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Role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to determine the role of service providers in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM) in ensuring effective service delivery. The absence of transparency, accountability, and proper and trustworthy structures and procedures in public procurement leads to corruption and abuse of resources, costing the nation its livelihoods, when services are ill-delivered. Therefore, service delivery has become increasingly important as a driving force in the South African economy. However, there has been limited research done in the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery. The article is a case study research design and data were gathered using semi structured interviews at the Supply Chain Management Department at the MMM based on a snowball sampling technique. The article reveals the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery in the MMM. It also found that there needs to be training to minimize corruption and poor service delivery within the public sector. Furthermore, the study recommended that service providers should monitor projects and they should perform their duties and responsibilities in terms of specification to ensure efficient and effective service delivery. The participants recommended that to enhance service delivery, there is a need to hire people in supply chain management with the capacity, skills, and knowledge to do the job.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The processes of public procurement through which the public sector and governments obtain required goods, works and services can be used to uphold certain guidelines. Therefore, to ensure efficient, effective and economic service delivery, there is a need to shift away from inner observing, bureaucratic structures, procedures, and approaches and a look into innovative ways of working, which put the requirements of the community first, is better, quicker, and more receptive to the citizens requests. It also implies a broad shift in the method that services are provided. The article reveals the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery in the MMM. It also acknowledges that there needs to be training to minimize corruption and poor service delivery within the public sector. Furthermore, service providers should monitor projects and they should perform their duties and responsibilities in terms of specification to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

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1. Introduction

Modise et al. (2020, pp. 51–64) state that service delivery asserts precisely about improving the way in which services are delivered and how these services are delivered effectively and efficiently. Legoabe and Worku (2017, pp. 180) argue that a lot of public attention has been created by municipal service delivery, due to recurrent service delivery protests happening throughout the nation, as well as risks caused by structural collapses to community health, environmental integrity, and municipal financial sustainability (Legoabe & Worku, 2017, pp. 151–180). Service delivery entails how public services are delivered and precisely about refining the productivity and effectiveness of the system in which services are distributed (Modise et al., 2020, pp. 51–64). According to the White Paper on Local Government (1998), refining the

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provision of public services entails rectifying the inequality of the previous years, while continuing to maintain service to all ranks of the general public, concentrating on meeting the requirements of the 40% of South Africa's who are existing beyond the poverty-defining line and those, such as the disabled and black women living in communal areas, who have in the past been underprivileged in terms of service delivery. The White Paper on Local Government (1998) further states that there is a need to shift away from inner observing, bureaucratic structures, procedures, and approaches, to improve service delivery and a look into innovative ways of working, which put the requirements of the community first, is better, quicker, and more receptive to the residents' requests. It also implies a broad shift in the method that services are provided.

1.1. Background

The South African public sector is organized and managed in a way that guarantees that the systems of Supply Chain Management (SCM) are set up for the critical supply of goods and services to the residents. The obligation of public service departments is to supply goods and services to the people of South Africa (SA); hence it is essential that this is done in an efficient, effective, equitable, transparent, fair, and economical manner. The tools of SCM ensure that quality services and goods are supplied at a fair and reasonable price (Manzini et al., 2019, pp. 117–129). Pauw et al. (2015) state that the purpose of the public sector is to provide services and the aim of the private sector is profit-making. The private sector is the sector in which profit is used as a gauge of achievement. The public sector is the sector in which service to the general population is the main gauge of accomplishment. Furthermore, procurement of goods and services, through direct negotiation, will occur when there is a catastrophic event, then there is critical importance for early delivery required for urgent cases and the request of quotations is either impractical or impossible (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality Policy, 2019).

