Full Length Research Paper

Governance theory paralysis: Case of Malamulele of the Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo Province

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This study investigated whether the petitioning of the Municipal Demarcation Board and protesting for own separate municipality by the Malamulele community of the Thulamela Municipality were influenced by tribalism/ethnicity and lack of service delivery in the Malamulele area. This study has found no evidence which suggests that lack of service delivery and ethnicity are behind the demand for own separate municipality by Malamulele community. A literature review has revealed that Thulamela municipality delivers services to Malamulele as opposed to the claims. The study revealed that politicians from Malamulele hold higher offices in the political governance and administrative structures which demystify perceptions of tribal/ethnicity preferential treatment of Vhavenda speaking areas by the Thulamela Municipality. Instead, this study revealed that the problem is governance paralysis, resulting from lack of participation of Malamulele community members in Ward Committees. It is clear from the evidence obtained from Ward Committee reports that committees are non-functional in the Malamulele area. Very few community members participate in Ward Committee meetings to receive feed-back. Lack of participation could be influenced by the fact that Ward Committees (11 members) are much smaller compared to the vast wards with population ranging from 17,417 in ward 1; 18,247 in ward 7; 17,665 in ward 13; 17,898 in ward 15; 16,212 in ward 18; 12,064 in ward 40 and 14413 in ward 10.

Key words: Governance, participation, service delivery, ward committees.

INTRODUCTION

There are two theories on the demand for own munici-pality by the Malamulele community. The first theory is that the demand for own municipality is motivated by tribalism or ethnicity, the hangover of apartheid policies (Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), 2015). The second theory is that Malamulele has suffered the worst service delivery under the Thulamela municipality since the 2000 Local Government elections (Malamulele Task Team, 2015), while the Tshivenda speaking areas fare well. This reinforces the findings by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB)(2015) that, "The key point that emerges from this concern is that service delivery has been uneven across the municipal boundary, and biased in favour of the Greater Thohoyandou area". Data from documents scrutinized revealed that Thulamela Municipality delivers services to Malamulele as opposed to the claims. There is little evidence that Malamulele people participate in ward committees, which are the

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instruments of local governance by local communities. If they participate, they would know the service delivery projects budgeted by the municipality through monthly community meetings feed-backs they receive from their ward committees. Ward committees are instruments for promotion of good governance by local communities. In his Foreword of 2012 Ibrahim Index of Africa Governance, Mo Ibrahim says:

"Good governance is about harnessing a country's resources to achieve the results any citizen living in the 21st century has a right to expect".

The total shutdown of Malamulele area in Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province has left destruction of the area with its businesses in ashes and preventing school children from going to school for almost two months. Four schools were burnt to ashes to make sure that no one dared to undermine the total shutdown. No one was allowed to enter or leave the area, as there were monitoring groups to make sure that no one defied the shutdown. The total shutdown followed the demand by the residents for a separate municipality. The Municipal Demarcation Board has twice (2013 and 2015) turned down such demand by saying that Malamulele area did not qualify to have a separate municipality. Among the reasons was that they did not have a tax base to sustain the demanded municipality. They wanted to have a separate municipality from Thulamela municipality.

This study assesses the two theories namely the provision of service delivery to Malamulele by Thulamela municipality; the perception of tribalism or ethnicity in the demand for own municipality by Malamulele residents; and the investigation of community participation in ward committees which are tools of local governance. This study is guided by three objectives namely to investigate if tribalism or ethnicity is the cause of demand for own municipality by Malamulele residents, to assess community participation in ward committees and to investigate existence or non-existence of service delivery in Malamulele.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Governance discussed

Governance has ushered in a debate on what it actually means in academic arena. The Anglo-American literature is striving to discover the adjectives to describe what it refers to as 'light touch government' form of government appropriate to the circumstances of governance which is also viewed as Énabler', 'catalytic agent', 'commissioner', all in the quest to capture the new form of governing (Stokes, 1998). In differentiating governance from the government, Fasenfest (2010) defines government as an office, authority or functioning of governing. Governance

refers to the changing nature in the way that public services are provided to the society. Instead of leaving service delivery in the sole hands of the government alone, inter-dependence of role players is a pre-requisite to the provisioning of service delivery (Thornhill et al., 2014). Consistent with this view, it is a public management reform reflecting a widespread belief that administrative practice is shifting from the hierarchical government toward greater reliance on horizontal hybridized and association forms of governance (Hill and Lynn, 2005). Wachhaus (2013) argues that in governance, the emphasis is interconnected web of public, private and non-profit actors working across organizational, institutional and sectoral boundaries to deliver public services. The interconnectedness web is linked to diverse links between many agencies of government at local, regional, national and supranational levels (Stokes, 1998).

Mayntz (2004) and Scharpf (2000) wrote that governance is institutionalized mode of co-ordination through which collectively binding decisions are adopted and implemented for the common good. Borzel (2010) views it as governance without government where actors or civil society assume full autonomy in coordinating themselves mutually. International Institute of Administrative Sciences (1996) defines governance as the process of wielding power and authority, influence and enacting of polices and decisions concerning public life, economic and social development by elements in a society.

In the context of local government, ward committees will be the platform where civil society will be represented, and providing space for participation of ordinary community members to articulate their challenges and solution. However, Paradza et al. (2010) in the National Ward Committee Survey (2010) found that ward committees were unable to function because they lacked clear policy documents on their roles. Graham et al. (2003) defines it as a process where societies or organizations make decisions and also decide on whom they should involve and be held accountable for things.

Governance is defined as the interaction of government and other social organizations, how they relate to citizens and how decisions are taken. It is about how societies or organizations take decisions; determine whom they involve in the process and how they carry out their business. It may be applicable to global, national, institutional and community levels (Graham et al., 2003). Governance has become a critical concept in practice due to its suspicious role in the improvement of society. It occupied the center stage at the beginning of the end of the Cold War. At this stage government could be assumed to have lost momentum in international development, academic and policy discourse (Cheka, 2008). In African society, governance is established on the traditional, religious and republican institutions. The three institutions, therefore, guarantee governance (Mbassi, 1994).

