An Exploration of the Effectiveness of Professional Bodies Operating in South African Municipalities

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Abstract

Public service, in general, is marred with a lot of dissatisfaction from service users and this has inevitably culminated into public protests. Members of the public and service users are beginning to question competencies and capabilities of the officials who are responsible for the provision of services. Whilst it is true that there are public servants who do not qualify for positions they are occupying, it is also true that there are officials who meet the qualification requirements but simply cannot perform in their jobs simply because of laziness and or lack of professionalism. The latter has also led to questions being asked about the role of professional bodies in supporting the provision of public services. South Africa has recently seen a spike in public protests for services especially in the local government sector (municipalities). It is for this reason that the study explored the effectiveness of professional bodies operating in South African municipalities. The study employed the qualitative research method wherein interviews were conducted as data collection instrument. A sample of senior managers was selected across South African municipalities who then responded to questions about professional bodies. It became evident from the study that there is a need for professional bodies to play an even bigger role in collaboration with municipalities to professionalize the local government sector. The study therefore recommends various options in which professional bodies can collaborate with municipalities.

Keywords: *Professionalization; Professional Bodies; Professions; Continuous Learning and Development (CPD); Code of Ethics; Effectiveness*

Introduction

Professional governance plays an important role in professionalizing different professions. It is not only about safeguarding the professional standards and ethics but also ensuring professional

accountability and disciplinary processes that are consistent and fair. There are many reasons why professional bodies are established but in most cases the rationale is to set standards for members and to ensure that those standards are maintained in the interest of both the members and the society that is receiving the service. Professional bodies ensure that the skills of their members are developed by using continuous professional development (CPD). This relates well to the concept of lifelong learning that is motivated by both personal and professional development (Naidoo and Rajcoomer, 2020). This inevitably makes professional bodies part of the implementers of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). The question though might be whether or not there is alignment between the country's NSDS and the professional bodies' CPD strategies. There is no doubt that CPD can improve productivity and thus contribute towards the development of the country's economy in general. The calibre of support provided by professional bodies can also prove to be a catalyst for problem-solving in industry, thereby contributing to the stabilization of the economy (Green, 2015). The other question though would be if the CPD programmes were effective why do organizations especially public organizations continue to be plagued with low productivity levels? Professional bodies should also support governance arrangements of different industries by ensuring that their members adhere to ethical codes of conduct and conduct themselves professionally at all times. It also begs the question whether professional bodies are effective in enforcing discipline and codes of ethics especially in the era of rampant corruption in the public sector. The mandate to develop professionals also extends to the development of their attitudes and behaviours. Fusco, et.al. (2015) maintain that the development of professional attitudes and behaviours is just as critical to providing high quality services to customers as is the acquisition of knowledge during schooling. The process of inculcating professional values, attitudes and behaviours (professionalism) cannot be acquired from a textbook but acquired through practice and active engagement with other professionals, however professional bodies still have the duty to ensure their members are able to acquire professional values, attitudes and behaviours.

Legislative Framework

The National Qualifications Framework Act (2008) is the South African legislation that provides for the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a body that is responsible for recognition and accreditation of professional bodies. These professional bodies are recognized and accredited on the basis of SAQA's policy and criteria for recognizing a professional body and registering a professional designation after consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies of expert practitioners in occupational fields and with the Quality Councils. Section 31 of the National Qualifications Framework Act (2008) states that a professional body must, in consultation with SAQA, maintain a database (of accredited professionals) and submit such database for recording in the national database. In terms of SAQA Policy and criteria a professional body applying to be recognized as a professional body in terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act (2008) shall:

- Be a legally constituted entity with the necessary human and financial resources to undertake its functions, governed either by a statute, charter or a constitution and compliant with and adhere to good corporate governance practices.
- Protect the public interest in relation to services provided by its members and the associated risks.
- Develop, award, monitor and revoke its professional designations in terms of its own rules, legislation and/or international conventions.
- Submit a list of members in a form acceptable to SAQA.
- Set criteria for, promote and monitor continuing professional development (CPD) for its members to meet the relevant professional designation requirements.
- Publish a code of conduct and operate a mechanism for the reporting of and investigating members who are alleged to have contravened the code.

- Not apply unfair exclusionary practices in terms of membership admission to the body or when recognizing education or training providers.
- Make career advice related information available to SAQA.