Xhariep, Lejweleputswa, Thabo Mofutsanyana, Fezile Dabi District, including MMM, are municipalities in the Free State (FS), which have evaded on paying their creditors on time and other suppliers when likened to other municipalities in other provinces. The adverse financial effects on rural businesses, municipalities, youth, and women, who own Small, Medium and Macro Enterprises (SMMEs) have been due to the nonpayment of suppliers (Tshilo & Van Niekerk, 2016, pp. 109–126). There is a dispute between the MMM and Bloem Water, concerning the contract signed by both partners for supply of bulk water (Kusakana et al., 2019, pp. 104–108). Glasser and Wright (2020, pp. 413–441) expand on Tshilo and Van Niekerk's assertion by giving an example of the MMM when Bloem Water decreased the pressure of water, and this was because of the failure by the Municipality to pay a debt amounting to R247million. Glasser and Wright (2020, pp. 413–441) argue that it is not transparent that the decreased water load would institute a grave infringement of the Municipality's service delivery responsibilities. In its attempts to ensure that the citizens of MMM would not suffer because of an avoidable tassel amongst the Municipality and the service provider, Bloem Water, the City revisited the court order that was lodged against the water entity. It is a government's obligation to supply decent water quality to the public (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Mamokhere, 2022). Kusakana et al. (2019, pp. 104–108) argue that until now, this does not seem to have been accomplished.

The result of the supply of poor water quality by the Municipality has led to the people developing a bad impression about the MMM and the Department of Water and Sanitation. According to Kusakana et al. (2019, pp. 104–108), in the agreement between Bloem Water and MMM it is stated that a payment of at least 70% of the bulk water will be made to Bloem Water by MMM. It is further agreed by the stakeholders that MMM has the responsibility to pay Bloem water for 70% minimum of the bulk water if it fails to pay for the minimum percentage of water (Kusakana et al., 2019, pp. 104–108). Hence, based on this background, the aim of the study was to explore the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery in MMM.

1.2. Problem statement

Mantzaris (2017, pp. 121–134) states that procurement corruption has many forms: bribery, active bribery, bid rigging, and collusive bidding by contractors. Hence, the argument that, the absence of

transparency, accountability, and proper and trustworthy structures and procedures in public procurement leads to corruption and abuse of resources, which costs the nation of its livelihoods. In the Free State Province where Mangaung is the only Metropolitan Municipality, the Auditor General South Africa (AGSA) cautioned that a continued lack of accountability in the public sector resulted in prevalent non-compliance, mainly concerning procurement and failing financial health (Auditor-General of South Africa, 2023, p. 11). The number of audits, identified material non-compliance with SCM legislation which decreased from 37% in the previous year to 31% and this is due partly because of the decrease in procurement due to budget cuts (Auditor-General of South Africa, 2023, pp. 11). Mantzaris (2017, pp. 121–134) indicated that, in some instances, there has been a concerted effort to determine many corrupt practices in the SCM and procurement environment, such as misappropriation of funds, fraud, irregular and unsolicited purchases, overstated prices, ghost suppliers, and similar acts.

2. Literature review

Service delivery is the provision of benefits, satisfactions, or municipal activities. Services relate both to the delivery of intangible services and tangible public commodities (Van der Walt et al., 2018, pp. 179). Ndebele and Lavhelani (2017, pp. 340–356) expand on Van der Waldt's assertion that service delivery is a municipal service that is essential to guarantee a normal and standard quality of life, and which will risk public safety or health or the environment, if not delivered. According to Ndebele and Lavhelani (2017, pp. 340–356), service delivery is the delivery of viable services by the municipality to the people. They also define service delivery as a municipal service that is essential to guarantee a normal and standard quality of life and which will cause risk to public safety or health or the environment, if not delivered. Van der Walt et al. (2018, pp. 179) argue that it is the providing of benefits, municipal activities, or agreements. Services correlate both to the delivery of intangible services and tangible public goods themselves. Service delivery is defined as the provision of a product or a service, by a government body to a community that it was pledged to, or which is anticipated by the public (Kemp & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020).

