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Resolving the service delivery dilemma in South Africa through a cohesive service delivery theory

Abstract

The main objective of public sector reform to speed-up resource distribution via a service delivery system has failed in South Africa resulting in scores of service delivery protests, some of which are violent. In this article research gaps on service delivery chaos in South Africa are identified. The author of the article acknowledges that different factors contribute to service delivery but such factors are not linked to give a clear understanding of service delivery dilemma. The research then reviews the literature on factors influencing service delivery and proposes a “Cohesive Service Delivery Theory”. The theory is developed using the Bayesian networks system, an artificial intelligence tool that facilitates the definition, quantification and combination of different factors contributing to service delivery. The theory suggests and interprets different scenarios showing how each factor or/and the combination of factors positively or negatively influences service delivery. The author promotes the theory as a tool that assists in maximizing the use of information communication technologies to improve and sustain service delivery in South Africa.

Keywords: service delivery, governance, Batho Pele, e-governance, public participation.

JEL Classification: H44.

Introduction

Continuous service delivery protests have been one of the worst predicaments the post-apartheid South African government has had to face. Although the post 1994 government embarked on public sector reform with one of the key outputs being transforming service delivery to meet basic needs and redress past imbalances (see White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1997), service delivery remains a dilemma. The failure of the public sector to deliver services to South Africans is therefore no more direct consequence of apartheid.

Service delivery is a “buzzword” in South Africa, according to Ayeni (2001, p. 42) and is epitomised in the principles of ‘Batho Pele’ or ‘People first’. To be effective, the government must be able to provide basic goods and services to the population, and to promote public participation. The Batho Pele project was crafted to simplify and enhance the relationship between public servants and the population, thus facilitating service delivery in South Africa. However, on 6 March 2014 it was reported in the *Business Day* newspaper that over 500 protests occurred in South Africa between 2013 and early 2014 and that 20% of these protests were violent. Similarly, at national level, service delivery protesters decried access to a variety of basic social needs. They revealed, through their acts, the poor levels of service provision by local municipalities. Such protests corroborate what Siddle and Koelble (2012, p. 1) regretted: “South Africans are reminded almost daily of incompetence, corruption, and the collapse of service delivery at local level.”

The numbers and levels of service delivery protests in South Africa explain not only the failure of the government’s effort to reform the public sector but also the ineffectiveness of the Batho Pele strategy. Yunus Carrim, the then Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs declared to the National Council of Provinces during the budget vote debate on 23 April 2010: “Clearly, some of the factors influencing the service delivery are certainly beyond the control of municipalities. And ultimately the service delivery protests reflect the failures of the cooperative governance system as a whole, not just local government.” The government’s acknowledgment of its failing service delivery system creates a pressing need for innovation to improve and sustain the service delivery system, the aim of the research subsequent to this article.

A literature review on public sector reform and service delivery in South Africa supports the hypothesis that service delivery is the consequence of different factors. However, there is no evidence on the links between the factors contributing to or hindering service delivery. Similarly, each contributing factor is not assessed with reference to its contribution to the incidence of other factors and/or to its direct impact on service delivery.

This prompted further research to develop a theory of service delivery. A good theory, according to Shalley (2012, p. 4), increases our understanding of the relationships ... in a given literature in a novel and innovative way. The author quotes Campbell (1990) who describes a theory as identifying what the important variables are, specifying how they are interrelated, and identifying under what conditions

different variables are related or are not related (Shalley, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, the Cohesive Service Delivery Theory (CSDT) proposed by this article defines and links different factors and interpret probabilities in understanding how the combination of factors explains more effectively a service delivery system.

The CSDT is an information, communication and technologies (ICTs)-based theory that facilitates the understanding, improvement and sustaining of service delivery system. The theory proposes different scenarios of service delivery. For example, the combination of public participation, e-governance system and sufficient government resources can lead to a 70% probability of service delivery. When government resources are insufficient, the population does not participate and there is no e-governance system in place, only less than 20% probability of service delivery can be achieved.

The article is a build-up of a social research theory through a critical social science methodology aiming at creating new knowledge about understanding and solving the service delivery dilemma. A literature review is provided in which factors contributing to or hindering service delivery are analyzed. This review is followed by the section on the development of the CSDT that defines, quantifies and links contributing factors and simulates different scenarios on service delivery.

1. Research approach, methodology and modelling of the CSDT

This article is the outcome of a social research process aiming at generating new knowledge about service delivery. The research subscribes to the suggestion of Mouton (2002) that social research enhances the understanding of phenomena in the social world. Its contribution is to propose interventions geared toward social change through a theory that facilitates the delivery of public goods and services in South Africa.

Being theory-based, the CSDT combines different factors to facilitate the understanding of the dilemma regarding the delivery of services in South Africa and to suggest possible solutions thereof. Neuman (1994) defines a social theory as the sum of ideas that organize knowledge about the social world, or an abridged way to think about how the social world functions. Newberger, Newberger and Hampton (1983) argue that a good theory must make sense and must also assist people in searching for solutions in the same field.

