



## Nurturing Development Administration in South African Local Government: A Critique of Socio-Economic Development

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to unpack the relationship between development administration and local government in fostering socio-economic development. The paper argues that the effective implementation of development administration sufficiently contributes to local government productivity in delivering government development-oriented services and programs. Development administration covers a wide range of techniques used by large organizations, most notably governments, to implement plans and policies that are meant to assist them in achieving their developmental objectives. Development administration includes the strengthening of administrative capabilities. The main goal of development administration is to create a better social, political, and economic environment. Local governments play a crucial role in Africa's economic development trajectory. Local government is known for its significant role in the implementation of national economic development initiatives and strategies to boost economic growth. This paper is conceptual in nature, and it relies heavily on the secondary data, and the existing literature to address answers to the inherent argument. From the literature, authors derived findings such as lack of adequate political capability and politicization of development, administrative corruption, accountability, low priority for quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation of socio-economic policies, excessive political control and nepotism in administration, poor capacity for development, lack of community participation, resource constraints inter alia. The study contributes to the field of public administration and development as it subsequently deals with assessing and resolving the economic, social, and political problems that affect the everyday life of the local communities. The development administration additionally, contributes to the South African Nation Development Plan (NDP) as it enhances the social, economic, and political arena. This study can influence public officials to be equipped with more knowledge and skills to be able to enhance and manage socio-economic development. Therefore, this paper recommends that further research should be conducted in all the municipalities within South Africa, to detect problems associated with development administration for the effective enhancement of socio-economic development as well as reinforcing and easing sustainable development in local government.

**Keywords:** *Development; Administration; Development Administration; Socio-economy; Local Government*

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to unpack the relationship between development administration and local government in fostering socio-economic development. The paper argues that the effective implementation of development administration sufficiently contributes to local government productivity in delivering government development-oriented services and programs. Layton-Matthews and Landsberg (2022:55) highlight that eventually, the South African government is moving towards e-government systems as compelled by the development of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution. However, the South African local government is still facing the challenges of socio-economic development. Hence, academics might pose the question as to whether South African local government can achieve the implementation of e-government in the present of the current socio-economic development challenges. The other issue is the concept of developmental local government wherein other scholars use interchangeably with the developmental state, on how will it be achieved if the socio-economic development is hindered in local government. The interchangeable use of the terms developmental local government and developmental state" stems from their shared goals of driving socioeconomic progress. However, they operate at different levels and within different spheres of influence.

Further, Ijie and Iyoriobhe (2018:2) in Ibieta (2014) asserted that Development Administration is about projects, programs, policies, and ideas that are focused on nation-building, with the viewpoint that socio-economic and socio-political development of a society should be undertaken by talented and skilled bureaucrats. Furthermore, Weiden (1994) harmonizes development administration as a process of guiding public organizations toward attaining government development objectives. In addition, this implies that the Development Administration is a compass that guides and directs practitioners in the execution of government developmental plans. In simplest terms, Development administration is concerned with maximizing innovation for development. Ugwuanyi (2016) asserts that development administration is concerned with how to manage the public sector of a nation to accelerate national development and develop the capacity of the public administration system to effectively do so.

Etalong and Aduma (2022:147) concur that development administration is an integral part of a system that facilitates the well-being and smooth operation of that system to achieve the desired result. Etalong and Aduma (2022:146); and Avijit (2020) further, added that Development administration helps in strengthening and executing developmental programs and projects in the direction of nation-building and socio-economic progress through public administration. Ohemeng (2017); and Hope (1984:64) concur that development administration has essentially evolved from the recognition that the administrative structures in developing countries required restructuring to promote societal transformation. However, Ikenna and Tochukwu (2023) allude to it that it is fascinating to dive into the origins and evolution of developmental theories in administrative thought. Weidner's introduction of the two streams, particularly the one stemming from scientific management, had a profound impact on administrative reform. The concept development, initially termed by Goswami and later propagated by influential scholars like Riggs, Weidner, La Palombara, and Waterson, showcases how ideas can evolve and gain traction over time. The influence of scientific management on administrative reform movements, as traced back to the turn of the century, highlights the enduring nature of these concepts in shaping administrative practices.

Subsequently, Hope (1984) asserts that development administration straddles the realms of an academic discipline and a practical approach to implementing and enhancing administrative systems within these nations. This field aims to address governance issues, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and institutional limitations that hinder socio-economic progress in less-developed countries. By reorganizing and revitalizing governmental structures, development administration seeks to facilitate and expedite positive changes within these societies. In terms of section 152 of the *Constitution of the Republic of*

*South Africa, 1996*, and the *White Paper on Local Government, 1998* the local governments, particularly local municipalities in South Africa have a constitutional obligation to play a critical role in promoting social and economic development, which entrenches the developmental duties of municipalities. In South Africa, the government is divided into three spheres: namely, local, provincial, and national with the main purpose of satisfying all the rights of the public and facilitating the socio-economic development as prompted by development administration.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Conceptualisation of Terms**

It is important to conceptualize and clarify the key terms as they form part of the discussion.

