

ACTIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE IN INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) and conclusive Acts analysed in this article reflects the process of local government democratization in South Africa. In this milieu, the importance of intergovernmental relations in South Africa as a determining factor in the democratization process is evident. It is further argued that the operational activities flowing from these Acts directly shape the success of intergovernmental relations. This article therefore investigates the decisive influence operational activities have on intergovernmental relations. The local government integrated development plan (IDP) in general and the specific assessment process in particular serves as an example in this research of the influence of these activities on intergovernmental relations.

This article then identifies appropriate actions and examines the contribution of important role players and government institutions to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations in South Africa in this challenging environment. The research finally focuses on the involvement of other external institutions, specifically the Intergovernmental Institute of South Africa (IGISA), and the endeavour to support the promotion and facilitation of excellence in intergovernmental relations in South Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Political reform in South Africa in general and The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) in particular can be seen as foundation of the democratization of institutions and the facilitation of decentralization in the public sector. To vindicate and cultivate the democratization of institutions and to explore decentralization effectively, the promotion and facilitation of intergovernmental relations and the resolution of intergovernmental disputes in South Africa is of vital importance.

Since South Africa's first democratic elections on 27 April 1994, the country made a political transition to a democratic state whilst adapting its national, provincial and local spheres of government. Although these spheres of government have their own structures and jurisdictions at different levels, they are still interdependent (Gildenhuys and Knipe 2000:285). The state performs its concerted powers and functions through a process of intergovernmental relations, according to Chapter 3 of The Constitution. Other non-government organs of state listed in the Schedules to the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) is also part of this environment.

The source of Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) therefore originates from The Constitution. To give effect to the stipulations of The Constitution, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill, 2004, has been published in the Government Gazette of 5 November 2004. The importance of intergovernmental relations as a determining factor to enhance local

government democratization in South Africa cannot be stress enough. The Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill therefore signifies the government's earnest approach to develop intergovernmental relations further. An approach also shared by other governments abroad, such as in Canada (Reddy 2005:12).

The process of local government democratization in South Africa is first founded in The Constitution and is further exploited by conclusive Acts, analysed in this article. It is illuminating that the operational activities arising from these Acts is actually the instigator or even the cause of intergovernmental relations. The research further indicates that the manner of the execution of these activities has a significant influence on the effectiveness of intergovernmental relations. As an example a case-scenario of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in general and the assessment process in particular explains the influence of the IDP activities on intergovernmental relations.

Actions to support excellence in intergovernmental relations therefore refer to the role of individuals and applicable government structures in executing activities, such as the IDP process. However, also other institutions can support the mission to achieve excellence in intergovernmental relations. This is the reason why the School of Government Management at the Central University of Technology, Free State established the Intergovernmental Institute of South Africa.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEMOCRATIZATION

The Constitution and other legislation mentioned in this article recognise the involvement of local government in embracing democracy in South Africa and the role of municipalities in development and nation-building. To achieve this, municipalities have to respect the democratic principles and developmental stipulations in legislation. According to Roberts & Edwards (1991:82), the following features amongst others demonstrate what true democracy demands from a democratic government:

- Implementation and enforcement of the procedural and substantive principles of democracy that appears necessary for municipalities operations.
- Political office-bearers always have to act in the interest of the residents.
- The rule of law should prevail in all government actions.
- Political office-bearers should be accountable to and removable by the people, either directly or through their representatives.
- Everybody must have equal opportunity to practice democracy: all citizens should therefore be able to vote, and the vote of every citizen should count equally. If policy disagreements appear, they should be resolved by the principle of majority decision.
- A pillar of democracy is the rights of minority groups in the community. They should be in a position to protect their interests; therefore, the idea of democracy should not include tyranny by the majority.
- Basic civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and assembly, must be maintained.
- A secret ballot, limitations on electoral expenditure, and laws regulating mass media communications during the election period is not negotiable, resulting in minimising the possible effects of improper influence on the voter.

