ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER CARE UNIT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

BY

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DECLARATION

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In accordance with Rule G4.6.3, I hereby declare that the above treatise/dissertation is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University or for another qualification.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the support that I received from my Supervisor, Professor RS Masango, for the motivation, professional guidance, experience shared and supervision he has given me during the course of writing this dissertation. Without your patience and insistence on quality work, my achievement would not have been possible.

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- My husband Chusta for your love, prayers, patience and support as I pursue my dreams
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- Assistance from friends: Mastandi wam Dollz, sana lwam Zandie, my skat Dru, oobhuti bam Mzukisi Ndara and Mxolisi Jack and colleagues Sakie and Dr Lombo.
- All participants in this study.

Yanga iNkosi uYesu inganandisela, Nangamso!!
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother, my friend, my supporter Masithathu Ncediswa Ncesh Mkutukana, ndiyabulela ngako konke sthandwa.
ABSTRACT

The importance and need for customer care is recognized in both the public and private sector. Policy documents such as *Batho Pele* (White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery 1997) have captured this. Hence citizens should be treated as customers. Each of the eight *Batho Pele* principles reinforces and encourages the perception of the end-users of public services as customers, rather than simply as citizens (*Batho Pele* Handbook, 1997:26).

The Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education has experienced challenges which include the malfunctioning of the school nutrition programme, unpaid service providers and unpaid benefits to its employees. These challenges highlight the need for customer care in the provision of these services.

This study evaluated the role of the Customer Care Unit in the Department of Basic Education in the Eastern Cape. Interviews and complaints data base were used in the data collection process. The study found that factors influencing the functioning of the Customer Care Unit include, among others, limited collaboration between the Customer Care Unit and the Head Office of the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education; limited awareness of the existence of the Customer Care Unit; and a shortage of staff and financial resources. The study recommends that Management should support the Unit by, among others, appointing and training adequate staff, raising awareness regarding the Unit and providing financial, technological and physical resources for the Unit.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Investigating the role of Customer Care unit in the Department of Education has been chosen as the topic of this study. This chapter presents an introduction and orientation of the study entitled Role of the Customer Care unit at the Department of Education in the Province of the Eastern Cape. It gives a background and motivation to the study. The statement of the problem, research questions and the research objectives are also outlined. Ethical considerations which were taken into account in undertaking this study are also presented and the outline of chapters is also presented.

1.2 Background

There is concern about the role of Customer Care in the Department of Education and its contribution to the culture of teaching and learning, this is evident from the number of complaints received by both this unit and the Office of the Superintendent-General.

Customer Care, a unit under the Communications and Customer Care Services Directorate, was established and approved in terms of the Organizational Design for the Eastern Cape Department of Education, with effect from 26 January 2006. The first employee was appointed to this unit in 2006, and the rest were appointed on 01 May 2008.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDE) Head Office has five branches: the Office of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education, Office of the Superintendent General, Planning Branch, Operations Branch and the Corporate Services Branch. Communications and Customer Care Services is one of the four (4) directorates under the Chief Directorate: Statutory Advisory and Protocol Services, which reports to the Office of the
Superintendent General with a dotted line to the Office of the MEC for Education (see Appendix 1 for an Organizational Structure).

Having worked in the Office of the Director - Communications and Customer Care Services Directorate since 2008, the researcher has been involved in forums aimed at improving communication within the department and with external customers. The researcher has observed with concern the number of unresolved complaints received by the unit, most of which could have been avoided and resolved earlier and easier at the first point of contact.

This situation and environment is discouraging employees in this unit, since it creates an impression that they cannot solve most of the cases they receive and this has a negative impact in the image of the unit. The performance of employees is measured according to the number of complaints resolved and one of the service standards is that complaints must be responded to within seven days of receipt and resolved within thirty days, and this is not happening. Hence the increase in the number of complaints is perceived as a product of poor performance.

This research is also informed by problems expressed by employees, the public and the media over the past five years, examples being outstanding payment for suppliers, non-payment of leave gratuity, late salary payments and other benefits such as pension and performance bonuses due to employees. The fact that the Cabinet directed that an intervention in terms of Section 100 (1) of the Constitution be applied on the Department, with effect from 02 March 2011, also is related to this study as one of the major intervention areas had to do with addressing the outstanding payment of suppliers of the department, scholar transport and school nutrition issue. Chapter 5, section 100 (1) of the Constitution of Republic of South Africa provides that:
When a province cannot or does not fulfill an executive obligation in terms of the Constitution or legislation, the national executive may intervene by taking any appropriate steps to ensure fulfillment of that obligation, including –

(a) issuing a directive to the provincial executive, describing the extent of the failure to fulfill its obligations and stating any steps required to meet its obligations; and

(b) assuming responsibility for the relevant obligation in that province to the extent necessary to –

(i) maintain essential national standards or meet established minimum standards for the rendering of a service…

(ii) prevent that province from taking reasonable action that is prejudicial to the interests of another province or to the country as a whole.

This was announced by the Minister of Basic Education in a media statement issued on 03 March 2011 (www.ecdoe.gov.za). The effectiveness of the Customer Care unit will contribute towards ensuring that the core business of the Department of Education, which is teaching and learning is achieved.

Customer Care is about satisfying customers’ needs and exceeding their expectations, Griffiths, (2006) argues that there are three secrets to satisfying your customers; take time to find out what your customers expect from you, always meet these expectations and always try to exceed these expectations. The customers of the ECDE that the Customer Care unit deals with are internal customers (employees who have not received their benefits, educators and learners who seek specific services for their schools), external customers (individuals who have not received quality service within the Department of Education, parents whose children are not admitted at schools), also the MEC for Education, Office of the Premier, the Presidential Hotline.
Customers are commonly defined as those people who can choose to select a company’s product or to engage a service, choose to select the product or service at all. There are two problems with this approach in the public sector. First, many of the services provided in the public sector, such as tax collection, are not optional. Second, it is often difficult to determine who should be considered the actual recipient of services (Immordino, 2010:67). Public employees usually do not regard people who have no choice of service as customers. In case of the Department of Education, especially in the Eastern Cape, most people in the rural areas have no choice but depend on the Department to deliver teaching and learning, also employees of the Department will only receive their benefits from the Department, hence they need to be well taken care of.

The purpose of Customer Care as outlined in the Provincial Customer Care Policy Handbook includes, a responsibility to communicate, consult and cooperate with customers and stakeholders, to establish what they need, provide a wide choice fitting to the services required; reminding all public servants to interact with customers, business partners and citizens in a courteous, professional manner, respond to their identified needs and integrate the needs into program planning and implementation.

There are various skills that are required to communicate effectively with customers, the Quality Q concept makes one understand how to become more quality aware: Question; Understand; Action; Listen; Interact; Training; You; Question (Badler, 2004:59). Cook (2008: 194) outlines the skills training in customer care as including, listening and questioning skills; assertive communication; dealing with difficult customers; written communication skills; teamwork; complaint handling; managing pressure and stress; and problem-solving in teams. The researcher will also look into the skills and capabilities of the Customer Care officers.

It is important that there is a back office which would be offering support services to the frontline officers in dealing with queries and complaints. An example where the back office was used effectively is highlighted by Hadfield (2006) ‘the council moved its back-office functions –
finance, human resources, IT and procurement – to the Customer Care unit’. The Customer Care unit has to work with other units such as Supply Chain, Human Resources, Infrastructure, Salary Payments, Scholar Transport, School Nutrition and Examinations; and the back office should be made up officials from these units as most complaints and queries are related to these units.

By doing this research, the researcher hopes to clarify the role and importance of Customer Care, be better equipped to support the Customer Care unit to achieve its objectives, find ways of dealing with the backlog of complaints and encourage a culture where the customer comes first at all times.

1.3 Research Problem

The Customer Care Unit of the Department of Education in the Province of the Eastern Cape has a backlog of cases dating back to 2006. This shows that it is experiencing difficulties in responding and addressing complaints promptly, and to respond to enquiries from the Office of the Premier of the Province and the Presidential Hotline.

The cases that the Department is faced with among others are pertaining to School Infrastructure, Suppliers not paid, Scholar Transport, School Nutrition, Employee benefits not paid, all of these programmes are mainly coordinated from the Head Office.

The research problem to be addressed in this study is: Is the Customer Care Unit of the Department of Education able to function well within its current context such that it can play a meaningful role in addressing the complaints and concerns referred to it?

1.4 Aim of the study

The main aim of this research is to evaluate the role of Customer Care Unit in order to find out if it meets the purpose and objectives for which it was established, and identify the challenges facing this Unit and propose solutions for such challenges.
1.5 Objectives of the study

To identify and analyze factors affecting the functioning of the Customer Care unit.
To determine if stakeholders are aware of the role of Customer Care unit.
To find out the extent to which the functioning of the Customer Care unit is affected by its interaction with the Head Office of the ECDE.
To find out the challenges faced by the employees of the Customer Care unit with regard to the Unit’s objectives.

1.6 Literature Review

A literature review is vital, as it establishes links between the existing body of knowledge and the research problem under investigation (McMillan and Schumbacher, 2010:73. Mouton (2001:87) maintains that when doing research on a specific topic, “the researcher wants to learn from other scholars what evidence they have found empirically, what instruments they have used and to what effect”.

McMillan and Schumbacher (2010: 73) continue to identify the purposes of a literature review as follows:

- It refines the research problem
- It establishes a theoretical framework
- It develops the significance of a study
- It identifies methodological limitations
- It identifies any contradictory findings

Punch (2009: 95) states that a literature review is a systematic method of identifying, evaluating and synthesizing previous research relating to the research question. The researcher has done a literature review to check opinions expressed by various authors about performance management and service delivery. A few of the relevant local and international publication have been consulted in order to present a coherent background to this research.
The researcher will analyze literature looking at the following:

- What is Customer Care
- When was the concept Customer Care adopted by the public sector
- Structural Organization
- Methodologies and models used in organizing and restructuring
- Legislative framework dealing with Customer Care

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Customer Care in the public service in South Africa is guided by the:


Chapter 2 of The Constitution, the supreme law in the country, highlights numerous requirements, including, citizens have the right of access to any information held by the state, to improve their quality of life; access to equitable services without discrimination; be consulted to encourage meaningful participation; that their needs be attended to in a justly manner.

1.7.2 White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service, 1997

(a) *Batho Pele* is a deliberate service delivery strategy to instill a culture of accountability and caring by public servants. Through this strategy public servants must become service orientated, strive for service excellence and commit to continuous service delivery improvement.

(b) The White Paper sent a strong message of government’s commitment to a citizen-centered approach to service delivery, anchored by eight *Batho Pele* principles:

- Consultation
- service standards
- access
- courtesy
- information
- openness and transparency
• redress
• value for money

1.7.3 Batho Pele Handbook
This handbook provides a service delivery that ensures that citizens are consulted about the choice, level and quality of public services at their disposal; that public services are provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money; that citizens have a right to be treated with courtesy and consideration; that when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.

1.7.4 Inter-Governmental Relations Framework Act, 2005
The Act places emphasis on intergovernmental relations by creating awareness on the interdependent and interrelated relationships that exist between organs of state with the view of promoting cooperative governance. Government entities are encouraged to work together to provide citizens with a comprehensive package of services.

To be customer-centric, an organization must literally organize around the customer (Galbraith, 2005:3). Customer Care is also affected by factors such as, organizational structure and culture, time, processes, systems, which will also be looked at in this study. The researcher is of the view that should the whole department adopt a culture of Batho Pele (putting people first), the Customer Care unit will be able to achieve its objectives and there will be no backlog of complaints.

1.8 Research Methodology
Merriam (1998 as cited in Ary, et al., 2006, p.483) says there are “four categories of documents and these include public records, personal records, and physical material and researcher-generated documents”. In this study, public records such as Strategic Plan of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, National and Provincial Customer Care and Batho Pele documents, complaints database, operational plan, job descriptions, and work plans will be used.
The data will be used as the first baseline analysis for the research to gain an initial picture of how the Customer Care unit is supposed to function. The data will also be used to understand and establish the core objectives of the ECDE. This initial analysis will serve to frame the main part of the research and shape questions to be posed in the interviews.

The researcher will also use a qualitative approach. This approach is used because the researcher would like to get the views of the employees and managers who deal directly with Customer complaints. Opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals are important in the qualitative approach. In this study, the researcher will adopt Cohen’s (2000) non-positivist approach, thus use naturalistic, qualitative and interpretative approaches in the study. Finch (1986: 158) sees a broad role for qualitative policy evaluation, ‘to describe and understand the real effects of policies, to compare the assumptions upon which policies are based with social experience, and to assist in a considered assessment of their viability and appropriateness.’ More details with regard to the methodology employed in undertaking this study are presented in chapter 3.

1.9 Clarification of Terms and Concepts

In this study, the researcher will work with the following key concepts, which are defined here in order to clear up any possible ambiguities and obscurities

1.9.1 Batho Pele: Batho Pele, a Sesotho translation for ‘People First’, is an initiative to get public servants to be service orientated, to strive for excellence in service delivery and to commit to continuous service delivery improvement. It is a simple and transparent mechanism, which allows citizens to hold public servants accountable for the level of services they deliver.

1.9.2 Qualitative approach: concerned with describing meaning, rather than with drawing statistical inferences

1.9.3 Customer Care means:

- Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and friendly way. It is a commitment to continually strive to improve services by ensuring good communication and a positive attitude towards customers.
- Treating people with dignity, respect and courtesy
• Offering choices where possible for customers
• Giving information about what is available and providing an explanation when a service is not available

1.9.4 Customers: in this context are all the people the Departmental officials come into contact with, anyone making use of the Department’s resources or services. These may be parents, educators, learners, employees of the department.

1.9.5 Customer Service: implies delivering a professional service, providing access to quality information, providing services that are timely, cost effective and useful, for the Department’s core objectives.

1.10 Ethical Consideration

Strydom (1998:24) describes ethics as a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students. He further mentions, among others, ethical issues to consider when conducting a research (Strydom (1998: 25):

• Harm to experimental subjects and or respondents: the responsibility to protect respondents against harm reaches further than mere efforts to repair, or attempt to minimize, such harm afterwards.

• Informed consent: obtaining informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures which will be followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed, and the credibility of the researcher be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives.

• Deception of subjects and/or respondents: no form of deception should ever be inflicted on respondents. If it happens inadvertently, it must be rectified immediately or during the restoration interview.
Violation of privacy: the right to privacy is the individual's right to decide when, where, to whom, and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs, and behavior will be revealed. The more sensitive the information or the more concealed the manner in which the information was gathered, the greater the responsibility of the researcher and all concerned to treat the information as extremely confidential.