2.1. Communication

There is a single database, called the Central Supplier Database (CSD), which serves all the data about licensed and potential service providers for all sectors of government (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The purpose of CSD is to grow a country's economy that ensures that e-procurement is permitted by decreasing needless repetition of effort and cost for both service provider and government and to expose economic prospects for developing companies to do business with the government (Mpehle & Mudogwa, 2020, pp. 1–10). Carrim et al. (2020, pp. 150–182) state that it is understood that several forms of information distribution play a key role between a consumer and its major players. Information linking resources and their meetings can be better identified when data is classified and coordinated appropriately through communication technology. For instance, this may involve uncertainty in raw materials, demand, or supply. Furthermore, Carrim et al. (2020, pp. 150–182) argued that supplier evaluation and audits may provide results of improvements for buyer performance to both parties through vital information exchange. Kusakana et al. (2019, pp. 104–108) argue that better communication with the community in a municipal area, such as Mangaung can be enabled through the function of administrative communication.

According to the South African Constitution (1996), it is a requirement of the Government to supply good water quality for the public. Kusakana et al. (2019, pp. 104–108) argue that the provision of good quality water is an obligation of the government to the community, however this does not appear to be the case. Communities have currently developed a bad impression about the MMM and DWS, as a result of supplying poor water quality by the Municipality. This bad image boils down to communication challenges. The society anticipates from MMM to be notified at the right time about all disputes or obstacles that may affect their anticipation and to be supplied with superior quality services.

2.2. Lack of finance

The local government sphere and public service in general are engulfed in fraud and corruption and it remains a challenge in preventing good governance to take place in the public sector. This is compounded by the large sums which go missing without being accounted for and state resources being utilized for personal gain (Mamokhere, 2019, pp. 373–379). The abandonment of various projects in the municipality is mainly because of fraud and insufficient funds to finish up projects (Ngcamu, 2019, pp. 1–9). Water pressure was reduced by Bloem Water, which affected the community of the MMM, because of amount owing of R247 million by the MMM (Glasser & Wright, 2020, pp. 413–441).

2.3. Service delivery backlog

In recent years, service delivery protests have escalated. This situation is provoked by the circumstance that municipalities are beleaguered by challenges of infrastructure backlogs, maladministration, and incapacity, due to lack of skills. It is further indicated that there are often protesters that refer to a lack of accountability of government officials, corruption, and maladministration as the aggravating factors to service delivery protests (Mamokhere, 2019, pp. 373–379; Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2023).

2.4. Enterprise Resource Planning

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) produces an arrangement of essential internal actions that supports organisational analysis. It stimulates the efficiency of real-time monitoring and evaluation of raw materials storage, production, delivery, sales, and management of cash flow (Okanga & Groenewald, 2019, pp. 1–15). The use of ERP schemes allows businesses to work more efficiently and effectively as a result of improved interaction, and data interchange. Information plays a crucial role in a complex construction company through enabling the organisation with collaborators, and incorporation among collaborators and allowing the smooth flow of operations. The cost-effectiveness of data in attaining it and its quality, decide the effectiveness of a project in SCM (Mathu, 2019, pp. 1–8).

3. SCM and service delivery in other countries

This section gives a brief discussion of the global dynamics of SCM and service delivery. Eriksson et al. (2017, pp. 415–422) state that in Sweden landfilling of biological waste is prohibited; usually food waste is used for the recovery of energy and nutrient recycling, which meaningfully lessens the climate effect equated with landfilling. Eriksson et al. (2017, pp. 415–422) argue that in the waste hierarchy, using more positive waste management options is likely to lower emissions even further. The greatest potential savings is however observed in restraint through source reduction. Catering is at the lower end of the food SC and there is therefore an advantage from reducing food waste in catering (Erikson et al., 2017, pp. 415–422).

