishing a sustainable governance framework specifically designed to address the distinct challenges encountered by the municipality.

The main distinguishing feature of the governance efficiency model is its incorporation of Traditional Authorities into formal governance frameworks. In numerous prevailing models, Traditional Authorities are frequently excluded or marginalised, resulting in conflicts and delays in rural service provision. The governance efficiency model acknowledges the significance of these authorities and implements formal governance frameworks to incorporate their contributions into municipal planning and decision-making processes. Furthermore, the

governance efficiency model's focus on digital governance instruments is notable. While numerous current models depend on antiquated manual procedures, the governance efficiency model utilises contemporary digital platforms to enhance transparency, optimise workflows, and involve the public in decision-making. This augments efficiency and bolsters public confidence in the governance system by rendering information more accessible.

Unlike traditional models of improving governance, the governance efficiency model seeks to address and harmonise multiple governance issues simultaneously to provide a holistic approach to adherence to good governance as a way to improve service delivery efficiency in the Zululand District Municipality. Financial oversight, community engagement, collaborative governance, and digital transparency tools form this holistic model. Innovation begins with financial oversight. Real-time monitoring and reporting through the governance efficiency model can make financial management systems more rigorous to help the Zululand District Municipality track expenses and revenues and reduce mismanagement, fraud, and unauthorised spending. The governance efficiency model's proactive financial oversight improves accountability and ensures that funds are allocated efficiently to improve service delivery.

The emphasis of the governance efficiency model on community engagement is another benefit. Unlike current governance structures, the governance efficiency model makes public engagement a key part of decision-making. The model includes regular community-municipal feedback loops to ensure governance meets citizen needs. The governance efficiency model boosts citizen satisfaction and governance legitimacy by fostering trust and public participation. The governance efficiency model's collaborative approach encourages coordination among municipal officials, traditional authorities, and civil society organisations. This collaboration leverages stakeholder strengths to deliver services efficiently and cohesively. This integrated approach is essential for solving complex problems and providing quality service in Zululand, where governance is multilayered.

The governance efficiency model's digital transparency tools set it apart from current models. These tools allow real-time monitoring and open access to governance data like budget allocation and project timelines. Transparency allows public and independent audits, builds trust, and reduces corruption and mismanagement. Real-time governance monitoring helps identify and resolve issues quickly, improving accountability and efficiency. The model's holistic, integrated approach to financial transparency, community engagement, collaboration, and digital tools is innovative. These features improve governance by making it more agile,

responsive, and accountable than traditional models. The governance efficiency model provides a dynamic framework for municipalities like Zululand, enabling real-time monitoring and feedback loop development.

The governance efficiency model holds several benefits for the Zululand District Municipality as it aims to assist the municipality in enhancing its service delivery by promoting transparency, accountability, collaboration and other tenets of good governance. Implementing effective performance management systems and proactive financial planning through the governance efficiency model can help the Zululand District Municipality to optimise the allocation of resources, minimise wasteful expenditures, and guarantee the timely provision of essential services, including water, sanitation, and infrastructure. Incorporating Traditional Authorities into decision-making processes enhances service delivery to rural communities and mitigates governance fragmentation. Hence, the governance efficiency model addresses immediate governance challenges while establishing a foundation for sustainable enhancements in service delivery, public trust, and overall governance efficiency.

6.5 Conclusion

The findings of this study addressed the central issue of governance inefficiencies and their negative impact on service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality, which was the study's primary objective. The study aligns research findings with the good governance theory and public value theory, both of which emphasise adherence to the tenets of good governance, such as accountability, transparency, and public participation, in enhancing service delivery outcomes. The principles are essential for sound governance, restoring public trust, improving transparency in financial management, and aligning service delivery with community needs. This chapter highlighted significant governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality, including financial mismanagement, political interference, and insufficient public participation. As such, it aligns with broader governance issues noted in municipalities throughout South Africa. Challenges identified by the Auditor General of South Africa and scholars indicate that inadequate governance structures and ongoing audit failures at local and provincial levels are significant obstacles to effective service delivery, including in the Zululand District Municipality. This study enhances understanding by analysing the structural weaknesses that lead to governance failures, specifically the inadequate enforcement of existing laws such as the MFMA.

This chapter also reiterates this study's introduction of the governance efficiency model, which offers a framework for addressing failures at adhering to good governance to improve service delivery efficiency in the Zululand District Municipality. The governance efficiency model provides a context-specific solution to the governance challenges encountered by the Zululand District Municipality through the integration of enhanced financial oversight mechanisms, improved collaboration with traditional authorities, and structured public participation frameworks. This model is grounded in the principles of good governance and public value theories. It highlights the importance of real-time monitoring, fiscal transparency, and inclusive decision-making processes. The components of the governance efficiency model are essential for allocating resources efficiently and aligning service delivery outcomes with community needs.

