



**The impact of effective municipal administration in  
providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo  
Local Municipality**

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requirements for the degree Masters in Business  
Administration at the North-West University**

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## DEDICATION

I, Pelane Daniel Mofokeng, declare that the mini-dissertation titled *'The impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality* is my own work.

I further acknowledge all the resources used or quoted using complete referencing and in-text citation. Moreover, I declare that this mini-dissertation has never, on any previous occasion, been presented at another university or institution for any degree purposes.

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“Hela Yalo”

## **ABSTRACT**

Municipal governments, being the third and bottom most sphere of government and the one closest to local communities, have often been regarded as the sphere of government primarily accountable for the development and supply of basic services to communities. In line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, local municipalities are required to provide communities with effective and sustainable services that are competent, efficient and of high quality. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. This study uses a qualitative research approach to assess the impact of efficient municipal administration on service delivery in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The major data for this research derives from semi-structured interviews. For this study, ten (10) Metsimaholo Local Municipality workers who are responsible for municipal management and administration were selected for the study. An important practical contribution of the study is to establish a framework for the delivery of basic municipal services that will help municipalities react to and prevent unfavourable audit findings from the Auditor General and secure unqualified audit opinions. Therefore, the study's overarching aim is to educate local governments about the value of good municipal administration and its specific purpose is to determine how much inadequate administration contributes to the subpar provision of municipal services. The research concludes by providing policymakers and practitioners with a thorough understanding of the potential and problems facing the administration of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The study's suggestions and research topics are meant to add to the current conversation in public administration and to improve the effectiveness of local government in providing communities with high-quality services.

**Keywords:** municipal government, service delivery, municipal services, local communities, unqualified audits

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# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Municipal governments, being the third and bottom most sphere of government and the one closest to local communities, have often been regarded as the sphere of government primarily accountable for the development and supply of services to communities. Although all local municipalities are required by South African laws and regulations to conduct sustainable and operative services, achieving this objective is not as simple as it may seem. Before a town will be able to accomplish this monumental endeavour, several components must be coordinated.

In line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, local municipalities, being the closest level of government to communities, are required to offer services to them (South Africa, 1996). Local municipalities, as established by the country's constitution, are designed to provide communities with effective and sustainable services that are competent, efficient and of high quality (South Africa, 1996).

A local municipality is a fundamental component of government that is accountable for providing people with basic services (Alam, 2019). Therefore, municipalities play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life of their citizens. Local government is an important level of government whose physical structures facilitate a stronger relationship between the government and its citizens (Alam, 2019). As a result of its progress since democratization, the local government sector has faced several threats to community development.

South Africa is a constitutional democratic country, which requires municipalities to accomplish tasks stipulated by the Constitution. The introduction of democratisation in 1994 ushered in a period of exceptional legal order and constitutional standing for local government (Maphunye & Nkambule, 2020). The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa became the highest legislation of the entire nation. The Constitution of 1996, Chapter 7, recognizes local government as one of the three domains of government (South Africa, 1996).

By recognizing local government as one of the three domains of government, the Constitution of 1996 provides a constitutional mandate for the establishment and functioning of local government structures in the country. This is significant because it ensures that local government has a legal basis for its existence and that its functions and responsibilities are clearly defined and protected by law. Additionally, the recognition of local government as a domain of government signifies the importance of decentralized governance and the role of municipalities in addressing the needs and concerns of local communities.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Chapter 7, Section 152(1)(d) of the South African Constitution stipulates unequivocally that “municipalities must, subject to applicable national and provincial legislation, strive within their financial and administrative capacity to achieve the following objectives: to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities; to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner; to promote social and economic development; and to promote a safe and healthy environment” (South Africa, 1996).

Therefore, a municipality should therefore prioritize the fundamental requirements of the community in establishing and administering its administration, budgeting and planning procedures (Bedford *et al.*, 2019). Community members must participate in municipal decision-making processes. For instance, before establishing the municipal planning framework and accepting the municipal budget, the municipal council must examine the opinions of the communities (Curtis & Sweeney, 2019). The system of governance used by the local government is largely accountable for the executive operation of the municipality (Drury, 2017). Thus, special conditions would provide a degree of flexibility in the formation of the different municipalities, which should facilitate the effectiveness and efficiency of municipal operations (Gómez & Monroy, 2018). As a result, there is no standard or universal method for organizing local government councils, as the physical expenditure, resources and political ideology of each local municipality vary.

Over time, the efficacy of competent municipal administration in enabling efficient service delivery has been called into question, particularly concerning the delivery of fundamental municipal services (Lämsä, 2019). According to Lämsä (2019), when municipal water and wastewater services are not performing well, this suggests that municipal maladministration is taking place. Many towns are running uncontrolled and poorly managed waste management facilities, which have some severe consequences on the excellence of life of society and the state of the environment, according to audit reports (Lämsä, 2019).

According to Matsuo and Matsuo (2017), several municipalities fail to adhere to the fundamental rules necessary for efficient administration and service delivery. This can result from a lack of experience and expertise in municipal management. Officials and councillors must pledge to act in the best interests of the communities they serve, without bias and to achieve efficiency (Merchant *et al.*, 2017). The Metsimaholo Local Council has not been excluded from a series of service delivery demonstrations since 2004 (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2017). Poor municipal management is generally accepted as the root cause of service delivery protests as noted by Makoti and Odeku (2018). These protests may arise from several obstacles that make it difficult for local governments to offer fundamental municipal amenities, including errors, a lack of expertise and the inability to implement policies (Matsiliza, 2017; Muller, 2020). By failing to follow the fundamental rules required for efficient administration and service delivery, municipalities are unable to provide essential services to their communities.

A lack of experience and expertise, combined with biases among officials and councillors, may contribute to poor municipal management. This, in turn, can lead to service delivery protests, such as those prevalent in the Metsimaholo Local Council since 2004 and hinder the provision of the necessary municipal amenities. Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State may be described as an organisation that lacks efficient management based on the Auditor General's frequent unfavourable audit findings (Auditor-General, 2020, 2021). Specifically, the Auditor General has issued disclaimers for the municipality's finances for multiple consecutive years due to insufficient documentation and irregular expenditures, indicating systemic issues with financial management (Auditor-General, 2021). These audits align with local community protests against inadequate service

delivery, with residents complaining of intermittent water supply, electricity cuts and uncollected garbage according to various local newspaper reports.

According to repeated audits, the majority of these communities have suffered financial losses due to wasteful and fruitless expenditure. Wasteful spending refers to expenditures that were made in vain and did not achieve the intended outcomes, while fruitless spending refers to expenditures that were made but the goods or services were not received despite payment (PFMA Act, 1999). The Free State provincial government placed the Metsimaholo Local Municipality under administration on 06 December 2017 as reported by the Provincial Government Gazette (2017). This was done after the municipality failed to pass its budget and carry out its constitutional mandate amidst financial challenges that left it unable to pay creditors like Eskom. The provincial administration aimed to ensure continued provision of essential services to residents and address the municipality's finances.

The inability of South African cities to address undersupplied municipal services can be seen as a sign of ineffective management systems. However, it is important to define "management systems." The problem may actually lie with the municipal employees responsible for implementing systems, rather than the systems themselves. Therefore, it could be argued that inadequate staff capacity to effectively manage services, rather than the systems they operate within is the crux of the problem (Muller, 2020).

This study aims to establish the relationship between effective municipal administration and the efficient delivery of fundamental services in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. Effective municipal administration will be defined as management practices that enables the municipality to achieve clean audits, pass budgets, pay creditors and provide adequate services to residents. Efficient service delivery will be defined as the provision of water, electricity, sanitation and waste management at levels that meet community needs.

### **1.3 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

A significant literature frame provides several definitions of the major concepts utilised in this study. The phrases have varied socio-economic, cultural and political implications in different circumstances. However, definitions are crucial because they require us to

consider the breadth and significance of the word. The following definitions are the key terms of this study:

**Municipality:** according to the South African Constitution, a municipality is "an institution that has executive and legislative authority within an area determined by or in terms of national or provincial legislation" (Section 156(1)) and its role is to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities, ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, promote social and economic development and provide a safe and healthy environment for residents. Furthermore, municipalities are required to exercise their powers and perform their functions in a manner that is consistent with the principles of cooperative government and intergovernmental relations (Sections 41-43).

**Basic municipal services:** such as public health, safety and environmental sanitation are essential for municipalities to offer. In South Africa, municipalities are obligated to provide a minimum level of basic services to their residents (South Africa, 2000). In addition to these essential services, utilities such as roads, storm drains and garbage collection are also necessary components of municipal services.

**Municipal administration:** includes establishing goals, evaluating real performance and accounting for remedial action if there is a discrepancy between the two (Bedford & Malmi, 2015).

**Service delivery:** as defined by the South African constitution, is the provision of essential services to the public (Section 152(1) (d)).

#### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The Metsimaholo Local Municipality has not been left out as one of the targets of several service delivery demonstrations since 2004 (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2017). It is commonly acknowledged that poor municipal management is the source of service delivery protests (Makoti & Odeku, 2018). Studies by Matsiliza (2017); Muller (2020) show that mistakes, lack of skills and not being able to carry out policies are some of the things that make it hard for local governments to provide basic municipal services.

The Auditor General's frequent adverse audit results and local community protests against service delivery suggests that the Metsimaholo Local Municipality may be categorized as an organization that lacks effective management (Auditor-General, 2020). According to the most recent audits (Auditor-General, 2022), the bulk of these local municipalities, including Metsimaholo, have incurred financial losses as a consequence of unnecessary and inefficient spending.

Local municipalities, such as the Metsimaholo Local Municipality were placed under administration for not being able to fulfil their constitutional mandates or being on the edge of failure (Moloto & Lethoko, 2018). The inability to overcome inadequate provision of basic municipal services is indicative of ineffective management systems among South African municipalities (Muller, 2020). Informed by international standards, this research aims to analyse the developmental relationship between inadequate municipal administration and the poor service delivery of basic municipal services in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

## **1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **1.5.1 Primary objective**

To examine the impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

### **1.5.2 Secondary objectives**

- To examine what entails effective municipal administration at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State.
- To investigate the relationship that exists between effective municipal administration and the efficient provision of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- To assess the degree to which the deficient service distribution of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is a result of poor municipal administration.

- To examine the strategies that can be used to improve the effectiveness of municipal administration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.6.1 Primary research question**

- What entails effective municipal administration at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State?

### **1.6.2 Secondary research questions**

- What is the relationship that exists between effective municipal administration and efficient provision of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality?
- What is the degree to which the deficient service distribution of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is a result of poor municipal administration?
- To examine the strategies that can be used to improve the effectiveness of municipal administration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

## **1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY/DELIMITATIONS**

The focus of this research is the impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The study focuses on one local municipality to investigate the impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality within the South African context. For the fact that a scenario was chosen, the results may not be generalizable to other local municipalities. The results of the research will be limited to the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

### **1.7.1 Field of study: Local Government**

**1.7.2 Sector/industry/business under investigation:** Local Municipalities

**1.7.3 Geographical demarcation:** Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State province in South Africa.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

### **1.8.1 Literature review**

This part examines prior studies on the effects of efficient municipal administration on the Metsimaholo Local Municipality's efficient service delivery or lack thereof. It will be determined and corroborated which authors' perspectives and arguments, as well as worldwide and regional research, relevant to this field of study. Significant emphasis is put on those dynamics that give responses to the research questions and subsidize the study's research objectives.

### **1.8.2 Empirical study**

The major data for this research will come from semi-structured interviews. According to Ndlovu (2019), semi-structured interviews consists of a series of questions that specify the regions to be examined. Semi-structured interviews, according to these specialists, allow for the finding or development of information that is crucial to respondents but may not even be deemed significant by researchers. To accomplish the three objectives of this research, semi-structured interviews will be undertaken to investigate the influence of effective municipal administration on the delivery of efficient services in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

The target audience will consist of nine Metsimaholo Local Municipality officers with knowledge and expertise in municipal administration. According to Parpworth (2017), while using purposive sampling, the researcher may choose the sample that best answers the question. For this study, a purposive sample of ten (10) participants were selected because the researcher considered they would be best able to respond to questions about the function of the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan, and the budget in the delivery of fundamental municipal services.

The participants will be scheduled for interviews in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality and the interviews will be performed there. For instance, formal permission to conduct the research will be acquired from the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, followed by ethical approval from the North-West University Ethics Committee. Before the interviews are done, each participant will get a participant information sheet that describes the purpose and nature of the research and they will sign an informed consent form.

#### **1.8.2.1 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm is a set of ideas and presumptions about the evolution of knowledge (Klakegg, 2018). In particular, the researcher singled out three axiological, epistemology and research assumptions. The researcher should make an effort to harmonize the study topic, methodology and overarching philosophy. Different perspectives may be successful in any area of study, yet they may be limited by taking an extreme stance (Klakegg, 2018). Furthermore, it is critical to emphasize that the study should not be methodologically driven; rather, the researcher's philosophical position and the social science topic being examined should inform the researcher's choice of methodology (Klakegg, 2018).

In research, the interpretative paradigm is a means of comprehending scientific information and reality. It is a study methodology based on an in-depth knowledge of reality and its underlying causes, as opposed to relying just on generic and superficial explanations (Salkind, 2018). This study will apply an interpretive paradigm, as opposed to the positivist paradigm used in the natural sciences for experimentation, manipulation, hypothesis development and testing and other quantitative procedures. This notion is context-specific and cannot be generalized. Included in interpretivism are interviews, observations and textual study.

#### **1.8.2.2 Research approach**

This is sometimes referred to as idiographic research (Patton, 2017). Insights gained from this out-of-the-ordinary case study may be applied to real-world scenarios for greater success. It is perfect for examining the progression of anything over a "defined period," whether it is an event, a person or a program (Patton 2017). In addition, they noted that the design calls for data collection through observation and interviews, regarding the

event(s), program(s), or person(s) upon which the investigation is predicated. According to Salkind (2018), case study research enables a careful evaluation of the selected unit of analysis and the collection of specific data. As a result of the researcher's proximity and the responses of study participants, case studies are regarded as superior to other qualitative research methodologies in capturing the reality of a given unit of analysis. Since the study aims to investigate the effects of efficient municipal administration on the delivery of efficient services in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, a case study will be judged more suitable.

### **1.8.2.3 Methodological choice**

Common research methodologies include qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. According to Kaushik and Walsh (2019), choosing between qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research is an epistemological challenge. The approach used is determined by the subject matter expertise available. This study will use a qualitative research approach to assess the influence of efficient municipal administration on service delivery in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. Research using qualitative approaches seeks to learn more about how things happen in the real world and what people think about them (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019).

Due to the qualitative method (Schwandt, 2020), there will be a plethora of information and a clear image of the participants' views in this study. This study was a social science research in which the researcher sought to comprehend the living circumstances of the participants. Schwandt (2020) highlighted that qualitative research aids in comprehending the life experiences of participants. This process comprises the development of theories and methodologies that investigate people's interpretations, thoughts and inspirations based on data acquired from diverse participants.

Municipal maladministration has not only happened in the past, but also persists in the majority of municipalities currently. In addition, past studies have shown that the topic has several dimensions and levels. According to Rosenthal (2019), qualitative research is ideal for attempting to comprehend the significance of individuals or groups affected by a community problem such as maladministration.

In addition, a qualitative research method is ideal for this research since it employs an exploratory method that collects data via stories and interviews. Rosenthal (2019) acknowledged that exploratory research projects most often use the qualitative research approach. When researchers lack a firm grasp of the challenges to be faced throughout the investigation, this strategy is perfect. The researcher may learn more about the topic at hand and help shape the research design via inductive reasoning by conducting a qualitative study. Regarding the above, Rosenthal (2019) argued that qualitative research is essential for deciphering the creation of complex systems inside persons and organizations.

In addition, the researcher believed that qualitative research is crucial for determining what individuals experience and how they understand these interactions. This was accomplished via a focused and protracted approach with participants in a typical setting, and involving oneself to discover the fundamental reasons for what one is attempting to comprehend (Rosenthal, 2019).

#### **1.8.2.4 Research Strategy**

A "research strategy" is defined by Moser and Korstjens (2017) as "a plan for data gathering and analysis to assess a certain theoretical viewpoint". The strategy of a study that provides recommendations for data collection and analysis is referred to as research design. The researcher will employ an exploratory study method to examine the effects of competent municipal administration on efficient service delivery. Leedy *et al.*(2019) state that the goal of any exploratory research should be to gain new knowledge, develop novel ideas or deepen one's understanding of a subject.

Due to a lack of past studies on the issue at hand, exploratory research designs are frequently used in instances where a precise focus is not yet established (Dannels, 2018). Investigative research is intended to provide the researcher with new perspectives on a problem or circumstance (Dannels, 2018). There are a variety of reasons for conducting an exploratory study as Dannels (2018) demonstrates. These reasons include achieving the author's goal of better understanding the subject matter; validating the viability of conducting a more thorough review; advancing the development of methodologies for future studies; clarifying the study's core concepts and determining research objectives.

### **1.8.2.5 Time horizon**

The impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality will be assessed for the period 2018 to 2022.

### **1.8.2.6 Study population and sampling**

#### **1.8.2.6.1 Target population**

This is relevant to the group that is the focus of the study. In this context, Bryman (2019) reaffirmed the impossibility of studying the entire population and the necessity of focusing on a particular demographic. After that, a sample is chosen from that group. The Metsimaholo Local Municipality workers who have job descriptions or duties connected to municipal management and administration make up the target group for this study. Employees whose work is vital to providing services are also included. As a result, those considered to be support personnel who are only peripherally involved in these tasks, including traffic department employees have been omitted from the population.

