

# Capacity Building Challenges of Municipal Councillors in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in the Free State Province

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## ABSTRACT

Through the introduction of the relatively new council structures for metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, and the new mandate for municipalities, the traditional role of councillors has broadened to encompass additional responsibilities and functions. Therefore, municipal councillors (proportional public representative (PR) councillors) require specific competencies and skills in order to ensure the effective operation of their local municipality. The efficacy of municipal councillors in respect of service delivery is increasingly being questioned in the wake of recent service delivery protests and negative reporting on the state of the local government sphere. The current state of affairs relating to municipal councillors raises numerous questions about the required skills and capacity building challenges to successfully execute their mandate. The aim of this article is to further investigate by means of an interview schedule the training and capacity building challenges of municipal councillors in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in the Free State Province.

A qualitative research methodology is adopted for the realisation of the above aim. An interview schedule was utilised as a tool that contains the predetermined questions prepared in order to acquire the insight, knowledge and application of the persons involved and familiar with

the municipal councillor processes and challenges. The requirements, purpose, roles, functions and mandate of municipal councillors will be provided. The findings of the empirical study will be provided, followed by specific recommendations pertaining to capacity building and training initiatives to address these challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

Local government is established in terms of Chapter 7 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* which is interdependent and interrelated with the national and provincial spheres of government. In terms of Section 152 (c) (i) of the Constitution, of 1996 the objectives of local government include the following: to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities; to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner; to promote social and economic development; to promote a safe and healthy environment; and to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

Since 2004 numerous cases of public unrest resulted from poor service delivery and a high rate of corruption by municipal officials and municipal councillors (Du Plessis and Lues 2012:5). Kanyane and Mabelane (2009:82) state that the result of fraud and corruption is eating away at the tax collected from the public; simultaneously in the process also eating away at the moral fabric of society. The lack of service delivery by the municipality is an observable symptom of the major problem in the local sphere of government. In terms of the Constitution, 1996 Section 151, one of the major objects of local government is to ensure that services are delivered in a sustainable manner.

According to a study conducted by the Centre for Policy Studies during 2010 in the Free State and Northern Cape, high councillor turnover and excessive workload hinders municipal councillors from meeting the requirements of their positions as stated in the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Paradza, Mokwena and Richards 2010:16). A previous study conducted by Raga and Taylor (2005:144) emphasises that through the introduction of the council structures for metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, and the mandate for municipalities, the traditional role of councillors has broadened to encompass additional responsibilities and functions. Therefore, municipal councillors (proportional PR councillors) require specific competencies and skills in order to ensure the smooth operation of their local municipality. Another study conducted in 2010 by the Centre for Policy Studies explores the role of elected

municipal councillors in four municipalities (Paradza *et al.* 2010:7). The study found that many municipal councillors in the case studies lacked basic core skills to enable them to perform their functions effectively. During 2012, the School of Government Management of the University of Technology, Free State Province, conducted a Competency Assessment Survey of municipal councillors in the Free State Province in cooperation with the Free State Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, to assess the competency levels of councillors. The study found that municipal councillors in the Free State need to undergo specific training sessions.

Another factor that remains a challenge on the part of municipalities' performance is the shortage and availability of skills of municipal councillors and ward councillors to fulfil their functions effectively (Idasa 2010). According to Paradza *et al.* (2010:81–88) the key factors that limit the performance of councillors as intermediaries in service delivery include the following; divisive party politics in some municipalities; lack of skills and portfolio-specific competencies; and ward demarcation and the geographical spread of constituencies.

