

Multiple Cultures' Influence on Intergovernmental Relations

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ABSTRACT

Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) relates to co-operative governance or co-operation amongst the three spheres of government in the way they conduct their activities. District Municipalities are empowered by the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (2005) and have the legal obligation to coordinate IGR activities amongst the spheres of government within the district. Pertinent to these coordination activities are IGR forums that should consider issues of cooperation and coordination to achieve IGR objectives. This is strongly interrelated with the influence of culture and particularly the notion of multiple cultures embedded within IGR arrangements. In this context, for the District IGR to achieve the required level of functionality, the minimum required culture should be the one where there is a sense of shared and common values, beliefs, vision and purpose that emphasise the need for cooperation, consensus and adherence to applicable norms and standards amongst the IGR partners. Whilst cultural assessment and management may contribute in mitigating the effects of multiple cultures and improve the achievement of municipal IGR goals, the effect on the attainment of IGR objectives of ensuring co-operation by all spheres of government in the delivery of services, is of most relevance and requires further reflection. In this context, the paper brings forth the cultural aspects of IGR and examines the existence of multiple cultures that manifest themselves within the dominant culture and its influence on IGR. This is consistent with the understanding that multiple culture aspects translate into different beliefs and views by the different spheres of government on IGR, which may lead to lack of cooperation and poor coordination.

INTRODUCTION

Intergovernmental Relation (IGR) is about cooperative governance or cooperation amongst the three spheres of government in the manner in which they conduct their activities. This cooperation means that three spheres of government i.e. National, Provincial and Local should cooperate with one another in the delivery of services to the community.

In the study conducted by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (DCOG, 2012), the functionality of IGR in South Africa and KwaZulu Natal was assessed where UGU, Harry Gwala and Uthungulu district municipalities were found to be non-functional. The study concluded that IGR is non-functional in that these district municipalities have not established IGR structures; the role and mandate of IGR is not clear; policy documents were not in place; there was lack of dedicated officials to coordinate IGR activities and lack of cooperation and commitment (DCOG, 2012).

In examining the challenges affecting functionality of IGR in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) district municipal-

ities, it is believed that culture shape the organisational functionality and have a bearing on the functionality of IGR. In this article, IGR is looked at from a district municipality perspective. This is due to the legislative role of the district municipalities in coordinating IGR activities within their jurisdiction as stipulated in the IGR Framework Act of 2005 (DCOG, 2005). Although issues of culture and multiple cultures have been discussed and acknowledged in the literature of local government functionality, the link with IGR have been missing. Therefore, this articles seeks to confirm the existence and implications of culture on the IGR functionality.

IGR CHALLENGES

The problem is non-functionality of IGR at Harry Gwala, Ugu and Uthungulu district municipalities as informed by the assessment conducted by the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) in 2012. When functionality is a problem it depicts the rationale for the existence of IGR which is regarded as the ability to ensure cooperation amongst the spheres of government on the provision of services to the community.

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Figure 1 below indicates that municipalities discussed in this article are characterised by multiple cultures that manifest themselves in the dominant culture of IGR institutions or forums. In this article, reference to multiple cultures within IGR refers to the presence of the different stakeholders in the IGR forums, who come from different institutions that upholds specific cultures. Within the municipalities studied, the existence of multiple cultures opposes the required culture and affect the achievement of IGR objectives. For the IGR function to be effective, a minimum level of culture is required, the one that focus on shared

and common values, beliefs, vision and purpose, that emphasise the need for co-operation and consensus and adherence to applicable norms and standards. Whilst according to Rubin and Weinstein (1974), cultural management is necessary in order to mitigate the effects of multiple cultures and improve achievement of organisational goals, the environment in which these municipalities operates affect the attainment of the required municipal culture. The environmental issues as indicated in figure 2 includes environmental uncertainty, instability and patronage.