The study's findings emphasise the systemic characteristics of governance failures in the Zululand District Municipality, notably the widespread political interference that skews resource allocation and compromises service delivery mandates. Political actors often emphasise immediate political advantages at the expense of enduring community requirements, leading to delays in service delivery and inefficient resource allocation. This challenge is evident not only in South Africa but throughout sub-Saharan Africa, as highlighted in the broader literature on local governance. This study illustrates how political interference undermines governance efficiency in the Zululand District Municipality and posits that separating political and administrative functions is crucial for restoring effective governance.

This study identified public participation as a significant theme in enhancing service delivery efficiency in the Zululand District Municipality. The study indicates that despite the recognised significance of community engagement in governance, public participation in the Zululand District Municipality frequently remains superficial and ineffective. Many community members perceive their contributions as overlooked, resulting in disillusionment and disengagement. The research advocates for establishing more effective public engagement strategies, including participatory budgeting and ward-based consultations, to enhance the alignment between municipal decision-making and community requirements. Community participation is crucial in delivering services such as water provision and infrastructure maintenance, as it aids in identifying and addressing local priorities.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of good governance and addresses the practical challenges municipalities, such as the Zululand District Municipality, encounter in

ensuring effective service delivery. Hence, the study of a governance efficiency model as a comprehensive solution that integrates financial oversight, public participation, and collaborative governance to address these challenges. Implementing this model will allow the Zululand District Municipality and comparable municipalities to refine governance, improve service delivery, and rebuild public trust. This study contributes to the existing literature and provides practical insights for policymakers and governance practitioners aiming to reform local governance systems in South Africa and elsewhere.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study's main findings and offers recommendations for enhancing the efficiency of service delivery through adherence to good governance in the Zululand District Municipality. The analysis in the previous chapters led to an understanding of inefficiencies affecting efficient service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. To solve this, the study proposes a governance efficiency model to enhance service delivery efficiency in the Zululand District Municipality. The main findings presented in this chapter seek to illustrate how the study achieved its aims and objectives stated in chapter 1, particularly on whether adherence to the tenets of good governance can enhance the effectiveness of service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality through a governance efficiency model.

7.2 Reflections on the theoretical framework underpinning the study

The theoretical and methodological approaches used in the study helped to identify the significant challenges. They proposed a governance efficiency model to enhance service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. A theoretical foundation underpinned by methodological rigour enabled the understanding of good governance inefficiencies and their impact on service delivery outcomes in the Zululand District Municipality. In this light, this reflection aims to examine the theoretical frameworks that informed this study, assess the methodological decisions utilised to explore service delivery challenges and conclude on how these choices, individually and collectively, facilitated the formulation of actionable recommendations provided.

A theoretical framework reflection evaluates the research process and reflects on the coherence between objectives, frameworks, and findings. They show how governance theories helped analyse and interpret the research problem. In this regard, they helped the researcher evaluate the chosen theories' applicability to complex issues like failure to adhere to good governance and inefficient service delivery. This understanding helped develop the governance efficiency model, which provides the suggested solution for addressing governance challenges that lead to inadequate service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. This goes beyond

theoretical propositions to a practical and actionable approach centred on citizen views and engagement, as seen from the interviews conducted during this study.

Table 7-1: Analysis of theoretical frameworks

Theoretical framework	Description	Key components	Application in study
Good governance theory	Focuses on ensuring adherence to the tenets of good governance.	Accountability, transparency, participation, responsiveness, trust and legitimacy, equity and inclusiveness, consensus-oriented decision-making, the rule of law and efficient service delivery	Used as a primary lens for analysing governance failures in Zululand District Municipality. Highlights areas of deficiency, such as poor accountability and lack of transparency, which hinder effective service delivery.
Public value theory	Emphasises that public institutions should create value for the community, focusing on trust, legitimacy, and community welfare.	Community-focused value creation, trust and legitimacy, public satisfaction	Provides a framework to assess how well governance aligns with public needs. It suggests improvements in public participation, trust, and transparency within Zululand District Municipality's governance structures.

Institutional theory	Examines how organisational structures and norms impact governance practices, often leading to resistance to change.	Organisational norms and structural stability	Addresses internal governance dynamics and bureaucratic inefficiencies within Zululand District Municipality. Emphasises the need for reforms to improve responsiveness.
Principal-agent theory	Analyses conflicts where government officials (agents) may prioritise personal or political objectives over the community's needs (principals).	Agency dynamics, incentive alignment conflict of interest management	Explains political interference and misaligned incentives within Zululand District Municipality, showing how agents' actions may not align with community interests.
Public participation theory	Stresses the importance of involving the public in decision-making processes to ensure governance reflects community interests	Citizen engagement participatory governance inclusive decision-making	Highlights the minimal public involvement in Zululand District Municipality's governance, suggesting that increased engagement could address service

			delivery misalignments.
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This study’s theoretical framework is primarily based on two principal theories: good governance and public value. Although various theories were reviewed, as provided in the table above, this shows the relevance of the selected theories over the other possible theories. Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage, and Young (2020) note that theories are crucial for comprehending how phenomena [governance practices] affect service delivery outcomes in local municipalities. Institutional theory, principal-agent theory, public participation theory, and new public management were supplementary theoretical frameworks utilised. These theories provide complementary perspectives to analyse the complexities of governance failures and reform, as Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage, and Young (2020) alluded to.

