



**Rhodes Business School**  
*Leadership for Sustainability*

**EXPLORING SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS A KEY COMPETENCE IN  
DRIVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT  
PLAN OF A SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITY**

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## ABSTRACT

Situational leadership is relevant to any organisation responsible for the delivery of services. Senior public sector leaders must cultivate the characteristics necessary to drive the implementation of initiatives geared towards meeting the developmental objectives of local government.

The introduction of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the municipality for the political term beginning in August 2016 provided a prospect of investigating the management of the implementation of this strategic blueprint in the context of the type of leadership styles prevalent in the local government environment. This dissertation therefore elucidates the idea of situational leadership as a key competence in driving the implementation of the IDP. This is through an examination of the understandings of twelve managers involved in driving this implementation.

This research took the form of an evaluation case study. The critical incident technique was used to establish from the managers, as part of the interviews, a particular incident relevant to the delivery of services in line with the IDP. The focus in engaging with research participants was on their exercise of leadership as managers through the various contexts/ situations that arise within their working environment.

The perspective gleaned from the participants is one which demonstrates the application of the model of situational leadership in a given sector. Furthermore, the study pinpointed the need to consider situational leadership through situation-specific lenses that take on board the role of relationships, organisational culture and its perceived impact on the performance of the organisation.

The Case Study of the application of situational leadership provides insight into the myriad of challenges faced by local government leaders in driving service delivery imperatives. This is achieved through interviews with participants and the use of inductive thematic analysis as a tool of analysis. It provides an example of the value to be derived from situational leadership for leaders wanting to reach new frontiers in the work that they do. Ultimately, the service delivery expectations must be satisfied by those on whom this responsibility falls.

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# Contents

ABSTRACT .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement .....	2
1.3 The Nature of Situational Leadership .....	3
1.4 Research Methodology.....	3
1.5 Research Aims, Goals and Questions .....	3
1.6 Dissertation Outline .....	5
1.7 Conclusion .....	6
CHAPTER TWO.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 What is Situational Leadership?.....	7
2.3 Relationship between Situational Leadership and Organisational Behaviour.....	16
2.4 How can Leadership influence Performance within an Organisation?.....	17
2.5 Conclusion .....	20
CHAPTER THREE .....	21
3.1 Introduction.....	21
3.2 The Goals of the Research .....	21
3.3 The Research Paradigm.....	22
3.4 The Participants in the Research .....	23
3.5 Interviews as Data-Gathering Tools.....	24
3.6 The Approach to the Analysis of Collected Data.....	26
3.7 Ethical Implications of the Research.....	27
3.8 Credibility, trustworthiness, transferability and Researcher Bias .....	27
3.9 Drawbacks of the research methodology .....	28
3.10 Conclusion .....	28
CHAPTER FOUR .....	29
4.1 Introduction.....	29
4.2 Recognising the need for renewal .....	30
4.3 The importance of choosing the right situational leadership style .....	32
4.4 Building a culture of adaptability and responsiveness .....	33
4.5 Reflections on autonomy and team performance .....	34
4.6 Strategic approaches to management decision-making.....	35
4.7 Conclusion .....	36
CHAPTER FIVE.....	37
5.1 Introduction.....	37

5.2	Aims, understandings, themes and their significance .....	37
5.3	Conclusion .....	47
CHAPTER SIX .....		49
6.1	Introduction .....	49
6.2	A Summary of the Main Findings of the Research .....	50
6.3	Potential Value of the Local Government Case Study .....	51
6.4	The Limitations of the Research .....	52
6.5	Concluding Remarks .....	52
LIST OF REFERENCES.....		53
APPENDIX A- Interview Questions .....		60
APPENDIX B- Ethics Approval Letter .....		62

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

*The gates of opportunity and advancement swing on these four hinges: initiative, industry, insight and integrity.*

(William Arthur Ward, author)

### 1.1 Introduction

The Eastern Cape province of South Africa is endowed with rich natural resources and the diversity of its people (Glavocic & Boonzaier, 2007). The municipality that is the subject of this study is located in the Eastern Cape and is one whose areas of jurisdiction include urban, rural and township communities.

It was established as a local municipality following South Africa's reorganisation of municipal areas. There are currently eight metropolitan municipalities, 44 district municipalities and 226 local municipalities in South Africa making up a total of 278 municipalities (South African Government, 2018).

Within the municipality's administration, the Office of the City Manager plays a strategic role in the planning, evaluating and controlling of the work done by other departments. The Corporate Services Directorate is tasked with all human resource and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) related matters of the institution and thus fulfils a key role in the effective functioning of the municipality.

Local government has the mandate of overcoming the injustices of the past through the promotion of local economic development, job creation, basic service delivery and housing and infrastructure provision. Considering the developmental agenda of local government, it is incumbent upon municipalities to put systems in place to enable the realisation of these objectives and ensure that the right personnel is sourced to drive the implementation of strategic

blueprints like the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in ways that are productive, sustainable and financially viable (De Visser, 2005).

The South African local government elections of August 2016 heralded a new dawn in this sphere of government. The highly contested election saw changes in the leadership of municipalities big-and-small across the country (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2017). Following this watershed election, the municipality published its 2016-2021 IDP which would serve as the municipality's blueprint for the ensuing political term. This IDP identified five Key Performance Areas and would be subject to annual review by the municipal Council.

The challenge confronting the municipal administration mandated with driving the implementation of the IDP was in adopting leadership styles congruent with the developmental agenda of the IDP and inculcating a culture of service delivery excellence capable of supporting other user departments as well as meeting the obligations imposed on local government by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

This chapter introduces the notion of situational leadership and the problem statement attached to this study, as well as the research methodology undertaken. The research aims, goals and objectives are also presented. This is followed by an outline of what the dissertation entails and concludes with a brief overview of the chapters that follow.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

In addressing the research aims of this research, a problem statement is required to bring to the fore the contemporary issues at play. Given the over-arching mandate of municipalities to provide services to their communities, there is an inherent responsibility placed on managers to conduct themselves in a manner which supports the implementation of legislative and institutional blueprints.

The issue needing to be addressed in this context relates to how managers make sense of their responsibilities and how these perspectives shape the manner in which they execute their responsibilities on a day-to-day basis in pursuit of achieving their institutional and legislative mandate.

### 1.3 The Nature of Situational Leadership

The adoption of the 2016-2021 IDP presented an opportunity to evaluate situational leadership as a key competence in driving its implementation in the context of organisational behaviour within local government administration.

The gap identified by the researcher, being the question of how leaders in the local government environment use situational leadership to drive the implementation of their mandate, was occasioned by the need to gain insight to critical questions that would challenge notions around the significance or lack thereof of situational leadership in the sector. These insights would be derived from first-hand accounts of leaders within the organisation. Furthermore, it was desired to use such insights to pinpoint successes, challenges, shortfalls and opportunities in maximising the value proposition of the municipality to the ratepayers and the community at large.

### 1.4 Research Methodology

This report utilises the single, evaluation case study method as it afforded the researcher an opportunity to understand and gain perspective through engagement with people.

The participants were key leadership figures in the Office of the City Manager and the Corporate Services Directorate respectively. All these managers play a significant role in driving the implementation of the IDP in the municipality and come from diversified academic, professional and operational disciplines. In total, twelve managers participated in the case study, sharing their experiences of situational leadership as a key competence in driving the implementation of the IDP.

### 1.5 Research Aims, Goals and Questions

The aim of the research has been to explore how leaders influence and manage performance in organisations whose core business is to deliver services as per defined objectives. The research seeks to describe how and why leaders utilise each of the six leadership styles captured in Goleman's (2000) model of situational leadership in local government organisations to give effect to the IDP process that captures the full intent and organisational mandate of a

municipality. It is hoped that their respective outlooks illustrate a multi-faceted understanding of the nature of effective situational leadership.

Interviews were conducted with these managers aimed at realising the goals of the research, which are to explore:

- How do leaders use various leadership styles to fulfil their respective management roles and what influences them to adopt a particular style and when;
- How do leaders achieve their objectives using the situational leadership styles; and
- How and when the use of these varied leadership styles have reflected on performance in the IDP Review (approved by Council) in light of the predefined objectives, strategies, targets, projects and financial and operational plans.

In this qualitative study, the researcher has sought to articulate and interpret how the research participants viewed themselves, their environment and their conduct in driving the implementation of the IDP of a South African municipality. The qualitative approach in this social science research is congruent with the interpretive paradigm. It recognises the necessity of understanding and gaining insight through engagement with people to understand the meaning that they attach to their activities in a given setting (De Vos et al., 2011).

Therefore, thematic analysis, being one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research, was used. In the research context, themes may refer to the important points regarding the research data. The research has utilised inductive thematic analysis. Inductive analysis is whereby the recognised themes are made related to the data and may have little to do with the research questions themselves (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

In interpreting the data and communicating the findings, the researcher has attempted to ensure a structured and adequately robust understanding that speaks to the research paradigm. Central to this has been the inherent need to showcase authentic and powerful reflections of the participants with their experiences of situational leadership in the context of local government administration being the cornerstone of this research.

The researcher has taken cognisance of the fact that his proximity to the implementation of the IDP that he has researched, has made the qualitative findings that have been lifted more complex and at times harder to present as a comprehensively complete and valid understanding of the phenomenon. That said, it is believed that this admitted internal analysis has yielded benefit in researching and submitting a logical and evaluative overview of what has been uncovered.

## 1.6 Dissertation Outline

In Chapter 2, the review of the literature is designed to dissect the following key issues: what is situational leadership? How does situational leadership combine with the mandate of an organisation and what leadership styles and approaches are most appropriate for service delivery implementation?

In Chapter 3, the research methodology adopted is discussed in more detail. Herein, the goals of the research are outlined, the research paradigm articulated, motivation for the relevance of the single, evaluation case study method presented and reference to the participants, data-gathering techniques and methods of analysis is made. The ethical considerations will also be reflected upon as well as the assessment of possible limitations of the methodology of choice.

In Chapter 4, the views elicited during the interviews are narrated. The analysis of the data also takes place in this chapter as the substantive pieces of information supplied by the research participants are collated and assembled in the correct themes and sub-themes. The purpose of this exercise is to present a carefully constructed picture reflecting how managers have understood their role as leaders in driving the implementation of the IDP of the municipality.