Another concern mentioned by Paradza *et al.* (2010:84) is that councillors should be able to readily access information from various municipal departments to be able to fulfil their role as elected representatives of the communities. Paradza *et al.* (2010:86) further argue that councillors need more training to be able to interpret council decisions better and should have a clear understanding of applicable municipal legislation and should also have basic literacy and numeracy skills to be able to understand submissions made by the municipal administrators. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to further investigate by means of an interview schedule the training and capacity building challenges of municipal councillors in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in the Free State Province. Such an investigation has capacity building and training implications for councillors in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

## **THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONS OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS**

According to Taaibosch (2015:18) the specific functions of municipal councillors are not comprehensively dealt with in legislation. Fourie (2000:57) states that the responsibilities of councillors as provided in the Constitution, 1996 entails the following; Section 152(1)(a) provided that councillors must be sensitive to public opinion; Section 153(1)(e) provided that councillors should react to the community needs; Section 151(3) provided the right to govern on its own initiative the local government affairs of its community, subject to national

and provincial government legislation; while Section 156(1) (4) provided the right to exercise powers without unnecessary interruption by national or provincial government.

In terms of Section 21 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998, municipal councillors are elected public representatives of their constituents and are mandated to make decisions on behalf of their constituencies. There are no specific requirements for a person to become a municipal councillor in terms of level of education, experience or skills. Section 21 of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 further provides that every citizen who is qualified to vote for a particular municipal council has the right to stand as a candidate in an election for the council, except a person disqualified in terms of Section 158 of the Constitution, 1996. Section 53 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 directs each municipality to define the specific role of each political structure and provide guidelines on how the councillors and municipal managers should interact. The municipal councillor may interact with local and provincial party structures and may serve as a substitute chairperson on ward committees where ward councillors cannot be present.

In this regard Van der Waldt *et al.* (2013:75) maintain that a municipal or metropolitan council consists of a determined number of councillors, who are elected according to the number of wards. Section 22 of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 provides that an equal number of councillors represent the various political parties proportionally in accordance with the percentage of votes attained by that party. This means that councillors need to enhance the interest of the people they are serving. Paradza *et al.* (2010:11) aver that municipal councillors are elected through a party list and therefore they are primarily accountable to the party; they may interact with party structures at local and provincial levels, and can get input relevant to such structures.

In addition, elected municipal councillors as proportional PR councillors have legislative powers to pass by-laws that are not in conflict with national or provincial legislation. Elected councillors are also responsible for approving policies for their areas. Furthermore, municipal councillors as proportional PR councillors have to pass a budget for their municipality or metro each year and they have to decide on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and service delivery for their municipal areas. In general municipal councillors meet in committees to develop proposals for council (Gildenhuis 1997:68–69).

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) (2011:61) outlines the following responsibilities of metropolitan and municipal councillors namely:

- councillors must act as representatives of the community they serve;
- councillors must provide leadership in councils;
- councillors must act as custodians and guardians of public finance;
- councillors must promote the cooperative governance ethos;

- councillors must provide effective oversight over the municipal executive and council officials;
- councillors must be accountable to local communities and report back to their constituencies on council matters; and
- councillors must be responsive to the committees they serve.

In light of the above, Van der Waldt *et al.* (2013:81) point out that councillors have the following general responsibilities:

- councillors must participate in council meetings;
- councillors have to ensure that a ward committee is established in their ward;
- councillors must act as chairperson of a ward committee;
- councillors must be involved in their ward and have to determine the needs of the residents in their ward;
- councillors have to ensure that residents of a particular ward are informed of the mechanisms through which they may participate in the activities of council;
- councillors must liaise between their constituents and the council;
- councillors must cast a vote on matters raised in council;
- councillors must contribute to policy formulation;
- councillors must be involved in the compilation of the IDP of the municipality or metro;
- councillors must be involved in the compilation of the municipal or metro budget to ensure that the needs of the community are addressed; and
- councillors must contribute actively to assist council in fulfilling its functions, rights and duties in order to achieve the developmental goals of local government.

Cloete (1997:70) and Thornhill and Cloete (2014:34) maintain that it is the duty of the councillors to perform legislative functions as councillors should contribute to decisions pertaining to by-laws and policy matters such as estimates of income and expenditure. Craythorne (2003:100–101) also adds that the statutory duties of councillors as provided in the Code of Conduct for Councillors include the following: councillors are elected to represent local communities on the local councils; councillors have to ensure that municipalities have specific structures of accountability to local communities; councillors have to meet the priority needs of communities by ensuring that the services provided by the municipality are equitable, effective and also sustainable within the means of the municipality. In addition councillors must be accountable to local communities and report back on a quarterly basis to their constituencies on council matters, including the performance of the municipality in accordance with set performance indicators (Thornhill and Cloete 2014:112).