3.1. Global trends: Europe, Asia, and North America

The processes of public procurement through which the public sector and governments obtain required goods, works and services can be used to uphold certain guidelines. Accelerating the hiring of underprivileged groups, encouraging impartiality, and guarding the surroundings while procuring goods and services, solve two problems at once (Martinić & Kozina, 2016, pp. 207–249). Martinić and Kozina (2016, pp. 207–249) further state that an example of how social and environmental deliberations can lead to discernment is well explained in two milestone cases, namely that of Beentjes and Concordia Bus. A tender by Gebroeders Beentjes BV in the Beentjes case was excluded by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, because it seemed less suitable than that of the next lowest bidder. The authority, which awarded it, indicated that the Beentjes did not have the required experience and that

it did not seem to be in the position to hire long-term out of work individuals (Martinić & Kozina, 2016, pp. 207–249). Lazar (2021, pp. 159–165) argues with Martinić and Kozina's (2016, pp. 207–249) assertion that the emergence of the new European Public Procurement Act 2020, is one of the many motives Europe initiates to create equality in terms of community and skilled incorporation or recuperation of disabled and underprivileged people, such as unemployed members of minority or other disadvantaged groups, publicly marginalised.

The vulnerabilities of supply chains across many industries have been exposed by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Health care systems in many countries in the recent years have stimulated or forged the offshoring of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) production to less costly service providers. 95% of surgical masks in the United States and 70% of ventilators are manufactured abroad. During the COVID-19 epidemic in the People's Republic of China, factory closures and prohibitions on travel and PPE export have put significant political and technical constraints on the market, while the evolving nature of COVID-19 has strained PPE supply chains (Park et al., 2020). Countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, United States, France, Mexico, and China became pioneers in producing medical supplies. France requested domestic manufacture of ventilators for French healthcare workers in March 2020. National export restrictions on masks were imposed by Germany on face shields and other PPE, which later led to the scarcity of health kits between European Union countries (Andaneswari & Rohmadiena, 2021, pp. 171–188).

4. Theoretical framework: Resource-Based View Theory

Nkwanyana and Agbenyegah (2020, pp. 1–9) state that the Resource Based View Theory also known as the RBT, implies a set of resources related to an organization for a specific phase. These resources are not restricted to but can include physical assets, skills, organizational procedures, and materials. In this context, the aim of RBT is to improve the roles and capabilities of these resources to expand supply chain associations and performance. This implies that, there should be a continuous appraisal of firms of the web of businesses involved in the events of the chain to evaluate whether they have the right people in place with the necessary abilities to bring significance to the firm and customers to continue a constant competitive advantage. The major component of an organization's power and flaw roots in the kind of suppliers, manufacturers, and distributors combined within the supply chain, either internally or externally, and their quality of affiliation to the host organization, such as fiscal and internal procedure performance, thus focusing broadly on the abilities and process development of the organization, providing exclusive goods and services to the final user.

5. Legislative frameworks

Public SCM in South Africa is overseen by the legislative frameworks, which state as its objectives the need to be impartial, unbiased, transparent, and economical for example the PFMA Act 1 of 1999, PPPFA Act 5 of 2000, BBBEE Act 53 of 2003 (Masete & Mafini, 2018, pp. 1–12). It also includes the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which makes the provision regarding the procurement of commodities and services in the public sector (Magoro, 2016, pp. 329–333).

The PFMA (Act 1 of 1999) came into effect on 1 April 2000 with the purpose of modernizing financial management in the public sector. Accounting officers are enabled by the PFMA (Act 1 of 1999) to be held accountable for the resources allocated to their institutions. To improve the general state of financial management in the public sector, the PFMA (Act of 1999) is used as the government's broader strategy (Madue, 2007, pp. 306–318). Accounting officers are required by the PFMA (Act 1 of 1999) to ensure that their institution upholds a suitable procurement and provisioning system which is impartial, reasonable, transparent, modest, and economical (PFMA Act 1 of 1999). Chapter 11, Part 1 of the MFMA (Act 56 of 2003) deals with SCM and relates to the procurement by a municipal entity or municipality of commodities and services and the municipality's disposal of commodities that are no longer in use. Furthermore, it deals with the choice of suppliers to aid in the delivery of municipal services.