The test at the local government level lies in the manner the democratization process progresses, despite the historical role of local government in South Africa (Parnell, Pieterse, Swilling & Wooldridge 2000). To respect these general demands identified by Roberts & Edwards (1991:82) it is required from local government to base their democratization process on the democratic values and principles enshrined in section 195 (1) of The Constitution. Amongst others, the following values and principles should direct the democratic route of local government in South Africa:

- It is expected that a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
- Local government must endeavour to utilize all their available resources efficiently, economically and effectively.
- Administration of local government must be development-orientated and accountable.
- All services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
- Appropriate response to the needs of the residents is required and they must be encouraged to participate in municipal policy-making.
- The public are entitled to timely, accessible and accurate information.
- The maximization of human potential, effective human-resource management and career-development practices must be cultivated in the municipalities.
- It is also expected from local government administration to be broadly representative of the South African people. Employment and personnel management practices should however be based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past.

In this environment in terms of the above basic requirements, the local government democratisation process should progress in South Africa. Apart from The Constitution, with reference to Chapters 3 and 7 specifically, a number of significant and important Acts in South Africa implemented since 1994 serve as mechanisms in the democratization process. In analysing this specific legislation, it is noteworthy how the Acts support and measure up to the required values and principles of democracy. A pioneering effort in democratising local government in South Africa since 1994 is amongst others the following Acts classified as the “big three”. This legislation most definitely forms the corner stone of the new democratic local government in South Africa:

- *Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000)*: This Act describes the core principles, mechanisms and processes that are necessary for municipalities to achieve their goals in the public sector. It therefore gives effect to the new system of local government nurturing effectiveness and transparency in the spirit to be fundamentally developmental in an environment of non-racial democracy.
- *Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998)*: The process of democratising local government in South Africa requires the establishment of new and legitimate democratic structures with a developmental vision. The establishment of municipalities, division of functions and powers, regulation of internal systems, structures and office-bearers and the provision for appropriate electoral systems is stipulated in this Act.
- *Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003)*: Accountability is the corner stone of democracy. The principles enshrined in this Act and the significant reforms resulting from them pave the way for effective and efficient financial management and

accountable local government actions. This Act explains the treasury norms and standards for the local sphere of government. Except municipalities, the MFMA also applies to national and provincial governments, departments and public entities. It applies to the extent that they have dealings with municipalities.

Section 40(1-2) in Chapter 3 of The Constitution determine that government in South Africa be constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government. These three spheres are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated. In their specific environments, they must observe and adhere to the principles in Chapter 3. It is required from them to conduct their activities within the provided parameters according to the principles of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations as reflected in section 41(1-4).

Local government operates therefore in a milieu of co-operation and the nature and extent of the specific roles of the three spheres of government results in the existence of intergovernmental relations. Although the democratization process of local government is firmly on track with sound legislation as mechanism, this alone will not assure that democracy will triumph. The nerve system of triumphant democracy is intergovernmental relations and attached to that, the ability, actions, attitudes and behaviour of every relevant role player. The status of the relationship between the three tiers of government will ultimately decide the success of democracy at government level in South Africa!

This is why Chapter 3 of The Constitution is so important for the cause of democracy in South Africa and also why the consequent Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill, dealing with the promotion and facilitation of intergovernmental relations is of paramount interest for democratic governance. It really guides intergovernmental relations as the nerve system of the operational actions of the three levels of government. Local government democratization can only succeed in a climate of sound intergovernmental relations. This calls for specific actions to achieve excellence in intergovernmental relations in South Africa. Positive actions are required involving everybody as role players in the public sector, also research and knowledge backup and support from other competent institutions.