This study is biased toward the good governance theory, highlighting the principles of accountability, transparency, participation, effectiveness, and the rule of law. The research aligns with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission’s definition of good governance, emphasising inclusivity, participation, and responsiveness (Thomas, 2012). Municipalities ought to comply with these principles as they are tasked with creating systems that mitigate the risks of corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency, which are recognised as significant issues in the Zululand District Municipality.

The study’s findings further substantiate that the governance failures in Zululand District Municipality, including financial mismanagement and political interference, primarily stem from a deficiency in adhering to sound governance principles. This theoretical foundation provides a framework for assessing the domains where these principles are either lacking or inadequately implemented. The lack of accountability is evident in disregarding audit recommendations, leading to financial irregularities. A deficiency in transparency undermines trust between the municipality and its citizens, ultimately leading to diminished public engagement in governance processes. These failures were identified as underscoring the need for reforms aligned with the principles of good governance, making this theory particularly pertinent to developing the proposed governance efficiency model after this study.

The public value theory is integral to this study as it enhances the good governance theory, providing a framework that emphasises the value public institutions generate for their communities. Public value theory underscores the necessity for customising public services to address the community's distinct needs and generate concrete advantages, such as cultivating trust, legitimacy, and public satisfaction. This is particularly pertinent in the Zululand District Municipality, where notable governance inefficiencies have resulted in shortcomings in essential service delivery, especially in vital sectors such as water supply and sanitation. In this case, the customisation also requires creating a level ground in operating with the traditional leaders, as they are custodians of the people the municipalities seek to serve.

In the Zululand District Municipality, the findings indicate that service delivery failures are not merely operational challenges but also a profound incapacity to create public value. The municipality's inability to deliver essential water services and sanitation signifies a failure to fulfil the needs of its citizens. From the standpoint of public value theory, this indicates a governance failure, as public institutions are anticipated to provide services that improve community welfare. Inadequate provision of these services erodes public trust in the municipality, undermining its legitimacy among citizens.

Public value theory is pertinent in examining these governance deficiencies, as it enables the assessment of service delivery outcomes not merely as technical failures but as essential failures in value creation. Lapuente and Van de Walle (2020) state that public value is generated when public institutions provide services that enhance community welfare and promote civic participation. Zululand District Municipality's inadequate services directly compromise the municipality's capacity to create public value. The study's findings indicated that participants emphasised the deficiency of public trust and satisfaction regarding the municipality's capacity to fulfil basic needs. Moreover, Chapter Four elucidated how combining public value theory and good governance theory facilitates a more profound examination of the interplay between governance structures and community expectations. Public value is attained not solely through service provision but also through governance frameworks that facilitate community engagement in decision-making processes and foster trust. The research participants consistently noted that public involvement in governance processes is restricted, especially in rural areas, where the value of participation is neither understood nor promoted as a means of contributing to decision-making. Osborne notes that the absence of public involvement has

resulted in a misalignment between community requirements and governance priorities, intensifying existing service delivery challenges.

The study utilised public value theory to evaluate the effects of this disengagement. Public value theory emphasises that to create value, public institutions must function with a sense of responsiveness and accountability to the community. In Zululand District Municipality, governance mechanisms frequently neglect to incorporate community input effectively, resulting in decisions that do not align with the genuine needs of the population. The results revealed that residents experienced a disconnection from governance processes, reducing trust in the municipality's capacity to address their interests. The absence of inclusive governance and responsive decision-making further undermines the municipality's capacity to create public value.

Moreover, public value theory facilitated investigating how trust and legitimacy may be reinstated through enhanced governance reforms in the Zululand District Municipality. A principal finding of the study is that for Zululand District Municipality to produce public value, it must improve transparency, accountability, and participation within its governance frameworks on service delivery matters. Participants proposed that enhanced public involvement in budgeting, service delivery planning and oversight would better align municipal services with community requirements and restore public trust. As such, public engagement in the affairs of the municipality is essential from a public value standpoint, as public institutions gain legitimacy through their capacity to fulfil the expectations of the communities they serve.