The success of the implementation of governance hinges on the political leadership in the management of interrelationships namely government and civil society. The management of this relationship is a prerequisite for the movement from traditional administration to representative administration. Unlike government which has the mandate to regulate society and administer services on a wider scale, governance revolves around working with and also listening to the citizens so that public resources are managed in a proper manner. This allows for the proper response to the needs and expectations of the people as a whole (Swilling and Wooldridge in Fitzgerald, 1997). There are principles of governance which are discussed below.

Participation

In governance, men and women should participate. Their participation may either be direct or indirect in electing those that represent their interest in any government bodies (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 1997). The civil society should participate in the formulation of development strategies. They need to participate in the design and imple-mentation of developmental programs and projects. They should be consulted in order to get their views so that they can commit themselves to supporting the projects and programs and enhancing quality implementation (International Development Association cited in International Fund for Agricultural Development 1999).

The underlining message from governance definitions as aforementioned by various theorists, academics, and practitioners is thus participation which calls for the provision of space and time in involving the public through consultations, hearings or even through delegating certain decisions or activities to citizen committees (Dossing et al., 2011). For real participation to take place, Bojic (2011) argues that decision-making process should take place within formal and informal structures and that there should be actors, and the government should be enjoined in governance as one of the actors. According to Arnstein (1969), in her study of participation revealed that any participation that lacks redistribution of power becomes useless and creates frustration on the powerless.

Partnership

Good governance should be seen as a partnership of alliance which is a collaborative arrangement in which actors from two or more spheres of the society namely state, market and civil society are involved in a non-hierarchical process through which these actors aim for sustainable development (Glasbergen, 2007).

Good governance is about active co-operation and on-going engagement in the process of policy formulation and implementation between government officials and citizens (Swilling and Wooldridge in Fitzgerald, 1997). Partnership encourages formulating of joint agreements, procedures, conventions or policies which determine those who get power, the manner in which decisions are taken and how accountability is applied. In short, governance incorporates the traditions, institutions and processes important for the exercise of power, giving communities a voice and the manner in which decisions that concern communities are reached (Graham et al., 2003).

Under governance partnerships activity is the formation of self governing networks which involve not just influencing government but taking over the affairs of government (Stokes, 1998). Partnerships are a crucial tool to empower the participants to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with those who are in authoritative positions. Partnership is key to citizen participation since participants are also involved in the redistribution of power and to participate in political, economic processes (Arnstein, 1969). Partnership functions well when there is an organized powerhouse in the community to which citizens leaders are accountable (Arnstein, 1969).

Transparency

In order for governance to be realized, there should be a free flow of information which should be available to communities (United Nations Development Programme 1997). In transparency, decisions are taken and implemented in a manner that is guided by rules and regulations (UNESCO for Asia and the Pacific, 1997). The constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) in its principles and values of public administration directs that all the actions of government must be open and transparent to the public and information should be made available to those request it (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The study by McComas et al. (2006) had revealed that people do not attend meetings due to the fact that they did not get information, and they are uninformed, indifferent, occupied and disaffected.

Accountability

All stakeholders in governance namely government, private sector and civil society should account to the public for their actions (UNESCO for Asia and the Pacific, 1997). This accountability should include government employees as well because they are responsible for policy implementation (International Development Association cited in International Fund for Agricultural Development, 1999). Accountability would lead to the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals (MDG) of reducing poverty in Africa (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2000).
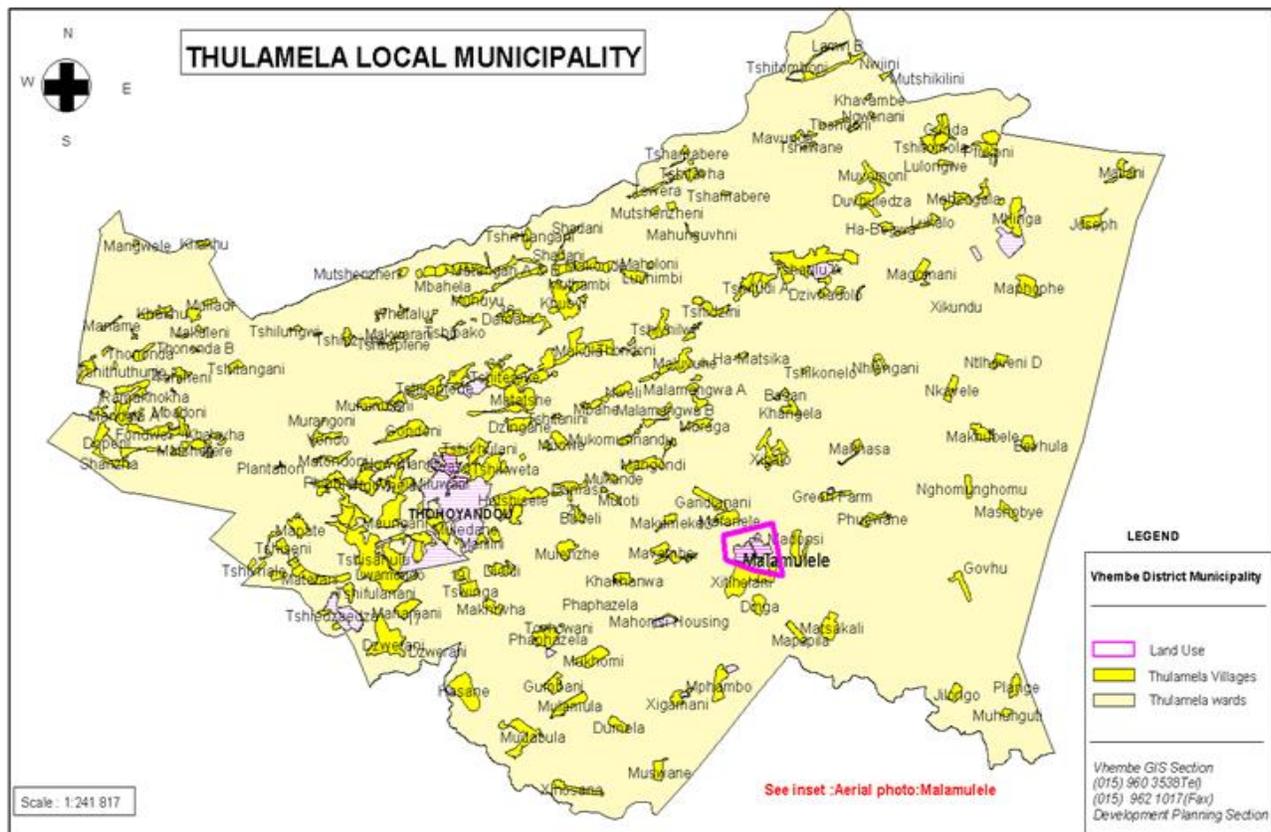
Figure 1. Thulamela local municipality map with Malamulele area (Source: Vhembe District Municipality GIS 2015).

