

One District, One Plan, and One Budget: Towards a Capable Government in South Africa

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Abstract

South Africa continues to battle against issues of service delivery, poverty, unemployment, and inequality. These issues persist despite numerous efforts of the South African government to become a capable, responsive, and accountable state that is characterised by transparency. Hence, the South African District Development Model (DDM) was introduced in 2019 as a cooperative governance framework aimed at building a capable, ethical, and developmental state. While this model is designed to address South Africa's development issues, its challenges and prospects remain largely unknown. This paper aims to critically analyse the potential of DDM in building a capable South African local government. It is informed by a qualitative research approach in which government documents, newspaper articles, journal articles, books, and book chapters sourced through Google search and scholarly databases were consulted. The findings indicate that while DDM can capacitate local government, it is likely to face challenges in implementation in some contexts. These challenges include, but are not limited to, poor coordination, lack of resources, lack of capacity, and lack of community participation. Therefore, the successful implementation of DDM requires, *inter alia*, effective intergovernmental coordination, substantive community participation, and stakeholder capacity development.

Keywords: District Development Model; government; service delivery; South Africa

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Introduction

South Africa remains behind in its socio-economic transformation targets of addressing poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Matyana and Thusi 2023; Mdluli and Dunga 2022). The country also continues to struggle with service delivery backlogs (Sebola 2023). These issues persist despite numerous efforts of the South African government to become a capable, responsive, and accountable state. A widely accepted view is that addressing these issues requires a capable state that can effectively use resources to achieve its developmental goals (Khambule 2021). There is also a growing consensus among policymakers, development experts, and researchers that cooperation between various spheres of government and other development stakeholders is necessary to achieve development objectives. This perspective is evident in development efforts in many countries across the world. Accordingly, a global integrative review conducted by Eweje et al. (2021) suggested the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in the achievement of sustainable development.

Notably, various policies, strategies, and frameworks are implemented in South Africa to overcome development challenges. The National Development Plan (NDP), for instance, remains South Africa's key development strategy to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (Naidoo and Maré 2015; Tebogo 2023). While the NDP has given hope to South Africans, some critics point to its unrealistic targets and poor implementation (Moyo and Mamobolo 2014), with many scholars arguing that it remains largely rhetoric with insignificant impact on the key national issues. Undoubtedly, the South African government continues to prioritise inclusive economic growth through employment creation, investment in education and skills development, and improving access to basic services (Cumming et al. 2017; Van der Westhuizen and Swart 2015). Nevertheless, the progress made in addressing the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality is discouraging. Furthermore, the role of the government in public service delivery is undermined by various issues, particularly corruption and general maladministration in South Africa's public sector (Maile and Vyas-Doorgapersad 2023; Vyas-Doorgapersad 2022). In particular, the issue of corruption remains a major threat to South Africa's development. It should also be mentioned that state capture in South Africa has led to poor service delivery through the corruption of institutions, the misdirection of public funds, and the weakening of state capacity. This has been a major problem to overcome because it is the country's powerful elites who influence government and its institutions for private gain, leading to poor service delivery (Croucamp 2019). Accordingly, the South African local government continues to battle against poor service delivery, partly due to inadequate funding, incapacity, and corruption (Madumo 2015; Masuku and Jili 2019). Clearly, the aim of integrated development planning has not been achieved, which calls for alternative integrated approaches to service delivery and to solve development challenges in South Africa.

During the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of June 2019, the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, identified what can be referred to as a “pattern of operating in silos” associated with service delivery challenges and the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. In his speech, he introduced the District Development Model (DDM) as an approach to promote service delivery, create jobs, and promote local businesses while promoting substantive community participation (Teti et al. 2024). Unlike the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the essence of DDM is collaborative planning undertaken at local, district, and metropolitan levels by all three spheres of government (South African Local Government Association 2021). It is, therefore, anticipated that this model would, among other things, improve the coherence and impact of government service delivery and address poverty, unemployment, and inequality while promoting overall sustainable development (South African Local Government Association 2021). While this model seems like an alternative approach to IDP, its prospects and challenges remain largely unknown. In other countries, similar models show both challenges and prospects in promoting the development of districts.