This research borrows four features from Seiler's [Sa] critical social science methodology. Firstly, it

stresses the importance of understanding that the service delivery system has failed and subsequently violent service delivery protests happen. For this reason there is a need for an immediate solution. Secondly, it analyzes why and how many South Africans are not beneficiaries of goods and services from their government. Various factors are therefore analyzed and gaps in their links and interdependences considered. Thirdly, the solution is people-centred as the theory promotes public participation. Finally, critical social science methodology facilitates the development of the CSDT that assists in the better understanding of the factors contributing to service delivery. The CSDT also facilitates policy process about interventions for service delivery.

The CSDT was developed through two research methods, the qualitative research method and the modelling method. The qualitative research method consisted of the literature review on the factors contributing to service delivery. The modelling method entailed developing Bayesian Networks (BNs) using the Hugin Researcher 7.2 software to quantify and link contributing factors and to simulate different scenarios on how the causal links work among factors and between factors and service delivery. The BNs theory is a problem-solving mechanism. The Hugin Expert A/S, (2002, p. 5) expresses the following view:

Usually, we do not have complete knowledge about the state of the world, meaning there are some things that we do not know for certain. When we make observations, or in some other way obtain additional knowledge about the state of the world, we use this knowledge to update our belief about the state of the world.

Two important principles in problem solving are used by the CSDT: probability and uncertainty. Probability means the chance of something happening or concluding on the likelihood of the combination of different factors to contribute to service delivery. Uncertainty, on the other hand, is the specification about the belief of field experts that the strengths of the links between the factors will result in certain specific scenarios in a service delivery system. These principles accommodate the addition and/or subtraction of factors to the CSDT depending on different situations.

2. Literature review on public sector reform failure in South Africa

Public sector reform is based on the new public management theory on making government more effective and efficient through changes. The World Bank supports and associates public sector reform

projects with service delivery as in the case of South Africa. For the World Bank (2008: xi), the effectiveness and efficiency of a country's public sector is vital to the success of development activities. The key outcome of public sector reform – the focus of this article – is therefore to improve the quality and quantity of public goods and services, as emphasized by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000). Public sector reform is the sum of deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them to run better (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000). These authors argue that public sector reform success includes making *savings* in public expenditure and improving the *quality* of public services, amongst other things (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000, p. 6).

The South African government embarked on public sector reform to address the inequalities and inequities of the apartheid regime. Two priorities of such reform were important to the research on which this article is based: good governance through the Batho Pele or People First strategy and e-governance to maximize the opportunities offered by the availability and advancement of technologies. Good governance and e-governance are therefore two important vehicles conceived to facilitate service delivery in South Africa.

What then went wrong in the service delivery machinery? Service delivery protesters and activists blame local municipality officials for poor, inefficient, and/or no provision of basic public goods and services. Municipalities have the full responsibility to provide basic public goods and services to the population in their areas; however, this task has not been carried out by many local municipalities, resulting in a multitude of service delivery protests and demonstrations. Atkinson (2007, p. 58) contends that the violent mass protests and demonstrations taking place since 2005 are a direct result of the culmination of numerous frustrations built up over a long period. Williams (2000) emphasizes that South Africa reflects very little opportunity for community participation. This justifies the failure of local municipalities to function as independent structures.

An important factor of a successful public sector reform for service delivery is good governance through public participation. There are many valid reasons for these. The first most important reason for service delivery protests is to reclaim access to, and delivery of, basic public goods and services such as housing, water, sanitation and electricity that should be provided by local authorities. The

second reason is the failure of local authorities to involve the population in the decision-making process. Atkinson (2007, p. 63) argues that “at municipal level, protesters have regularly complained about the unresponsiveness of officials and councillors. Channels of communication with municipal mayors and councillors are blocked.” Additionally, Siddle and Koelble (2012) identify issues such as a lack of funding, poor institutional design, a lack of capacity and a lack of support mechanism by the national government.

All these causes are valid, depending on the realities within which each local government operates. It is therefore reasonably acceptable to assume, for the purpose of this article, that the key factors that negatively influence the public sector reform in South African and consequently the service delivery system include: the Batho Pele principles not being implemented (good governance); the population not being involved in decision making; the gap between the design and implementation of technologies for electronic service delivery (e-governance); the lack of resources; the lack of a planning, monitoring and evaluation system; and the non-adherence to appropriate laws, policies, regulations and procedures.

The extent and importance of the above-mentioned and other factors, as well as the causal links and interdependences between each of them, must be taken into account in attempting to understand how each factor contributes to service delivery. To date, no research has attempted to establish such relationships. The research reported in this article undertook to define, quantify (probabilities) and link (causal links) the above-mentioned factors in order to understand the provision or not of goods and services by the government.

The human mind is not able to mathematically link all factors and to process probability calculus on how factors affect each other, or/and how the combination of some or all factors contribute to service delivery. The CSDT, through the BNs system, facilitates such exercise by the computation of probabilities and uncertainties using the selected factors.

3. The cohesive service delivery theory

The main contribution of this research, the CSDT, is a complex tool that analyzes the cause-effect relationships between predetermined factors contributing or not to service delivery.