#### **2.1.1. Development**

Mensah (2019) in his paper titled “Sustainable Development: Meaning, history, principles, pillars, and Implications for human action”: refers to development as an evolutionary process through which the capacity of humans increases to initiate a new structure, handling the challenges, being familiar with change and strive towards the achievement of new goals. However, Rabie (2016) asserts development is a fundamental economic concept that has positive implications; it involves the application of certain economic and technical measures to utilize available resources to initiate economic growth and improve people’s quality of life. In addition, development implies overall activity in a society, consciously or subconsciously undertaken, aimed at improvements in that society (Stec, Filip, Grzebyk, & Pierscieniak, 2014). For this paper, development entails all the activities undertaken for the advancement and attainment of socio-economic growth.

#### **2.1.2. Administration**

The administration is defined by Escobar, Mena, Benítez, and Maury (2022:266) as the coordination and supervision of activities that have to do with work tasks, guaranteeing two essential characteristics such as efficiency and effectiveness in the world of work. Igbokwe-Ibeto (2019) further addresses administration as a cooperative action involving human and material resources to achieve set goals or desired ends. For this paper, administration is regarded as the local government's day-to-day activities towards meeting the community's socio-economic needs.

#### **2.1.3. Development Administration**

Development administration is highlighted by Ugwuanyi (2016) as how to manage the public sector of a nation to accelerate national development and develop the capacity of the public administration system to do so effectively. However, Humiara (2019) is of the view that development administration is about the enlargement of administrative capabilities and structural and behavioral change. Moreover, Humiara (2019) added that it should be aimed at the development of an administrative system or administrative health by introducing- administrative rationalization and institution building. For this study, development administration is probed as a dynamic concept concerned with formulating and implementing plans, policies, programs, and projects aimed towards the advancement of the socio and economic needs of society. Moreover, it is also aimed at developing the knowledge and skills of administrators responsible for promoting and facilitating socio-economic development in local government.

#### 2.1.4. Socioeconomic Development

According to Roztock, Soja, and Weistroffer (2019), socioeconomic development is defined as a process of transformation in social and economic situations as it concerns an individual or an entity in a specific society of a nation in its entirety. Roztock and Weistroffer (2016) further explain socioeconomic development as a process of improvements in social and economic conditions relating to an individual, an organization, or society as a whole. Socioeconomic development is considered as the advancement of citizens of a nation on the following; quality education, adequate infrastructure, employment, an efficient health system, and a better standard of living that eliminates poverty from the society. For this paper, socio-economic development refers to the social and economic needs for improvement of human development.

#### 2.1.5. Local Government

Section 151 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* refers to the local sphere of government consisting of municipalities, which must be established for the whole of the territory of the Republic”, as well as to the authority and rights of Municipal Councils. Further, Wessels (2022) defines local government as a representative and administrative government institution, authorized to perform a limited range of legislative and executive state functions in a circumscribed territory within a larger and sovereign jurisdiction. For this paper, local government refers to spheres closest to the community and is responsible for the delivery of the socio-economic needs of the society and the improvement of quality of life for all.

### 2.2. Theoretical Foundation: Development Administration

There are various theories of development administration namely; modernization, dependency, development, and inter alia. However, for the study, the development theory was adopted to supplement the arguments. Utilizing this development theory within the context of development administration allows for a deeper understanding of administrative challenges and offers insights into potential solutions. Integrating theoretical frameworks into the study enriches the analysis by providing a broader perspective and a theoretical basis for addressing administrative complexities in the pursuit of development goals.

#### 2.2.1. Development Theory

For Pearson (1992) the development theories do not provide a comprehensive explanation of development as „development“. For instance, development does not refer to one particular perspective on social, political, and economic betterment. Instead, it is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted for socioeconomic and environmental transformation from current states to desired ones. Abuiyada (2019:119) articulates development as a term that has various meanings to different people and can be explained in different contexts. Development should be seen as progress towards complex goals such as the elimination of poverty, the provision of employment, the reduction of inequality, and the guarantee of human rights. Hence, Furher (1996:220) alludes, that development is usually seen as crucially determined by structures of governance; governance is interpreted through and shaped by the goal of development. Coccia (2023) probes that there are different conceptions of development and, consequently, disparate approaches to the subject. However, all approaches are concerned with the relationship between development and governance. Further (1996:220) additionally, claims that most development theory equates development with national economic growth and sees the state as its primary agent; consequently, one of its central concerns is to understand and explain the role of the state in development and the nature of government-market relations. In support of Furher (1996) Halperin (2018) concludes that because the above explanations relate development outcomes to the extent and form of the state’s role in development, there is a close relationship between development theory and practice. Scoones (2016)

addresses that development theory has changed over time with changes in ideology and the international environment, and, as it changes, so do its conceptions of development and governance and how they are related.