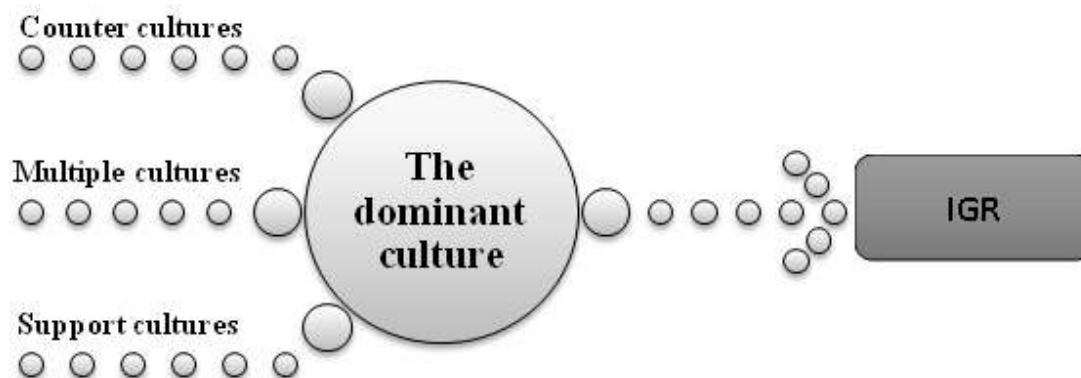


Figure 1. The organisational culture

Source: Own (2017)

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The area of non-functionality has already been explored, however this article aims at understanding the influence of culture as a contextual issue on IGR functionality within KZN district municipalities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

General Overview of IGR in South Africa

According to Wright (1988) IGR originated in the United States, during the Roosevelt's New Deal Era. The origin of IGR was however a result of the challenges posed to the different tiers of government in the coordination of their state affairs. After 1994, South Africa adopted a democratic model of cooperative governance which is enshrined in the Constitution and provides a platform for IGR and cooperative governance (Levy and Tapscott, 2001). The Constitution makes provision for a three-sphere system of government to work together, which is national, provincial and local spheres and which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated in nature.

Notwithstanding the constitutional provision, Opeskin (1998) indicated that IGR concerns itself with interactions and transactions conducted

by executives between and amongst spheres of governments in the country. Whilst IGR intends to promote and facilitate cooperative governance and decision making by ensuring that policies and activities across all spheres encourage service delivery to meet the needs of citizens in an effective way, Agranoff (2004) discovered that ineffective IGR and coordination is regarded to be a problem of capacity and management rather than of structures and procedures. Various efforts, such as the establishment of intergovernmental structures, procedures, and tool kits have been initiated by the government, but the question remains whether these efforts are sufficient to ensure that effective IGR takes place in all spheres of government (Thornhill, Malan, Odendaal, Mathebula, Van Dijk, and Mello (2002).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The role of organisational culture in IGR functionality can be explained as the ability of IGR partners to share the same beliefs and values about IGR, as well as the commitment by members to attend IGR meetings and to cooperate with each other in all IGR activities. Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003) views organisational culture as resembling a sense of shared meaning by members, that distinguish one institution from the other. This implies that in each municipality

there exists a set of beliefs and understanding about IGR, which such beliefs influence the IGR functionality. In relation to this definition, Arnold (2005) argued that organisational culture relates to distinctive norms, values, principles, beliefs and the manner of behaving that affect the distinct character of an organisation. These two definitions suggest that organisational culture distinguishes one organisation from another. Therefore, organisational culture can be regarded the same as what personality is to an individual (England, 1993).

As a good organisational culture can be best instilled by good leadership, Motilewa, Agboola and Adeniji (2015) suggests, that for managers to know organisation's culture is of required standard and results in success, alignment between the organisation's culture, its structure, goals and processes which occur as a result of internal or external pressures should be ensured, and as such dis-synchronisation between the cultural and structural components of an organisation is thought to be a harbinger of decay or revolutionary potential.