In Chapter 5, a discussion of the findings follows. The viewpoints of the participants are arranged under the themes mentioned in the preceding chapter. These perspectives are then critically evaluated to understand and draw linkages between the findings and the research questions posed in this paper.

Chapter 6 summarises the significant findings of the study. The intrinsic value of the research is then examined by making appropriate recommendations for future practices and exploring

potential avenues for further research on situational leadership. Lastly, the chapter captures the limitations of the study undertaken on the implementation of the IDP of a South African municipality.

## 1.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduces certain topics to be explored throughout the study. It provides a context to the research and conveys where it is located. The developmental agenda of local government is captured, with the aim of providing the reader with an overview of the mandate of municipalities such as the one under review. The concept of situational leadership is also introduced alongside the stated methodology, participants, aims and goals with the purpose being to provide the reader with a roadmap of what the study entails. In the chapter that follows, the literature review will highlight the academic framework which forms the basis of this study.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

*The sole advantage of power is that you can do more good.*

(Baltasar Gracian, poet)

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature to guide us in examining the following key questions: what is situational leadership? How does situational leadership combine with the mandate of an organisation and what leadership styles and approaches are most appropriate for service delivery implementation?

In response to these questions, reference is made to traditional schools of leadership. Thereafter, contemporary leadership debates are reflected upon. The researcher then articulates how concepts of situational leadership can be applied within an environment such as that of local government, which carries a public benefit mandate.

At the beginning of this chapter, prevailing leadership theories are explored in response to the first question.

### 2.2 What is Situational Leadership?

#### 2.2.1 The Concept of Situational Leadership in the Context of the Resource-based View

The resource-based view looks toward internal firm resources as sources of competitive advantage and suggests that a range of factors of production may be elastic in supply. That said, the view also argues that because some capabilities can only be developed over time, some factors of production may be inelastic in supply. Firm resources and capabilities are recognised as they reflect the ability of firms to use their resources in generating competitive advantage (Barney, 2001).

A firm's unique capabilities with regard to technical know-how and management are considered to be critical sources of heterogeneity that may provide sustained competitive advantage. It is this heterogeneity of productive services that distinguishes a firm's character. The services that resources will yield will depend on the dominant logic of senior management, though the development of the dominant logic of senior management is partly shaped by the resources at its disposal (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992).

A firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it is implementing a value-creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors (Clulow et al., 2003). It is important to bear in mind that competitive advantage comes about over a period of time and can shift over a period of time. Therefore, in explaining competitive advantage, the resource-based view must incorporate the evolution of time over the resources and capabilities that form the backbone of competitive advantage. According to Helfat & Peteraf (2003), while some capabilities may deal specifically with adaptation, learning and change management, all capabilities have the potential to accommodate change (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003).

In South Africa, there are no competitors for municipalities. Municipalities are driven by rules and budgets and since local government uses monopolies, it is required to heighten its productivity through the leveraging of resources (Osborne, 1993).

In local government, this entails the exploration of the interface between human resources and firm performance (Wright et al., 2001). The failure of an organisation can be attributed to the absence of a specific capability or capabilities (Lawson & Lawson, 2001). The leveraging of internal resources for organisations is key and this speaks to the need for strategic human capital management in organisations in order to fulfil the benchmarks contained in the organisation's mandate (Barney, 2001).

Profit driven firms focus on markets, customers and competition in the value creation process that generates competitive advantage (Slater & Narver, 1994). On the other hand, service-based organisations focus on the public value to be created, sources of legitimacy and support as well as the operational capacity to deliver the value (Moore, 2000).

It is for these reasons that the concept of situational leadership is considered through the lenses of the resource-based view of the firm and organisational behaviour. In the context of local government institutions, the aim is not to maximise profit but rather to sustain competitive

advantage through the leveraging of internal capabilities. These capabilities are the municipal workforce who in unison, deliver the services which form part of the organisation's legal and socio-political mandate.

### 2.2.2 Traditional Theories of Situational Leadership

Human capital incorporates human resource elements such as attitude, competencies, experiences, skills, tacit knowledge and innovativeness of people (Kong & Prior, 2008). Service firms may invest in human capital so that employees can deal with the fluctuating customer demands generated by their strategic positioning. The greater the variance in customer demands, the more sophisticated the skills needed to transform a wider variety of inputs into the service offering (Skaggs & Youndt, 2004). It is therefore suggested that service delivery firms that possess a match between their strategic positioning and human capital will have greater performance (Skaggs & Youndt, 2004).

Management is central to the planning, controlling and monitoring roles undertaken to bolster human capital (Simons, 1994). Scholars have debated how much management and leadership really matters when it comes to predicting and improving organizational performance (Kloppenborg & Petrick, 1999). A study of the United States public sector federal sub-agencies found that integrated leadership in the public sector matters when it comes to improving organizational performance and that it has a positive impact on performance in the federal government (Fernandez et al., 2010).

This raises the prospect of a simultaneous relationship between leadership and performance when using employee attitudes to measure leadership behaviour and traits: good leadership improves performance, but higher levels of performance cause followers to make positive attributions of leaders (Fernandez et al., 2010).

Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard wrote their first article on leadership entitled "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership" (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). The theory and its name were inspired by the changing leadership styles needed by parents at different phases of a child's development with the argument being that a toddler requires a different leadership style to an adolescent or young adult. They felt that the same logic held true for managing newly-appointed workers, developing employees and experienced staff in the workplace (Blanchard et al., 1993).

The initial model represented leadership as two-dimensional in nature. Their research showed that there were two separate leadership behaviours: “Initiating Structure” and “Consideration”. These dimensions then evolved to “Concern for Production” and “Concern for People”. Their work implied that a style which showed both a high concern for people and a high concern for production was indeed the best leadership style (Blanchard et al., 1993).

In 1985, the revised model, Situational Leadership II was published. This version held the notion that managers who practiced situational leadership ought to exercise both directive and supportive behaviours in leading others toward successful task completion. Previous dimensions of “task behaviour” and “relationship behaviour” were ambiguous. Therefore, in the revised model, the directing style replaced the telling style; the coaching style replaced the selling style and the supporting style replaced the participating style. This was because it was found that a manager applying situational leadership needed to embrace both directive and supportive behaviours when guiding others towards the successful completion of a given task (Blanchard et al., 1993).

The revised model also brought to focus the development level of the employee. The Development Level is the extent to which an individual has perfected the attributes necessary for the given task and has acquired a positive mindset towards the task. The previous model stated that the two aspects of Development Level were ability and willingness. The revised model replaces ability with competence and willingness with commitment (Blanchard et al., 1993).

In the broader context of situational leadership, Fiedler’s contingency model should not be overlooked (Fiedler, 1971). It postulated that effective leaders ensured convergence between their leadership styles and the demands of the situation (Peters et al., 1985). Hersey and Blanchard emphasised that great leaders possessed the flexibility to adapt to changing situations by considering existing levels of maturity amongst their subordinates (Blanchard et al., 1993).

In summary, the traditional view of situational leadership identifies with three major propositions: the first being the responsibility of the leader, the second being the behaviour of the leader and the third being the characteristics of the followers. More recent trends arising from the unpredictable and ever-evolving nature of private and public sector governance have

steered researchers towards the study of scenario/ context driven contemporary theories of situational leadership.

### 2.2.3 Contemporary Theories of Situational Leadership

The business world was quick to realise that the new age required an approach that depended upon the individual being considered as a valued component of the company's success (Welbourne, 1997). In the public sector, it was incumbent upon leadership to act in a manner that was purposeful, equitable and in the interests of its people (Binns & Nel, 2002).

Such changes are evident in how the theory of situational leadership has developed over the past half century. The emphasis has now shifted from purely people and process, to rather how-to best deal with contemporary issues and the levels of flexibility that they in turn demand (McCleskey, 2014).

Daniel Goleman's contemporary model of situational leadership is premised on the idea that there are six distinct leadership styles that spring from different components of emotional intelligence. Goleman (2000) describes the six pertinent leadership styles as: visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and commanding. The six leadership styles defined by Goleman were identified as yielding varying results in an organisational context. The research evidences that only four of these six styles consistently have a positive impact on a company's environment and financial success. The coercive and pacesetting styles appear to have yielded a negative impact on these two variables (Kritsonis, 2004).

Goleman's (2000) research posited that leaders who positively influence the working environment yield better results. Notably, the leaders who understood and applied the four positive styles (coaching, affiliative, democratic and authoritative) enjoyed the most preferred environment and organisational performance. Attention must be drawn to the fact that not all leaders possess all six styles of leadership. Fortunately, these styles can be honed through the application of emotional intelligence.

Visionary leadership encompasses the mobilisation of people towards a common vision. Staff understand that what they do matters and why. The visionary leader possesses a "come with me" type of attitude and typically exudes self-confidence and empathy. This style is said to most effective when changes require a new vision or when clear direction is required. This

leader motivates people by articulating and demonstrating how their work fits into the broader vision of the organisation. Standards of success and accompanying rewards are made clear to all. As the vision is worked towards, followers are given the freedom to innovate, experiment and to take calculated risks.

Coaching entails developing people for the future and works particularly well when employees are already aware of their weaknesses and want to improve their performance. It is ineffective when employees are resistant to learning or changing their ways or when the leader lacks the expertise to help the employee along. Coaching leaders seek to ensure that they manage employees in manner that is aligned with their (employees') personal and career aspirations. They excel at delegating and stretching employees through challenging tasks, even though such tasks may take time to complete.

Democratic leadership builds consensus through participation. By spending time soliciting ideas and buy-in, the leader builds trust, respect and commitment. It is a style that encourages flexibility and responsibility but over-reliance on consensus can put off crucial decision-making and escalate conflict amongst staff. Democratic leaders possess collaboration, team leadership and communications as underlying emotional intelligence competencies. By allowing workers to have input in decisions that affect their goals and listening to their concerns, the democratic leader is able to establish what needs to be done in order to keep morale high. Workers in turn develop an awareness of what can and cannot realistically be achieved.

Affiliative leadership creates emotional bonds and harmony. It has a positive effect on communication and promotes the sharing of ideas and inspiration. However, if overly relied upon, staff may feel isolated and rudderless. With this leadership style, people come first. Proponents of this style value individuals and their emotions more than tasks and goals. Flexibility is promoted because team members trust one another, thus fostering innovation and risk taking. Affiliative leaders give people space to do their work in a manner which they as individuals feel is most effective. Feedback is also regular as well as recognition for work well done.