So far, very few studies have been conducted on DDM in South Africa (see, for example, Khambule 2021; Mamokhere and Kgobe 2023; Mutereko and Shava 2024; Nel and Minnie 2022; Teti et al. 2024). While these studies addressed the potential of DDM, there is a lack of conclusive evidence on the role of this model in building a capable state that is accountable and responsive. This paper addresses this knowledge gap by critically analysing the potential of this model in building a capable South African government, with a specific focus on the triple challenges and service delivery backlogs. Following this introduction section, the paper presents the methodology that was adopted to conduct this study. The third part of the paper presents the literature, which covers the conceptualisation of the DDM. The fourth section focuses on the discussion. The last section provides the overall conclusion and recommendations.

Methodology

This paper is informed by qualitative research in which a comprehensive literature and documents search was conducted through desktop research. This approach was applied to gather relevant existing information and data from readily available sources such as books, book chapters, journal articles, newspaper articles, and government documents. All sources were elicited electronically from January 2025 to April 2025. To access scholarly publications like peer-reviewed journal articles, the search was conducted on various scholarly databases. Accessed through the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) library, the databases consulted include Google Scholar, ProQuest, SABINET, Web of Science, EbscoHost, Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley Online Library. Applying desktop research was useful to elicit data from diverse sources within a limited timeframe and in a cost-effective manner, as also acknowledged by Chong and Plonsky (2024).

While this research is not limited to a specific discipline and followed a multidisciplinary search process across relevant disciplines like Development Studies, specific search terms were used. Thus, a combination of search terms used included “District Development Model (DDM),” “government,” “development,” “service delivery,” “municipalities,” and “South Africa.” It is also worth noting that the comprehensive literature search on scholarly databases was conducted first to understand the current body of scholarly knowledge on DDM. To supplement the limited scholarly knowledge on this topic, further search was conducted through the Google search engine, which sourced publications from government websites, newspaper outlets, and other electronic sources. The term “District Development Model” was searched on Google. In addition, reference lists of the obtained publications were checked to access additional relevant sources.

To ensure the selection of relevant publications for the final analysis, an inclusion criterion was developed indicating the specific features each document must have to be selected. Based on the predetermined criteria, only publications that focused on DDM were selected. In addition, only full-text publications in the English language were selected. The search was also restricted to publications from reputable sources such as peer-reviewed journals, official government websites, and reputable news sources. Following this preliminary selection process, all documents were carefully screened to assess relevance to the research topic. First, abstracts and introductory sections were screened. Those documents that passed the first screening were then read in full in the second phase of the screening process. To analyse data, a thematic analysis was applied to identify themes and patterns from the data gathered. The six-step process proposed by Clarke and Braun (2017) was followed to analyse data. The first step was to get familiar with the data collected by carefully reading and re-reading all data files. The second step was to engage the data to generate codes, where the data was segmented into smaller codes. The third step was to generate themes where similar codes were grouped into themes. The fourth step was to review themes to better understand the data contained in each theme. The fifth step was to define and name themes to make sense of each theme. The last step was the write-up of findings.

Literature Review

Issues in the South African Local Government

The DDM has been introduced in response to the plethora of challenges that the South African local government faces. Accordingly, the 2019 Presidential speech highlighted some of these challenges, particularly service delivery deficits and triple development challenges, which necessitated the introduction of DDM. Scholars in the field of community development, like Tshishonga (2019), acknowledge that local government in South Africa is facing numerous challenges, such as a lack of capacity, inadequate service delivery, corruption, and maladministration, among other issues. A relevant study conducted by Mudzusi et al. (2024) in the Vhembe District Municipality also indicates that municipalities are failing in their developmental mandate. This failure

often translates to citizens' dissatisfaction, resulting in service delivery protests. Similarly, a study conducted by Nomarwayi et al. (2020) in Walmer Township noted violent service delivery protests as a growing problem in the South African society. A lack of political will, among other issues, has been cited as a major problem compromising public service delivery in South Africa (Thusi et al. 2023). While this section does not cover all the challenges of local government in South Africa, it critically discusses the key issues. The section thus discusses the lack of capacity, lack of community participation, and corruption as some key issues in the South African local government.