In support of Scoones (2016) Todaro and Smith (2006) argue that development is a multi-dimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, attitudes, and institutions, as well as economic growth, reduction of inequality, and eradication of absolute poverty. The theory is more related to the study since it is responsible for addressing the development administration and the socio-economic development to improve the lives of rural communities in local government. The theory is more relevant since it advocates for growth, improvement, and advancement of the socio-economic needs of society.

### **2.3. Development Administration and Local Government: Correlation**

In terms of Section 152(1) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996*, the objective of local government is to promote social and economic development. Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto, and Nkah (2014) affirm local government is the substructure upon which the superstructures of state and federal governments are erected. Thus far, Bello Iman (in Akhakpe, 2011) addresses local government as a unit of administration with defined territory and powers as well as administrative authority with relative autonomy. *Local Government Reforms, 1976* outline local government as “government at local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. Hence, these powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas and to ensure, through devolution of functions to their councils and through the active participation of the people and traditional institutions, but that local initiative and response to local needs and condition are maximized”. By the above statement on local government reform which entails the principles of development administration to facilitate community participation, service delivery, poverty alleviation, job creation, and utilization of local resources, the local government is linked with the development administration.

Bolatito and Siddig (2014) assert that local government is the nearest government institution to the populace and thereby, the concern of the grassroots in the provision of social and economic facilities to the rural area where they come from, making it government at the doorstep of rural inhabitants. Fagbohunka (2019); and Ljeoma (2013) argue that the recognition and importance of local government in the development process is prompted by the imperative to tackle local socio-economic problems and to manage grassroots development, especially through the provision of basic infrastructure. Further, Fagbohunka (2019) harmonizes that local governments are public agencies that provide urban services to communities in enhancing better operations; the vehicle of delivering services and achieving sustainable socio-economic development. Bolatito (2022) is of the view that the local government councils are required to serve the public interest in areas of developmental programs, such as; constructing roads, public markets, health care centers, drainages, motor parks, building primary schools, provision of social and economic facilities, making governance available at the doorstep of people. In terms of the political factor, the local government enhances the transfer of political powers to local areas by involving the people in the provision of basic needs in their respective communities. Moreover, Bolatito and Ibrahim (2014) local government administration also carries out informative functions such as enlightenment, development projects, administration, democratic and leadership initiatives, and maintenance of peace, law, and order in the locality. According to Bolatito (2022), local government is seen as government by local inhabitants freely elected to carry out programs to improve the well-being of the people at the grassroots. In aligning the development administration with the local government, the principal function of development administration is to carry out development programs and projects attuned to the



developmental objectives of nation-building and socio-economic progress and to strengthen the government's capacity to engage in such programs and projects.

This paper proposes the concept of development administration to serve as the focus whereas the local government serves as the locus. The aforementioned proposal entails the interconnectedness of the development administration and local government. Local government plays a significant role in socio-economic development as prompted by the development administration. The local government is more familiar with the local economy than any other level of government, it is in close contact with local stakeholders and can ensure that policies are adapted to local conditions, promote specific advantages, and address important bottlenecks. The concept of developmental local government in supporting local government advocated for local government that aimed towards working with communities, groups, stakeholders, council, and other role players to find sustainable ways of meeting their socio-economic needs and improve quality of life. With the above statement, the local government is forced to ensure the provision of socio-economic development to improve the citizens' quality of life. In recap all the activities the local government is taking, socio-economic development is paramount. Therefore, when socio-economic development is promoted the concept of development administration is achieved. Moreover, the development administration is about ensuring and enhancing the socio-economic development which gives the duty to local government to implement and ease the development. Local government is instructed to exercise its powers and functions in a way that has a maximum impact on the economic growth and social development of communities.