The researcher, being fully aware of the importance of adhering to ethical codes, ensured that the rights of the respondents are not compromised. Approval to conduct this research was obtained from the Ethics Committee at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The permission of the Head of Department of the ECDE was sought and granted prior to the conduct of the survey. All participants were fully informed about the objective of the study and individual permission was sought prior the interviews. Correct information was given to the respondents throughout the study. The welfare, human rights right to privacy and confidentiality was assured and adhered to throughout the study. The respondents were made aware that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any point of the investigation.

1.11 Overview of Chapters

This study will focus on the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation of the study**
  This chapter deals with the introduction of the study. It also addresses the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, as well as highlighting the importance of this study and its intended objectives. Terms and concepts relevant to the study were also clarified.

- **Chapter 2: Literature Review**
  This chapter focuses on literature study pertaining to customer care. It discusses concepts and aspects which are pertinent to Customer Care.
• **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**
  Research Methodology, data gathering and interpretation - This chapter outlines the road map of how the study has been carried out. It contains the research design, population of the study, sampling method, how data was collected and analysed.

• **Chapter 4: Research Analysis**
  Findings after the necessary data has been gathered and analysed are presented in this chapter.

• **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**
  Conclusion and recommendations are highlighted in this chapter.
CHAPTER 2

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces Customer Care as a concept that has recently received increased emphasis not only in the private sector but also in the public sector. Organizations have become a lot more concerned about the need to satisfy their customers than it was in the past. The organization need to understand that all customers whether from within the organisation (its employees, stakeholders and management) or those who come from outside the organisation for products and services are equally important. Management has to deal with staff as its prime customers. To be discussed in this chapter is the purpose of Customer Care, Customer Care in the private and the public sector, prerequisites for Customer Care, the role played by Customer Care in an organization, and an elaboration on the statutory and regulatory framework for Customer Care in South Africa.

2.2 Purpose of Customer Care

The main purpose of Customer Care is ensure that customers' needs regarding the products and services the organisation offers, are met to the satisfaction of the customers. To satisfy someone one has to know what the person really wants. Laurie Brown (2009:1) in his article titled “What your customers really want” addressed this question and came up with the following seven qualities of Customer Care:

- Accessibility – which includes language of communication, location, ample parking, website that is clear and easy to navigate, telephone systems, response time to emails. Customers need to know that the organization is easily contactable and its products and services readily available.
- Availability – “Is the organization there when its customers need it?” Today customers need information that is readily available, and one has to ensure that they get what they want when they want it.
• **Affability** - Making a point of warmly greeting customers on the phone or in person can have an amazing impact on the success of the organization. Everyone (from the janitor to the Chief Executive Officer) should greet customers warmly. Affability is everyone’s responsibility. This will help ensure that customers get the treatment they deserve.

• **Agreeability** – it is better to be creative and find a way around the issue in question, than giving a customer a “No” answer. The organization must be seen to be doing everything possible to accommodate the customer and that prove that it cares about their best interests.

• **Accountability** – deals with taking ownership of customer's needs and issues. Let the customers know that the organization will do what it takes to make them happy. If there is a problem, even if it was not the fault of the organization, the organization must be the one who resolves it. When other people need to be involved, the organization or its representative should still follow-up to ensure that the problem was successfully resolved.

• **Adaptability** - Customers' desires are constantly changing and the organization must keep up with the changes. Adaptability is essential. It must be the initiative of the organization to survey its customers, ask them about their experience doing business with the organization, their likes and dislikes. More than keeping up, the organization must ensure that it exceeds its customers’ expectations. If the organization always provides something exceptional, the customers will grow to expect it, and it ceases to be exceptional. When exceptional becomes the norm, the organization needs to figure out new ways to surprise and delight its customers.

• **Ability** - It might seem strange that ability comes last on the list, but if all the things described above are done successfully, customers will be far more willing to accept that the organization is not perfect but continually strives for improvement. Customers are becoming more and more knowledgeable. The Internet has made it easy for them to gain expertise. The organization needs to do more research, find out what others are saying about its products and service, learn about its competition and ensure that it is an expert on its products and services. Only then it can truly set itself apart from the competition.

The discussion above indicates that the organization must ensure that everything from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation, is customer centered.
In its Customer Care Policy, The Office of the Premier of Eastern Cape (2008: 3) emphasizes that the purpose of Customer Care is to:

- Promote a customer service culture by enforcing customer service standards and performance targets
- Remind all public servants to:
  - Interact with customers, business partners, and citizens in a courteous, professional manner, respond to their identified needs;
  - Integrate the needs into program planning and implementation
- To raise awareness on the need to foster a culture that encourages and rewards service excellence
- Establish a framework for complying with applicable legislation

The underlying values for Customer Care are:

- Accountability to the citizens, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- Excellence to the Standards of Performance and Professionalism
- Equity and redress

Masithela, (2008:6) identified the following relating to the purpose of Customer Care in the public sector:

- Bringing government close to the people
- Interacting with beneficiaries to enhance ownership of government programmes
- Getting guaranteed feedback about public service
- Front office that can make or break the government of the day
- Exceeding customer’s expectations
- Chapter of the Constitution which gives a clear mandate of how public service should be

It is clear from the above mentioned points that courtesy, accountability, going beyond the call of duty to ensure that one exceeds customer expectations, professionalism and working within the boundaries of legislation are important factors in addressing the purpose of Customer Care which is “to satisfy customers”.
The private sector has led the way in acknowledging the importance of the customer and the manner in which customers should be treated. They deliver products and services in order to earn a profit and if the service/product does not satisfy the customer, the organization will not survive. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, organizations with good Customer Care have increased their profitability and that an improved image and enhanced reputation will lead to greater profit (Cook, 2008:2).

The customer is king, always right and is treated with all courtesy in the private sector, more so than it is in the public sector. In the private sector, they understand that without the customer, there is no business as a result of this, products and services are designed to suit the customer and are supplied at the customer’s convenience. Products and services are continuously improved to make them more appealing to the customer.

An example in this case will be the First National Bank’s “How can I help you” marketing statement. This statement suggests to the customer that the organization exists only to help the customer and this makes the customer feel that the focus is on them. The trend has been for organizations to move from being product-focused to being customer-focused (Cook, 2008:3).

The private sector is highly competitive. As a result, when a customer is not satisfied with the product or service rendered by Company A, it is easy to change to Company B, hence it is important to treat each customer as the only customer. As customers begin to experience a better service their expectations rise (Cook, 2008: 9).

Customer Care in the private sector is taken so seriously that if an employee is losing customers, and in turn is not reaching their targets in terms of profit, they stand a chance of losing their job.
2.4 Customer Care in the Public Sector

The Public Sector generally includes all institutions and organizations which:

- operate within the three branches of government (that is, the legislature, often referred to as parliament; the judiciary represented by the system of courts of law; and the executive which implements the government’s policies)
- are engaged in the implementation of government policy and the administration of laws within the three spheres of government
- are ultimately accountable and responsible to a political authority, for example cabinet or parliament.

The public sector therefore includes all national state departments and provincial administrations, public enterprises, municipalities, institutions of higher learning, research agencies and a number of control and regulatory institutions which fall within the different branches and spheres of government (Davids, Theron, Maphunye, 2009:53)

The concept of Customer Care in the public sector in South Africa received momentum in the late 1990s, during the term of office of the former President Thabo Mbeki. On several occasions, both before and after the general elections, President Jacob Zuma has stated that: “We need public servants who will always uphold the interests of the people they are employed to serve … we want to build an administration that knows where people live, which knows what they think, and which acts fast, efficiently and effectively on the issues they raise.” The President also asked: “… how will we make the Public Service more caring, responsible, effective and interactive?” (Government Communications Information Systems, 2011: 38)

The need to find more effective ways of working and serving the public has been recognized throughout government and is captured in policy documents such as Batho Pele (White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery 1997). Citizens, receiving public services should be treated as customers as they are the reason why the public service exists. Each of the eight Batho Pele principles reinforces and encourages the perception of the end-users of public services as customers, rather than simply as citizens (Batho Pele Handbook, p26).
Batho Pele principles identified the values and norms that must serve as permanent ideals that influence and shape the general nature of public servants’ behavior as follows:

- We belong
- We care
- We serve

Bvuma and Russel (2008:5) indicate that the main proponents in Customer Care in the Public Sector are the Department of Public Service and Administration, Executing authorities, Heads of Departments and the Public Service Commission.

All departments were required to change their culture and adopt Batho Pele as a new way of doing things. For the above norms and values to have an impact they must form an integral part of any service-delivery operations, strategic planning and implementation strategies. This meant that government departments needed to be aware of the current culture, behavior, attitudes and values of their institutions and then to prepare their employees for the Batho Pele culture of responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to the public.

We belong – Citizens, who feel pleased, definitely develop a spirit of patriotism towards the country and will also feel the sense of belonging. Furthermore, this belief also:
• encourages a spirit, culture and practice of collaboration, teamwork and collegiality among all public servants, thereby fostering effective intergovernmental relationships;
• builds a learning Public Service, and
• fosters partnerships with the recipients and beneficiaries of public services, thus ensuring that the public service is responsive to the people’s needs in line with the notion of ‘putting people first’.

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We care – It is expected that the public servants be courteous when providing their services to the public by listening to their problems, apologizing when necessary and serving people with a smile. Public servants are expected to respect all citizens, irrespective of background, gender, race, or religion.

We serve – Public servants are expected to establish service standards, produce information, seek service delivery solutions and perform beyond citizens’ expectations. Furthermore, public servants are expected to deliver quality services and they must make citizens look forward to receiving world-class integrated service delivery (Bvuma & Russel, 2008:6).

The eThekwini Municipality Customer Care Policy states that, whilst Customer Service can be defined as a set of behaviors that a business undertakes in its interaction with its customers, Customer Care is the phrase that is used to describe the taking care of our customers in a positive manner. Good Customer Care refers to:

- Treating people with courtesy, dignity and respect.
- Treating people in the manner they would like to be treated.
- Treating people in their language of preference in accordance with the eThekwini Municipality’s Language Policy.
- Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and helpful manner.
- Giving people the information they need and providing an explanation if the service is not available.
- Keeping the customer informed of progress in addressing their complaints/requests or enquiries.
- Customer Care standards are important to ensure that all customers, whether they are residents or visitors to our Municipality will receive the same consistently high standards of Customer Care and, that Customer Care and customer service are essential to the planning and delivery of all Council services.
- That staff will always be reminded of their responsibility to put the Customer First and what this means in practical terms.
- That the Council will eliminate wastage by providing services “Right the First time”.

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In order to achieve this it is important to set clear goals on putting the “Customers First.” It is important to define what Service Excellence in Customer Care is so that the eThekwini staff will know what standards they must maintain. In addition, customers are to be informed of what standards of Customer Care they can expect whenever they engage with any staff of the eThekwini Municipality. This Customer First principle will be adhered to whenever any policies and procedures are being considered (eThekwini Customer Care Policy, p4).

2.5 Prerequisites for Customer Care

The culture of Customer Care therefore leans towards discovering new ways of working, encouraging new attitudes and cultures, developing new skills and competencies and to creating new institutions (Van der Waldt, 2004:145).

For Customer Care to be effective the following prerequisites must be attended to:

2.5.1 Strategic Planning

Rue and Holland as quoted by (Nandakumar, Ghobadian, O’Regan, 2010:907) state that the strategy of an organization describes the way it will pursue its goals given the threats and opportunities in the environment and its resources and capabilities. Each department must develop a strategic plan that is aligned to the department’s mandate and the Provincial and National priorities.

Strategic planning, an essential first step in the development of a results-based accountability system, is defined as the process of addressing the following questions: Where are we?, What do we have to work with?; Where do we want to be?; and How do we get there? (www.worldbank.org)

Strategic Plans must be translated to operational plans and to individual work plans so that everyone contributes to ensure that the objectives planned for are achieved. Customer care should be incorporated as one of the priorities of the department and be captured in its strategic goals and objectives.
2.5.2 Organizational Structure

Organizing consists of grouping similar functions together and allocating these groups of functions to different organizations and workers in such a way that everything done by the workers will be aimed at achieving an objective. People (or functionaries, as they are known in the public sector) must be arranged in such a manner that they will cooperate willingly with each other to achieve an objective (Du Plessis & Lotter, 2010:27). Each organizational unit is created to carry out directives of political office bearers and to provide services of the highest possible standard (Du Plessis & Lotter, 2010:28).

According to the classification theory, institutions are grouped into four main categories:

- Similarity of functions or objectives
- Geographical area in which certain services are rendered
- Products and services rendered
- Particular clients or population groups (Du Plessis & Lotter, 2010: 29)

Some of the questions to be asked in terms of the organizational structure and Customer Care as identified by Immordino (2010: 182) are:

- How is the organization organized?
- What is the management structure?
- Are there other levels of government to which the organization and Customer Care unit report to?
- Does the organization and the Customer Care Unit report to any other level of Government?
- Where is the organization located?
- Where is the Customer Care office located?
- At what level managerial is the manager of the Customer Care unit?

Answers to these questions will indicate if the organization is prioritizing its customers or its products and services. For example, if the Customer Care office reports directly and receives support from the Head of Department or the highest authority in the organization’s hierarchy,
this may be interpreted as the organization being serious and committed about customer services whereas if it is merely a unit which reports to a sub-directorate that is insignificant its impact will not be felt.

2.5.3 Human Resources

Organizational structure alone is not enough, there needs to be warm bodies who will undertake the activities of Customer Care. The approved structure needs to be funded, systems and people recruited and appointed to the posts. This placement needs to be in line with the strategic objectives of the organization. People with the right skills must be recruited, encouraged to apply, appointed to the posts, those that are already within the department must be capacitated to ensure that the objectives are met.

Taking good care of frontline personnel should be on the top of the list of management's concern (Business Horizons, 2009: 279) The managers concerned must ensure that these employees are well taken care of within the parameters of the law of course. Their rights must be protected their needs met as they are also customers of the department. Customer Care officers are the face of the department; they are the ambassadors of the department. All care should be taken by the employer to ensure that they remain positive and encouraged to speak for the department and support must be given in terms of resources to ensure that they are able to perform their functions with the least amount of difficulty. Continuous training must be provided and they must be updated on all aspects around the changes being made and implemented and decisions taken by management. This will equip them and enable them to respond to any queries that may come their way.

2.5.4 Good Governance

Simply put, governance means the process of decision-making and processes by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Since governance is the process of decision-making and the processes by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the
The structure of governance indicates that it consists of several interrelated social systems: government, administrative, political and economic systems (Van der Waldt, 2004:4).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) stipulates that public administration should adhere to a number of principles, including:

- a high standard of professional ethics being promoted and maintained,
- services being provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias,
- resources being utilized efficiently, economically and effectively,
- people’s needs being responded to,
- the public being encouraged to participate in policy-making, and
- being accountable, transparent and development-oriented.

2.5.4.1 Characteristics of good governance

- Participation by citizens is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point on that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision-making. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand, and an organized civil society on the other hand.

- Rule of law: good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.

- Transparency: means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.