Cloete (1997:70) further maintains that it is also the duty of the councillors to perform governing functions which will involve certain governing functions

that will involve decisions about the implementation of statutory and provincial legislation, by-laws and other applicable directives as well as continuous monitoring of the activities of officials. Cloete (1997:70) further argues that a councillor who is unable to perform legislative and governing activities will be less able to master administrative executive activities. Councillors who lack the necessary knowledge and insight may tend to busy themselves with simplistic and easily understood aspects of the administrative executive and therefore will not be able to fulfil its monitoring function.

SALGA (2011:182) further emphasises the following functions to be fulfilled by municipal councillors;

- Make decisions on behalf of the constituents they serve;
- Represent the needs and interests of their constituents;
- Fulfil leadership roles in municipal councils;
- Act as custodians or guardians of public finance;
- Provide effective oversight over municipal executive and council officials and accounting officers; and
- Be responsive to the communities they serve.

In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 together with the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 municipal councillors are prohibited from being board members of entities, audit committees and a tender or bid committee. Councillors should also not serve on planning tribunals and other approval forums. The Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 also expects that municipal councils reinforce their oversight role by forming portfolio committees within the council. SALGA (2011:180) declares that the oversight role of municipal councillors focuses on accountability as it requires transparency and consultation. The councillors are accountable to the community that they serve and to their party structures. The role of municipal councillors is essentially to improve the quality of life for all by overseeing governance and service delivery in the local sphere of government (SALGA 2011:77).

From the above discussions it can be deduced that councillors should have a thorough understanding of what their function of representation entails. In order to ensure that municipal councillors effectively fulfil their constitutional mandate and obligations councillors need to have a thorough understanding of the communities they represent. In this regard the governing function of the councillors cannot be delegated as they are separately or jointly accountable to the different communities they represent (Raga and Taylor 2005:140–141). The above functions require specific knowledge and expertise from municipal councillors concerning the local government environment. Municipal councillors are also involved in the management of municipalities by virtue of their participation in the allocation and management of resources in order to achieve the municipalities' policy intentions

(Du Plessis and Lues 2011:108). Cloete (1997:70–71) avers that municipalities should ensure that specific condensed discussion and information sessions should be provided by experts to keep councillors informed about the numerous facets of local government, administration, and the diverse functional activities of local government. From the above discussion one could argue that the aim of councillors in capacity building training initiatives should be to inform the councillors about their statutory and required responsibilities and to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge, capacity and skills to promote the general welfare of the local community and to make them aware of performance standards to be met.

## **THE MUNICIPAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING SYSTEM: A CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL EXPOSITION**

In this article the researcher seeks to determine the training needs and competency challenges of municipal councillors of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality as well as to determine what capacity building and training initiatives should be recommended to address these challenges. Therefore, it is important to outline the municipal training system in the context of the South African local government with specific reference to the capacity building training initiatives of municipal councillors.

According to Grobler, Wörnich, Carrel, Elbert and Hatfield (2006:300) training refers to the process in which employees gain information and specific skills that are designed for their specific workplace. Van der Waldt *et al.* (2013:194) maintain that training refers to those activities that are specifically developed to improve skills, and thereby improve the performance or productivity of an institution. Nel, Gerber, Van Dyk, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono and Werner (2001:467) define education as an approach that focuses on a wide range of activities rather than on providing knowledge and skills for a limited field or activity. On the one hand, education creates a general basis that prepares an individual for life without any specific job-related skills being developed. On the other hand, training and development strive to guide and prepare individuals for performing specific job-related activities (Nel *et al.* 2001:467).