A pacesetter leader expects excellence and self-direction. Pacesetters are obsessive about doing things better and faster and expect others to follow suit, often leaving staff overwhelmed and with diminishing morale. Pacesetter leaders typically exude conscientiousness, drive to achieve and initiative. This style may be used when the objective is to yield quick results from

a motivated and competent team. However, this leader will pinpoint poor performers and demand more from them. Those who do not meet expectations are swiftly replaced. Workers tend to feel that their boss does not trust them to work independently, nor to take initiative.

A commanding leader demands immediate compliance. Flexibility is hardest hit through this approach. The leader's extreme top-down decision-making stifles creativity. People's sense of responsibility and motivation to work towards a shared vision evaporates. Because of the inability to act on their own initiative, people lose their sense of independence and feel little accountability for their performance. Whilst this style works best in crises situations or with problematic employees, it does have the potential to undermine the leader's prime tool of motivating people towards the attainment of a shared common vision (Goleman, 2000).

The theory further holds that there are six factors that influence an organisation's working environment. They are flexibility (freedom to innovate), sense of responsibility, defined standards, aptness of rewards, clarity (pertaining to mission and values), and commitment (to common purpose). All six leadership styles are said to have a measurable effect on each aspect of organisational climate (Goleman, 2000).

According to Goleman (2000), managers capable of switching flexibly among the situational leadership styles (particularly the democratic, affiliative, visionary and coaching styles) have the best climate. Such leaders are sensitive to the impact they have on others and the human capital of the organisation translates this to stronger organisational performance (Goleman, 2000). Goleman further identifies effective leaders as generally holding high levels of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence comprises of, but is not limited to- empathy, motivation, social skills, self-control and self-awareness. Through repetition and discipline, these competencies can be mastered to the benefit of results driven leaders (Kritsonis, 2004).

Hay Group data on the leadership styles of thousands of executives suggests that the most effective executives use a collection of distinct leadership styles- each in the right measure at just the right time (Goleman et al., 2000). Such flexibility is tough to put into action, but it pays off in performance. A leader's emotional intelligence creates a certain culture or work environment (Palmer et al., 2001). High levels of emotional intelligence create a climate of information sharing, trust and healthy risk-taking. Low levels of emotional intelligence give rise to fear and anxiety, given the short-term nature of the productivity of tense and intimidated employees (Goleman et al., 2001).

In a 2007 qualitative investigation into leader behavioural flexibility/ situational leadership amongst Australian managers of Brisbane-based organisations, 20 organisational managers were interviewed. All leaders believed that in order to effectively manage relationships and the influence of environmental factors, it was important to recognise which leadership style would achieve the best outcome for a given situation. People factors such as employee confidence, willingness to learn, tenure, leadership ability, age, motivation and education were all taken on board in determining which situational leadership style to adopt (Sumner-Armstrong et al., 2008).

In a further qualitative study, 17 Australian managers were interviewed around the application of the situational leadership model in their respective workplaces. Overall, the managers felt that situational leadership as a tool was most effective when embedded in the culture of an organisation. Most managers also held the view that situational leadership training was appropriate for junior staff to enable them to understand how they were being managed as well as to consider how they would like to lead in the future.

Managers further attested to the fact that situational leadership was used for managing staff, as well as other management tasks such as counselling, team development, performance appraisals, conflict resolution and initiating new staff. They further proclaimed it as a tool that was effective, easy to use and improved levels of understanding between managers and subordinates (Avery & Ryan, 2002).

The exercise of situational leadership has not been without criticism. From a theoretical point of view, Avery & Ryan (2002) suggest that in the study of situational leadership, the data obtained is restricted to managers' self-reported behaviours. This has the potential to distort the authenticity of findings as some managers may show a reluctance to make statements or narrate experiences of behaviours that may cast them in a negative light. Situational leadership models have also been accused of having few theoretical bases and little research support (Avery & Ryan, 2002).

The situational leadership theory has also been found to lack internal consistency, hold conceptual contradictions and ambiguities. Furthermore, research has revealed that no particular leadership style was effective and that behavioural theories relied on abstract leadership types that were difficult to identify (McCleskey, 2014).

In the public sector, research has shown that leaders must get the work done and in doing so work through people. How they are perceived to balance these factors can be defined as operationally as their style. In addition to style (situational demands), style preference and style range, there is the underlying issue of style quality. Extensive use of a style does not necessarily mean that one is proficient in its use (Van Wart, 2003).

According to Fernandez (2005), a leadership style in government that gives greater discretion to subordinates is negatively correlated with performance when task difficulty is low but has a positive influence on performance when tasks become difficult. Furthermore, a leadership style that actively promotes change can have a negative influence on performance, particularly in the short term (Fernandez, 2005).

A Greek study found that there is a greater prevalence of situational leadership in public organisations than private entities. However, the reward power in public organisations was lower than in private companies in that rewards were largely based on seniority (Bourantas & Papalexandris, 1993).

Ultimately, Goleman (2000) argues that leaders are most effective when they utilise a range of leadership styles at the right time in the appropriate measure. The contextual and situational approach is guided by an attuned level of emotional intelligence held by the manager within the organisation.

#### 2.2.4 The Fluid Nature of Situational Leadership

Contemporary models of situational leadership accurately bring to the fore the need for leaders to continually re-assess factors that inhibit the performance of an organisation. Successful leaders are those capable of tapping into the emotional, psychological and material resources at their organisation's disposal to ensure that followers are fully equipped to service the needs of their stakeholders (Ginsberg & Davies, 2007).

Models of situational leadership therefore provide the relevant theoretical framework upon which a workable programme of action can be implemented. An appreciation of the fact that leaders operate at various levels of an organisation is also important.

The theories explored represent increasing fountains of knowledge that should not rule out further development of new models, nor take for granted the concept of 'everyday' leadership which is often overlooked (Diphofa, 2003).

In the next section of the literature review, the impact of the organisation's mandate on situational leadership is examined.

## 2.3 Relationship between Situational Leadership and Organisational Behaviour

### 2.3.1 Considering the Mandate of Local Government Institutions

The public sector has been under the microscope in recent times to ensure that it promotes best-practice in a manner mirroring that of some of its private sector counterparts (Bradley & Parker, 2001). Consequently, this has bore witness to an increasing number of senior managers in government being recruited from or having had previous experience in the world of commerce.

The *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service* (The Republic of South Africa, 1995) declares that institutional building and management are part of the creation of a strategic framework for change. It promotes the development of strategies that encompass participatory organisational structures, new organisational values and institutions that foster and actively promote change and diversity.

Due to changes in the environment, regular internal and structural adaptations have become necessary in enabling institutions to respond to environmental and political changes. Schwella and Rossouw (2005) identify a broad list of abilities that provide a basis for defining some of the competencies that are necessary for an effective manager. They are, according to Schwella & Rossouw (2005: 763), as follows:

- (a) “the ability to locate and interpret relevant information from written, electronic and people resources and apply it to solve complex, multidimensional problems using processes of analysis, synthesis and systemic thinking;
- (b) the ability to communicate effectively with diverse groups of people and individuals on complex issues;

- (c) the ability to apply scientific and mathematical concepts and use relevant technology effectively;
- (d) the ability to operate effectively in multifunctional teams;
- (e) the ability to use time effectively to manage a variety of tasks; and
- (f) the ability to manage one's own, often multiple careers and balance occupational, family, community and other demands effectively”.

Leading public sector organisations introduces unique and demanding challenges to senior managers looking to drive strategic initiatives in the local government space. This is largely attributable to the fact that such institutions have downplayed the developmental and rational components of organisational mandate due to their lack of orientation towards change, adaptability, innovation, output generation and efficiency (Bradley & Parker, 2000).

#### 2.4 How can Leadership influence Performance within an Organisation?

The resource-based view of the firm identifies strategic human resource management as a means of gaining competitive advantage through people. Resources confer lasting competitive advantage on a firm to the extent that they remain hard to duplicate, have no direct substitutes and enable organisations to pursue opportunities (Richard, 2000). According to the resource-based view (Barney, 2001), the main aim of any organisation is to sustain competitive advantage, organisational performance is used to assess the progress of an organisation and the extent to which it is attaining its goals. It highlights the achievement in any group performance and leaders bear the responsibility of converting the values of followers to promote the vision and mission of the organisation (Choudhary et. al., 2013).

In this concluding section of the literature review, the remaining question from those that were initially posed is addressed. This is achieved by synthesising the work done in the leadership and culture domain with the body of knowledge on organisational performance. The aim of this exercise is to link these disciplines in a manner that allows this chapter to serve as a foundation for the review, analysis and discussion of the research findings.

#### 2.4.1 Effective Situational Leadership

The Fiedler contingency model proposes that “effective groups depend on a proper match between a leader’s style of interacting with subordinates and the degree to which the situation gives control and influence to the leader” (Kritsonis, 2004: 4). The cognitive research theory isolates stress as a situational factor. This theory states that stress has a negative impact on a situation.

According to Goleman (2001), a leader’s emotional state drives performance. Subordinates tend to feed off the energy of an inspirational and upbeat manager. Such managers create an enabling environment where everything is made to feel possible, resulting in stretch goals being achieved, competitors overtaken and entry to new markets being established (Goleman, 2001). Situational leadership also requires leaders to take stock of the four components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (Goleman, 2001).

According to Goleman (2001), self-awareness is the ability to read your own emotions. It is used to gauge your own moods and understand how they are affecting others. Self-management is the skill in controlling emotions and acting in an honest, consistent though flexible manner. Social awareness speaks to the leader’s degree of empathy and organisational intuition and relationship management is the ability to communicate clearly, authoritatively and persuasively in building strong interpersonal bonds in the workplace (Goleman, 2001).

#### 2.4.2 The Management of Performance within Organisations

Leaders are gradually needing to make the transition from performance measurement to performance management. They must be capable of anticipating the changes necessary to the strategic direction of the organisation, as well as developing a clear methodology for effecting strategic change. The successful response to these two tasks will form the basis of good performance management (Amaratunga & Baldry, 2002).

The world we live in is becoming increasingly complex and intertwined. Technology, advancement in telecommunications, global innovation, a shifting balance of forces socially and politically, a rise in populist movements around the globe and the rapid pace of

globalisation has had a significant impact on the environment under which organisations are required to operate (Sheffield et al., 2013).