- Responsiveness: good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.
• Consensus oriented: there are several actors and as many viewpoints in a given society. Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable Customer Care service; this can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society.

• Equity and inclusiveness: a society’s well-being depends on ensuring that all members feel they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, and particularly the most vulnerable, to have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being. A key responsibility of Government is to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are equitably distributed across society. Taxation and expenditure measures are prominent instruments for this purpose.

• Effectiveness and efficiency: good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

• Accountability: is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Who is accountable to who varies and depends on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution.

In general an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law (Van der Waldt 2004:11).

Good governance is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality (Van der Waldt 2004: 12), but every public official must do their part in ensuring that there is a balance. The eight Batho Pele principles should also serve as a basis for good governance.
The Public Service Commission’s role is to promote the basic values and principles set out in the Constitution. The Commission has changed from an executive policy-making and implementing institution to an independent and impartial advisory and monitoring body with responsibilities for promoting good governance in public administration (Van der Waldt 2004:10).

2.5.5 Organizational Culture

According to Douglas (1985: xxiii) as quoted by Taher, culture is not a static ‘thing’ but something which everyone is constantly creating, affirming and expressing. She writes about, "…the admonitions, excuses, and moral judgments by which the people mutually coerce one another into conformity." Organization culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations around values, meanings and proprieties amongst the members of that organization and with its environment Taher (2005:83).

Organizational culture is a strong glue holding the organization’s people together (Nhlonipho, 2007:20). Aspects dealing with organizational culture include, telephone answering guidance, reception and staff behaviors, customer centricity, one-stop shop, seamless communication and Customer Care integrated processes, after sales service/back office, reputation and reliable service delivery (Manana, 2007:11).

The culture of the organization is easily discernable from the way in which the telephone is answered, the way employees of the organization conduct themselves when dealing with customers, and manner in which they value their customers.

2.5.6 Quality Customer Service

Quality answers the question, “Are the services and products of quality being provided in such a way that they can last for a suitable period of time so that they do not have to be re-supplied at additional cost?” There has been growing concern about quality issues in service organizations.
The International Organization for Standardization ISO 9000: 2005 document introduces eight quality management principles on which the quality management system standards are based. These principles can be used by senior management as a framework to guide their organizations towards improved performance. In addition, it provides examples of the benefits derived from their use and of actions that managers typically take in applying the principles to improve their organizations’ performance.

The eight principles are:

- **Customer focus** – organizations must understand current and future customer needs, meet customer requirements and strive to exceed customer expectations.
- **Leadership** – establish unity of purpose and direction of the organization. They should create and maintain the internal environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organization’s objectives.
- **Involvement of people** – people at all levels is the essence of an organization and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organization’s benefits.
- **Process approach** – a desired result is achieved more efficiently when activities and related resources are managed as a process.
- **System approach to management** – identifying, understanding and managing interrelated processes as a system contributes to the organization’s effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its objectives.
- **Continual improvement** – continual improvement of the organization’s overall performance should be a permanent objective of the organization.
- **Factual approach to decision making** – effective decisions are based on the analysis of data and information.
- **Mutually beneficial supplier relationships** – an organization and its suppliers are interdependent and a mutually beneficial relationship enhances the ability of both to create value (www.iso.org/iso/qmp).

From the discussion above it is clear that quality in Customer Care is important. The services and products must be of a good quality.
What is quality to one cannot be seen as quality by another, so there needs to be consensus on the level of quality and this must be communicated to customers in writing. Communication in writing can be in a form of signage or posters at the entrance of the building. The customer is the final judge of the quality of the service they receive.

2.5.7 Effective Participation

The abovementioned prerequisites for Customer Care must happen in consultation with the beneficiaries of the products or services and the consultation must take place before, after and throughout the processes to ensure customer satisfaction. This means that before a department is established there must be consultation with the identified customers and thereafter continuous consultation to ensure that Government is always living up to the expectations of the citizens and aware of their forever changing needs.

Forums like the Batho Pele Forum, Imbizos and Ministerial outreaches can help the department to identify the needs of its customers and give the department time to interact with its customer and respond to their needs. Questionnaires, surveys, discussion panels, talk shows and road shows can also be conducted to obtain information from the customers and give them the opportunities to have a say in the way they are to be served.

2.5.8 Professional Ethics

Organizational ethics refer to sets of formal and informal standards of conduct that people use to guide their behavior at work. These standards are partly based on core values such as honesty, respect, and trust, but they can also be learned directly from the actions of others. For example, what people see their organizational leaders, managers, and coworkers do on the job can influence their own views of what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior (Joshua@ethics.org).
Core ethical values are integrity, honesty, truthfulness, respect and responsibility. When faced with an ethical dilemma and wanting to make an ethical decision one must ask and answer the following questions:

- Is the action legal and consistent with government policies?
- Is it in line with the department’s goals and code of ethics/conduct?
- Is it a proper thing to do?
- What will the outcome be for the department, colleagues and/or other parties?
- Is it justifiable?
- Would the action stand up to public scrutiny? (Masithela, 2008:17)

Every organization needs ethics policy so as to set standards to guide the behavior of managers and employees on the manner of conducting business with the outside world (Masithela, 2008:23).

Unethical behavior includes:

- using organization facilities (fax, email, telephone, photocopier, binder, scanner, etc.) for own private business,
- spending large parts of the working day conducting personal affairs (banking, booking holidays, communicating with relatives, etc.)
- non-disclosure of people they have recommended for employment or as suppliers as close relatives or friends and
- conspiring with clients/customers to steal from the organization (Masithela, 2008:24).

The public sector should continue to play a leading role in ensuring ethical conduct and integrity through multi-sectoral forums such as the National Anti-Corruption Forum. South Africa should continue to promote its anti-corruption values and interests in continental and international structures (ANC 52\textsuperscript{nd} National Conference December 2007 – Resolutions in Polokwane, 2007:31).

Developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, the following are found in many professional codes of ethics:

- Honesty – being truthful, sincere straightforward, forthright, frank and candid.
- Integrity – being principled, courageous, scrupulous, honorable and upright.
• Promise-keeping – being trustworthy, reliable, abiding by the spirit and letter of an agreement.
• Fidelity – being loyal and discreet, maintaining confidences and making objective judgments.
• Fairness – being equitable, open-minded and willing to admit errors and change position.
• Caring for others – being courteous, prompt, decent, compassionate, preserving dignity and respecting the privacy of others.
• Responsible citizenship – being law-abiding, opposing unjust laws, protecting the environment and exercising democratic rights.
• Pursuit of excellence – being committed, doing one’s best and maintaining one’s competence.
• Accountability - leading by example, accepting responsibility and avoiding the appearance of impropriety.

By providing employees with ethics standards, training, and resources to get advice, organizations seek to create a work environment where (1) it is acceptable for employees to acknowledge that they have an ethical dilemma, and (2) resources are readily available to guide employees in working through such dilemmas before making decisions (Joshua@ethics.org).

2.6 Role of Customer Care in an organization

The role of Customer Care in an organization with special emphasis in the public sector in South Africa includes but not limited to:

2.6.1 Promoting the Batho Pele Principles

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, the so-called “Batho Pele White Paper”, was published in 1997. It requires departments to improve their service delivery in terms of eight service delivery principles.
The objectives of Batho Pele include the following:

- To introduce a new approach to service delivery which puts people at the centre of planning and delivering services;
- To improve the face of service delivery by fostering new attitudes such as increased commitment, personal sacrifice, dedication;
- To improve the image of the Public Service; (Spontaneous Management Consulting, 2010:25)

The term Batho Pele comes from the Sesotho language and its English translation is "people first". The eight Batho Pele principles were:

1. To regularly consult with customers. Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and wherever possible be given a choice about the services that are offered.
2. To set service standards. Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.
3. To increase access to services. All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.
4. To ensure higher levels of courtesy. Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.
5. To provide more and better information about services. Citizens should be given full accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.
6. To increase openness and transparency about services. Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.
7. To remedy failures and mistakes. If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.
8. To give the best possible value for money. Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money. (Bvuma, Russel 2001:245).
It is the role of the Customer Care unit to ensure that the Batho Pele principles are promoted and enshrined in the department’s culture, objectives and everyday operations.

2.6.2 Promoting good governance

It is the role of Customer Care to ensure that the department runs smoothly and there are systems in place to ensure that there is sound administration. As previously discussed in 2.5.4 above, good governance ensures that all stakeholders are aware and feel part of the decisions taken by the organization through participation and consultation.

Customer Care ensures that the organization responds to the needs of customers courteously, within an acceptable time frame, and if that is not done at some point in the organization, Customer Care must mediate and account on behalf of the organization to those ill-treated customers. Customer Care must ensure that products and services are rendered effectively and efficiently within the limited resources that Government has at its disposal.

2.6.3 Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management (CRM) involves managing the customer relationship across all its interfaces within the company as one entire process. Rather than seeing customer transactions on an ad hoc basis as, for example, a contact from marketing, or a request for customer service, it breaks down the ‘silo’ mentality of traditional businesses and shares information about the customer (Cook, 2008:28).

This means that if the customer has a savings account in the bank, the bank must have all the information about the customer. The system must be able to tell a consultant at the credit department that the customer has a savings account with the bank. It is easier to deal with, make informed decisions and manage a long term relationship with the customer whose information is readily available.
CRM establishes a learning relationship between business and customers, and satisfies customer needs by obtaining customer information and data. The characteristics of CRM should include:

- establishing long-term relations with customers,
- gathering and integrating customer information,
- using computer software to promptly analyze customer data,
- segmenting customers according to customer lifetime value, compared with segmenting customers through customized services for customer value,
- conducting a micro-segmentation marketing depending on customer needs and wants,
- utilizing process management to create customer value and
- emphasizing customer-centred management, and thus having to alter the working strategy and evolution of organizational structure (Bor-wen, Chun-Lang, & I-sheng, 2005:609).

2.6.4 Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Customer satisfaction is a function of perceived service quality and expectations. Customer satisfaction is influenced by two factors: expectations and experienced service performance. Perceived performance is influenced by consumers’ perception of service quality, marketing mix, brand name and image of the organization.

Attitudes and beliefs are influenced by previous experience. People with prior experience will base their attitudes and beliefs on the experienced product or service quality, while people with no experience may base their attitudes and belief on reputations (Van der Waldt, 2004:149).
2.6.5 Setting Service Standards

Customer service standards are concerned with offering public services more in line with the needs of the users with fewer resources, that is, increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Any public institution has as its primary objective the promotion of the general welfare of the inhabitants it serves. It is therefore essential that a public institution obtains clarity with regard to who its clients are, what their needs are and what action it is going to take to satisfy their needs (Van der Waldt, 2004:149).

Targets for service standards are now in place for central government departments and agencies covering the time taken to see people visiting public offices without an appointment, answering calls to national telephone enquiry points and to having in place at least one e-mail address for handling enquiries from the public (Van der Waldt, 2004:151).

The set service standards must be visible, and preferably be displayed at the reception and at all service points. The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997 (Batho Pele) states the following in the foreword section:

- “….. Departments are expected to set standards on the services they provide and to monitor the results thereof …… and
- Reports will be made public on how Departments have performed against set standards.”

Section 27 (4) of the Public Finance Management Act (Act no 1 of 1999) emphasizes the importance of regular monitoring and reporting against measurable objectives, which are linked to outputs and service delivery indicators. Service standards are service delivery indicators. The service standard relevant to Customer Care in the ECDE is the following:

- Process Service Standards – Complaints Management: All complaints to be acknowledged within 7 working days and resolved within 21 working days to ensure a good and sound relationship is maintained with the education community and the public at large and change negative public perceptions about the Department.

Though there is only one service standard set for Customer Care in the ECDE, all other set standards have an impact on the functioning of the Customer Care Unit.
This is so because, if for example, the Payment Unit does not deliver according to its set standard, namely, ALL invoices submitted to the Department are paid within 30 calendar days in line with the PFMA, complaints and queries regarding non-payment of suppliers will end up on the desk of a Customer Care official.

2.6.6 Protecting Human Rights

Chapter 2 (sections 7 to 36) of the Constitution of South Africa deals with human rights. Each of these rights and relevant laws passed to give effect to individual rights are described in Chapter 2 of the Constitution.

These rights include the right to:

- Equality: this means that people have a right to the same opportunities and to have equal access to resources, which would allow them to be equal in the future. Neither the state nor any person can unfairly discriminate against someone, either directly or indirectly.

- Human dignity: Everyone has dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.

- Freedom of religion, belief and opinion: everyone has the right to believe or think what they want, even if their opinion is different to the government. Everyone has the right to practice the religion they choose.

- Freedom of speech and expression: everyone has the right to say what they want, including the press and other media. Limiting these rights, there are certain kinds of speech that are not protected and these are propaganda for war, inciting (encouraging) people to use violence and hate speech. Hate speech encourages people to discriminate against other people.

- Labour Relations: everyone has the right to fair labour practices.

- Education: everyone has the right to: basic education, including adult basic education further education, which the government must make available and accessible.
• Language rights: everyone has the right to use their language.
• Access to information: everyone has the right to have access to information which the government has and information that someone else has if they need it to protect any of their rights
• Just administrative action: Section 33 guarantees that administrative action will be reasonable, lawful and procedurally fair.

It also makes sure that one the right to request reasons for administrative actions that negatively affect one. The section says government must pass laws that will: provide for a review of the actions of a government official (or department) where the action might have gone against a person's rights, and make it a duty of the government and all government bodies to put this right into practice, be just and promote an efficient administration. (The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa)

It is the duty of the Customer Care officers to ensure that, in line with its objectives and its line of function, both internal and external customers’ human rights are protected.

2.6.7 Complaints Management

Most complaints about government services emanate from customers who are not satisfied with the services they receive. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the department, affecting an individual customer or group of customers (Brennan & Douglas, 2002:220).

Some organizations misunderstand and view complaints as a nuisance that need to be avoided at all costs. This type of thinking is more costly than anyone can realize. Complaints must be viewed as an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with a customer, and an opportunity that needs to be understood and exploited. Complaints not only provide the company with valuable information about its products and services but also signal the need to refine a product or develop something new. They also furnish insight about service-related difficulties that need to be corrected (Spontaneous Management Consulting, 2010:22)
Every complaint received should be regarded as an opportunity to:

- Correct the situation in order to satisfy the customer
- Win back a loyal customer, who might have decided to take his business elsewhere or have already taken his business elsewhere.
- Analyze and identify areas where there might be weaknesses or bottlenecks within the organizational systems so that weaknesses could be corrected and bottlenecks eliminated. By improving the organizational systems an organization will be satisfying its existing customers who have not complained, as well as satisfying future customers.
- Promote one’s products or services;
- Ensure one’s customers that the organization and its staff are approachable and customer-focused (Spontaneous Management Consulting, 2010:22).