Lack of Capacity in Local Government

Service delivery is a complex activity that demands that local government have a strong capacity. Yet, most local municipalities in South Africa lack the capacity to effectively and sustainably deliver services and to respond to community needs (Kroukamp 2017). A study conducted by Durokifa et al. (2023) shows that building a developmental local government in South Africa has largely been hindered by the lack of capacity, with some government officials lacking the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate development. Similarly, Edoun et al. (2023) argued that strengthening the capacity of local government is essential to deliver services to local communities more effectively and efficiently. The increase in the number of service delivery protests in South Africa symbolises citizens' dissatisfaction with poor service delivery, which is partly attributed to the poor performance of municipal officials (Masiya et al. 2021). While concerns exist regarding a lack of capacity among government officials, this study points to poor skill utilisation and weak capacity for collaboration as contributing factors to poor public service delivery in South Africa (Masiya et al. 2021). Both studies conducted by Durokifa et al. (2023) and Masiya et al. (2021) underscored the importance of the competency-based training of officials in municipalities. Education and training remain critical in ensuring work productivity among employees in various sectors (Rivaldo and Nabella 2023). In light of the pervasive challenge of skills deficits among municipal employees in South Africa, a study conducted by Nama et al. (2022) demonstrated that some municipalities do not train their employees. This study suggested that training, particularly coaching and mentoring, could improve the performance of local government employees. It should be noted that nepotism and cadre deployment also undermined the capacity of local government, which remains a problem hampering service delivery (Adanlawo and Chaka 2024).

Local government is the sphere of government that is located closer to citizens at a grassroots level, and it has the critical role of ensuring that local needs are addressed. The delivery of services partly depends on the quality of skills of those responsible for delivering services (Nengwekhulu 2009). Therefore, improving the capacity of municipalities to deliver on their developmental mandate is crucial. Some research (see, for example, Chilunjika and Chilunjika 2021) shows that twinning arrangements in local government, where municipalities collaborate, contribute to local government capacity development through knowledge and skills exchange. In a study conducted in

Umzinyathi District Municipality, Ngobese (2017) found a lack of coaching and mentorship, a lack of skills development facilitators, and a lack of training and development sections as among the factors undermining the capacity of local government. These results further justify the importance of twining arrangements in capacitating the under-resourced municipalities in particular. In light of the technological advancement, Pillay and Kikasu (2024) discovered that most municipalities are struggling to stay up to date with the latest technological advancements. These municipalities often lack necessary skills in areas such as cybersecurity, IT, and data analytics, which inhibit their capacity to deliver services effectively and sustainably.

Lack of Community Participation

South Africa is regarded as a democratic country, and as such, public participation remains a key principle in South Africa's development agenda. At a local government level, significant efforts are made to promote community participation in government affairs (Enaifoghe and Adetiba 2019; Masuku and Jili 2019). Undoubtedly, the participation of community members and stakeholders in development practice is critical in ensuring that government interventions are relevant to local realities (Hügel and Davies 2020). However, the lack of substantive community participation remains a major challenge in many municipalities. For instance, a study that was conducted in the Tzaneen municipal area found that the lack of community participation in municipal affairs was a challenge contributing to service delivery backlogs (Mamokhere and Meyer 2023). Lack of information regarding the notion of participation, attitude of public officials who do not value public participation, and lack of resources are among the factors inhibiting community participation in local government (Ianniello et al. 2019; Naidoo and Ramphal 2018). It is also evident that citizens often lack knowledge of how local government works, which excludes them from participatory processes (Bester 2020). Matloga et al. (2024) found that despite various initiatives to promote public participation in public affairs, the government's repeated broken promises about service delivery make people hesitant to attend meetings. Furthermore, the South African legislation promotes public participation, but the centralisation of decision-making processes often excludes the contributions of the public in development planning. In particular, marginalised groups such as the poor, women, people living with disabilities, and the youth are generally excluded from decision-making processes on matters that affect their well-being (Kanyane et al. 2021). Hence, some scholars (see, for example, Lekaota 2016) have argued for the application of a bottom-up approach in decision-making about development initiatives.

The inappropriate political interference has reportedly undermined effective administration in the public sector, which has hindered meaningful public participation and service delivery (Mngomezulu 2020). Consistent findings were made in the context of Zimbabwe, where politicians interfered in the development planning processes, which denied citizens a greater influence in development planning (Ndlovu 2017). Education is recognised for its critical role in empowering citizens to voice their ideas,

views, and perspectives. However, South Africa is still characterised by very low levels of education among citizens. This is deemed a challenge as many people are unable to contribute to deliberative processes due to a lack of confidence in their abilities (Bajinath 2018). Linked to lack of education is the lack of knowledge and understanding of development and the right to participate meaningfully in development processes. Due to a lack of knowledge and understanding, most citizens remain “passive” or “non-participants” in their development (Marzuki 2015; Msenge and Nzewi 2021). This underscores the importance of civic education to empower citizens with knowledge and understanding of government affairs to enable their participation. It should also be noted that successful community participation requires time and adequate resources (Matloga et al. 2024). Unfortunately, most municipalities lack resources and time to facilitate substantive community participation in development practice, with some arguing that public participation often delays development. Nevertheless, there is a substantial body of literature suggesting the importance of community participation in development practice (Lucky 2016; Rijal 2023).

