

# Providing Better Services to All Through the Implementation of E-Governance at the Local Government Level in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The sphere of local government in South Africa is often viewed as an institution that is closest to people. It is also perceived to be the first point of contact between members of community and government institutions. This means that most service delivery objectives that are contained in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* are achieved at the local government level, thereby making municipalities the most important institution in the country. This saw municipalities being able to touch any area or communities where the national and provincial government cannot reach including disadvantage rural areas. Such development led to the introduction of e-governance as a way of providing services to both public and private sector in the country. The main reason is that the internet has become an important way to conduct business and to communicate between government departments and members of the community. However, current evidence points to the fact that local governments worldwide, including South Africa, have been slow to respond to these developments: the implementation of e-governance and use of internet to provide e-services. Based on that this paper advocates for the implementation of e-governance at the local government level in South Africa as a measure of improving and achieving Constitutional objectives of providing better services for all. This paper argues that through e-government or e-governance, municipalities will be in a better position to respond to service delivery challenges faced by members of the community because in itself (e-governance) public participation is achievable. The paper concludes that local e-governance is a better way of providing municipal services to different communities in the country.

**Keywords:** E-governance, E-government, Good governance, Implementation, Information technology, Local government

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## 1. Introduction

The transition from the apartheid era into a democratic dispensation in South Africa ushered in major opportunities for members of community to be provided with adequate services by the government. Though being celebrated and appreciated, this transition came also with challenges which affected the provisions of services to majority of citizens especially those residing in remote rural areas. Based on such challenges the country has since been rocked with community protest by different communities in all the South African nine provinces. This shows that the system adopted in the country post 1994 for the provision of services to members of community is falling or it was not capacitated enough to cater for all. The expectation by members of the community was and still is that the establishment of municipalities "local municipality" in their areas will turn around service delivery woes in their community. Unfortunately, the sphere of local government being the government that is closest to people could not cater for the needs of the majority of people. This is because some of

them reside far from municipal offices. While others are unable to access services due to ill health or if they are, they are unable to stand for a long time on the queues to pay for utility bills and municipal services. This saw many communities taking the matter on the street, protesting against what is termed poor service provision or lack of service at all in their areas.

Such community protest in the name of poor service delivery led to the South African government searching for proper ways in which services can be rendered to different communities including remote areas in the country, with the aim of alleviating poverty and lack of access to municipal services in the townships and rural communities. This is because the era in which communities in South Africa lives in is different as compared to the one adopted or used during the apartheid. Communities are now living in what is known as the information communication technology (ICTs) era. These developments made it possible for citizens to move offline to business online to acquire e-services from private sectors without physically being present to receive such services.

Based on that it was observed in this paper that the new information age in which local communities live in start to show some cracks in how government and municipalities renders its services to citizen. The new information age has changed the manner in which government will or renders its services to its consumers (Maleka, 2016). This is to say that the use of internet has become an important way to communicate, render services and conduct business (Streib & Willoughby, 2002). Furthermore, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is being seen as a way of widening access to government information and services in developing countries. Unfortunately, e-government development remains at a very low level at the local government in South Africa (Olivier & Murenzi, 2017). This is surprising because there is a tremendous growth of electronic transaction in the private sector in South Africa and that leave one with multiple questions as to why public sectors are slow in implementing e-government or governance infrastructure. This created serious frustrations in the public eye, especially to those who cannot differentiate between private and public sectors. Streib and Willoughby (2002:198) point out that it is therefore very understandable as to why citizens compare local government performance to that of e-commerce giants such as Amazon.com. This paper provides that through e-governance some service delivery challenges at the local government level can be resolved because citizens including those residing in the rural areas can be able to move from businesses to government online in seconds.

The purpose of this paper is to answer a question as to why it is necessary to implement e-governance at the South African local government. This paper will also provide the reason why it is imperative for local government to connect with citizens via the internet and the need for the provision of municipal e-services in South Africa. Pursuant to that it will outline the process of implementation e-governance at the local government level and critic how best can adequate services be provided equitably to members of the community. This includes the challenges and strength of both e-government and e-governance. This paper argues that it is possible to connect citizens including rural communities to enable them access to municipal e-services. Furthermore, this paper concludes that the implementation and provision of e-services by municipalities will bridge the gap between citizens and their municipalities. This will ensure that accountability and public participation prevail at the local government level.