Performance measures within an organisation can be designed based on several different disciplinary approaches. According to (Waggoner et al., 1999:54) some of these include, but are not limited to the following:

- (1) “the engineering approach, which relates expected output to specified input at each stage in the value chain and thus measures the input/output ratio;
- (2) the systems approach, which sets objectives for each work unit or individual and measures the achievement of these objectives;
- (3) the management accounting approach, which measures the achievement of a set of financial results by each cost/ performance centre; and
- (4) the ‘conformance to specifications’ variant of quality management approaches, which advocates the use of a checklist of attributes of a product or service together with its service delivery system”.

The task of the leader is to nurture an integrated appreciation of all the levers that culminate in successful organisational performance. In the local government environment, the systems approach and the conformance to specifications variant are of particular relevance (Greyling, 2012).

#### 2.4.3 The Role of Organisational Mandate in the Management of Performance

In earlier reflection on this area, it was submitted that a successful leader must be capable of inculcating behaviours and thereby influence the organisation in ways that will create fertile ground for the implementation of deliverables. According to Peters (2003), leaders must master their organisations and effective leaders know that whilst you can’t change people, you can change climates.

Den Hartog & Verburg (2004) postulate that practices aligned with staff development and training, active participation, empowerment through decision-making, dissemination of information and equitable compensation systems are conducive to high performance levels in organisations.

The onus is on leaders to assist the organisation in defining its present- inclusive of the attitudes that limit its potential. Leaders must then discover an ideal vision of what ought to be and enable staff to slot into their own roles within that vision (Goleman et al., 2001).

## 2.5 Conclusion

People are indeed the lifeblood of any organisation and it is incumbent upon the leader to create an enabling environment that promotes the organisational values of the institution to ensure that the workforce is capable of consistently performing at optimal levels.

In this Chapter, the purpose of the literature review in this study as a means to provide a theoretical framework and context to this study was introduced. The researcher expounded upon the definition of situational leadership and tracked its development as a theory to more contemporary application in the organisational context. He then explored the relationship between situational leadership and organisational behaviour and how this interface is encountered in organisations.

In this section, how situational leadership can influence performance within an organisation was explored. Furthermore, the various leadership styles that the model of situational leadership recognises were looked at, as well as the impact that these styles have yielded in organisations reviewed. The different levers of organisational performance were also touched on and the role leadership plays in determining the success or failure of an organisation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*Deeply built into human beings is the desire to excel. It is the essence of nature for men to compete if not with others at least with themselves and perhaps competing with oneself, ever trying to improve present performance is the highest form of competition.*

(Norman Vincent Peale, 2003, author)

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the goals of the research, the research paradigm is explained, and submissions made on the appropriateness of the decision to use the evaluation case study method. The research participants are outlined, data gathering techniques and tools of analysis reviewed as well as reflection on ethical issues confronted and potential drawbacks of the methodology.

#### 3.2 The Goals of the Research

The primary aim of the research is to describe how and why leaders utilise each of the six leadership styles captured in Goleman's model of situational leadership in local government organisations to give effect to the IDP process that captures the full intent and organisational mandate of a municipality. In meeting the objectives of the research, the study will describe how leaders infuse an enabling environment through the use of these leadership styles within their respective departments.

The research will also capture:

- How do leaders use various leadership styles to fulfil their respective management roles and what influences them to adopt a particular style and when;
- How do leaders achieve their objectives using situational leadership styles; and

- How and when the use of these varied leadership styles have reflected on performance in the IDP Review (approved by Council) in light of the predefined objectives, strategies, targets, projects and financial & operational plans.

The propositions put forward in this case study are that:

- Given the extent to which the local government framework is regulated, leaders are constrained to the use of a limited number of the leadership styles put forward by Goleman (2000);
- The leadership styles put forward by Goleman (2000) can never be used in equal measure in the local government environment;
- The vast array of stakeholders in local government means that more democratic and affiliative leadership styles will enjoy popularity given the very public nature of public sector leadership; and
- There is no single, most appropriate leadership style that a manager can rely on at all times.

### 3.3 The Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is a framework, viewpoint or worldview premised on people's assumptions about the social environment and the body of knowledge (De Vos et al., 2011). The qualitative approach in this social science research is congruent with the interpretive paradigm. It recognises the necessity of understanding and gaining insight through engagement with people to understand the meaning that they attach to their activities in a particular setting. Interpretivism is based on the assumption that reality should be interpreted through the meaning that the research participants attach to their world (De Vos et al., 2011).

The qualitative researcher endeavours to obtain a better understanding of complex situations. The research is often exploratory in nature (as is the case in this study) and researchers are able to use their observations to develop theory. A study is qualitative if its primary purpose is to describe a situation, problem or event. In the entire qualitative research process, the researcher focuses on the meaning that the participants attach to an issue, rather than their own diagnosis of a problem (De Vos et al., 2011).

This research is an evaluation case study. The critical incident technique will be used to establish from the managers, as part of the interviews, a particular incident relevant to the delivery of services in line with the IDP. The focus in engaging with research participants will be on their exercise of leadership as managers through the various contexts/ situations that arise.

Critical incident technique is best applied when critically testing a theory's proposition, such as the situational leadership theory, where the theory must predict the behaviour of a specific person or instance (De Vos et al., 2011). An evaluation of the type of responses such leadership styles elicited from them/ their subordinates in terms of the implementation of the relevant component of the IDP will then follow.

The decision to use the evaluation case study method is informed by the blend of the author's research orientation and the incidents that one sought to investigate through the research. The researcher was eager to explore how leaders interpreted their role in the implementation of the IDP, particularly in light of the positions they occupied in the Office of the City Manager and Directorate of Corporate Services, respectively. This phenomenon being to understand how leaders made sense of their experiences. Making sense of the experience of participants required the researcher to undertake the process of inductive thematic analysis. Thematic analysis as an independent qualitative descriptive approach is mainly described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). This process is comprehensively depicted in subsequent chapters of this study.

### 3.4 The Participants in the Research

The municipality currently employs approximately 60 senior managers across 10 directorates. From this population, a sample of fourteen managers was selected. The participants were all located amongst the key leadership personnel in the Office of the City Manager and the Directorate of Corporate Services in the municipality and were selected based on their proximity to the implementation of the municipality's service delivery mandate. Though not inclusive of all the managers in these directorates, the participants were identified as being most suitable in engaging with the research questions based on their experience, expertise and services rendered to the institution. The Heads of Department (HODs) of these two departments report directly to the City Manager, whilst below them are General/ Senior Managers and the

third-tier managers are Program managers. Of the fourteen managers approached, twelve were interviewed.

These individuals occupied strategic positions in the institution and played central roles in the implementation of the service delivery imperatives outlined in the IDP. All research participants took part in interviews which consisted of research questions (detailed in the appendix) designed at describing the influence of situational leadership and its impact on driving the implementation of the IDP; appraising the success factors in the application of situational leadership; and identifying and evaluating key leadership styles in propelling service delivery in the local government sector.

These twelve managers are responsible for the allocation and monitoring of work undertaken by subordinates, as well as creating an enabling environment for the discharging of their duties. Each manager has three to five immediate subordinates reporting directly to them. Typically, the HODs are responsible for the allocation of work in their respective departments. HODs will delegate functions to General Managers and Senior Managers and they in turn will cascade operational issues to their subordinates whilst still reporting to the HOD. HODs are required to prepare any reports to Council pertaining to issues within their respective departments.

### 3.5 Interviews as Data-Gathering Tools

The approach to data collection was through interviews. Interviewing is considered the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research. The researcher obtains information through the direct interchange with an individual or group that is expected to possess the knowledge they seek (DePoy & Gibson, 2008). The strategy of using in-depth, open-ended interviews was geared at uncovering lived experiences that would bring to life the paradigm within which one sought to pursue the research goals.

The interview is a social pact designed to facilitate the exchange of perspectives between the researcher and the participant. It is the responsibility of the researcher to be inclusive and expansive when selecting participants to ensure a richness and diversity of views (De Vos et al., 2011). The interview itself entails not only a description of the experience but also a reflection on the experience.

To satisfy the research goals, questions prepared from the literature review were geared towards eliciting from participants, a picture of the role played by managers in the context of implementing the IDP of the municipality. To achieve this outcome, the researcher had to avoid approaching the interviews in a restrictive and rigid fashion, but rather attempt to allow the participants to dictate the flow of the engagement and the freedom to express themselves on the areas pertinent to the research context.

The researcher then facilitated meetings with the participants prior to the interviews, providing them with a copy of the interview questions and letter outlining the purpose and aims of the research. These meetings were also directed to allay any concerns held by the respondents and to answer points of clarity where needed. Though not recorded, these meetings would then be followed by a further written reminder of the date, time and venue of the research interview.

The interviews were recorded on a voice recorder with consent having been received from the respondent. Managers in the Office of the City Manager were interviewed first, followed by those in the Corporate Services Directorate. The interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes in duration. They produced a rich diversity of learnings, perspectives, information and experiences from the respondents. Handwritten notes were kept, though in the circumstances a *verbatim* recording of proceedings would have been impractical and ultimately interrupted the flow of the interview.

Participants were then afforded the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and the contents of the research report prior to submission through the process of member checking.

The questions which were posed to the research participants are appended to this report. The questions began with determining the profile of the respondent according to their responsibilities and experience. Most questions were phrased in such a way that the respondent would determine a particular incident, articulate details of the incident (fact-finding), identify the issues underlying the incident, suggest possible solutions to the issue and then evaluate whether the suggested solution was appropriate. Emphasis was placed on when managers had to use each of the six leadership styles postulated by Goleman (2000), how such styles were used and whether the style and how it was used yielded the intended outcome. This approach is in accordance with the critical incident technique.

Goleman's (2000) model of situational leadership was used as a guide in formulating questions which would align with the objectives of the research. Through the framing of the questions,

the researcher was able to ascertain how leaders use the leadership styles captured in Goleman's model to give effect to the municipality's over-arching mandate.

### 3.6 The Approach to the Analysis of Collected Data

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), there is no singularly efficient approach to qualitative data analysis. Weiss (1998) postulates that the aim of analysis is to convert a mass of raw data into a coherent account and goes on to suggest a logical process for qualitative data analysis which was used in this study.