3.1. Factors contributing to service delivery. The following six factors were considered for the sake of

this research: (1) good governance through Batho Pele; (2) public participation; (3) e-governance; (4) laws, policies, regulations and practices; (5) planning monitoring and evaluation; and (6) sufficient government resources. These elements were selected through the literature review to satisfy the BNs system's principle of involving field experts in defining and linking factors.

3.1.1. Good governance through Batho Pele. The concept of good governance is derived from the term 'governance' which means the way an institution does its business to fulfil its mission and vision. The mission of the South African government is to provide public goods and services, through municipalities, to its citizens. The vision of each municipality, according to the South African Local Government Municipal Structures Act (No.117, 1998), is to preserve the fundamental agreement on "which municipalities fulfil their constitutional obligations to ensure sustainable, effective and efficient municipal public goods and services..."

For IDASA (2010, p. 2), good governance entails the existence of efficient and accountable institutions and systems and entrenched rules that promote development and ensure that people are free to participate in, and be heard on, decisions and implementation thereof that directly affect their lives.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)¹ argues that, for any governance to be labelled as good, it has to adhere to eight crucial attributes. It must be participatory; it must be consensus-oriented; it must promote accountability; it must be transparent; it must be responsive; it must be effective and efficient; it must be equitable and inclusive and it must apply the rule of law. The UNESCAP principles are similar to the South African government's eight Batho Pele principles: consultation; service standards emphasizing benchmarks to constantly measure citizens' satisfaction; increasing access; courtesy in the way citizens are treated with respect; information sharing with citizens on service delivery; openness and transparency on resources allocation; redress or contingency plan to solve service delivery imperfections; and value for money or avoiding wasting money.

These eight Batho Pele principles are not different to standard good governance characteristics, yet public goods and services are not fully provided to South Africans.

Ayeni (2001, p. 42) is of the view that the Batho Pele project aims to change relationships between the government and civil society. For this reason the causal relationship between good governance (Batho Pele) and public participation is undeniable. Visser and Twinomurizi (2008) are among those who support the view that ICTs is a crucial catalyst of service provision and good governance. They emphasize the need of e-governance and good governance to facilitate both the provision of public goods and services and public participation. The links and interdependences of these three critical factors are very important to the CSDT.

3.1.2. Public participation. Section 152 of the South African Constitution stipulates that local authorities have to encourage the involvement of community members and local structures and organizations in matters of local government. For Wanjohi (2003, p. 49), "failure to refer important decisions to the local people or communities amounts to usurping the sovereign rights of those people or communities who are the rightful owners of the local authority or local government". Public participation is a vehicle to promote a culture of good governance at local level. For Ackerman (2004, p. 448), "the opening up of the core activities of the state to societal participation is one of the most effective ways to improve accountability and governance".

Section 19 of the White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service is clear about the obligation of municipalities to promote public participation: (3) A municipal council must develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organizations in performing its functions and exercising its powers. Public participation can be achieved through municipal councils, ward committees, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), youth movements and other local structures. In South Africa, public meetings commonly known as 'indabas' are official means to discuss matters of common interest to and by the whole concerned community.

3.1.3. E-governance. The term 'e-governance' or 'e-service' has different meanings and explanations converging to the use of ICTs to facilitate service delivery. In this article 'e-governance' means interactions between the government and the public. Javalgi, Martin and Todd's (2004, p. 56) definition of e-service is pertinent: [E-service is] "those public goods and services that can be delivered electronically". In other words, e-service is the provision of public goods or services by means of Internet or other ICTs means such as mobile phone.

¹ What is Governance? <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp>.

Reviewing what good service is and what the implications are of using ICTs to facilitate the delivery of good service, Visser and Twinomurizi (2008) assessed the e-government system in South Africa and considered it as a way of achieving the Batho Pele strategy or good governance.

3.1.4. *Laws, policies, regulations and practices.*

Understanding, adhering to and implementing laws, policies, regulations and procedures facilitate the delivery of public goods and services. IDASA (2010) emphasizes that municipalities must have policies and institutional frameworks that support and sustain the development of local people. Such plans must be geared towards the achievement and progressive realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and fundamental rights of the people, meaning the effective and efficient delivery of public goods and services. Naidoo (2005, p. 306) warns that the ability to understand policy and to translate it into a strategy for implementation requires a certain level of intelligence, competence and commitment on the part of public servants. Because government develops different laws, policies, regulations and procedures, their implementation is extremely important. There is a need for a proper planning with achievable and measurable indicators.

3.1.5. *Planning and monitoring and evaluation.*

Planning is a driving force not only behind public sector reform but behind service delivery. For Tarawa (2001), public service reform is a planned intervention to raise the level of public service performance. It must have carefully defined goals and a strategy to attain these goals. The ultimate aim of the public service reform is to see remarkable improvement in the public service outputs, such as more effective and responsive service delivery.

Ayeni (2002) argues that public reform in South Africa is premised on improving the monitoring and evaluation of capacity on government initiatives amongst other priorities. The Ministry for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation was created in order to make government effective. The outgoing minister of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation, Collin Chabane, stated: "We want to focus more on implementation, rather than ... policy, because that's where our challenges lie" (Buanews, 2010). According to President Zuma, regular monitoring and evaluation of the government's performance was crucial if it was to achieve its delivery objectives: "In order for us to be able to deliver, we need to give ourselves timelines in everything."

The Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA, 2010) emphasizes in an official document that monitoring and evaluation is a very important aspect in ensuring that services are delivered as intended. RALGA suggests the use of a database system for planning and monitoring and evaluation of service delivery at the lowest municipality level.

3.1.6. *Sufficient government resources.* Many questions have been raised about the source, justification and funding of public sector reform in underdeveloped nations. The total dependency on donor agencies for public sector reform in Africa defies its success (Olufemi and Adejuwon, 2010). The implementation of laws, policies, regulations and procedures for service delivery as well as a successful monitoring and evaluation system require human, material and financial resources.

Sufficient funding has always been a problem for the majority of municipalities. IDASA (2010) quotes the 2003/04 report for Local Government financing published in March 2004 by the Auditor-General of South Africa and notes that "the basis of income generation might not provide sufficient funds for delivering the services expected of municipalities. This means that sustainability of service provision by local government has to be called into question." Furthermore, IDASA (2010) regrets that the State of Local Government in South Africa Report (2009) admits that "the national government may have created expectations that local government cannot fulfil, or placed a burden on municipalities that perhaps only the strongest amongst them can carry". Municipalities with financial limitations cannot translate their IDPs to workable socioeconomic programs. According to IDASA (2010, p. 7):

... the effectiveness of municipalities to deliver on their mandate is largely dependent on their ability to plan and allocate public resources in a developmental and sustainable manner. Therefore, it is significant that municipalities carefully integrate community needs in their development plans and when allocating money. It is essential to note that the IDP is informed by the resources which can be afforded and allocated through the budget process. Therefore, the budget must, in turn, be aligned with the IDP and its objectives and strategies.

3.2. Links between contributing factors. The choice of the contributing factors is explained by the evidence of their contribution to service delivery without necessarily attempting to measure the extent of such contribution before the development of the

CSDT. Besides a working definition that provides clarity on the use of each factor, a research assumption on the contribution of that factor in service delivery is also provided. The factors are then linked with their probabilities estimated based on the literature review to justify the views of the field experts. Each factor has two states (or statuses): YES or good/positive connotation and NO or bad/negative connotation. For example, the factor public participation has a positive state (“Population participate”) and a negative state (“No public participation”).

The development process of the CSDT includes three steps. Firstly, a definition and a research assumption provide meaning to each contributing

factor. Secondly, the theory establishes the links and interdependences between contributing factors and the quantification (probabilities) of those links. The probabilities establish the level and impact of each contributing factor or the combination of many factors in the incidence of another factor or other factors and/or of service delivery. Thirdly, different scenarios depict the contribution of each contributing factor thus validating the CSDT as a theory/tool to facilitate understanding of and solution to service delivery dilemma. The CSDT finally confirms the hypothesis of the research by emphasizing the importance of the combination of different factors in understanding, promoting and sustaining service delivery in South Africa.

Table 1. Definition, assumptions and states of contributing factors

Outcome factor: service delivery	States of the factor	
Definition: The provision of basic needs in the form of goods/services to the people Research assumption: The satisfaction of people's needs implies no service delivery protests.	+	Service delivered
		Government provides goods and services
	-	No service delivery
		Government provides less or/no goods and services.
Critical factor 1: Good governance	States of the factor	
Definition: The 8 Batho Pele principles facilitate good governance and service delivery Research assumption: Batho Pele principles facilitate public participation and direct service delivery.	+	Good governance adhered to
		Public servants adhere to/implement all/most of Batho Pele principles.
	-	Good governance not adhered to
		Public servants not adhere to/implement all/most of Batho Pele principles.
Critical factor 2: E-governance	States of the factor	
Definition: E-governance facilitates service delivery Research assumption: E-governance system facilitates public participation and direct service delivery.	+	E-governance system exists
		E-governance system exists and works
	-	No e-governance system
		No e-governance system
Critical factor 3: Public participation	States of the factor	
Definition: People participate in decisions affecting their well-being. Research assumption: Public participation facilitates public goods and service delivery/satisfaction.	+	Public participation
		People participate in decisions affecting its well-being.
	-	No public participation
		People don't participate in decision affecting its well-being.
Factor 4: Sufficient state resources	States of the factor	
Definition: Government financial, material and human resources. Research assumption: Sufficient government resources enable service delivery.	+	Sufficient government resources
		Government has sufficient financial, material and human resources.
	-	Insufficient government resources
		Government has no sufficient financial, material and human resources.
Factor 5: Planning, M&E	States of the factor	
Definition: Government has planning, M&E system; Research assumption: Planning; M&E system facilitates provision of goods and services.	+	Planning and M&E system exist
		Planning, M&E system exists.
	-	No Planning and M&E system
		No Planning, M&E system.
Factor 6: Laws, policies, regulations and practices	States of the factor	
Definition: Legal and policy frameworks that govern service delivery. Research assumption: Effective legal and policy frameworks facilitate service delivery.	+	Laws/policies/regulations/practices
		Laws/policies/regulations/practices exist
	-	No laws/policies/regulations/practices
		No laws/policies/regulations/practices

3.3. Links and interdependences between contributing factors. Figure 1 shows how the six selected factors are linked without displaying how they mathematically facilitate (or not) service

delivery depending on their states. The probability calculus is performed by the Hugin Researcher 7.2 software as it is the case in each scenario.