## 2. The Constitutional Status of the South African Local Government

After the abolishment of apartheid and the transition into a democratic era, local government was given a constitutional status with the main aim of providing democratic and accountable government to local communities in South Africa. In trying to accommodate all communities (urban and rural) in the country, local government is expected to consist of municipalities that must be established to cover the whole territory of the Republic (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996). The process is explicitly provided for and outlined in terms of section 155 of the *Constitution*. Section 155 provides for the categories of municipality that must be established in the country, namely: (i) category A, which is municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority; (ii) category B, which is a municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a category C municipality and; (iii) Category C which is a municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality (Section 155 (1) (a)-(c), *Constitution*).

Being the third sphere of government in South Africa, its objectives amongst others include ensuring that services are provided to communities in a sustainable manner while encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations in its matters (Section 152, *Constitution*). The notion of community involvement led to the sphere of local government being viewed as the first point of contact between members of the community and their government through local government (Mokgopo, 2016). This is the reason why it is being perceived and defined as an institution that is closest to people (Mokgopo, 2017). It is therefore very clear that the main purpose for the establishment of the sphere of local government in South Africa was and still is to improve service quality and ensure equity in the provision of services while enhancing participation by citizen in government system (Fox & Gurley, 2006). Based on that, the author highlight that in order to do so, there is a need to strengthen local government in South Africa to ensure better services for all. This is because through local government, service delivery objectives as provided for in the *Constitution* can be achieved while on the other hand the cost of service-delivery can be minimised to accommodate remote areas that were and are still affected by the injustice of the past. All this is

being done to allow communities to have access to municipal services that they are entitled to in terms of the *Constitution*.

Due to its constitutional status, there is always a high demand and high level of expectation by communities from their municipalities to provide them with adequate services. Unfortunately, it does happen that communities are not afforded with such services as expected and this resulted in most municipalities in the country experiencing serious service delivery protests with communities demanding better services from their municipalities (Mokgopo, 2016:69). In 2004 most rural communities had taken the matter to the street to demand better services from government. As a result, local government was under a serious spotlight (Managa, 2012). Unfortunately, the majority of these protests have been marked by exceptionally high levels of violence and vandalism (Managa, 2012:1). Some communities lamented lack of communication from their municipalities (Mokgopo, 2018:35). The process which points out clearly that indeed the local government in South Africa need to be strengthened and capacitated to provide adequate service to all citizens. Traditionally, one would think that after 1994 the concept of service delivery and e-governance would have been absolutely intertwined (Thobakgale & Mokgopo, 2018:25). This is to ensure that municipal services reached vast majority of citizens in the country. Unfortunately, current evidence points out that most municipalities in South Africa have been very slow to respond to these developments.

It is worth noting that the issue of how to deliver services to communities in an effective and adequate manner is not only faced by the South African government. According to Rahman (2009), governments throughout the world are in quest of finding novel ways to deliver public services more efficiently and effectively to reach members of the community at large. That is the reason why this paper advocates for the implementation of e-governance as a system that can alleviate the burden of providing service to members of the community.

Like any other innovation the South African local e-governance has its own disadvantage such as lack of infrastructure in the townships and rural community, making the process of connecting communities to the internet problematic. These include the maintenance of ICTs infrastructure, as well as

the high cost of data in the country. However, one of the advantages of introducing and maintaining local e-governance is that electronic service delivery has the ability to enable citizens access to government (municipal) services in different ways. Furthermore, through e-governance community members from different communities can receive services by just calling municipal central toll-free number and be provided with a pool of service (service menu) and choose the appropriate one they are looking for. The opportunities that come with the introduction or the implementation of e-governance service lead to the author concluding that local e-governance is the way to go in order to reach the vast majority of citizens in the provision of services.