## 2.4 Legislative Framework Underpinning Local Government

South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 brought about significant changes in the governance structures, including local government. The concept of developmental local government emerged as a fundamental principle to address historical inequalities and promote socio-economic development at the grassroots level. This section examines the legislative framework that underpins developmental local government in South Africa, highlighting key statutes, policies, and institutional arrangements. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, serves as the primary legal instrument shaping local government functions and responsibilities. Section 152 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* outlines the objectives of local government, emphasizing the promotion of social and economic development, provision of basic services, and community participation. Moreover, Section 153 delineates the powers and functions of municipalities, empowering them to govern, plan, and manage their affairs in accordance with national and provincial legislation.

*The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (Act 117 of 1998)* establishes the framework for municipal structures, governance, and decision-making processes. It mandates the establishment of municipal councils, executive committees, and ward committees to facilitate public participation and accountability. Additionally, the *Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000)* provides norms and standards for municipal governance, financial management, and service delivery. It requires municipalities to adopt Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) that align with national and provincial development objectives, thus fostering a developmental approach. The *White Paper on Local Government (1998)* laid the foundation for developmental local government, articulating principles of democracy, accountability, and community participation. It advocates for an integrated and holistic approach to local governance, emphasizing poverty alleviation, job creation, and spatial transformation. Subsequent policy documents, such as the National Development Plan (NDP) and the New Growth Path (NGP), reinforce the developmental agenda, guiding municipalities in promoting inclusive growth and sustainable development. The Back to Basics (B2B) Program, launched in 2014, seeks to improve municipal performance by focusing on key areas of governance, service delivery, and financial management. It emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership, effective planning, and community engagement in advancing developmental objectives.

Moreover, the District Development Model (DDM), introduced in 2019, aims to enhance coordination and collaboration between spheres of government in addressing development challenges at the local level. The legislative framework for developmental local government in South Africa is characterized by a comprehensive set of laws, policies, and institutional mechanisms aimed at promoting inclusive and sustainable development. While significant progress has been made since the advent of democracy, challenges persist in realizing the full potential of local government as a driver of socio-economic transformation. Continued efforts to strengthen governance, build capacity, and foster partnerships are essential to overcome these challenges and advance the developmental agenda at the grassroots level.

## 2.5. Drivers of Socio-Economic Development in Local Government: The Significance

Local governments play a pivotal role in driving socio-economic development within their jurisdictions. Through various policies, initiatives, and resource allocation, they can significantly influence the well-being of their communities. This part of the paper aims to explore the key drivers of socio-economic development in local government, focusing on factors such as infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and local economic empowerment programs. South African Cities Network (2017) economic development is not an isolated function and not the sole responsibility of the Economic Development Department, or Local Economic Development unit, but rather serves as a transversal municipal function. The drivers of socio-economic development in the local sphere of government are an embodiment of three-legged strategic relationships between government, business, and community which Meyer (2013) regards as the triangle of service delivery to local economic development. Additionally, Meyer (2013) opines that local government is not only responsible for service delivery but also for the socio-economic development of its communities. The constitutional mandate has been strengthened by the *White Paper on Local Government (1998)*, which formally introduced the concept of developmental local government. The section hereunder discusses the drivers of socio-economic development in local government.

### 2.5.1. Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development is a fundamental driver of socio-economic progress in local government. Improved infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water supply, and energy networks, facilitates trade, enhances accessibility to markets, attracts investment, and stimulates economic growth (Smith, 2018). Moreover, investments in infrastructure create job opportunities, enhance productivity, and improve living standards within the community (World Bank, 2020). Local governments often collaborate with regional and national authorities, as well as private sector stakeholders, to plan and implement infrastructure projects tailored to local needs and priorities (Wegelin, 2019).

### 2.5.2. Education

Education is widely recognized as a key determinant of socio-economic development. Local governments play a crucial role in providing access to quality education by establishing and maintaining schools, allocating resources for educational programs, and promoting literacy and lifelong learning initiatives (UNESCO, 2019). There is a general view that education is the competency of the National and Provincial Departments, however, it is crucial to indicate that local government thrives where its citizens are educated. This includes its employees, community members, service providers, and its leadership. Investments in education not only empower individuals with knowledge and skills but also contribute to poverty reduction, gender equality, and social inclusion (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, an educated workforce fosters innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic diversification, driving sustainable development in local communities (Smith, 2020). Highly skilled, educated, and well-trained workforces have a direct impact on economic performance; as well as ensuring quality output, work will be more

efficient. Conversely, unskilled, under-utilized workforces will have the opposite effect, negatively impacting economies and raising unemployment levels (Diaz, 2022; ICONECON, 2023).