3. IGR: SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Figure 1 on the next page is a graphic and compact exposition of intergovernmental relations in South Africa. A concise explanation of intergovernmental relations reflected in this figure is necessary to put specific actions for excellence in perspective:

Intergovernmental relations refer to relations between the three tiers of government in South Africa at the national (central), provincial and local level. The nature and extent of these relations leads to a form of power-independence. In this regard, Rhodes (1986:17) indicates that the different structures are therefore dependent on other applicable structures for resources. For instance, for a municipality to achieve specific goals, they depend on resources from provincial and national government.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS (IGR)

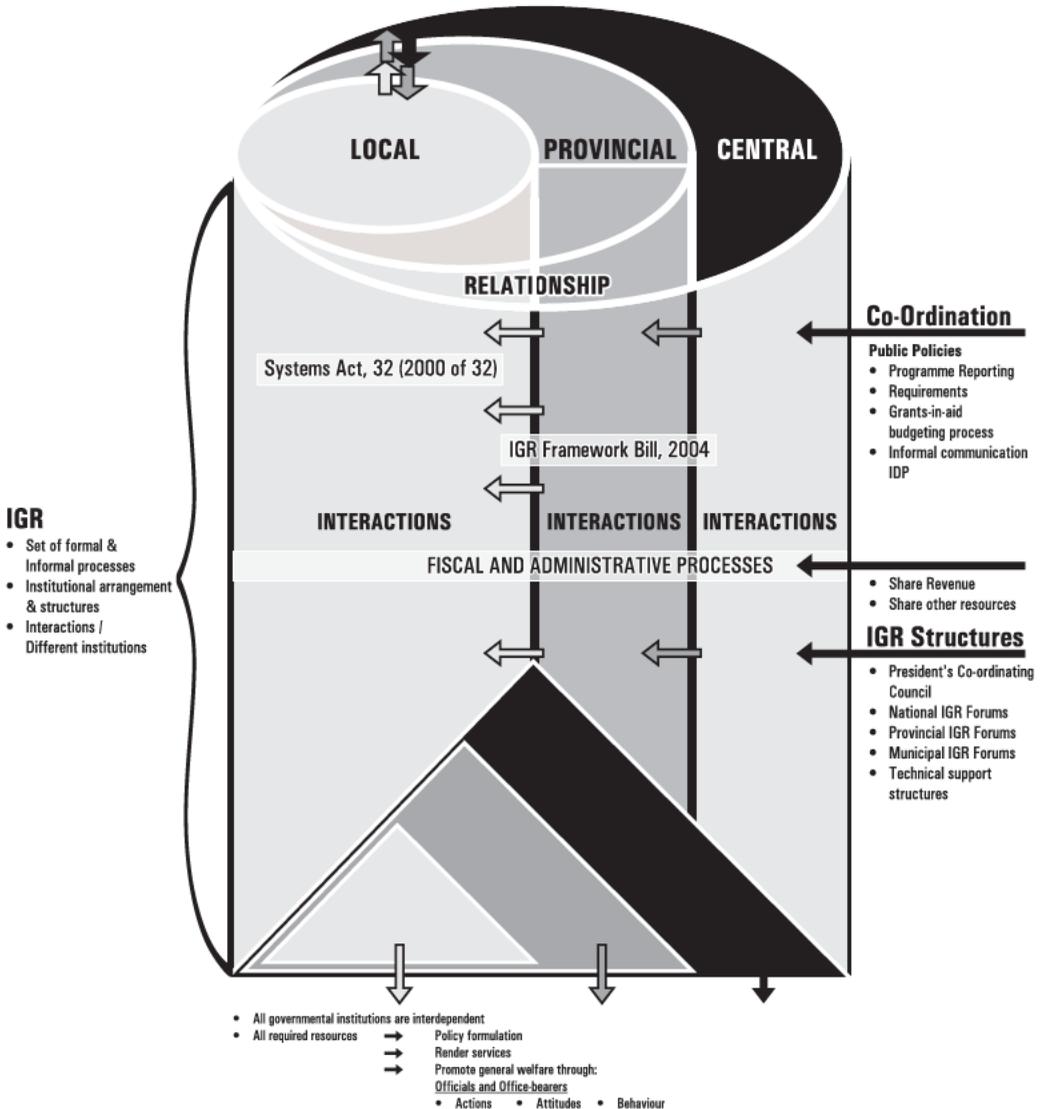


Figure 1: IGR16

- Public policies require the direct and indirect involvement or explicit involvement of the three tiers of government. Co-ordination of these policies is required through mechanisms such as programming, grants-in-aid, planning and budgeting and communication actions.