### **3. Understanding the Concept of E-Government and E-Governance**

It is worth noting that there are some slight differences between e-government and e-governance and for clarity sake their differences will be outlined below. The main reason for such clarity is that both these terms are intertwined and in most cases one can be used or preferred over the other in this paper. It should also be noted that in defining these concepts, it does not mean that there is no governance at all at the South African local government. The main aim of this paper is to come up with new techniques and strategies of transforming and strengthening governance at the local government by making it more accessible to all citizens in the country. For clarity sake different definitions will be provided because there are different ways in which the concept of e-government can be defined. This paper will look at and critic various definition on the subject matter as provided by different scholars. This paper will also provide a definition that best fit the concept.

#### **3.1 E-Government**

E-government is defined as referring to the use of information and communication technologies with the main aim to improve and better the provision of government services to citizens. Kesar and Jain (2008) writes that e-government can also strengthen interactions with business and industry and ensuring citizen empowerment through access to information or more efficient government management. E-government should not be seen as a profit center as it will never be but it should be viewed as a way of maximizing communication to

citizens and facilitating harmonious provision of services to communities. On the other hand, Abdul Kalam (2018:18-19) points out that:

*"E-government can also be defined as the transformation of government to provide efficient, convenient & transparent services to the citizens & businesses through Information & Communication Technologies. Furthermore, he writes that above all e-government is a process of change in the way government shares information and delivers services to achieve greater transparency and convenience in transacting with citizens and businesses".*

On the other hand, World Bank define e-government as referring to the technology-enabled transformation of government which is governments' best hope of reducing services delivery costs, while on the other hand it is aimed at increasing transparency in government, promoting economic development, facilitating the advancement of an information society and improving service delivery and public administration (World Bank, 2018). For the purpose of this paper e-government can be defined as the process of moving citizen services online, the process which, in this paper, encourages it to be implemented at the local government level in South Africa. However, the main challenge with the above provided definitions is that they do not provide governance of ICTs. It is such omission that kicks in the concept of e-governance in this paper.

### 3.2 E-Governance

In simple terms e-governance means electronic government and it is generally understood to be a wider concept than e-government. E-governance refers to electronic governance and it concerns itself with using Information and Communication Technologies at various levels of government (Maleka, 2016:167). E-governance can bring about required change in the manner in which citizens relate with government and government to citizens. This is because among other things its prerequisites include telecommunication networks, skilled staff, cross-government systems, internal agency systems and internet access. E-governance in itself provides better service delivery on the side of government to citizens, it empowers citizen through access to information in a fast and efficient way and it improve interactions with industry and business.

E-governance is preferred more than e-government in this paper because among other things its objectives includes connecting citizens through e-citizens and e-services, while building external interactions (e-services) and improve government processes (e-administrations). Most government institutions or departments in South Africa took the initiative of applying e-governance strategies in the form of e-administration and e-procurement with the main aim of improving administration. Not only was this initiative carried out at the national or provincial and departmental levels, some municipalities have also launched free Wi-Fi as a method of improving citizen access to e-services. It is worth noting that the initiatives of e-governance is to strengthen the relationship between government (municipalities) and society, thus enhancing community participation at the local government level. According to Maleka (2018:167) the use of e-governance refers to how supervisors and managers utilise internet and Information Technology to execute their functions of coordinating, supervising, planning, organizing and staffing effectively.

From above, it is very clear that e-governance involves the use of technology to bring local government to recipients of services (communities) in new ways. E-governance makes use of innovative ICTs such as the internet to provide information and knowledge and to delivery efficient and cost-effective services. According to Signore, Chesi and Pallotti (2005) the thought behind the adoption of ICTs is to move beyond the passive information-giving to active citizen participation in the decision making process. This therefore kicks in the good news that its implementation at the local government can bring new concepts of citizenship both in terms of community needs (citizen) and responsibilities. The reason behind this conclusion being that its nature is to enable, engage and empower the citizens (Pallotti *et al.*, 2005:1). From the above discussions, this paper highlight that e-governance can be regarded as an ICT-enabled route to achieve good governance because it has the ability of integrating people and process information and technology in the service of governance initiatives.

### 4. Why E-Governance at the Local Government

The South African government over the years has since recognized the importance of ICT and more recently what is known as electronic government

(e-government) with the main aim of improving the manner in which services are provided to citizens. Such recognition is also aimed at increasing the overall efficiencies of government in general. This is due to the fact that information and communication technology has the potential of addressing social problems, strengthen democratic institutions in the country and empower citizens to overcome development challenges. Therefore, the South African government is implementing e-government with a number of poverty alleviation programmes to improve the living standards of its communities such as the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Municipal Public-Partnership Pilot Programme (MPPP).