If qualitative research is to yield meaningful results, it becomes important that the material under review is analysed methodically. Consequently, thematic analysis seeks to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels and thematic networks aim to facilitate the depiction of these themes. The process of analysis is then split into three stages, namely: the breakdown of text, exploration of the text and integration of the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

In this study, inductive thematic analysis was preferred in the analysis of data. The inductive approach is used when the identified themes are strongly linked to the data. It is most useful when, as in the case under review, the data has been collected via interview or focus group. It is possible that the themes may have little relationship to the specific questions posed to the participants. Therefore, it can be said that the thematic analysis undertaken in this study was data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data was analysed by describing the nature of the IDP, understanding how leaders adopt a multitude of leadership styles as a key competence for driving the IDP process, ruling out rival explanations, interpreting through deducting from theory and fashioning recommendations. Data was also analysed through discovery and description of patterns through explanation building. The patterns may point to a theoretical understanding of situational leadership in the context of service delivery.

In accordance with the qualitative, story-telling strategy undertaken, the results are discussed in narrative form. The presentation thereof is a critical though measured description of the research findings.

### 3.7 Ethical Implications of the Research

Being an insider of the institution places an ethical responsibility on the researcher. Since the primary aim of the study is to understand how situational leadership acts as a key competence in service delivery implementation, the risk of manipulation of findings is diminished as the researcher has not interviewed any of his own subordinates and has relied on the understanding of experiences as independently narrated by the respective managers. Notwithstanding this degree of comfort, the proximity to the phenomenon has made the evidence more complex and at times harder to process. Approval from the Human Ethics subcommittee of the University's Ethical Standards Committee was obtained under reference number 2019-0349-702 on 16 July 2019 for the purposes of this study.

As the basis of the study is focused on human behaviour, attitudes and interactions in achieving organisational goals, participants had to be put at ease that their contributions will be handled in a responsible and ethical manner (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Anonymity is one way in which confidentiality is operationalised (Wiles et al., 2008). Participants were given forms in which they indicated their consent to form part of this study and that their inputs would be handled with the strictest of confidence. This was to ensure that participants do not feel that their responses may lead to reprisals or prejudice in the workplace.

Reasons for the study and how ethical guidelines would be honoured were clarified. A commitment to promote the study as a learning experience for all involved and an undertaking to refrain from making value judgments about participants' views even if in direct conflict with the researcher was also made (De Vos et al., 2011). Agreement was reached around the use of anonymised quotes in the study publication. Anonymity can also be achieved through the use of pseudonyms. Risk to the organisation was mitigated by uplifting publicly available information when aspects of organisational performance were considered. The researcher has avoided bias, real or imagined, through the calibre of knowledge and rich insights provided by the participants.

### 3.8 Credibility, trustworthiness, transferability and Researcher Bias

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher. A qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experience are immediately recognized by individuals that share the

same experience. Trustworthiness refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represent the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints.

The researcher can demonstrate trustworthiness by describing how conclusions and interpretations were established and exemplifying that the findings were derived directly from the data. In reporting qualitative research, this can be exhibited by providing rich quotes from the participants that depict each emerging theme. Transferability refers to findings that can be applied to other settings or groups. A qualitative study has met this criterion if the results have meaning to individuals not involved in the study and readers can associate the results with their own experiences (Cope, 2014).

### 3.9 Drawbacks of the research methodology

The primary limitation of the evaluative case study method lies in the fact that the findings may not be readily transferable to other settings requiring situational leadership in giving effect to the service delivery imperatives of a municipality. Nevertheless, the researcher has endeavoured to provide a picture of the data which is hoped will further legitimise the perspectives shared by the research participants.

### 3.10 Conclusion

In concluding the chapter, the researcher is mindful that such a case study requires extension beyond a mere overview of process and techniques to be adopted. He has sought to ensure solid alignment between the goals of the research, the research paradigm and the data-gathering tools that were deployed. As a researcher, the duty is to present to the reader in the chapter that follows, a logical and interpretive summary of what was discovered (Gillham, 2000).

It is noted that though the task in analysing and presenting findings is considerable, the methodology utilised will illuminate for the reader, the observed phenomenon that speaks directly to the goals of the research. The themes identified are drawn from the nature of the inputs received from the research participants and are aligned with the goals of the research. This alignment is achieved through the manner in which the research questions are answered and the common experiences, attitudes and observations of participants that come to the fore.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

*The challenge of leadership is to be strong but not rude; be kind but not weak; be bold but not bully; be thoughtful but not lazy; be humble but not timid; be proud but not arrogant; have humour but without folly.*

(Jim Rohn, entrepreneur)

#### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data in a logical and coherent manner.

In achieving this objective, the data has been arranged according to five distinct themes, namely: (i) recognising the need for renewal; (ii) the importance of choosing the right situational leadership style; (iii) building a culture of adaptability and responsiveness; (iv) reflections on autonomy and team performance; and (v) strategic approaches to management decision-making.

The five themes identified came about following the conclusion of the interview process with the research participants. The reason for the selection of these themes is based on patterns that emerged from the data pertaining to the experiences articulated by the managers concerned. The data and the analysis thereof has thus been grouped under these themes to allow the researcher to provide a contextual account of the situational leadership model in the local government environment.

These themes share linkages with the questions in the contained in the appendix. The respective themes respond to the questions asked in the following sequence:

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Question numbers</i>
Recognising the need for renewal	1, 2 and 14
The importance of choosing the right situational leadership style	3, 5, 6, 7 and 14
Building a culture of adaptability and responsiveness	5, 9 and 10
Reflections on autonomy and team performance	7, 12 and 13
Strategic approaches to management decision-making	4, 7, 8 and 11

For ease of reference, the twelve managers interviewed have been labelled SM1 to SM5 and M1 to M7 respectively. This has been to ensure that the anonymity of these participant senior managers and managers is preserved.

## 4.2 Recognising the need for renewal

Leaders are required to possess the emotional intelligence to understand that change is inevitable and forms a necessary component in the lifecycle of any organisation (Goleman, 2001). This applies to both public and private sector organisations. One senior manager (SM1) reflected on this phenomenon in the local government environment as follows:

*The municipality must be briefed to take appropriate decisions that will not place it in trouble due to reckless decision taking... This requires officials to develop an acute awareness of the ever-changing regulatory framework within which local government operates... Change is therefore institutional and regulatory, and managers have a critical role to play in this regard.*

The need for renewal also speaks to the national government imperative of municipal transformation and organisational development. This imperative resonates as one of the 5 Key Performance Areas (KPA's) in the IDP of the municipality. One manager (M1) reflected on this KPA as follows:

*When you look at organisational development and municipal transformation, you look at it as transformation as a national target, given the South African history of discrimination. We need to ensure that our institution is a discrimination-free institution as outlined in the Constitution, but also you want to have an equitable institution that is highly transformed, taking cognisance of those who have been disadvantaged through the previous dispensation's laws are brought into mainstream economic activity through the accelerated affirmative action programmes and also women, youth and other marginalised groups are playing an effective role in the development of the institution. Also, we want to inculcate continuous learning through training and development, especially in my department which is expertise driven.*

On the issue of organisational mandate, one senior manager (SM2) in the Corporate Services Directorate was rather emphatic:

*We've dropped the ball and I'm blunt about this. Our lower-level managers, that being the supervisory managers don't even understand the governance mechanisms. They don't understand our planning mechanisms, being the IDP, SDBIP and performance scorecards. That's not their fault, that's management's fault and I stand indicted there with other managers. For any staff manager to be aligned with what the institution wants to achieve, they have to understand the mission, vision and values. You can't live the values if you don't know what they are.*

An understanding of nuanced issues of an organisation's mandate is important in the local government environment. Another senior manager (SM3) argues that the leadership style adopted by managers in the sector should always be underpinned by the social imperatives for which the institution operates, as well as the role of political decision-making and oversight in the local government sphere:

*Municipalities must work with communities to achieve the goals and objectives of the developmental state. There will always be differing views on how developmental imperatives ought to be driven. Hence diplomacy in understanding different views and stakeholder interests, dynamism of the administrative leadership in explaining the developmental goals to the members of the public and also the ability to interface with the political principals who are called councillors, who do not have the same level of understanding of the developmental parameters as officials. So you've got a 3-fold type of interaction which requires flexibility and appreciation of differences in terms of the backgrounds from which people are emanating from.*

Managers must develop the ability to strengthen networks with stakeholders of the organisation and other persons of influence within. With regard to recognising the need for renewal, one manager (M2) had the following reflection:

*I recall my arrival in the department coincided with significant changes in law and policies relating to the regulatory framework of the institution. There was general apprehension and uncertainty from subordinates as to what would be expected of them and the extent to which they would be required to abandon practices that they had long become accustomed to. To provide the necessary certainty, I applied the authoritative leadership style by calling in preparing a practice note for each subordinate and calling them in for a meeting detailing what would be expected from them and why their compliance was necessary. With the way-forward clearly mapped out and an open-door policy adopted, they were able to fall in line with the changes by having the vision made clear to them in a non-threatening manner.*

#### 4.3 The importance of choosing the right situational leadership style

The importance of choosing the right situational leadership style is vital. According to a manager (M3) in the Corporate Services Directorate, the implementation of the IDP's stated objectives requires managers to take on board a range of leadership styles notwithstanding their legislative powers:

*For any manager to be effective and I'm not even saying efficient, just effective, to be able to get certain things done in local government, there's no ways you can have a single management style. If you're autocratic, you fail the basic batho pele principles, you fail transparency, you fail fairness because an autocratic style does not contain transparency and fairness principles and so most local government managers are enjoined to be more consultative and more participative in my understanding, even though they are endowed with certain abilities through legislation that empower them to make autocratic decisions.*

The same manager (M3) reflected on how situational leadership played out recently in respect of the newly introduced cost-containment measures by National Treasury:

*Induction falls under my department. This is an example of where you have to adapt your leadership style. The cost-containment measures were promulgated in May and were effective as at 1 July. Our inductions happen on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. Probably a week before that (1 July), my staff clicked that they can't provide catering without the municipal manager's authority. So, we wrote to the HOD for this request to be supported. It wasn't. We then had to change the structure of the program to a half-day and the time allocated to the two unions to make presentations was halved. That caused havoc. We had not consulted the unions regarding their revised*

*time allocation. I had to take a decision, instead of following the authoritative route, I tried to be affiliative and democratic. We agreed to postpone the presentations by the unions to new staff. Had I not done so, we ran the risk of exposing newly appointed staff to a sit-in by the unions at their induction.*

Situational leadership is therefore identified as an important skill in the local government environment. In the next section, the research participants reflect on the need for the organisation to engender a culture of adaptability and responsiveness in the execution of its mandate.