The institutional and principal-agent theories provide further insight into the internal governance dynamics of Zululand District Municipality through their distinct perspectives. These theories explain the bureaucratic inefficiencies and the misalignment of incentives between municipal leaders (agents) and the communities they serve (principals). Political interference, which this study recognised as a significant disruptor in Zululand District Municipality, can be comprehended through the principal-agent framework. From this viewpoint, the agency theory says that agents prioritise political objectives over the community's requirements. Conversely, the institutional theory highlights the structural and organisational constraints inherent in the Zululand District Municipality that impede reform efforts. These limitations include insufficient oversight mechanisms and inadequate intergovernmental coordination. These theoretical perspectives contextualise the shortcomings

of internal governance and the need for structural reforms to synchronise institutional practices with the objectives of efficient service delivery.

In addition to the institutional and agency theories, this study also found support in the public participation theory, which underscores the importance of public involvement in decision-making. The study revealed a substantial deficiency in the governance of Zululand District Municipality, which is characterised by minimal or tokenistic public participation. This disparity results in a misalignment between community needs and municipal priorities regarding water, sanitation and infrastructure service delivery issues. Thus, the proposed collaborative efficiency model could provide a solution where e-governance is promoted through citizen-friendly systems.

The interpretivist paradigm is most appropriate for examining social phenomena such as governance, as seen in chapter 3 of this study. It constitutes the basis for the methodological approach employed in this study, as outlined in Chapter 4. The choice of qualitative research, particularly the use of case study methodology and semi-structured interviews, facilitated a comprehensive examination of governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality from the perspectives of community members and local government officials. The interpretivist approach, which prioritises the subjective experiences of individuals in governance, is particularly relevant for examining governance dynamics in municipalities such as Zululand District Municipality. In this study, this methodology enabled the research to capture municipal officials' perspectives on failure to adhere to good governance and ineffective service delivery. The participants comprehensively described how political interference, financial mismanagement, and inadequate public engagement obstruct service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. Concentrating on the lived experiences of these individuals enabled the researcher to reveal insights that quantitative methods may have overlooked. This illustrates the personal frustrations officials experience with political leaders who subvert governance reforms.

However, the interpretivist approach has limitations, including a diminished ability for generalisation. This is because research in a single municipality may yield findings not entirely applicable to other contexts. Nonetheless, the thorough comprehension achieved through this method provides valuable insights to formulate context-specific governance reforms adaptable to other municipalities facing similar challenges.

7.3 Methodological reflections

The methodological chapter provided an understanding of the impact of the research design and methods on data collection and results. It analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the research design and ensured alignment with the study's objectives. It also clarified the selection, implementation, and evaluation of the research methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. These methods helped to obtain comprehensive and detailed data on service delivery inefficiency in the Zululand District Municipality and how it is attributed to failure to adhere to the tenets of good governance. These methods enabled participants, especially local government officials and community members, to articulate their lived experiences in the Zululand District Municipality. The insights gained informed the proposed collaborative efficiency model.

As the researcher had a background understanding of how municipalities in South Africa operate, a reflective check was maintained to ensure the results' impartiality, rigour and authenticity. This reflective approach enhanced the study's credibility and rigour by offering a balanced perspective on the methodological decisions made during the research. Arguably, reflexivity is vital in maintaining study rigour where the researcher detaches their views and lets the data reveal the phenomenon rather than being influenced by their background knowledge. In this regard, the method chapter illustrated how the selected methods yielded insightful findings while recognising their limitations, enabling readers to comprehend the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn. Table 7.2 summarises methodological reflection, which is further expanded below.

Table 7-2: Methodological component

Methodological component	Details
Research paradigm	Interpretivist, emphasising subjective experiences and perceptions for an in-depth understanding of governance issues
Research approach	A qualitative approach focuses on rich, context-specific insights from stakeholder perspectives and individuals with rich experience in local governance.

Research strategy	A case study focusing on the Zululand District Municipality to explore local governance and service delivery challenges .
Data sources	Primary and secondary sources include interviews with officials and document analysis from government reports and databases.
Primary data collection tool	Semi-structured interviews with 17 municipal stakeholders, allowing probing for deeper insights into governance practices.
Secondary data collection tools	Document analysis, library catalogues, media analysis, and online government databases for supporting contextual understanding
Data analysis techniques	Thematic analysis, coding with Atlas.ti software, and triangulation for validating findings from multiple sources.
Ethical considerations	Ensuring anonymity, privacy, informed consent, voluntary participation, and respect for equity, aligned with the POPI Act of 2013.
Validity and reliability measures	Credibility (member checking, triangulation), dependability (audit trail), transferability (detailed contextualisation), and confirmability (peer debriefing).

The case study approach offered a contextually informed analysis of governance challenges in the Zululand District Municipality. This method enabled the integration of diverse data sources, including municipal reports, audit findings, and comprehensive interviews. The conclusions gained from the mixed method used in this study enhanced credibility due to data triangulation from multiple sources. This guaranteed that the study could obtain a thorough perspective on governance failures and their effects on service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. However, the case study method has several limitations, which include its labour-intensive nature and applicability to only one district municipality, as was the case in this study. Applying the findings to other municipalities necessitates consideration. In this light, future research could expand on this case study by conducting comparative analyses across various

municipalities to identify broader trends and patterns in failures to adhere to good governance and the resultant effects of inefficiencies in service delivery.