Furthermore, e-governance is an attempt by the South African government to ensure public service delivery and the total management of the quality of the services being provided. It is therefore not surprising that the author in this paper advocates for its implementation at the local government level. The reason being that electronic government is the concept by which services and much of the information that is currently available at the local government or in the country in general can be provided to members of the public on a 24/7 basis through the utilization of technology. By making all these services available to all citizens' members of the community will be spared the necessity of physically procuring these services and information at the municipal offices. This means that by migrating offline to online citizens can easily move from waiting for municipal services for a long time to access such services online without even visiting municipal offices physically.

The evolution of electronic-governance came at the right time where many countries including South Africa are at the edge of merging or reducing the number of municipalities as a means of improving service quality and lowering the cost of service-delivery. Such reduction is aimed at improving the services provided to communities by dysfunctional municipalities. Another reason for such consideration is to increase accountability while improving equity or enhancing public participation at the local government level. But then the main reason why there is a serious cry about local e-governance and its implementation is to make municipalities more independent and transparent. Furthermore, is to provide municipalities with more autonomy by providing them with more power to act within and formalize their institutional by upholding all the

benefits attached to the sphere of local government in the country.

Pursuant to that e-governance services are two fast and easy to use and such accessibility can be done within a second. As a result, five reasons can be provided why it is necessary to immigrate offline to online at the local government:

- The use of ICTs will reduce service delivery cost and increasing venue from the national government to the local government;
- It will help in re-structuring (fragmented) administrative processes at the local government in the country;
- It will expedite the exchange of information between municipalities and communities including government departments or businesses;
- The use of ICTs is faster and more efficient in delivery public service;
- Finally, it will improve internal efficiency at the local government.

E-governance at the local government is concerned with whether communities are able to interact with their respective municipalities using ICT channels and media in a convenient and affordable way. Such interaction is varied and it includes information as well as services flows between communities and their respective municipality including government. With citizens receiving important information from municipalities using electronic means. This includes using electronic communication to consult with citizen on the part of the municipality, the process which will indirectly and directly ensure community participation by all in the affairs of the municipality.

Abrahams and Newton-Reid (2008:33) highlight that interactions can be facilitated and achieved by affordable access to electronic communications network and services. The main reason why there is a serious need for such affordable access to municipal services and information is because in some instance the provision of services using toll-free numbers over a fixed municipal line will depend on members of community having access to affordable fixed line services. Furthermore, the supply of municipal information via the internet (websites) will also depend on communities having easy access and affordable internet.

As a point of departure, should the above criteria not be met, it might result in serious implications for the implementation and improvement of e-governance at the local government level in South Africa. The reason being that the channels available to ensure interaction between local government and communities depend mostly on the penetration of ICTs service that are affordable. Majority of municipalities in South Africa have websites yet only few or a small percentage of citizens have access to the internet to be able to access any available information or online services.

The study that was conducted by Abrahams and Newton-Reid (2008:34) which the author in this paper fully attests to its findings provides explicitly that all municipalities in the country have fixed line numbers where they can be contacted. Unfortunately, most people who form part of the majority in the country and happen to fall under the marginalised groups rely only on mobile technology for regular interaction and communication. The process is beyond an average citizen's affordability to contact the municipality using mobile phone as most of them use their phones to send text messages including free "please call me" service. It is therefore unlikely that even if such options were available from the municipalities such please call me messages from members of community will be replied to. Summarily, it is clear that members of the community mostly if not all are not yet able to interact with their municipalities in an affordable and convenient way, due to broad policy failure to achieve universal service and access both at the local government and in the country (Abrahams & Newton-Reid (2008:34). That is the reason why there is a great demand for the implementation and improvement of local e-governance at the South African local government level. The section that follows will provide guideline and different stages on how to develop e-government services at the local government.