Some Government departments have toll free numbers to be called when citizens, as customers, have questions or problems about the service rendered to them. An example of this is the toll-free number in the Office of the Presidency which is available for citizens to telephonically register complaints about service delivery or lack thereof.

When a company wants to discover what their customers want and also get feedback about the product or service rendered, it is important to engage in a customer satisfaction survey. Surveys can be a useful source of customer service information. The purpose is to determine whether the product or service met customer expectations (Spontaneous Management Consulting, 2010:22).

2.6.7.1 Guidelines for Complaints Handling

Complaints cannot be handled effectively if there are no systems in place or complaints systems are not well structured. The result of not having a well-structured complaint system is frustrated customers and this might lead to destructive confrontation (Spontaneous Management Consulting, 2010:49). In terms of the Batho Pele White Paper government departments (including municipalities) should establish and review their complaints handling systems in line with the following principles:
A. Accessibility

Complaints systems should be:

- well publicized and easy to use,
- avoid excessive formality and jargons,
- user-friendly and convenient to the customer, with options such as face-to-face, telephonic or written communications and
- accessible to everybody including people with disabilities.

B. Speed

The longer it takes to respond to a complaint, the more dissatisfied customers are likely to become. The following are guidelines to eliminate the dissatisfaction of customers:

- Time limits for responding to complaints should be set to ensure that they are dealt with promptly.
- All complaints should be acknowledged immediately and courteously and where delays are unavoidable, customers must be kept informed of progress and be told when an outcome can be expected.
- Once the complaint has been verified, a sincere apology together with a full explanation must be given to the customer.

C. Fairness

Complaints should be fully and impartially investigated. As the provider of a service one should guard against becoming defensive and trying to justify one’s actions when a complaint is received. One should keep in mind that that many people might be nervous and hesitant to complain and therefore the process should not be daunting nor place them at a disadvantage. Wherever possible the customer who is complaining should be offered alternative avenues to take their complaint forward if the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily the first time round.

D. Confidentiality

The confidentiality of complainants should be respected and protected at all times to prevent possible intimidation and victimization.
Confidentiality must also be maintained so that staff who are being complained about are managed in line with the Code of Good Practice as detailed in the Labour Relations Act, 1996 as amended.

E. Responsiveness

No matter how trivial a complaint may seem, for the customer it is a real concern and they must be taken seriously.

Full account should be taken of the complainant’s concerns, perceptions and feelings. Where a mistake has been made, or the service has fallen below the promised standard, service providers

- must respond promptly,
- start with an apology and full explanation,
- give an assurance that the occurrence will not be repeated and that remedial action will be taken, and
- take remedial action.

F. Informative

The complaint system must provide good and useful information to management so that service delivery can be improved.

G. Review

A good complaints system should incorporate mechanisms for review and evaluation. Furthermore, it should allow for feedback and suggestions to those responsible for providing service so that mistakes and failures do not recur.

H. Training

Complaints handling procedures should be publicized throughout the organization and training given to all staff so that they know what action to take when a complaint is received.

Spontaneous Management Consulting (2010:51) summarizes the complaints procedure by taking the following into account
The complaints procedure should be kept simple:

- be written in clear, simple language;
- be easy to access and operate – if it is difficult and complicated customers may feel intimidated and not use it;
- cover a range of matters including operational and policy matters;
- be reviewed regularly; and
- assist staff to respond promptly and effectively to complaints.

The procedure should set and monitor clear targets for:

- acknowledging complaints;
- dealing with complaints;
- keeping people informed about the progress; and
- getting contributions or comments from people outside of the organization (peer review);

The procedure should set out guidelines for handling complaint, which include

- details on handling difficult customers, in person, telephonically and in writing; and instructions on what level of complaints may be dealt with at a particular level and when they need to be referred to a higher level.

From the above it is evident that access, information and redress are key components in complaints handling. Proper complaints handling and management is critical for an organization to identify its weaknesses, prevent the same errors in future and reduce the amount of time and costs involved in resolving those complaints.

2.7 Role of Leadership in Customer Care

Customer Care needs a strong corporate leadership for it to be effective. Introducing and encouraging a customer-friendly environment in an organization has its challenges. Some key players will support it and some will not.
Leaders need to confront the resisting key players and resolve the conflicts that accompany any strategic change. Leading the confronting and resolution of these conflicts requires strong leadership (Galbraith, 2005:164).

The way leadership treats their employees is exactly how those employees will, in turn, treat the customers. Top management needs to create a strong and clear culture that emphasizes learning, as well as internal customer orientation, and ensure that all organizational members are encouraged to follow suit.

### 2.7.1 The role of Leadership

- **Commitment and accountability** – Commitment to Customer Care must be shown by the most senior person of the organization and everyone in the organization will follow that example.
- **Setting the strategic vision and direction** – it is the role of leadership to lead the strategic planning process whereby the purpose of Customer Care is clarified and goals are translated into action. Everyone in the organization must own and be committed to ensure that the vision is accomplished. This is done by ensuring that all processes in an organization are linked.
- **Challenging old roles and processes**
- **Creating enabling environment and enlisting support**
- **Providing good role models**
- **Challenging the heart in bringing about change**

(Diphola, 2008: 6)

Managers must be committed to their customers, not only in the decisions they make but also in ensuring that the decisions are implemented by the organization as a whole. They must lead by example and ensure that the environment is customer friendly.
2.8 Key Skills for Customer Care

A skill can be defined as a means or method of completing a task. The following passage will briefly discuss the skills that officials dealing with customers should possess.

2.8.1 Communication Skills

Dealing with people of different cultures, groups, professions, ages and genders requires communication skills. Communication as a skill does not refer to the way one sounds when speaking, but rather to the way that one communicates with others.

Communication looks at the word structure of sentences, does one speak clearly, use short sentences as opposed to long-winded conversations that lose the attention of others? Is there stimulation in one’s conversation, like good body language and eye contact? (Badler, 2004: 15).

The following are important points when communicating:
- Always maintain eye contact
- Body language – be comfortable
- Tone – must be clear so that everyone can hear
- Sentences must be kept short

Organizations recognize that the customer’s experience of the organization is based on its communication or marketing efforts, its branding and interaction with employees as well as its products or services (Cook, 2008:19).

The following tools can be used to communicate with customers: Internet, organization website, email, cellular phones, telephone, leaflets, television, radio, posters, billboards and notice boards.

2.8.2 Empathy and Understanding

Ethical empathy entails an affective sensitivity to the other’s experience without ever confusing the other with oneself, but also without turning into the distancing, self-serving concern of sympathy. Empathy is a spontaneous emotional response of experiencing similar emotions to another person.
Empathy can be provoked by witnessing another’s emotional state, by hearing about another’s condition, or even by reading. Empathy is not always a pleasant experience; it may be rather close to experiencing personal distress (Koopman, 2010:241).

Customer Care officials must be able to have a sense of feeling and understanding of what the customer is going through and also be able to communicate that feeling to ensure that they capture it correctly. Most of the customers that come to Customer Care have been ill-treated in one way or another. The manner in which they are served at this point is very important.

Empathy and understanding for a customer with a problem or complaint should be communicated in genuine ways that are not judgmental or critical but that demonstrate acknowledgement and appreciation of the customer’s feelings. Customers want to feel that one understands exactly how this problem affects them. This gives them confidence in the ability of the employee concerned to correct the problem (Spontaneous Management Consulting, 2010:18).

2.8.3 Listening Skills

*Listening attentively and actively*

The key words here are ‘listening’ and ‘actively’. Listening actively assures customers that you are listening to them intently thereby encouraging them to talk freely. If one puts oneself in the shoes of the customer, viewing the problem from the customer’s point, listening should not be difficult. Avoid being judgmental, listen attentively and actively asking *open questions* that encourage the customer to talk freely. Open questions are questions that cannot be answered by simply saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ they often begin with phrases like “Tell me about or describe what happened when...”. When open questions are asked, the customer is encouraged to talk and the information that is necessary to solve the problem is obtained. The company’s representative must be understanding and compassionate; demonstrate that he cares about making things right. Allowing customers to vent their frustrations is a vital part of recovery (Spontaneous Management Consulting, 2010:19).
Listening is a skill that Customer Care officials must have as they deal with customers on a daily basis. This skill is essential not only when dealing with walk-in customers, but also when interacting with customers telephonically or via correspondence.

2.8.4 Presentation Skills

Customer Care officials are at the frontline of the department. They need to be presentable at all times. They need to be able to represent the department in a positive way not only in how they are dressed but also in the way they talk to their customers. The information they give to clients must leave the customers with the hope that their concerns are the department’s priority.

2.8.5 Decision making

Crous (1995:181) defines a decision as a rational process by which a specific plan is chosen to solve a particular problem. Harrison (1999:5) is of the opinion that a decision is a moment in an ongoing process of evaluating alternatives to achieve a goal or objective. Decision making includes the solution and the requirement to transform it into action through a series of changes and commitments (Du Toit, Knipe, Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Doyle, 2002:338). Du Toit etal (2002: 342-346) identifies the following as the steps in the decision making process:

- Investigate the problem
- Collect information on the problem
- Develop alternative solutions to the problem
- Evaluate all alternatives and select the best one
- Implement the decision
- Evaluate and monitor the decision

The steps above are useful no matter how insignificant the decision to be taken. Within their scope of work and delegated powers, Customer Care officials must be able to take decisions.
2.8.6 Problem Solving

According to Du Toit, et al (2002:337) problem solving involves the process of carefully and deliberately attempting to overcome the obstacles in the path towards a goal. It requires four main steps.

- Defining a problem: a problem is a gap between the present situation and the desired situation. The more difficult the problem, the more difficult it is to define it.
- Analyzing a problem: involves examining careful and critical examination of relevant facts and information from the vast amount of information available. This process is critical because unless the problem is analysed correctly, inappropriate decisions to solve the problem will be taken.
- Solving problems: implies closing the gap between the present and the desired situation. Every problem generates another problem and this makes problem solving difficult. All attempts must be made to ensure that problems are solved.
- Implementing solutions: is the final step in the problem solving process and involves planning as a key aspect.

Customer Care officials must be able to identify, define, analyse and solve the problems they encounter daily. Customer Care officials must be flexible and be able to work well with everyone regardless of who that person is.

2.9 The Statutory Framework for Customer Care

The frameworks relevant to Customer Care are the following:

2.9.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996;
Section 2 of the Constitution indicates that the Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic, law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid, and the obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled. Section 195 (1) serves as a reference point for the public service; it stipulates principles that should inform public service delivery. The Constitution spells out the fundamental principles that must govern the provision of services by the public service and supports the notion of ‘putting people first’.
The constitutional principles governing the Public Service state that:

- services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- people’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making;
- public administration must be accountable; and
- transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.

Although all these principles have some bearing on the importance of a sound Customer Care service, fundamentally it is the Bill of Rights that states that all citizens have the right to public services and the right to be heard if they are unhappy with those services.

2.9.2 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele) 1997

In 1997 the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, known as the ’Batho Pele White Paper’ was enacted. It was intended to improve service delivery by making use of eight service-delivery principles. Batho Pele is a Sotho translation that means ‘People First’. The Batho Pele is a technique of delivering services by positioning citizens at the centre of public service delivery and operations not an add-on activity.

There are eight Batho Pele principles and they are as follows:

- Consultation - to regularly consult with customers about the level and excellence of the public services they receive
- Service Standards- the department must set service standards in order to inform citizens what level and excellence of public services they will get so that they are aware of what to expect
- Access to services- it is the duty of each department to increase citizens should have equal access to the services they deserve.
- To ensure higher levels of courtesy-Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.
- To provide more and better information on available services-Citizens should be given full and accurate information on the public services they deserve.
- To increase openness and transparency on services-Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.
• To remedy failures and mistakes—If the promised standard of services is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic and positive response.

• To give the best possible value for money—Public services should be offered economically and efficiently in order to furnish citizens with the best potential value for money (Russell and Bvuma, 2001, p.245-247).

2.9.2.1 The objectives of Batho Pele

The Batho Pele strategy on service delivery was established to convene the following strategic objectives:

• The improvement of the image of the Public Service;

• The enhancement of the face of service delivery by encouraging new approaches, such as increased commitment, personal sacrifice, devotion, and

• The introduction of a new approach to service delivery which prioritizes ‘citizens first’ during the planning and delivery of services.

2.9.3 Promotion of Access to Information Act No. 3 of 2000 as amended by Act No. 53 of 2002

This Act, which allows for people to have access to information sets the procedures that are to be followed in accessing information. The Act is intended to give effect to the Constitutional right of access to any information held by the state and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. The information may include inter alia information that may assist people to participate in the economy. This information cannot be unreasonably withheld. The Act is linked to the principle of Batho Pele ‘giving information’.
2.9.4 The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA), No 3 of 2000:

The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000 (and amendments in 2003), provides for specific procedures to ensure that any administrative action is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair. An administrative action is defined as a decision taken or failure to take a decision by an organ of state (when exercising a constitutional power or other public power or function) that adversely affects the rights of any person. Anyone who feels their rights are being adversely affected may ask for written reasons for any decision, and even seek redress from the government institution concerned or the courts.

The aim of the PAJA is to:

- Promote an efficient administration and good governance; and
- Create a culture of accountability, openness and transparency in the public administration or in the exercise of a public power or the performance of a public function, by giving effect to the right to just administrative action.

The provisions of the PAJA have direct bearing on virtually all of the Batho Pele principles, but specifically it focuses on the following principles:

- Consultation
- Courtesy
- Information
- Openness and transparency; and especially
- Redress.

Section 3(1) of the PAJA states that: “Administrative action which materially and adversely affects the rights or legitimate expectations of any person must be procedurally fair.” It continues by stating that in order to give effect to the right to procedurally fair administrative action, an administrator must give a citizen:

- adequate notice of the nature and purpose of the proposed administrative action;
- a reasonable opportunity to make representations;
• a clear statement of the administrative action;
• adequate notice of any right of review or internal appeal, where applicable; and
• adequate notice of the right to request reasons for the administrative action

Section 4 of the PAJA states that where an administrative action materially and adversely affects the rights of the public, an administrator, in order to give effect to the right to procedurally fair administrative action must consult with the public by either holding a public enquiry or instituting other appropriate actions.

Section 5 of the PAJA details citizens’ rights to redress. It states that any person whose rights have been materially and adversely affected by administrative action and who has not been given reasons for the action may request that they be provided with written reasons for the action.

Any person may, in terms of the Act, institute proceedings in a court of law or a tribunal for the judicial review of an administrative action and the act further stipulates the procedures for such review and the remedies that may be implemented.

2.9.5 Public Service Act 103 of 1994

The Act was enacted to provide for the organization and administration of the public service, the regulation of conditions of employment, terms of office, discipline, retirement and discharge of members of the public service and matters connected therewith. One of the areas Customer Care deals with is employee benefits that are not paid out. This Act protects the official placing them in a better place to negotiate and present the case of a customer when he is conversant with this Act.

