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The implication of a strained political-administrative interface on service delivery in Emfuleni Local Municipality

Bongo Ntshangase
WITS Graduate School of Governance

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public Administration and Governance) to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand

February 2023

DECLARATION

This research report, "The implication of a strained political-administrative interface on Service Delivery in Emfuleni Local Municipality", is my unaided work. I have acknowledged, attributed, and referenced all ideas sourced elsewhere. I am at this moment submitting it in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (Public Administration and Governance) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I have not submitted this report before for any other degree or examination to any other institution.

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ABSTRACT

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Thesis: The implication of a strained political-administrative interface on service delivery in Emfuleni Local Municipality

The debate on the political-administrative interface is an age-old debate that dates to the 16th century and is premised on whether politics should be separated from the administration. Using a qualitative research strategy, Emfuleni Local Municipality, as a case study and interviews (semi-structured) as the primary data collection method, this study examines how a strained political-administrative interface influences a municipality's ability to deliver essential services.

Most empirical research on the interface confines the debate to the political-administrative dichotomy, which provides a framework for the political-administrative interface. But little is said about the other elements that affect the interface which according to Svara (2006), include professionalism, political neutrality, distinctive means and shared roles and responsibilities, which this research seeks to address.

Executive and administrative officials (former and current) who had first-hand experience of the interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality during the period under review were identified and interviewed. The interviews were recorded and later coded based on the themes. The patterns determined from interviews were used to explain the influence the strained political-administrative interface at Emfuleni Local Municipality had on its ability to deliver essential services. The results are discussed and interpreted using political-administrative models as analytical frameworks.

The research study found that, although various factors can influence a municipality's ability to deliver essential services, a strained political-administrative interface is a leading cause.

Johannesburg, February 2023

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DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Lindani Ntshangase, whose unwavering support, love, and continuous encouragement and prayers made it possible for me to achieve this milestone. To my beautiful boys Buhlebenkosi and Kamvelihle Ntshangase, this one is for you, my angels. My dear parents, Lumka and Mbulelo Sonqishe, your love, wisdom, and encouragement carried me through when the going got tough. I am eternally grateful to you, Thahla naweGcwanini. To my Heavenly Father, all glory and honour belong to you. Thank you for being a God of your word.

“When the time is right, I, the Lord, will make it happen.”

Isaiah 60:22

In memory of Robert Cebo Sonqishe

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Background

The debate on the political-administrative interface is an age-old debate that can be traced back to the 16th century and is premised on whether politics should be separated from the administration. Woodrow Wilson (1887), who arguably popularised the argument, claims that the two, although interdependent, need to be separated from each other to avoid politicising the administration. Politics is concerned with policy development, and the administration is concerned with its implementation. According to Schedler and Eicher (2013), policymaking entails identifying a societal problem that needs to be addressed, discussing, and agreeing on the best course of action required to address the issue before finally developing the policy. At the same time, policy implementation gives effect to the policy by converting it into the government's plan of action/ programme to benefit society. In local government, the council is meant to give orders (formulate policy), and the municipal officials give effect to those orders (policy implementation).

However, as highlighted by de Visser (2010), political interference of political parties in the running of the municipality often impedes municipal officials from performing their duties. de Visser (2010) also notes a concerning trend of regional party structure interference in municipal processes, with the former insisting on being part of the administration's human resources and supply chain processes (de Visser 2010, p.94)

Another practice that adds to this dilemma is political office bearers appointed within the municipal administration. Thornhill (2008), de Visser (2010), and Woodridge (2007) argue that not only does this practice blur the lines of political accountability, but it also creates a breeding ground for consistent power struggles, especially if the public office bearer holds a senior position in the political party. This results in multiple power centres with conflicting interests, which has a negative effect on service delivery.

This study, therefore, investigates the implication of a strained political-administrative interface on service delivery in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The selection of the case study was influenced by the decision to place the local municipality under administration in 2018, in accordance with section 139(1)(b) and (5)(a) of the Constitution for its failure to provide essential services.

This chapter introduces the study. Section 1.1.1 (overview of Emfuleni Local Municipality), 1.1.2 (the sub-national service delivery mandate), and 1.1.3 (political-administrative interface as an enabler of service delivery) describe the research context. Section 1.2.1 outlines the problem statement. Section 1.2.2 discusses the research purpose, and Section 1.2.3 the research questions. The chapter concludes with the delimitation of the study (Section 1.3) and its justification is discussed in Section 1.4. This is followed by the general layout of the study (section 1.5). Similarly, Section 2 provides a more comprehensive discussion on the implication the political-administrative interface has on service delivery at the sub-national level.