The IDP process in terms of the Systems Act and the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill analysed in this article serves as appropriate examples.

- Fiscal and administrative processes also instigate intergovernmental relations. This in general refer to processes through which the different levels of government share revenue and other resources, accompanied by special conditions that must be satisfied as prerequisites for assistance. Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000:291-292) confirms the dominant influence of fiscal relations between the applicable government structures by the allocation of sources of income and the approval of budgets. Subsidising of various government institutions as well as the lending and borrowing of money to finance capital expenditure also reflects the importance of fiscal relations in this environment.
- Intergovernmental relations are therefore inspired by a set of formal and informal processes and institutional arrangements and structures. This happens for bilateral and multilateral co-operation within and among the three tiers of government. The IDP action and the assessment process in particular in the milieu of local government democratization are viewed in this article as the instigator of intergovernmental relations.
- IGR therefore reflects important interactions occurring among different governmental institutions in all spheres of government. At the local government level the IDP action and the assessment process serves as example of these interactions as mentioned already.
- Intergovernmental relations have distinctive features that suggest an increase in complexity and interdependency of political systems. This distinctively reflects in the legislation analysed in this article.
- These complex and interdependent systems originates and develops from; the large number and growth of governmental institutions; the number and variety of public officials involved in IGR; the intensity and regularity of contacts among those officials; the importance of the actions, attitudes and behaviour of officials; and the preoccupation with financial policy issues.

In Chapter 2 of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill, the establishment of intergovernmental structures are required on the three levels of government. These IGR structures are forums for intergovernmental consultation and discussion. They include the; President's Co-ordinating Council; National intergovernmental forums; Provincial intergovernmental forums; Municipal intergovernmental forums; and other structures such as technical support structures. Thornhill, Malan, Odendaal, Mathebula, Van Dijk & Mello (2002:105) are of the opinion that these kind of structures are important to ensure that each sphere of government could operate effectively and efficiently.

- It is a fact that the nature and extent of interaction between the different tiers of government varies continuously in terms of; the specific degree of co-operation; it also depends on the dynamics of the system and the distinctive role players; and the accommodation and managing of interdependence and geographical and social diversity.
- From a local government perspective and in terms of the topic of this article, municipalities are dependant upon external institutions and role players in the other two spheres of government for appropriate resources as mentioned already. These resources enable

them to formulate applicable policy and to render required services through the actions of role players, influenced by their attitudes and behaviour (Chapman 1993:3). It also applies for the relationships between municipalities on a trans-frontier, district or general inter-municipality level. The IDP action is a reflection of this perspective.

- Intergovernmental relations as viewed by Venter (2001:191) occur vertically and horizontally. The vertical relations are between the spheres of government and the horizontal relations across institutions within the same sphere, for instance between different municipalities.

An urgent need exists for actions and positive reactions in the public sector to achieve the required excellence in IGR, also on the local government level to foster the democratization process (Ranson et al., 1985:24-27). That is why section 41 (2) of The Constitution requires an specific Act of Parliament; to establish or provide structures and institutions for the promotion and facilitation of intergovernmental relations; and also to provide for appropriate mechanisms and procedures to address intergovernmental disputes effectively.

The Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill, 2004 therefore deals with this requirement to create the necessary institutional framework for the three tiers of government for the promotion and facilitation of IGR in South Africa. On the local government level, Chapter 2 of this Bill makes provision for the establishment of municipal intergovernmental forums, including:

- District intergovernmental forums, the composition, role and meetings of these forums; and
- Inter-municipality forums.