2.9.6 Public Service Regulations of 1999 and 2001

These Regulations give practical effect to the Constitutional principles that all employees are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct provided for in the Regulations and expected to perform their duties to the best of their ability. Customer Care officials, as employees of the public service and their internal customers, are bound by the public service regulations.
2.9.7 Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999

The Public Finance Management Act stipulates and stresses the accountability of public administration and advocates value for money in procurement of goods and services within the public service. In other words, this Act prohibits the fruitless, wasteful, and unauthorized use of public funds.

Public servants need to adhere to the Act whenever they administer and provide services to their customers. They need to provide quality service within the limited resources in an economic manner.

These frameworks seek to ensure a culture of Public Service Delivery which gives citizens service packages that the government thinks are relevant and ensuring that citizens are at the centre of service delivery, establishing of a culture of accountability, openness and transparency in public administration, consulting the public and the citizen’s rights to redress. Based on the needs of the citizens, all national and provincial departments are obligated to bring their service delivery mandates and service delivery improvement plans into line.

The real nature of Customer Care is defined as more than making customers smile. The five main requirements are, understanding the customers, methods of measuring service quality, involving employees at all levels devolving decision taking on Customer Care and communication (Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 1989: 34).

From this discussion, it can be said that Customer Care is all about ensuring that the changing needs of the customer are known, met beyond the customer’s expectation and form a great part of the day-to-day planning and running of the organization, so as to keep the customer happy at all times. The focus of the organization is therefore, not to give the customer what the organization deems necessary, but to know exactly what the customer really want.

It is important for Customer Care officers to have the necessary and relevant skills to ensure that they deal with customers in a professional and courteous manner. Management needs to prioritize Customer Care initiatives and embrace the culture of putting people first.
All Customer Care activities and interactions must be within the boundaries of the prescribed laws and regulations.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter the purpose of Customer Care has been discussed. The chapter did elaborate on the Customer Care in private sector vis-á-vis Customer Care in the public sector. Prerequisites for and skills required for Customer Care were highlighted as well as the role of Customer Care Unit in an organization. The chapter also focused on regulatory directives that form basis and support Customer Care concept in the public sector. The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*) 1997 is seen as the basis for Customer Care in the Republic of South Africa as its focus is on putting people first. The following chapter deals with the methodology used in undertaking this study.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology used in this study. This includes sampling and data collection process.

According to Robert Holmes (2005:21) research methodology refers to the principles and values, philosophies and ideologies that underpin research. Silverman contends that methodology defines how one will go about studying any phenomenon (Silverman, 2000:79). Research methodology therefore is the method in which data is collected, analyzed and interpreted so as to ensure that the aims and objectives of the research are achieved.

The officials of the Customer Care Unit and the customers of the Department of Basic Education (both internal and external customers) are directly affected by the issues of customer care hence the researcher anticipated that they may have the information which contribute towards addressing the objectives of this study. Internal customers were interviewed for the purposes of this, while the Customer Complaints database was used to evaluate the impact of the Customer Care Unit on external customers.

3.2 Research Design

Welman and Kruger (2001:46) define research design as "a plan according to which participants are obtained and information is gathered from them"; and Leedy (1989:92) states that research design is "the common sense and the clear thinking necessary for the management of the entire research". The researcher needs to have an idea of the manner in which data will be collected, secured and interpreted so as to resolve the main research problem.
Research design involves a clear description of what is to be done with the participant so as to ensure that there is some light shed and there are conclusions relating to the research problem.

Miller and Salkind (2004:49-50) contend that any meaningful research design is constructed with the following principles in mind:

1. Research design is the plan of the study and, as such, is present in all studies, uncontrolled or controlled and subjective or objective. It is not a case of scientific or not scientific, but rather one of good or less good design. The degree of accuracy desired, the level of proof aimed at, the state of existing knowledge, all combine to determine the amount of concern one can have with the degree of science in one’s design.

2. The proof of hypotheses is never definitive. The best one can do is to make more or less plausible a series of alternative hypotheses. In most cases multiple explanations are given. Demonstrating one’s hypotheses does not rule out alternative hypotheses and vice versa.

3. There is no such thing as a single correct design. Different researchers will come up with different designs favoring their own methodological and theoretical predispositions.

4. All designs represent a compromise dictated by the many practical considerations that go into social research. None of us operates except on limited time, money, and personnel budgets. Further limitations concern the availability of data and the extent to which one can impose upon one’s subjects.

5. A research design is not a highly specific plan to be followed without deviation, but rather a series of guideposts to keep one headed in the right direction.

According to Neuman (2006:151) there are two approaches to research, namely qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative researchers often rely on interpretive or critical social science and emphasize conducting detailed examinations of cases that arise from the natural flow of life. Quantitative researchers rely on a positivist approach to social science, and emphasizing measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to general casual explanations. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative method was applied.

The advantage of using qualitative methods is that they generate rich, detailed data that leave the participants' perspective intact and provide a context for healthy behavior. A disadvantage is that data collection and analysis may be labour intensive and time consuming (Weinreich, 2000:2).
Data collection of this study included the interviews in an attempt to address the research problem, which states that: Is the Customer Care Unit of the Department of Education able to function well within its current context such that it can play a meaningful role in addressing the complaints and concerns referred to it?

To answer this question the following areas needed to be addressed by the interview schedule:

- To identify and analyze factors affecting the functioning of the Customer Care Unit.
- To determine if stakeholders are aware about the role of Customer Care Unit.
- To find out the extent to which the functioning of the Customer Care Unit is affected by its interaction with the Head Office of the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education.
- To find out the challenges faced by the officials of the Customer Care Unit with regard to the Unit’s objectives.

3.3 Site

The research took place at the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education Head Office quarters in Zone 6, Zwelitsha. While this is the main site for research, data gathering included but not limited to Education Leadership Institute in East London and other offices deemed relevant to the study were accessed as sites for data gathering.

3.4 Data gathering and Instruments

Data was collected through interviews. Barbie and Mouton (2001) argue that "an interview is a technique to collect information from the respondents through an interactive, verbal, real time contact". A semi structured interviews schedule was due to its adaptability to the subject, though time consuming, it enables the researcher to probe more deeply to gain in-depth information. Moreover, the fact that the interviews are semi-structured allows some space for an interviewee to explain further. The researcher intends interviewing individuals.
Ethics are a very important component to consider in research. Mason and Bramble (1989), writes the following, when emphasizing the importance of research ethics:

1. Subjects must provide informed consent – subjects should be willing to take part in the study after being informed of all aspects of the research that might influence their decision. Subjects should have all the information about the study that they need to make a decision about participating. They should not be misled.
2. Subjects must not be coerced – subjects must not be coerced to participate in the research. This principle was violated consistently before ethical codes for research were formalized.
3. Anonymity and confidentiality – subjects have the right to insist that their anonymity as participants in the research be observed. They should be assured that they will not be identified by their performance or the nature of their participation.

In addressing the above, the researcher requested permission to conduct the study in the Eastern Cape Department of Education from the Head of Department. The letter of request outlined the reasons for the research (see Appendix A) and the permission was granted (see Appendix B). Consent was also sought in the form of a written letter from the respondents (see Appendix C). The researcher ensured that the respondents understood their rights, especially the right to pull out at any stage of the study and that their names will not be revealed. No incentives were offered to respondents for the information provided.

Barbie and Mouton (2001:15) argue that "an interview is a technique to collect information from the respondents through an interactive, verbal, real time contact". Separate individual interviews were conducted to gather information directly from the respondents, the interview schedule was prepared in such a way that it covered the research questions and the specific objectives of the study. The interviews were conducted by the researcher.

The researcher used semi structured questions, which were constructed around a core of standard questions. However, unlike the structured questions, the interviewer may expand on any questions in order to explore a given response in greater depth, get information and views of the respondents and to enable the respondents to voice freely without being cornered to give a particular answer.
3.5 Study Population

According to Preece (1994:126), the term population does not refer to the population at large, nor even necessarily to humans or indeed animate objects at all. It refers to any whole group of subjects or things which have the characteristics identified for the research purpose. The population is composed of all individuals of interest to the researcher. Babbie and Mouton (2001:100) maintain that "the population is the group of participants from whom conclusions are to be drawn". Welman and Kruger (2001:46) further say the "population is the study object which may be individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events or conditions".

The Head Office of the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape has thirty six (36) Directorates. Each Directorate has its population and due to resources and time constraints it is practically impossible to use all of them as subjects of the study. The population of this study is comprised of the officials of the Customer Care Unit, beneficiaries of the services offered by the Customer Care Unit, internally and externally. For the purposes of this study therefore, a sample of six (6) Directorates was done.

3.6 Sampling and Sampling Procedure

Sample is a set of individuals selected from a population and is usually intended to represent the population in a research study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006:117). Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education Head Office has thirty six (36) Directorates but due to resources and time constraints this study concentrated on the six (6) Directorates from which most of the complaints and concerns emanated.

The researcher interviewed four officials from the Customer Care Unit, two Managers, and one official from each of the following Directorates: Education Leadership Institute, Supply Chain Management, Human Resource Administration, Human Resource Planning.
These officials were interviewed separately. This smaller group was selected because of factors such as expense, time and accessibility which may prevent researchers from gaining information from the whole population. The researcher will be able to obtain data from this smaller group or subset of the total population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population (however defined) under study (Cohen, 2000: 93).

Customers of the Eastern Cape Department of Education were not interviewed but the Customer Complaints database was used to assess areas with most frequent complaints (refer to attached Customer Complaints database marked as Annexure 2), this has been used as a reflection of the responses of the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education’s external customers.

One of the decisions a researcher has to take when designing research is the selection of subjects to participate in the study. Researchers can rarely examine every individual in the population that is relevant to their interests (Leary, 1991:82). It was not feasible to consider each and every individual who is the beneficiary across the entire population. As such, it became necessary to establish a sample that was representative of the entire population.

Best and Khan, (1989:10) explain that the primary purpose of research is to discover principles that have universal application, but in some cases, to study a whole population in order to arrive at generalization, is not possible. Some populations are so large that it would be difficult to measure their characteristics and, when an attempt is made to measure them, it would be difficult to complete it before the population changes. Sampling, therefore, assists one to learn what a larger group of people would do or how they would behave from studying a small group.

People are unique and this makes it difficult for the researcher to just choose respondents, hence a need to choose a representative sample. If people were the same, the researcher would choose any population and the results would always be the same and since this is not the case, it becomes necessary to find ways of choosing people from the larger group in such a way that the characteristics found in the smaller group reflects those of the larger group.
Cozby (2004:130) states that there are two known sampling techniques for sampling individuals from a population, namely; probability and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, each member of the population has a specifiable probability of being chosen. Probability sampling is very important when one wants to make precise statements about a specific population on the basis of the results of the survey. Non-probability, on the other hand, allows the researcher to define the population. It is cheap and convenient.

Purposive sampling has been used in undertaking this study. Leary (1991:90 describes purposive sampling as the selection of the sample on the basis of the researcher’s own judgment. The researcher tries to choose respondents that are typical of the population.

According to Silverman, (2000:129) purposive sampling allows the investigator to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which he is interested in. The researcher was constrained by the limitation of resources and was unable to investigate every existing unit. The researcher therefore made a practical decision.

3.7 Data Analysis

The researcher sought support of the Education Media and Information System (EMIS) of the Eastern Cape Department of Education for the collation and interpretation of data. To avoid bias in the interpretation and presentation of data, the EMIS unit facilitated the transcription of the tapes.

According to Punch, (2005:194) qualitative research concentrates on the study of social life in natural settings. Its richness and complexity means that there are different ways of analyzing social life, and, therefore, multiple perspectives and practices in the analysis of qualitative data. There are varieties of techniques because there are different questions to be addressed and different versions of social reality that can be elaborated on. Once the researcher has completed the data collection, the next step is to organize the data into a manageable format. This allowed the researcher to prepare the data for analysis.
According to Punch (2005:198), qualitative data analysis has three main components, namely:

1. **Data reduction** - this occurs continually throughout the analysis. It is not something separate from the analysis, it is part of the analysis. In the early stages, data analysis occurs by editing, segmenting and summarizing the data. In the middle stages it happens by coding and memoing, and associated activities such as finding themes, clusters and patterns. In the last stages it occurs by conceptualizing and explaining since developing abstract concepts is also a way of reducing the data.

2. **Data display** - data displays, organize, compress and assemble information. Because qualitative data are typically so voluminous, bulky and dispersed, displays help at all stages in the analysis. There are many different ways of displaying data and these include: graphs, charts, networks, diagrams of different types and any other way that moves the analysis forward is appropriate. Displays are used at all stages, since they enable data to be organized and summarized, they show what stage the analysis has reached and they are the basis for further analysis.

3. **Drawing and verifying conclusions** - the reasons for reducing and displaying data are to assist in drawing conclusions. While drawing conclusions logically follows reduction and the display of data, in fact it takes place more or less concurrently with them. Conclusions will be in a form of propositions, and once they have been drawn, they need to be verified.

The above three components of data analysis involve coding. Coding refers to the recognition of persistent words, phrases and themes within the data for later retrieval and resorting of information. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), coding is used to reduce a wide variety of idiosyncratic items of information to a more limited set of attributes composing a variable. These three components provide an overall view of data analysis.

For this study, the researcher used data reduction as a tool to conceptualize the data collected from the interviews. Individual responses from the respondents were categorized and grouped according to the questions. During the process of data analysis, the researcher drew conclusions from the data provided by respondents. These will be addressed in detail in the following chapters.
3.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a clear framework regarding the procedure used for data gathering, processing and analysis. The research methodology enabled the researcher to establish a road map of how the entire study should be conducted.

The chapter focused on the method applied for the study and also provided descriptions of amongst others, data gathering instruments employed, sampling sizes, the procedure for the study, ethical consideration during data collection and other important aspects necessary to arrive at a logical process of conducting the study. These factors give credibility to the study. The next chapter deals with the findings of the study and a detailed discussion of results.
CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three of this study dealt with the research methodology. This chapter deals with data collection and interpretation. Data was collected from the employees of the Department of Education, Customer Care officials and customers of the department through the aid of the Customer Complaints database. The total number of officials interviewed including the Customer Care officials was ten (10). The names of the officials and customers who participated in this study have not been disclosed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

4.2 Data collection

Individual interviews were held with the participants. The two managers were interviewed separately and their interview schedules differed slightly from each other. This is attributed to their different roles with regard to the Customer Care Unit. Managers that have something to do with the Customer Care Unit are six (6) and two have been chosen.

4.2.1 Data collection from Managers

Two managers were interviewed. An interview schedule was used in conducting interviews with them (see appendix 5).

4.2.1.1 Number of years employed in current position

The Managers were asked how long have they been employed in their current positions. One said that she/he has been employed for 7 years, while the other one said that she/he has been employed for 2 years. (Respondent 1) and 2 years (Respondent 2).
Chart 1: Managers' experience
The managers have been in the organisation for more than a year and that could mean they are in a better position to understand how the Department functions and their experience and input will be useful in this study.