#### **1.8.2.6.2 Sampling**

Sampling consists of selecting a subset of a population from which to draw useful information and knowledge (Bryman, 2019). It is a difficult procedure since the phenomena under inquiry and the research questions should inform it (Bryman, 2019). The researcher used a method called purposive sampling since participants were chosen because they fit the profile of an ideal group. To be selected, a person must fulfil pre-determined criteria or "firm criterion" (Bryman, 2019).

Any sampling bias must be avoided so that the sample does not reflect a subset of the population. Anti-bias measures were put in place to ensure that inhabitants from more wealthy neighbourhoods were not excluded from consideration. As the research requires several kinds of municipal authorities within the Metsimaholo Local Municipality who are directly engaged in the management and administration of the municipality, purposive sampling will be considered appropriate for this investigation.

### **1.8.2.6.3 Sample size**

Sample size is the proportion of the total population that will be chosen to participate in the research (Creswell, 2018). For this study, ten (10) Metsimaholo Local Municipality workers who have job descriptions or duties connected to municipal management and administration were selected to take part in this study.

### **1.8.2.7 Designing the measuring instrument**

The term "research instrument" refers to anything a scientist may use to collect data for further study (Creswell, 2018). Researchers often announce the study's design by mentioning both the research question and a specific evidence source, such as an interview from which data will be gathered. Interviewing, according to Creswell (2018), is a necessary and sufficient method of investigation. Structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviewing methods might be used in research (Dannels, 2018). Interview questions with a clear and obvious focus are what Salkind (2018) describes as "interview questions with a clear and evident emphasis". Dannels (2018) notes that in structured interviews, the interviewer has a limited amount of discretion to depart from a pre-prepared interview agenda. Unstructured interviews allow the interviewer to go further into an area of particular interest without regard to a predetermined timetable (Ezzy, 2018). Maree and Maree (2019) argue that there are varying degrees of structure between organized and unstructured interviews.

An outline of topics and questions to be discussed throughout the interview is termed an interview schedule in semi-structured interviews (Maree, 2019). In Ary *et al.*'s (2017) definition of an interview schedule, the interviewer is given a list of subjects and their corresponding elements to address during the interview. Semi-structured interviews as argued by Ezzy (2018), enable participants to relate their stories while also providing the researcher with the opportunity to probe further if necessary. In the opinion of Ary *et al.* (2017), semi-structured interviews are an adaptable method of gathering data. The semi-structured interviews had the characteristics that the researchers in this study hoped to accomplish. This study thus employs semi-structured interviews for purposes of data collection.

### **1.8.2.8 Collection of data**

In most circumstances, the method of data collection will influence the specifics of the data collection process. The researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with the individuals to collect information. According to the interview schedule, the respondents will be given a series of semi-structured questions. These questions are used to have a better understanding of the influence of efficient municipal administration on efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. Insights gleaned from interviews benefit greatly from this back-and-forth interaction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The targeted population is small enough to make interviews feasible. Moreover, interviews provide richer data insights than surveys alone. The findings of the interviews were recorded on the necessary equipment and preserved on a laptop, but only with the applicant's consent and a password. The data will be gathered via semi-structured interviews in this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), conducting "in-depth, semi-structured interviews" might help researchers "create a deeper research connection with study participants".

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), a semi-structured interview is more flexible than a structured interview in terms of asking questions. A researcher may go into more detail using semi-structured interviews because of their flexibility. The researcher may use semi-structured interviews that allows for extra and probing queries to get a better understanding of the participants' behaviours, attitudes, thoughts and interpretations of the data.

Probing and open-ended inquiries allow participants to react on their terms, rather than imposing a predetermined response (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). To avoid the rigidity of a predetermined set of questions, semi-structured interviews are more open, allowing new ideas to be generated as a result of what the interviewee says. A significant disadvantage of interviews is that they are both costly and time-consuming. The respondents may be concerned about their privacy if they are not given the option to remain anonymous throughout the survey process. In qualitative interviews, McMillan and Schumacher (2018) provide "verbatim accounts of what occurs throughout the interviews". As a result, a written record of the dialogue might serve as proof of its completeness and consistency. See annexure A for the interview guide.

### **1.8.2.9 Statistical analysis**

Data analysis, according to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2017), comprises putting the reviewer's data into some kind of order, meaning or configuration. This is similar to McMillan (2018), who sees it as a process of gathering data, recognizing trends and summarizing data with the option of utilizing statistical processes. In particular, in qualitative research methods, McMillan (2018) focuses on the results, such as the formation of broad hypotheses. In essence, it is a method for transforming data into knowledge. Software such as ATLAS.ti, NVivo, Ethnography and Qiqqa are utilized in qualitative research as tools for data analysis (Willis, J2017). These technologies can code and categorize large amounts of narrative text or written content (Willis, 2017). Willis (2017) is of the view that computer-assisted software can effectively classify and analyse crucial components of qualitative data. Consequently, in this study, the researcher will employ ATLAS.ti, a computer-aided program to analyse the semi-structured interview data and validate the results.

After collecting the data, it will be analysed thematically. The researcher's role is to examine the study's subjects in search of commonalities and trends. Comprehensive descriptions of what is stated are the most important data in qualitative interviews, say McMillan and Schumacher (2018). As a result, the interviews will be recorded to ensure that every word is included and that there is proof of consistency (Moser & Korstjens 2017). Using words and paragraphs, the researcher will categorize the interview transcripts. The researcher was able to gather and arrange relevant data on how local newspapers utilize social media to report on breaking news using this strategy. The researcher used this method. While performing the analysis, the goals of the research were kept in mind (Patton, 2017).

### **1.8.2.10 Reliability and validity (Trustworthiness)**

Leedy and Ormrod (2018) defined trustworthiness as the degree to which others view the study's findings as credible and dependable, such that they can be taken seriously. It is a valuable concept that should not be disregarded but be included as a core component of any study. It ensures the quality of the study procedure and findings. According to Mason (2017), four criteria for evaluating trustworthiness; namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity have garnered a great deal of support among

scholars. Validating qualitative research methods, these later researchers utilize quality, credibility, trustworthiness, conformability and interpretative rigour. Therefore, there is no unanimity among the majority of renowned scholars. This researcher used Guba's four criteria; namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity as well as Anney's (2014) criterion for authenticity in this study. These requirements are elaborated upon below:

#### **a. Credibility**

The "credibility" of a study is measured by how well its findings match the conditions it depicts in the real world (King & Horrocks, 2020). Validation of results encourages trust in the dependability of the findings. According to King and Horrocks (2020), maintaining the highest levels of scientific rigour while simultaneously being open and truthful with the public is a requirement for credibility. Multiple procedures, including triangulation will be utilized to make sure that the research complies with the credibility criteria. This helps to identify any contradictory and unfavourable facts based on the opinions of the participants. This is because people are likely to have varying and occasionally contradictory knowledge in real life. In these situations, the respondents were informed of the interpretations and findings before they were finalized so they could verify that their opinions had been accurately captured.

#### **b. Transferability**

According to Willis (2017), transferability in qualitative research refers to how readily results may be implemented in different contexts and new groups of participants. Transparency, according to Yates (2017) is "the degree to which a reader may generalize a study's results to his/her circumstances". In order to guarantee the study's transferability, the researcher will keep in mind the need to present findings straightforwardly. This refers to the capacity of researchers to apply their findings in various contexts. To guarantee that the findings may be applied to other situations and people with comparable characteristics, the participants and their surroundings will be described in great detail throughout the study. As the study unfolds, the researcher will keep an eye out for an even distribution of participants. For the study to be transferable, the setting, participants and research technique must be described in detail. Readers will

be able to determine whether or not the results may be used in a different context by looking at relevant information that is accessible.

### **c. Dependability**

A study needs to be repeatable so that the same results can be predicted even if the experiment is repeated for it to be reliable (Yates, 2017). According to Kitzinger (2017), dependability is referred to as "the challenge of consistency across time, researchers, and analytical processes" in a study's methodology. Therefore, "reliability" refers to the consistency of a study's results across time. As such, there must be a clear method in place for conducting the study. The study will go into extensive detail about the data collection, data analysis and findings. The raw data will be compared to the findings of the researcher. There will be an audit trail, which is a record of all research practices and tasks to verify that the study is real (Kitzinger, 2017). As a result, the study will make it possible for a subsequent researcher to do a comparative study and get the same results. Given the differing perspectives of participants in connection with a certain lived experience or place that may provide some unique elements, this is a challenging criterion in qualitative work.

### **d. Confirmability**

Confirmability is defined as the ability of the results to be independently verified or corroborated (Willis, 2017). The researcher will record the techniques used to confirm and follow data throughout the investigation. The researcher will deliberately look for and report on instances that are in stark contrast to prior findings. The research findings that are "confirmable" are those that are free of the researcher's biases and preconceptions (Kitzinger, 2017). Using triangulation approaches can reduce researcher bias. Therefore, using a variety of methodologies improves the confirmability of research findings. As a result, the researcher acknowledges and justifies his theories and presumptions, which he documented in writing for future use. Interferences and influences will be removed while interacting with the responders to guarantee conformability.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Codes of ethics are necessary to "ensure the integrity and validity of the research" (Willis 2017). Throughout this investigation, the research underlines the need of adhering to

ethical values. When it comes to data collection and distribution, the researcher believes that ethical issues are most likely to develop; they include participant safety and confidentiality, as well as informed consent (Willis, 2017). The researcher will offer participants all important information, including the study's purpose, methods and possible dangers to make an educated decision on participation. Participation of this study will be voluntary. Therefore no reward will be given to participants. Anonymous identities, such as "P1" for the first responder will be used in place of the respondents' real names. No requests for employee's ID numbers or private information will be made. Any extra data gathered is assured to remain private. Before their agreement or permission to participate, participants will fully and accurately be informed of the goals of the research and the interview's purpose. The participants will also be informed of the benefits of the results of the research. The individuals who agree to participate in interviews will be required to sign permission and assent papers as proof of their participation and they will be advised that they might withdraw at any moment.

The following documentation was submitted for ethical clearance:

- A fully completed and signed Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) Application for ethics approval: New application form.
- A fully completed and signed Scientific Committee Ethics Recommendation Form (SCERF).
- Signed Code of conduct forms by the supervisor(s) and it should be completed.
- The approved research proposal.
- Consent form.
- Data collection tool.
- Communication documents, if applicable .

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Since the researcher is a colleague of the participants, this section outlines the existing relationship and ways to minimise the influence of the conflict of interest on the research results.

### **Hierarchical relationship**

The researcher is a colleague of the participants in the study. He is a senior manager at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality and the participants are all his subordinates.

### **Measures to minimize conflict of interest**

- The researcher will disclose his relationship with the participants to the participants and to the ethics committee that is overseeing the study.
- The researcher will take steps to ensure that the participants feel comfortable providing honest and unbiased information. This may include using a third-party to collect the data or using a confidentiality agreement.
- The researcher will analyze the data carefully to identify any potential biases that may have been introduced due to the conflict of interest.

By taking these measures, the researcher can minimize the impact of the conflict of interest on the study.

### **1.10 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

This research is of significance as it contributes the following:

#### **a. Theoretical contribution**

This study presented direct empirical data on a topic that had not been thoroughly researched in South Africa previously and its goal is to fill the knowledge gap on the influence of efficient municipal administration on service delivery in the local government sector. This research project is an academic effort that aims to demonstrate the importance of efficient municipal administration in South Africa's local government system. It is thus anticipated that it will add to the literature on municipal administration, service delivery improvement initiatives, local government as well as provide a resource for further study. Such contributions will aid in filling the vacuum in the literature that has been noted since there is so limited research on South African local governments that examines how successful their administration is at providing services.

#### **b. Practical contribution**

An important practical contribution is to establish a framework for the delivery of basic municipal services that will help municipalities react to and prevent unfavourable audit

findings from the Auditor General (2020) and secure unqualified audit opinions. The Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State was selected as a case study due to the high volume of service delivery protests in the municipality and the municipal authorization to deliver the intended basic municipal services of potable water and sanitation, street lighting, roads and storm water management and garbage collection (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2017c).

Therefore, the study's overarching goal is to educate local governments in South Africa about the value of good municipal administration and its specific purpose is to determine how much inadequate administration contributes to the subpar provision of municipal services in Metsimaholo. The study's findings will help municipal officials in other areas learn more about the connection between strong municipal leadership and the smooth operation of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality's most fundamental municipal services. Municipalities in South Africa with inefficient management systems are unable to improve the subpar delivery of even the most fundamental services to their residents (Muller, 2020). There were no studies found by the researcher that examined how efficient local councils affected local government service delivery in South Africa. The researcher hopes that our findings will help fill this knowledge gap.

### **1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A key limitation is the paucity of research on the effects of successful municipal management. To add to the obstacle, literature from both developed and developing nations will be employed to analyse the examined issue.

### **1.12 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY CHAPTERS**

This study consists of 5 chapters. The arrangements of these chapters will be as follows:

- **Chapter 1**

This chapter introduces the study by outlining the research topic, providing context, and describing the methodology.

- **Chapter 2**

This chapter describes the literature review, in which many types of research are researched and analysed to identify gaps and make suggestions.

- **Chapter 3**

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and data collection techniques.

- **Chapter 4**

Provides detailed information about the collected data.

- **Chapter 5**

This chapter will contain the study's findings, limitations and suggestions for further research.

### 1.13 TIMEFRAME

Item	Period
Research Proposal	15 February 2023
Chapter 1 Introduction	February 2023
Chapter 2 Literature review	March 2023
Chapter 3 Research Methodology	April 2023
Chapter 4 Data analysis and discussions	May 2023
Chapter 5 Summary and conclusions	June 2023
Draft dissertation	June 2023
Final dissertation for submission	June 2023

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The debate over the relationship between competent municipal administration and improved service delivery has acquired pace in the modern period. This conversation is especially significant in the context of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, an area in South Africa that encompasses a dynamic mosaic of communities. This chapter attempts to deconstruct and scrutinise the various features of municipal administration, its current state, prospective options for improvement and the resulting influence on service delivery within the Metsimaholo precincts.

The pursuit of administrative excellence and hence improved service delivery is based on a thorough examination of empirical research, policy landscapes and community participation approaches (Madumo & Koma, 2019). This intellectual journey is crucial in laying the groundwork for a sustainable administrative ecology that is both functional and sensitive to the demands and aspirations of the public.

The first section of this chapter takes the reader on a tour through a variety of empirical studies that have delved deeply into the world of service delivery. This portion promises a rich tapestry of insights and nuances that have moulded the outlines of municipal administration across the world, notably in South Africa. The subsequent discourse intends to outline the fundamental patterns that control the link between administrative efficacy and service delivery through a rigorous study of current literature, therefore generating a fertile foundation for additional investigation and analysis.

Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the importance of community involvement and participation, a pillar with the capacity to reshape municipal administration dynamics. This chapter acknowledges the critical role of policy interventions and strategic planning in defining the course of municipal administration. The researcher intends to carve out a roadmap that coincides with the ultimate objective of administrative excellence through a detailed discussion on policy proposals and the subtleties of legal frameworks.

## **2.2 BACKGROUND OF THE METSIMAHOLO LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

### **2.2.1 Geographical Location**

In South Africa's Free State province, the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, which is a component of the Sasolburg area, is crucial. It shares boundaries with a number of notable municipalities and takes up a sizeable portion of the Free State's northern region. Due largely to its closeness to numerous important economic centres in the area, this location is advantageously positioned geographically to support a variety of economic activity, benefiting from both rich agricultural areas and a strong industrial sector (Madumo & Koma, 2019).

The municipality has a significant impact on the regional economy according to its geographic location. The area has the potential to develop into a thriving economic powerhouse since it acts as a corridor connecting many strategically important places in South Africa. According to Netswera (2022), the connection it offers is a key enabler of regional development, boosting integration and cooperation among surrounding towns. Additionally, its proximity to the Vaal River emphasises its important role in the management of water resources.

The municipality's urban districts are characterised by industrial growth, while the rural sections still prioritise agriculture. According to Khomo *et al.* (2023), this duality exhibits a singular blending of urban and rural contexts, each with distinct administrative and service delivery requirements. Understanding regional subtleties is essential for developing plans that successfully meet the population's variety of requirements.

### **2.2.2 Historical Context of Administration**

The Metsimaholo Local Municipality's administrative history is inextricably linked to South Africa's larger historical background. Throughout its history, the municipality has gone through various transformations, each of which has shaped its administrative structures and policies. During the pre-apartheid era, the region was a focus for agricultural growth, with the arrival of diverse farming communities (Madumo & Koma, 2019). The government in the region was defined by segregation practises that were essential in dividing urban growth along racial lines during the apartheid era. The time saw the entrenchment of infrastructure inequities, which had a substantial impact on service

delivery patterns (Netswera, 2022). The post-apartheid era was a watershed moment in the Metsimaholo's administrative environment. With the end of apartheid came a slew of reforms aimed at redressing past injustices and promoting inclusive prosperity.

Scholars such as Khomo *et al.* (2023) and Mashabela (2021) emphasise various perspectives on post-apartheid administrative changes in municipalities. According to Mncedisi and Nkomo (2019), the shift was not as quick and successful, citing bureaucratic red tape and administrative errors as ongoing problems. Fox and Madumo and Koma, (2019), on the other hand recognise the progress made in establishing democratic government and community involvement, while admitting that significant problems remain. While progress has been achieved in restructuring the administrative environment, the researcher believes that the vestiges of historical imbalances continue to pose substantial obstacles in service delivery, demanding concentrated efforts towards supporting inclusive growth and decreasing inequalities (Madumo & Koma, 2019).