Section 217 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) led to the endorsement of the PPPFA (Act 5 of 2000), which stipulates the necessity to apply a policy on procurement that will offer preference in the provision of contracts and avoid unreasonable bias. The PPPFA (Act 5 of 2000) is an Act precisely designed to effect preferential procurement, and National Treasury administers it. It is a requirement of the PPPFA (Act 5 of 2000) that when a government evaluates contracts, it must consider the preference point structure, which recommends functionality cost and goals of the Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP) (Selomo & Govender, 2016, pp. 37).

6. Research methodology

This section discusses the research design, participants, procedures for data collection and data analysis in brief. The study adopted an interpretive philosophical paradigm (Žukauskas et al., 2018, pp. 121–124) and a case study research design (Webb & Auriacombe, 2006, pp. 588–602). The qualitative research design used was a case study and it was applicable to this kind of investigation because tools that are largely grounded on the qualitative method were equipped and managed by the researchers to acquire significant information about the role of service providers and public officials' views on the challenges of SCM, affecting service delivery.

From a sample size of eight participants, the study employed snowball sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative studies, central of which are the traits of interacting and recommendation (Parker et al., 2019). The study population consisted of these eight senior municipal officials within MMM who were interviewed. The researcher used snowball sampling to select the General Manager SCM, Head Of Department Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer in the Finance Department and five participants in the SCM Department, recommended by only the General Manager SCM. The inclusion criteria for these eight participants ensured the selection of participants who had knowledge about the roles of service providers and how that affects service delivery. Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach of detecting, evaluating, and describing patterns within a data corpus (Scharp & Sanders, 2019, pp. 117–121). The study adopted a thematic analysis to describe themes; that is information trends that are significant or valuable, and to use these themes to further enable an exploration of the role of service providers in service delivery in the MMM.

Ethical factors attached to the study were considered by the researcher. Therefore, the privacy and identity of those officials and other key individuals in the study were protected by the researchers. The assurance of anonymity was given at the start of the interviews and the assurance was included in the informed consent form, signed by the interviewees. The study was in alignment with the institution's research ethics policy. The researchers also took into consideration all the other institutions, which were involved, such as Government's ethics and research policies or any policies that were of relevance to the study. The researchers first got clearance from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Free State. The ethical clearance number for this research is UFSHSD2022/0051/22.

7. Findings and discussion

This section provides themes and codes on the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery.

7.1. Specification

This theme has identified how participants perceive bid specification. Participants noted that for service providers to ensure effective service delivery, they need to perform their duties and responsibilities in terms of specification, which is part of their contractual obligations. This theme relates to the aim of the study in exploring the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery in MMM.

7.1.1. Effective service delivery

Participants mentioned the duties and responsibilities of service providers. It has been noted by participant X, Y and E that for service providers to ensure effective service delivery, they need to perform their duties and responsibilities in terms of specification, which is part of their contractual obligations. Service

providers are failing to follow specifications, yet they state that they have the required experience. It has been noted by the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (2019) that the compiled bid specification and bid documentation were appropriate, and that evaluation and adjudication principles and general conditions of a contract, agree with any relevant legislation.

One participant echoed the following sentiments:

Participant E: We must appoint service providers to ensure that they offer effective service delivery. It is so important that they should deliver on time they should deliver the requested goods, otherwise service delivery is at stake. So, it's so important that they do their work accordingly, it uplifts the image of the municipality.

In addition, another participant during an interview noted that:

Participant B: why are they failing to follow the specification? Because when we appoint this person because he's got an experience. He did this for so many years. So, the same person who has the experience and did that for so long, is failing. Both officials are failing due to lack of resources.

It was also noted by a participant during an interview that:

Participant Y: The role is just to see to it that they meet the terms of the contract, they shouldn't breach the contract and they deliver as per specifications.

Another participant during an interview stated that:

Participant X: So, for a service provider to ensure that there is an effective service delivery in Mangaung, they need to ensure that they perform their duties and responsibilities in terms of the specification, which is part of their contractual obligation.

7.2. Monitoring

This theme identified how participants perceive monitoring in SCM. Participants noted that there is monitoring and evaluation in SCM, whilst others differed that there is lack of monitoring and evaluation in SCM. Andhov et al. (2020, pp. 1–58) have supported this claim by recommending that monitoring of contract requirements is often the only way to verify whether terms are compiled with.