Service delivery

Service delivery is defined in terms of policy makers, service providers and consumers of those services, and encouraging both services and supporting systems. Service delivery centers on basic services and pro-poor service delivery. Basic services include primary health and education, basic water and sanitation, roads and bridges, and minimum rules of law and justice that promote personal security (Slaymaker and Christiasen, 2005).

Pro-poor service delivery may be seen as interventions that maximize the access and participation of the poor by strengthening the relationships between policy makers, providers and service users (Slaymaker and Christiansen, 2005). Service delivery is defined as the provision of public activities, benefits to the satisfaction of citizens (Fox and Meyer, 1995). Service delivery is aimed at addressing poverty and deprivation amongst the rural poor (ANC, 1994). In order to achieve this, there should be basic needs namely; access to safe water, sanitation, energy sources (electricity) (ANC, 1994). These basics should be provided by municipalities. But these services should be provided through bottom–up approach where communities should participate in their own development.

The approach is captured by section 152 (1) of the Constitution of Republic of South Africa, 1996. It instructs local government to:

1. Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
2. Ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
3. Promote social and economic development;
4. Promote a safe and healthy environment; and
5. Encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government.

The State is, however, compelled by Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to deliver these services to their citizens. Delivery of services hinges on the participation of communities. The civil society should also support local government to supervise service delivery (ANC, 1994). Municipal Service delivery is approved by Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Performance Management Systems (PMS), Inter-governmental Relations (IGR), Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), Batho Pele, Budget, Policy and Procedure (Pretorius and Schurink, 2007) (Figure 1).

Executive Members

Figure 2. Executive committee (Source: own creation).

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This is a descriptive study. It is also a qualitative study. In a qualitative study, events and situations are described (Babbie, 2008).

Data sources

Data presented are based on secondary data analysis for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The author needed objective data that is not influenced by perception of respondents. Data were obtained from ward committees files of the Thulamela municipality. Data were also obtained from IDP documents; MIG; STATSSA; MDB.

Data collection

Data collection consisted of analysis of secondary sources that included ward committees files. A total of 15 files were scrutinised for information relating to the attendance of community meetings that are legislated by government. The data about the period of attendance were also sought. Of the 15 files, only 7 contained the data that the study needed to answer the problem statement and objectives. The rest of the files did not have attendance registers and did not record the number of people who attended the meetings.

Data were also obtained from STATSSA census. The data yielded by STATSSA were on the number and residents in each of the ward in the Malamulele area of the Thulamela municipality. MDB also yielded data that were needed to provide information on the number of wards (Figure 12) in the Thulamela municipality and the implication that re-demarcation of Malamulele would have on the municipality. The data obtained revealed that of the 41 wards in the Thulamela if 15 were to be re-demarcated, only 26 would remain. MIG was used for data collection in order to establish the projects which were implemented in the Malamulele as the instruments of service delivery. IDP documents were scrutinized for information

about steps of involving community in municipal affairs.

Data analysis

An analysis of data from sources was made. The ward committee files were examined. Attendance of the meetings was compared month per month in order to check the consistency of attendance. Analysis of these data showed that the way community members attended the meetings did not translate into real participation but malicious compliance. This is because very few people attended compared to the number of residents in each ward. Each ward had a minimum of 14000 residents but in each monthly meetings in a period of three years no meeting was ever attended by 500 people. The rate of attendance did not promote governance where people take decisions as a stakeholder to influence the delivery of services. Yet, it has been clear that the number of 11 member ward committee could not manage vast wards in their jurisdiction. Analysis of MIG documents showed that service delivery had been happening in Malamulele even beyond 2012. Data from files were captured and analysed in excel in order to translate that data into graphs and figures.

Analysis of governance at Thulamela Council

Executive committee

The Thulamela political governance consists of the mayor, speaker, chief whip and executive committee members of six councilors. In the whole of the political governance, there are three Xitsonga speaking councilors, with a speaker (Figure 2). Thulamela comprises six section 57 managers. A closer analysis shows that amongst the six, two are Xitsonga speaking while four are Tshivenda speaking (Figure 3).

Analyses of Malamulele ward committees

Thulamela municipality has 80 councilors that include 40 ward councilors and 40 proportional councilors (PR). Ward councilors by legislation are chairpersons of ward committees. Ward committees are instruments of providing local governance and are responsible for submitting service delivery programs to the speaker through the ward councilor (Figure 11).

They are expected to meet quarterly and give communities report-back on service delivery matters. Communities are expected to elect accountable members who should represent them at ward committees. In case ward committees are weak or strong, that will manifest itself in the delivery of services to their wards. In order to address the question of this study, this study provides a composition of Thulamela Council in terms of wards. This

Section 57 Managers

Figure 3. Section 57 managers (Source: own creation).

sheds light on whether as a municipality Thulamela deliberately hinders service delivery to Malamulele.The study puts a number and percentage of Tshivenda and Xitsonga speaking wards councilors for easy reference. The following wards fall under Malamulele area: wards 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 40 (Municipal Board Demarcation, 2015). The Malamulele wards are however, not exclusively Xitsonga speaking. There are notable inclusions for the whole of wards 2 and 36, which fall within the Mphaphuli traditional authority area and Ward 18, which falls within the Mulenzhe Traditional Authority area (Municipal Board Demarcation, 2015). This means that Malamulele is not a Xitsonga speaking area as it is generally perceived. Of the 15 wards, only 12 are under Xitsonga speaking.