In light of the above, capacity building refers to specific skills and knowledge, and it also involves the transfer of information with the specific aim to ensure that the trainees are able to perform tasks that they were previously not able to perform (Andrews in Van der Waldt *et al.* 2013:194). Competencies refer to the basic characteristics that can be linked to performing a job effectively by individuals or teams (Grobler *et al.* 2006: 553). For the purpose of this article it is important to distinguish between competencies and skills. Grobler *et al.* (2006:302) further maintain that each manager, regardless of the position in an

institution which includes municipalities, uses a mix of technical, conceptual and human-relations skills. Technical skills refer to the knowledge of equipment, work methods, systems and work technologies, while conceptual skills refer to the ability to view the institution as a whole and to coordinate and integrate a wide array of functions, activities, goals and purposes. Human-relations skills refer to the ability to communicate with employees, establish strong interpersonal relations and build cooperative relationships among various workgroups and stakeholders (Grobler *et al.* 2006:302).

In light of the above it is essential that all capacity building and training initiatives within municipalities should commence with a needs assessment process to ensure that effective training programmes will be designed and implemented. Grobler *et al.* (2006:304) explain that the first step in any training system entails a training needs assessment. The identification of training needs refers to a description of the specific training needed to improve job performance (Nel *et al.* 2001:478). According to Grobler *et al.* (2006:306) the following techniques could be used to identify skills training priorities through a needs assessment process; advisory committees; attitude surveys; performance appraisals; group discussions; questionnaires; and interviews. In this article the researcher made use of an interview schedule to identify the capacity building and training challenges of municipal councillors of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

Since the implementation of the White Paper on Local Government (1998:123) a municipal training system has been implemented that consists of a regulator, namely the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) that functions as a quality assurance body. The LGSETA is responsible for managing a local government education and training fund formed from the proceeds of the National Skills Fund as levied from local government. The LGSETA fulfils its role firstly by allocating these funds to provincial training structures, setting national training priorities, establishing standards, accrediting service providers and providing trainee certification. Secondly, a provincial training structure has been established for each province to undertake a systematic needs analysis and, together with municipalities, to procure the provision of training from a variety of agents. In terms of the White Paper on Local Government (1998:124), training will be designed by a variety of contracted agents in response to the needs defined by the LGSETA or provincial government training structures.

The White Paper on Local Government (1998:124) further directs that the capacity building and training of municipal councillors shall not be the responsibility of LGSETA. The White Paper clearly states that SALGA is the major role-player responsible for councillor training. The White Paper on Local Government (1998:124) further directs that an intensive councillor training programme will be required to coincide with the election of new councillors. The preceding paragraphs highlight the municipal capacity building and training system.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The research design is a general plan of how the researcher goes about answering the research question (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009:136). According to Cooper and Schindler (2003:149), a research is regarded as the blueprint for collecting, measuring and analysing data. In this article a two-pronged approach; namely a literature study and an empirical study, was conducted. The literature study was based on qualitative study, which included extensive literature, legislation, policy documents, journal articles, books, conference papers, internet and government reports and research reports about the requirements, purpose, roles, functions and mandate of municipal councillors. An interview schedule was administered to conduct interviews with selected municipal councillors. The population for the purpose of this article consisted of selected municipal councillors (PR councillors) of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality with whom structured interviews were conducted by means of an interview schedule. Sampling is defined as the process of choosing a small group of respondents from a larger defined target population, assuming that the results discovered about the small group will allow the researcher to make conclusions concerning the larger group (Hair, Buch and Ortinau 2003:333). Salkind (2009:90–91) explains that the most common type of probability sampling procedure is the simple random sampling method as each member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected to be part of the sample. Therefore, the probability random sampling method was used to select 20% of the 48 municipal councillors who took part in the interviews. For the purpose of this article the sample size was deemed representative enough in order to warrant a fair reflection of the views of respondents.

According to Salkind (2009:194–195) one of the basic tools used in survey research is the interview. Interviews can take the form of an informal question-and-answer session to a structured, detailed interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. The structured interview schedule was used to conduct interviews with the selected municipal councillors of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to obtain data pertaining to the training needs and competency challenges of proportional PR councillors. The interview schedule consisted of structured (closed-ended) and unstructured (open-ended) questions. The interpretation of the research findings are reflected in the discussion hereunder.