Corruption

While corruption is a problem in many countries worldwide, World Economics (2022) ranks South Africa among the top countries with high levels of corruption. According to Budhram and Geldenhuys (2018), corruption is “endemic” in South Africa, and the government has failed to address this problem. Due to pervasive corruption, South Africa has established several commissions, including the Madlanga Commission, Zondo Commission, Nugent Commission, Seriti Commission, and Jali Commission (Kohn 2024; Mudau and Takalani 2024). While all these commissions were established to investigate corruption in South Africa, the recent Madlanga Commission, established in 2025 to investigate allegations of corruption, political interference, and infiltration of criminal syndicates into the criminal justice system, indicates the severity and widespread nature of the corruption problem in the country. Hence, some members of the public believe that South Africa is becoming a “mafia state.” Accordingly, corruption in South Africa’s local government is a pervasive problem that involves the misuse of power for personal gain, which undermines public trust and impedes development (Fourie 2018). This problem of corruption not only undermines the Constitution of South Africa, but it also jeopardises the local government’s ability to deliver services to communities. The personal interests of municipal authorities, which arise when vital services should be provided to communities, inhibit service delivery (Mabeba 2021). Consequently, some community development projects are either not implemented or not completed, owing to self-interest-driven corrupt practices. It should be noted that during the time of COVID-19, the greed among government officials was evident in many South African municipalities. Based on the study conducted by Mantzaris and Ngcamu (2020), corruption occurred in the procurement processes, where some officials manipulated Supply Chain Management (SCM) guidelines and procedures for personal gain. This study suggested the lack of proper monitoring and evaluation systems that could prevent corruption in local government. Odeku (2018) conducted a qualitative literature review study that yielded similar findings, showing

that widespread corruption in the South African public sector's supply chain and procurement of products and services hinders the delivery of high-quality services to deserving citizens. This study, like many others, deduced that improving supply chain and procurement strategy compliance can lower public sector corruption.

District Development Model in South Africa

South Africa continues to face governance issues, and evidence shows that most municipalities are dysfunctional in the provision of public services (Mlambo et al. 2022). Due to a lack of political will, a lack of capacity, and corruption, the South African government has yet to achieve its developmental mandate of promoting economic and social development and reducing inequality, unemployment, and poverty (Mamokhere 2022). Despite the numerous key policy frameworks to improve governance in South Africa, such as the National Policy Development Framework, the Policy Framework for Integrated Planning, and the Medium-Term Strategic Framework, South Africa remains challenged by various socio-economic issues (Oskam et al. 2021). The Integrated Development Planning (IDP) has also failed to deliver public services efficiently and to improve the quality of life at the grassroots level (Mosala and Nxumalo 2023). These governance-related issues can be partly attributed to what President Cyril Ramaphosa referred to as “the habit of working in silos.” It was for this reason that the South African President introduced the DDM, aimed at ensuring coherent planning and implementation and improving the monitoring and oversight of the government’s programme (Ngumbela 2023).

The battle against poor service delivery in South Africa has partly been attributed to the inadequate capacity of the government to deliver on its developmental mandate. Starting from the national level down to the local level, the South African government continues to suffer from skills shortages, which inhibit service delivery and the government’s ability to address socio-economic issues (Mazzucato et al. 2021). The DDM thus presents an alternative approach to coordinating and implementing development initiatives at the district level, given the lack of capacity to do so at the local government level (Khambule 2021). While it remains largely unknown whether this model will solve South Africa’s development problems, its premise is to institute an integrated, district-based model aimed at improving service delivery while preventing budget duplication and providing support to municipalities (Mamokhere and Kgobe 2023). This model aims to promote the collaboration between various stakeholders, such as the national government, provincial government, local government, community representatives, and traditional leaders in development planning and implementation. Based on this model, it is desired that issues associated with government operating in “silos,” such as poor coordination, can be addressed (Schoeman and Chakwizira 2023). As such, the DDM focuses on bridging the gap between government and citizens, ensuring inclusive development, building state capacity, strengthening monitoring and evaluation, ensuring sustainable development, and improving oversight over budgets and projects. It should also be noted that this model focuses on 44 districts and eight metros in South

Africa as centres of service delivery, economic development, and job creation (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2023).