Administrative frameworks have become more geared towards encouraging participatory government in recent years, with a strong emphasis on community participation and cooperation (Madumo & Koma, 2019). Furthermore, policies have been reoriented to encourage integrated development planning, with the goal of promoting holistic and sustainable growth (Netswera, 2022). These initiatives have been critical in reinventing administrative procedures inside the municipality, with the goal of guaranteeing successful service delivery that matches the community's various demands.

### **2.2.3 Demographic Overview**

In order to assess the effects of municipal administration in the area, it is essential to comprehend the demography of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The administrative burden and the type of services that are required for a location are frequently predicted by demographic data. Therefore, it would be advantageous to look at important demographic data such as population density, age distribution, educational level and employment information. The municipality has a broad demographic profile highlighted by a range of age and ethnic demographics. According to Statistics South Africa's (2018) statistics, the Metsimaholo's population is continuously growing. The strain on municipal infrastructure and services increases as a result of this. The growth trends suggests a young population, which necessitates the improvement and extension of educational and

recreational facilities to promote an atmosphere that is favourable for both personal and professional progress (Statistics South Africa, 2018).

The nearby businesses and agricultural operations have a big impact on the job market in the municipality. According to employment data, a sizable majority of the population is employed in the industrial sector, which is a substantial contributor to the local economy. Although there has been an increase in educational attainment, there are still gaps that call for focused actions in order to close the gap and promote equitable opportunities (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020).

A detailed examination of the housing infrastructure reveals a varied environment that blends urban and rural settings. In contrast to rural regions, which still struggle with basic infrastructure requirements, the urban areas are characterised by improved infrastructure. While Khomo *et al.* (2023) links this difference to historical segregations that have been difficult to overcome post-apartheid, Mashabela (2021) contend that urban-rural discrepancies in infrastructure are a chronic problem in municipal administration in South Africa. According to the researcher's perspective, efforts should be focused on encouraging infrastructure development that accommodates the different population makeup, so promoting inclusion and equity. The historical causes of these gaps cannot be overlooked.

#### **2.2.4 Overview of Existing Municipal Services**

Evaluating current municipal services is an important part of determining the efficacy of municipal administration in Metsimaholo. The municipal government offers a wide range of services, including public health, education, housing and waste management. These services are critical to the development of a productive, vibrant and healthy community. However, the delivery of these services has come under fire, particularly in terms of efficiency and inclusion. The municipality, like other regions in South Africa, has faced the difficulty of service delivery protests, which are frequently ascribed to perceived deficiencies in service provision and disparities in resource distribution (Africa, 2020).

The local municipality has launched a number of initiatives to improve basic services such as water and sanitation. The infrastructure improvements have been designed to solve the backlog in service supply while also developing a sense of equity in service delivery.

The execution of the IDP has been critical to simplifying the municipality's service delivery processes (Matsiliza, 2018).

According to Ingwani *et al.* (2023), successful municipal service delivery is inextricably related to the concepts of good governance and administrative efficacy. They also emphasise the importance of community involvement in defining the trajectory of service delivery. Phera (2021) on the other hand, stresses the difficulties faced by past discrepancies in service delivery, which has hampered the smooth transition to a more inclusive service delivery paradigm. With the researcher's input, it is clear that while significant strides have been made in improving municipal services, a concerted effort focusing on inclusivity and addressing historical disparities is critical to fostering a municipality that is responsive to the diverse needs of its populace (Netswera, 2022).

As a result, it is critical for the administration to be adaptive, nimble and responsive to the changing dynamics and demands of the community. As the municipality progresses through various stages of growth and development, a nuanced approach to service delivery based on the principles of equality and inclusion becomes essential in order to meet the changing requirements of a varied population (Netswera, 2022).

## **2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.3.1 Definition of Municipal Administration**

#### **2.3.1.1 Different Approaches to Municipal Administration**

Municipal administration strategies have many facets, fusing historical traditions with the shifting demands and challenges of modern society. Understanding these strategies requires a thorough examination of the many ideas and practises controlling local governance in the South African setting, notably in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. Municipal administration was first governed by the bureaucratic method, which is founded on the ideas of hierarchical structures and distinct divisions of labour (Chukwuneme, Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2019). This method is criticised for its rigidity and inefficiency but prioritises stability and homogeneity (An Explorative Approach to the Evolving Municipal Landscape of South Africa: 1993-2020, 2021).

The New Public Management (NPM) strategy, which was developed in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and promoted decentralisation, market orientation and results-driven governance, is frequently contrasted with the bureaucratic model (Molepo, 2021).

The Collaborative Governance method, which emphasises the active participation of citizens in governance processes, arose as an option in light of the trend towards more participatory governance frameworks (Oyebanjo *et al.*, 2020). This strategy promotes openness and inclusion, despite difficulties in harmonising differing points of view and interests. The cooperative strategy may help to cultivate a community-focused government in Metsimaholo, where public involvement is crucial for guiding development initiatives.

A growing trend in municipal administration is the sustainability approach, which emphasises holistic growth that takes into account economic, social and environmental factors (Balie & Horn, 2021). This strategy represents a change towards a system of governance that strikes a balance between environmental protection and economic growth. This is especially important in locales like Metsimaholo that are seeing fast industrial expansion (Balie & Horn, 2021). A harmonised strategy, according to the research, would best benefit the Metsimaholo community by fusing the effectiveness of the NPM approach with the inclusiveness of collaborative governance and the holistic vision of sustainability.

### **2.3.1.2 Key Principles of Municipal Administration**

Municipal administration's guiding tenets are crucial in creating the operational framework and strategic direction of local governing organisations. The concept of accountability is the most important of them, since it is a vital prerequisite for ensuring that municipal administration runs in a transparent and accountable manner (Sanjay & Govender, 2018). This is strongly related to the transparency concept, which calls for transparent government procedures that create confidence between the administration and citizens (Klug, 2021).

Another pillar of municipal administration is equity, which ensures that resources and services are distributed in a way that promotes social justice and inclusion (Netswera, 2023).

Efficiency and effectiveness are equally important in ensuring that the administration is capable of providing services in a timely and appropriate manner while optimising resource utilisation (Shpachuk & Kuleba, 2022). Furthermore, innovation has become a guiding concept, pushing municipal administrations to implement creative solutions to modern difficulties (Sadovnikov, 2022). This is consistent with the notion of adaptability, which requires administrations to be flexible and sensitive to changing community demands and dynamics (Chukwuneme, Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2019).

After thoroughly assessing these concepts, it is clear that their inclusion would be vital in establishing a resilient and progressive municipal government in Metsimaholo. The researcher recommends for a determined effort to build an administrative framework that incorporates these characteristics, creating a governance system that is open, responsible and responsive to the Metsimaholo community's dynamic needs and ambitions.

### **2.3.1.3 Municipal Administration in the South African Context**

The dynamics of local government, including the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, in South Africa, are deeply rooted in a complex and rich sociopolitical past. This history has had a significant impact on the administrative structures and methods of service delivery used there. As stated in the article of the Constitution of the *"An Explorative Approach to the Evolving Municipal Landscape of South Africa: 1993-2020,"* (2021), local governments in South Africa are tasked with fostering social and economic development.

The local government sector witnessed significant transformations in the post-apartheid era, with the main goals of addressing past inequities and promoting inclusion and equity in service delivery (Molepo, 2021). The idea of participatory local governance, which encourages community involvement in the formulation and execution of policies came into existence (Oyebanjo *et al.*, 2020). This strategy uses inclusive growth and sustainable development to reduce the gaps in socio-economic inequality.

Additionally, the White Paper on Local administration (1998) outlined the crucial responsibilities of municipalities, including supporting social and economic growth and delivering transparent, democratic and accountable administration. Municipalities are required to foster citizen involvement in local government issues as well as the promotion

of a secure and healthy environment (Republic of South Africa, 1998). According to Balie and Horn (2021), it is essential for regional governments, especially Metsimaholo, to operationalize these mandates through strong implementation plans, administrative frameworks and policy frameworks. This means using local resources and capabilities, cultivating partnerships and leading activities that promote regional economic growth and raise the standard of living for local citizens.

The importance of institutional capacity in influencing the effectiveness of municipal administration is emphasised by Madumo and Koma (2019). The achievement of developmental goals depends critically on the interplay of managerial skills, financial management and governance structures. Therefore, there is an urgent need to promote a culture of accountability and openness in municipal operations as well as to cultivate administrative excellence.

Phera (2021) makes the case for a nuanced method for comprehending and analysing municipal administration in the context of South Africa. In developing municipal administrative practises and service delivery results, scholars emphasise the intersectionality of different elements, including socio-economic dynamics, geographical configurations and political pressures. Writing policies and initiatives that connect with the distinct contextual realities of various municipalities requires a rigorous understanding of these aspects (Phera, 2021).

In sum, municipal administration in South Africa is a multifaceted field with a wide range of affecting elements and dynamics. According to the researcher, a thorough comprehension of these factors might be the first step towards a revitalised municipal administration in Metsimaholo. Realising the desired growth trajectory for the Metsimaholo Local Municipality may need a concerted effort to strengthen institutional capacity, promote participatory governance and promote sustainable development.

## **2.3.2 Concept of Service Delivery**

### **2.3.2.1 Definition and Significance**

In today's local government debate, the notion of service delivery remains a critical area that defines the effectiveness and efficiency of municipal administrations, particularly in South African settings where municipalities like the Metsimaholo Local Municipality

function. It represents the supply of vital services and amenities to the community, which frequently includes utilities such as water and electricity, waste management, infrastructure development and other services. This section defines service delivery and discusses its significance within the framework of municipal government (Alam, 2019). Service delivery is predicated on meeting the basic needs of the people and is often used as a barometer of a government's effectiveness and commitment to improving the lives of its citizens (Abdallah, Farghaly & Sebaay, 2019). The range of services provided is extensive, including anything from basic infrastructural needs to more nebulous goals like promoting social harmony and ensuring the public's safety. To effectively manage such a wide range of services, administrators must use a holistic strategy that prioritises cross-sector cooperation and long-term planning.

According to Alam (2019), service delivery is fundamentally about ensuring that services reach the people who need them the most. This point of view emphasises the importance of equity and accessibility in service delivery. The equity discourse in service provision articulates that services should not only be provided but also be accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status (Auditor-General of South Africa. 2020). As a result, communities must develop plans to remove obstacles to access and promote inclusion.

Scholars claim that effective service delivery has a direct impact on economic growth and development from the standpoint of economic repercussions. According to Botes (2018), the quality of municipal services always influences the business environment and may influence investment decisions. As a result, efficient service delivery systems can act as a driver for local economic development and stability. Furthermore, according to Breakfast *et al.* (2019), the relevance of service delivery extends beyond the provision of basic facilities to include the larger purpose of improving people's quality of life. It implies the concept of developing sustainable communities in which people may prosper and live satisfying lives. This viewpoint is inextricably linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which push countries to build communities that are economically viable, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable (Breakfast *et al.*, 2019).

Brilliant (2018) offers opposing perspectives on the significance of community engagement in service delivery, unpacking the scholarly discussions around service

delivery. While Chigwada and de Visser (2021) contends that community engagement may sometimes slow down the process owing to bureaucratic entanglements, de Visser and Poswa (2019) strongly argues for communities' active participation in developing the services that directly affects them. This dispute highlights the complexities of managing service delivery dynamics, which needs a sophisticated strategy that combines efficiency and democratic governance.

It is critical to adopt a multifaceted approach to understanding service delivery by critically synthesising diverse views. In view of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, it would imply a paradigm shift in which service delivery is transformative rather than transactional, encouraging sustainable development and inclusive progress. It is critical to cultivate a service delivery paradigm that combines efficiency and justice, economic growth and environmental sustainability and community engagement with administrative agility.

### **2.3.2.2 Different Models of Service Delivery**

Examining different service delivery models provides a comprehensive picture of the numerous ways that communities could use to improve the quality of their service delivery (Balie & Horn, 2021). Being an important administrative unit in South Africa, the Metsimaholo Local Municipality may choose a variety of service delivery techniques that might be in line with a wide range of accepted theories and practises in the administrative literature. Examining several paradigms, the emphasis is on community-based, public-private partnership, centralised and decentralised models, which are fundamental in forming the current structure of service delivery systems internationally.

Consolidated control, wherein a single authority manages the planning and execution of services, is a characteristic of the centralised model of service delivery. The benefits of this paradigm are emphasised by academics like Enwereji and Potgieter (2018), particularly its ability to bring consistency and standardisation to service delivery. Roberts (2016) disputes this, pointing out that centralization could inhibit regional innovation and limit the response to local demands. In light of these observations, it is crucial to recognise the need for preserving a delicate balance between centralised management and localised response in a complex location like Metsimaholo, which is home to several groups with various requirements and preferences.

The decentralised approach, in contrast, places more emphasis on allocating responsibility for service delivery to various local administrative entities, promoting a sense of autonomy and enabling services to be customised in accordance with local needs (Felix, 2021). Although this paradigm encourages responsiveness, it occasionally draws flak for the possibility that it could lead to fragmentation and inconsistent service delivery (Gukelberger, 2018). However, adopting a decentralised strategy might offer a platform for fostering community-centric initiatives, nurturing local innovations and facilitating a tailored approach to service delivery for municipalities like Metsimaholo, which are distinguished by a rich tapestry of diverse communities.

The community-based model, which actively involves the community in the design and delivery of services, is another strategy in the field of service delivery. According to Makoti and Odeku (2018), this strategy can promote community empowerment and guarantee that services are tailored to the community's particular requirements. But according to Moloto and Lethoko (2018), for such models to be successful, there must be a high degree of community preparation and cohesion. As a result, encouraging a strategy that encourages community involvement while also adding expert contributions may result in a cooperative yet knowledgeable service delivery model in the Metsimaholo region.

The public-private partnership (PPP) model, which brings together the government and the private sector to provide services, is a final example of a collaborative strategy. Due to the involvement of private businesses, this paradigm is frequently praised for fostering innovation and efficiency. However, Muller (2020) provide warnings about possible hazards, such as placing an excessive emphasis on profit-making at the expense of service quality. Thus, it is crucial to design PPPs in such a way that it maximises the benefits of both industries, encouraging the development of an effective and customer-focused service delivery model.

In order to create a service delivery system that is robust and flexible and that reflects the distinctive socio-economic environment of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, it is crucial to weave an account that contains the synergies of these models as the story develops. A diverse strategy that considers local dynamics and makes use of the advantages of many models may be able to steer the municipality towards effective and inclusive service delivery.

### **2.3.2.3 Importance of Efficient Service Delivery in Local Governance**

The importance of effective service delivery within local government serves as a cornerstone in supporting sustainable growth and developing civic satisfaction in the broad scheme of municipal administration (Balie & Horn, 2021). South Africa's Metsimaholo Local Municipality is no exception. This section examines the several factors that highlight the importance of efficient service delivery, focusing on its role in promoting social fairness, boosting economic vitality, supporting community well-being and aiding environmental sustainability.

First and foremost, ensuring social fairness is an essential component of municipal governance. According to Ndevu and Muller (2018), effective municipal service delivery is critical since it guarantees that all communities, regardless of socio-economic status, have access to essential facilities and services. Rosenthal (2019) agrees, adding that inclusive service delivery methods have the ability to reduce current socio-economic inequities, building an inclusive society in which every individual may live a dignified existence. Budding and Gradus (2017), on the other hand contends that the emphasis on efficiency can often overwhelm the requirement for equal distribution, potentially leading to disparities in service provision. As the conversation progresses, it becomes clear that Metsimaholo plays a critical role in finding a balance between efficiency and fairness, building routes that guarantee the services provided are both high-quality and inclusive.

Furthermore, the Metsimaholo region's economic viability is inextricably related to the effectiveness of service delivery. According to Sidimba (2021), by fostering suitable conditions for enterprises and investments, improved service delivery procedures may pave the way for economic growth. Balie and Horn (2021) go on to say that strong service delivery systems may be used to attract investments, stimulate innovation and facilitate economic development. Van Der Walt *et al.* (2018), on the other hand advise against a too economic approach, emphasising the importance of aligning economic objectives with social needs and environmental sustainability. As a result, developing a service delivery model that not only stimulates economic vitality but also incorporates socio-environmental issues is a top priority for the Metsimaholo municipality.

In addition, the quality of services provided by local governing organisations has a significant impact on community well-being. According to Van Helden and Reichard

(2019), responsive and citizen-centric service delivery methods can improve community satisfaction, foster social cohesion and foster trust between residents and the government. Sebola and Tsheola (2017) on the other hand adds a layer of complication suggesting that community well-being is multifaceted and includes characteristics such as community engagement and empowerment in addition to efficient services. This multilayered story calls for a sophisticated approach in Metsimaholo, one that is sensitive to the rich dynamics of community dynamics and responsive to the community's developing needs and ambitions.

Finally, the importance of effective service delivery in promoting environmental sustainability cannot be overstated. Innovative and sustainable service delivery methods, according to Abdallah, Farghaly and Sebaay (2019), may greatly contribute to environmental conservation by supporting sustainable waste management, promoting green infrastructure and aiding resource conservation. In agreement, McDonald and Smith (2016) emphasise that incorporating sustainability in service delivery is not just a policy choice, but a must in today's period of growing environmental issues. As a result, the goal of Metsimaholo should be to include environmental stewardship within the service delivery framework, thereby establishing symbiotic relationships between municipal services and the environment.