## **INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This section highlights only the most ostensible results obtained from the empirical investigation. The questions used in the interview schedule were divided into the following sections; Section A, Local Government Legislations

and Policy Documents; Section B, Budgeting and Municipal Financial Management; Section C, Integrated Development Planning and Local Economic Development; Section D, Communications, Meetings and Report Writing; and Section E, General. The findings of some of the most important questions/statements are reflected in the following discussion.

On the question about the highest level of education obtained, a total of 67% of the respondents indicated that they have an education less than grade 12, while 17% of the respondents indicated that they have a master's degree and another 17% have grade 12 which is a national senior certificate. In the theoretical discussion of this article it was argued that municipal councillors should have basic literacy and numeracy skills to be able to understand submissions made by the municipal administrators. It was also explained that if a municipal councillor is unable to understand local government legislation and governing activities they will be less able to understand the administrative and executive activities of a municipality. The assumption can be made that education levels play a major role in councillors' execution of their duties; it could also be argued that a councillor without education will struggle to perform their duties. Thus, basic numeracy and literacy skills should be provided to municipal councillors who have limited education levels for them to be able to understand local government legislation and to understand the submissions made by the municipal administrators.

In question 3 respondents were asked whether they have attended an induction course for councillors. A total of 50% of the respondents have attended induction courses for municipal councillors and 50% did not attend the induction course for councillors. It was explained in the theoretical discussion of this article that SALGA is responsible for providing training to councillors. It is suggested that follow-up training sessions should be provided to all councillors who could not attend the induction training sessions. On the question as to whether councillors would like to receive additional training to fulfil their duties as a councillor a total of 83% of the respondents would like to receive additional councillor training while, only 17% indicated that they do not want to receive any further training. This indicates the need for training for the majority of municipal councillors in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality as this will enhance the level of service delivery and development.

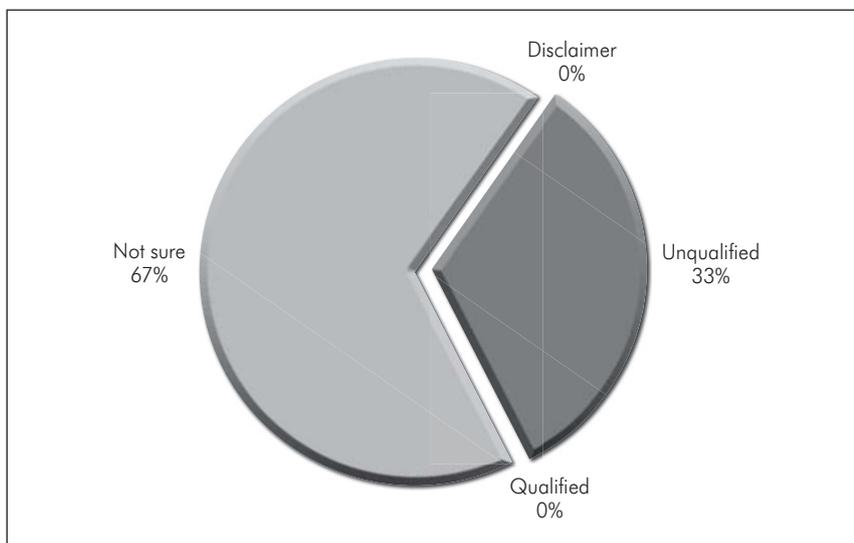
On the question about whether the respondents are receiving necessary guidance from management to assist them with the interpretation and understanding of local government legislations and policy documents, only 33% of the respondents get the necessary guidance and support from the municipal management/administration and 50% of them do sometimes get guidance and support from management and 17% indicated that they never get any support from management. From the results presented above it can be concluded that municipal management/administration does not support the councillors as

required to assist them to interpret legislation and policy documents. There is a need for capacity building and training in the interpretation of legislation and policy documents to ensure smooth operation of the metropolitan municipality. On the question about whether councillors would like to receive training pertaining to the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework, 2000; all the respondents indicated that they require training to interpret the Act.