7.2.1. Lack of monitoring

Participants mentioned that there is no good monitoring and evaluation through the process of tendering to improve SCM. It has been noted by participant C, D, E and Z that there is no monitoring and evaluation, due to the lack of the staff complement and office resources. The challenge that they are having, is paying for materials they do not know were delivered or not. The Chartered Institute of Procurement and SC in its risk index report for 2017, identified government policies, SC intricacy, availability of skills, as well as contractor performance monitoring as some of the highly frequent SC risks in the public sector. Fourie and Malan (2020, pp. 1–23) further argue that the institutional design of structures for the acquiring, handling, and storing of monitoring and evaluation of information and data are crucial. Inadequate accessibility of public procurement information for monitoring and evaluation functions results in lacking evidence to assess the reach of operating objectives and results. Participants have mentioned the need of service providers to appoint a person with knowledge to monitor a project. It has been noted by participant A and B that when an engineer requires a service provider to appoint a person to monitor a project there must select a knowledgeable person. The participants mentioned the appointment of service providers. It has been noted by participant X and Z that there is need for monitoring tools to be in place so that contractors can be held liable and comply with the contractual obligations.

Mhelembe and Mafini (2019, pp. 1–12) state that the challenges facing public sector SCM, which are the most prominent, include ineffective monitoring and evaluation, the noncompliance with current policies and poor planning. Participants mentioned that there is a good monitoring and evaluation through the process of tendering to improve service delivery in SCM. It has been noted by participant A, B, Y and C that when service providers procure it goes through the bid specification committee, while the user directorate is presenting the item. Before a tender can be advertised, the relevant department

comes to SCM's demand management and then they check against the recruitment if the project was budgeted for. There are internal controls from the beginning of submission of specification to the approval of the City Manager and advertising. The views collected on the issue were divergent. This is reflected in the excerpt below, where one participant during an interview echoed the following sentiments:

Participant E: I wouldn't say it's good. I would say it's there its existing, but we still lack capacity. As I've told you before, that we do have the performance management within supply chains, but I don't think they monitor every tender every quotation that we award. I don't think so. Due to the capacity or since there are a lot of vacant positions. So, I didn't think it's effective.

However, one participant during an interview echoed a different sentiment by noting with great concern that:

Participant D: There's no monitoring. It's there on paper, but it hasn't happened. There's no capacity for that to happen. The problem lies with staff complement, and all those resources that needs to be taken whether its human resources, office resources, and all those things that needs to be put in place for everything else to work. So unfortunately, the answer is a definite no.

Another participant during an interview noted with great concern that:

Participant C: Mangaung doesn't have a proper monitoring and evaluation of performance of the service providers. That's a fact. You can't award someone to do the pavement as a corporate service under facilities and that someone when he or she is on site, you're not there to monitor to check whether he's doing what he's supposed to do, and the payment is going out. For any payment there needs to be an acknowledgement letter or certificate to say yes as a department we're happy. He has done what was supposed to be done. When you go to finance under expenditure, the payment is there but go to those sites no progress.

Another participant during an interview noted that:

Participants C: we are doing a good monitoring and evaluation through the processes. Before the tender can be advertised the relevant department comes to supply chain to demand management with the specification to say roads and storm water, we want to build a reservoir at Botshabelo they give specification reasons and whatsoever signed by the relevant HOD and the budget therefore, and then we check that against the recruitment to check that was this project budgeted for. The department they bring the specification, they request for procurement initially, they request to procure whatever goods and services that they want with the budget, the signature of the HOD and so forth, we accept it and then it goes to the specification committee.

Another participant during an interview added that:

Participant B: You don't have people who monitor then the service provider also fails the Metro because they were appointed. Remember, if you are appointed you have read the advert, and you know that they need 1,2,3,4 but you do 1,2,4,5. So they both fail the service provider and government officials.