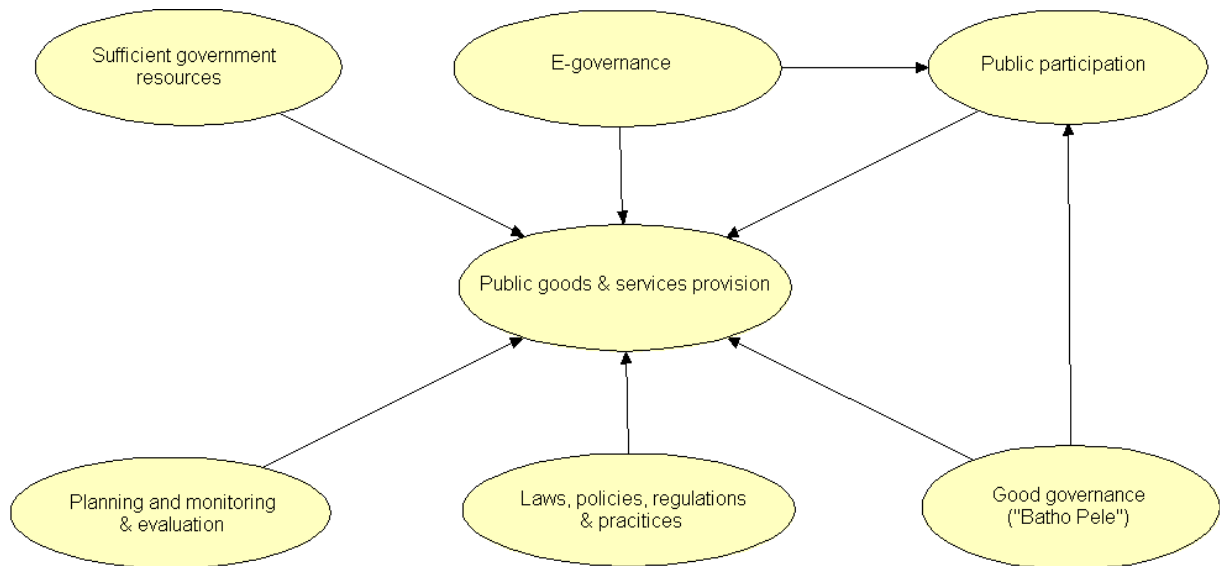


Fig. 1. Link of all contributing factors

At the initial level each factor is given an equal probability of 50% good and 50% bad, because of the uncertainty principle. The outcome factor (service delivery) is also meant to be equally distributed (meaning 50%

good and 50% bad). As e-governance and good governance affect service delivery doubly (directly and via public participation), there is a tendency of a negative state of service delivery (see Figure 2).