#### 4.4 Building a culture of adaptability and responsiveness

The implementation of the IDP process plan is critical for the municipality. It must be managed and closely monitored. The analysis of the implementation of the process plan requires staff to be ethical in depicting shortfalls and challenges. One manager (M4) with a sound knowledge of the IDP process remarked:

*In IDP, because customers are internal, you need to have better attitude than skill. That dynamic can determine the pace at which we can achieve certain things because people can become obstacles and we are 100% reliant upon how people participate in our processes. So yes, I value adaptability very highly and it is a culture here in our department and responsiveness as well.*

Another manager (M5) identified themselves as being a pacesetter leader in the following instance:

*I recall we were dealing with an urgent court application and time was of the essence. Instead of gathering consensus around what needed to be done to navigate the legal challenge, I realised that the complexity of the matter and the time constraints attached would require me to devote my energies to resolving the dispute. I then managed the entire court challenge with our attorneys. Had I roped in junior staff, as much as it would've been a learning opportunity for them, I felt that the stakes were too high and that my experience would ensure that the job was done expediently. In that instance, I exercised the pacesetter style and we were able to avert a potential crisis.*

Adaptability can be viewed through different lenses. In the Office of the Municipal Manager, one senior manager (SM4) had the following view:

*The notion of adaptability presupposes that one should adapt to the organisational environment. My view on the issue of adaptability is that the environment itself should appreciate the uniqueness of each individual, because there is a benefit which each of us is bringing to the platform. The diversity of individuals should be appreciated. Adaptability should not be constrained to the adaptation towards the institutional culture per se, but rather that people, in a diversified manner, ought to create their own culture that promotes the proliferation of ideas and harnessing of individual ability.*

Another manager (M6) in Corporate Services had the following outlook on adaptability and responsiveness:

*Firstly, I don't like the centralisation of decision-making. I try and drive decision-making to the lowest possible level, giving guidance and making sure that my department knows that we won't get everything right but that's how you learn.... So you have to adapt! With regard to responsiveness, managers should take accountability for any mistakes... learn and not make the same mistake again.*

In the next section, attention is drawn to the interface between levels of autonomy granted and team performance.

#### 4.5 Reflections on autonomy and team performance

In driving the implementation of the IDP, senior managers rely on line managers, functionaries and support staff to meet their respective deliverables. Part and parcel of this reliance requires managers to appreciate the need to guide subordinates to function independently and make decisions which best serve the interests of the institution. A delicate balance needs to be struck between the oversight/ supervisory role of the manager and the granting of autonomy in a manner that promotes the developmental objectives of municipality, accountability, good governance and continuous learning. One manager (M7) suggested that the link between autonomy and performance was based on the individual:

*Though the approach is the same towards all my subordinates, some are more able, are more experienced and are given more leeway to take decisions. With more junior people, I would rather have them checking back with me and once I see they're*

*on it, there is more autonomy granted. Generally, managers make it happen but there is a problem with deadlines and that is an institutional problem. There is simply far too much red-tape. Secondly our deadlines are often far too short and thirdly, there aren't consequences for not meeting deadlines.*

Another senior manager (SM5) suggested that whilst autonomy could have a positive impact on performance and output, the regulatory framework under which the municipality operated could in fact stifle the pace at which service delivery was implemented:

*When it comes to red tape, our governance framework in local government is first world, especially the financial stuff. However, it's cumbersome and the fact that there are so many hoops to go through, kills performance. You can't have a lot of red tape and expect great performance and in my view, its partly because of the red tape created by the regulatory framework. It's a chicken and egg scenario because the framework is there to kill corruption, but it doesn't necessarily succeed because corruption still finds a way. What it does do is that it kills our performance.*

The issue of autonomy and team performance is important in the service delivery context and M3 had the following view in this regard:

*For one, it depends on the individual. The job descriptions indicate the amount of discretion granted to an employee. But it really depends on trust. You should've established in your gut that you can trust them to make certain choices without having to consult you as the manager. So, it depends on your exposure in the organisation, understanding the dynamics and protocols and also understanding the implications of your actions.*

#### 4.6 Strategic approaches to management decision-making

Decision-making is an essential component of any management function. Leaders responsible for driving the implementation of the IDP must possess characteristics that enable them to respond to the needs of the organisation and the needs of the communities they serve in an efficient and effective manner. Managers reflected on how they exercised components of the situational leadership model in the execution of their day-to-day duties:

*There are elements of the coaching and democratic leadership style in our department. We have a management meeting with the HOD every Monday morning. It's not a formal meeting, its purpose is to structure our work for the week. In that, we discuss obligations that we have and things that need to be done. If there's anything that needs*

*to be passed on, I then meet briefly with my junior managers to convey same. I will also use that opportunity to provide feedback to my subordinates verbally (SM2).*

M7 in the Office of the City Manager was emphatic in terms of his views around his coaching style in the department:

*Because my department is expertise-drive, if my workload allowed, I would be hosting quarterly seminars with my department around trends pertaining to the work that we do. I would like my staff to understand how national and global developments influence us at the micro-level. Whilst feedback is usually provided through a policy instrument, I'm in favour of regularised feedback which is not constrained by policies and protocols. This, in my view is more effective in fast tracking the development of members of my department.*

SM1 attributed his preferred leadership style of pacesetting as being necessary if the objectives of the IDP were to be realised:

*Having come from the private sector, where the intensity and pace at which milestones were achieved was high, I was surprised by the amount of red tape I encountered in public institutions. The lethargy that this red tape creates required me to raise the bar in my department, particularly in respect of how things were to be done going forward and the levels of professionalism required. Whilst this was met with resistance in the beginning, my reliance on the pacesetting style has seen employees pay greater attention to detail and take more pride in the work that they do. This does not mean that perfection is expected but is rather aimed towards engendering an appreciation of the responsibility incumbent upon a professional person.*

## 4.7 Conclusion

The research and the data it has lifted have provided an opportunity to give an account, through the description of the findings, the realities at play in the lives of the research participants. In concluding the chapter, the researcher has sought to bring to life the factors relevant to the exercise of situational leadership. This has been achieved through the presentation of the findings in a systematic and interpretive manner as outlined in the methodology. In the chapter that follows, discussion on what the findings presented mean and the possible future implications for the municipality will be undertaken.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

*As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.*

(J.F. Kennedy, 1963, 20<sup>th</sup> century political leader)

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the data presented constituted a puzzle picture drawn from the jigsaw pieces of the experiences of managers responsible for driving the implementation of the IDP in the municipality. The picture presented by the puzzle of individual reflections and learnings of what has happened during this implementation process is a picture of the application of Goleman's (2000) model of situational leadership.

This chapter provides a demonstration, with reference to the research goal and questions, of the nexus between the data lifted from the participants and the literature canvassed on situational leadership. The arrangement of this chapter coincides with the five main themes explored in the preceding chapter and seeks to critically analyse the experiences of leaders of the implementation of the strategic imperatives of the municipality through the IDP.

#### 5.2 Aims, understandings, themes and their significance

The research goals have been to utilise the implementation of the IDP as a tool to pursue the following objectives: firstly, to explore the influence of leadership and its impact on driving service delivery; secondly, to review the success factors in the application of situational leadership; and thirdly, to identify and evaluate the key levers in the implementation of the IDP in the local government environment. These considerations speak to the primary aim articulated in Chapter 3, being to describe how and why leaders use situational leadership in local government to give effect to the organisational mandate of a municipality.

This study has explored how and why leaders utilise the six leadership styles captured in Goleman's (2000) model. The previous chapter captured, *inter alia*:

- How leaders use various leadership styles to fulfil their respective management roles and what influences them to adopt a particular style;
- How leaders achieve their objectives using situational leadership styles; and
- How and when the use of these varied leadership styles have reflected on performance.

Pursuant to the aforementioned objectives, a diverse collection of contemporary literature was examined to provide the possible solutions to the following questions: What is situational leadership? How does situational leadership combine with the mandate of an organisation? What leadership styles and approaches are most appropriate for service delivery implementation?

Furthermore, the following propositions were made in Chapter 2: Given the extent to which the local government framework is regulated, leaders are constrained to the use of a limited number of the leadership styles put forward by Goleman (2000); the leadership styles put forward by Goleman (2000) can never be used in equal measure in the local government environment; the vast array of stakeholders in local government means that more democratic and affiliative leadership styles will enjoy popularity given the very public nature of public sector leadership; and there is no single, most appropriate leadership style that a manager can rely on at all times.

Interviews with significant role players involved with the implementation of the municipality's IDP were concluded with the intention of eliciting their views of how leadership impacts their service delivery mandate. These perspectives have been grouped under the various themes outlined in the preceding chapter. What follows is an evaluation of and giving meaning to these findings and in achieving that, addressing the research questions put forward in this report.

In Chapter 2, the following question was posed: What leadership styles and approaches are most appropriate for service delivery implementation? The answer has been one that has brought into sharp focus, the continued relevance of the model of situational leadership. This model has emphasised the significance of individual behaviours of leaders, particularly with

regard to the situations that confront a leader and his/ her responses thereto as determinants of the effectiveness of their leadership. The model and related theories form the cornerstone of an understanding upon which later theories have been capable of construction.

A contextual account of the situational leadership model in the local government environment, grouped under the five themes identified, follows.

### 5.2.1 Recognising the need for renewal

The democratic breakthrough of 1994 that heralded a new dawn for governance in South Africa introduced a new view of leadership. Politically speaking, an authoritarian and repressive regime was replaced by a dispensation championing values of transparency, accountability and responsibility. Leaders, the majority of whom had emerged from years of incarceration and/ or exile, had to hastily adapt to the transformation of our society and also facilitate this process in a rapidly transforming global village (Binns & Nel, 2002).

At the Pan-African level, leaders had to appreciate this evolutionary dynamic as well. Traditional leadership, premised on communal norms, behaviours and interests had to take a back seat to a newly founded democratic state requiring transformational leaders capable of translating the hard fought for and won gains of political freedom to sustained growth for all. The new dawn suggested that a rethink of how the public and private sectors were led was needed. Local government, as a service delivery vehicle of the state post-1994, was now required to be managed in ways which spoke to the needs of this new reality (Binns & Nel, 2002).