Although the government is positive on the prospects of DDM in improving the coherence and impact of government service delivery, some concerns have been raised regarding this new model. From the onset, the legislative framework that underpins the implementation of DDM in South Africa remains unclear. While the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, 2005 (Act 13 of 2005) makes provision on the need for collaboration between the national government, provincial governments, and local governments, the legislative basis of DDM remains unclear. Nevertheless, it is very important to locate the essence of DDM within this legislative framework, as this model speaks to intergovernmental relations in development planning and implementation (Sausi et al. 2022). Further, critics have pointed out that the DDM may undermine the autonomy of local government and its ability to respond effectively to issues at a grassroots level. While this concern may be fair, research conducted by Khambule (2021) shows that the DDM can positively improve the innovation of local municipalities in meeting local needs. Also, despite the clear goals and objectives of the DDM, this model seems to overlook the importance of stabilising governance and financial management, which remains a huge challenge in local and district municipalities in South Africa (United Nations Development Programme 2023). It is also worth mentioning that although many government authorities have accepted the DDM as an alternative approach, there are concerns that it will be difficult to implement given its complexity and technicality (Nel and Minnie 2022). These concerns stem from the incapacity evident in many municipalities in South Africa, as confirmed by several studies (see, for example, Maphumulo and Bhengu 2019). The limited capacity in local government structures presents a challenge in managing and implementing complex DDM plans. Furthermore, public participation remains a critical principle of community development and policy-making (Umoh 2022). So far, there are concerns that the DDM may not adequately incorporate community contributions (Matshaya 2023). This may lead to the irrelevance of DDM plans to local realities, with the implementation of projects not addressing the pressing community needs. This literature evidence, therefore, shows that while DDM has potential, it is not a perfect solution to South Africa's development problems.

Nevertheless, the limited current body of knowledge does suggest the potential of DDM in building a capable government. A study conducted by Ngumbela (2023) shows that this model has the potential to overcome the skills deficit problem in the public service through bringing together all spheres of government, communities, and other relevant stakeholders in collaborative planning, budgeting, and implementation of projects. Integration is central to DDM, which is primarily about moving away from "silo" development planning, budgeting, and implementation, which can strengthen governance, according to Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma (2020), cited in Nel and Minnie (2022). Additionally, it is maintained that DDM can enhance governmental and institutional power and functions, such as the ability to collaborate, for greater unity and

positive development outcomes (Khambule 2021). Through collaborative planning and investment, it is argued that DDM can solve duplication in service delivery. This could avoid a situation where, for example, houses are built in a location where services are not available or cannot be provided (Department of Cooperative Development and Traditional Affairs 2020). A “critical mass” of investment that stimulates additional private investment might be created if the DDM concentrates on strategic development programmes and projects. The DDM may improve the expansion of infrastructure to places without adequate power, water, sewage, and roads (Nel and Minnie 2022). It is further alluded that the DDM can widen the pool of financial resources and overcome the financial constraints faced by many municipalities (Mutereko and Shava 2024), which can enable the delivery of services to every community.

Discussion of Findings

Considering the numerous challenges, such as corruption and lack of administrative capacity, facing the South African government (Tshishonga 2019), it was crucial to unpack the potential of the DDM in building a capable government. This study demonstrated that the South African government has not achieved its developmental mandate, particularly in addressing poverty, unemployment, and inequality, as evident in previous studies (Mamokhere 2022; Matyana and Thusi 2023). It is also evident that South Africa continues to struggle with service delivery backlogs, evident in various municipalities, particularly in rural municipalities where citizens still lack access to basic services (Kroukamp 2017; Mlambo et al. 2022). This literature evidence suggests that the South African government faces challenges in achieving a capable state, with poor performance across all spheres of government. While challenges are evident across all spheres, this study shows that the South African local government, a sphere that is closest to the communities at a grassroots level, is subject to numerous challenges that inhibit service delivery. Based on evidence drawn from peer-reviewed studies (see, for example, Budhram and Geldenhuys 2018; Durokifa et al. 2023; Ianniello et al. 2019; Masuku and Jili 2019), the failure of local government to deliver on its developmental mandate is attributed to a combination of factors, including corruption, lack of substantive community participation, lack of capacity, and lack of resources. Thus, this evidence suggests the need to enhance the local government’s capacity to overcome these issues.