Schein (1985) further views organisational culture as "a pattern of basic assumptions that are invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration within its area of work". This description highlights that organisational culture has created assumptions, which are accepted as a way of doing things and these have a potential of being passed on to new members of an organisation or group.

Whilst the organisational culture as the concepts is regarded as being intangible, it is grounded in some characteristics that could be clearly identified. These are mentioned by Deal and Kennedy (1999) to include an understanding of the vision, mission and goals of organisation as they may be found in organisational strategic documents, and formal charters. Values that informs decision-making and operations within different levels of an organisation include things like continuous improvement, integrity and continuous learning and these should appear in organisation's public statements and policies.

A survey that took place in the 1970s reveals the complex nature of organisational culture, especially in understanding attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of individual within some organisations (Brown, 1998). The work of Deal and Kennedy (1999) serve as the foundation of the organisational culture and explains the relationship between organisation success and culture. In addition,

Wilson (2006) views culture improving the consistency of certain behaviours and commitment within an organisation. The author further indicates that improved organisational culture can motivate employees to improve performance and that of an organisation respectively. This was consistent with Didit (2013), who further indicates that employee performance can mainly be improved through increased organisational culture and commitment

Cultural analysis as suggested by Román-Velázquez (2005) is key in helping to understanding the interactions of employees and team's members with different cultures and how they work together and share knowledge with each other. As this is the case with the organisations or municipalities that participate in IGR activities, the culture shared at an IGR level is dominantly informed by sub-cultures that emanate from different organisations and leaders. According to Kotter and Heskett (1992), an organisation should be aware of the existing cultures and what is necessary to adjust to the required culture and consider some elements such as norms and standards, beliefs, values customer care and commitment. These elements are non-verbalised behaviour or unwritten and they describe how organisations behave as this informs its unique character (Brown, 1998).

Functions of Organisational Culture

The main function of organisational culture is to demonstrate the way things are done and how that give meaning to the organisation (Arnold, 2005). In the context of IGR, that will mean the manner in which IGR actors conduct themselves in relation to issues of cooperation, decision making and even attendance of IGR meetings. This was confirmed in COGTA report on IGR (2012), where it was evident that IGR gets frustrated by poor attendance, inability to take and implement decisions and lack of cooperation amongst the spheres of government. Organisational culture affects organisational behaviour in as far as work methods, interactions and personal conduct are identified and viewed within an organisation (Harrison, 1993). It is expected that a District municipality coordinate IGR, and such coordination requires efforts and cooperation from other actors. Their values and beliefs enable or disable IGR functionality. In addition to the above functions, Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003) mentioned that organisational culture differs from one organisation to another as it gives a sense of identity to members of an organisation and

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ensures commitment by individuals. Whilst the same author regards organisational culture as the glue that binds the organisation by providing preferred norms and standards for members to follow and shapes the behaviours and attitudes of employees.

Elements of Organisational Culture

Figure 2 below depicts values, assumptions and beliefs that represent behaviour expected in an organisation. Most definitions of culture recognise

the significance of cognitive components such as beliefs, assumptions and values. Morgan (1997) extends the concept to include artefacts and behaviours that provide guidance on the distinction between the visible and the invisible patterns of organisational culture. In contrast to the distinction between the visible and invisible patterns, some theorists differentiated between multiple levels. Schein (1985), as an expert in culture issues, identifies the following levels, as shown in Figure 2 below.