7.4 Collection and analysis of qualitative data

Participants were allowed to express their views on governance challenges facing the Zululand District Municipality. They did so through semi-structured interviews. This flexible methodology enabled the participants to discuss their personal experiences with political interference and traditional leadership differences in the municipality. Due to the qualitative nature of the data, an iterative analytical process through Atlas.ti was used to reveal the main themes of key challenges facing municipal and administrative offices and the communities at large. This helped to suggest the governance efficiency model as an informed and data-grounded model for increasing municipal efficiency in service delivery.

7.5 Summary of findings on governance gaps

Table 7:3 summarises the study's findings on governance gaps identified in the Zululand District Municipality.

Table 7-3: Summary of research findings on governance gaps in the Zululand District Municipality

Finding focus	Summary of findings
Political interference	<p>Undue political interference disrupts service delivery.</p> <p>Political agendas influence resource allocation and transparency.</p> <p>Hiring and promotions are influenced by political considerations rather than merit.</p> <p>Political conflict between municipal leadership and officials is affecting service delivery.</p>
Financial mismanagement	<p>Poor financial oversight mechanisms, leading to irregular expenditure, wasteful and unauthorised expenditure</p>

	<p>Lack of financial discipline and transparency impacts governance efficiency.</p> <p>Audit findings reveal mismanagement of municipal funds.</p>
Weak accountability	<p>Weak accountability frameworks result in ongoing audit issues and a lack of financial discipline.</p> <p>Erosion of public trust in the municipality and governance outcomes.</p>
Co-ordination challenges	<p>Fragmented coordination between the district and local municipalities hampers efficient service delivery.</p> <p>Weak relationships with traditional authorities.</p>
Ineffective public participation and citizen engagement	<p>Limited and less informed public engagement reduces community involvement in governance decisions, affecting alignment with community needs.</p>
Capacity constraints and skills deficit	<p>Municipal officials lack the required skills and competencies.</p> <p>Limited training and professional development opportunities.</p> <p>Overreliance on external consultants due to internal capacity shortages.</p>
Inefficient service delivery and infrastructure management	<p>Inability to efficiently provide essential services such as water, sanitation, and waste management.</p> <p>Infrastructure projects such as road upgrades face significant delays due to governance inefficiencies and politically diverse agendas.</p>

	<p>Poor maintenance of municipal infrastructure.</p> <p>Bureaucratic delays in service provision.</p>
Poor monitoring and evaluation systems	<p>No precise mechanisms for tracking service delivery progress. Absence of data-driven decision-making processes.</p> <p>Lack of robust performance management structures.</p>

The study confirms the findings from the literature on problems faced by the Zululand District Municipality. Table 7.3 presents these challenges: political interference, financial mismanagement, inadequate accountability mechanisms, and inconsistent coordination between municipal entities and traditional authorities. These difficulties hamper service delivery. Political interference is a significant factor in the disruption of service delivery, as political willingness has a considerable stake in the delivery of development-related work in municipalities.

Political interference affects transparency and contributes significantly to service delivery failures. This is because no clear accountability procedures are followed or practised. This interference is characterised by the influence of political agendas on resource allocation, which compromises long-term planning for service delivery. This political dynamic frequently undermines the public’s trust in the government and its transparency. The mismanagement of finances, which is characterised by unauthorised expenditures, irregular procurement, and audit findings that are not resolved, is a significant problem. This result is consistent with the literature review in chapter 2, where inconsistencies in adhering to local governance were observed in many municipalities across South Africa. This inefficiency leads to considerable waste and delays in the delivery of services for the Zululand District Municipality.

Inadequate coordination between district and local municipalities and strained relationships with traditional authorities contribute to the fragmentation of governance structures. The fragmentation leads to delays and inefficiencies. This goes beyond the Zululand District Municipality to most South African rural municipalities, mainly in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and

Eastern Cape rural municipalities. These municipalities are characterised by a significant influence from traditional authorities on governance.

The study identified significant restrictions on public participation and community engagement. The Auditor-General of South Africa (2023) report on the Zululand District Municipality provides evidence. As a result of municipal officials' inability to respond to residents' concerns, there is disengagement between municipalities and their communities. This leads to widespread disillusionment among residents and sparks protests against poor service delivery. The reduced community participation in the decision-making process further undermines the efficiency of governance frameworks. A misalignment between the municipal priorities of service delivery and the community's needs is caused by the absence of consistent and substantial public engagement, making the challenges already present in governance even more difficult to manage. These findings reflect the complexity and interconnectedness of the municipality's governance challenges and how they all converge to cause ineffective service delivery.