Although the criteria seem stringent, it does help professional bodies to be governed professionally and hold their members accountable however it remains to be seen if all professional bodies do adhere to this criteria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to explore the effectiveness of professional bodies operating in South African municipalities. The objectives of the study were to:

- Establish the rate of registration with professional bodies by municipal officials.
- Find out what officials think are the benefits of joining a professional body.
- Find out what officials think are the roles, functions and responsibilities of professional bodies.
- Determine effectiveness of professional bodies.
- Find out how professional bodies should improve their effectiveness.
- Determine how municipalities can work with professional bodies to professionalize the local government sector.

Literature Review

Definition of a Professional Body

A very formal definition of a 'Professional Body' is provided by Eraut and Cole (1993) who define it as an organisation formally recognized by charter or statute as having jurisdiction over a profession or a section of a profession. This definition highlights one element which may be a barrier to many professional bodies that is recognition by a charter or statutes. In actual fact, there are many professional bodies that are not regulated by statutes. Less regulatory definitions include the fact that a professional body is an organisation with individual members practicing a profession in which it maintains an oversight of the knowledge, skills, conduct and practice of that profession. Paisey and Paisey (2018) further emphasize on the importance of knowledge by stating that a professional body is an organisation that harnesses a body of knowledge and protects it, thereby allowing the professional to act as an agent of formal knowledge. Although there could be different definitions of a professional body, a working definition includes:

- Specification of the requirements for an entry into the professional body, including the essential qualification or professional qualification requirement;
- Identification of requirements for continued membership, professional development, work experience;
- A set of regulations or codes of professional ethics to be upheld by members and the necessary sanctions for failing to uphold professional ethics; and
- Protection of the society that receives the service.

The Higher Education Better Regulation Group (HEBRG) (2011) brings in the dimension of society in defining professional organizations by stating that they are cultured societies whose purpose includes promoting an academic field or a group of disciplines. Societies, like professional bodies, dictate the kind of qualifications for specific professions. SAQA (2018) defines a professional body as any body

of expert practitioners in an occupational field and includes an occupational body and statutory council. This definition emphasizes "expert knowledge" which defines the competence and knowledge abilities of professionals hence the need for them to have undergone rigorous training and development in specific field that leads to a particular qualification.

Benefits of registration with a Professional Body

Once a professional has joined a professional body, he or she acquires a particular membership status that allows him or her to get membership benefits. In this day and age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) many professional bodies provide their members with access to a number of sites with valuable information and data sources such as Research Gate which would otherwise be very difficult to access by non-members. Professional bodies also provide wide network opportunities for members and these networks include discounted online learning opportunities, job opportunities, case studies, etc. In some cases, some professional bodies even provide live access to their members to resident experts in respective professions so that members can get latest expert advices. Some professional bodies have been so innovative that they offer exclusive discounts for example in airport lounges, book sellers, reasonable interest rates with banks, telecommunications companies, etc. Some also provide internships for students who are studying relevant qualifications.

It is also important for professionals to choose professional bodies wisely. Some of the considerations in making such a choice are the following:

- The professional body must have a moral fibre that you would like to be associated with.
- It is important to also ensure that it protects your personal information and will not give it away without your consent.
- The body or association should be recognized and many prestigious professional bodies are even recognized internationally or they affiliate to international professional bodies or associations.
- When joining a national body ensure that it at least has a regional presence or chapter.
- It should also be registered with SAQA.
- It should have a rigorous accreditation system.
- A professionally run professional body must have a regular publication system whether online or physical publications or newsletters.
- It must have a peer review mechanism.
- It must have sound knowledge management and distribution mechanisms.
- It must have properly constituted governance structures, Annual Report and be audited every year.

It should also be pointed out though that there are some professional bodies that are relatively new and may not fit the above-mentioned criteria, it is always good to give them the benefit of the doubt and being new may mean they still want to prove themselves.