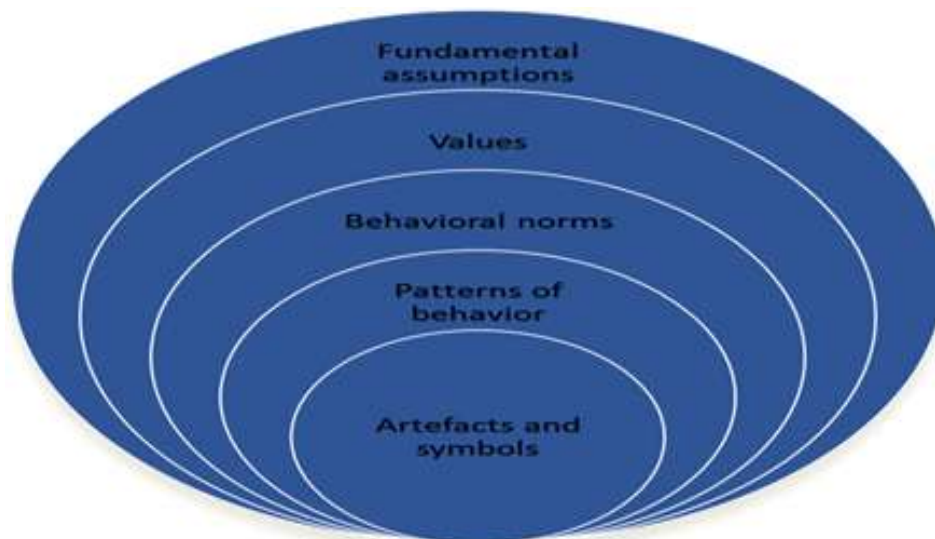


Figure2. Levels of organisational culture

Source: Schein (1985)

In Schein's view, fundamental assumptions constitute the core and most important aspect of organisational culture. Accordingly, this author offers the formal definition of organisational culture as being "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1999, p.12).

Organisational Subcultures

According to Steele (1981), when discussing organisational culture there is reference to the dominant culture; that is, the themes shared most widely by the organisation's members. However, Schein (1999) states that organisations are also comprised of subcultures located throughout its various divisions, geographic regions and occupational groups. Some subcultures enhance the dominant culture by espousing parallel assumptions, values and beliefs; others are called countercultures because they directly oppose the organisation's core values.

Schein (1999) regards subcultures and particularly countercultures as having the potential to create conflict and dissension among employees, but they also serve an important function, which is maintaining the organisation's standards of performance and ethical behaviour. Employees who hold countercultural values are an important source of surveillance and evaluation of the dominant order. They encourage constructive controversy and more creative thinking about how the organisation should interact with its environment. Weick (1995) further comments that subcultures prevent employees from blindly following one set of values and thereby help the organisation to abide by society's ethical values.

Why does culture matter?

As Schein (1990) and other management theorists have observed, organisational culture may be an abstraction, but it has powerful effects on the way organisations think and behave. Indeed, having "the right kind of culture" is a culture that is appropriate to the kind of enterprise in which an organisation is engaged and is widely acknowledged to be among the most important determinants of how effective or successful the

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organisation will be. According to Jones (1983), culture is important because it shapes what the organisation considers to be “right decisions”, what employees consider to be appropriate behaviours and how they interact with each other within the organisation, how individuals, work groups and the organisation as a whole deal with work assigned to them, the speed and efficiency with which things get done, the organisation’s capacity for and receptiveness to change and the attitudes of outside stakeholders to the organisation. In short, an organisation’s culture can be supportive of, or hinder, the implementation of new initiatives and the achievement of its overall goals (Steele, 1981).

What is involved in changing organisational culture?

An organisation’s culture comes into being over a period of time. According to Bailyn (1993), a newly formed group has no culture, and only a mature organisation has had time for a set of widely shared understandings and behaviours to take root. It follows that an established culture cannot be changed “overnight”. It has also been said that organisational culture cannot be changed directly. What can be changed are processes and behaviours. As employees are informed, trained and equipped to do things in new ways, the culture in which they are embedded changes as a matter of course.