## **5. The Process of Implementing E-Governance Services**

The main reason why there is a serious cry for e-governance services is because in itself e-governance promise to make government in general more responsive, legitimate, transparent and responsive to both economic and social challenges faced by different communities in the country. Unfortunately, the process of developing and implementing

e-governance applications at the municipal level in South Africa is a stringent process which requires political will because if not well implemented and monitored e-governance systems can waste resources. It is worth noting that e-governance is an evolutionary phenomenon. As such, its introduction at the local government does not necessary mean that the old method of providing services to communities is automatically faced out. This is to say that new e-governance projects when introduced and implemented should take into account (cognisance) existing experiences (method) used in the past to safeguard municipal (projects) investments. Furthermore, the implementation of e-governance service should not be aimed at a certain ethnic or specific communities, its implementation should be of paramount important, relevant and usable by a large number of people including deep rural areas. To make sure that e-governance is implemented at the local government level there are four stages that need to be followed to ensure that this process is carried out adequately. These stages are known as e-governance models and are cataloguing, transaction, vertical integration and horizontal integration.

### **5.1 Cataloguing**

The main idea behind this model is to focus on cataloguing local government (municipal) information and presenting them on the web. Such initiative requires municipalities to create an administrative website to enable access or to deal with the current pressure that is faced by municipalities from external actors who are demanding to get on the municipal net to access services. With cataloguing, parts of local government's non transactional information are put of the site (Pallotti *et al.*, 2005:3). The reason why moving online at the local government is encouraged is because not only is local government being viewed as the sphere of government closest to people but that many people in this new information age are able to access information on services from different private sectors from the web. This therefore created a serious thirstiness and expectation from citizens to receive same services from their municipalities in the same manner as those provided by private sectors.

### **5.2 Transaction**

This is the second stage of implementing e-governance. It is regarded as the second stage or model because it pays more attention on connecting

internal government (municipal) system to an online and allows communities to transact with their municipalities electronically. This stage allows communities to perform transactions such as paying municipal rate or traffic fines directly to municipalities as well as renewing license online.

This stage provides electronic communication between municipalities and communities there by making communication a two-way process where communities move from being passive participants to playing active role. This is to say that transaction stage present municipalities on the internet as an active response. Now, the most interesting part about this stage is that members of community are given fair and proper chance to transact with their municipalities online by either filling in necessary forms and municipalities' responds back by providing either confirmation or acknowledgement of receipt.

Transaction stage creates a one stop online centre to make services available through a portal. Pursuant to that it is worth noting that through this stage citizens, who are municipal customers, enter through the portal at the municipal services they need as opposed to expecting them to traverse numerous sites looking for or in order to find information they need from the municipality.

Pallotti *et al.*, (2005:4) highlight that:

*"the issue (time and cost) of integration of legacy systems comes onto the scene. The reason being that the information collected by government and local government may be politically sensitive and, therefore, the installation of appropriate security mechanisms may be an important technical consideration".*

This means that the Electronic Communications and Transaction Act 25 of 2002 comes to the party to ensure the safety of communities in transacting with their municipalities in as far as the authentication and confidentiality is concerned. The adoption of this Act is being celebrated in the African continent as one of the best Act in Africa to provide for the safety and implementation of ICTs. Furthermore, it is being celebrated because it provides for the registration and accreditation of authentication service provider and such authentication is attached to the concept of advanced electronic signature (*Chapter 6 ECTA, 2002*). Moreover, chapter 7 of the same

Act provide protection to customers by providing for disclosure requirements by suppliers. In this instance this will apply to municipalities in offering services or goods for sale and exchanging information by way of electronic transaction (*Chapter 6 ECTA, 2002*).

### 5.3 Vertical Integration

After online transactions, municipal services will become prevalent and mature thereby creating serious expectations from members of the community. As such this stage is aimed at moving towards the transformation of local government services rather than focusing on digitising and automating existing processes. Electronic governance/government is not a matter of simply putting existing local government services online or on the internet, it requires a re-conceptualisation of the local government service. By so doing this will be creating a system where full benefits of achieving e-government strategies will be realised. However, such achievement will not take place until organisational changes accompanied by technological changes at the local government is realised.

It is worth noting that most transactional stages are too fragmented and urbanised and the way forward will be to integrate them at different level of local government. With vertical integration the role played by municipal employees changes dramatically. The reason being that in the old traditional method of providing services offline many municipal employees were and are still responsible for processing localised municipal transactions. This is to say that they only served a certain group of communities but with the emergence of e-government system as a way of proving services to communities there is a lot expected from them to ensure that such services reach majority of people on time.