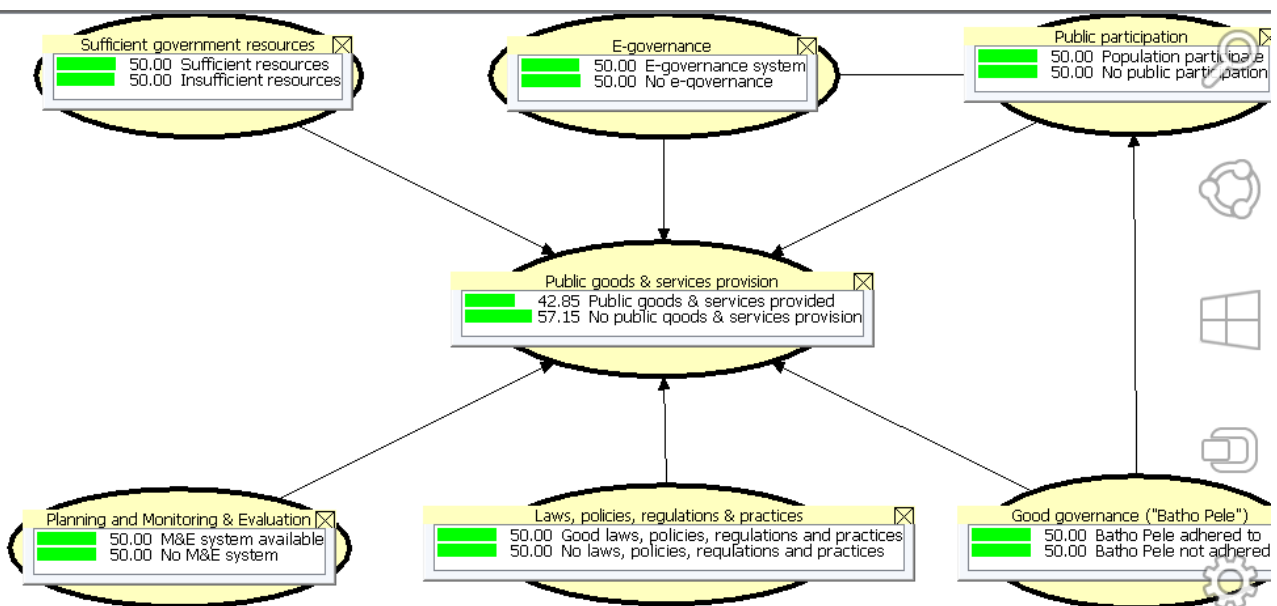


Fig. 2. Equal probabilities

With an equal probability of all contributing factors, their links and dependences result in a negative state of service delivery (43%). This scenario calls for more than just an equilibrium. Figure 2 shows the interdependences between e-governance, good governance and public participation and calls for action to facilitate public participation and therefore influence service delivery.

3.4. Different scenarios. The limitation of current research on service delivery is that the impact of

each contributing factor is not quantified. Similarly, the causal relationships among contributing factors and between them and service delivery is not established. The following Networks describe how the combinations of factor affect service delivery.

3.4.1. Scenario 1: full public participation: some form of service delivery. This scenario emphasizes the full public participation and its impact on service delivery. It shows that in order to maximize public participation e-governance must be operational for

at least 60% and good governance (Batho Pele) adhered to for at least 70%. Public participation has

a great impact on service delivery resulting in some form of equilibrium of almost 51%.

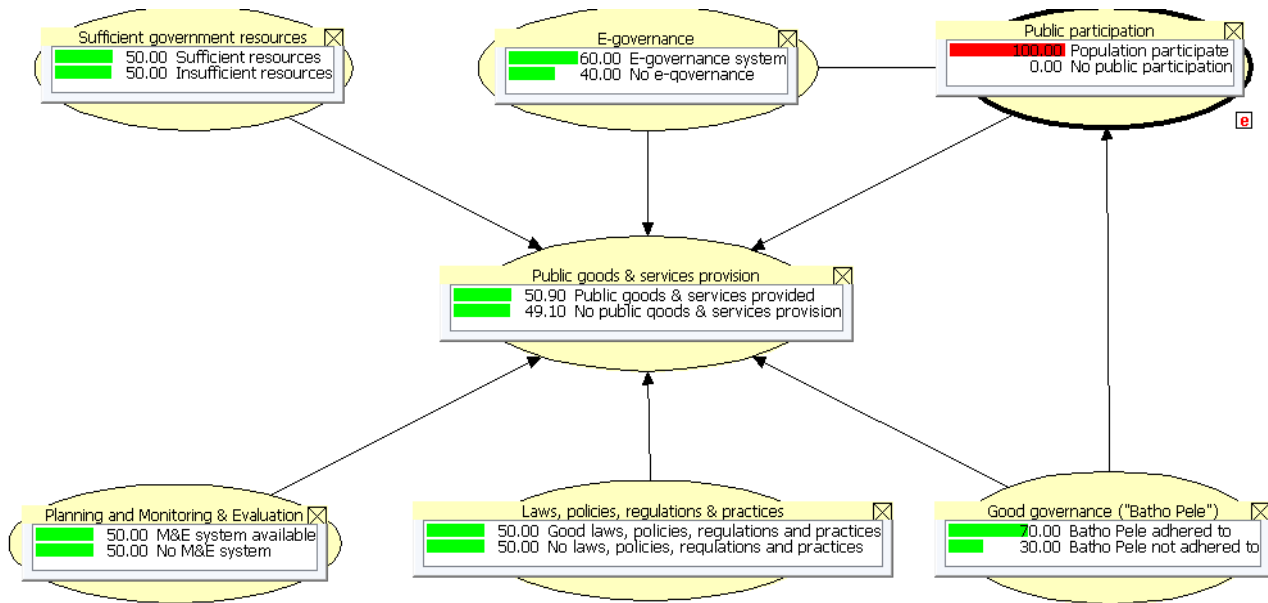


Fig. 3. Scenario1: full public participation

3.4.2. Scenario 2: positive states of all factors: service delivery. Service delivery depends on the positive states of contributing factors. When most of them are positive, the probability of service delivery is high (83%).

Positive good governance and an effective e-governance system maximize public participation (80%).