On the question as to whether councillors require training in financial and municipal budgeting, a total of 83% of the respondents indicated that they need training in municipal budgeting and financial management, while only 17% do not want any further training as indicated. Budgeting and municipal financial management is an area of concern for local government as the majority of councillors indicated that they need training in that regard. As explained in the theoretical discussion in this article municipal councillors must be involved in the compilation of municipal or metropolitan budgets to ensure that the needs of the community are addressed. It was also explained that municipal councillors must act as the custodians and guardians of public finance. Therefore, municipal councillors should be familiar with the municipal budgetary process.

On the question about the outcomes of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality audit report (Qualified. Unqualified. Disclaimer. Not sure) the results are as follows:

**Figure 1: Recent outcomes of the municipal audit report from the South African Auditor General**

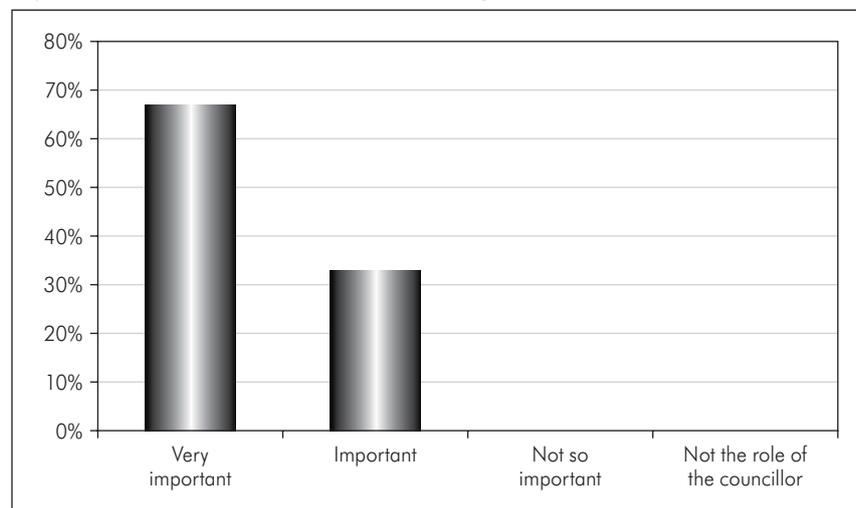


Source: (Taaibosch: 2015:142)

The pie chart above shows that 67% of the councillors in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality are not sure about the recent audit report, and 33% of the councillors indicated that the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality has received an unqualified audit report. It is of great concern to learn that respondents in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality are not sure about the audit report their Metropolitan Municipality has received. The theoretical discussion of this article states that it is expected from municipal councillors to act as custodians and guardians of public finance. It was also mentioned that as part of their oversight role municipal councillors are accountable to the community that they serve and to their party structures. It was also explained that the role of municipal councillors is essentially to improve the quality of life for all by overseeing governance and service delivery in the local sphere of government. As such one could argue that councillors should be aware of the outcome of the annual report of the Auditor General South Africa pertaining to the audit outcome of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to fulfil their oversight role effectively.

On the question about how well municipal councillors can analyse and interpret financial statements of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality; the majority of the respondents stated that they want training to be able to analyse and interpret the financial statements of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. On the question about how important the role is of councillors in the interpretation of the Municipal Financial Management Act, (MFMA), (Act 56 of 2003); the outcomes are outlined in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Role of the councillors in the interpretation of the MFMA**



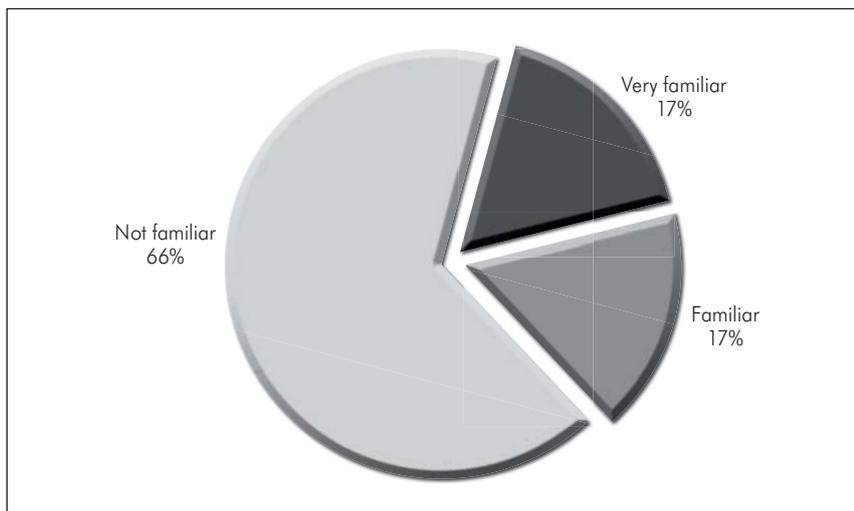
Source: (Taaibosch: 2015:143)