4.2.1.2 Objectives of the Unit

The respondents mentioned the following when asked about the objectives of the Customer Care Unit:

- Timeously responding to all complaints and queries’ related to the operations of the Department
- Acknowledging receipt of complaints within 1 day and give feedback within 7 days
- Channeling complaints to relevant directorates, make follow-up and give feedback to the customers

Respondents mentioned that the complaints could be from internal clients (service related complaints including pension payout delays, unpaid benefits, etc.) and external clients (delay in service provider remuneration, enquiry about available services). The respondents seem to be aware of the objectives of Customer Care, though they mentioned only a few, but their response is in line with the Provincial Customer Care Policy which emphasizes efficiency and rapidness when dealing with customer queries.
According to the Provincial Customer Care Policy (2008:6) the objectives of the Customer Care Unit are:

- To efficiently and rapidly deal with and resolve any queries or issues that customers may have
- To treat customers with courtesy and professionalism at all times
- Engaging knowledgeable and well informed staff members, who have been trained to deal with customer queries
- To regularly keep citizens informed and updated with regard to services and any developments which affect them.
- To hold all information gathered on customers in the strictest confidence.
- To foster a partnership approach to service delivery in order to leverage from resources of other stakeholders.

Customer Care Unit is therefore a point where the customers of the Department are supposed to be treated with courtesy and all their queries dealt with efficiently.

### 4.2.1.3 Inclusion of objectives in Performance contracts

Asked whether the objectives of the Customer Care unit are included in the Customer Care officials’ individual Performance contracts, both respondents’ answered Yes. They further explained that each Customer Care official’s Performance contract includes all the fundamental expectation of their positions, the Performance contract is entered into with their immediate supervisors on behalf of the Department. Performance of the Officials of the Customer Care Unit was reviewed quarterly and annually.

The researcher read the Performance Contracts of the officials of the Customer Care Unit and the Key Performance Areas were:

- Manage the Customer walk-in centre
- Liaise with other components to ensure effective client service
- Facilitate the implementation of National & Provincial policies on Customer Care and *Batho Pele* principles
- Facilitate for the effective Complaints Resolution and monitor the Presidential Hotline complaints

The Key Performance Areas for officials of the Customer Care Unit as indicated in the Performance Contracts are broad, they neither speak to the objectives nor to the operations of the Unit, they are not measurable and have no time frames. This therefore can result in inaccuracy when measuring their performance.

4.2.1.4 Performance Review

When asked how often is the performance of officials in the Customer Care Unit reviewed, both respondents indicated that it is reviewed quarterly and annually. Contracts are drawn and signed for on the 01 April of each year, performance is reviewed based on the contracts signed, every quarter (that is by the 30 June, 30 September, 31 December of the same year the contract was signed and the last one being the 31 March of the next year), this is so because the financial year of the Public Service starts on the 01 April and ends on the 31 March of the next year.

Though performance is reviewed as prescribed by the Provincial Performance Management Development Strategy, this seems to be compliance rather than a development measure. If the reviews were done in a development manner, the Key Performance Areas could have been revisited to ensure that they are measurable.

4.2.1.5 Service Standards

Asked if there are service standards set for the Customer Care Unit, both respondents’ response was Yes there are service standards set for Customer Care Unit and further mentioned that these Service Standards are also encapsulated in the broader service standards that the Department adheres to The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997 (Batho Pele) makes provision for departments “… to set standards on the services they provide and to monitor the results thereof ….. and reports on how Departments have performed against set standards to be made public. The Eastern Cape Department of Education therefore complied and have set the standards as stated hereunder.
The Department will adhere to the following generic standards:

- Telephones shall be answered within 5 rings in a friendly and professional manner.
- Employees shall introduce themselves when answering phones at all times.
- Where an employee is not knowledgeable about a subject, s/he shall refer the matter to the relevant person or unit immediately.
- Any person who receives a message shall ensure that it is written down and passed onto the relevant person/unit within a day and the message shall be responded to within two working days.
- Correspondence, including letters of complaint, shall be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt, including details of who is dealing with the matter, approximate time frame for resolving the matter and contact details.
- Electronic mail shall be responded to within 2 working days of receipt.
- Correspondence shall be responded to in writing within 10 working days in simple appropriate language.
- Correspondence for referral shall be sent to the relevant working unit within 3 working days and that unit shall respond within 10 working days.
- Where a client has lodged a complaint, progress relating to the full investigation shall be communicated within 10 working days.
- Letters of demand received from litigants shall be acknowledged within 7 days of receipt.
- Applications for vacancies shall be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.
- All short-listed candidates shall be notified within 2 days after short listing and at least three days before the interview.
- All unsuccessful candidates shall be advised in writing within a maximum of 15 days after the interview.
- Invitations to meetings shall be issued 7 days before the meeting.
- Agendas for the meetings shall be issued 7 days before the meeting.
- Where a scheduled meeting with clients cannot be attended by another employee, a written apology shall be submitted 2 days before the meeting unless alternative arrangements can be made.
- Minutes of the meeting shall be circulated 3 days after the meetings and filed appropriately.
- All visitors shall be seated in a comfortable area and attended to within 10 minutes of their arrival.
- Suppliers/creditors shall be paid within 30 days of receipt of invoices.
- Properly completed supplier registration forms received shall be captured within 5 working days and a supplier number issued within 10 working days.
- All compliant tenders received shall be evaluated within 30 working days of the closing date of the tender and the contract awarded to the preferred bidder within 30 days of evaluation.
- Documentation relating to employees who retire from service will be processed and submitted to pension administration within 30 days after submission of completed documents.
- Employees who retire shall receive their leave gratuity within the first 30 days of retirement.

**Service standards set by and for the Customer Care Unit are:**

When you write to us we shall.........

- Acknowledge your letter or e-mail within ( ) days of receiving it
- Provide you with the name of the person handling your query
- Provide you with a reference number where applicable
- Tell you when you can expect a full response
- Provide you with telephonic and e-mail contact details, for example, “You can call or e-mail Mr/Ms ..... on (telephone number and area code) or at e-mail address between ( ) and from Monday to Friday

**If you have a complaint**

- Tell us
- We shall apologize and try to put things right immediately
- If you are not happy with our response you can contact Mr/Mrs .... on ........
Your rights (In line with the Know your service rights campaign)

The following are suggested by the guideline document

You have the right to the Batho Pele principles

- Courteous behavior at all times
- Full information
- Prompt and Efficient Service
- Redress and an apology for lapses in our service (If a school is housed in a mud structure and is on a priority or other list for receiving a new school, does not receive the new school by the planned date do they receive an apology?; if district officials are to visit schools for support according to a set plan and dates and the visits do not materialize do the schools receive an apology?)
- Value for money – Do all officials understand that irrespective of where they work, front office or back office staff, teachers, admin officers in Corporate Services at Provincial Office or District officials need to keep in mind that the biggest cost factor to the state in delivering a service is the HR cost not the S&T, the accommodation or the travel costs.

Your obligations as customers

Courtesy, telephone etiquette, prompt and quality service by service providers prior to payment, giving timeous, detailed, accurate information is important to receiving timeous and quality responses. Batho Pele is based on putting people first whether they are Public Servants providing the service or external customers receiving a service.

Having the standards set is not the end in itself but implementation and consistency needs to be monitored continuously to ensure that customers receive services of acceptable quality.
4.2.1.6 Skills necessary for Customer Care

In response to the question: what are the necessary skills for the officials of the Customer Care Unit, the following skills were identified by the respondents:

- Patience
- Tenacity
- Planning
- Empathy
- Communication skills
- Report writing skills
- Understanding of all the Department's operational components
- Attention to timeframes

All the skills mentioned above seem relevant as writers like Koopman (2010:241) and Bvuma (2001) indicate the importance of these skills. Deducing from the response above it is evident that these managers are conversant with the Customer Care Unit needs, lacking to be further investigated is what they do to ensure that these are available so as to enhance the functioning of the Customer Care Unit.

4.2.1.7 Support

When asked, what form of support, if any, the Managers give to the Customer Care Unit, the response of both respondents was:

- Providing guidance and leadership in the overarching operations of the unit
- Bi-weekly debriefing sessions that allow for opportunity to explore joint mechanisms of enabling speedy resolution of difficult cases

Compiling and presentation of the unit's operational report to the Executive management of the Department so as to solicit support and buy-in, the managers are seemingly supporting the Customer Care Unit, the question therefore remains, are they giving the relevant support needed, is the support having an impact in the delivery of Customer Care services.
4.2.1.8 Training and capacitating

Answering the question, what kind of training and capacitating has been done to ensure that the officials of the Customer Care Unit are on par with the changes in the department and in the Public Service as a whole?

- Customer Care workshop
- Batho Pele principles
- Managing service delivery
- Financial Management
- Telephone etiquette

According to the response given above the training received by the officials of the Customer Care Unit is relevant to their operations, to be investigated therefor will be the impact thereof.

4.2.1.9 Optimal functioning of the Customer Care Unit

Asked if the Customer Care Unit was functioning optimally, both respondents mentioned that due to loss of staff and failure to fill all organizational structure positions, financial constraints and lack of support from relevant sections in the Department, the Unit has not functioned optimally.

Respondents confirm that the Unit is not functioning optimally, support from relevant sections in the Department is one of the critical areas mentioned. As officials of the Customer Care Unit cannot be 100% conversant with all areas of the Department, they therefore depend to some extent on the support they get from the section from which they have enquiries. Lack of this support therefore can mean that they cannot be able to resolve some or most of their enquiries.

4.2.1.10 Awareness of Customer Care

Asked if officials in the department are aware of Customer Care, the respondents agreed that awareness campaign was done during the establishment of the unit and constant mention of their work and contact details in media interaction have raised the profile of the Unit.
From the response above, it can be deduced that respondents took for granted that the one campaign done during the establishment of the Unit and the constant mention in the media is enough for the community of the department to be aware of the Unit. It cannot be denied that officials of the department are aware that there is a Customer Care Unit within the Department but that on its own does not mean they know what the Unit is about, what it does, what effect does it have on the day-to-day running of the Department.

### 4.2.1.11 Suggestions

The respondents highlighted the following as suggestions of what can be done to ensure that the unit meets all its objectives:

- Filling of all vacant posts as identified in the Organogram
- Extensive ongoing training for Customer Care officials
- Provision of all the requisite resources
- Encouraging all senior managers to take seriously the role of Customer Care in the Department
- Budget to be increased
- Provision of cross-cutting training throughout the Department that will emphasize the organizational ethos and commitment to individual officials' responsibilities
- Advocacy to all stakeholder and road shows in all districts

From the response above, it can be deduced that the Customer Care Unit is under resources. The managers suggests that the Unit be resourced (financial, human, capital, training and capacitating) and training of all officials in the Department for it to be able to function optimally.

### 4.2.2 Data collection from Officials of the Customer Care Unit

The following paragraphs will reflect the analysis of results of the interviews conducted with the officials of the Customer Care Unit. The researcher interviewed four (4) officials from the Customer Care Unit individually.
4.2.2.1 Term of office

The table below illustrates the respondents' answer to a question: how long have you been employed in the Customer Care Unit. Three respondents have been in the Unit for three years and one respondent for two years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of years employed in Customer Care</th>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 2: Customer Care Officials' Term of office

Most of these officials have been employed for three years, this could mean that they are by now aware of what their role is and what affects their functioning and their input will be useful to this study.

4.2.2.2 Type of work

When asked what type of work the respondents do in the Customer Care Unit, they all respondent that they are attending to customer queries and complaints (be it walk ins, via email, telephonically or in written form).

Looking at this response it is clear that the officials of the Customer Care Unit identify attending to customer enquiries as the main reason for the existence of the Customer Care Unit. Studying their Key Performance Areas as indicated in their Performance contracts, this function is not clearly defined.
4.2.2.3 Customers

When asked who are their customers, all four respondents identified the following as their customers:

- Educators
- Learners
- Suppliers
- General public

It can be deduced that the officials of the Customer Care Unit are in agreement about who their customers are.

4.2.2.4 Objectives of Customer Care

Respondents understood the main objective of the Customer Care Unit as being to serve as a support system to the department by providing customer care services to its internal and external customers.

The officials could not specify the objectives of the Customer Care Unit, it was expected that as they are hands on and are the implementers of the objectives, they would give more details than they have given. From their broad response, one cannot be really certain that they know exactly what is expected from them.

4.2.2.5 Performance Contracts

In relation to Performance Contracts, Customer Care Officials mentioned that the objectives of Customer Care are included in their individual Performance Contracts and their contracts are reviewed quarterly.

As indicated in 4.2.2.4 above, the main objective mentioned “serve as a support system to the department by providing customer care services to its internal and external customers” this is not mentioned in their performance contracts as the researcher read their contracts.
This broad objective will have to be broken down into measurable operational pieces that will indicate exactly what will be done when, how and by whom.

4.2.2.6 Batho Pele Principles

All respondents mentioned that they are familiar with the Batho Pele principles. Asked what is the contribution of Batho Pele in the work that you do, the following responses were recorded:

- *Batho Pele* principles serve as the basis for the implementation of good customer care culture in the department
- The foundation of responsibilities of a Customer Care officer and inform everyday dealings as employees of the department
- *Batho Pele* principles are a yardstick by which to measure performance
- The principles are our guide to ensure that we are constantly on the right track

It is strange that none of the Batho Pele principles have been mentioned up to this point by neither of the officials of Customer Care and at this point they mention that it is a basis, foundation and yardstick by which to measure their performance. By that the statement above can be questioned.

4.2.2.7 Skills for Customer Care official

The respondents, when answering the question of what are the necessary skills for a Customer Care official mentioned the following skills:

- Public relations
- Information Technology
- Good telephone etiquette
- Tact
- Interpersonal skills
It is interesting to note that none of the officials of Customer Care Unit have undergone a training on the above mentioned skills, they are also not included in their Performance Development Plan and one wonders how they plan to acquire these skills when none is reflected in the documents that make provision for their development.

4.2.2.8 Challenges

Asked about the challenges they encounter in relation to their work, the following were the common challenges recorded from their response:

- Lack of understanding the customer care concept by the staff
- Lack of co-operation and minimal support from the managers
- Staff attitude towards customers
- Lack/ improper understanding of government policies
- Staff shortages
- Insufficient resources
- Customer Care Unit is being seen as policing people to do their job
- Staff not doing their jobs and these end up in Customer Care office as complaints
- Not having enough power to directly confront some of the issues due to communication channels (according to communication channels we cannot directly go to e.g. a relevant Director)

From the challenges mentioned above it can be deduced that more mention has been made of the attitudes of staff towards the officials of Customer Care and that could be because the staff is not fully aware of their role towards Customer Care.