As the tale develops, it becomes clear that efficient service delivery in Metsimaholo is a multifaceted enterprise that encompasses social, economic, community and environmental aspects. A coordinated strategy that incorporates these disparate strands has the potential to construct a robust and inclusive service delivery paradigm, ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future for Metsimaholo.

## **2.4 REVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORIES**

### **2.4.1 Public Administration theory**

The theory of public administration emerges as a crucial theoretical framework in the context of the current study, which examines the effects of competent municipal administration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. This section will examine this theory in great detail, identifying its flaws while also exploring its antecedents, guiding principles and applicability to this research. Recognising the interdisciplinary nature of public

administration theory, which draws inspiration from disciplines like political science, management and sociology is essential for tracing its origins. It is believed that the writings of influential philosophers like Woodrow Wilson, who promoted the necessity for a formalised administrative structure to promote efficiency in government operations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, are what gave rise to this notion. With scholars like Max Weber outlining the fundamentals of bureaucracy, the early phase saw a focus on structural-functional methods and provided the foundation for contemporary administrative ideas (Alam 2019).

The area then saw a change towards behavioural methods in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, emphasising human components and the dynamics of administrative contexts. In this period, administrative theories underwent a revision that placed a stronger emphasis on organisational humanism and systems theory, as Henry (2015) rightly notes. This line of thought exemplifies the complex history of public administration philosophy, which is always developing to meet shifting social demands and governance paradigms.

In essence, the Public Administration theory is supported by a number of guiding principles that aim to guarantee an organised and effective administrative process. According to the Auditor-General of South Africa. (2020), the idea has historically supported the concepts of hierarchy, a distinct division of work and strict rules and regulations. The discipline, however, has subsequently developed and now employs more adaptable and responsive systems that prioritise human connections and adaptive management (Botes, 2018).

It is noteworthy that New Public Management (NPM), a reform movement that aimed to bring private sector management ideas into the public sector by emphasising efficiency, flexibility and customer-orientation, emerged in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Breakfast *et al.*, (2019) argues for a post-NPM period that restores a balanced focus on both management and governance dimensions. This theoretical change has drawn both praise and criticism. The principles of participatory governance, service-oriented administration and supporting local government development have resonance in the South African context where policies are geared towards inclusive growth and sustainable development (Brilliant. 2018).

In the context of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, the public administration theory is quite relevant. Its emphasis on building effective administrative systems is consistent with the study's main objective, which is to assess how well municipal administration supports service delivery. Furthermore, the theory offers a solid analytical framework to analyse the organisational dynamics, structures and processes inside the municipality, enabling a thorough comprehension of the variables affecting service delivery. Additionally, this theory's adaptability enables the inclusion of regional variations and community-specific demands, offering a customised approach to administrative changes. According to Chigwada and de Visser (2021), theoretical frameworks in public administration have the ability to encourage creative approaches to local government, which might spark a change in municipal service delivery methods.

The idea of public administration is not without criticism, despite its solid foundation. Its oscillation between strict bureaucratic structures and extremely flexible management techniques is one of its glaring flaws, occasionally leading to a lack of clear direction in administrative changes. De Visser and Poswa (2019) have suggested that the theory occasionally fails to account for the political specifics of administrative structures, potentially omitting the inherent power dynamics and influences that affect administrative activities. Additionally, the issue in the context of Metsimaholo is to modify the fundamental ideas of the theory to fit the distinctive socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the municipality. A one-size-fits-all strategy might not be enough, demanding subtle adjustments and creative methods to make the theory effectively implementable in the particular environment.

#### **2.4.2 Governance theory**

Governance theory may be traced back to the mid-twentieth century, when there was a growing realisation that government activities are intricately interconnected with various other variables in society. However, its popularity skyrocketed throughout the 1990s, owing largely to the emergence of globalisation and the growing demand for collaborative approaches in administration (Enwereji and Potgieter, 2018). Governance theory was initially embraced as a mechanism to delineate the increasing complexity of government functions, emphasising a broader framework that went beyond traditional governmental

structures to incorporate non-governmental elements which emphasize results-based management for example in policy formulation and implementation (Felix, 2021).

Contributions from famous researchers such as Gukelberger (2018), who proposed the notion of governance as an interactive and networked process, moving away from the siloed methods of the past, have enhanced the academic discussion surrounding this subject. This age also saw a significant emphasis on good governance, which is defined by openness, accountability and inclusion as espoused by international organisations such as the United Nations (Felix, 2021).

Governance theory is founded on a number of fundamental ideas designed to improve the efficacy and efficiency of administrative procedures. The notion of cooperation and networked governance is central to this theory, which holds that decision-making processes should engage a variety of stakeholders, including governmental agencies, the corporate sector and civil society (Makoti & Odeku, 2018). Furthermore, it emphasises decentralisation or the distribution of authority and responsibility to lower levels of government in order to enhance responsiveness and local engagement (Moloto and Lethoko, 2018).

Transparency and accountability are viewed as critical aspects in establishing trust and allowing egalitarian government in the debate surrounding this idea (Muller, 2020). Additionally, academics like Naki (2019) asserts that participatory governance is important in the African environment, particularly in South Africa, where public engagement in municipal decisions is encouraged to ensure that services are matched with community demands (Ndevu & Muller, 2018).

Furthermore, the concepts of openness and accountability are critical in scrutinising Metsimaholo's present administrative systems, perhaps providing insights into areas that need to be refined to enhance public confidence and efficiency. Furthermore, in accordance with Rosenthal (2019), it promotes a bottom-up strategy in which community needs and preferences are prioritised in administrative initiatives, an approach that can be transformational in improving municipal service delivery.

Governance theory, however, is not without constraints. Critics frequently highlights the uncertainty and complexity that might surround networked governance, with possible

confrontations amongst numerous stakeholders leading to delays and inefficiencies (Budding & Gradus, 2017). Furthermore, while the decentralised method encourages local engagement, it can often result in fragmentation and a lack of coordinated efforts in policy implementation (Sidimba, 2021). To minimise bureaucratic bottlenecks and facilitate coherent policy execution, the application of governance theory in the unique context of Metsimaholo necessitates a delicate balancing act in which collaborative methods must be harmoniously merged with centralised instructions.

## **2.5 EFFECTIVE MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION AT METSIMAHOLO**

### **2.5.1 Characteristics of Effective Municipal Administration**

#### **2.5.1.1 Leadership and Governance**

The effectiveness of a municipality's leadership and governance systems heavily influences the trajectory of development and success. According to Sanjay and Govender (2018), leadership in the setting of a municipality tends to have an inclusive stance that should go beyond transactional encounters to transformative activities that promote growth and development. Being an essential component of local administration in South Africa, Metsimaholo needs leadership that can guide the community through the socio-economic difficulties unique to the area, promote cohesion and direct growth in a sustainable direction.

Vision, creativity and a dedication to social justice are just a few of the attributes that need to be combined in order for leadership to be effective in a municipal environment (Klug, 2021). Additionally, the leadership should embody a sense of accountability and responsibility, guaranteeing the best use of resources while upholding the values of openness and public trust (Netswera, 2023). It is noteworthy how governance may support leadership efforts by facilitating smooth policy development and execution through organised, methodical and participative methods (Shpachuk & Kuleba, 2022).

#### **2.5.1.2 Financial Management**

Financial management is the backbone of municipal administration, with its success directly impacting the quality of service delivery and efficiency (Sadovnikov, 2022). Prudent financial management in the context of Metsimaholo comprises the rigorous

planning, allocation and utilisation of financial resources to enable various developmental initiatives and service delivery requirements. A municipality's financial health is heavily dependent on its ability to establish fiscal discipline and execute strong financial controls. Financial management in South African municipalities, according to Sadovnikov (2022) frequently encounters issues such as weak financial controls, corruption and inefficiency which necessitates a reformative strategy to maintain financial sustainability and effective service delivery.

Fourie (2006) agrees, arguing that improving financial management proficiency within municipalities entails developing skills and competencies in financial planning and management among municipal personnel. At the same time, a proactive approach to financial management entails the use of technologically driven financial systems that promote efficiency and transparency (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2019).

Adopting an integrated approach to financial management in Metsimaholo, which links financial planning with larger municipal development objectives might possibly create financial stability and improve service delivery. This would demand a move away from traditional financial management practises and towards creative and proactive techniques that embrace responsibility, transparency, and fiscal discipline (Sadovnikov, 2022).

### **2.5.1.3 Leadership and Human Resource Management**

Robust leadership and good human resource management are two important factors that are essential for attaining effective municipal administration (Oyebanjo *et al.*, 2020). The interplay of these factors has the potential to propel the Metsimaholo Local Municipality to hitherto unattainable levels of governance and service provision. In the context of municipal administration, leadership comprises a variety of skills and qualities that promote a cooperative and progressive atmosphere. Molepo (2021) asserts that leadership is a complicated process that entails persuading others to work towards a common objective. The leadership of Metsimaholo should ideally be rooted in inclusive ideals, promoting harmony and encouraging involvement from all facets of society. Additionally, successful leadership is aware of the complex dynamics of the local environment and makes decisions based on reality and foresight, which promotes sustainable growth (Oyebanjo *et al.*, 2020).

The cornerstone for maintaining the orderly and efficient operation of the municipal administration on the other hand is human resource management (HRM). Balie and Horn (2021) claims that HRM entails strategic and comprehensive methods for managing an organization's most valuable resource: its employees. In a varied and complicated environment like Metsimaholo, where HRM tactics may make or break the operational efficacy of municipal structures, this approach needs to be especially attentive. A culture of excellence and meritocracy should be promoted and effective HRM should include methods to support skills development (Madumo & Koma, 2019).

A closer examination of numerous models and ideas reveals that integrating leadership and HRM is essential for success in municipal administration, not merely as a precondition. According to Matsiliza (2018), organisations with strong HRM and leadership strategies frequently exhibit greater adaptation and resilience, particularly in complex and dynamic contexts like municipalities. In contrast, Ingwani *et al.* (2023) underlines the importance of servant leadership, which promotes a community-centric approach to municipal government by focusing on the development and well-being of communities and individuals. As the discussion continues, it is clear that Metsimaholo is at a turning point when the fusion of successful leadership practises may act as a catalyst for promoting an era of growth and development.

#### **2.5.1.4 Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure**

In today's world, the importance of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure cannot be overstated, particularly in encouraging successful municipal administration (Ngcobo & Roya, 2023). The Metsimaholo Local Municipality, like many other local governing bodies, is on the verge of a technology change that has the potential to redefine the way services are delivered to the community. The roots, existing condition, and future possibilities of ICT infrastructure in boosting municipal administration efficiency at Metsimaholo will be thoroughly investigated in the following sections.

Understanding the critical role that ICT infrastructure plays in modern-day governance is critical for establishing a ground-up approach. A variety of technologies, such as data analytics, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and social media are helpful in increasing openness and efficiency in government (Ngcobo & Roya, 2023). These solutions enable real-time monitoring of services, community participation and data-

driven decision-making processes, which may greatly improve service delivery quality in municipalities such as Metsimaholo.

Concurrently, the inclusion of ICT infrastructure causes a paradigm shift in the operational dynamics of municipal administration. According to Rankhumise and Jr (2019), e-Government may dramatically improve public involvement and satisfaction by enabling seamless access to government services and information. Furthermore, Efobi *et al.* (2018) asserts that digitising public services not only bridges the gap between the administration and the community, but also ushers in a new era of openness and accountability, both of which are key components in increasing public confidence.

However, it is necessary to examine the difficulties associated with integrating ICT infrastructure into local government frameworks. As observed by Louw (2022), discrepancies in digital literacy and access have the potential to deepen socio-economic inequities. Furthermore, according to Maswikaneng *et al.* (2022), the initial financial outlay and resource allocation for developing ICT infrastructure might be significant, necessitating rigorous planning and strategy design to assure long-term implementation.

Analysing the preceding conversation reveals that a nuanced strategy is necessary to support the integration of ICT infrastructure in Metsimaholo. The dynamics of the local municipality, which are characterised by different community demands and operational issues, necessitates an inclusive and flexible ICT strategy. This would include developing policies that not only promote technology innovation but also ensure that the advantages of ICT infrastructure reach all segments of the community, ensuring a coherent and inclusive development trajectory.

To that aim, a table outlining alternative ICT methods and their consequences for distinct Metsimaholo community sectors might serve as a roadmap for policy creation and implementation. It might provide a holistic picture of how ICT infrastructure can alter municipal administration by detailing prospective ICT tools, predicted outcomes and probable problems. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that Metsimaholo is at a key juncture at which the coordinated integration of ICT infrastructure may act as a catalyst in encouraging an era of growth and development. This involves a more in-depth investigation of creative ICT solutions based on the concepts of inclusion, involvement

and adaptation, promoting a municipal administration that is robust, efficient and capable of serving the different requirements of the community it serves.

### **2.5.1.5 Community engagement**

One of the key components of a successful municipal administration is community engagement, which acts as a springboard for promoting social cohesion, participatory government and sustainable development. An in-depth examination of the subtleties of community involvement in the context of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in South Africa might offer insightful tips for enhancing the effectiveness of service delivery and building a symbiotic connection between the administration and the community. The discussion that follows attempts to analyse the nuances of community participation, highlighting its crucial role in creating a thriving and adaptable municipal environment.

Understanding the theoretical foundations of a community involvement framework is essential during the crucial building phase. The ladder of citizen involvement proposed by Bladergroen and Chigona (2018), which goes from non-participation to citizen control, may be a useful framework for thinking about engagement tactics in Metsimaholo. It is also possible to use Sanjay and Govender's (2018) observations to create a thriving environment of trust and collaboration. Putnam focused on the importance of social capital in building community participation.

Establishing open lines of communication between the government and the populace is one of the fundamental tenets of successful community participation. Irvin and Netswera (2023) contend that the use of procedures for deliberative democracy can promote meaningful discussions and inclusive decision-making. This would entail creating forums where residents in Metsimaholo may express their opinions on various municipal initiatives and policies, building a feeling of ownership and cooperation. According to Shpachuk and Kuleba (2022), this encourages accountability and openness in the administrative process.

Community involvement does not, however, come without difficulties. According to Sadovnikov (2022), there is frequently a difference in how involved certain community segments are, which might result in the under representation of some groups. Additionally, Chukwuneme *et al.* (2019) noted the difficulty in juggling the interests of

many stakeholders, which calls for skillful negotiating and conflict resolution techniques. Metsimaholo would profit in this situation through using adaptable techniques to promote inclusive and equitable community involvement.

Drawing from these stories, it is clear that the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is engaged in a complex process of creating a detailed plan for community participation. Metsimaholo might enter a new paradigm of collaborative governance by creating strategies based on participatory principles, generating social capital and encouraging open discussions. A table listing the various community involvement initiatives, their possible effects and the difficulties they may create can also be used as a visual aid to direct implementation.

The story urges a further investigation into the nature of community involvement in Metsimaholo, moving the conversation forward. The research is to investigate the effectiveness of the present engagement methods as well as possible ways to promote a framework for community participation that is livelier, more diverse and more responsive. This leads to a space where community involvement transcends established limitations and develops into a powerful instrument for fostering a resilient and peaceful society.

## **2.5.2 Case Studies of Effective Municipal Administration**

### **2.5.2.1 Comparative analysis with similar municipalities in South Africa**

The assessment of the efficacy of municipal administration is inevitably associated with investigating the differentiating traits and operational dynamics across distinct municipalities in the dynamic fabric of municipal government. In the context of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in South Africa, an analytical deep dive into comparative case studies with other similar municipalities can provide a vantage point for developing feasible initiatives for improved service delivery and community participation. This section begins on a scholarly trajectory to compare Metsimaholo to municipalities with similar administrative and socio-economic environments, identifying patterns of effectiveness and opportunities for improvement.

The first phase of this research should look at the governing structures and frameworks that serve as the backbone of municipal administration. Reddy (2010) argues, via the lens of governance theory, that developing a culture of accountability and openness is a cornerstone in improving the efficiency of service delivery. Municipalities such as the

eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality, on the other hand, have embraced a participatory governance approach, which has resulted in a visible increase in service delivery by building a collaborative connection between the government and the population, according to Molepo (2021). In this context, a critical examination indicates that Metsimaholo has the ability to implement a symbiotic approach, combining both transparency-oriented and participatory governance models in order to increase administrative efficacy.

The financial management tactics used by various municipalities provide fertile ground for comparative examination. While Metsimaholo has implemented initiatives to streamline its fiscal administration, other municipalities, such as the City of Cape Town, have introduced novel financial management systems that have been lauded for their efficiency and fiscal prudence by Oyebanjo *et al.* (2020). Balie and Horn (2021) on the other hand criticises several municipalities for financial mismanagement, emphasising the critical importance of implementing effective financial management practises.

Furthermore, an investigation into the field of HRM reveals disparities in municipal tactics. According to Madumo and Koma (2019), human capital development via continual training and development has worked as a catalyst in improving service delivery in municipalities such as the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality. Ingwani *et al.* (2023) on the other hand claims that several municipalities have encountered substantial issues in HRM, which have had a negative influence on service delivery.