1.1.1 An Overview of Emfuleni Local Municipality

According to the Statistic South Africa Census Report (2011), Emfuleni Local Municipality is situated in Vanderbijlpark on the Western side of Johannesburg. It covers an area of 987 km² with a population of 721 663. The report also notes that the municipality shares boundaries with the City of Johannesburg Metro, Metsimaholo in the Free State, Midvaal and Rand West City and JB Marks in the Northwest province. According to Pieterse (2021), Emfuleni Local Municipality runs an interconnected unit, making local economic growth and spatial planning initiatives intricate. As a result, the effectiveness of the municipality is dependent on intergovernmental relations structures inside and outside of its district (Pieterse, 2021). The municipality is one of three local municipalities comprising the Sedibeng District Municipality and is led by the African National Congress (ANC). The other two municipalities are Midvaal which is led by the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Lesedi Municipality which is ANC-led. Emfuleni Local Municipality is home to 77% of Sedibeng's population.

1.1 Population distribution at Emfuleni Local Municipality

Year	Population By Sex		Population Group By Age			Total Population
	Males	Females	0-14	15-64	65 -	Total
2016	361 692	371 752	188 801	474 865	69 779	733 445

(Source: Community Survey 2016)

Year	Population Group					Total Population
	Blacks	Whites	Coloreds	Asians/Indians	Other	Total
2016	625 778	90 996	7 368	7 368	-	733 445

Fig 1 illustrates the population distribution of Emfuleni Local Municipality. ***Source Community Survey 2016***

Emfuleni Local Municipality has two central business centres, Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark. The Municipality is made up of a few residential areas, which include Evaton, Sharpville, Boipatong, Tshepiso and Sebokeng, Bonanne, Steelpark, Duncanville, Unitas Park, Sunland Park, Waldrift, RustterVaal, Roshnee and Debonair Park (ELM, 2019/2020, p6).

The local municipality is famous for significantly contributing to the South African iron and steel industry. According to the South African Cities Network Report (2017), the industry was the backbone of Emfuleni's economy for over 60 years. The municipality was once home to the South African Iron and Steel Industrial Corp (ISCOR). This development brought about significant economic growth in the area. However, this economic boom was short-lived as the apartheid government moved to privatise the steel plant, leading to substantial job losses in Emfuleni (South African Cities Network Report, 2017). This job shedding marked the beginning of the economic decline in Emfuleni. Since then, the region's economy, which was once heavily dependent on industrialisation, has been kept afloat by the weekend tourism industry and the development of the two universities in the area –the Vaal University of Technology and the Northwest University (Vaal et al.).

Other industries that contribute to the municipality's economy at a much lower scale, according to the South African Cities Network Report, 2017, include finance, government services, trade and retail and transport.

1.1.2 Service Delivery Issues at Emfuleni Local Municipality

South African municipalities, including Emfuleni, face service delivery, administration, and governance challenges. According to the Emfuleni Local Municipality draft financial recovery plan (2018), some of the municipality's challenges include poor governance, political oversight, and significant deterioration in the municipality's financial situation and its ability to deliver services. The challenges in the municipality were so dire that it was placed under administration in accordance with section 139(1)(b) and (5)(a) of the Constitution in 2018 for its failure to provide essential services for the residents. The South African Local Government Association Municipal Support and Intervention Framework (2020), explains that contrary to popular belief, this intervention is intended to assist ailing municipalities in getting back on their feet rather than a disciplinary measure (SALGA, 2020, p. 47).

Service delivery challenges in Emfuleni Local Municipality include uncollected refuse, roads riddled with potholes, power outages, and burst sewerage pipes due to poor maintenance of ageing infrastructure. According to Schrieber (2023), Emfuleni Local Municipality owes Eskom R 5,8 billion (Schrieber, 2023, p1).

According to section 151 of the South African Constitution (1996), a municipality has the right to exercise power/perform its function of ensuring the provision of essential services to communities without the interference of the provincial and national and spheres. However, this right can be withdrawn when a municipality fails to perform its constitutional obligation, and section 139 of the Constitution is evoked, which gives the provincial government power to interfere in the municipality, as was the case with Emfuleni Local Municipality in 2018.

1.1.3 The Sub-national Service Delivery Mandate

South African government comprises three spheres of government, namely, national, provincial, and local government. Chapter 3 Subsection 40 of the

South African Constitution (1996) describes these spheres as different, but interdependent, and connected. Each of these spheres has political and administrative structures with detailed roles and responsibilities, which promotes accountability across each government sphere.