### 2.5.3. Enabling Socio-economic Environment

Local government's overarching role in development is to provide an enabling environment for all its residents and businesses to prosper. To achieve this requirement, local government needs to have a LED strategic plan which has a balanced approach between "pro-poor" and "pro-growth". LED strategies need to intervene in the creation of jobs, poverty alleviation, and the general improvement of quality of life (Mayer, 2013). The *White Paper on Local Government (1998)* introduced the concept of developmental local government and made it quite clear that local government is not responsible for creating jobs. This is linked to the assertion by Nel (2001); Meyer (2014); and Triegaardt (2007) who cautioned that caution that local government is not responsible for creating jobs, but instead is responsible for creating an enabling environment for economic development. Municipalities can use their power as regulators as advocated by Mashamaite (2018) and in this regard municipalities can introduce new by-laws and/or enhance the existing by-laws that will encourage businesses to come and invest in their municipalities, thus improving the socioeconomic livelihood of local people.

Bureau of Economic Research (2021) alludes that municipalities must provide the infrastructure and basic services that allow households a decent standard of living and attract investment that will unearth job creation ventures. Creating an enabling environment requires municipalities to have an appetite for promoting foreign, direct, and domestic inward investment which the World Bank (2011) in Ababio and Meyer (2012) calls for the optimization of local small business opportunities. The provision of support, advice, and resources to existing local businesses to create a positive climate for growth is another role that municipalities can play in creating an enabling environment for socio-economic development.

### 2.5.4. Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Enaifoghe and Ramsuraj (2023) posit that entrepreneurship plays a critical role in promoting and driving social and economic growth in South Africa. Entrepreneurship is similar to innovation, skills, and social cohesion, they are all key drivers of socio-economic growth with a strong governance component that thrives where there is a real partnership between government, business, and civil society (OECD, 2005). Morden Growth Theory sees innovation as endogenous, with firms forging a continuing market advantage by being the first to create a compelling new product. For entrepreneurship and innovation to thrive it requires municipalities to position themselves to ensure that they take a lead in creating a conducive environment for these drivers of socio-economic growth as advocated by OECD (2005). Koirala (2018) opines that nurturing the culture of entrepreneurship and innovation has the power to enable SMMEs to unleash their capability to adopt inclusive business models. Through entrepreneurship and innovation, municipalities can nurture a calibre of SMMEs who will assist in coming up with ways to improve the prospects for wealth distribution and employment creation (Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017). This will require municipalities to scale up support for SMMEs, Co-operatives, and Village and Township Economies (Department of Small Business Development, 2019).

### 2.5.5. Partnerships

Local partnerships and coordination to foster socio-economic development in local communities. Involvement of the community is essential to obtain commitment and to ensure that the entire community is empowered. Ensuring the involvement of the community not only forces the community to mobilize and work together to meet socio-economic development challenges such as poverty and unemployment but also increases the chances of socio-economic development projects being more sustainable. Van der



Waladt (2022) advocates that partnerships should also accommodate the youth and women in the planning process. People with local knowledge and expertise should become involved to ensure that practical approaches are applied. Linked to partnership is ensuring that municipalities shift to inward investment where investment from local investors is encouraged and nurtured. OECD (2004) holds the view that inward investors enable local firms and organizations to import new knowledge and technology that has the potential to unleash job opportunities. OECD (2004); and Rogerson (2006) argue that it is much easier to prioritize inward investors as compared to foreign investors who often come with stringent demands.

### **2.5.6. Local Leadership**

Meyer (2014) indicates that local leadership is critical and essential for LED success. The term “local leadership” includes members of the “LED triangle” of local stakeholders. Meyer (2014) consequently opines that government leaders are expected to take the lead in coordination and facilitation, but other leaders from the community and business must contribute. Under the term “local leadership”, two other terms are also listed namely “local champions” and “local drivers”. Ababio and Meyer (2012) are of support that local leaders and champions must work together as partners to maximize local resources and actions. Local leaders must make sure the local economy is driven and to create momentum. Additionally, Ababio and Meyer (2012) stress that local government must make quick and effective decisions to the benefit of the local community. Local leaders must put communities first and facilitate participation by all stakeholders. Examples of local champions are local government officials such as the municipal manager, and LED manager, local politicians such as the mayor and ward councillors, local ward committee members and CDWs, local business leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) leaders, and church leaders. Political instability can have a significant negative impact on LED (Meyer, 2013).

Ramodula and Govender (2021) posit that the developmental agenda is boosted by the emergence of municipalities as primary actors in global economic integration. This situation compels municipalities to develop their socio-economic policies that are biased towards the promotion of the social well-being, growth, and prosperity of local communities. Trousdale (2005) in Ababio and Meyer (2012) argues that those in the position of power have a responsibility to strike a balance between a “pro-growth” strategy and a “pro-poor” strategy for which the combination of such strategies places the formulation of strategies for job creation, sustainable rural and urban development, and the central place of poor and vulnerable people at the focus of LED (Trousdale 2005:4).