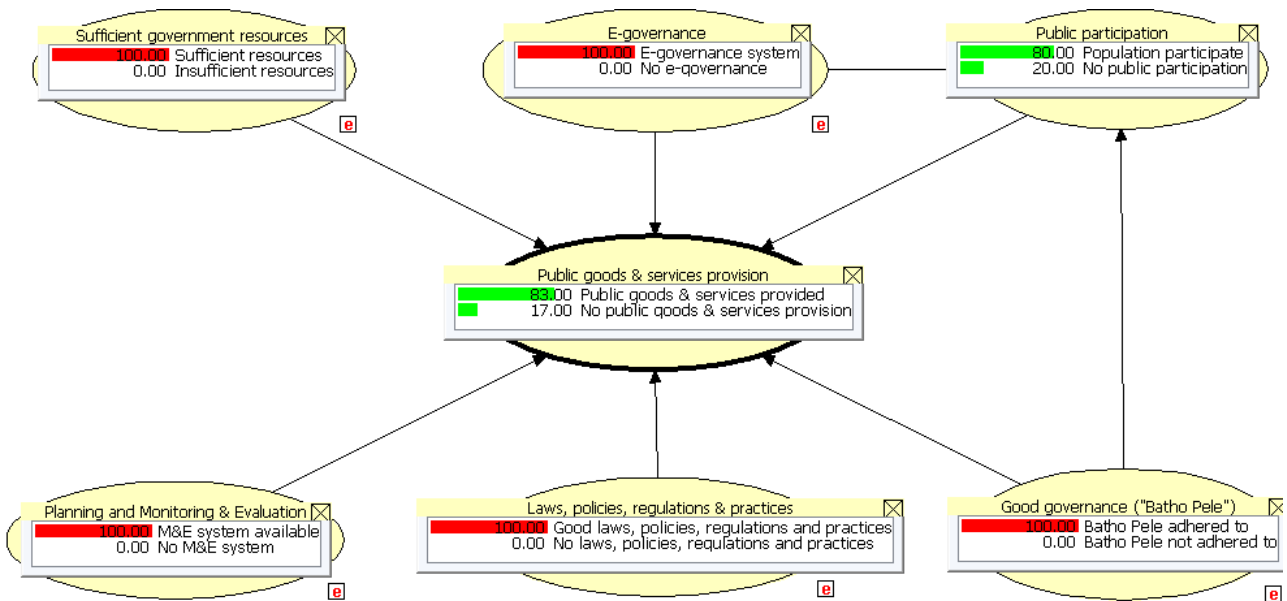


Fig. 4. Scenario 2: positive states of all factors

3.4.3. Scenario 3: no e-governance and insufficient resources = less service delivery. Service delivery is less probable when a local municipality has no sufficient resources and does not implement an e-governance system. E-govern-

nance and sufficient government resources support service delivery when the state of other factors is unknown. Public participation is negative as a consequence of the absence of an e-governance system.

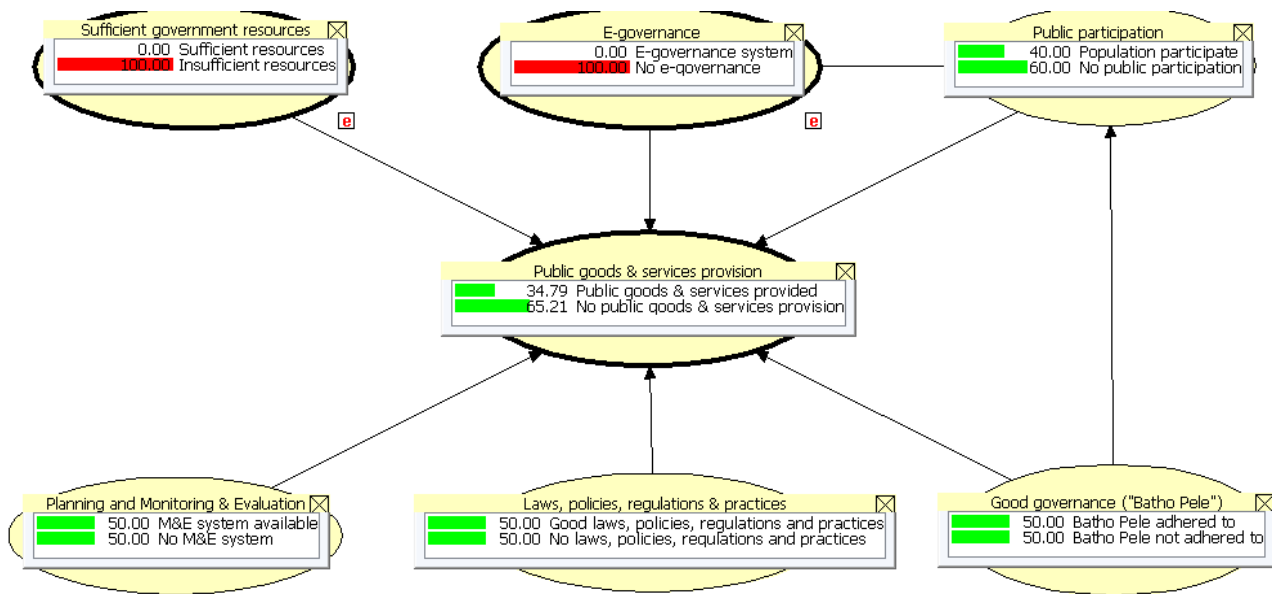


Fig. 5. Scenario 3: no e-governance and insufficient resources

3.4.4. Scenario 4: worst case: no service delivery. Scenario 4 shows that the negative state of all contributing factors result in less or no service delivery. There is therefore a need to develop and

implement policies/programs to change the states of contributing factors or to analyze other factors and to develop monitoring and evaluation indicators to measure and improve the success.