The figure above shows that 67% of the respondents indicated that the role of councillors in the interpretation of the MFMA is very important, 33% of the respondents indicated that the role of councillors in the interpretation of an MFMA is important. It is encouraging to learn that the majority of the respondents do regard the role of councillors in the interpretation of the MFMA as very important.

On the question about specifying any type of training councillors received in relation to the IDP of the metro and the role of public participation; a total of 83% of the respondents indicated that they attended a councillor development workshop while, 17% of the respondents were reluctant to answer this question. In the theoretical discussion of this article it was emphasised that municipal councillors must be involved in the compilation of the municipal or metropolitan IDP. It is required of municipal councillors to be familiar with the integrated development planning process in order to provide feedback to the community which they serve on the achievement of their needs.

On the question as to how familiar the councillors are with the processes and objectives of the metropolitan's IDP the results are indicated in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Familiar with the processes and objectives of the IDP**



Source: (Taaibosch: 2015:145)

The figure above shows that a total of 66% of the respondents indicated that they are not familiar with the processes and objectives of the metropolitan IDP, while 17% indicated that they are familiar with the processes and objectives of the IDP, and another 17% indicated they are very familiar with the processes and objectives of the metropolitan's IDP. From the statement provided above

one could argue that councillors do need training about the processes and objectives of the IDP.

On the question of whether councillors would like to receive training pertaining to the IDP processes a relatively large percentage of the councillors (83%) indicated that they would like to receive training pertaining to the IDP processes, while 17% indicated that they do not want to receive training in relation to the IDP processes and objectives. The statistical information provided above clearly indicates that municipal councillors should receive training pertaining to the IDP processes of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. In terms of Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 it is required of councillors to consult with the citizens to get inputs on; the municipal budget, the IDP, development projects, as well as matters pertaining to the performance management system of the municipality.

On the question as to how familiar the councillors are with the Local Economic Development Strategy, its processes and advantages; 50% of the respondents indicated that they are familiar with the Local Economic Development Strategy, its processes and advantages while, 33% of the respondents indicated that they are not familiar with the Local Economic Development Strategy, its processes and advantages. A total of 17% of the respondents indicated that they are very familiar with the Local Economic Development Strategy, its processes and advantages. As explained in the theoretical discussion of this article it was emphasised that municipal councillors should react to the community needs of which their social economic development needs could not be excluded. Thus, one could argue that in order for municipal councillors to fulfil this responsibility they should have some knowledge of the local economic development initiatives of the metro.

On the question on how familiar the respondents are with report writing; 50% of the respondents indicated that they are not familiar with report writing, while 33% of the respondents indicated that they are familiar with report writing, and 17% of the respondents indicated they are very familiar with report writing. It was emphasised in the theoretical discussion of this article that municipal councillors must be accountable to local communities and report back to their constituencies on council matters. Thus, municipal councillors should be familiar with reporting matters in order to report back to their constituencies on council matters.