They could not be aware that they all have a Constitutional mandate and responsibility to treat their customers equally with courtesy and professionalism.
4.2.2.9 Minimizing the challenges

Respondents thought the following can be done to minimize the challenges they face:

- Organize workshops and awareness campaigns for staff members
- Employment of qualified personnel
- Management investing more time and resources into Customer Care
- Training of Customer Care Officials and the staff at large in order to have the same understanding of what Customer Care is

4.2.2.10 Complaints Management

In relation to complaints management, respondents were asked what is the response time set, meaning how long does it take to respond to a complaint received? Respondents all agreed that the response time set to attend to complaints is three days depending on the complexity of the case. They also agreed that sometimes there are delays in responding to enquiries within the set response time, depending on the nature of the complaint. Within that period a response informing of the process/developments must be available to the customer.

This response is in line with the Provincial Customer Care Policy, the Batho Pele principles and the Service Standards set by the Department of Education. Adhering to this response time would mean that the Customer Care Unit is able to achieve one of its objectives, that is, to efficiently and rapidly deal with and resolve any queries or issues that customers have.

4.2.2.11 Awareness of Customer Care

Asked if officials in the Department are aware of Customer Care, all respondents answered yes, but mentioned that they are not aware of its concept, scope and their role, so there are still some awareness workshops that need to be done.
The researcher is of the opinion that this is true given the fact that officials of the Department seemingly do not see their responsibility towards Customer Care, if they do, they do not seem not to be acting as such, there would be minimum complaints if every official in his/her corner was doing the best they could.

4.2.2.12 Support Received

Asked if they get support from the principal's office and what kind of support they get, respondents mentioned that they do get support from the principals' office but constant changes to the leadership hinders their work as they have to start the process all over time and again. The kind of support they get is intervention in complex cases.

Change of decision makers have an effect to the way the department runs, this may be negative or positive. One manager can be for and another be against a certain concept, and having to bargain for that concept from this manager to the other can be discouraging.

4.2.2.13 The role of the Customer Care Unit in the Department

On the role of the Customer Care Unit in the Department, the respondents mentioned that it is to be a point of contact to address customer needs and to serve as the department's listening ear to meet the needs of those concerned.

The researcher is of the opinion that this role should also include advocacy and ensuring implementation of national and provincial policies of Customer Care and Batho Pele Principles, as it was indicated that Batho Pele principles are the foundation of Customer Care.

4.2.2.14 Suggestions to ensure optimal functioning

Customer Care officials came with the following suggestions to ensure that the unit functions optimally and meet all it objectives:
• Elevation of the Unit to a fully-fledged directorate
• Full support from the management and thoroughly engaging in the development of this unit
• Recruitment and placement of additional staff
• Availability of resources
• Conduct workshops and awareness campaigns for both public servants and the public at large
• Proper complaints management system

From these suggestions there was no mention of training as indicated in paragraph 4.2.2.9 in the skills mentioned in 4.2.2.7 and the resources needed not specified, from this it can deduced that the officials of the Customer Care Unit do not put across their needs clearly so as to get the necessary support from the managers relevant.

4.2.3 Data collection from Departmental Officials

The researcher interviewed officials from different Units of the Department of Education. Their response is discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.2.3.1 Respondents’ rank and Unit

Interviewed officials were selected from the different units and ranks, the following table illustrates the units they were selected from and the chart indicated the ranks in levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Education Leadership Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Human Resource Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Human Resource Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Supply Chain Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Respondent’s Unit
Respondents were sampled from different units of the Department with the aim to get input not only from one unit. The units they have been selected from are the ones that most complaints come from, they are therefore relevant for this study.

4.2.3.2 Respondents' number of years in service

The following chart illustrates the respondents' number of years in service. Two respondents have been working in the Unit mentioned earlier for 3 years and one for two years and the other one for 6 years.
Chart 4: Respondents' number of years in service
The respondents’ experience will be useful for this study as it varies from two to six years and this is a considerable experience.

4.2.3.3 Knowledge about Customer Care

Asked what they know about Customer Care, the respondents responded as follows:

- It's about taking care of clients/ people/ visitors and making sure that you are a servant of the people or clients
- Dealing with all enquiries received from clients of the department and referring them to the most relevant office
  Always keeping your customers satisfied Customer Care is the provision of service to customers before, during and after purchasing

From this response it can be deduced that the officials of the Department are aware of the activities of the Customer Care Unit. They have expectations from the Unit and these expectations are in line with the objectives of the Unit.

4.2.3.4 Understanding of Batho Pele principles

When asked about their understanding of Batho Pele principles they mentioned that it is about putting people's needs first before considering your own, serving all the people equally irrespective of gender, race or political affiliation and that the concerns of customers must be priority number one.

The understanding of the Batho Pele concept seems to be spot on but the respondents did not mention any of the principles, but the researcher was satisfied with their understanding of the concept. The question then would be are these officials practicing what they are confessing in their areas of work as all public servants are expected to in terms of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery 1997, putting people first.
4.2.3.5 Role of Customer Care Unit

The role of the Customer Care Unit in the Department, according to the Departmental officials interviewed is to implement Batho Pele principles, facilitate communication between the Department and all its customers and to ensure that all customer enquiries and complaints are resolved.

Again we find that Complaints management is perceived as the fundamental role of the Customer Care Unit as indicated even in the previous sections. This means that officials in the department best identify the Customer Care Unit with resolving complaints and enquiries.

4.2.3.6 Role played in Customer Care

Interviewed respondents mentioned that they play the following role in Customer Care:

- Making sure people's needs are put first
- Serving people according to standards
- Improve the role of Customer Care and upgrade it to be a call centre
- Ensure that customer needs are satisfied all the times
- Serve people with dignity and fairness

Three of the respondents indicated the role they play in ensuring that the customers of the department receive quality service, that is, making sure people’s needs are put first, ensuring that customers are satisfied at all time and serving people with dignity and fairness. They understood that by doing this they are playing a role in Customer Care, whilst the other two respondents wanted to see the Customer Care Unit improve and be upgraded to be a call centre and serving people according to standards. From this, it can be deduced that some of the officials of the Department view the Customer Care Unit and their role as us and them, meaning they don’t see their role in Customer Care.
4.2.3.7 Support

Responding to a question: what support do you give to the Customer Care Unit, respondents’ response included serving people with dignity, recruiting the best employees for the unit in terms of face, intellect and willingness to serve, delivering services of high standard to customers and supporting and welcoming visitors in a friendly manner.

Two respondents did not respond to this question as they maintained that according to their knowledge they do not know of any support that they can give to the Customer Care Unit. Three respondents knew that the services they offer from their offices contribute to the running of the Customer Care Unit, for example, the respondent from Human Resource Administration understood that by recruiting the best employees, he/she will be giving needed support to the Customer Care Unit.

4.2.3.8 Awareness of Customer Care

The response to a question of whether other officials in the Department are aware of Customer Care was yes from all respondents. But they mentioned that if everyone took what they knew into practice customers of the department would be paid in time if the Department was aware of Customer Care hence the conclusion that officials are aware of its existence but not necessarily of its role within the organisation i.e. reason for its existence.

4.2.3.9 Suggested solutions

Suggestions from respondents on what can be done to ensure that this unit functions optimally and meet all its objectives were summarized as follows:

- Put people first and implement the Batho Pele principles
- The Unit be marketed through awareness campaigns, road shows which would include role playing, public participation etc.
- Should make sure that all the Departmental employees adhere to the "generic service standards" that is obtainable in the Eastern Cape Provincial Charter published in 2006
• Identification of internal controls
• Valuation of Key Performance Areas on a monthly basis
• Sufficient staffing and budget

From the response above, it is evident that most officials in the Department are aware of the challenges facing the Customer Care Unit as most of the suggested solutions are related to what the officials of the Customer Care Unit mentioned, for example the need for advocacy campaigns.

4.2.4 Data collected from Customers

The database of Customer Complaints for the period November 2009 to November 2011 was received from the Customer Care Unit to analyse the results of Customers. This database indicates complaints received, complaints resolved and complaints unresolved within the period concerned (November 2009 and November 2011). These complaints included amongst others, complaints about Scholar Transport and School Nutrition, Suppliers not paid, School Infrastructure, Ill-treatment by staff and Employee benefits.

The following table illustrates data collected from the Complaints database:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of complaints received</th>
<th>Number of complaints resolved</th>
<th>Number of Complaints unresolved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholar Transport and School Nutrition</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppliers not paid</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill-treatment by staff</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Infrastructure</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other complaints</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Data collected from the Complaints database
Chart 5: Nature of Complaints from Complaints Database

As seen in the table above it is evident that the Department is lagging when it comes to dealing with internal customers (its employees), as the employee benefits are the most common complaints and form part of the backlog as some of these cases go back as far as two years without being resolved.

School Infrastructure is not only the Provincial problem but National problem, the National Department of Basic Education has resolved to assist Provinces with this problem by helping reducing the mud schools.

This table did not include complaints regarding admissions due to the fact that these complaints are seasonal and are dealt with by a special task team that take calls from a call centre established only during this period and dissolves after that. Customer Care officials form part of that task team every year.
4.2.4.1 Awareness of Customer Care

Customers of the Department are seemingly aware of the existence of this unit as they contact it daily. Most of the clients become aware of this unit during School opening period as most complaints are recorded this season and dealt with by a task team that dissolves after this period.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis of the data gathered through interviews that were conducted at the Head Office quarters of the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Ten (10) officials in total were interviewed individually, information obtained from the interviews was textually analysed and where possible illustrations made in order to simplify the information.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain knowledge of the respondent regarding Customer Care. This was achieved by asking all participants relevant questions. Customers' database was analysed to give perspective of the customers of the Department.

Another goal of this chapter was to present and interpret data obtained from the information collected from the respondents and from the customers’ database. Deductions made from the collected data will be presented in the next chapter together with recommendations and the conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER 5

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings and conclusions related to the problem statement, main research question and sub questions of this research, and elucidate how these are supported by the data presented in Chapter 4. The main objective of this study was to examine the Role of the Customer Care Unit at the Department of Education in the Province of the Eastern Cape.

In order to carry out this mandate, ten officials were purposefully selected from different Units within the Head Office of the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape to constitute the sample. The required data was captured using interviews with the participants, that is, four Customer Care officials, Manager of the Office of the Head of Department, Manager of Communications and Customer Care, officials of the Department of Education. The Customer Care database reflecting the interaction between customers of the department and the Customer Care Unit of the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape was also utilized to get the perspective of the customers of the Department.

The summary of this chapter is guided by the key findings that are organized according to the research questions and the objectives of this study. The researcher also provides recommendations in this chapter.

5.2 Findings

The main research question was: Is the Customer Care Unit of the Department of Education able to function well within its current context such that it can play a meaningful role in addressing complaints and concerns referred to it?

The main aim of this research was to evaluate the role of Customer Care Unit in order to find out if it meets the purpose and objectives for which it was established, and identify the challenges facing this Unit and propose solutions for such challenges.
To address research question and the main aim of the research, the following key findings could be drawn from the data that was collected through semi structured interviews and documentary analysis.

5.2.1 Functioning of the Customer Care Unit

It can be deduced from the data analysed that the Customer Care Unit is not functioning as it ought to and therefore unable to play a meaningful role in addressing the complaints and concerns referred to it. Factors affecting the functioning of the Customer Care include amongst others, shortage of staff, physical and financial resources; minimal support from management and staff of the Department; staff attitude towards customers.

5.2.1.1 Performance Management

Looking at the Job descriptions of the Customer Care Officials, specifically the Key Performance Areas, it can be deduced that the duties are clearly defined but not measurable. The Customer Care officials’ duties included:

- Liaising with other components to ensure effective client service:
- Ensure implementation of national and provincial policies of Customer Care and Batho Pele Principles
- Assist in the establishing of an effective complaints management system
- Receive and record complaints
- Use persal and logis for enquiry purposes
- Implement customer satisfaction by ensuring due dates are met
- Attend relevant training programmes and promote team work
- Contribute to ongoing systems development

No targets were set and no timeframes were indicated.
5.2.2 Establishment of the Customer Care Unit

The Customer Care Unit was established according to the Organogram approved and in operation with effect from January 2006, but in reality the Unit started functioning in 2008. The organogram indicates that the Unit is mandated to establish and operate an effective customer care and call centre. The Organogram shows that the Customer Care Unit is supposed to have ten officials, however during the time of the study, it had four officials, that is, 3 Administrative Officers and 1 Senior Administrative Officer.

According to the Office of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC)’s plan in the Annual Performance Plan of 2009/10 financial year, Customer Care Unit was established with an objective to ‘provide a Customer Care service for the public’ (Annual Performance Plan, 2009/10). This statement excludes employees and learners of which they are also main customers of the Department. The Office of the MEC also transferred the Assistant Director from Customer Care Unit to Community Liaison Office, and looking at this, it could be deduced that the Customer Care is not always given priority.

As indicated by the Manager responsible for this Unit, the Unit was established as a result of an extensive internal and external customer base that exists in order to unravel blockages if and when they occur, hence it is tasked with timeously responding to all complaints and queries’ related to the operations of the Department, hence the unit is more concerned about complaints and queries instead of putting more energy in preventative measures like educating staff about the importance of taking good care of customers and this would result in fewer complaints.

The researcher is of the opinion that there has not been clear vision for this Unit’s existence, and stakeholders involved do not share the same vision, hence there is no commitment to ensure that it functions well. In the strategic documents of the Department, that is the Strategic Planning, Annual Performance Plan, Operational Plan; one can hardly see Customer Care mentioned. Where it is seen like in the 2009/10 Annual Performance Plan, there are no clear guidelines on what functions will lead to this objective and how to measure performance.
There is a Customer Care Unit but one can argue that it is not effective and the call centre has not yet been established. Judging from the above information, it is clear that in its current state the Customer Care Unit can hardly meet the purpose (establish and operate an effective customer care and call centre) for which it was established, mostly because of circumstances beyond its control. Hence, there is a need to improve the current state of the Customer Care Unit.

5.2.3 The extent to which the functioning of the Customer Care unit is affected by its interaction with the Head Office of the ECDE

Findings were that the fact that the Office is at Head Office has an advantage that most of the offices are close by and it only takes a walk down the passage to go to those offices and it also came with a disadvantage that Head Office staff do not take seriously some of the complaints and would refer them back to the districts and these will take longer to be resolved.

5.2.4 Awareness of the Customer Care Unit

Findings are that officials in the Department are aware that there is a Customer Care Unit but they are not really conversant of its function and their role as individual employees in relation to Customer Care. Most employees are not aware that when they do not treat customers well, that results to customers complaining and those complaints land in the Customer Care Unit.