The requirement that institutions and leaders ought to have the capacity to change is an important part of the theory of strategic leadership. In addition, the work on situational leadership discussed in Chapter 2 similarly highlights the need to adapt to changing circumstances as well as to facilitate a change in circumstances necessary to achieve the organisation's objectives. This theory places an emphasis on the coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter and coaching leadership styles and appears to have found resonance with the learnings conveyed by the majority of research participants.

Instead of attributing the success of the implementation of the IDP to visionary leadership and insight, the respondents articulated the importance of the daily ability of leaders to think beyond the bureaucratic functioning that constrains the organisation. This, they understood, was through an appreciation of the situations which required their leadership: a reflection that they are sensitive to the impact they have on others and in turn seamlessly adjust their style to yield the best results (Goleman, 2000).

The data demonstrates that service delivery implementation is only made possible through the ability to bring one's authentic self to the role they fulfil as a leader. In the absence of such an effort, the rigid, one-dimensional thinking that can inhibit organisational performance will prevent the successful implementation of the municipality's IDP. This finds expression in Chapter 2, in that it has been established that great leaders possess the flexibility to adapt to changing situations by considering existing levels of maturity amongst their subordinates (Blanchard et al., 1993).

These understandings provide a critical insight into situational leadership. "Leaders who have mastered four or more- especially the authoritative, democratic, affiliative and coaching styles- have the very best climate and business performance. And the most effective leaders switch flexibly among the leadership styles as needed" (Goleman, 2000: 87).

A key dynamic in driving the implementation of the IDP was identified in Chapter 2 as the effect of the organisation's mandate on situational leadership. Essentially, quality leaders were those that knew their environment, understood its benefits and limitations and were capable of harnessing change within their sphere of influence to successfully drive their strategic deliverables.

It was also noted that the local government space was characterised by the following features: technocratic leadership, stringent regulatory and legislative governance frameworks, hierarchical systems and processes, bureaucracy and political interests/ considerations. It was suggested that such institutions have downplayed the developmental and rational components of organisational culture due to their lack of orientation towards change, adaptability, innovation, output generation and efficiency (Bradley & Parker, 2000).

The participants all appreciated the need for managers to take cognisance of the prevailing environment and the nuances that differentiate public organisations from private entities. Senior managers needed to not only scan the environment but apply their knowledge through inculcating behaviours in their departments that would maximise their respective contributions towards the attainment of the goals of the municipality.

At the time that the research was conducted, it was important for managers in the Office of the City Manager and the Corporate Service Directorate to manage the meaning of true service delivery. Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee (2001) argue that the most effective executives exude behaviours that match the situation at hand, with a dose of optimism in the mix. They list the four components of emotional intelligence as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. These components illuminate the importance of the actions of managers and hammer home the fact that the leader's perspective is of huge significance. In the local government environment, the components of emotional intelligence come to the fore daily. This is by virtue of the myriad of stakeholders of a municipality and the competing interests that arise within the environment.

Three quarters of the research participants took cognisance of the relevance of organisational context to their attempts to implement service delivery in local government. These participants emphasised the high level of sensibility required of local government managers. This embraces the notion of "public value pragmatism" which states that the best management approach to adopt depends on the circumstances such as the value being produced, the context, or the nature of the task (Alfred & Hughes, 2008).

The findings on the interface between situational leadership and organisational culture garnered fresh concerns pertaining to the value of traditional theories of situational leadership. The views expressed by the respondents was that rather than having two separate leadership behaviours, being 'Initiating Structure' and 'Consideration; and later 'Concern for Production' and 'Concern for People', managers in the local government environment had to think beyond these simplistic paradigms and operate with a pragmatic yet empowering understanding of the organisation that promotes the use of multi-faceted leadership styles.

If the understandings of participants are to be carefully considered, it may be time to re-evaluate the relevance of the traditional theory of situational leadership and to pay greater attention to

the value of emotional, cultural and social intelligence needed by local government managers. You can't necessarily change people, but you can change culture. Culture changes landscapes and culture is embodied by landscapes (Nassauer, 1995).

Going forward, there is a responsibility incumbent upon institutions to select situational leaders who can relate to the role players within the environment in ways that gear prospects of success in the municipality's favour.

### 5.2.2 The importance of choosing the right situational leadership style

The research outcomes demonstrate the importance of applying the right leadership style to drive the implementation of the pre-determined objectives of an organisation. One manager in the Office of the City Manager described the need for appropriately attuned leaders capable of guiding and advising- a person who is *au fait* with the regulatory and technical aspects of governance, but at the same time has the soft skills set required for managing a diverse group of people.

As highlighted in the literature review section of this report, Goleman's (2000) theory postulates a contextual approach to leadership given the shortcomings identified in the more traditional approaches. The research goal of exploring what leadership styles are most appropriate for service delivery implementation therefore requires close scrutiny.

In 2001, Goleman argued that emotional intelligence was an important component in the repertoire of the type of leader that will prove to be the most effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In his research, he postulates that effective leaders possess a high degree of emotional intelligence and that coupled with IQ and technical skills, emotional capabilities are entry level requirements for leadership positions. In a 1996 study of a global food & beverage company, it was found that senior managers that had a critical mass of emotional intelligence capabilities outperformed their annual revenue goals by 20% in their respective divisions. Conversely, leaders without emotional intelligence underperformed by almost the same percentage (Goleman, 1998).

Under the banner of emotional intelligence, effective leaders are said to have two attributes: self-awareness and self-regulation. People with high levels of self-awareness know how their

feelings affect them, their colleagues and their overall job performance. Self-regulation on the other hand is the ability to control bad moods and emotional impulses, channelling them in productive ways. Self-awareness and self-regulation are examples of personal competence. Linked to these qualities is the notion of social competence. Goleman (2001) submits that empathy is regarded as an important component of leadership given the increased use of teams, the exponential pace at which globalisation is taking place and the need to retain the best talent.

One manager in the Corporate Services Directorate emphasised the importance of local government managers responsible for the implementation of the IDP to exude emotional stability in everything that they do. Four managers considered themselves as heavily reliant on the affiliative leadership style. Their views were that the development of an emotional rapport with those in your team fostered effective teamwork, communication, transparency and commitment to the vision and mission of the organisation. The affiliative leadership style is that most closely linked to Goleman's 2001 exposition on emotional intelligence. It became increasingly apparent as the various themes of data emerged, the resonating effect of situational leadership as one of the most positive contributors in driving service delivery implementation.

### 5.2.3 Building a culture of adaptability and responsiveness

National government's programme of modernising local government emphasises evaluation and performance review as a driver of continuous improvement in providing "best value" for consumers. It is incumbent upon local government authorities to go beyond the development of review systems and processes and to rather ensure that the capacity for evaluation and learning is embedded as an attribute of culture to achieve the purpose of best value (Sanderson, 2001).

Correctly so, it is in line with the remarks above that all of the remaining themes identified in the research data are underpinned- none more so than the need for managers to build a culture of adaptability and responsiveness within the organisation.

In the literature review section, Goleman (2000) argues that leaders capable of switching flexibly among the situational leadership styles have the best climate. Such leaders are said to be sensitive to the impact they have on others and therefore the human capital of the organisation translates this to stronger organisational performance. When considering the

development of a culture of adaptability and responsiveness, reference must be drawn to the six factors mentioned in Chapter 2 that influence an organisation's working environment. These are flexibility, sense of responsibility, defined standards, aptness of rewards, clarity and commitment to common purpose.

The leaders responsible for driving the implementation of the IDP had to rely on their own personal perspectives on the nature of situational leadership to plot a path for the implementation of the municipality's service delivery imperatives. The findings indicate that the managers in the Office of the City Manager and Corporate Services Directorate were savvy enough to realise that adaptability and flexibility must characterise the type of decision-making taking place in their respective departments. This came to the fore very strongly from managers who serviced internal customers such as other departments within the municipality together with political principals.

With regard to the IDP, all planning must be done in consultation with the Budget & Treasury department of the municipality and as such, planning must be structured in a way that acknowledges the budgetary limitations of the organisation. Effective leaders must therefore endeavour to seek a good enough consensus, a working majority (Binney et.al, 2005). In the same manner that the manager dealing with staff induction was prepared to negotiate with union representatives who would be affected by National Treasury's cost-containment measures, he realised that the induction programmes would have to proceed but must receive sufficient support from the unions. In this regard, the data shows rather clearly, the application situational leadership at play.

Three managers in the Office of the City Manager were undoubtedly coaching leaders- which are described as follows: "they help employees identify their unique strengths and weaknesses and tie them to their personal and career aspirations. They encourage employees to establish long-term developmental goals and help them conceptualise a plan for attaining them" (Goleman, 2000:86).

Coaching leaders are excellent at delegating and are continually stretching their subordinates by assigning challenging tasks to them. These managers insisted that through the decentralisation of decision-making, there was a strong element of staff development that was taking place. This view, *inter alia*, is that subordinates should be given the independence and

autonomy that speaks to their technical capabilities and experience in that particular role. These coaching managers were of the view that coaching is an ongoing process and should not be constrained by policy instruments such as quarterly performance reviews. Rather, informal feedback on a regular basis empowers subordinates to work towards attaining the goals of the municipality. Coaching allows subordinates to move out of their comfort zones, embrace responsibility and take accountability for different facets of the organisation.

Ultimately, the insights exhibited by the research participants and their unanimous support for building a culture of adaptability and responsiveness has yielded benefits in shortening the time taken to deliver output at a departmental level.

#### 5.2.4 Reflections on autonomy and team performance

One of the ingredients for success in driving the implementation of the IDP was the ability of managers to value individual ideas, identities and capabilities of staff reporting to them. Both the Office of the City Manager and the Corporate Services Directorate of the municipality are expertise driven. Within these departments, managers have technical capabilities ranging from legal to ICT to internal audit to risk to HR to labour relations etc. Institutions must therefore transform, taking on board the fact that the world is becoming rapidly dominated by the knowledge worker/ economy and the service industry.

People are at the heart of an organisation. The very success or otherwise of the IDP process turned on the success of managers of the municipality in eliciting from staff, behaviours that drive service delivery. Nine managers agreed on how failure to appreciate the knowledgebase of workers will hinder the progress the organisation so desperately seeks to achieve year on year.

Another critical role this time envisaged by Barney (2001) in the literature review section of this report, was one where leaders apply strategic human capital management in order to fulfil the benchmarks apparent in the organisation's mandate.

As earlier indicated, the resource-based view looks toward internal firm resources as sources of competitive advantage. In other words, Barney (2001) postulates that the manner in which

human capital management takes place has the potential to determine the success or otherwise of organisational performance.