Another participant during an interview stated a different sentiment to that:

Participant B: Yes, they do have good monitoring and evaluation through the processes of tendering. Remember, they will advertise, they will receive applications? And then they will check, you don't just appoint for the sake of appointing. They do it according to the processes.

Another participant during an interview echoed a different sentiment to that:

Participant A: It happens a contractor must submit an engineer who would be monitoring the whole project, then they will give you the engineer only to find this engineer doesn't even know that is going to be a project manager on your project.

Another participant during an interview noted that:

Participant A: Yeah, we do have good monitoring and evaluation when it comes to supply chain, what do we mean regarding that if user directorates, let's talk now about the tender if they want to procure, they will come with what they require their needs, because they will know, they will have done their needs analysis. That we have 50 offices now, we need 50 desks what kind of furniture are we going to use wood or wire, steel, or plastic? They will check all those things. Now, they will bring the specification to supply chain. Now, if it is a tender

it will go through the committee system, the first moment that it will be discussed, is the bid specification committee then that's where they are going to talk to members of the committee whilst user directorates are presenting the item to them. They will ask questions in terms of the specification. If it is wrong, or favoring, one company from the other then they will tell you that this is wrong. We need to comply with the law.

Another participant during an interview added that:

Participant Y: there are internal controls that are implemented there from the beginning of the submission of the specification that site to the specification to the approval of the city manager or for advertising.

Another participant during an interview observed that:

Participant Z: another thing maybe they also must be monitoring, I have to go and check within this specific period of time. They, the engineers will say we'll know within a specific period this portion should have been done. So, if it is not done what I you doing as an official. No it does not have according to my knowledge is that when a contractor has been appointed, there's a contract there's a section that has to monitor that contract in terms of the contract that they signed to say are they doing according to the contract, there are people who supposed to go out because the challenge that were are having sometimes we are paying for things that we don't even know whether they were delivered or not.

Another participant during an interview added that:

Participant X: When a service provider is appointed, we expect that they are monitoring tools that must be put in place. Contractors must be held liable and accountable and comply with the contractual obligations.

7.3. Lack of communication

This theme identified how important it is for service providers to communicate when undertaking a project. Participants mentioned that failure of service providers to communicate during a project, hampers service delivery. If service providers do not communicate, SCM will just think everything is going according to plan. Fourie (2018, pp. 726–739) supports this claim by stating that in public procurement, the usage of information and communication technology can assist to enhance transparency and enable access to public tenders.

7.3.1. Service providers communication

Participants have mentioned communication as the role of service providers. It has been noted by participant E and Z that service providers must communicate if there are any delays in a product that they have been requested for by the SCM Department. If they cannot perform, based on the terms of the contract, they should also communicate and inform the Department of their challenges. If they communicate on time, the SCM Department can source another service provider to do the job. Carrim et al. (2020, pp. 150–182) have noted that information distribution of several types is well-known to play a key role among a customer and its major players. When data are classified and organised properly, knowledge linked to resources and their meetings can be realised via a communication technology. One participant during an interview noted that:

Participant E: another thing is communication, service providers should communicate on time if they will not be able to do the job, and sometimes that is the issue. Then after that, they come back to say, that there's a price increase, so they will not be able to supply the goods and services because if they communicate on time, we are able to source it again, to another service provider who can do the job, or we can negotiate for price increase. Especially with regards to contract and service because if they do not complete on time, it hampers service delivery.

Another participant during an interview noted that:

Participant A: one of the things that the current situation the country is facing now is that they will be saying they don't want illegal immigrants. In terms of the supply chain and procurement, how does that filter in as service providers? All service providers that you're doing business with they must be a registered on the supplier database, National Treasury CSD what does that mean? It means for a supplier to be registered. They must comply with the law. The company must be registered. Directors or shareholders must be registered in

terms of Home Affairs ID or any other document or passport. So, it will mean that if they are on our CSD, they are compliant to the law.