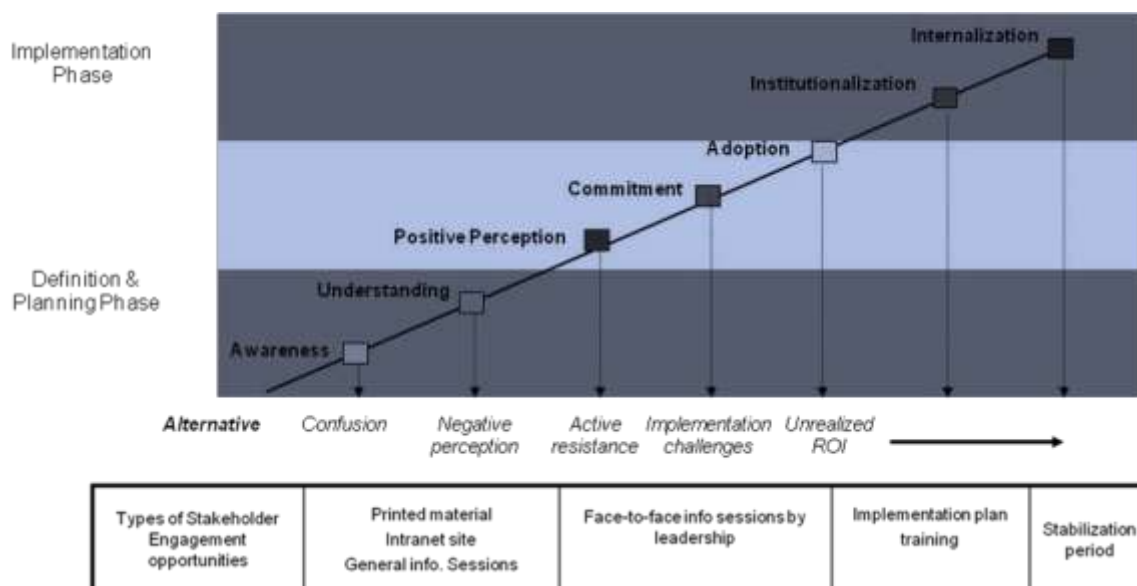


Figure 3. The proposed change implementation process

Source: Douglas (1986)

As illustrated in Figure 3, successful organisational change initiatives are usually implemented over a 3 to 5-year time span in an intensive incremental process that begins simply with awareness of the need for change and eventually leads to internalization of new patterns of thinking and doing. The most important aspect of a change implementation process as indicated in the diagram involves stakeholder engagement, information sessions, face-to-face sessions by leadership, implementation plan training and stabilization periods.

Table 3. above reflects key arguments on the culture perspective of an organisation. These are summarised in relation to the importance of culture within the organisation. The importance of the argument within the IGR context is provided for in the last chapter of this report and refers to norms, standards and values that IGR role-players bring into the context of intergovernmental

relations and how they affect the achievement of IGR objective, which is to ensure co-operation by all role players in government.

IGR WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Malan (2005) described IGR as crucial if policies are drafted or projects and programmes planned are implemented. This author further argued that through the establishment of various institutional arrangements for IGR and the successful operation of these structures, it is expected that all three spheres of government will continually strive to co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith. However, without the effective operation of IGR in South Africa, projects and programmes cannot succeed.

Pierre and Peters (2004) suggested a model of multi-level governance, features of collaborative exchanges and joint decision making between

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institutions at different levels of the political system. Pierre and Peters (2004) further argues that this type of IGR will play a more prominent role in the future as a result of what appears to be an increasing degree of institutional overlap in terms of competencies and of growing political, economic and administrative interdependencies.

In particular, the emphasis is made by Kirkby, Steytler and Jordaan (2007) on the establishment of the district IGR forums by the district Mayors in order to realise the goal of cooperative governance within the district. The forum is suggested by the mentioned author to be consisting of the district mayor and the mayors (or designated councillors) of all local municipalities in the district. These authors further suggests that the district IGR forum establishes a consultative forum to facilitate IGR between a district and its local municipalities; the forum's first role should be to discuss national and provincial actions affecting municipalities, including implementing and commenting on draft

policy and legislation; and secondly, the forum members must consult on development in the district, such as service provision, district planning and harmonising strategic and performance plans.