At local government level, Chapter 3 of the Bill deals with the conduct of intergovernmental relations, including the following:

- Provincial policies and legislation affecting local government; and
- The responsibility for co-ordinating intergovernmental relations of district municipalities.

Chapter 4 reflects on the resolution of intergovernmental disputes and the role of assistance by the Minister or MEC for local government in the local government sphere. This Bill is a further significant mechanism in the democratization process of local government in South Africa, directed at achieving excellence in intergovernmental relations. The successful promotion and facilitation of intergovernmental relations in South Africa in terms of this legislation at local government level in particular is now possible with promulgation and the eventual implementation of the applicable Act.

The role of these new structures in general dealing with intergovernmental relations and the operational actions of municipalities in terms of other applicable legislation such as the Systems Act that instigate intergovernmental relations, holds the key for sound democratization at local government level. Therefore, to proof the need for effective intergovernmental relations on the local government level the IDP action and the assessment process in terms of the Systems Act serves as an example and explanation in the remainder of this article.

4. RELATIONSHIPS IN GOVERNMENT: IDP AS CASE-SCENARIO

The implementation of the integrated development plan (IDP) in the local government sphere has brought a new approach to the activities of municipalities in South Africa. This new approach demands a fresh developmental orientation from municipalities (Parnell et al 2002:79-91). The IDP process as a result requires from municipalities to work closely with provincial and national spheres of government, as Chipkin also (2002:57-58) argues. To elucidate the importance of this IDP document section 36 of the Municipal Systems Act in this regard demand from all municipalities to conduct their affairs in a manner, which is consistent with its integrated development plan. The nature and extent of the IDP is dealt with in Chapter 5 of this Act where the authoritative concept of this document becomes evident. Section 35 (1) of this Act confirms the status of the IDP approach by identifying what the plan demands and how it actually conducts the activities of local government, including the following:

- The IDP is the strategic planning instrument of a municipality. This signifies that it guides and informs all the planning and development of a municipality. What is especially significant is that the IDP directly guides all decisions with regard to the planning, management and development in a municipality. These decisions must therefore be based on what the IDP envisaged for the actions of the particular municipality.
- The IDP binds municipalities in the exercise of their executive authority. In terms of the powers bestowed on the executive authority of a municipality, this is further proof of the directing and authoritative status of the IDP.
- A by-law approves resulting actions of the IDP when it imposes duties or affects the rights of specific role players in a municipality.

In the preceding evaluation of the IDP as an important mechanism that actually conducts the affairs of municipalities, it is evident that it is also the major cause and foundation of intergovernmental relations. These affairs should be developmental orientated and according to Davids, Theron & Maphunye (2005:135), the IDP process should guide them. Any problems or challenges experienced in the execution of the IDP can therefore have a particular impact on intergovernmental relations. That is why the struggle municipalities experience to get the co-operation and assistance of government departments in the IDP assessment process is a reason for concern because it has a direct impact on the effectiveness of intergovernmental relations (South African Local Government Research Centre 2005:8).

In this case-scenario, the South African Local Government Research Centre (2005:8) evaluates a CSIR Report that analyzes the status-quo of the MEC IDP assessment processes in terms of the requirements of section 31 and 32 of the Systems Act. Critical and indeed a concern in this report is the conclusion that provincial reviews of IDPs reflect specific intergovernmental weaknesses. This serves as an example in this article to emphasize the importance of pro-active actions to achieve excellence in intergovernmental relations in the local sphere of government, instigated by the reality of the IDP. In this regard, the CSIR Report indicated that DPLG and most provinces embarked on actions to improve the IDP process (South African Local Government Research Centre 2005:9).

To put the case-scenario in context however, it is necessary to refer to section 31 and 32 of the Systems Act, highlighting the role of the provinces and the MEC's in the IDP process. In this regard, section 31 deals with provincial monitoring and support to municipalities in the IDP process, including the following:

- The MEC for local government in a province may monitor the IDP process of municipalities.
- Can assist a municipality with the planning, drafting, adoption and review of the IDP.
- Facilitate the co-ordination and alignment of the IDP of applicable municipalities.
- Co-ordinate and align the IDP of a municipality with the plans, strategies and programmes of national and provincial organs of state.
- Take steps to resolve disputes and differences in the IDP process of role players.