The local sphere of government comprises municipalities, which the South African Local Government's Association Report (2011) describes as state organs with political structures, the administration, and the community in the municipal area. Local government is located within communities and is the sphere of government nearest to the people. This, and the fact that the local government is the first point of contact a person has with the government, makes the local government the face of government service delivery, as explained by Van der Waldt (2006) and Thornhill (2008). According to subsection 155 of the Constitution, local government is divided into three types of municipalities, metropolitan (category A), district (category B and local (category C) municipalities (RSA,1996, p70). The Municipal Structures Act (1998) sets out the criteria used to categorise municipalities. According to this criterion, Emfuleni is a Category C municipality.

According to White Paper on Local Government (1998) and section 152 of the South African Constitution (1996), "local government duties include providing an accountable government for local communities, promoting economic growth, a safe and healthy environment, ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner amongst other things" To give effect to these duties effectively and efficiently, each municipality is made up of political structures (elected councillors) and administrative structures (appointed officials). Thornhill (2005) explains that the former makes political decisions, while the latter ensures that the decisions are made within the administrative, technical, and managerial feasibility framework (Thornhill, 2005, p185).

According to the Emfuleni Local Municipality Financial Recovery Plan (2018), the Emfuleni Council comprises 90 councillors, 45 Ward Councillors and 45 Proportional Representatives (PR) Councillors. The latter is the distribution of

parliamentary seats based on the percentage of votes each party received during the election (Independent Electoral Commission, 2023).

The structure of Emfuleni Local Municipality currently has 6,323 approved positions. The following section 56 managers, in the organisational structure report to the Municipal Manager:

a) Public Safety and Community Development;

b) Basic Services;

c) Economic Development Planning;

d) Infrastructure Planning;

e) Corporate Services; and

f) Chief Financial Officer.

Section 56 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000, defines these managers as those that report to the Municipal Manager (Municipal Systems Act 2000, p4).

Many management positions in the municipality were vacant during the period under review. According to the Emfuleni Draft Financial Recovery Plan (2018), all Section 56 positions within the Municipality were filled by acting appointments, contributing to the leadership vacuum, instability, and lack of accountability in the municipality.

The municipality's 2017/2018 financial report highlights that out of a total of 6314 positions in the municipality, only 2600 (41%) positions were filled, with a vacancy rate of 59%.

Occupational Levels	Post Created	Filled	Post Vacant	Vacancy Rate
Public Safety and Community Development	2 442	900	1 542	63%
Basic Services	2 836	1 100	1 736	61%
Economic Development Planning	182	92	90	49%
Infrastructure Planning	53	28	25	47%
Corporate Services	322	194	128	40%
Budget and Treasury Office	321	164	157	49%
Municipal Manager	65	44	21	32%
Audit	24	14	10	42%
Political Office	69	64	5	7%
Grand Total	**6 314**	**2 600**	**3 714**	**59%**

Fig 2 Emfuleni Local Municipality Vacancy rate sourced from the Emfuleni Local Municipality 2017/2018 Annual report.

1.1.4 The political-administrative interface as an enabler of Service Delivery

A municipality's efficacy and efficiency are ensured by being governed by a municipal council with executive and legislative authority, as outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. According to Section 156 of the Constitution (1996), the executive authority, or political authority, comprises the executive mayor, the speaker, and the executive committee. The administrative authority (appointed officials) includes municipal managers and other municipal officials. Khalo (2013) explains the former passes legislation (by-laws) and the latter gives effect to the passed legislation (by-laws).

Although legislation draws an obvious division between the roles and responsibilities of the council and the administration, according to Reddy (2017) and De Visser et al. (n.d) as cited in Reddy (2017), it is common practice for councils to appoint people, based on political affiliation rather than merit.

A key role player in the political-administrative interface is the executive mayor of a municipality, also known as the executive authority. According to section 55 of the Municipal Structures Act, executive mayors are elected to office by the municipal council. In municipalities that follow an executive mayor system, such as Emfuleni, authority is conferred on the mayor, supported by an executive committee. The role of an executive mayor, as stipulated in section 56 of the Municipal Structures Act, is to conduct a needs assessment of the municipality, rank these in order of importance and urgency and recommend the policies to address these to the municipal council.