### 5.4 Horizontal Integration

This is the last stage in proving guidance on the stages to be taken in making sure that communities in South Africa receive municipal services using electronic systems. Horizontal integration is more concerned with community developed and it provides for the achievement of information technology from citizen's point of view. The main idea here is to integrate different services that are available within the departments in the municipalities. This will ensure that each department is up to speed

and not left behind because at this stage the vision brought by the internet will be clearer.

The main reason why it is necessary to integrate services offered by different department in each municipality is because citizens require more than one service from their municipality. All this will be achieved if one-stop service centre can be established. This will also make sure that each department in the municipality knows what, when and where the other department is providing services to communities. The question is how can all this be achieved? In providing an answer to this Pallotti *et al.*, (2005:5) captured this very well and writes that "databases across different functional areas will communicate with each other and ideally share information, so that information obtained will propagate through all municipal departments". In line with the above, communities will be able to receive variety of services across different departments or sections in the municipality at once.

In short, the last two stages complements each other in that they maintain that members of community desire to see the sphere of local government as an integrated information base and one contact point where all service offered by different departments within the municipalities are available to all at any time. The right term to be used for this kind of transaction is "one-stop shopping". In simple terms such integration takes place vertically and horizontally.

Pallottii *et al.*, (2005:3) writes as follows regarding this two stages of integration:

*"Vertical integration refers to local and central administrations connected for different services or functions of government, whereas horizontal integration means integration across different service and functions. In defining the stages of e-government development, the vertical integration across different levels within similar functionality will be attained before the horizontal integration across different functions because of their different level of complexity. This last stage of e-government vertically and horizontally integrated represents for citizens and ideal situation in which they have online access to ubiquitous government services with levels of government and functional walls inside government transparent to them".*

Having provided such guideline on how to develop e-governance services at the local government the

question that follows is how can communities become active participants in local e-governance services?

## **6. E-Governance Via Telecommunications**

It is worth noting that access to public services in South Africa or any part of the world through any electronic means forms part of e-governance. E-governance in itself can broaden openness and facilitate community involvement. This is to say e-governance in South Africa should be evaluated through public participation. The best way to achieve service delivery via e-governance is by empowering communities through telecommunications. Telkom in South Africa is the main service provider of communications services and it operates both mobile communications and fixed line (Naidoo, 2012:63). However, there are different mobile operators in the country and amongst them include Vodacom, Cell C, MTN and Virgin Mobile. With these various mobile operators there is still no enough cell phone infrastructure in the country to provide e-government services to all communities.

Beside the use of phones in accessing e-services, multi-purpose community centres also places a huge role in helping communities to have access to e-services. Multipurpose Community Centre should be viewed and be defined as public places where different community members or citizens in general are or can be able to access internet using computers and other digital technologies that enable them to create, learn, gather information and communicate with their municipalities and other government institutions. The centres are built with IT facilities that are shared by all local community within a remote or rural area. There are several opportunities and challenges that come with the establishment of Multi-purpose community centre. Some of the opportunities that provoke the establishment of the Multi-purpose centre in the rural communities include:

- Multi-purpose centres provide a means of dialogue between rural communities.
- It can enhance distance learning through distance education.
- It facilitates the sharing of information.
- It also offers an opportunity to reduce social isolation and marginalization experienced by those residing in rural communities.



## 7. Challenges of Implementation and Strengthening E-Government and E-Governance at the Local Government in South Africa

Like any other innovation, there are also some challenges attached to the implementation and development of proper e-governance channels and strategies at the local government level in South Africa. Some of the challenges include lack of access by communities to e-governance services even if they are implemented. Such lack of access to local e-governance (e-services) to all citizens makes it difficult to celebrate the effort made so far by other municipalities in developing e-governance service. This is mainly caused by what is known as rural-urban divide in the distribution of resource or provision of services. Other issues include lack of necessary skills in the use of internet by citizens, inability to read and understand the content; high costs of data (internet access) and long waiting times due to network failure in connecting to the internet.