The Roles, Functions and Responsibilities of Professional Bodies

Professional bodies have a very important role to play to shape the education system of the country. Stoltz-Urban and Govender (2014) examined the role of professional bodies and reported that there is a need to set and adhere to minimum standards for professions and a need for professional bodies to remain very close to the delivery of qualifications. For example, Danango and Subhi (2013) identified and reviewed the impact of accounting professional certificate on the practice of accounting in Malaysia and the study confirmed that the Malaysian Institute of Accountants certification has a positive impact on the practice of accounting in Malaysia due to high quality skills, knowledge, reputation and ethical soundness which motivate them in putting in their best as they render their services to their clients or employers. Another example is that of Henczel (2013) who explored the roles and responsibilities of

professional associations in developing, maintaining and sustaining the professionalism that underpins the profession of librarianship. The study concluded that the roles and responsibilities of professional associations include safeguarding specialized knowledge, protecting and securing boundaries and operational territories for the profession, ensuring that formal education for the profession establishes and maintains the level of prestige appropriate for the profession, certify attainment of specialized knowledge and maintaining the integrity of the profession. Professional bodies are also responsible for innovations and recent technological developments in respective professions thus having a responsibility as well to host webinars, conferences, workshops, training, etc to cascade this information to its members. Many professional bodies have established Research and Development Committees for the same purpose and it has become inevitable for modern day professional bodies that they should invest in knowledge management. One other very important function of professional bodies is accreditation of its members. In most cases members are accredited by designations which are a reflection of rigorous continuous learning, experience and expertise in the field. These designations come with prestige, pride and recognition and junior members always aspire to receive the accolades in their career progression. Many professional organizations are synonymous with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for they have this primary duty to develop their members. Professionals also have the same responsibility and commitment to life-long learning. There are various means within which CPD can be achieved and this includes attendance of short courses, webinars, seminars, workshops up to registering and attaining a full qualification. Some courses or programmes are compulsory for the professional to acquire CPD points that will help them retain their membership in the professional body. Professional bodies are also responsible for the ethical behavior of their members. They have codes of ethics that pin their members to ethical behavior and have powers to investigate and discipline members who are facing allegations of unethical misconduct. Pak Yean and Lee Gan (2015) refer to this responsibility as professional governance which they claim is about safeguarding professional standards and managing a system of professional accountability and disciplinary process that is competent, effective and fair. This helps professional bodies in ensuring that their members follow the established processes, policies and codes of good governance. The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) (2015) maintains that without professional bodies, the role of the state would inevitably have to be more far-reaching and intrusive. In other words, professional bodies also have a civic duty to help government deal with corruption, crime, lack of professionalism, etc amongst their members. They should develop and produce professionals who can be trusted to deliver services to the highest quality and of acceptable standards socially, economically and ethically.

Professional bodies also play an important role in designing curricula for professional qualifications. Most professions have two types of qualifications the first one being an initial undergraduate degree or diploma which grounds the student on theory and content to acquire the necessary knowledge. Professional bodies do not have much influence at this level however it may always be good for higher education institutions to consult them, especially to get latest knowledge in various fields. The second type is a professional qualification wherein the student studies specifically professional norms, standards, values, etc of a particular profession. Whilst universities or higher education institutions that offer these professional qualifications are autonomous and can set own academic standards, professional bodies have a right and responsibility to determine in terms of theory what students acquire and that it should be relevant for professional practice. The following are other education-related roles that professional bodies play:

- Specifying the nature of the education and training that is required to enter a particular profession;
- Assessing the required knowledge, skills, values, competencies required by professions on an ongoing basis;
- Examining the content of Training Provider's Programmes or curricula to ensure that they align with the needs of the profession; and

- Ensure that the content of professional development has interests of the public at heart and protects the rights of the public.

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) (2015) cite that professional bodies set standards, technical and ethical, that must be achieved and they ensure that they are maintained and enhanced through the professional's career to support the public's interest. Professional bodies should at all times seek to raise the standards and also increase the understanding of their role by the public.

Professional bodies also play an important role in social mobility of their members. The set standards and qualifications inhibit participation by unqualified people, at the same time there is responsibility to propel new careers for new members to join the professional bodies. It will be difficult for professional bodies to achieve this social mobility alone, sometimes the society, working environment and academic institutions do have a role to play as well.