On the question as to whether the respondents would like to improve on any of the following skills; communication, decision-making, and active listening skills; a total of 83% of the respondents indicated that they would like to improve on their communication skills, decision-making and active listening skills. This is an area of great concern because “through communication with citizens, government gathers information about the needs, opinions, values and perspectives from the broadest spectrum of the public, enabling government to make better and more informed decisions” (Tsatsire 2008:196).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In this article the researchers seek to determine the training needs and competency challenges of municipal councillors of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality as well as to determine what capacity building and training initiatives should be recommended to address these challenges. It was mentioned in the article that one of the challenges that remains a factor is the high councillors' turnover rate as well as an excessive workload that hinders municipal councillors from meeting the requirements of their positions as stated in the Municipal Systems Act, 2000. Another factor that remains a challenge on the part of municipalities' performance is the shortage and availability of skills of municipal councillors to fulfil their functions effectively. It was also emphasised in the article that the traditional role of councillors has broadened to encompass additional responsibilities and functions. Therefore, municipal councillors (proportional PR councillors) require specific competencies and skills in order to ensure the smooth operation of their local municipality. Furthermore, it was accentuated in the theoretical discussion of this article that the specific functions of municipal councillors are not comprehensively dealt with in legislation. However, Section 153(1) (e) of the Constitution, of 1996 provides that councillors should respond to the community needs. Section 53 of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 directs each municipality to define the specific role of each political structure and provide guidelines on how councillors and municipal managers should interact. Furthermore, the theoretical discussion emphasised that municipal councillors may interact with local and provincial party structures and may serve as substitute chairpersons on ward committees where ward councillors cannot be present. The following functions of councillors were emphasised in the theoretical discussion of this article, namely; that councillors should make decisions on behalf of the constituents they serve; they should represent the needs and interests of their constituents; they should fulfil leadership roles in municipal councils; and act as custodians or guardians of public finance; councillors should provide effective oversight over municipal executive and council officials and accounting officers; and councillors should be responsive to the communities they serve. The oversight role of municipal councillors was also emphasised in the theoretical discussion of this article.

Based on the literature (theoretical discussion) and the findings from the interview schedule the following are recommendations concerning specific training interventions to address the identified needs and challenges of councillors of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. It is recommended that SALGA in cooperation with the Free State Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs arranges a holistic capacity and training programme as part of a training intervention to municipalities to improve the capacity, competencies, skills and knowledge of the councillors of the Mangaung

Metropolitan Municipality to be able to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. It is also recommended that the following should be included in the capacity building and training initiatives provided to municipal councillors:

- Training pertaining to applicable national, provincial and municipal legislation, municipal policies and the National Development Plan should be provided. Councillors are accountable to the communities that they serve and to their party structures. The role of municipal councillors is essentially to improve the quality of life for all by overseeing governance and service delivery in the local sphere of government.
- Basic literacy and numeracy education should be provided (Adult Based Training programmes) to councillors who are illiterate. It is imperative that all municipal councillors understand applicable legislation as well as the submissions made by the municipal administrators. Councillors should be able to readily access information from various municipal departments to be able to fulfil their role as elected representatives of the communities.
- Training pertaining to municipal budgeting and financial management is imperative. Municipal councillors are the custodians and guardians of municipal finances.
- Training pertaining to the interpretation of the different audit outcomes of the Auditor General South Africa is an important factor, as councillors must exercise their oversight role by considering the audits and annual reports.
- Training pertaining to the IDP process of the metro is essential, as every councillor should fulfil an active role in the preparatory phase of the IDP to ensure that every constituency's specific needs are acknowledged in an effective manner.
- Reporting skills and report writing skills pertaining to the performance of the municipality is also an important factor. Councillors must be accountable to local communities and report back on a quarterly basis to their constituencies on council matters, including the performance of the municipality in accordance with set performance indicators.
- Induction training should be provided to the municipal councillors who were not able to attend the municipal councillor's induction training session provided by SALGA.
- The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality has to ensure that on a continuous basis specific condensed discussion and information sessions will be provided by experts (municipal officials and sector department experts) to keep municipal councillors informed about the numerous facets of local government, administration, and the diverse functional activities of local government.
- Lastly, all councillors should receive training pertaining to the Code of Conduct of Councillors to ensure that all councillors fully understand the implications of their conduct.

The above recommendations emphasise the importance to capacitate the municipal councillors of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in a suitable manner to ensure that they have the necessary capacity, competencies, skills and knowledge to be able to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

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