There are 15 wards that fall under the Malamulele area which suggests that there are fifteen ward committees. The scrutiny of the ward committees in the office of the speaker confirmed that all the 15 wards have established ward committees and they are functional.

For this study, only seven ward committees' files were scrutinized seeing that their results would certainly represent the rest of the 15 ward committees as they raise related and similar issues. The purpose of this exercise was to investigate if ward committees were established, holding public meetings with community members as a way of strengthening local democracy. Figure 12 shows Scrutinized ward committees 1, 7, 10; 13; 15; 18; and 40.

Participation of community members in the ward committees

This section shows the rate of community participation in ward committees in the Malamulele wards. Participation in ward committees is essential if promotion of good governance is to be strengthened. Section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa instructs local government to involve local community in the affairs of municipalities so that they articulate their service delivery issues. Figure 4 shows the number of people who participated in the years 2013 and 2014 in ward 1.

Figure 5 shows the number of community members who participated in the ward committee meetings in ward 7 in the 2013 and 2014. Attendance of community members is not consistent. In the other months, there are no figures that show how many people attended because attendance registers were not filled. The year 2012 is not included because no attendance register was kept. Figure 6 shows the number of those who participated in ward committees meetings in ward 13 in Malamulele. This period is 2012, 2013 and 2014. In 2012 and 2013 no figures were provided in the attendance registers.

In 2014, only in January, there is an attendance by the number of people shown in Figure 7. Figure 7 shows the number of committee members who participated in the ward committee meetings in ward 18 in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The attendance is not consistent if we look at the month of the three years. Figure 8 shows ward 40 with the number of committee members who participated in the ward committee meetings in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The number of attendance continues to be inconsistent. Figure 9 shows ward 10 with the number of committee members who participated in the ward committee meetings in 2012. In ward 10 there are no attendance figures for the years 2013 and 2014. Even in 2012 attendance follows the same pattern of inconsistency. Figure 10 shows ward 15 with the total number of committee members who participated in the ward committee meetings in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The numbers of attendees is low.

Analysis of service delivery audit

An analysis of the 2011/2012 Capital Projects List shows that in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, there was a project implemented in 2011 namely 5×Solid Waste Transfer Stations at Saselemani and Mulenzhe. The project was to the tune of R4, 200,000:00 (Capital Projects List, 2012). Service delivery overview on the Thulamela Municipality Draft Annual Performance Report of the 2013/2014 shows that a number of household electrified was 2684. New houses that were built were 1,510. Villages that were provided with access roads were 50,000.

Water, which is under the authority of the district municipality, was not provided as well as sanitation (Thulamela Municipal Draft Performance Report, 2013, 2014). Table 1 shows 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/ 2015 as the periods when the IDP projects for Malamulele were done. The table shows the attached budget and the
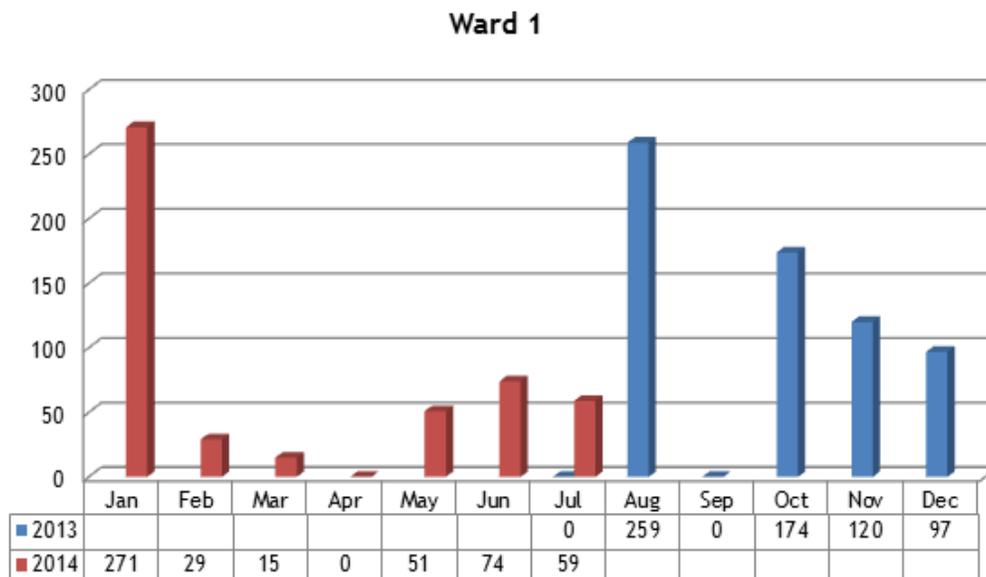
Ward 1

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2013							0	259	0	174	120	97
2014	271	29	15	0	51	74	59					

Figure 4. Number of people who attended ward committee meetings in ward 1.