Professional bodies also have a role of contributing to policy formulation, development and review in their respective sectors. They participate as stakeholders in government's policy development processes and can advise government on the impact of proposed policies. They also have the responsibility to explain policy positions to their members. They can also be involved in the process of regulating qualifications that are relevant to their professions.
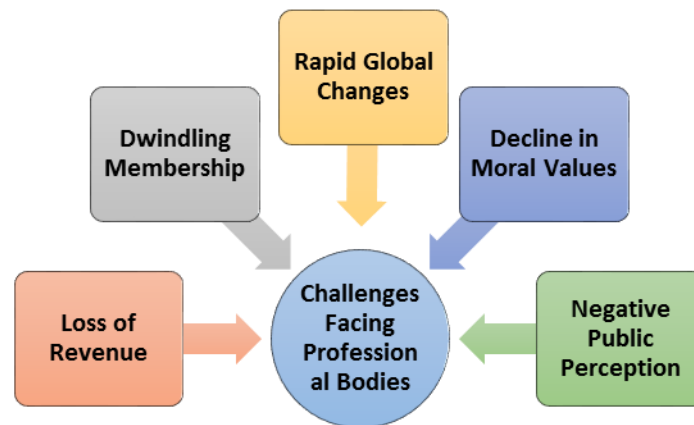

Figure 1: Challenges Facing Professional Bodies

There are many challenges faced by professional bodies and only a few will be enumerated in this study and these are:

- **Loss of Revenue:** Many professional bodies are struggling financially because they depend on membership fees to survive. Some have already started to diversify their products to raise revenue, for example, they charge a fee for attendance at their conferences, workshops, etc.
- **Dwindling Membership:** Many of the qualified students fresh from academic institutions are unable to enter the labour market due to jobs scarcity. This then creates problems for professional bodies for they struggle to get new members.
- **Rapid Global Changes:** Professional bodies find it difficult to cope with the rapid changes happening globally such as technological changes, climate change, etc. They have a duty to keep up with these changes, advise and develop their members accordingly.
- **Decline in Moral Values:** Many professions are plagued by declining moral values thus exacerbating corruption and unethical behavior and some of the immoral standards have been made a norm by certain unscrupulous societies such that scrupulous professionals find it difficult

to work in those society. In some South African municipalities, for example, professionals of high integrity are purged because they refuse to compromise their moral and professional values.

- **Deterioration of Services:** Lack of professionalism by some professionals has resulted into poor service delivery and that has posed tremendous pressure on professional bodies to try and restore the culture to serve.
- **Negative Public Perception:** The public servants are generally perceived by the public as corrupt, incompetent, lazy and unprofessional. This becomes a burden for professional bodies who have to do everything in their power to eradicate this perception.

Professional Bodies in Local Government (LG) in South Africa

There is already a number of professional bodies operating in local government in South Africa. The following are some of them:

Professional Body	Profession	Qualification
1.Institute of Local Government Management (iLGM)	Managers	Bachelor of Public Administration
2.Law Society of South Africa (LSSA)	Attorneys	Bachelor of Law
3.Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)	Engineers	B, Sc in Engineering
4.South African Nursing Council (SANC)	Nurses	Bachelor of Nursing Science
5.South Africa Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA)	Accountants	CA
6.South African Board for People Practices (SABPP)	HR Practitioners	Bachelor of Commerce (HR)
7.Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA)	Doctors, Psychologists	MBCHB; Honours in Psychology
8.Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA)	Communicators	Bachelor of Communication Science
9.South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP)	Scientists	Bachelor of Natural Sciences
10.Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)	Librarians	Bachelor of Information Science
11.Chartered Institute of Government, Finance, Audit and Risk Officers (CIGFARO)	Auditors. Accountants, Risk Practitioners	Bachelor of Commerce
12.South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN)	Planners	Bachelor of Town and Regional Planning

Figure 2: Professional Bodies in LG in SA

There are other professional bodies operating in the local government sector (municipalities) the list above is just an illustration that it is highly possible for the whole sector to be professionalized and these existing professional bodies need to be strengthened and work more collaboratively with municipalities to professionalize the sector. It is also possible that the remaining few municipal officials who do not belong to any professional organizations can be professionalized through the process of establishing new bodies or at least developing professional norms and standards where it is impossible to establish a professional body.