The discussion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure shifts to assessing the digitization effort across municipalities. Municipalities such as Johannesburg have been in the forefront of embracing technology developments, which have permitted faster service delivery and promoted an information-rich administrative environment. According to Phera (2021) this depicts the digital gap that continues in some towns, impeding the efficient use of ICT infrastructure. This story suggests that Metsimaholo has a huge chance to begin on a digital transformation path, developing measures to bridge the digital gap and establish an ICT-rich administrative ecosystem.

The discussion, which is related to community involvement, sheds light on the many tactics used by municipalities to encourage public participation, "SOUTH AFRICA: Municipal Poll" (2021), for example have emphasised the good impact of community

involvement efforts in municipalities such as Tshwane, where citizen forums and participatory budgeting have established a collaborative government paradigm (Zerihun & Mashigo, 2022). However, Willie and Nkomo, (2019) on the other hand emphasises the difficulties in developing genuine community participation in numerous towns, pointing to a schism between the government and the citizens.

### **2.5.2.2 Success stories and Best Practices**

Drawing lessons from successful stories and best practises can serve as a lighthouse within the realm of municipal administration, pointing towns in the direction of effective governance frameworks. One must first investigate the City of Cape Town's widely recognised government structure. This municipality has excelled in adopting an integrated approach to urban planning, guaranteeing that socio-economic growth is inextricably linked with environmental sustainability. According to Madumo and Koma (2019), this seamless integration is replicated in its extensive spatial development frameworks that tie community upliftment and ecological protection together. In the Metsimaholo narrative, this success story presents a chance to promote a governance structure that is based on sustainable development, tracing a path that resonates with the values of environmental stewardship and socio-economic advancement.

In the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, a number of excellent practises in community participation and service delivery are revealed. The eThekweni participatory budgeting programmes, according to Netswera (2022), have promoted a setting where the community actively participate in financial choices, ensuring that resource distribution is in line with the requirements of the grassroots. However, Siddle and Khomo *et al.* (2023) contend that there are times when bureaucratic red tape prevents the effective implementation of community decisions, notwithstanding participatory techniques.

Additionally, a thorough investigation is necessary into the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality's achievements in promoting social inclusion and economic growth. Van Donk and Mashabela (2021) claim that the municipality has taken the lead in developing policies that promote economic inclusion, ensuring that the economically disadvantaged areas of the community are integrated into the mainstream. Rulashe and Ijeoma (2022) also draw attention to the efforts made by this municipality to boost

entrepreneurial ecosystems by offering platforms and assistance to new business owners.

The Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality's achievements in implementing digital governance frameworks need special attention as the conversation moves to the area of technical breakthroughs (Ngumbela, (2021). As Galushi and Malatji (2022) claim that through launching digital transformation projects that have reduced administrative procedures, Johannesburg has carved out a place for itself in utilising technology to promote effective service delivery. On the other hand, they warn against the potential for such developments to widen the digital gap and emphasise the importance of inclusive digital initiatives.

## **2.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFFECTIVE MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **2.6.1 Empirical Studies**

#### **2.6.1.1 Analysis of the Quality of Municipal Services**

A foundational research by Luvuyo and Thandeka (2020) emphasises the importance of municipal service quality in relation to infrastructure robustness and human capital development. They assert that a municipality endowed with cutting-edge infrastructure and qualified labour is well-positioned to provide exceptional services. In line with this notion, they conducted a detailed study on various South African municipalities, concluding that a competent workforce is a critical component in improving service quality, a viewpoint shared by Luvuyo and Thandeka (2020), who emphasises the critical role of human resource development in ensuring service quality.

#### **2.6.1.2 Customer Satisfaction in Service Delivery**

Since residents are the main clients of municipal administration, the function of customer satisfaction emerges as a prominent subject as we delve deeper into the world of service delivery. Ngumbela (2022) asserts that consumer satisfaction with municipal services is closely tied to the administration's level of openness and accountability. This viewpoint is

shared by Worku (2018), who asserts that reaching high levels of customer satisfaction depends on a municipal administration's capacity to uphold openness and encourage open communication with the community. However, Bradshaw and Nomarwayi (2019) argue that in addition to openness, the effectiveness and responsiveness of the service delivery systems are crucial in guaranteeing customer satisfaction.

After weighing these conflicting opinions, the story emerges that an integrated strategy encompassing openness, efficiency and responsiveness should be used by the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in order to nurture a high level of customer satisfaction. The discussion that follows will be focused on creating plans that guarantee a harmonious blending of these components, creating an environment that is synonymous with customer happiness and high-quality services.

It is essential to use a methodical strategy going ahead in order to comprehend and evaluate numerous customer satisfaction measurements and indicators. By utilising frameworks like the SERVQUAL model, we may get a more in-depth understanding of the aspects of service quality and customer satisfaction. The reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness aspects of this model are five areas that might be used as focal points for assessing customer satisfaction in the context of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

As the story develops, it becomes clear that a comprehensive strategy that balances infrastructural robustness, human resource competency, transparency and efficiency is the only way to ensure customer happiness and high-quality service delivery. In the sections that follow, we will delve further into these characteristics and provide practical insights and strategic frameworks that may assist the Metsimaholo Local Municipality usher in a new age of service delivery excellence.

## **2.6.2 Challenges in Establishing Effective Relationships**

### **2.6.2.1 Bureaucratic hurdles**

Bureaucratic systems are intrinsically fraught with procedural delays, which Abdallah, Farghaly and Sebaay (2019) attributes to hierarchical structures and strict adherence to formal rules. Red tape, as it is colloquially known, has been recognised as a substantial impediment to aiding quick decision-making processes. The Metsimaholo Local

Municipality is no exception in this circumstance. Drawing parallels from other municipalities, it is clear that these procedural delays frequently result in inefficient service delivery as the community's requirements are unfulfilled owing to onerous administrative regulations (Auditor-General of South Africa. (2020).

On the other hand, it is vital to shine light on the deep-seated corruption that occasionally surfaces inside bureaucratic structures. Botes (2018) emphasised the devastating effects of corruption on service delivery, stating that it frequently leads to resource misallocation and creates an environment of impunity. This remark is consistent with Breakfast, Bradshaw and Nomarwayi (2019), who stated that towns in South Africa frequently deal with corruption concerns impeding the delivery of important services to the people. In this study, the Metsimaholo Local Municipality has the chance to design interventions that combat corruption at several levels, promoting a transparent, accountable and citizen-centric governing system.

Another crucial arena where bureaucratic barriers frequently develop is resource management. According to Brilliant (2018), ineffective resource management is frequently caused by a lack of capacity, insufficient training and a lack of strategic vision. Chigwada and de Visser (2021) agrees stating that South African towns frequently confront resource allocation issues due to low administrative capability and the inability to successfully execute strategic objectives.

According to de Visser and Poswa (2019), policy implementation frequently becomes enmeshed in bureaucratic red tape, impeding the smooth implementation of policies at the ground level. Enwereji and Potgieter (2018) provides a counter-narrative, arguing that policy implementation challenges may be reduced through collaborative governance frameworks that entail community engagement at several levels.

### **2.6.2.2 Corruption and Mismanagement**

The Metsimaholo Local Municipality is not immune to the pervasive phenomenon of corruption and inefficiency, firmly ingrained within the folds of its local government, in a society wobbling towards progressive advancement. This complex network not only gets in the way of growth but also tramples on the fundamental principles of openness,

responsibility and effectiveness, dividing the municipality from the people it is meant to serve.

A cancer in the administrative apparatus, corruption has deep-seated roots in many areas of municipal government. Felix (2021) emphasises the pervasive corruption within South African municipalities and highlights the detrimental effects it has on the provision of services and economic development. It is consistent with the findings of Gukelberger (2018), who describes corruption in South Africa as a multifaceted problem that extends beyond cash theft and includes favouritism, nepotism and the abuse of authority. Excavating the many aspects of corruption and identifying the complex networks and systems that enable such malpractices become essential in the Metsimaholo environment. The discussion will also aim to develop methods for fostering an atmosphere of accountability and openness, which will prevent the spread of corruption inside municipal realms.

Furthermore, mismanagement is frequently a breeding ground for corruption since it fosters weak governance, which in turn allows for the growth of corrupt practises. According to Makoti and Odeku (2018), bad management frequently results in service delivery interruptions and financial irregularities because of insufficient financial controls, a lack of responsibility and weak leadership. Similar to this, Fourie (2018) characterises the municipal situation in South Africa as one that is battling problems with mismanagement at all levels, frequently leading to a lack of service delivery and unhappiness among the community members. As a result, within the context of the Metsimaholo municipal framework, it is crucial to examine the structural deficiencies and leadership shortages that contribute to a culture of mismanagement.

### **2.6.2.3 Infrastructural Challenges**

One of the critical challenges in this trajectory is the lack of sufficient planning and policy frameworks to manage the process of infrastructure development. According to Luvuyo and Thandeka (2020), a lack of well-thought-out regulations and procedures frequently leads to infrastructure projects that are either insufficient or do not fulfil the demands of the community. This is mirrored by Sibonde and Dassah (2021) who emphasises that the absence of comprehensive policy frameworks frequently results in infrastructure that does not fit with the municipality's desired developmental trajectory.

When examining infrastructure difficulties, the factor of financial restrictions cannot be overlooked. Ngumbela (2022) outlines the financial issues confronting the South African municipal sector as the availability of funding frequently falls short of the communities' infrastructure demands. Worku (2018) echoed this opinion, describing financial disparities as a significant hurdle in encouraging infrastructure development because budgetary allocations frequently fall short of infrastructural expectations.

Furthermore, the factor of technical skills and experience presents a severe hurdle on the road of infrastructure development. According to Ryu (2021), a lack of technical skills and competence in the municipal sector frequently presents itself in poorly executed infrastructure projects with insufficient planning and execution techniques. Similarly, it shows how a lack of technical expertise leads to infrastructure improvements that are not viable in the long-term.

Furthermore, societal engagement appears as an important factor in addressing infrastructure difficulties. According to Abdallah, Farghaly and Sebaay (2019), meaningful community engagement in infrastructure planning and development typically results in projects that are more aligned with community demands. This, as demonstrated by Alam (2019) has the ability to pave the way for long-term infrastructure initiatives that build a feeling of ownership among community members. In light of the Metsimaholo municipality, building channels that improve community engagement in the infrastructure planning process becomes an important, as does developing tactics that include community viewpoints into the infrastructure development route.

## **2.7 ANALYSIS OF SERVICE DISTRIBUTION DEFICIENCY**

### **2.7.1 Current State of Service Distribution in Metsimaholo**

#### **2.7.1.1 Overview of Basic Municipal Services**

In order to promote higher living conditions and socio-economic growth within the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, fundamental municipal services must be provided. These services cover a wide range, including the provision of water and sanitation, the distribution of energy, the management of solid waste and the construction of roads. Makamure and Jojo (2022) claims that the municipality has demonstrated a significant commitment to improving water and sanitation services. Despite the great progress, there

are serious worries about the reliability and calibre of these services, which are essential to meeting the people's most basic requirements (Ndou & Ngwenya, 2021). Another crucial function is the provision of energy, whose distribution dynamics are closely linked to the wider range of economic pursuits inside the municipality.

The complex network of municipal services includes solid waste management, a field that affects environmental sustainability as well as represents larger public health viewpoints (Ndou & Ngwenya, 2021). Even if efforts to streamline waste management procedures have been undertaken, there is still more space to improve productivity and include sustainable practises. Another crucial component is the road network, whose quality and upkeep have a significant impact on the municipality's connection and accessibility.

#### **2.7.1.2 Analysis of Service Delivery Gaps**

Exploring the canvas of service delivery and identifying gaps is an important activity. Water and sanitation services are one of the most noticeable gaps in the Metsimaholo municipality's service delivery spectrum. Despite significant investments, there remains a persisting gap in providing consistent and high-quality services to all segments of the population (Ndou & Ngwenya, 2021). This disparity presents itself in differences in service access, with some communities enjoying greater facilities than others thus indicating the need for governmental measures that promote fairness in service distribution.

Furthermore, the electrical distribution sector has shown weaknesses, as seen by frequent outages and load shedding. These disruptions affect not just residential users, but also the industrial and commercial sectors within the town. A more in-depth examination would delve into techniques that improve the dependability and stability of energy distribution networks, promoting a climate favourable to economic growth.

Furthermore, gaps exist in the domain of solid waste management, where existing frameworks have been criticised for failing to fit with sustainability principles (Abdallah, Farghaly & Sebaay, 2019). As a result, the transition to a greener, more sustainable waste management model emerges as a vital option, emphasising the importance of initiatives that include recycling and trash reduction. Furthermore, the road infrastructure paints a picture of imbalance with significant variances in the quality and upkeep of road networks across the municipality. This circumstance necessitates precise planning and intervention

strategies that prioritise maintenance and growth in a way that promotes connection and accessibility across all municipal regions.

## **2.7.2 Impact of Poor Municipal Administration**

Subsequent sections present an exploration of the impact of poor municipal administration.

### **2.7.2.1 Consequences of Deficient Service Delivery**

Initially, the consequences of insufficient service distribution echo across different dimensions of the municipality, paving the road for discontent and socio-economic imbalance. The repercussions of inadequate service distribution, according to Alam (2019) are numerous, enveloping the community in a cycle of stagnation and underdevelopment. These shortcomings in water and sanitation services may translate to greater health risks, as evidenced by the prevalence of waterborne infections in areas with inadequate sanitation.

Disruptions in energy supply impede economic growth by causing irregularities in industrial activities and lowering inhabitants' general quality of life. Abdallah, Farghaly and Sebaay (2019) noted in a comprehensive analysis that inconsistent power supply might depress the possibilities of attracting investments hence restricting the options for economic progress. Furthermore, poor road infrastructure causes mobility concerns, raising transit costs and limiting access to key services.

### **2.7.2.2 Stakeholder Perspectives**

One notices that the residents, community organisations and corporations have a variety of opinions as they make their way through the intricate tapestry of stakeholder perspectives (Ndou & Ngwenya, 2021). Citizens' unhappiness and mistrust of the administrative apparatus are the consequences of poor service delivery, according to Alam (2019), a feeling that is repeated in many community-led conversations and forums. Businesses are simultaneously expressing worries about the instability of critical services, which might limit their operational effectiveness and competitive advantage.

At this point, it is also crucial to support community organisations' viewpoints, which frequently serve as intermediates, promoting community engagement in governance processes and enabling communication. According to Chapman and White (2019) these organisations have continually pushed for a participatory approach to policy creation because they feel that doing so might lead to frameworks for service delivery that are more nuanced and community-focused.

### **2.7.2.3 Comparative Analysis with Efficient Municipalities**

Municipalities in South Africa, such as the City of Cape Town have been praised for their administrative efficiency and comprehensive service delivery frameworks (Staunton *et al.*, 2018). As a result, the comparative discourse develops as a mosaic of opposing narratives with the interaction of successful governance institutions and policy implementations delineating developmental paths. In comparison, efficient municipalities have a consistent vision that combines smoothly with strategic planning and execution frameworks, providing a climate favourable to socio-economic progress. Furthermore, they express a culture of responsibility and openness, which are vital in developing community trust and involvement (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020).

## **2.8 STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION**

### **2.8.1 Best Practices**

#### **2.8.1.1 Global Best Practices**

Finding insights from international best practises is essential to starting an effective transformation in Metsimaholo's municipal administration. Municipalities have used tactics including participatory governance, decentralisation of administration and encouraging public-private partnerships in several parts of the world, which have clearly improved the delivery of public services. In order to promote a culture of accountability and openness, Chapman and White (2019) highlight the transformational potential of enhancing local government capabilities through capacity-building projects.

Additionally, the growth of "smart cities," which are characterised by the application of technology to urban planning and service delivery, offers bright prospects for increasing effectiveness. According to Staunton *et al.*, (2018), these technologically advanced

frameworks make it possible to monitor and control urban infrastructure in real-time, resulting in more efficient service delivery. A revolutionary trajectory for Metsimaholo might be sparked by learning from cities like Barcelona and Singapore, which have won praise for their creative and citizen-centric administrative initiatives. These cities have promoted cooperation between governmental institutions and the populace, resulting in a feedback loop that continuously improves the methods of providing services (Todd *et al.*, 2021).

### **2.8.1.2 Lessons from South African Municipalities**

Moving on to the South African context, it is necessary to assess the best practises implemented by other municipalities around the country. In this sense, the municipality of the Western Cape stands out as a model of administrative efficiency, with an emphasis on sustainable development and equitable government (Makamure & Jojo, 2022). Furthermore, a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) research highlighted the measures implemented by municipalities such as eThekweni to encourage community involvement and stakeholder engagement in policy formulation and implementation (Ndou & Ngwenya, 2021).

Simultaneously, other researchers have emphasised the need of adaptable leadership and innovation in governance systems, which have helped municipalities such as Cape Town achieve administrative efficiency and robust service delivery (Mogongoa, 2020). Furthermore, as shown in the Durban Metropolitan Area, utilising the potential of community-centric initiatives has the ability to build an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual progress (de Jager *et al.*, 2020).

As this study evolves, it becomes critical for the Metsimaholo municipality to chart a course that combines the best practises from global and local examples. This entails developing a discussion that incorporates many views and viewpoints, resulting in a blueprint for inclusive and creative administrative transformation. Metsimaholo might possibly steer towards a future that exemplifies administrative excellence and efficient service delivery by instilling a spirit of creativity and adaptation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature review was presented in the preceding chapter to create an image of the current body of information around the functioning of municipal administration, with a special focus on the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in South Africa. The study created a narrative by critically evaluating empirical studies, policy documents and theoretical frameworks, highlighting the nuances of service delivery mechanisms and the critical role that effective administration plays in fostering community growth and development.