The scholarly works analysed in chapter 2 in the literature review and in chapter 3 in the theoretical framework provide evidence on how public participation affects good governance and service delivery. The capacity constraints and skill deficiencies that the Zululand District Municipality experiences include a sizeable portion of municipal employees lacking the necessary technical expertise, leading to operational inefficiencies, delays and errors in implementing the project. A persistent skills gap undermines the effectiveness of service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality. This study suggests training programs for municipality employees, although these may be insufficient to close the gap. This is because many employees lack sufficient foundational knowledge to be in their positions. After all, most were hired through nepotism without adherence to prudent human resource practices. This is evident in the 2022 Financial Recovery Plan of the Zululand District Municipality.

From the interviews, it also became apparent that the skills gap issue is huge. The number of students graduating in the governance fields puzzled many interviewees, who could not reconcile the skills deficit with reality. It could be suggested that there is a mismatch between the theory offered by universities and practice. This could render graduates unemployable or unable to understand the realities of the corporate environment. In turn, these findings drove towards suggesting a collaborative approach could work where each municipality practices a holistic approach to service delivery by allowing every member to partake in policy

formulation, such as budgeting and Integrated Development Plan development and participating in the voting for their competent leaders rather than complaining without engaging in these governance matters.

The Zululand District Municipality's reliance on national and provincial government grants for a significant portion of its budget also contributes to the delays in service provision. Municipal projects face financial difficulties when there are delays in the distribution of funds from the top level. This hampers the effective planning and execution of projects, leading to service delivery backlogs in essential areas such as water, sanitation and infrastructure maintenance. As a result of the delayed disbursement of funds, a significant number of services are either not adequately funded or encounter obstacles that affect project timelines.

The tense relationship between the Zululand District Municipality and the Traditional Authorities is another factor that makes providing services in rural areas more difficult. Due to the differences in priorities and lack of ideal consultation between these two governance structures, the planning and execution of services are ineffective. Collaboration with traditional authorities is then suggested as essential, as they influence the rural population, which still abides by their traditions and customary leadership. The absence of formal agreements or roles that were clearly defined led to the fragmentation of governance, yielding a significant contribution.

The study suggests that the governance efficiency model should be implemented to improve financial oversight through regular audits, performance evaluations, and strengthened accountability mechanisms. This model is proposed to address the issues that have been identified. It is recommended that collaboration with traditional authorities be strengthened to improve coordination, particularly in rural areas, and to align governance priorities to provide services more efficiently. This collaborative framework adds to the good governance theory by enhancing a collective bottom-up approach in service delivery.

In implementing the governance efficiency model, the use of e-services to monitor and evaluate municipal services should be considered. This is because the use of e-services is crucial in this digital age. It reduces human intervention in some services, such as meter readings, toll-free calls for emergency services, online payments, and bidding for tenders. Implementing e-services would reduce inefficiencies and corruption and promote transparency and fairness. The improvement of public participation through implementing more open and transparent

decision-making procedures, participatory budgeting, and digital feedback platforms that make it easier for communities to engage with governance more efficiently is recommended. Establishing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems to assess service delivery performance through key performance indicators is necessary to facilitate accountability and responsiveness in the Zululand District Municipality.

7.6 Recommendations

7.6.1 Recommendations to address weak accountability and financial mismanagement

Given the significant impact of weak accountability and mismanagement, the study recommends four main measures. First, the Zululand District should consider implementing and strictly enforcing a real-time financial tracking system to monitor expenditure and reduce irregular spending to ‘nip’ unaccountability and financial mismanagement ‘in the bud.’ Second, the municipality must strengthen the role of its Municipal Public Accounts Committee in financial oversight. Third, the municipality's financial management must strictly adhere to the Municipal Financial Management Act, related treasury policies and the municipality's own policies. Last but not least, there seems to be a need for mandatory financial training for municipal officials as part of capacity building to ensure financial regulations are correctly understood and implemented.

7.6.2 Recommendations to address political interference in municipal appointments

Although the Zululand District Municipality has proper human resource practices for ensuring that properly qualified and suitable persons are hired to provide strategic direction and manage the provision of basic services, there is no effective implementation, contributing to the collapse of the municipality's efficient human resources as persons are hired based on who they know. There is a need to ensure a recruitment system that is based on merit to reduce the adverse effects of nepotism and guarantee that qualified individuals are appointed to leadership positions in the administrative department.

7.6.3 Recommendations to enhance efficiency in service delivery and infrastructure management

Given the findings on inefficient service delivery and infrastructure management, this study recommends delineation of clear boundaries between political and administrative functions to ensure that decisions regarding the allocation of resources and provision of services are driven

by the community's needs rather than political agendas. The Zululand District Municipality should consider prioritising infrastructure maintenance and upgrades to prevent service delivery failures, given that service delivery depends on robust infrastructure that supports the municipality's agenda. In this regard, the city should also consider adopting innovative service delivery systems through integrating technologies such as GIS mapping for infrastructure management. There is a need to streamline bureaucratic processes to reduce delays in the provision of services and to introduce a performance-based budget allocation system that improves resource efficiency.