### **2.5.7. Political Support**

The political support on influencing the implementation of such strategies. Authors such as Swinburn and Yatta (2006), and Tomaney, Pike, and Rodriguez-Pose (2011), argue that the effective implementation of any LED strategy will require concerted political effort and support. Ensuring that local political leaders (e.g. executive mayors, councillors, ward members, community leaders, etc) are committed and involved in the process will help to ensure that the LED strategy obtains the necessary resources required for effective implementation (Van der Waladt, 2022). Koma (2010) opines that strong, coherent, and transformative political and executive leadership is needed to steer the implementation process in the right direction to achieve organizational objectives. Political support and a stable political environment cannot be divorced from socio-economic development in both developing and developed countries. There is no ideal political framework that is more conducive to growth than another as much depends on the stage of economic development and country-specific factors. Nonetheless, the more stable a political system, all else equal, the more likely it is that economic growth will be fostered (ICONECON, 2023).

### **2.5.8. Local Economic Programmes**

Local economic empowerment programs aim to stimulate economic growth, create employment opportunities, and alleviate poverty within local communities. Local governments often implement policies and initiatives to support Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), attract investment, and promote local entrepreneurship (OECD, 2021). Additionally, they may facilitate access to finance, provide business development services, and foster partnerships between the public and private sectors (IFC, 2020). For municipalities to be responsive to the socio-economic aspirations of their communities, there is a need for their Local Economic Development strategies to be aligned. Such strategies must woo local and foreign investors, and accommodate Public Private Partnerships, and business development programmes (Agbevide, 2018).

### **2.6. Government Commitment to Socio-economic Development in Local Government: Proclamation**

Government commitment to socioeconomic development aims to help people build businesses, create jobs, and lift themselves out of poverty. It is a deliberate process with specific goals and objectives and often a built-in feedback loop with an attempt to find and resolve specific problems and sustain the solution. Cristea, Noja, Danacica, and Stefea (2020) opine that socio-economic development is an important way to create socio-economic progress for communities. It includes a combination of strategies for improving access to capital, creating new businesses and jobs, and improving access to resources that can fuel economic and social progress. Socio-economic development is a long-term strategy and is not a one-time event, and it consists of many different activities and actions designed to increase community development over time. According to Liu (2021); and Zikovic (2020), socioeconomic development is an approach that helps communities and nations develop the skills and knowledge they need to lift themselves out of poverty. This can take the form of targeted microloans, education and job training, or even public policy changes. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the importance of poverty reduction and call for policy implementation that leads to the socio-economic development of impoverished people (Niaz, 2020). However, there is a lack of knowledge about assessing individual-level socio-economic development and how financial inclusion through microfinance can contribute to it.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) sets out the Government's commitment to the elimination of poverty in a rapidly growing and more equitable economy and the context of an open, peaceful, and democratic society. This is done as part of socio-economic development and as a government program towards reconstruction and development goals within a sound fiscal and macroeconomic framework. Furthermore, the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework seeks to give budgetary content to the Government's commitments to socio-economic development while identifying and clarifying crucial systemic reforms needed in accelerating social and economic progress. The paper critiques that hence the government is committed to improving socio-economic development, greediness, failure to employ officials based on merit, and working for self-development instead of societal value remain the impediments towards the proclaimed commitment by the government or political party in power.

### **2.7. Challenges of Socio-economic Development: The Impediments**

South Africa has made tremendous progress in overcoming decades of colonialism, apartheid, and inequality since gaining democracy in 1994. The economy was facing the effects of structural difficulties during the COVID-19 crisis. The crisis has substantially impacted capacity utilization across all sectors of the South African economy. Habiyaemye, King, and Tregenna (2020) advocate that developmental progress has been uneven across all dimensions of the socio-economic landscape, and new ideas are needed to deliver transformative outcomes within the national and global constraints, creative

solutions need to be devised using all available tools of modern science and technology to strengthen the common foundation of an inclusive and cohesive society (Habiyaemye *et al.*, 2022). Socio-economic development offers opportunities to harness the power of new knowledge and find solutions to old and new challenges. Despite all efforts, the country faces several socio-economic challenges, including low economic growth, high unemployment, poverty, limited skills development, climate change, and limited access to health services. Hence, the paper probes that the aforementioned obstacles remain the reason why the South African government is moving towards a developmental state, instead of being a developmental state. Thus, the so-called socio-political and economic development constitutes the developmental state. The paper calls for the below challenges to be attained as a way of reinforcing the South African government to a Developmental State.