In this chapter, the focus is on developing a research methodology and design that will serve as a guidepost, directing the study through the numerous pathways of data collection and analysis. This chapter presents the intellectual work crafted to provide a smooth connection with the study objectives indicated in Chapter 1. The study will proceed on an exploratory voyage into the domains of study design, where the selection of paradigms and methodological approach will be discussed. A critical discussion of the selection of the measuring instrument and design will follow, providing insights into the methods used to collect rich, contextual data. As the chapter progresses, the researcher will provide narratives on data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical issues, each mirroring the preparation and forethought that supports this scientific trip.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Research methodologies have many paradigms with distinct philosophical assumptions and approaches. Positivism, interpretivism and critical theory are research paradigms. The interpretivism paradigm was adopted for studying how municipal administration improves service delivery in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The paradigm was chosen for its ability to explore the lived experiences and matching qualitative social research approaches among other factors (Creswell, 2018).

Interpretivism, examines social processes from participants' views. It emphasises how people interpret their experiences subjectively (Orb *et al.*, 2000). This paradigm holds that social and cultural surroundings shape people's actions, decisions and behaviours (Creswell, 2018). Interpretivism is warranted for this research topic since it tries to understand the Metsimaholo Local Municipality residents' views on effective municipal administration and service delivery. An interpretivist method allows researchers to explore the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of municipal administration and service delivery staff.

Interpretivism helps explain complicated social processes with numerous components and viewpoints (McMillan & Schumacher, 2018). Municipal authorities, staff and the community are involved in effective municipal administration and service delivery. Their different viewpoints and expertise can illuminate the Metsimaholo Local Municipality service delivery efficiency factors. Interpretivism also matches qualitative social research approaches. Qualitative methods like interviews, focus groups and observations allow researchers to collect and analyse rich, context-specific data (Bryman, 2012). These methodologies allow the examination of individuals' subjective experiences and perceptions of effective municipal administration and its impact on service delivery, offering a full grasp of the research topic.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the choice between qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research approaches represents an epistemological crossroad, a decision based not only on the subject matter at hand but also on the researcher's expertise and philosophical alignment. A qualitative research technique was used in this study to scrutinise the numerous details that impact efficient municipal administration within the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, creating a greater knowledge of the various forces at work.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a qualitative research technique contains an investigative methodology that tries to dive into the subtle dynamics of human experiences and social events. This approach is consistent with an interpretive philosophical viewpoint, in which a researcher immerses oneself in the depths of human experiences in order to capture the complex views and underlying currents that define

the phenomenon under investigation (Tenny, Brannan, Brannan & Sharts-Hopko, 2022). This analytical route paved the way for an in-depth investigation of the complex web of dynamics that pervade the Metsimaholo Local Municipality's municipal administration domain.

By embarking on this qualitative journey, the research was able to collect a richer and denser data environment, producing viewpoints that provided a realistic depiction of real-world occurrences inside the municipality. As Patton (2015) points out, qualitative research depends on the capacity to capture the complexities and subtleties that are sometimes lost in the numerical data of quantitative research.

According to Stake (1995), the qualitative method enables a multifaceted inquiry, a search that not only reveals the underlying dynamics but also creates an awareness of the numerous interrelationships that govern the efficacy of service delivery within municipal limits. In this regard, the study reinforced Rosenthal's (2019) argument that the qualitative method is useful in interpreting the complex systems that regulate human and organisational dynamics, especially in scenarios involving community concerns such as municipal maladministration.

Furthermore, the qualitative technique was consistent with the study's goal of uncovering the underlying narratives that affect administrative dynamics inside the municipality. This strategy, as explained by Schwandt (2020), presents a kaleidoscope of perspectives that provides a thorough depiction of the participant's viewpoints. The selected methodology facilitated the utilisation of inductive reasoning. This enabled the study to adapt and modify the research design in accordance with developing patterns in the data. As a result, the research design allowed for effective navigation of the intricate complexities within the municipal administrative domain. This is consistent with Creswell's (2013) endorsement of the qualitative approach as a suitable methodology for exploratory research projects, especially when the research questions are complex and multifaceted, necessitating a methodological pathway that allows for depth and nuance in the data analysis process.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The case study research design is best for studying how good municipal administration improves service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. A case study examines a real-life occurrence or circumstance in detail (Stake, 1995). Here, academics can study the municipal administration and service delivery systems' complexity, nuances and distinctive traits. This research topic warrants a case study design because it provides a holistic grasp of municipal administration and service delivery efficiency. Yin (2014) suggests using case studies to study complex social processes in a given environment and their interconnections and interdependencies.

In the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, local administration's effectiveness directly affects service delivery, making it a complicated and interdependent phenomenon. A case study design also enables for in-depth subject analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2018). Effective municipal administration may affect service delivery due to organisational structures, governance frameworks, leadership styles and community dynamics. Case studies allow researchers to collect detailed data on these aspects, their interconnections and service delivery efficiency.

### **3.5 TARGET POPULATION**

According to Dörnyei (2007), the target encompasses persons or entities with personal knowledge of the issue under consideration. The population of the study consisted of municipal workers in occupations that were managerial and administrative. Administrative managers emerged as reliable sources of data, offering personal experiences that reflected the intricacies of municipal operations. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the inclusion of participants who have a profound awareness of the research environment frequently results in richer data, promoting a comprehensive analysis that reflects the depth of the studied phenomena.

A variety of elements impact the dynamics of service delivery within the municipal setup, necessitating a target audience that embraces a varied array of jobs. In keeping with this, the research broadened its scope to include personnel whose roles were judged critical by the researcher in supporting service delivery. Individuals in administrative roles, planning departments and those directly involved in the delivery of various services were included. The research intended to construct a holistic story by including multiple views

that resulted in a vivid representation of the administrative dynamics in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

### **3.6 SAMPLING**

Purposive sampling was used to study how municipal administration improves service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. Purposive sampling selects volunteers based on their unique traits or qualifications that make them relevant to the research (Bryman, 2012). Purposive sampling is warranted for numerous reasons. First, the research topic needs selecting participants who understand the Metsimaholo Local Municipality's municipal administration and service delivery operations. The researchers use purposeful sampling to target senior officials, administrators and service delivery staff in the municipality. These participants have the knowledge, competence and first hand experience to shed light on how successful municipal administration affects service delivery efficiency (McMillan & Schumacher, 2018).

Purposive sampling selects participants who can represent diverse study perspectives or dimensions (King & Horrocks, 2010). To understand good municipal administration and service delivery, it is vital to collect multiple perspectives. Researchers can gain insights into the phenomenon's complexity and depth by purposefully selecting people with varied positions, experiences and perspectives within the municipality (Yin, 2014).

Purposive sampling also includes people with unique or specialised knowledge relevant to the research issue. Stake (1995) emphasises that participants should be intentionally selected who can provide rich and thorough information about the research objective, not random or generalised. This study carefully selects participants with extensive municipal administration and service delivery experience at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality to ensure that the data is informative, contextually grounded and meets the research objectives.

The researchers carefully selected the sample size to satisfy their purposive sampling goal and to provide a balanced approach. According to Creswell (2018), the sample size must be carefully considered to accommodate the complex dynamics of the research and allow a wide range of narratives to emerge, resulting in a cohesive collection of insights and experiences. Using a well-structured conceptual framework, the research involved a

group of 10+ individuals who held various positions in the municipal administration systems. This diverse group was carefully selected to provide rich and nuanced perspectives for exploring complex narratives. Experienced professionals were selected to oversee service administration.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT**

In order to examine the impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, it was imperative to create a reliable data collection instrument. There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews employ predetermined questions to obtain consistent data. The participants are presented with identical questions in a predetermined sequence (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are characterised by their flexibility, involving a combination of pre-determined questions and open-ended questions, as clearly defined by the user.

The interviewer adheres to a predetermined framework but has the flexibility to go further into the subject matter based on the answers provided by the participants. Bryman (2013) defines unstructured interviews as interviews that are characterised by open-ended questions and the absence of prepared questions. The interviewer explores numerous subjects and collects accurate data in a proficient manner. The research employed semi-structured interviews. This method facilitated the creation of intricate storytelling regarding the effectiveness of local administrative activities and reliable assessments (Bryman, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews were adopted for their ability to enable researchers to acquire qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the issue (Orb *et al.*, 2000). Semi-structured interviews blend structure and flexibility, making them ideal for examining complex topics like municipal administration's impact on service delivery (McMillan & Schumacher, 2018). This method allows the researcher to use planned questions based on relevant literature and theory to collect data systematically. Questions could address municipal administration operations, decision-making and resource distribution (Bryman, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews allow for participant diversity and distinct insights. Rich and extensive data were collected because interviewers can comment on their experiences and opinions (Orb *et al.*, 2000). This is crucial when studying municipal administration's effects on municipal officials, service consumers and community members. Semi-structured interviews create a dynamic, participatory atmosphere that builds rapport between the researcher and the participant (King & Horrocks, 2010). The researcher might actively listen and ask questions to gain further understanding. Semi-structured interviews' interactive nature elicits nuanced information that quantitative or strict research methods may miss. Lastly, semi-structured interview data can be analysed using qualitative methods like topic or content analysis. These approaches reveal data themes, patterns and relationships (King & Horrocks, 2010). Researchers can add to the literature on how successful municipal administration affects service delivery by carefully analysing interview transcripts.

### **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the effects of effective municipal administration on service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality used thematic analysis and coding to discover and analyse interview data themes and patterns (King & Horrocks, 2010). ATLAS.ti was used to organise, manage and analyse qualitative data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2018). The semi-structured interviews with municipal officials, service beneficiaries and community leaders were transcribed to begin data analysis. ATLAS.ti was used to organise and structure data from transcripts (Orb *et al.*, 2000). The software treated each interview transcript separately. Based on the study's research questions and objectives, a coding framework was created to begin the analysis (Bryman, 2012). The interview guide and pertinent theories provided predetermined codes for this initial coding structure. Codes may include "administrative procedures", "decision-making processes," "resource allocation" and "service delivery effectiveness".

Open coding followed, where the researcher reviewed the transcripts line by line to find and code important themes and topics (King & Horrocks, 2010). The researcher immersed themselves in the data and learned about the participants' opinions. Based on the data themes and patterns, the researcher revised, added or merged codes to refine the coding system (McMillan & Schumacher, 2018). Iterative analysis of interview data

yielded more nuance and depth. After initial categorization, the researcher used axial coding to examine code-theme interactions (Bryman, 2012). They examined coded text for patterns, similarities and differences. Comparing and contrasting data from interviews helped uncover bigger themes and sub-themes that highlighted the impact of municipal administration on service delivery.

The researcher used peer debriefing and member verification during analysis to improve rigour and dependability (Orb *et al.*, 2000). This included reviewing codes, themes and interpretations with other researchers and requesting participant feedback during data collection process to ensure the analysis appropriately reflected their perspectives and experiences. Data analysis was aided by ATLAS.ti. The software's user-friendly interface helped the researcher to organise and manage coded data. ATLAS.ti let scholars record memos, write memoranda, link codes to pertinent language and visually analyse code interactions using network views and diagrams (King & Horrocks, 2010). These characteristics improved analysis efficiency, data exploration and understanding.

### **3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

The establishing of trustworthiness is critical in qualitative research, anchoring the investigation firmly within the areas of reliability and validity. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the evaluation criteria for qualitative research should include credibility, transferability, reliability and conformability. In order to adhere to these cardinal pillars, the researcher built an investigative framework that would resonate with integrity.

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

In order to achieve an accurate depiction of the phenomena under study, the research utilised the concept of credibility. The participants were given an opportunity to evaluate and validate the legitimacy of the data collected from them as part of the researcher's thorough member verification procedure, which increased the study's trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, the researcher spent time in the field to be involved in the dynamics of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, developing a understanding of the situation that, in Patton's (2015) opinion, greatly increases the credibility of qualitative research.

### **3.9.2 Dependability**

Another aspect of credibility that was considered was dependability. In order to create a setting where the research process could be examined, assessed and validated by outside auditors, the researcher created an audit trail, an extensive roadmap outlining each stage of the research trip (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, methodological exposition was undertaken, in which every aspect of the research process was outlined in detail and with clarity. This created a framework for other researchers to potentially replicate the study in a related setting, thus adhering to the principles of dependability (Miles, Huberman & Saldaa, 2014).

## **3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The need of following a strict ethical code became clear as this research set out to clarify administrative efficacy inside the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. An unrelenting dedication to ethical issues, spanning a wide range of aspects like informed permission, participant confidentiality and data protection was necessary to ensure that the study adheres to the relevant ethical prescripts.

### **3.10.1 Informed Consent**

The idea of informed consent is essential to the ethical fabric of any research project since it ensures that participants have a thorough awareness of the research aims and ramifications. According to Denscombe (2014), the art of obtaining informed consent is cultivating a collaborative collaboration between the researcher and participant based on transparency and mutual respect. In keeping with this, the study used a methodical approach, with participants receiving a thorough explanation of the research aims, potential hazards and their rights as contributors (Israel & Hay, 2006). This programme was launched with the intention of avoiding any coercive components, allowing individuals to engage with complete autonomy and consciousness. Furthermore, as Smith (2003) advises, the process was meticulously documented to guarantee a clear record of agreement, preserving the ethical prescripts and encouraging a path of trust and collaboration.

### **3.10.2 Anonymity**

Protecting participant anonymity served as a crucial tenet in the ethical framework of this study in a time when data breaches and privacy abuses have become pervasive. The safeguarding of participant identification, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015), is not only a logistical requirement but also a moral duty that supports the integrity of qualitative research. In keeping with this, the research implemented strict precautions to maintain participant anonymity. Personal identifiers were deleted from the data transcripts, ensuring a secure environment for open speech. The direction provided by Orb *et al.*, (2000) inspired the creation of a complex coding system that expertly concealed participant identities, fostering secrecy and respect. This project, based on moral obligation, enabled a rich tapestry of information, echoing the voices of people free from the constraints of fear of retaliation or exposure.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

The chapter explained in detail, the research paradigm, approach and design. It was shown that interpretivism paradigm was the best research philosophy for the study as it accommodated a qualitative research approach and a case study research design. The target population consisted of municipal workers in occupations that were managerial and administrative in nature. Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyse recurring themes and patterns in the interview data.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter presents the findings of the study guided by objectives. As such, the findings presented in this chapter examines what entails effective municipal administration; the relationship that exists between effective municipal administration and efficient service delivery of basic municipal services; the degree to which the deficient service delivery of basic municipal services results in poor municipal administration and examining the strategies that can be used to improve effectiveness of municipal administration in municipalities.

The research focused on the significance of competent municipal administration to effective service delivery and their findings are dissected and discussed at length in this chapter. In order to meet the objectives of the study, the researcher examined the material acquired from 14 semi-structured interviews. The participants' expertise in leadership, resource allocation, organisational structure, human resources and creative practises was beneficial since they were hand-picked from each department in the municipality. This chapter focuses on the Metsimaholo Local Municipality and how its challenges affect the quality of its public services. In this chapter, the findings from collected data are presented.

#### **4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

For a full appreciation of the perspectives and insights participants provided on the role of municipal administration in determining service delivery in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, familiarity with their demographics is essential. The participant's demographic is essential for offering a comprehensive grasp of the difficulties and workings of the local administration. There was a balanced gender representation among the 14 participants, with seven females and seven men. In line with the advice of Baxter and Babbie (2004) who stress the significance of gender balance in qualitative research to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and viewpoints, this gender balance is noteworthy since it represents a variety of perspectives. The participants' ages ranged

from early 30s to late 50s, so their perspectives reflected a blend of fresh energy and mature understanding. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), a varied age range may enhance data collection by including both fresh and experienced perspectives, therefore this combination of age groups is advantageous.

The participants' professional backgrounds ranged from five to 25 years of employment in the municipality. This range made it possible to have a thorough grasp of both modern and historical municipal administration practises. The participants' tasks were distributed across many departments, such as corporate services, infrastructure, community services and finance. A multidimensional knowledge of the administrative activities of the municipality is ensured by this variety in professional responsibilities, which is critical and aligns with Creswell's (2013) perspective on the importance of varied professional backgrounds in qualitative research.

The participants' educational backgrounds ranged from diplomas to master's degrees in subjects such as engineering, finance, community development and public administration. This variety in educational backgrounds improved the data by combining theoretical and practical expertise, supporting Patton's (2015) claim that educational diversity may improve the breadth and depth of results from qualitative research. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the participants' ethnic makeup was typical of the local community's demographic makeup, which is essential for guaranteeing that the study's conclusions accurately reflect the community's variety of viewpoints. This portrayal helps in understanding how various cultural origins may affect people's experiences and views of local government management and service provision.

In assessing the demographics of the participants, it is obvious that the variety in gender, age, professional experience, educational background and ethnicity contributed greatly to the richness and comprehensiveness of the data. This varied demographic makeup ensured that the study's conclusions are based on a wide range of experiences and viewpoints and gave a comprehensive grasp of the subtleties and complexity of municipal administration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

## **4.3 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.3.1 Components of Effective Municipal Administration**

### 4.3.2 Organizational Structure and Governance

The study of semi-structured interviews conducted under this sub-theme gave vital insights into the Metsimaholo Local Municipality's administrative framework, hierarchy, and decision-making processes. The results revealed a complicated interaction of variables influencing the city administration performance. Many participants emphasised the complex nature of governance arrangements, which, although intended to speed operations, often resulted in bureaucratic difficulties. The municipality's hierarchy was often noted as both a strength and a problem. While a well-defined hierarchy might help with clear communication routes, it can also lead to rigidity, limiting quick decision-making and adaptation. Several panellists emphasised the need of taking a balanced approach to governance.