7.6.4 Recommendations to address ineffective public participation and citizen engagement

The study noted that the Zululand District Municipality lacks public participation and citizen engagement. Hence, it recommends enhancing civic engagement and public involvement to cultivate a culture of good governance. To ensure that it moves with its communities when it makes decisions, the Zululand District Municipality should enhance and strengthen mechanisms that promote community engagement in decision-making, such as participatory budgeting, feedback loops, and regular community forums. These will enable citizens to influence policies that directly affect their lives. Other ways of ensuring public participation and strengthening citizen engagement include enhancing the power of the ward committee to ensure active community participation; establishing digital platforms (such as mobile online applications and online public forums) for citizen engagement; conducting more public consultations; and implementing robust municipal communication strategies that optimise transparency.

Local municipalities that constitute the Zululand District Municipal and traditional authorities should work together to improve good governance in the Zululand District Municipality, where people believe in their socially and culturally constructed leaders in the form of traditional leaders. Formal partnerships help municipalities define roles, responsibilities, and expectations regarding service delivery on water, sanitation and infrastructure matters. This will reduce governance fragmentation and streamline service delivery. This engagement will increase civic participation, making local leaders and citizens feel more invested in government initiatives and connected to decision-making. This collaboration can be achieved through the proposed governance efficiency model.

Streamline workflows and unify service delivery, all of which improve efficiency in service delivery.

7.6.5 Recommendations to address capacity constraints and skills deficit

Given the skills deficit and resultant capacity constraints that plaque the Zululand District Municipality, the study recommends several strategies, including the development of a municipal skills development and training programme through the National School of Government and in collaboration with higher education institutions; introducing mentorship systems where experienced officials (particularly in finance and policy) guide junior staff; strengthening partnerships with academic institutions in the region, such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal, to offer targeted municipal governance courses; and reducing reliance on external consultants through building internal expertise. Continuous human development and capacitation programmes focusing on governance and financial management should be implemented in the Zululand District Municipality. These programmes will ensure employees are up-to-date with changing governance standards, new technology and systems (Nzimakwe, 2021). This will help them to manage their work effectively. It will also improve transparency and accountability and meet community needs.

7.6.6 Recommendations to address poor monitoring and evaluation systems

Because of poor monitoring and evaluation in the Zululand District Municipality, the study proposes a results-driven enhanced system. This is because it has been established that the municipality already has performance, monitoring, and evaluation systems, but these are merely tick boxes. If these systems were not simply about ticking boxes, the city would not have experienced the poor levels of governance and underperformance that it has. Hence, there is a need to establish a dedicated monitoring and evaluation unit that develops actionable and consequence-based indicators that align with the municipality's service delivery targets. The unit must implement data-driven decision-making tools to improve governance, and the public will complete and submit accurate annual service delivery performance reports to enhance accountability.

7.6.7 Recommendations to incorporate the governance efficiency model

The proposed governance efficiency model can be incorporated into the formal policy and planning of the Zululand District Municipality to enhance efficiency, planning, monitoring and evaluation. Its incorporation will improve adherence to the tenets of good governance, thereby

enabling the Zululand District Municipality to overcome the main obstacle to efficient service delivery. This obstacle is the failure to adhere to good governance. The proposed governance efficiency model embeds accountability mechanisms that enable real-time financial process tracking and correction to reduce audit irregularities. The model aligns municipal services with community needs by focusing on public satisfaction in service delivery and improving citizen engagement and confidence in the Zululand District Municipality. Also, the model prioritises inter-departmental collaboration to reduce redundancy.

7.7 Implications for the future of research on municipal efficient governance

This study offers a governance efficiency model to solve the municipality's failure to provide adequate service delivery due to poor governance. Even though Zululand District Municipality is the primary focus of the research, the problems discovered in this study indicate broader governance inefficiencies prevalent in many South African municipalities. Consequently, there is an opportunity for future research to build upon this work and extend the proposed governance efficiency model to other municipalities nationwide. Since many local government institutions in South Africa are plagued by political interference, financial mismanagement, weak accountability, and inadequate public participation, comparative studies between municipalities would provide invaluable insights into how governance reforms can be effectively implemented, adapted, and scaled across various municipalities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Topic: **Towards a governance efficiency model: Evaluating the impact of governance on service delivery in the Zululand District:**

To examine the existing governance framework and structures in order to explain their impact on service delivery.

1. What are the existing governance frameworks in your municipality?
2. What are the existing governance structures in your municipality?
3. What impact do these frameworks have on service delivery?
4. What impact do existing structures have on improving service delivery?

To analyse challenges related to governance and the provision of services at Zululand Local Municipalities.