Section 32 further reflects the requirement that a copy of the appropriate IDP should be submitted to the MEC for local government in the specific province:

- The municipal manager of the municipality must submit a copy of the IDP after adoption by the council of the municipality to the MEC.
- The MEC may request the municipality (Approved by the Minister), to adjust or amend the IDP of that municipality for the reasons indicated in this section. The reasons can include the possibility that the IDP does not comply with the requirements. It can be for instance in conflict with, not aligned with, or negates any other applicable plans of affected municipalities or organs of state.
- It is required from a municipal council to consider the proposals of the MEC, and if in agreement with the proposals, to adjust or amend the IDP accordingly. If not, the municipality can object in writing to the MEC and an ad hoc committee appointed by the MEC will deal with the objection. The decision of the ad hoc committee is then final and the municipality should react accordingly.

With these two sections of the Systems Act as foundation for the provinces and the MEC IDP assessment processes, appropriate and significant examples from the mentioned CSIR Report indicates the challenges the IDP process creates in the milieu of intergovernmental relations (South African Local Government Research Centre 2005:8-14). The importance of effective IGR is eminent from these under mentioned examples and illustrate that the IDP process of municipalities should receive the highest priority of all concerned as the pillar of all local government activities.

Provincial scenario: IDP actions and assessment processes

The direct and operational relationship between municipalities and provinces arising from the IDP process is determined by the specific stipulations in section 31 and 32 of the Systems Act. IDP actions and approaches of a municipality and the applicable province will have a significant and even conclusive influence on the effectiveness of intergovernmental relations. That is why provinces must approach IDP actions and assessment processes not just in a rigid legalistic manner but rather from a holistic perspective as indicated in the following scenario of questions:

- Are the IDP support units of the provinces able to assist municipalities in the IDP process as required in the Systems Act? The CSIR Report confirms that most provinces have only small support units.
- Are the resources enough and is there a lack of authority and capacity to provide the necessary support to municipalities, specifically to handle problems related to intergovernmental and -institutional collaborations and co-ordination? This is further questions provinces have to deal with.
- The question if the approach in the IDP assessment process is indeed appropriate also needs authorities' attention. Do the provinces and therefore the process only focus on activities of minor significance left out in the IDP of a municipality, instead of focussing on systematic and structured engagement?
- Does a province in the IDP assessment process support the objective of bringing about the re-alignment and redistribution of resources between the different local areas in a municipality, and different areas between municipalities?
- Provinces should concentrate to assist municipalities to focus their IDP process on real strategic issues instead of non-strategic aims. As Rauch (2003:26) rightfully mentioned, the IDP is far from being a real strategic process. For instance, a direct link between the IDP and budget process of a municipality is required.
- To conduct the IDP process successfully, municipalities have to depend on positive links, collaboration and co-operation with all the applicable government structures. The question is then if provinces really support municipalities in initiating and maintaining co-operation in the IDP process. The CSIR investigation unfortunately found that municipalities struggle to get the cooperation and assistance of other government departments, including provincial and national departments.
- The quality, nature and extent of the feedback from MEC`s are also very important. Is the feedback to a municipality mainly a critical reflection of identified gaps in the IDP? Are the reasons for "negative" feedback clear and are specific solutions with viable options available?
- The Systems Act requires continuous consultation with municipalities throughout the different stages in the IDP process and the question remains if provinces indeed consult? As a matter of organisational reality, consultation about IDP actions at all levels of government should take place in a permanent and continuous way.
- A continuous and consistent engagement from the provinces is required and a once-off assessment action is not conducive to sound intergovernmental relations. Continuous and consistent engagement from IDP officials and coordinators can result in the improvement of intergovernmental relations in general (Davids et al., 2005:145-146).
- Sustainable relationships between local and district municipalities, and specifically between municipalities and provincial structures are of the utmost importance in the IDP process, but is this happening?
- If there is a lack of effective collaboration, it is highly unlikely that provinces and national departments will deliver their services in alignment with local priorities and needs as required by the Systems Act. This definitely does not create a positive climate for excellence in intergovernmental relations in South Africa. Rauch (2003:23) indicates that effective alignment is indeed lacking.
- To fulfil the required and expected role in the IDP process and therefore to support municipalities in this regard, the infrastructure and capacity of provinces must be developed accordingly.