*"Our structure is theoretically sound, but practical challenges in communication and decision-making often slow down processes,"*  
Participant 4 said.

One participant said:

*"The hierarchy is clear, but it sometimes creates barriers to quick decision-making, which is essential in our work".*

Participant 9 further supported that:

*"There's often a gap between policy-making and execution, which affects our service delivery".*

According to participant 12:

*"When governance structures work well, they significantly improve our efficiency."*

The Metsimaholo data could indicate that although the municipality's administrative system has benefits, it also has issues that may impair service delivery. The observations of the participants are also consistent with O'Toole's (2004) work which highlights the difficult balance between hierarchical control and the necessity for adaptable, responsive governance in municipal contexts. The Metsimaholo Local Municipality data supports the

premise that good governance requires a balance of established hierarchy and flexibility. This balance is critical in tackling the particular issues that municipalities confront as participants' experiences demonstrate.

However, the data shows some deviation from certain accepted literature. For example, Osborne (2006) contends that in order to improve performance, public administration should shift towards more network-based governance structures. In contrast, the Metsimaholo participants' experiences show a persistent dependence on old hierarchical systems, but with a knowledge of their limits.

### **4.3.3 Human Resource Management**

The data showed alignment of staff capabilities with the municipality's strategic goals, as several delegates voiced worries about mismatches and gaps.

### **4.3.4 Capacity Building**

A focus was placed on the training, competencies and abilities of municipal employees as well as how these factors affect the municipality's overall performance. The need of continual training and skills development emerged often and many participants believed that the present structure did not sufficiently meet this requirement.

*“We have a gap in skills, especially in newer areas like digital management”*  
explained Participant 3.

*“We need more targeted capacity building that aligns with our strategic goals”* maintained Participant 8.

Participant 11 pointed towards a crucial gap in human resource development:

*“Many staff members are dedicated, but without the right skills, their effectiveness is limited”.*

These results are consistent with and expand the current research on human resource management (HRM) in government. According to Pynes (2013), successful HRM in the public sector entails not just employing competent employees but also continuously improving and aligning their talents with organisational objectives. Similarly, Bailey (2016)

emphasises the necessity of strategic HRM in matching staff capabilities with organisational goals, a fact that participant answers clearly underscore. The focus on skills shortages, particularly in emerging areas such as digital management reveals a complicated scenario that was often articulated in the literature. This need for specificity in municipal training and skills development deviates from the generic approach often espoused in prior research.

#### **4.3.5 Financial Management and Accountability**

A common topic of discussion among participants was the difficulties in maintaining accountability and openness in financial transactions, which are essential for efficient administration and public confidence.

#### **4.3.6 The suitability of present financial management systems**

Participant 8 reflected on accountability:

*“Effective financial oversight is key, but we often face challenges in implementing it rigorously”.*

*“There’s a gap between our financial management practices and what is ideally required for efficient service delivery”* said Participant 11.

#### **4.3.7 Difficulties in maintaining accountability**

Participants provided insights into these issues.

*“Our budgeting process is often constrained by red tape, limiting our flexibility”* Participant 2 revealed.

Participant 5 expressed concerns about transparency stating:

*“We need more transparent processes to enhance public trust in how funds are managed.”*

In the current literature, these results show both resonance and divergence. Transparency and accountability in public financial management have long been emphasised by scholars such as Hood (1995) and Heald (2003). The Metsimaholo

municipality's focus on openness and accountability resonates well with these concepts. Concerns about inflexibility in financial processes, on the other hand, show a different scenario. The difficulties in implementing financial supervision as indicated by the participants support the views of researchers such as Christensen and Laegreid (2007), who claim that the complexity of public financial management often impedes the realisation of ideal practises. As a result, the data paints a more complex picture of financial management in the Metsimaholo municipality. While there is widespread agreement on the need for sound financial systems and accountability, there are gaps in their implementation.

#### **4.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

##### **4.4.1 Administrative Efficiency and Service Quality**

Most of the participants agreed that the effectiveness of administrative procedures had a direct impact on the calibre and promptness of the services provided. One important finding was the identification of administrative hold-ups that impede the provision of services. These challenges include delays in policy implementation, procurement procedures and decision-making. Additionally, the information highlighted the need for streamlining administrative processes to improve service efficacy and responsiveness. The participants' accounts illustrate these themes.

*“Delays in procurement directly affect our ability to deliver services on time”*  
Participant 4 noted.

Participant 7 highlighted internal process inefficiencies:

*“When administrative processes are sluggish, it cascades down, affecting our service timelines”.*

*“Our intention is always to deliver quality services, but administrative red tape often hinders this”* expressed Participant 10.

In the available literature, the participants' insights find both agreement and disagreements. Scholars such as Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) have studied the relationship between administrative efficiency and service quality, arguing that competent

public administration is critical for high-quality public service delivery. The widespread worry about administrative delays affecting service delivery demonstrates this alignment. The focus on procedural bottlenecks and red tape, on the other hand, reveals a more complicated reality than what is often presented in the literature. Moynihan (2008) contends that although administrative systems are necessary for accountability, they may also be inefficient, which is consistent with the findings of this study. The disparity is especially noticeable in terms of decision-making efficiency. According to Osborne (2010), in order to improve service delivery, public sector organisations should embrace more flexible decision-making frameworks. In contrast, the findings points to a situation in which organised decision-making procedures may not always coincide with the desired speed and flexibility, hindering service quality.

#### **4.4.2 Administrative Efficiency and Service Quality**

The results showed that effective administrative procedures greatly improve service quality. On the other hand, it was also clear that ineffective administrative procedures and bureaucratic hold-ups had a negative effect on service delivery. The need for more streamlined and effective administrative procedures was shown by the participants' repeated citation of incidents in which delayed administrative response times resulted in service delays. The participants' responses reflected these findings.

*“Efficiency in our administrative processes directly impacts how we deliver services; slow processes mean delayed services”* stated Participant 2.

Participant 6 remarked:

*“Quick and clear decision-making within the administration leads to faster service delivery, something we constantly strive for”.*

*“Bureaucratic red tape is the biggest hurdle in translating our plans into actions”* expressed Participant 9.

In a similar vein, Participant 12 noted:

*“When our administration works efficiently, the community sees and feels the difference in service quality”.*

These results are consistent with previous research, which often emphasises the importance of administrative efficiency in public service delivery. Scholars such as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) have suggested that entrepreneurial governance, defined by efficiency and creativity, has the potential to greatly improve public service delivery. The participants' focus on minimising bureaucratic obstacles and boosting decision-making efficiency echoes this viewpoint. The data from the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, on the other hand, reveals a more subtle challenge: the battle to combine efficiency with thoroughness and accountability, an issue examined by Hood (1991) in his work on public administration.

The focus of the participants on the negative effects of red tape and bureaucratic delays resonates with the new public management (NPM) paradigm, which advocates for more business-like, efficient governance in the public sector (Hood, 1995). The Metsimaholo instance, on the other hand, paints a more nuanced picture than the idealised efficiency of NPM, implying that, although efficiency is important, its implementation in the public sector is beset with obstacles particular to the municipal setting.

#### **4.4.3 Policy Implementation and Operational Execution**

Although the majority of participants recognised the existence of well-meaning policies, they also noted that resource constraints, bureaucratic inertia and even a lack of clarity in the rules themselves often impeded the transfer from policy to action. The participants' responses clearly articulated these challenges:

*“We have policies that are sound on paper, but when it comes to putting them into action, we face multiple hurdles”* said Participant 3.

Participant 5 shared:

*“Resource constraints often impede the actual implementation of policies we set out. There is sometimes a disconnect between what is planned and what is feasible on the ground”.*

Participant 8 observed:

*“The biggest challenge is in converting policy into actionable steps that everyone understands and follows”* noted Participant 11.

These findings complement and contradict previous knowledge on policy implementation in government. Matland (1995) for example, emphasises the complexities of policy implementation, implying that ambiguity and disagreement may have a considerable influence on the process. The Metsimaholo Local Municipality staff's experiences align with these complexities, notably in terms of resource limits and policy-practice divergence. However, the data also shows a more complex obstacle that has received little attention in conventional literature: the issue of translating policy into clear, executable and intelligible measures as emphasised by Hill and Hupe (2009) in their work on public policy.

#### **4.5 DEFICIENT SERVICE DISTRIBUTION OF BASIC MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION**

##### **4.5.1 Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms**

The research revealed that while the value of stakeholder participation is acknowledged, it may be difficult to successfully integrate community input into operational procedures and service delivery plans. Stakeholder involvement, according to many participants, often remains a formalistic exercise rather than a significant input tool for service improvement. Concerns were also raised about the efficiency of the current methods for obtaining and reacting to community input.

The voices of the participants bring these issues into sharper focus.

*“We try to engage with the community, but there’s a gap in turning their feedback into actionable changes”* Participant 4 noted.

*“Our feedback mechanisms are there, but I’m not sure how much they really influence administrative decisions”* stated Participant 6.

Participant 9 shared a similar sentiment:

*“We gather a lot of feedback, but the challenge is in integrating it effectively into our service delivery plans.”*

*“There’s a need for more genuine, two-way communication with our stakeholders”* Participant 13 emphasized.

These results both confirm and contradict previous research on stakeholder participation in public administration. The focus on incorporating stakeholder input is consistent with Bryson's (2004) support for participatory government, which views stakeholder interaction as critical for good public service delivery. Furthermore, the municipal results offer a practical dimension to the ideas of Innes and Booher (1999), who advocate collaborative dialogues as a method of improving public decision-making.

#### **4.5.2 Analysis of Service Delivery Failures**

Finding certain service areas, including waste management and water delivery, where failures were most noticeable was a recurring trend in the data. Administrative problems like slow decision-making, insufficient resource allocation and inadequate planning were often blamed for these failures. The participants provided candid insights into these challenges.

*“In waste management, delays in decision-making often lead to service interruptions”* Participant 2 observed.

*“Inadequate resource allocation affects our water supply services, reflecting a deeper administrative problem”* Participant 5 noted.

*“Poor planning and coordination in administrative processes are leading to noticeable lapses in service delivery”* Participant 7 stated.

*“Our biggest challenge in service delivery stems from inefficient administrative practices”* Participant 11 said.

Scholars such as Andrews and Boyne (2010) emphasise the significance of competent administrative practises in achieving good service delivery. The participants' focus on the effect of administrative inefficiencies on service delivery clearly reflects this viewpoint. Administrative efficiency is seen as important. The results are also consistent with Moynihan and Pandey's (2005) assertions about the influence of organisational characteristics on public service delivery. However, the unique issues identified in the

Metsimaholo setting such as delayed decision-making and inefficient resource allocation, point to the need for further specialised study on administrative practises in the context of local government.

#### **4.5.3 Resource Allocation and Utilisation**

The results showed that participants' concerns about the efficacy and efficiency of resource management techniques were common. Many pointed out that misaligned or inefficient resource allocation often resulted in service shortcomings, drawing attention to problems like resource theft and underfunding of important regions. Additionally, a number of participants pointed to situations in which resources were accessible but not efficiently deployed, seeing this as a key factor leading to unsatisfactory service delivery. The participants shared their perspectives on these challenges.

*“Resources are often allocated without a clear understanding of priority needs, affecting service delivery”* Participant 2 commented.

*“Even when we have the resources, inefficiencies in how they are utilized mean that services are still not delivered effectively”* Participant 6 observed.

*“Misallocation of resources is a significant issue, leading to some services being under-resourced”* stated Participant 9.

*“There is a gap between resource availability and its effective use, which hampers service delivery”* noted Participant 12.

These results are consistent with previous research that emphasises the importance of resource allocation and management in efficient public service delivery. The participants' worries regarding mismatched resource distribution are consistent with Robinson's (2009) arguments, which emphasise the need of aligning resource allocation with service delivery goals. Inefficiencies in resource utilisation replicate Gupta and Sharma's (2005) findings, which show how inadequate resource management may lead to inferior service results even when ample resources are available.

While the value of efficient resource allocation and utilisation is recognised, the practical ramifications and manifestations of inefficiencies in these areas, especially in a municipal

environment, provide a difficult picture. These insights adds a practical dimension to theoretical models and necessitates a more in-depth examination of resource management practises in local government contexts. The findings indicate a relationship between resource management practises and service delivery outcomes, highlighting the need for more targeted and efficient resource management techniques in the municipal setting.

#### **4.5.4 Implementation of strategic initiatives**

A recurring topic in the data collected was the importance of leadership in establishing strategic direction and guaranteeing its successful implementation. The municipality's leadership sometimes lacked a distinct strategic direction, which had an impact on the results of service delivery. Successfully Implementing strategic initiatives has also been hampered by a substantial lack of communication between personnel and leadership.

*“Leadership needs to provide clearer strategic direction to guide our work”*  
Participant 2.

Participant 5 mentioned that:

*“There is often a disconnect between the leadership’s strategy and its implementation on the ground”.*

*“Effective leadership is about more than just setting goals; it's about inspiring and guiding us to achieve them”* Participant 9 reflected.

*“Communication gaps between leadership and staff hinder our ability to deliver services effectively”* Participant 11 noted.

The participants' emphasis on the necessity of clear strategic direction and excellent communication is backed by the work of Heifetz *et al.* (2009), who emphasise adaptive leadership as vital in navigating complex public sector difficulties. The findings showed that disparity between strategy and execution in Metsimaholo's environment supports Bryson's (2018) statement that public leadership must be capable of not just crafting a vision but also of turning it into concrete strategies. The focus on communication gaps on the other hand provides a sophisticated knowledge that is not well addressed in

conventional leadership literature. This remark is consistent with Moynihan's (2008) viewpoint on the importance of communication as a vehicle for executing strategic goals in government organisations.

## **4.6 STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS**

### **4.6.1 Innovative Administrative Practices**

Most of the participants agreed that innovation had the potential to improve municipal administration's efficacy. To increase productivity and service delivery, there was a noticeable interest in implementing new administrative procedures and incorporating contemporary technology. Nonetheless, a number of participants voiced concerns about the difficulties in putting such ideas into practise, citing staff shortages of technical skills, budget constraints and opposition to change. The participants' quotes reflect these findings.

*"Incorporating new technologies could significantly streamline our processes"* Participant 2 observed.

*"We need to adopt more innovative practices, but resistance to change is a big challenge"* mentioned Participant 6.

Participant 9 pointed out a practical issue:

*"Innovations are great, but we often lack the necessary skills to implement them effectively"*.

*"There's a gap between recognizing the need for innovation and actually implementing it"* Participant 11 noted.

These findings are consistent with prior research on public administration and innovation. The need for new technology and practises mirrors the ideas of researchers such as Osborne and Gaebler (1992), who argue for reinventing government via innovation. However, the problems raised by participants such as resistance to change and a skills deficit, give a more nuanced picture of the actual difficulties in implementing innovative practises, a point raised by Borins (2002) in his examination of public sector innovation. Furthermore, the data indicates a strong understanding of the need for administrative

innovation but it also exposes the gap between this knowledge and its actual execution. This conclusion supports Hartley's (2005) argument that although innovation is universally seen as helpful in the public sector, its implementation confronts various hurdles, including organisational culture and budget constraints.

#### **4.6.2 Community Participation and Inclusivity**

The participants strongly believed that community involvement in decision-making processes is important. It did, however, also draw attention to a number of issues, such as the obstacles of reaching out to all facets of the community, guaranteeing meaningful engagement and incorporating community input into administrative decisions. Everyone agreed that while inclusive government is something the municipality strives for, there are a number of obstacles that need to be removed in order to make this goal a reality. Participant responses illuminated these issues.

*“We understand the importance of involving the community, but often, their voices are not fully integrated into our decision-making”* Participant 2 stated.

*“Inclusivity is a challenge; reaching marginalized groups requires more effort and resources”* Participant 6 noted.

*“We need to move beyond tokenistic engagement and ensure genuine community participation”* Participant 9 asserted.

*“Translating community feedback into actionable administrative steps is where we often fall short,”* Participant 11 observed.

These results are consistent with previous research on community engagement and governance. The recognition of the necessity of community engagement is consistent with the ideas of Arnstein (1969), who conceptualised the citizen participation ladder, emphasising the need for true public involvement in decision-making. However, the problems in attaining meaningful involvement and inclusion as stated by participants, parallel Fung's (2006) worries about the difficulty in guaranteeing effective participation and representation in public government.

The focus on incorporating community input into administrative procedures mirrors Habermas' (1996) deliberative democracy ideals, which advocate for the inclusion of various public voices in decision-making. However, the actual difficulties encountered in doing so in the Metsimaholo setting indicate a mismatch between theoretical objectives and their application in local administration.

#### **4.6.3 Monitoring, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

The results provided viewpoints on the monitoring, assessment and continuous improvement procedures that are in place in the municipality today. The understanding of the role these procedures play in improving service delivery was a recurring topic. Nonetheless, some attendees identified certain obstacles, such as deficient monitoring frameworks, inefficient assessment methods and an absence of a methodical strategy for ongoing development. This suggested a disconnect between the appreciation of these procedures' significance and their successful execution. The participants' quotes highlighted these points.

*“We know we need to monitor and evaluate our processes, but often, we lack the tools and systems to do it effectively”* Participant 2 expressed.