Edward (2008) alluded that these forums are consultative bodies designed to facilitate intergovernmental dialogue on matters of mutual interest such as, the implementation of national policy and legislation, co-ordination of development planning and the co-ordination and alignment of provincial and local strategic and performance plans. The researcher's view and understanding of IGR can be further attributed by the fact that local sphere of government is central in ensuring that IGR functions properly.

REFLECTION ON IGR AND CULTURE

Culture is understood to be a relevant dimension in an organisation which is embedded on organisational contextual dimensions with implications for IGR.

Table1. Reflection on culture

	Major sources	Major arguments
Issue (culture)	Martins and Martins (2003)	A system of shared meaning held by members, distinguishing one organisation from another.
	Deal and Kennedy (1999)	Shared understanding of organisational mission including goals, strategies and values that guides decision making
	Kotter and James (1982); Fillan and Hargreaves (1992); Wallace and Hall (1994); Schein (1999)	Multiple cultures associated with different functional groups and existence of sub-cultures. Cultural analysis is important to understand interactions of different teams. Sub-culture may not be consistent with organisational culture.
	Dimmock and Walker (2002); Roman-Velazquez (1999)	Importance of leadership in creating and managing culture. Leadership creates and changes culture, whilst management and administration act within.

Source: Own (2016)

Table 1 above reflects key arguments on contextual dimensions with attention for the culture perspective of an organisation. The key arguments are summed up and provide for the importance of culture within the organisation. The importance of the argument within the IGR context refers to norms, standards and values that IGR role players brings into the context of Intergovernmental relation and how they affect the achievement of IGR goal, which is to ensure cooperation on amongst the spheres of government.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article reflects on the primary methods of data collection used such as interviews, focus groups and document analysis in achieving the objectives and maximise validity as much as possible. The targeted population consisted of Municipal Managers, IGR Officials, and Mayors

within the identified district municipalities and the respective local municipalities. The article articulate onpurposive sampling to select the municipalities and the participants. Purposive sampling is also referred to as judgement sampling, is a non-random sampling technique where a specific informant is deliberately chosen due to his or her qualities (Amin 2005). Three focus group discussions comprised of municipal managers of each district municipality, which were selected purposively due to their role in providing technical support in Mayors IGR Forum. Documents requested include IGR Framework, IGR Protocol document, Minutes on IGR meetings, attendance registers and IGR reports. Given the aforesaid, this focused on basic interpretive qualitative approach, which according to Merriam (2002) exemplifies the

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interest in understanding how participants make meaning of the situation or phenomenon.

Table 2 below provides for measures undertaken in ensuring trustworthy of information.

Table 2. *Criterion of trustworthy as provided by the research*

Quality criterion	Possible provision used by the researcher
Transferability	Background data has been provided to establish context of study and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made
Dependability	Overlapping methods employed on data collection such as interviews, focus groups and documents analysis and an in-depth methodological description has been implemented to allow study to be repeated
Credibility	Well recognised and appropriate research methods were adopted and utilised. Development of early familiarity with culture of participating organisations through presentations to Municipal Manager's forums of the District Municipalities was done. Triangulation via use of different methods, different types of informants and different sites was conducted. Description of background, qualifications and experience of the researcher. Member checks of data collected, and interpretations or theories formed
Conformability	This involve recognition of shortcomings in study's methods and their potential effects. In-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinised

Source: *Shenton (2002)*

Table 2 above represent some provisions made in dealing with issues of validity. The above indicated criterions were approached on the basis of relevancy and applicability. Given the reflection made in table 2, it is the researcher's view that ensuring validity and reliability is necessary, hence the choice of validity tools, as discussed above.