Research Methodology

The study was qualitative and explorative in nature. As noted by Dornyei (2007) qualitative data 'are most often' collected by researchers through interviews and questionnaires. With the use of non-numerical data, this line of research to explore and describe the 'quality' and 'nature' of how people behave, experience and understand (Alshenqeeti, 2014). It used semi-structured interviews to elicit information from respondents. The semi-structured interview was used to make respondents more comfortable in providing responses. Stuckey (2013) maintains that the researcher is mandated to provide the subject with some topics reflecting the issue under study, whereby one is to explore the topic that the interviewee is comfortable with. This value of interview is also cited by Berg (2007) in that the value of interviewing is not only because it builds a holistic snapshot, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants; but also because it enables interviewees to "speak their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings." The interview setting was a natural one as asserted by Cohen, et.al. (2007) that interviewing is a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting. The natural setting is also emphasized by Creswell (2009) who notes that the analysis process should also be reflexive. i.e. including the researcher's interactional experience with interviewees. This is also supported by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) that semi-structured interviews are the sole source of information for qualitative researchers. Respondents were selected from a sample of Senior Managers across South African municipalities. The sample consisted of 50 senior managers who were selected randomly, and senior managers have significant years of experience and are likely to be members of particular professional organizations. Morse (1994) advises that 30-50 interviewees are reasonable for a qualitative study. Data analysis used coding, the process supported by Charmaz (1983) in that it categorizes and sorts data, while codes serve to summarize, synthesize and sort any observations out of data.

Research Findings

All respondents were senior managers in South African municipalities. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed five (5) themes and these are:

- Membership of a Professional Bodies
- Benefits of joining a Professional Body
- Roles, Functions and Responsibilities of Professional Bodies
- Effectiveness of Professional Bodies
- Collaboration between municipalities and Professional Bodies to professionalize the Local Government Sector

Theme 1: Membership of Professional Bodies

Respondents were asked if they are members of Professional Bodies. Ninety-six (96%) of the respondents confirmed that they are members of Professional Bodies and only four (4%) does not belong to any professional body. Some respondents even stated that they belong to three (3) professional bodies. A follow up question was posed on those who do not belong to any professional body as to why they are not affiliated. R6 stated "*I did not take much interest in the past regarding Professional Bodies as I felt the scope for my discipline was limited. From history emphasis was placed purely on the Technical careers being Engineering, etc. Having said this, it was an oversight on my part for not taking the initiative to source professional bodies in my respective discipline.*" Lack of taking initiative was also echoed by R18 who said, "*I am only aware of the Institute of Local Government Management (iLGM) as a professional organization and one has not taken time to fully understand the organizations particularly the professional benefits that such organizations offer.*"

Theme 2: Benefits of joining a Professional Body

Many respondents showed good understanding of the benefits of joining Professional Bodies. The following are some of the benefits that were cited by respondents:

- Professional bodies encourage leaders to recognize the value adding of Professional Bodies, in so doing they are better equipped to motivate their staff about imparting knowledge and insights to ensure efficacy within the organization.
- Networking with key stakeholders from other organizations and parastatals.
- Keeping abreast of changes in legislation development and governance issues.
- Enhancing professional development so that the discipline can achieve the status of professionalization.
- Ensuring the ethical code of practice within the workplace.
- A great tool for all participants to understand the mechanics of their profession and feel a sense of belonging to the group as it is made up of diverse and broad experience which helps to build one's talent even further.
- Provide for continuous professional development.
- Sharing of knowledge, experiences, best practices and skills.

Theme 3: Roles, Functions and Responsibilities of Professional Bodies

When asked what they think are the roles, functions and responsibilities of Professional Bodies, respondents cited the following:

- They provide standards for that profession and regulate the behavior of its members in terms of ethics.
- They provide opportunities for networking on a global scale as a professional body.
- They assist with career advancements and professional development.
- They safeguard the interests of the profession.
- They monitor and regulate adherence to the professional standards.
- They keep members updated on the latest trends and changes in terms of the profession.
- They disseminate knowledge to all and sundry.
- They promote effective practices of learning and development mechanisms to become competitive in their respective domains of operations.
- They raise the bar or standards of excellence so that the professional body is credible to all stakeholders and can market their body.
- They publish journal articles and magazines so that the audience can be reached far and wide.
- They adopt a code of ethical practice to professionals whereby they provide a guide to professional behavior patterns at the workplace.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of Professional Bodies

Respondents were also asked if they think Professional Bodies are effective. Only 1% of the respondents stated that Professional Bodies are not effective. Areas of improvement to increase effectiveness include the need for professional bodies to promote ethical conduct among members; simplification of the registration and accreditation process; etc. Areas where Professional Bodies are effective were cited as follows:

- Professional bodies are strict on their requirements for professionals.
- They are good at Continuous Professional Development (CPD).
- They inculcate technical expertise and promote good knowledge management practices.