*“Our evaluation methods are outdated and don't always provide the insights we need”* Participant 4 noted.

*“Continuous improvement is a goal for us, but turning it into a consistent practice is challenging”* stated Participant 7.

*“There's a need for more structured and systematic approaches to how we assess and improve our services”* Participant 9 observed.

These findings both confirm and contradict previous public administration literature. The recognition of the significance of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation is consistent with Hatry's (2006) views on the relevance of performance measurement and management in public services. The participants' worries regarding the efficacy of present assessment techniques are consistent with the difficulties outlined by Poister (2010) in adopting performance measurement systems in government organisations.

The focus on the gap between seeing the need for continual improvement and successfully executing it, on the other hand, provides a more nuanced picture. While the theoretical components of continuous improvement as articulated by Deming (1986) are often discussed in the literature, the practical problems in developing these processes in a municipal environment are rarely addressed. This gap is highlighted by the Metsimaholo instance, indicating the need for more practical, context-specific methods for monitoring and evaluation in local government.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented an examination of the results of the research on successful municipal management at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The chapter presented the collected data based on the objectives which included: examining what entails effective municipal administration at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State; investigating the relationship that exists between effective municipal administration and efficient service distribution of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality; assessing the degree to which the deficient service distribution of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is a result of poor municipal administration. And to examine the strategies that can be used to improve effectiveness of municipal administration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

The semi-structured interviews revealed important areas of municipal administration that have a substantial impact on service delivery. The research discovered that although there is an understanding of the value of structured governance, human resource development, strategic resource allocation and creative practises, there are significant gaps in their actual application. The results emphasise the need for adaptable leadership, good communication and real community involvement in improving administrative performance. Furthermore, the chapter emphasised the need for building effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as taking a pragmatic approach to continual improvement in administrative procedures.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The study on the contribution of efficient municipal administration for successful service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is summarised in this chapter. It seeks to synthesise the information from Chapter 4 into a comprehensible overview, make relevant inferences and provide doable suggestions. The chapter is organised to closely correspond with the study's major and secondary objectives, guaranteeing a targeted and relevant discussion.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the other sections, which include a thorough synopsis of the major results, an analysis of the implications of these findings and a series of suggestions designed to improve administrative efficacy and solve the issues that have been discovered. In the context of local government, this chapter aims to make a significant addition to the area of public administration by fusing insights from the data analysis with well-established theoretical frameworks. The final objective is to provide a tool that summarises the study and acts as a reference for future academic research on municipal governance and service delivery, policy-making and practical implementation.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

##### **5.2.1 Overview of key Insights**

The data analysis, which was based mostly on semi-structured interviews, indicated a number of characteristics that influence the efficacy of municipal administration. One of the most important observations concerns organisational structure and governance. The research discovered that although the municipality has a clearly defined hierarchical structure, this may occasionally contribute to rigidity, impeding adaptive and quick decision-making. This conclusion supports O'Toole's (2004) claim regarding the complicated relationship between administrative structure and operational efficiency, as well as Svava's (2008) criticism of hierarchical governance in public administration.

In terms of human resource management, a crucial insight was the necessity for continual skills development and alignment of these abilities with the municipality's strategic goals. This need mirrors Pynes' (2013) focus on ongoing skills development in public administration but it also reveals a gap in integrating training with strategic objectives. The analysis discovered inefficiencies in resource allocation and utilisation, which contributed to service delivery difficulties. This is consistent with Robinson's (2009) viewpoint on the necessity of strategic resource allocation, but it also highlights the need for more sophisticated management tactics. Another key element was the function of leadership and strategic direction. The data indicated that leadership in the municipality lacked clarity in vision and strategic focus at times, which affected service delivery results, corroborating Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky's (2009) claim regarding the importance of good leadership in public administration.

### **5.2.2 Alignment with Research Objectives**

This study's main goal was to examine the impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The results show that the efficiency and efficacy of service delivery are highly influenced by a number of elements, including administrative structure, human resource skills, resource management and leadership. This supports the main goal by emphasising that efficient management is a multifaceted notion that calls for consideration of several organisational components.

Concerning the secondary objectives:

#### **To examine what entails effective municipal administration at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State:**

- The study found that effective administration in Metsimaholo involves not just structured governance but also flexibility, adaptability and a clear strategic direction in line with contemporary perspectives in public administration literature (O'Toole, 2004; Svara, 2008).

#### **To investigate the relationship that exists between effective municipal administration and efficient service distribution of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality:**

- There is a clear relationship between administrative efficiency and service quality. Inefficiencies in administrative processes, such as delayed decision-making and bureaucratic hurdles, directly impact service delivery, supporting the arguments presented by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) on public service delivery.

**To assess the degree to which the deficient service distribution of basic municipal services at the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is a result of poor municipal administration:**

- The deficient distribution of basic municipal services in Metsimaholo is closely linked to gaps in resource management and administrative inefficiencies, resonating with the views of Robinson (2009) on strategic resource allocation.

**To examine the strategies that can be used to improve effectiveness of municipal administration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality:**

- The study suggests several strategies for improving administrative effectiveness, including enhancing human resource capabilities, adopting innovative practices and fostering community engagement. These strategies align with Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) principles of entrepreneurial governance and Borins' (2002) discussion on innovation in the public sector.

The study results provided a thorough knowledge of the elements affecting successful municipal administration and its influence on service delivery in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. The findings are consistent with and expand on previous research and they have practical implications for enhancing administrative performance in the setting of local government.

## **5.3 CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.3.1 Impact of Municipal Administration on Service Delivery**

The primary purpose of this research was to examine how effective municipal administration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality impacts service delivery efficiency. The findings of this study highlight the need for effective municipal management in ensuring high-quality service provision. Timeliness and quality of services provided to the

community have been demonstrated to be directly correlated with the efficiency of administrative procedures such as resource allocation, policy execution and decision-making.

O'Toole (2004) and Svava (2008) supported the importance of administrative procedures and structures in the delivery of public services. The study found that bureaucratic inefficiencies such as rigid hierarchical structures and lengthy procedures slowed the municipality's response time to service requests. This result is consistent with Svava's (2008) critique of public administration's strict hierarchical systems.

The study also emphasises how critical it is to include community input into administrative procedures. It has been illustrated that poor procedures for including the public in decision-making have a detrimental influence on service delivery. Bryson's (2004) endorsement of participatory government, which emphasises the need of public participation in decision-making processes is consistent with this finding.

### **5.3.2 Efficacy of current administrative practices**

Evaluating the performance of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality's present administrative practises found both strengths and places for development. The research discovered that although there are established procedures and a defined organisational structure, they often lack the flexibility and adaptability required to successfully meet the changing demands of service delivery. This outcome supports Pollitt and Bouckaert's (2011) argument for the need of adaptation in public sector governance.

HRM practises in the municipality were shown to be critical but underemphasized areas, notably in terms of skills development and capacity building. The results indicate a need for better strategic alignment of human resource capabilities with the aims of the municipality, echoing Pynes' (2013) focus on the strategic relevance of HRM in public administration.

Furthermore, the research found that resource allocation and utilisation are important factors influencing service delivery. Inefficiencies in resource management, such as misallocation and underutilization were highlighted as important impediments to successful service delivery, matching with Robinson's (2009) viewpoint on the need for strategic resource allocation.

### **5.3.3 Administrative Challenges and Service Deficiencies**

The results of the research show that there is a strong link in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality between administrative difficulties and service shortcomings. The rigidity of hierarchical structures - which, while offering a clear organisational foundation, often leads to procedural delays and inflexibility - has been cited as one of the main administrative challenges. The idea that this structural rigidity and ineffective decision-making procedures have a direct influence on the promptness and efficacy of service delivery is consistent with the criticisms of hierarchical systems found in the literature on public administration (Svara, 2008; O'Toole, 2004).

The study found a deficiency in the strategic use and allocation of resources. According to Robinson's (2009) viewpoint on strategic resource allocation, ineffective resource management - including misallocation and underutilization - is emphasised as a major obstacle to providing quality services. Numerous service problems, particularly in the areas of waste management, water supply and community services are a result of these administrative difficulties. The relationship between ineffective administrative practises and difficulties in providing services highlights the need for adopting a more planned, adaptable and effective approach to municipal administration.

### **5.3.4 Leadership, Resource Management and Community Engagement**

The Metsimaholo Local Municipality's leadership emerged as a critical element impacting both administrative efficiency and service delivery. The results imply that the municipality's leadership occasionally lacks clarity in vision and strategic focus, which has an influence on service delivery outcomes. This supports Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky's (2009) contention that competent leadership is essential in public administration. The research recommends visionary leadership that is also capable of transforming strategic ideas into concrete and practical initiatives.

The research emphasises the need for a strategic approach to resource allocation and utilisation in terms of resource management. According to Robinson (2009), good resource management is critical for successful service delivery. This includes the need for a more sophisticated and context-specific knowledge of resource allocation in order to handle the municipality's particular difficulties.

Community involvement was shown to be an important but underutilised part of municipal management. While the value of community engagement is acknowledged, the research found barriers to successful participation. This is consistent with Bryson's (2004) support for participatory government, but it also emphasises the need of techniques that assure true and meaningful community interaction. Effective community participation is seen as critical for comprehending public demands and incorporating input into service delivery and policy-making processes.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.4.1 Enhancing Administrative Structures and Processes**

The research underlines how important it is for the Metsimaholo Local Municipality to improve its procedures and organisational framework. It is advised that the municipality implement an organisational structure that is more adaptable and responsive. As suggested by O'Toole (2004), this may include flattening the hierarchical structure to speed up decision-making and enhance responsiveness to service delivery demands. Furthermore, expediting processes and cutting down on bureaucratic red tape will contribute to increased productivity, supporting Svava's (2008) criticism of inflexible hierarchical structures. Taking up Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) more process-oriented approach might improve administrative responsiveness and agility even further.

### **5.4.2 Strengthening Human Resource Capacities**

Human resource development and capacity building are critical for providing successful services. The municipality should prioritise programmes for continual professional development that link personnel capabilities with the organization's strategic goals. Pynes' (2013) focus on strategic HRM coincides with this approach. In addition, implementing mentoring and coaching programmes might improve worker capabilities, particularly in leadership and technical positions. To keep the personnel up to date on current trends, regular training sessions on new technology and administrative practises should be conducted.

### **5.4.3 Strategic Resource Allocation and Utilization**

Delivering services efficiently requires effective resource management. In order to allocate resources strategically and make sure that they go towards priority regions, the municipality should do so. This approach is consistent with Robinson's (2009) theory of strategic resource distribution. The most important service areas might be identified and addressed with the use of a needs-based resource allocation model. Regular resource utilisation audits may also guarantee that resources are being utilised effectively and efficiently.

### **5.4.4 Leadership and strategic planning improvements**

Improving leadership effectiveness is crucial for successful strategic plan execution. According to Heifetz *et al.* (2009), leadership development programmes should be implemented to help leaders improve their skills. The municipality should also prioritise the development of clear and executable strategic plans, which should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure alignment with changing service delivery demands. Engaging employees at all levels in the strategic planning process helps promote a feeling of ownership and dedication to the objectives of the municipality.

### **5.4.5 Fostering innovation and technology adoption**

To enhance service delivery, the municipality has to embrace innovation and technology. In keeping with the ideas of reinventing government put out by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), this may include implementing e-governance platforms for more effective service delivery and enhanced public interaction. Staff members that get technology training will be prepared to manage new procedures and systems. A specialised innovation team might also be established to aid in the discovery and application of novel technologies and procedures.

### **5.4.6 Promoting community participation and inclusive governance**

It is essential to improve inclusive government and community participation. Bryson (2004) suggests that the municipality should provide more efficient avenues for citizen input and involvement. This can include holding frequent community forums, conducting

surveys, and soliciting public input online. Including community feedback in decision-making procedures will improve the applicability and efficiency of the services offered.

#### **5.4.7 Implementing Effective Monitoring and Evaluation Systems**

Finally, for continual improvement, it is critical to build comprehensive monitoring and assessment methods. These systems should be primarily concerned with analysing the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery and administrative procedures. Implementing Kaplan and Norton's (1996) balanced scorecard method might give a complete framework for performance assessment. These systems will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain relevant and effective in driving continual improvement in service delivery and administration.

### **5.5 FINAL REMARKS**

#### **5.5.1 Implications for policy and practice**

- The results of this research on how the Metsimaholo Local Municipality's service delivery is affected by efficient municipal administration have important ramifications for municipal governance practise and policy. In order to improve service efficiency, the research emphasises the need for a thorough re-evaluation and restructuring of administrative procedures and practises.

#### **Policy implications**

- **Organizational structure reform:** policymakers should consider revising municipal governance structures to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and promote flexibility (O'Toole, 2004). Dismantling the hierarchical structure may result in enhanced decision-making effectiveness and responsiveness.
- **Human Resource Development Policies:** as recommended by Pynes (2013), it is important to create policies that emphasise ongoing professional development and skills alignment with strategic objectives. This covers guidelines for consistent training, mentoring initiatives and performance reviews that are in line with company goals.

- **Resource Management Policy:** in line with Robinson's (2009) suggestions, policies that guarantee strategic resource allocation and efficient utilisation are required. This might include conducting routine audits and allocating resources in accordance with requirements.

### **Practical Applications:**

- **Leadership and Strategic Planning:** municipal administrations should concentrate on improving leadership skills and strategic planning on a practical level. Leadership development initiatives and strategic planning workshops may help translate organisational objectives into concrete strategies.
- **Integration of Innovation and Technology:** in practise, municipalities should actively attempt to incorporate new technology and practises to expedite operations as proposed by Osborne and Gaebler (1992). Investing in e-governance and digital platforms for enhanced service delivery and community involvement might be part of this.
- **Community Engagement:** There is a practical need for effective mechanisms to facilitate community engagement and feedback. Regular forums, polls and digital channels for public participation may improve the relevance and quality of services.

### **5.5.2 Areas for Further Research**

This study opens avenues for further research in several areas:

- **Comparative Studies:** in order to find best practises and cutting-edge methods for municipal management and service delivery, future studies may compare municipalities with one another.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** longitudinal studies have the potential to evaluate the long-term effects of administrative innovations and changes in local government.
- **Technology and Innovation in Municipal Administration:** more investigation may be conducted to see how certain technology and creative approaches might improve the effectiveness of municipal service delivery.

- **Human Resource Management techniques:** in-depth research on the effects of different HRM techniques in public administration may provide more profound understandings of workforce optimisation.
- **Public Participation Models:** researching the efficacy of alternative public participation models in diverse municipal government situations may provide important insights for improving community involvement strategies.
- **Frameworks for Monitoring and Evaluation:** examining the efficacy of various frameworks for monitoring and evaluating municipal settings may provide valuable information for ongoing enhancement of public service delivery.

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## **ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Section A: Demographic Information**

1. How long have you been working at Metsimaholo Local Municipality?
2. What is your academic qualification?

### **Section B: impact of effective municipal administration in providing efficient service delivery at Metsimaholo Local Municipality**

1. Can you describe your role within Metsimaholo Local Municipality and how it relates to service delivery?
2. How do you define effective municipal administration, and why do you think it is important for service delivery?
3. In your opinion, how does the effectiveness of municipal administration impact service delivery in Metsimaholo Local Municipality?
4. Can you provide some examples of how effective municipal administration has improved service delivery in Metsimaholo Local Municipality?
5. Conversely, can you describe any instances where ineffective municipal administration has hindered service delivery in Metsimaholo Local Municipality?
6. How does Metsimaholo Local Municipality measure the effectiveness of its municipal administration in relation to service delivery?
7. What are some of the challenges that Metsimaholo Local Municipality has faced in providing efficient service delivery, and how has effective municipal administration helped to overcome these challenges?
8. How does Metsimaholo Local Municipality ensure that its municipal administration remains effective in the long term, and how does this impact service delivery?

9. How do you see the role of effective municipal administration evolving in the future of Metsimaholo Local Municipality, and how will this impact service delivery?
  
10. What are some recommendations that you would make to improve the effectiveness of municipal administration in Metsimaholo Local Municipality, and how would this impact service delivery?

## Marks allocation

Number	Criteria	Marks Scored	Possible Marks
1.	Research Theme	7	10
2.	Problem Statement and Objectives	11	15
3.	Literature analysis/handling of sources	10	20
4.	Research Methodology	10	15
5.	Problem-Solving/reaching of objectives	12	20
6.	Logical Structure	6	10
7.	Documentation and technical finishing	4	10
	Total	60	100

## General Comments

1. The candidate not conversant with the field of study, e.g. Local government instead of Public Administration. See page 8.  
The word "Mini" Dissertation missing on the title page.
2. The candidate did not clearly stated the identified research problem of his study. See page 5&6.
3. The candidate has done comparisons with other municipalities in South Africa. The central concepts theme were not defined at the correct section.
4. The candidate did not clearly specify the research methodology chosen and the rationale behind the choice thereof in the correct section. No where in this chapter the heading research methodology categorically mentioned.
5. Semi structured questionnaire administered and analysed with the sample population in Chapter 4.

6. The numbering of headings and sub heading in the text and table of content do not tally or correspond. There are many technical mistakes noticed. The reference list was duplicated starting from Page 97.  
NWU Harvard style of referencing was not followed accordingly.
7. Table of content not Automatically designed causing many errors in the page headings and subheadings. NWU Harvard style referencing not followed Accordingly.

Examiner: Dr Simon John

Date: 07 January 2024