Another consideration has been on avoiding social desirability bias, where the respondent would answer questions in a way they think will be liked or accepted. In this regard, the researcher has focused and maintained an unconditional positive regard of all responses. This includes phrasing questions to indicate that it is acceptable to answer in a way that is socially undesirable (Doudou & De Winter (2014)). A neutral stance and limited reinforcement to positive feedback that can be construed as her affiliation to the municipality and reiterated the independent status, was maintained throughout the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This article is based on the qualitative study and explores areas that are understudied within the contingency theory realm and searches for contribution to theory (Creswell, 2003). In searching for theoretical contribution, a conceptual framework played a significant role for situating this article. The conceptual framework grounded this article in the relevant knowledge basis that laid the foundation for the importance of IGR functionality and the explanation or reasons for IGR challenges. One emerging aspects of the contingency theory is its association with

organisational contextual dimensions, which are regarded as being structural or contextual. While this article is grounded on the organisational contextual issues such as goals, culture and the environment, of importance to note are the emerging issues arising from the research findings that have implications for the contingency theory. These then informed conceptual issues that have brought in ideas from outside the traditionally defined field of IGR functionality and integrate approaches or lines of investigation or theory that have not been previously connected, such as the connection between IGR functionality and culture as an organisational contextual issue.

One thing this article does is to inform the readers about what is going on in the world of IGR and transforms the way we look at things and the way we talk about them. That is why Miles and Huberman (1994) felt strongly that no one can contribute to theory if that person doesn't have something to say about what is going on "out there" in real life. In mapping out this new conceptual landscape, the researcher recognised that over time, her ideas will be refined. The following factors contained in (Dubin, 1978) were considered by the researcher in qualifying the expansion of the contingency theory. These are:

- The factors that should be considered logically as part of the explanation of the social phenomena of interest;
- The criteria used for judging the extent to which the researcher has included the right factors;
- All factors included; and

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- Whether some factors should be deleted because they add little additional value to the understanding of IGR.

Contingency variables relate to factors affecting leadership and organisational effectiveness and guide functionality within the organisation (Blake and Mouton, 1982).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation relates to the research to be conducted as to whether IGR should be led by executives or politicians. IGR is viewed in the legislation as a political function; hence more emphasis is placed on politicians (Mayors) to drive IGR activities and meetings. However, IGR concerns itself with cooperation in relation to administrative activities that are undertaken by functionality or non-functionality of IGR. Policy review for the effectiveness of IGR since IGR policy framework emphasises the role of Mayors in leading IGR activities. The municipal managers are required to give technical officials and it is those activities that lead to either support in the form of the District Municipal Managers' forum. In the same policy framework IGR and cooperation is not clearly articulated as to how other partners should participate and cooperate with each other.

Lastly, the cost of political instability and patronage on policy implementation and organisational effectiveness cannot be over-emphasised. A study in this area will shed light especially to those in political power to understand the possible consequences or implications of political instability

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this article was to understand the challenges of IGR in three district municipalities, i.e. Ugu, Harry Gwala and Uthungulu. IGR functionality was explained in terms of culture as an organizational contextual issue affecting the three district municipalities. To this end, key arguments were identified and include the effect of culture on IGR functionality. This article has highlighted the need, on the part of these municipalities, to recognise the impact multiple culture on public policy making and implementation. The conclusion of organisational culture is a clear understanding on the expanded components of the contingency theory, in relation to other concepts, to the plane on which they are defined, and to the problem they resolve – that of the functionality of IGR within Ugu, Harry Gwala and Uthungulu District municipalities.

The main overarching argument relates to municipal culture and bringing to light the

existence of multiple cultures that manifest themselves within the dominant culture of the municipalities studied. Data collected on the effects of culture on IGR provide evidence that multiple cultures exist within these three municipalities' IGR arrangements, which oppose the required culture and affect the achievement of IGR objectives. For the municipalities to achieve this level of functionality, the minimum required culture is the one where there is a sense of shared and common values, beliefs, vision and purpose that emphasise the need for co-operation and consensus and adherence to applicable norms and standards. This multiple culture aspect translates into different beliefs and views by the different spheres of government on IGR, which ultimately lead to lack of co-operation and consensus. However, cultural assessment and management is key to mitigate the risks associated with IGR functionality.

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