Language also seems to be a great concern challenging the implementation of e-services to reach the majority of communities in the country. This is because municipal information is generally presented in English thereby excluding those who are illiterate in taking part in the activities of their municipality. Though some municipalities have websites, observations made in this study explicitly show that the functionality of this site is affected by the language used. This somehow affects community engagement using municipal site because the main target audience is not reached. Information might be there but if not understood by majority of people then it is as good as not being there. This in itself illustrates the nature of digital divide in our municipalities. However, the main challenge of achieving e-governance at the local government is mainly due to theft of copper. The growing theft of copper cables has affected e-governance negatively, and undermined the implementation of unbundling policy in South Africa as well as being a threat to the country's security and socio-economic development (Naidoo, 2012:64). Another challenge is due to lack of skilled people. This is evident from what was provided by the Department of Communication where it was pointed out that:

*"the central challenge to the implementation of the Information Society Development Plan (ISAD) in South Africa is the serious shortage of ICT skills*

*and the state's limited capacity to deliver the necessary task force. This skills shortage is exacerbated by the brain drain caused by skilled ICT personnel and professionals leaving to work in developed countries or moving from the public to the private sector"* (Department of Telecommunication, 2018).

Another factor threatening the implementation of local e-governance is culture and tradition. It is not easy to automatically migrate rural people from offline to online because they are mostly used to receiving offline services from their municipalities. People residing in rural areas are used to the word of mouth in passing information from one person to another. However, in trying to build a better service delivery mechanism at the local government level it is about time rural communities are taught on the importance of passing and accessing information via the internet and using mobile phones.

Political instability at the local government can also become a major factor threatening the implementation of e-services in different municipalities. Though the City of Tshwane proved to be moving in the right direction there is a serious political disruption in the provision of local e-governance services. This paper provides that political disruption sometimes comes when a new political party win the local government elections and begin to introduce new programmes without working on what was implemented. Though corruption and court battle between the Democratic Alliance and the City of Tshwane is not the subject matter in this paper it is worth noting that recent court battle by the DA approaching the High Court to side aside the tender that was awarded in rolling out broadband in the City is enough evidence of political disruption. Whether there were irregularities or not, that stand to be proven but for the purpose of this paper the City of Tshwane is applauded for having managed to implement e-governance services and providing free Wi-Fi to citizens to have easy access to municipal services and become active participants in the affairs of the municipality (Maxanda, 2018).

Mintzberg (1973,2018) highlight that the ability of local government to manage disruptive external political forces is an important threat to real progress in the implementation of or e-governance services. Because such disruption provides serious difficulties that affects the vision about marvellous things that technology can do for municipalities.

This is to say that the implementation of e-governance will require serious attention from both the council and municipal managers (political will). This process requires more research and time; something which most municipalities proved – they either don't have enough time or they are just not interested in providing e-services. The blame should also be against municipal manager because they are too busy to an extent that they do not have any time to spare for introspection or experimentation of the new development that is constantly taking place in the area of electronic governance. Streib and Willoughby (2002) point out that municipal managers always rush from one task to another throughout the day such as going to staff meetings, meeting with community leaders, etc.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper concludes that local e-governance is a better way of providing municipal services to different communities in the country including previously disadvantaged rural communities. The implementation of e-governance services will ensure that different communities are provided with enough information and services that is available and being provided for by their municipalities. By so doing they will automatically become active participants in the activities of their municipality. However, it is worth noting that local e-government initiatives involve more than just a municipal website. Municipal website should have enough information and be accessible to members of the community. Therefore, as a way of accommodating all communities including remote areas there is a need to introduce either free Wi-Fi or the reduction of the cost of data to enable the citizens fair access to local e-governance services.

Furthermore, local e-governance development strategies should be built upon the previous once as highlighted in this paper above (municipalities can still copy from either the national or provincial government) until such time that municipalities are able to improve and provide e-services to communities and business. The main reason why this paper advocate for the implementation of e-governance in transforming local government in South Africa is because access to e-governance services is very fast, e-governance is reliable and it can build or ensure accountable local government that is responsive to the needs of communities. In ensuring that e-governance prevails, this paper recommends that municipalities should

update the information that is available on their websites constantly. Furthermore, municipal council should also make enough funding available to further develop and improve available ICTs infrastructure at the local government (municipal) level.

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