Ward 7

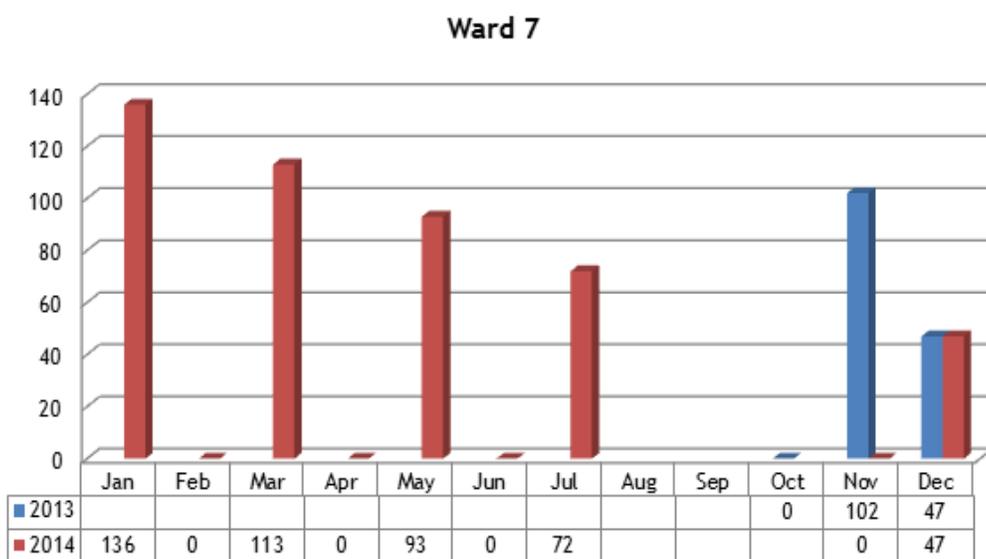|	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2013										0	102	47
2014	136	0	113	0	93	0	72				0	47

Figure 5. Number of people who attended ward committee meetings in ward 7.

number of benefiting households. This table proves that service delivery is taking place at Malamulele despite the cry that there is no service delivery. The data available and reflected in the table suggest that there is a gap between the community and ward committees, which results in information not being disseminated to the people. It is questionable if community stakeholders and citizens are participating in governance.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) instructs local government to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities. In this case, the violent demand and protest is a reflection that the community is emotional and angered by perceived lack of service delivery and ethnic discrimination. The community is directing its anger on the government and not the ward committees that they elected and who should be held accountable. Table 1 shows projects of water, sanitation, solid waste, electricity, roads, and other facilities. Table 2 shows names of wards, project name, starting date, category and budget for the wards that
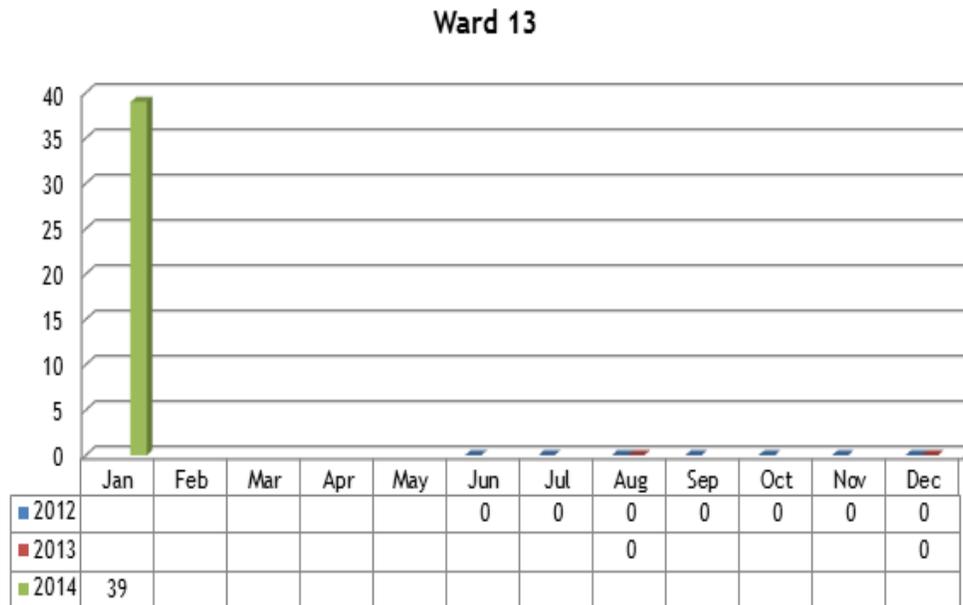
Ward 13

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012						0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013								0				0
2014	39											

Figure 6. Number of people who attended ward committee meetings in ward 13.

Ward 18

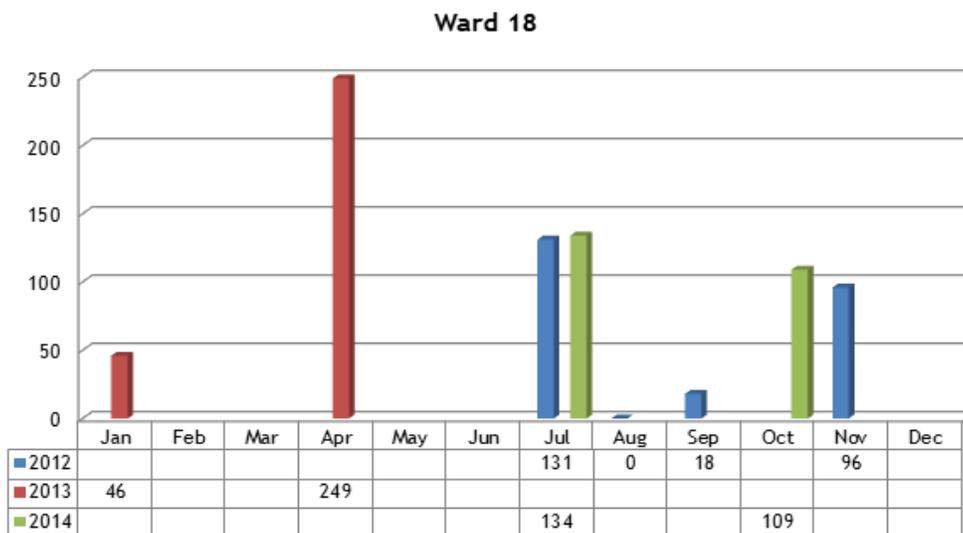|	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012							131	0	18		96	
2013	46			249								
2014							134			109		

Figure 7. Number of people who attended ward committee meetings in ward 18.

benefitted from the MIG Funds Expenditure within Thulamela municipality from 2010 to 2014. Within these wards, there are Malamulele wards that received allocation for solid waste transfer stations such as Saselemani.