The general public and some of the customers of the Department are aware of the existence of this Unit as it has been advertised on local Radio stations and other media but most of the customers are not using this office to their benefit. From the customers' database, it is clear that most people that use the services of Customer Care Unit are employees of the Department and Suppliers. Few complaints have been received from the most rural areas of the Eastern Cape and those are the most subserviced areas by the Department. This may mean that they are not aware of this Unit and also that they do not have facilities (email, telephone) or means (transport, money) to come in person to the Department.
The rate and nature of complaints received indicates that officials in their places of work within the Department are not sensitive to Batho Pele principles and the importance of treating customers well

5.2.5 Challenges faced by the Customer Care Officials

The following has been identified as factors affecting the functioning of the Customer Care Unit in relation to the Unit’s objectives:

- Human Resources: the organogram provides for ten (10) officials to be employed to carry out the mandate of this Unit and only four officials were employed of which one has been transferred to another Unit and that left the Unit to operate with three officials who are bombarded by complaints from the whole province. One of these four has already applied for transfer to other units and one is looking to relocate to another Province.

- Level of Authority: The senior official in this Unit is on a Senior Administrative Officer Level (8), which is not even a Middle Management post. This makes things extremely difficult as according to the Communications channels, they are not able to communicate directly with Managers when they have urgent issues to be resolved and their authority is undermined.

- Physical resources: The officials have been moved from office to office with the constant changes in management. All these offices are not ideal for this Unit as they are far from the public entrance and they are not easily identifiable as they ought to be.

- Financial resources: There is always shortage of funds as this Unit does not have control over its budget and does not have a Director to administer their budget but depend on the mercies of the Director: Communication and Customer Care, who, based on the pressure and urgency of work related to- would priorities Publications and Media Liaison functions over Customer Care.

- Software: The current software used is not advanced and can be easily manipulated in terms of reporting. Dedication and support from staff: officials in the Department are not doing their jobs properly on time and this leads to complaints referred to Customer Care. Their insensitivity to Customer satisfaction brings a backlog of cases to the Customer Care Unit.
- The Customer Care Unit is based at the Head Office of the Department of Education and most of the complaints will come from the District offices and the only means of communication would be the telephone and emails, of which the districts in the remote areas of the Province would not have emails and customers would have to come in person to Head Office and this prolongs the processes.
- Support from Management: not getting enough support from management.
- Training: officials need to be taken through continuous training relevant; also the staff of the Department needs to be taken through Customer Care training.
- Constant changes to leadership: the Department has had three Heads of Department in the time in question. This affects the functioning of the Unit in that, they get the buy-in of this HOD and he/she is changed and they have to start the processes again.
- Cannot meet targets as mentioned in the service standards: the Service Standards of the Department indicate that “all complaints should be acknowledged within 7 working days and resolved within 21 working days to ensure a good and sound relationship is maintained with the education community and the public at large and change negative public perception about the department”. The three officials cannot possibly meet this requirement as there are walk-in customers as well as telephones ring throughout the day.

5.3 Recommendations that emanated from the findings

The following are the researcher's recommendations after undertaking the study:

5.3.1 Senior Management Buy-in
Senior Management needs to take cognizance of the importance of Customer Care. This will be evident when Customer related issues are prioritized and turn around strategies are employed in ensuring that Customers are well taken care of.

Senior Management also needs to employ Organisational Culture change programmes, it has been evident in the study that it is common to see customers ill-treated by the staff and that needs urgent attention.
5.3.2 Vision

Strategic Planning working together with the Customer Care Unit, Manager Communications and Customer Care, Office of the MEC and the Office of the Head of Department need to sit down and craft the vision of the Unit. Buy-in from the Senior Management, Education Advisory Council and District Managers need to be sourced so that the vision will encapsulate what the direction of the Department will be.

The vision will then be communicated with all stakeholders, that is, customers, personnel, learners, parents, organizations with interest in education and the general public.

5.3.3 Escalating the Unit to a fully-fledged Directorate

The Customer Care Unit needs to be escalated to a fully-fledged Directorate. This will help in communication, decision-making and resourcing.

5.3.4 Human Resources

Senior Management and Human Resources Management needs to prioritize employing qualified people with relevant experience to this Unit. Areas of experience to be considered would be Human Resources, Supply Chain Management, Salaries, Infrastructure, Assessment and Examination, because most complaints emanate from these Units, having qualified officials in these areas would expedite the process.

5.3.5 Resourcing

Office: the Customer Care office needs to be closer to the Main entrance so that it is visible to incoming customers.

Front and Back office – there should be a back office established. The front office would deal with walk-in clients and incoming calls. The back office will deal with resolving complaints and queries and responding to customers in writing. Officials in the front and back office would be the experienced officials who will be able to deal with the queries on the spot.
Software for complaints management – there is a need for up to date Complaints Management software that can easily generate reports required, traceable, trustworthy, and cannot be manipulated in terms of reporting. Managers in their different units must be able to receive a complaint through email with target dates and reminders so that this can be escalated to the next level of management should there be no response.

5.3.6 Performance Management

Looking at the Key Performance Areas of the Customer Care Officials, the researcher could observe that the duties are clearly defined but they were not measurable. The Key Performance Areas need to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. The manager concerned together with the Human Resource Development Practitioner need to set achievable goals with clearly defined tasks for each day.

5.3.7 Training and capacitating

The following are suggestions relating to training and capacitating:

- Relevant training should be provided for Customer Care officials and continuous training programmes to keep officials encouraged and customer oriented.
- As identified earlier, key skills that need to be developed in Customer Care officials include, communication, empathy and understanding, presentation, decision-making, problem solving, assertiveness, professionalism, complaints management and interpersonal skills.
- All staff including Management should be trained on Customer Care and the importance of treating customers well.
- Inclusion of Customer Care and Batho Pele principles in the Orientation and Induction Programmes. These programmes must be made practical; they must tackle real issues that have come to Customer Care and role play imaginary consultations.
5.3.7 Consultation

The purpose of Customer Care as outlined in the Provincial Customer Care Policy Handbook includes, a responsibility to communicate, consult and cooperate with customers and stakeholders, to establish what they need, provide a wide choice fitting to the services required; reminding all public servants to interact with customers, business partners and citizens in a courteous, professional manner, respond to their identified needs and integrate the needs into program planning and implementation.

The Department should hold Imbizos or participation programmes where it will get the views of the public, employees, learners, parents and all people that have an interest in education.

5.3.8 Awareness campaigns and workshops

There must Customer Care awareness campaigns at Head Office and in all districts to ensure that people are aware of what Customer Care stands for. Customer Care Unit working together with Human Resources should ensure that in all the workshops conducted in the Department, there is a slot for Customer Care and Batho Pele principles.

5.4 Limitations to this study

This study was conducted at the Head Office of the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The researcher is a full time employee of the Eastern Cape Department of Education where she serves as a Senior Administrative Officer under the Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretariat Services. This fact made it very difficult for the researcher to go beyond Head Office due to the amount of work and time constraints.

The findings of the study were limited to Head Office although it could be helpful as a way forward for Clusters, Districts and Circuit offices of the Eastern Cape Department of Education and beyond.
The researcher also aspired to interview one Manager in the Office of the Member of the Executive Council as the highest office in the Department; all efforts to do so were not successful due to the Managers’ work schedule.

5.5 Suggested areas for further study

Research experts such as Leedy and Ormrod (2005:6) have rightfully pointed out that research is not often beyond question, this is because they reason out that in exploring one area, the researcher may come across additional problems that need to be resolved. In case of the findings that came up from this study, the researcher believed that the following areas may need further study:

- Appropriate Complaints Management System for the Department of Education
- Review of Service Standards
- Strategic Planning and as a change management tool
- Establishment of Customer Care Unit in Districts
- Organizational Culture
5.6 Conclusion

The background of this study highlighted that there has been a track record of unresolved complaints and neglect of customer’s needs. In particular it was observed that the Customer Care Unit does not meet the purpose and objectives for which it was established and is also unable to meet the service standards target set by the Department and the Province. Furthermore Customer Care was established with the aim of ensuring that the Customers of the Department have access to the Department in order to voice their satisfaction and dissatisfaction about the services they receive.

The rationale behind this undertaking therefore was to unearth what the Customer Care Unit of the Department of Education in the Province of the Eastern Cape do or fail to do as the face of the Department in order to accomplish the purpose for which it was established. This research undertaking has served as an eye opener to the researcher as she began to understand the plight of the customers of the Department as well as the circumstances the Customer Care officials work under. It is the opinion of the researcher that the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape Province should seriously consider the findings and implement the recommendations from this study for it to have healthy relations with its customers and thereby eliminating some of the media provoking issues.


Badler, H. 2004. *Quality Customer Care: The ultimate solution to improving the level of service to your client*. Pinetown: Reach Publishers


*Communications and Customer Care*: A synergistic perspective presented by Mr Siyanda Manana – Director Communication Department of Health EC, 26 October 2007: 11


Joshua, J. 2000. Ethics Management Available online: Joshua@ethics.org


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APPENDIX 2: Letter to Department of Education Requesting Permission to conduct Research

59343 Ungleya Crescent
Sunnyridge
East London
5201

The Head of Department

Eastern Cape Department of Education

Private Bag X0032
Bisho
5605

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH

I currently registered for the Master of Arts degree in Public Administration at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. One of the requirements for the completion of my studies is a treatise or research. My research topic is:

ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER CARE UNIT AT THE DEPARTMENT EDUCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE
The purpose of this research is to evaluate the role of Customer Care so as to identify if it meets the purpose and objectives for which it was established, identify challenges and come up with strategies to ensure the unit meets its objectives.

I hereby request permission from the Department of Education to undertake my research at Head Office. Participation of the respondents will be voluntary with the option of withdrawing at any stage of the process. There will be no consequences for anyone who does not wish to participate. An informed consent will be requested before the respondents participate in the research.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. Information received will be utilized in such a way that the respondents cannot be identified. The final report will not include identifying information.

An interview schedule will be used to collect data from the officials of the department. Respondents will be informed that they are not obliged to answer all the questions. If they feel uncomfortable about certain questions they need not answer them.

By participating, the respondents will contribute towards investigating the role of Customer Care in the Department of Education. The research findings will be disseminated to the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Yours faithfully

Babalwa Mkutukana

Student Number: 209262488
APPENDIX 3: Approval to conduct Research from the Department of Education
11 April 2011

Babalwa Mkutukana
59343 Ungoya Crescent
Sunnyridge
EAST LONDON
5200

Dear Ms Mkutukana

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH FOR A MASTER'S THESIS: ROLE OF CUSTOMER CARE UNIT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.

2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research at Head Office of the Eastern Cape Department of Education is hereby approved on condition that:

   a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;

   b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;

   c. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoe) to the District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;

   d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;
e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, as *educators* programmes should not be interrupted;

f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services;

g. the research may not be conducted during the fourth school term, except in cases where a special well motivated request is received;

h. your research will be limited to those schools or institutions for which approval has been granted;

i. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis. This must also be in an electronic format.

j. you are requested to provide the above to the Director: The Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services upon completion of your research.

k. you comply to all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document completed by you.

l. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).

m. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services.

3. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Director, Dr. Annetia Heerkroo on 043 702 7428 or mobile number 083 271 0715 and email: annetia.heerkroo@edu.ecprov.gov.za should you need any assistance.

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Advocate M. Minyana

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION
APPENDIX 4: Letter to Participants

59343 Ungeya Crescent
Sunnyridge
East London
5201

Participant
Eastern Cape Department of Education
Private Bag X0032
Bisho
5605

Dear Sir/ Madam

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I am currently registered for the Master of Arts degree in Public Administration at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. My research topic is:

ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER CARE UNIT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE EASTERN CAPE
The purpose of this research is to evaluate the role of Customer Care so as to identify if it meets the purpose and objectives for which it was established, identify challenges and come up with strategies to ensure the unit meets its objectives.

As an employee of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDE) I request that you participate in this research by answering the questions. Participation is voluntary with the option of withdrawing at any stage of the process. There will be no consequences for anyone who does not wish to participate.

Confidentiality is ensured and information received will be utilized in such a way that you cannot be identified. The final report will not include identifying information. You are not obliged to answer all the questions. If you feel uncomfortable to answer certain questions, you may not answer them.

By participating in this study you will contribute towards investigating the role of Customer Care in the Department of Education. The research findings will be disseminated to the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

Babalwa Mkutukana

Student Number: 209202488
APPENDIX 5: Interview Schedules

Appendix 5A – Managers

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

MANAGERS

1. How long have you been employed in this position?

2. What are the objectives of this unit?

3. Are these objectives included in the individual Performance Contracts of the officials of the Customer Care Unit?

4. How often is the performance of the officials of the Customer Care Unit reviewed?

5. Are there set standards for Customer Care?
   Explain:

6. What skills are necessary for Customer Care officials?

7. What support does your office give to the Customer Care unit?

8. What kind of training and capacitating has been done to ensure that these officials are on par with the changes in the department and in the Public Sector as a whole?

9. Is the unit functioning optimally and meeting its objectives?

10. In your view are other officials in the Department aware of Customer Care?
   Explain:

11. What can you suggest that would ensure that this unit functions optimally and meet all its objectives?
Appendix 5B – Officials of the Customer Care Unit

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

OFFICIALS OF THE CUSTOMER CARE UNIT

1. How long have you been employed in this unit?

2. What type of work do you do in this Unit?
   Explain:

3. Who are your customers?

4. Do you know the objectives of the Customer Care unit?

5. Are these objectives included in your Performance Contract and how often is your performance reviewed?

6. Are you familiar with the Batho Pele Principles and what is the contribution of Batho Pele in the work that you do?

7. What skills do you think are necessary for a Customer Care official?

8. What challenges do you encounter in relation to your work?

9. What do you think can be done to minimize those challenges?

10. In relation to complaints management, what is the response time set and are you responding to enquiries within the set response time?
11. In your view are other officials in the Department aware of Customer Care? 
   Explain:

12. Do you get support from the Principal’s office and what kind of support?

13. What do you understand to be the role of the Customer Care Unit in the 
    Department?

14. What can you suggest that would ensure that this unit functions optimally and meet 
    all its objectives?
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

OFFICIALS IN THE DEPARTMENT

1. What is your position in the Department and from which unit of the Department?

2. How long have you been employed in this position?

3. What do you know about Customer Care?

4. What is your understanding of Batho Pele?

5. What do you understand to be the role of the Customer Care Unit in the Department?

6. What is your role towards Customer Care?

7. What support does your office give to the Customer Care unit?

8. In your view are other officials in the Department aware of Customer Care? Explain:

9. What can you suggest that would ensure that this unit functions optimally and meet all its objectives?
APPENDIX 6: Complaints Database

CUSTOMER CARE COMPLAINTS DATABASE

PERIOD: NOVEMBER 2009 TO NOVEMBER 2011

Categories: 1 – Employee benefits; 2 – Suppliers not paid; 3 – Scholar Transport & School Nutrition;
4 – Ill-treatment by staff; 5 – School Infrastructure; 6 - Other

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