This study presents DDM as an alternative model that can lead to a capable state. Literature evidence, though limited, shows the potential of DDM to enhance the government’s capability. Through bringing together various government spheres, departments, community stakeholders, and other relevant stakeholders, this model can overcome the “silos” practice in government, which often leads to duplicated efforts and a lack of transparency (Khambule 2021; Schoeman and Chakwizira 2023). It should be noted that a lack of transparency creates opportunities for corruption, where South African government employees exploit the decision-making processes for personal gain, which undermines public trust and accountability (Fourie 2018; Mabeba 2021).

By promoting coherent planning and implementation of development, the DDM shows potential to reduce opportunities for corruption that have hampered the ability of local government to deliver services to communities for many years. Considering the massive literature suggesting the lack of capacity in local government to deliver services efficiently and sustainably (Durokifa et al. 2023; Masiya et al. 2021; Masuku and Jili 2019), the DDM is a potential solution to overcome the local government capacity gaps by fostering collaboration and integrated planning between all spheres of government, potentially leading to more effective service delivery and development outcomes.

While the DDM has raised hopes for some South African citizens who are still waiting for high-quality services from the government, evidence shows that there is still no clear legislative framework underpinning this model (Sausi et al. 2022). The legislative framework is very important in development (Borova and Dollani 2011); it provides the basis of development practice. Therefore, the lack of an appropriate legislative framework behind DDM is a cause for concern as it remains unclear how decisions will be made and implemented, particularly from a legal perspective. One of the arguments for DDM is its ability to overcome the lack of capacity in local government (Khambule 2021). However, it is unclear from the current body of knowledge how the current capacity in government will be enhanced to manage the formulation and implementation of DDM plans, which are deemed more complex than IDPs. Without adequate, highly skilled, and experienced human capital in the South African government, as is the case today (Pillay and Kikasu 2024), the notion of DDM will probably remain rhetoric. As evident in this study, public participation is essential for meaningful development planning and implementation (Enaifoghe and Adetiba 2019). With some studies (see, for example, Mamokhere and Meyer 2022) suggesting that municipalities are failing to ensure the participation of community members in IDP processes, DDM processes will likely lack substantive community participation. The inputs of stakeholders, such as traditional leaders, may not be considered in DDM processes. Without community participation, the DDM plans may not truly reflect the pressing needs and aspirations of communities, a recipe for disastrous service delivery in South Africa. Furthermore, South Africa continues to face financial crises, as was highlighted in the 2025 budget speech (Jacobs 2025). Therefore, while DDM may be a potential solution to pervasive service delivery deficits, its prospects are undermined by limited fiscal resources. So far, it is unclear how the implementation of DDM will be financed and sustained financially, given the pervasive economic crises in South Africa. Lastly, previous research has argued for a decentralised governance system and the importance of autonomous local governments in facilitating local development (Isufaj 2014). With the introduction of DDM, concerns have arisen that local municipalities may be disempowered in facilitating development at the local level.

Conclusion and Recommendations

After three decades of democracy, the South African government is still struggling to overcome the key development issues of poverty, unemployment, inequality, and

service delivery deficits. Hence, the public continues to raise the question of whether South Africa will ever become a capable, accountable, and responsive developmental state. Accordingly, South Africa's local government continues to experience problems such as corruption and maladministration, which undermine service delivery. These issues have necessitated the introduction of DDM as a cooperative governance framework aimed at building a capable, ethical, and developmental state. This study has analysed the prospects and challenges of this model, particularly concerning improving service delivery in South Africa. The study demonstrated the potential of DDM in building a capable government in South Africa, indicating that this model can promote integration in development planning, budgeting, and implementation. However, this study shows that the implementation of DDM can be hampered by the lack of an appropriate legislative framework, lack of capacity in government, lack of substantive community participation, and lack of financial resources. While this study provides key insights on DDM, its major limitation is that it relied only on secondary data. Therefore, future empirical research on this phenomenon is recommended. Based on the findings, this study recommends:

- Developing an appropriate DDM legislative framework. This is deemed crucial to inform coherent DDM plans and the appropriate implementation of DDM across South Africa.
- Clarifying the roles of various stakeholders in DDM, including the different spheres of government, community representatives, civil society stakeholders, and private sector stakeholders.
- Strengthening the institutional capacity of different spheres of government through training the current government employees and ensuring the future recruitment of highly skilled and experienced government employees who can contribute meaningfully to the formulation and implementation of DDM plans.
- Developing appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems targeting the DDM. This is crucial in improving the chances of success in the implementation of DDM plans.
- Appropriately applying participatory strategies, such as community-based participatory research, can ensure the contribution of communities in DDM plans.

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