Municipal milieu: IDP actions and assessment processes

Intergovernmental relations are really a multidimensional action involving all the role players and structures that have a direct and even indirect influence on relations. In the IDP process, this also put municipalities in the same responsibility sphere as all the other government structures. Therefore, municipalities have to do their own soul searching to establish what they can do and contribute to an effective IDP process, resulting in intergovernmental excellence. The following needs appropriate attention:

- In the light of the authoritative nature of the IDP process, municipalities have to use or employ adequate and qualified staff for the job. Brown (1997:68-80) echoes this sentiment of the need for skilled staff.
- It is important to convince and motivate all the role players in a municipality to approach the IDP process as the most important mechanism to achieve the developmental mandate of local government. Municipalities must comply with the individual procedures in the Systems Act in the IDP process.
- In the above scenario, it will then be possible for a municipality to honour the requirements of the Systems Act and to execute all the procedures accordingly, including the timely submission of the IDP document.
- The Systems Act determine in section 29(1) (b) that the local community should participate in the drafting of the IDP. Khan and Cranko (2002:262-275) however confirms the lack of general participation by the community.
- In terms of the Systems Act, all municipalities must submit an IDP document and they have no choice in this regard. If not and for what ever reason they do not comply, they violate a law and therefore do not support the democratization process.

IGR excellence an anomaly without IDP validity

As has been argued throughout this article, the IDP process is an authoritative mechanism in local government, one of the corner stones in the local government democratization process and the operational instigator of intergovernmental relations (Mhone and Edigheji 2003). With this in mind, the provincial IDP assessment process as the case-study example of the effects it has on intergovernmental relations should be under continuous scrutiny in South Africa, and amongst others the following as perspective:

- A successful IDP assessment process will strengthen intergovernmental relations and promote positive cooperative governance.
- Calculated, proper actions and engagement in conducting the IDP process will make the interaction between provinces and municipalities a natural and continuous occurrence during the financial cycle. Stoker (2002:31-36) declares that this will also empower municipalities to address the challenges of managing environments in a sustainable manner. This will support excellence in intergovernmental relations.
- The IDP process in general creates an excellent opportunity to strengthen intergovernmental ties across the board of the three tiers of government. Another reason therefore for the entire spectrum of role players involved to do their utmost to develop the IDP process according to the real essence of the Systems Act.
- To proof the importance of the above scenario research found that the IDP process indeed contributes to the promotion of intergovernmental relations (South African Local Government Research Centre 2005:8-14). This is exactly one of the major aims of the new

Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill.

- Although the correct approach to the IDP process and the applicable assessment cycle should be in terms of the Systems Act, a balancing act is still required from role players in the provinces. By this, it means that provinces should not just concentrate on “correct” IDP documentation and actions but must also support municipalities in their general and specific efforts to achieve integrated development success to the benefit of the entire community. Theron and Barnard (1997:35-58) is of the opinion that putting this developing planning into appropriate action is not an easy task, but can be achieved in practice.

5. CASE STUDY OF ACTIONS FOR EXCELLENCE IN IGR: IGISA

In terms of the Constitution and the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill, the national government, the provincial and local governments need to establish an institutional framework to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations. The establishment of mechanisms and procedures to facilitate the resolution of intergovernmental disputes is also a requirement. To face the challenges of intergovernmental relations in South Africa government institutions on all three levels is in need of expertise, knowledge and support to enhance excellence in training, research and consultation services. An example of these challenges being the case-scenario of the IDP assessment process in the previous rubric.