Another participant during an interview stated that:

Participant Z: Service providers, when they are given a contract, or when they are given an order, it comes with the terms of the contract and comes with the delivery terms. So, they must ensure that if we say that this order must be delivered within 14 working days, they do that. If they don't do that, they also must communicate, sometimes they might be delays or they are struggling to get a certain product that we have requested them to deliver for us, then they have to communicate. So that is the role they must communicate, in addition, they also have to ensure that if they can't perform based on our terms, or they also have to ensure that they stick to the terms of the contract and if they are failing to do that, they have to communicate and inform the department what is their challenges?

On the same note, another participant during an interview echoed the following sentiments:

Participant Z: I know that there is a database that is maintained by Treasury but it's our responsibility to report to Treasury. If there's a supplier that is not performing, we have to report with the evidence to say that this is what we have done but this service provider has not performed then they list them there. So that next time when you also want to appoint or another department want to appoint the recent supplier, when they go to the list, they can see that they have a history of non-performance.

Participants have mentioned the issue of service providers on the CSD. It has been noted by participant A and Z that the role of service providers is registration on the CSD. The current immigration laws facing the country requires service providers to comply with the law. It has been noted by Statistics South Africa (2020) that the CSD provides all supplier info for all spheres of government and that there is a specific database of potential and certified service providers of the state.

7.4. Checklists in SCM

This theme identified the checklists for suppliers after completing a project. Participants have noted that there is a need for a checklist when suppliers are completing a project. Project managers can tick off if the project has been successfully undertaken as it assesses the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery.

7.4.1. Checklists

Participants mentioned that there are checklists in SCM. It has been noted by participant X, E and A that there should be checklists provided by an inspector, in order for a contract to be paid. The checklist must have been fully completed and fully signed by the project manager after he/she is fully satisfied with the service provider in terms of the payment. The Compliance and Performance Division assesses the performance of service providers through providing a checklist. The checklist assesses if the service provider performed well or poorly. Oyedokun et al. (2021, pp. 45–57) argue that there is need to have a checklist that assures that procurement of suppliers and services are completed within the financial agreements, as to prevent delays in expenditures. One participant during an interview indicated that:

Participant E: also, in supply chain we do have what we call checklists. Whenever we procure, we pay when we procure when we order and when we pay there's a checklist that we tick to ensure that we have complied with all applicable legislations before we can sign off any document before the document goes to another section.

One of the participants in an interview noted that:

Participant A: fortunately for Mangaung we do have, one of the things that we have done amongst many which is crucial is to have some checklist, checklist in terms of the service that is being delivered by the contract. Now, what does that mean? It will mean for Mangaung to pay that contract the checklist must have been fully completed and fully signed by the project manager which is saying to us that the project manager is happy with the service that the service provider has done in terms of the payment.

Another participant added that:

Participant X: There must be checklists, checks and balances to say that on the street they must be an inspector that inspects that the area all of it, it was dealt with so that we sign off for payment to be effected.

8. Recommendations

Various recommendations were made from the research for the role of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery in MMM. To establish an approach which strengthens the role of service providers in MMM, there is need to come up with guidelines that better stabilise and control service providers. Another prudent prerequisite for SCM, monitoring contract requirements to ensure conditions have been compiled with. There is need for service providers to appoint skilled people in a project. There is need to select a specialist in that field, such as an engineer to monitor a project such as roads and infrastructure. There is need for monitoring tools to be available so that contractors can be held liable and comply with the contractual obligations of a contract.

8.1. Limitations and suggested areas for further research

The study only concentrated in the MMM and did not cover other Metropolitan Municipalities in other provinces of South Africa. Moreover, it did not specifically look at the smaller district municipalities, which are also part of the MMM. In future research, there is need to investigate SCM challenges in other municipalities in other provinces. Research of this nature will be able to come up with a broad overview of the challenges in SCM and possible solutions. A comprehensive study on the challenges of service providers in ensuring effective service delivery in the local government sphere, needs to be done. This is critical because it will go a long way in identifying the trials confronting service providers, which ultimately undermines their potential to deliver effective services.

Disclosure statement

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