Rehabilitation of streets has taken place at Malamulele according to the information from this table. This table shows that Malamulele is part of the beneficiaries from service deliverables in the Thulamela Municipality. In this table, it is clear that fewer wards in the Malamulele are included but the reason for this might be informed by the fact that of the 40 wards in the Thulamela, only 14 falls under Malamulele. However, it should be noted that notall the wards under Malamulele are Xitsonga speaking. Table 2 shows MIG Funds Expenditure within Thulamela local municipality (2010 to 2014). Table 3 shows current and planned expenditure on water infrastructure and reticulation for 2011 to 2016. This table reveals that Malamulele has been allocated water infrastructure and reticulation budget of R188, 000,000:00.
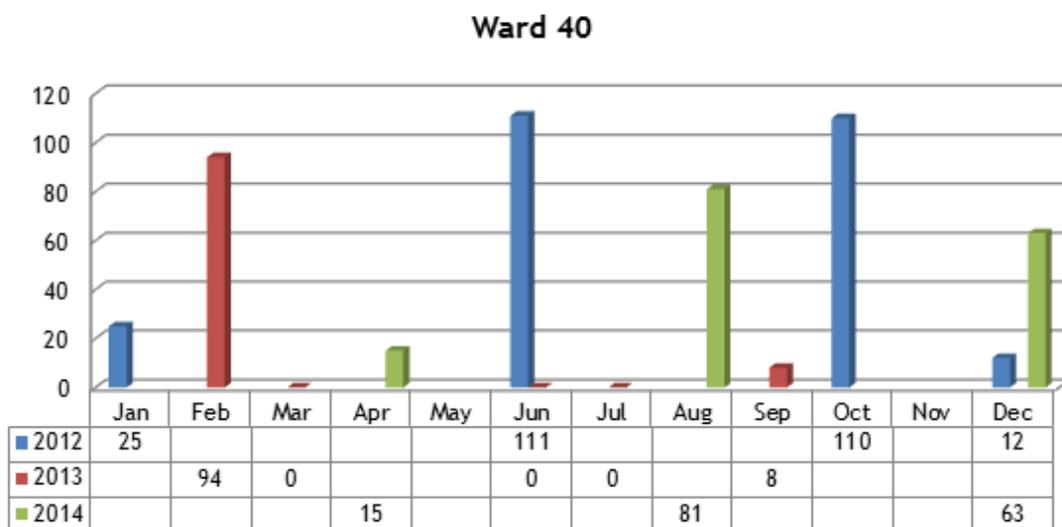
Ward 40

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
■ 2012	25					111				110		12
■ 2013		94	0			0	0		8			
■ 2014				15				81				63

Figure 8. Number of people who attended ward committee meetings in ward 40.

Ward 10

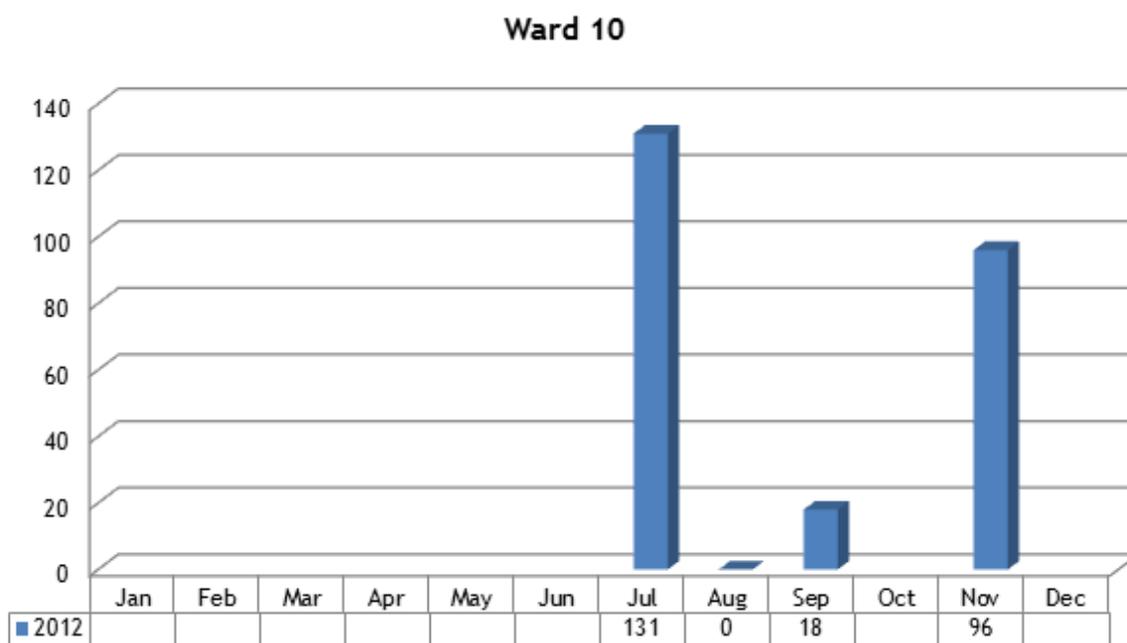|	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
■ 2012							131	0	18		96	

Figure 9. Number of people who attended ward committee meetings in ward 10.