- They provide rewards and recognition for outstanding performance.
- They facilitate innovation and embrace changes

Theme 5: Collaboration between municipalities and Professional Bodies to professionalize the Local Government Sector

Respondents were also asked how municipalities should collaborate with Professional Bodies to professionalize the Local Government Sector. R17 stated, *"Municipalities should evaluate and align their standards and behavior against that of the professional body; provide the necessary training needed by professional bodies and vice versa; provide the respective employees an opportunity to be members by subsidizing membership fees; ensure that members maintain their membership in terms of respective CPD points;"* R18 stated, *"it would assist to make registration compulsory for appointments but then these organizations should clearly articulate the benefits to municipalities; municipalities can, in conjuction, with these professional bodies have development programmes in place; municipalities can also include such collaboration in municipal policies."*

The other collaboration areas were stated as follows:

- Professional bodies should be part of the Advisory Committees in the Local Government Sector.
- Municipalities should adopt professionalization in the sector by having strict requirements for professional registration with the relevant professional bodies.
- They should adopt a system of recruiting graduates and working with professional bodies to ensure that they grow to professionals.
- Municipalities should carefully evaluate the required registration body for all positions that require registration and make it a compulsory requirement.
- Municipalities must introduce relevant and required professional registration at all levels of positions.
- All staff appointed from Supervisor upwards should be members of professional bodies.
- Professional bodies should assist in the selection of key staff such as the Municipal Manager, CFO and other Section 54 Managers.
- Municipal professionals should play an active role in mentoring the young professionals and municipalities must have full coaching and mentoring programmes.
- Professional bodies must help and support municipalities in dealing with unethical conduct in the sector.
- Thy should ensure growth and development of knowledge of the local government sphere through research and constant discourse on policies and strategies on how to further grow this critical sphere of governance.

Discussion

Respondents showed a very good understanding of how Professional Bodies operate in general and this understanding is consistent with the exposition by literature. Although there are a few municipal officials who do not belong to any professional body, it does look like the concept of professional bodies is widely accepted in local government which creates an expectation that it will be possible to professionalize all jobs in local government. The expert knowledge management principle is also accepted by most respondents as the definite quality that is upheld by professional bodies alongside ethical conduct. Municipal officials also understand that for local government to be professional it has to deliver quality services to its communities. This is particularly important to understand especially because protection of the society is part of good and professional ethos.

Findings and Recommendations

The following are the findings of the study:

- The majority of municipal officials belong to professional bodies.
- There are many benefits in becoming a member of a Professional Body.
- Professional bodies play a very important role in professional development in local government.
- Professional bodies are effective, but they can do better.
- Professional bodies should work closely with municipalities to be more effective.

The following are the recommendations from the study:

- Professional bodies should be part of the Governance arrangements in the Local Government Sector so as to improve governance processes.
- Municipalities should adopt professionalization in the sector by making it compulsory for employees to register with the relevant professional bodies.
- They should develop compulsory coaching and mentorship programmes to ensure proper guidance of interns and young professional.
- Professional bodies should assist in the selection of key staff such as the Municipal Manager, CFO and other Section 54 Managers and other highly technical positions.
- Professional bodies must help and support municipalities in dealing with unethical conduct in the sector.
- Thy should ensure growth and development of knowledge of the local government sphere through research and constant discourse on policies and strategies on how to further grow this critical sphere of governance.
- Professional bodies must collaborate with institutions of higher education and municipalities in the design of curricular that is relevant and is addressing the needs of municipalities.

Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to explore the effectiveness of Professional bodies in South African municipalities. The objectives of the study were to establish the rate of registration with professional bodies by municipal officials; find out what officials think are the benefits of joining a professional body; find out what officials think are the roles, functions and responsibilities of professional bodies; determine effectiveness of professional bodies; find out how professional bodies should improve their effectiveness; and determine how municipalities can work with professional bodies to professionalize the local government sector. Literature review was based on legislative and conceptual theoretical framework of Professional Bodies. This included the benefits of joining professional bodies; the roles, functions and responsibilities and challenges of Professional bodies. A total of 50 respondents were selected randomly from senior management officials from municipalities across South Africa. The study was qualitative design and used semi-structured interviews to elicit information from respondents. Responses were transcribed and categorized according to themes. The study revealed that the majority of municipal officials belong to professional bodies and there is a need for professional bodies to work more collaboratively with municipalities to professionalize the local government sector.

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