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) established an Intergovernmental Institute of South Africa (IGISA) in the Faculty of Management Sciences, specifically attached to the School of Government Management. The establishment of IGISA arises from the crucial need in the Public Sector for an independent unit specializing in the support, promotion and facilitation of excellence in intergovernmental relations in South Africa. The opportunity to establish the Institute was confirmed by government programs such as Project Consolidate of the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and the widespread need expressed by various role players at different levels of government, including institutions such as the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). IGISA created this infrastructure as a specialized Institute and amongst others, the following mechanisms and functions of IGISA will support actions for excellence in intergovernmental relations in South Africa:

- **Education:** In collaboration with government institutions, the Institute identifies public sector role players and employees to enrol for postgraduate studies in intergovernmental relations to contribute to the body of knowledge in this specialized field. Professional role players in IGISA and specific partners participate as guest lecturers at academic institutions, also to promote their expertise in this field of specialization. The establishment of partnerships in this environment with amongst others universities in Australia and Canada specializing in intergovernmental relations is also one of the objectives of the Institute, contributing to the further development of this field in South Africa and the promotion of expertise in this milieu.
- **Research and Publications:** Co-operation in intergovernmental activities in South Africa is still in a developing phase and not yet as effective as supposed to be. One of the reasons for this is the lack of research done in this field and the limited authoritative book sources available in South Africa and internationally for the enhancement of knowledge and

insight. IGISA is publishing the first authoritative handbook on IGR and intend to publish a number of articles in this field. The Institute is also managing the process to produce a bi-annual publication of an accredited Journal in Intergovernmental Relations.

- **Consulting Services:** The case-scenario of the IDP assessment process in this article confirms that the national, provincial and local governments are in need of specialized consulting services in IGR. However, experts in this field in South Africa are limited. Professional experts of the Institute are currently involved in consulting in the Free State and other parts of South Africa to support and collaborate with government institutions to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations in the appropriate environments and to develop applicable mechanisms and procedures for dispute resolutions. One of the most influential clients of the consulting staff of IGISA is the Tshwane Metropolitan Government, which liaises with every government department on the national level and with the international diplomatic community.
- **Facilitation:** The Intergovernmental Relations Framework Bill, 2004 creates opportunities for experts in the field to establish and participate in relevant support structures for inter-municipality forums (s26). IGISA organizes and hosts specific conferences and seminars at CUT in 2005 to establish two appropriate forums. IGISA is also in a position to participate as official secretariat for forums. IGISA is exploring and developing the necessary mechanisms for the future facilitation of the resolution of intergovernmental disputes in South Africa.
- **Seminars and Conferences:** All the provinces and large municipalities should have operational IGR co-coordinators. Seminars, conferences and workshops conducted by IGISA create further opportunities for these co-ordinaters and other role players to exchange ideas, further their knowledge and therefore to improve effectiveness and efficiency in IGR in the applicable government spheres. IGISA has the capacity to play a major role in the arrangement of opportunities to bring political office-bearers and officials together to debate and exchange ideas on intergovernmental relations in South Africa.

6. CONCLUSION

Democracy in the true sense of the local government democratization process demands purposeful and calculated actions to achieve excellence in intergovernmental relations in South Africa. Therefore, the different structures of government and all the role players involved are firmly submissive to the requirements and obligations of democracy. This requires democratic based governance on national, provincial and local level, directing the available resources with a firm developmental approach.

The local government democratization process has already resulted in effective mechanisms with a sound democratic foundation, referring to the applicable Acts analysed in this article. The most comprehensive challenge however manifests in the operational milieu of intergovernmental relations, specifically the management of these mechanisms and identified actions in terms of the authoritative IDP process. However, without reliable quantitative and qualitative three-tier capacity, excellence in intergovernmental relations will only be a figment of the imagination and successful democratization will dwindle away as just a pipe dream!

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