In the context of driving the implementation of the IDP, senior management in the Corporate Services Directorate fulfilled this role: ensuring that the organisation's recruitment and selection processes are aligned with best practice with a view to maximising the human skills complement within; and secondly in further ensuring that once recruited, employees are equipped with all the tools required to succeed in the organisation.

This has been achieved through the allocation of a 'scarce skills' allowance for critical technical posts (Scarce Skills Policy, 2010) as well as budgetary allocation for financial assistance enabling employees to attend training seminars, register with professional bodies and enrol with tertiary institutions to further their studies on a part-time basis for the purpose of ongoing skills development (Human Resource Development Policy, 2018). The data showed that levels of autonomy granted often depended upon the expertise possessed by the relevant employee. The more knowledge and expertise held by the employee, the more autonomy granted by the manager and generally the better the quality of work received, according to M7 in the preceding chapter.

#### 5.2.5 Strategic approaches to management decision making

The concept of strategic approaches to management decision making as a theme emerged as an amalgam of sub-themes that came through from interviews conducted with the managers playing a role in driving the implementation of the municipality's IDP. These sub-themes are reviewed independently for purposes of this section of the discussion of the findings. Collectively, these sub-themes appear to be suggesting that a fresh approach to management is required: an approach that recognises that leaders driving service delivery must apply various leadership styles for various contexts.

##### (a) *Collaborative Leadership*

The findings demonstrate that leadership must be balanced, embracing the views of municipal stakeholders in providing decisive yet inclusive leadership. The research participants often alluded to the implementation of the IDP as a collaborative effort that

required management and teams not to operate in silos, but to interact and share experiences in a manner that promotes the effective implementation of the IDP process.

(b) *Resonant Leadership Styles*

The literature has described an effective leader as one who applies the most resonant leadership style to the context in which such leadership is needed to be exercised. A key insight into driving the implementation of the IDP was that provided by the managers in the Office of the City Manager. Their analysis was that consensus should be informed by realities of the internal and external environment of the organisation and that there were certainly instances in which democratic and affiliative leadership was most appropriate yet others where coercive and authoritative styles yielded effective outcomes.

(c) *What drives Local Government Leaders*

The research findings suggest that effective managers in the local government space embrace the challenge of service delivery. They have developed a sense of urgency towards seeing the fruits of what they've set out to achieve in their respective units and take great pride in seeing their projects and initiatives come to fruition. Ultimately, they remain motivated by the impact they realise they can make both within the organisation and in the broader community.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to interpret the puzzle pieced together in Chapter 4 from the perspectives offered on situational leadership by the research participants. To achieve this aim, the themes were established to use the literature review to contextualise the picture presented in a manner that best addresses the research goals.

As far as how leaders use various leadership styles to fulfil their management roles and what influences them to adopt those styles and when, the majority of leaders were of the view that their leadership style was influenced based on their position within the organisation, the people over whom this leadership style was being exercised and the complexity of the task at hand.

Managers could achieve their objectives using situational leadership styles by identifying instances in which some leadership styles yielded positive outcomes and instances where the outcomes were less satisfactory. This meant that leaders could tailor their style according to experiences of past successes and failures.

Managers also articulated that the leadership styles were used to give effect to the IDP in the manner in which tasks were allocated in their respective departments, in how relationships with various stakeholders were co-ordinated and managed and in how subordinates were afforded opportunities to develop within the organisation in a manner that prioritised the service delivery mandate of the institution.

The phenomenon of situational leadership through the lenses of the managers driving the implementation of the IDP of a South African municipality was evaluated. In the final chapter that follows, the main findings are summarised, along with their potential limitations and future value.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

*He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.*

(Muhammad Ali, 1977, sporting icon)

#### 6.1 Introduction

Not all case studies harbour a revelatory quality that revolutionises the status quo, however, it is a research method that allows for an account to be given of the real-life experiences of leaders driving service delivery in a South African municipality. An insight into the lived experiences of people is often the best that can be achieved with a view that the accounts of their learning will ensure that the meaning of discoveries will generate a further expression of effective situational leadership.

This study has sought to explore the application of situational leadership in the local government environment as a key competence in driving the implementation of the IDP in a South African municipality. A key consideration was how leaders exercised their inherent leadership authority in alignment with their legislative and institutional responsibilities.

Interviews were conducted with these managers aimed at realising the goals of the research, which were to explore:

- How do leaders use various leadership styles to fulfil their respective management roles and what influences them to adopt a particular style and when;
- How do leaders achieve their objectives using the situational leadership styles; and
- How and when the use of these varied leadership styles have reflected on performance in the IDP Review (approved by Council) in light of the predefined objectives, strategies, targets, projects and financial and operational plans.

This chapter summarises the main research findings, the potential value and limitations of the study and recommendations for the future.

## 6.2 A Summary of the Main Findings of the Research

The views of the managers interviewed direct the need to perceive the nature of situational leadership through a situation-specific radar: one that acknowledges the role of emotional intelligence and that appreciates the relevance of organisational culture and its impact on performance. The core research findings are expressed in five themes:

### 6.2.1 Recognising the need for renewal

Effective managers are able to see beyond the prevailing barriers and limitations of their space. They are attuned to pioneer change and display courage in accelerating the organisation towards the attainment of its objectives. They are capable of debunking negative stereotypes about the sector and redirect these attitudes in a manner that unlocks the true potential of people around them.

### 6.2.2 The importance of choosing the right situational leadership style

Effective managers know the importance of choosing the right leadership style for the right situation. They acknowledge that successful service delivery will be stimulated by gaining an understanding of what moves people to perform the way they do under different material conditions.

### 6.2.3 Building a culture of adaptability and responsiveness

Effective leaders are able to respond to the needs of the organisation through tapping into the resources at their disposal and displaying a flexibility in accommodating the needs of various stakeholder groups within the legislative framework.

### 6.2.4 Reflections on autonomy and team performance

Effective leaders recognise the value of empowering those around them through delegating tasks and issuing responsibilities and decision-making authority congruent with their positions. They encourage creativity and information sharing when problem-solving is required.

#### 6.2.5 Strategic approaches to management decision making

Effective leaders harbour essential characteristics that empower them to drive performance in their organisation. These include: an understanding of the vision, mission and values, collaboration and teamwork, diversified leadership styles and a willingness to make a positive impact institutionally and externally.

### 6.3 Potential Value of the Local Government Case Study

Institutions such as the municipality under review have a mandate to provide public goods such as health & public safety, infrastructure, local economic development and municipal services for the region. However, many government institutions remain rule-driven and hierarchical, which has the potential to delay initiatives geared towards servicing communities.

There is thus a growing need for local government leaders to break the established bureaucratic nature within. Pursuant to the findings, the following recommendations for practice are made:

1. HR processes must involve psychometric tools in assessing the levels of emotional and social intelligence possessed by the prospective manager.
2. Increased attention should be given to the recruitment, remuneration and retention of those found to display situational leadership abilities needed to drive the implementation of government programmes.
3. Systems/ programmes should be administered to develop situational leadership skills. This can be done through formal mentoring or executive training.

The following recommendations for further research are made:

1. A more transversal account of situational leadership in local government may more fully bring to life the issues of service delivery in the sector.

2. Broader and more substantive analysis into the nature of local government organisational culture and its impact on the leadership of service delivery implementation.

#### 6.4 The Limitations of the Research

The following limitations to the research have been identified:

1. The sample interviewed was small, consisting of individuals in select directorates of the municipality.
2. The research findings are not universally transferable to other contexts, be at another municipality or government institution.

#### 6.5 Concluding Remarks

Qualitative research seeks to provide an insight into people's lives through them reliving the challenges posed in the implementation of the IDP. The idea is that the richness and diversity of their experiences will provide an understanding of the nature of situational leadership in their working environment.

The study has enabled the researcher to take heed of the responsibility placed on municipal officials to ensure that the objectives of the IDP come to fruition. It was an opportunity to encounter and research situational leadership as a tool to optimise performance in the local government environment.

There is no universal approach to leading organisations as large as municipalities. The research would have achieved its objective if the insights garnered have shown improvement in the delivery of output through the application of situational leadership. It is hoped that these reflections will resonate with some leaders and assist them in propelling their organisations towards reaching new frontiers.

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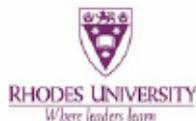
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## APPENDIX A- Interview Questions

1. How long have you been in the employ of the Municipality in your current role?
2. Explain the nature and responsibilities attached of your role within the organisation?
3. What is your understanding of your role towards ensuring that the Municipality is capable of achieving its stated objectives in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).
4. Municipal Transformation and Organisational Development is a Key Performance Area (KPA) in the IDP, how do you contribute to ensuring that this KPA is realised by your team.
5. What is your understanding of situational leadership in the Local Government environment?
6. How has the visionary and/or coaching and/or democratic and/or affiliative and/or pacesetter and/or commanding leadership style/s been used and in which situation.
7. In your view, how this style/s affect your team's ability to meet the Municipality's stated objectives?
8. How have you created a climate for the 6 factors influencing the working environment to emerge? You may refer to any/ all of the presence of the following factors: flexibility, sense of responsibility, defined standards, aptness of rewards, clarity and commitment.
9. To what extent do you ensure that an awareness of expectations is created and that regular feedback is provided to your subordinates?
10. Is a culture of adaptability and responsiveness promoted within your department? If so, how?
11. What is your approach to decision-making in your team? Eg. Directive, consultative, inclusive etc.

12. What levels of autonomy do subordinates currently enjoy in your team and how do you feel that this affects their performance?
13. Are subordinates provided with all the tools need to succeed in the organisation? Explain.
14. Please provide examples of instances in which situational leadership has been applied, successfully?

## APPENDIX B- Ethics Approval Letter



Human Ethics subcommittee  
Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee  
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NHREC Registration no. REC-241114-045

1 August 2019

Aphiwe Nkosimbini

Review Reference: 2019-0349-702

Email: [g09N1139@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:g09N1139@campus.ru.ac.za)

Dear Aphiwe Nkosimbini

Re: Situational leadership in a South African Municipality

Principal Investigator: Mr. Kevin Rafferty

Collaborators: Mr. Aphiwe Nkosimbini

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) – Human Ethics (HE) sub-committee.

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely

Prof Joanna Dames

Chair: Human Ethics sub-committee, RUESC- HE