### 2.7.1. Low Economic Growth

Schröder and Storm (2020) argue that South Africa's economy has been growing at a slow following the 2007–2009 global financial crisis. Before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the real GDP growth rate averaged 0.84 percent per annum, which is lower than the population growth rate. It is estimated that, due to the effects of the pandemic restrictions, output contracted by seven percent in 2020 (Stats SA, 2021).

### 2.7.2. High Unemployment Rate

According to Mahadea and Kaseeram (2018), high unemployment remains the key challenge for South Africa as the country struggles to generate sufficient jobs. Spaul and Daniels (2021) assert that after shedding more than two million jobs in 2020 as a result of the lockdown and other containment measures associated with COVID-19, the South African economy has been operating below its production capacity. Schröder and Storm (2020) are of the view that the economy had suffered from productivity stagnation even before the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly due to the underutilization of existing production capacity and the reduction of high unemployment rates. Job creation in South Africa has been slow in comparison to the shifts in the labor force with youth unemployment as a particular concern (Habiyaemye *et al.*, 2022). The fact that youth unemployment is undoubtedly one of SA's most intractable challenges, made worse by COVID-19, is itself an affirmation of the support for small businesses (Matjeke, 2022). Therefore, the government should be encouraged to continue providing sustainable business developmental support and finance to local small businesses.

### 2.7.3. Poverty

South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, with race playing a determining factor in a society where 10 percent of the population owns more than 80 percent of the wealth (World Bank report, 2022). Habiyaemye *et al.* (2022) indicated that substantial progress has been made in reducing the intensity of poverty since the democratic transition in 1994, mainly through the implementation of a redistributive transfer program in the form of government grants. Zizzamia, Schotte, and Leibbrandt (2019) allude that to address this issue of poverty and inequality, the country adopted a variety of programs, including fiscal policy, to assist redistributive measures. However, more than half of South African households were still living in poverty in 2017 (Zizzamia *et al.*, 2019). Van der Berg, Patel and Bridgman (2021) add that at the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown in April 2020, 47 percent of households reported running out of money to buy food and experiencing child hunger. For economic growth to reduce poverty, it is necessary to design policies that combine growth stimulation and inequality reduction. Without the policy interventions, South Africa would, on its current trajectory, not be able to attain its development targets outlined in the country's National Development Plan 2030 of creating sufficient jobs, eradicating poverty, and reducing inequality (Van der Berg *et al.* 2021).

#### 2.7.4. Limited Skills Development

According to Habiyaemye *et al.* (2022), the skills shortage has often been identified as one of the main constraints on employment growth in South Africa. To address the skills gap problem, the government passed the Skills Development Act of 1998 through its commitment to socio-economic development and launched the National Skills Development Strategy to coordinate skills development in education and training institutions. Habiyaemye *et al.* (2022) further indicate that South Africa has been performing poorly in comparison with other countries in terms of educational achievement in mathematics and science literacy. As such, South Africa continues to face the constraints of a skills shortage, which limits the ability of its economy to deploy sufficient levels of human capital to strengthen the country's productivity and international competitiveness. Despite having leading universities on the African continent, the country is still trying to attract foreign professionals with critical skills to help bridge the existing skills gaps.

#### 2.7.5. Climate Change

Climate change poses one of the most complex and greatest threats to socio-economic development, felt most severely by society's poor and vulnerable groups. The effects of climate change are highly variable; while some regions become hotter and drier, others become wetter and colder, which affects human and livestock health and lower crop yields (Arndt *et al.*, 2021). South Africa has committed itself to supporting the development, demonstration, and implementation of renewable energy sources because of climate change (Department of Energy, 2019). However, given the challenges facing South Africa's economy due to the insecure supply of electricity production, renewable energy alternatives remain critical to reducing the dependency on coal-fired power generation and ensuring stable supply alternatives. (Wright & Calitz, 2020). Besides all this load-shedding because of a thorn in the flesh of South Africa since 2019.

#### 2.7.6. Health Services

One of the key features of a developmental state such as South Africa is to ensure that all citizens, especially the poor and other vulnerable groups, have access to health. South African health service system reflects the unequal legacy left by apartheid, which remains polarised today, and poverty still fundamentally determines health outcomes (Habiyaemye *et al.* 2022). The poor have limited resources to source alternative healthcare options and remain dependent on a deeply under-resourced government healthcare system. The 2011 census found that men aged 40 to 59 from the poorest quintile were six times more likely to die within the next year than the corresponding group from the richest decile (Burger & Ngwenya, 2021; Stats SA, 2011). Public health care in South Africa is legally available to everyone but has been constrained by financial and investment shortages, resulting in shortages of proper supplies, functioning machinery, and high-quality services. The services often require patients to wait in long queues without appointment times, along with the unavailability of skilled doctors. Despite introducing the national development plan and district development model, South Africa still faces profound socio-economic developmental challenges. There is a need to address the 'triple challenges' of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in South Africa while transforming the economy and raising the rate of economic growth. The president of South Africa, Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, introduced the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) in October 2020. The main aim was to rebuild the economy and address the socio-economic development crisis.