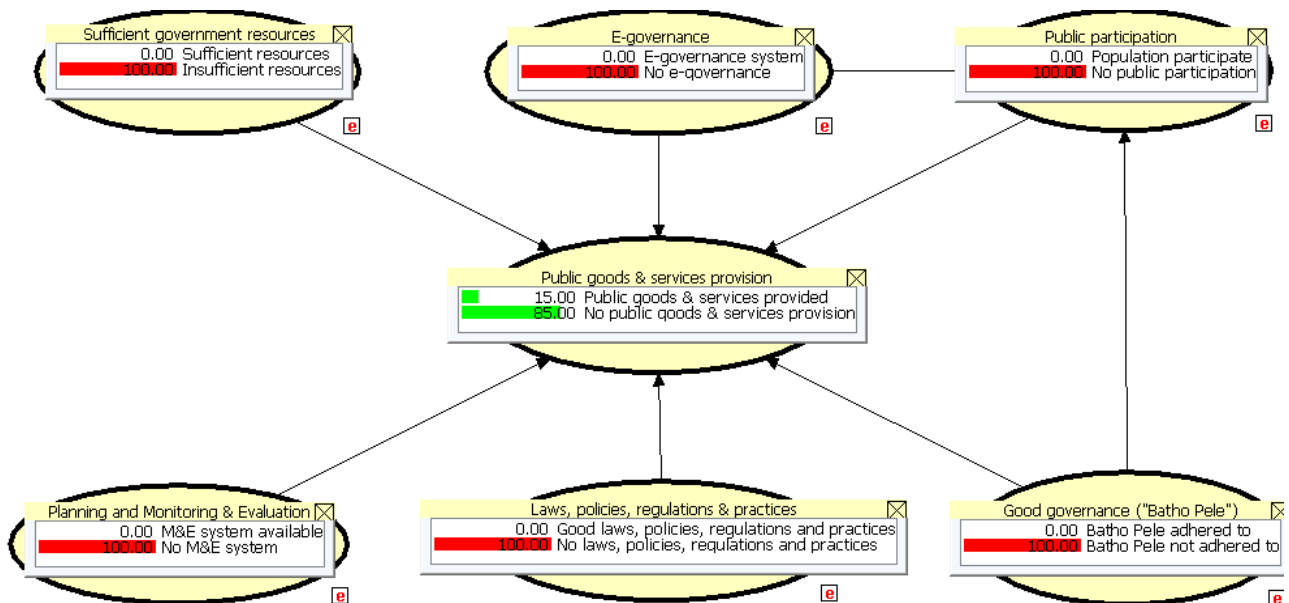


Fig. 6. Scenario 4: worst case

3.4.5. Scenario 5: ideal situation: effective service delivery. The above scenario indicates that when all contributing factors are positive they have an impact on each other resulting in the improvement and sustainability of service delivery. Therefore, the ideal scenario means the existence of planned

programmes with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) activities supported by policies and a monitoring and evaluation system (based on pre-defined indicators). The CSDT is represented in the Figure 7 below.



Fig. 7. The cohesive service delivery theory (CSDT)

Conclusion

Achieving service delivery is a big challenge for many governments. Siddle and Koelble (2012) acknowledge that the South African Constitution and a multitude of policy measures and statutes adopted to provide an effective local government should have facilitated service delivery. The failure of the provision of promised public goods and services is therefore the consequence of the immediate failure of the public sector reform as it has been the case in many developing countries.

A successful public sector reform should revolve around providing public goods and services to the people. The indicators of such success are according to Ayeni (2001, p. 40): to improve the monitoring and evaluation of capacity on government initiatives, to strengthen management capacity, to improve quality of service, to improve people management, and to maximize the opportunities that technological advances for e-government.

Many factors contribute to service delivery. The negative states of such factors hinder the achievement of governments to provide quality public goods and services. The CSDT is a new theory in understanding and attempting to solve the service delivery chaos in South Africa by considering six important contributing factors. They are, (1) good governance; (2) public participation; (3) e-governance; (4) planning and monitoring & evaluation, (5) government resources and (6) laws; policies, regulations and practices.

Shalley (2012, p. 4) argues that a good theory is a compelling explanation of the process that actually takes place for a particular phenomenon (service delivery in this case). It involves causal explanations for why and how things happen the way they happen (service delivery protests). The CSDT goes beyond the understanding of the phenomenon by proposing scenarios in solving the chaos to improve and sustain a service delivery system.

The CSDT plays two critical roles. Firstly, to facilitate the understanding of different factors contributing to service delivery. Secondly, to inform and justify (through different scenarios) policy and programme development and implementation for good governance, e-governance, public participation and planning and monitoring and evaluation, resulting in effective service delivery. The CSDT is therefore an essential tool for municipalities that suffer public embarrassment for not delivering public goods and services no matter their disjointed efforts.

There are many other factors such as corruption, contrast between politics and administration, no intergovernmental cooperation, no public-private partnership, no skilled and committed public servants that also hinder service delivery. These factors can still be added to the theory depending on the realities on what each municipality has and how it functions. Added factors must however be defined, linked and quantified (probabilities) in order to observe their impact on other factors and on service delivery.

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