Vhembe District municipality also made a water capital budget of 47.57% to Malamulele. This is further evidence that Malamulele is receiving services as per the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Therefore, any insinuation that suggests that Malamulele is discriminated against for service delivery or that ethnicity plays part in service delivery is not supported bythe data in the table. The major question that must be addressed is why is Malamulele community not aware of the service delivery issues taking place in their area? This suggests that the community is not receiving feed-back from ward committees monthly as required by the legislation. Section 152 of the constitution requires that municipalities should involve and consult with communities in matters that affect them. It is also clear that councilors may not understand their role, particularly as leaders of ward committees, as one of them addressed a community meeting and said, *"the government must listen to the call of the people"*. If the community of Malamulele received feed-back from ward
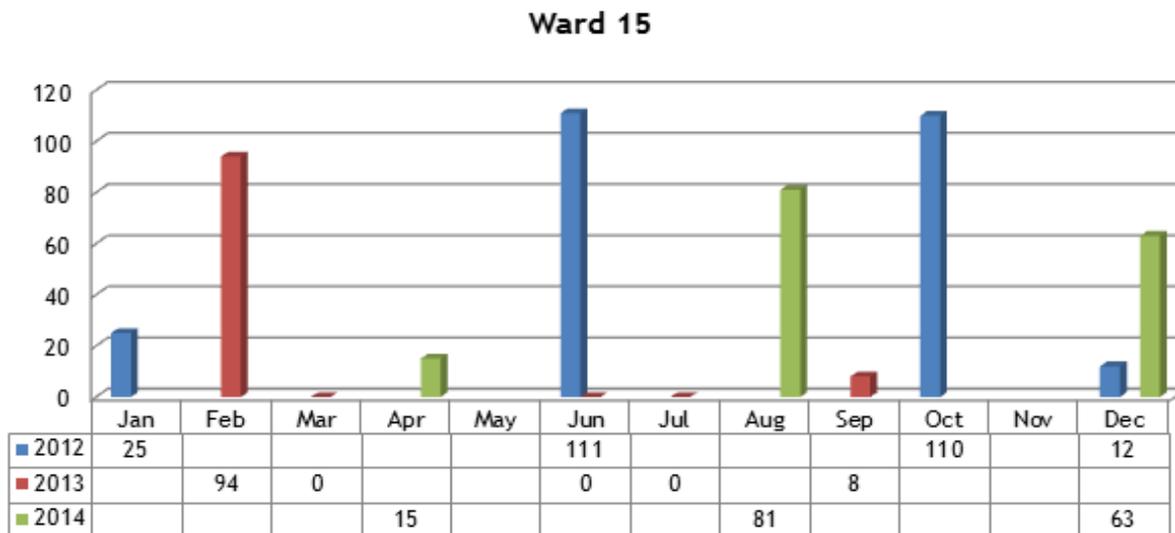
Ward 15

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	25					111				110		12
2013		94	0			0	0		8			
2014				15				81				63

Figure 10. Number of people who attended ward committee meetings in ward 15.

Table 1. The Thulamela Municipality IDP project for the Greater Malamulele Area 2012 to 2015.

Project	Project cost (R)	Household benefiting
Projects for 2012/2013 financial year in Malamulele Area		
Water	53 619 692.69	57186
Sanitation	19 379 289.95	3570
Solid waste	840 000	-
Electricity	46 622 334.75	352 2
2013/2014 financial year projects		
Water	149, 899, 697.99	65991
Sanitation	2, 600, 000.00	400
Road	61, 592, 128.19	1.9km
Electricity	38, 546, 071.92	2398
Other Facilities	15, 761, 453.69	-
Proposed 2014/2015 projects		
Road	92, 000, 000.00	13km
Electricity	15, 271, 000.00	1391
Other	26, 500, 000.00	-

committees they would have known about the service delivery projects in their area. Ward committees are also expected to elicit delivery issues from the community members for submission to council for resolution and implementation. The clamor for non-service delivery clearly suggests that Malamulele community is not participating in local governance as envisaged in section 4 (c and d) of Draft Guidelines for the establishment and operation of municipal ward committees (2003).

DISCUSSION

This section deals with the findings gathered through literature review as the method adopted in this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the theory that

Table 2. MIG funds expenditure within Thulamela local municipality (2010-2014).

Wards	Project name	Start date	Category	Budget (R)
06,07,18,25,28	Tshitereke, Makonde, Mulenzhe, Saselemani and Tshikombani solidwaste transfer stations	2011/07/01	Construction	3, 750, 000
13,21,22,23,36,37,38	Rehabilitation of streets inThohoyandou, Malamulele,Makwarela and Shayandima	2010/08/24	Construction	103, 500, 000
19	Makhuvha sports facility	2011/04/01	Construction	26, 100, 000
21	Thulamela information centre	2011/09/26	Construction	16, 500, 000
21	Thohoyandou G streets upgrading from gravel to tar	2013/02/13	Construction	40, 000, 000
23, 32	Sokoutenda Ngwenani access road	2013/02/22	Construction	56, 120, 000
32	Ngovhela backside Iyani ring road	-	Design and construction	11, 750, 000
Total	-	-	-	257, 720, 000

Source: MIG Expenditure Records 2010 -2014; COGHSTA.

Table 3. Current and planned expenditure on water infrastructure and reticulation (2011-2016).

Item	Thulamela municipality	Malamulele area	Remainder of Thulamela municipality
Water infrastructure andreticulation budget	R348, 635, 239.70	R188, 000, 000.00	R160, 635, 239.70
Percentage of Vhembe district water project capital budget	88.22%	47.57%	40.65%

Source: Calculations based on information from Vhembe District Municipality SDBIPs 2014-2015.

the demand of own municipality was based on ethnicity or tribalism. It investigated the second theory that Thulamela Municipality was stifling service delivery to Malamulele because it is predominantly Xitsonga speaking. The study went beyond the two theories and investigated the existence and functioning of ward committees as per the legislation.

On the theory of existence of ethnic or tribal influence, this study did not find any evidence to support this theory thus corroborating the report of the Malamulele Task Team claim that "*the proposed boundary dispels the notion that we were applying for the municipality which defeats the purpose of social cohesion*". It is also clear from the Literature Review that Thulamela Municipality accommodated Xitsonga speaking in its powerful structures of Mayoral as well as Administration such as section 57 employees. They are proportionally represented. Therefore, the theory of ethnic or tribalism does not exist from the data collected and analyzed.

On the theory of lack of service delivery, this study reveals that there is service delivery in the Malamulele areas in contrast to the claim and findings by both the MTT and MDB which suggest that Malamulele suffered the worst service delivery and that there has been bias in service delivery in favour of greater Thohoyandou areas. Tables 1 to 3 testify to this. There are service delivery projects as well as service providers from Malamulele who are appointed for this purpose. Although this study

did not get deep into the matter of wards that are run by the Tshivenda speaking officials, under the Malamulele area, it does not come out that there are service delivery problems.