(audit, political stability,

5. What are the challenges related to governance frameworks and structures and the provision of services in your Municipality?
6. What have been your Municipality's audit outcomes over the past 3 years?
7. Which governance challenges contributed negatively towards your audit outcomes?
8. What has been your municipality's response to these challenges?
9. What strategies can be adopted by the municipality to improve the governance challenges tabled above?

To explore the extent to which good governance practices contribute to service delivery at local government

10. To what extent do good governance practices contribute to service delivery at Zululand District Municipality?
11. In your opinion, does good governance and clean administration translate to service delivery?
12. Please describe the manner in which governance practices affect service delivery.

To develop a good governance model to enhance local government efficiency.

13. What can you propose to promote and enhance local government efficiency?
14. Any recommendations to be undertaken by your Municipality to improve service delivery.

APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY



Zululand
District Municipality

Ref: 10/2/3/1

Enq: RN Hlongwa

Email: nhlongwa@zululand.org.za

Date: 24/08/2023

To whom it may concern

Dear: **Mr Nkosenye Zulu (216075176)**

RE: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITHIN ZULULAND DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

This letter seeks to confirm that the above-mentioned student has been granted permission from my office to conduct their study entitled: **Evaluating the impact of good governance on service delivery in the Zululand District: Towards a good governance efficiency model.**

I am aware that the study will take place during office hours within the municipality, and it will also include interviews for which they will be using to collect data.

As per your request, I (Ntokozo Hlongwa; Municipal Manager) grant you permission to conduct your study within Zululand District Municipality.

Sincerely,

RN HLONGWA
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

"Service Delivery through Integrity"

Tel : 035 874 5500 • 400 Ugagane Street, Ulundi, 3838 • Private Bag X76, Ulundi, 3838
www.zululand.org.za

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



13 November 2023

Nkosenye Godfrey Zulu (216075176)
School of Man Info Tech & Gov
Westville Campus

Dear NG Zulu,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006415/2023

Project title: Evaluating the impact of governance on service delivery in the Zululand District: Towards a good governance efficiency model

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 30 October 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 13 November 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS

COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

Note to researchers: Notwithstanding the need for scientific and legal accuracy, every effort should be made to produce a consent document that is as linguistically clear and simple as possible, without omitting important details as outlined below. Certified translated versions will be required once the original version is approved. There are specific circumstances where witnessed verbal consent might be acceptable, and circumstances where individual informed consent may be waived by HSSREC.

7.7 Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Greeting: (Choose a greeting appropriate for the setting - not "Dear Participant", as this assumes enrollment).

My name is (provide details) from (Provide information about the researcher (name, department/institution and various contact numbers and email addresses)

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research (describe). The aim and purpose of this research is to (describe in lay terms). The study is expected to enroll (how many participants in total, how many in each arm, how many other sites, and where). It will involve the following procedures (describe). The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be (provide). The study is funded by (provide details if relevant).

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts (describe). We hope that the study will create the following benefits (describe if relevant; otherwise state that the study will provide no direct benefits to participants. Describe the scientific/other benefits hoped for from the study). The researcher must disclose in full any appropriate alternative procedures and treatment etc. that may serve as possible alternate options to study participation.

If the research could potentially involve risk, explain in full if compensation exists for this risk, what medical and/or psychosocial interventions are available as treatment, and where additional information can be obtained.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

State clearly that participation in this research is voluntary (and that participants may withdraw participation at any point), and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled. Describe the potential consequences to the participant for withdrawal from the study and the procedure/s required from the participants for orderly withdrawal. Under what circumstances will the researcher terminate the participant from the study?

State clearly if any costs might be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study. If there are incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study, state how much and why they will be given.

Describe in detail the steps that will be taken to protect confidentiality of personal/clinical information, and the limits of confidentiality if applicable. Describe the fate of the data and stored samples.

CONSENT (Edit as required)

I (Name) have been informed about the study entitled (provide details) by (provide name of researcher/fieldworker). I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate). I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction. I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to. I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures. If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details). If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion	YES / NO
Video-record my interview / focus group discussion	YES / NO
Use of my photographs for research purposes	YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

(Where applicable)

Signature of Translator

Date (Where applicable)

APPENDIX 5: EDITING CERTIFICATE

Perismart Editing

Premium English editing, formatting and referencing

Phone: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]
Web: www.perismart.co.za

111 The Courts
Neptune Way
Olympus AH
Pretoria

Certificate of English Editing

This certificate confirms that I edited the following thesis:

Evaluating the impact of governance on service delivery in the Zululand District: Towards a governance efficiency model

Name of student: Nkosenye G Zulu
Student number: 216075176
Institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal

I rendered the following services:

- ◆ Language, spelling and grammar corrections
- ◆ Structure, logic and flow improvements
- ◆ Proofreading

Authorised university personnel may contact me for verification of the authenticity of this certificate and for a copy of the edited document that I submitted to the student..



Dr Felix Dube

Editor-in-Chief

Perismart Editing (Pty) Ltd

Date issued: 15 November 2024