### ***3. Research Methodology***

The question that guides the study is: whether development administration is well articulated or nature within local government in South Africa. To address the above question, the paper deploys a qualitative data analysis as a methodological approach employed in social sciences, humanities, and various other fields to make sense of non-numerical data, typically textual or visual as advocated by (Silverman, 2016). It is based on content analysis wherein literature and other government documents on the subject matter are analyzed.

#### **3.1. Case Study**

In giving context to the above discussion, the study highlights some case studies within the South African context wherein local government is driving socio-economic development with jurisdiction. The South African National Development Plan envisages a capable developmental state being the only solution to the ongoing triple challenges of unemployment, poverty, and inequality (National Planning Commission, 2012). Developmental state aspiration requires strong and capable state institutions across all spheres of government to ensure efficiency in delivering developmental outcomes. Evidence from successful developmental states such as Japan, China, South Korea, and Singapore points to the existence of capable bureaucracy selected through meritocracy (Von Holt, 2010). In South Africa, the City of Cape Town has shown developments that are geared towards socio-economic development and urban inclusivity (SALGA, 2021). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) strives towards the achievement of access to quality, effective, and affordable services (Gordon, Booysen & Mbonigaba, 2020). South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) is mandated to provide universal, equitable, efficient, and quality services. In light of these global and national policy prerogatives, socio-economic inequalities in access to basic services remain high (NPC, 2013).

3.1.1. The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality collaborates with local businesses and non-profit organizations to revitalize urban spaces, promote tourism, and enhance community engagement through initiatives such as the Route 67 public art trail (Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, 2021).

3.1.2. The City of Cape Town's Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) provides temporary employment opportunities to marginalized individuals, thereby addressing poverty, and promoting social inclusion (City of Cape Town, 2021). Thus, to guarantee and promote the delivery of social services, the Polokwane Local Municipality collaborates with Seshego Community Against Crime and Gangsterism (SCACAG) to fund rehabilitation facilities and reduce crime in Polokwane.

3.1.3. The City of Johannesburg's Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit system has improved mobility and connectivity, thereby promoting economic integration and access to employment opportunities. Similar to this project is the introduction of the Polokwane Municipality's Leeto la Polokwane which is embedded in social cohesion with economic spin-offs. The two projects are the hallmark of the power of collaboration between the private sector and municipalities in driving socio-economic development and inclusive growth.

### ***Recommendations and Conclusion***

This paper was about the nurturing development administration in local government, a critique of socio-economic development. The paper deliberated the development administration in local government taking into the social, political, and economic factors of the local communities. Therefore, the study considers development as a focus, the local government remains as the locus wherein socio-economic development is considered to be the critique or the main discussion. Since the development administration



is responsible for equipping the administrators of officials with skills to deliver socio-economic development there is a need to implement and enforce the socio-economic drivers. The discussion demonstrated that local government is the pulse of socio-economic development and it set into motion the developmental duties of the local government as enshrined in section 153 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*. By prioritizing investments in these areas and adopting inclusive and sustainable development strategies, local authorities can create conducive environments for economic growth, improve living standards, and foster social cohesion within their communities.

This paper calls for collaboration, partnership, cooperation, and inclusive local government as a way of effectively achieving socio-economic development. Additionally, the paper scrutinizes that effective governance, adequate resources, and collaboration with stakeholders are essential for maximizing the impact of the drivers on socio-economic development outcomes. Due to the current load-shedding problem in South Africa, the Chapter 9 institution needs to investigate matters causing the problem, for such a reason if the problem is corruption, the Public protector is not doing enough job, and perhaps it is the issue of misusing the public funds the Auditor General is not effectively playing the safeguarding role, therefore this paper calls for monitoring and evaluation of the Chapter 9 institution on socio-economic development matters. The paper also adds that the Constitution stipulated so much to support and safeguard the public, hence those in practice of Constitutional mandates fail to meet its objectives. The study also recommends further studies and research on socio-economic development as a societal day-to-day problem. In recap, the papers call for the utilization of local resources as a catalyst/stem of socio-economic needs. Education and training are also key to the utilization of local resources for growth and development. Moreover, drivers of the socio-economic development need to be supported and strengthened for efficiency and effectiveness motives.

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