In respect of governance, ward committees are established for purposes of promoting local governance through the participation of community members in the monthly meetings where they make decisions on service delivery matters. Civil society made of ward councilors, traditional authorities, youths, business, traditional healers, political parties should participate in governance. Community members and structures should also receive monthly feed-back from ward committees they have democratically elected to represent them on municipal service delivery matters. This study has however found that there are established ward committees in the whole of Malamulele area. It further found that there are community meetings convened where community members and traditional leaders participate as required by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Municipal Structures Act (1998).

However, the scrutiny of ward committees' reports revealed that far too low residents attended the meetings. Majority of the residents did not attend the feed-back meetings (Figures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10). This non-attendance may confirm the findings of the study by McComas et al. (2006) who found that non attendance of meetings is attributed to lack of information about how
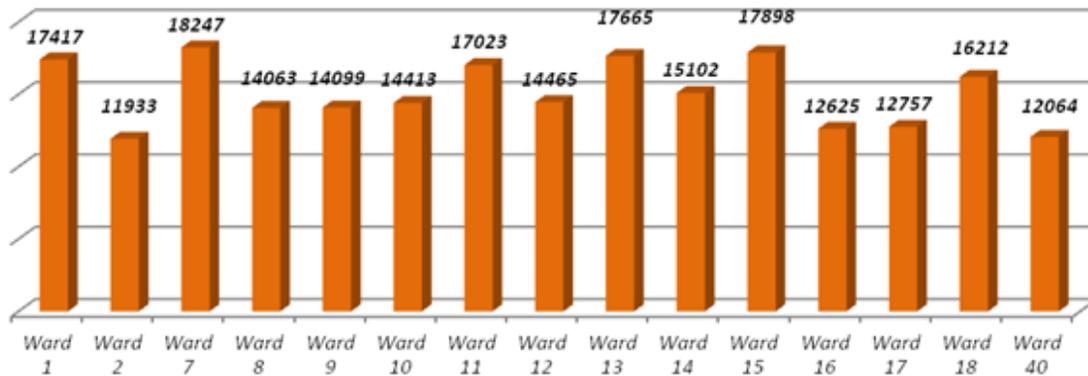
Wards population in Malamulele

Figure 11. Ward committees in Malamulele (Source: own creation).

Figure 12. Number of wards that were selected for this study (Source: own creation)

and when meetings take place and that they might be occupied with other engagements. Lack of information might also suggest reasons why community does not know about service delivery taking place in the area. The findings by Arnstein (1969) revealed that if communities are not empowered in a way that they took responsibility of their own affairs they would be ignorant and may not see any value in attending the meetings.

In other wards, there are no attendance registers to show how many people attended particular ward community meetings. Attendance registers must be kept by the secretaries of ward committees and their non-existence may confirm the study by Swilling and Wooldridge as cited in Fitzgerald (1997) that there may be a leadership vacuum to enforce their implementation. This may also confirm the findings of the study by Paradza et al. (2010) which found that ward committees were unable to function because they did not have clear policy documents on their roles and functions.

The low attendance may be a gesture of silent rebellion

of feeling undermined if they are not taken serious when they make proposals in meetings since the study by Wachhaus (2013) found that there must be relationships formed among all the role players and this suggest that they should all be equal. However, low attendance of meetings may also be attributed to the vastness and high population in nearly all the wards as shown in Figure 11. The size of the ward committees may also not be proportional to the size of wards they should service. The implication of the low attendance suggests that majority of the residents are not participating in governance structures such as ward committees. Few community members decide their fate. This also suggests that they may not be aware of what services are coming to their areas since they are not also receiving service delivery reports. The other point is that residents may not have been aware of what service delivery meant because they would have challenged the claim that there was no service delivery in the area.

This study therefore conclusively revealed that local

governance was not promoted through ward committees and residents were indirectly prevented from participating in the affairs that affected their lives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study could not establish or confirm that ethnicity or tribalism is responsible for the demand for own Malamulele Municipality by the residents. Contrary to the theory that Malamulele suffered worst service delivery under Thulamela Municipality, the study has revealed that service delivery takes place and continues to happen in the Malamulele areas.

There are Integrated Development Plans (IDP) projects for service delivery to the area. In terms of municipal governance structures, the Xitsonga speaking officials are proportionally represented in the executive committee of the municipality and also in section 57. However, the study found that there is a lack of information about the meetings that take place in Malamulele, communities are not empowered to take charge of their own affairs, ward committees do not manage attendance registers of ward community meetings, there is leadership vacuum in the area to co-ordinate stakeholders to work together, there is no clear ward committee policy of roles of ward committees, communities are engaged in a silent rebellion, poor relationships of stakeholders in the area.

This study recommended that a structured schedule of meetings should be developed and all stakeholders work together to get all residents to the meeting and share the schedule. Communities should be empowered through various workshops and seminars to get them understand their importance and how to articulate their service delivery issues. Ward committees should manage attendance registers of meetings. Ward committees should be trained and be provided with clearly formulated policies on their roles and responsibilities. Ward councillor should lead in getting all stakeholders to collaborate their effort to maximise attendance of meetings.

There is a need to ensure that the ward committees are strengthened to ensure that the majority of residents attend the monthly feed-back meetings. The small number of community members who attend meetings suggests that the majority of community members do not have deeper understanding of the service delivery happening in their community. There is a need for councilors, particularly ward councilors and ward committees to understand their role and avoid making inflammatory statements such as "government should heed the call of the people" as uttered by one councilor in one of the community meetings. The sizes of the wards in Malamulele should be revisited by the MDB to enable local participation because the current sizes overstretch the resources to convene those meetings. The size of ward committees should be revised to be proportional to the wards to be serviced.

Ward committees' reports should be summarized by the relevant offices and issues raised should be attended to. Thulamela Municipality should have effective and meaningful Imbizos in all the areas of its jurisdiction to meet with the communities and disseminate service delivery information. There should be municipal newsletters circulated in all the offices in the municipal areas. This study concludes by recommending that a further study with a bigger scope is needed for analysis.

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Conflict of interests

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