The executive committee, the local government's version of a cabinet, oversees the municipal administration. The executive mayor uses their discretion to appoint executive committee members, which usually do not reflect the council's composition. De Visser (2009) and Pieterse (2021) argue that this practice tends to blur the lines of accountability and transparency and promote dictatorial decision-making. This practice, coupled with the unclear separation of executive and administrative authority roles at a municipal level and the appointment of municipal managers tied to the municipality's political head's term of office, affects the political-administrative interface negatively. This is one of the most significant contributors to the high vacancy rate in most South African municipalities, according to De Visser (2009) and Palmer (2017). In Emfuleni local municipality, during the period under review, most of the senior administrative positions were vacant, contributing to the leadership vacuum, instability, and lack of accountability in the municipality (Emfuleni Local Municipality Recovery Plan 2018).

1.2 Towards examining the implication of a strained political-administrative interface at sub-national service delivery

1.2.1 The research problem statement

The political-administrative interface has been a point of contention for many management, political science and public administration scholars, given the significant role these two actors play in the public policy-making process. At

the local government level in South Africa, this debate gained prominence when the role of officials was expanded to include giving effect to political policies. De Visser (2009) explains that post-2000, a new legal framework that governs local government governance systems was introduced, which increased the scope of municipal activities to include adopting policies, by-laws, and strategic planning (De Visser, 2009). Under this new framework, the roles of the executive authority included initiating policy, overseeing the administration, and making regular executive decisions. At the same time, administrative management included policy implementation, strategic planning, and accounting officer duties (De Visser, 2009). The interface between elected politicians and appointed administrators is central to this protracted debate. Both these roles require substantial political and administrative leadership, as effective government depends on a balance of powers between those who make policy and those responsible for its implementation. Reddy (2017) adds that the nature of this interface has a bearing on the successful implementation of policies and the delivery of services.

Personality clashes between the political and administrative leadership often impede this interface. Thornhill (2005) and Cameron (2003) explain that the governing styles, trust deficiency, and obscure responsibilities of both the executive and administrative authorities can affect the interface's nature. In addition, the DPME political-administrative stability synthesis report (2019), highlights institutional arrangements, technical skills and resources as additional factors that influence the nature of the political-administrative interface (DPME,2019, p.7). A strong-willed executive authority paired with a weaker administrative authority can result in political interests being prioritised over organisational issues and vice versa. According to Anuzu (2015), the strained interface often results in conflicts which adversely affect the overall performance of municipalities, especially service delivery.

Thornhill (2005) further explains that poor service delivery is more evident in municipalities and often results in community members complaining to the municipal councillor instead of following proper channels for registering

grievances. The councillor then communicates directly with the manager or the official. This practice tends to blur the distinction between the two functions. It also contributes to communication failures within the managerial system, which tends to negatively affect the lines of authority (Thornhill,2005, p183). This was the case in Emfuleni, which was placed under administration in 2018 in accordance with section 139(1)(b) and (5)(a) of the Constitution for its failure to provide essential services.

This complex relationship was in the spotlight in two high-profile cases, that of former Gauteng Member of Executive Council (MEC) of Health, Bandile Masuku and the former Minister of Health, Zweli Mkhize. The issue in both cases was how the principle of separation of responsibilities between the two role players is understood and applied when exercising authority over matters and public institutions.

Many reasons can affect a municipality's ability to deliver essential services to the residents. Scholars Makanyeza, Kwandayi, and Ikobe (2013) allege that Poor service delivery at the sub-national level is often the result of inadequate planning and a lack of resources, poor monitoring and evaluation systems, inadequate citizen participation and corruption, amongst other things. However, this study seeks to prove that the strained political-administrative interface in municipalities is the leading underlying cause of poor service delivery at the local government level, specifically in Emfuleni Local Municipality. Scholars such as Mantzaris, Pillay (2014), and Kathyola (2010) argue that a balanced, collaborative, and ethical relationship between political and administrative leadership translates to efficient and effective service delivery. These include providing clean drinking water, electricity, sanitation, refuse collection, potholed streets, etc.

1.2.2 The research purpose (aim and objectives) statement

The primary purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the implication of a strained political-administrative interface on service delivery, using Emfuleni Local Municipality as a case study and public administration as an academic

lens. Although extensive research has been undertaken to study the political-administrative interface, most analyses limit the interface to dichotomy and do not consider the other elements that affect the interface. According to Svara (2006), these elements include professionalism, political neutrality, distinctive means and shared roles and responsibilities. This research seeks to narrow this knowledge gap.

The researcher achieved this by first examining the nature of the interface in the context of Emfuleni Local Municipality. This will be followed by an investigation into how the politicians and administrators at Emfuleni Local Municipality relate with one another, as well as the effect this interface had on the municipality being placed under administration in 2018, in accordance with section 139(1)(b) and (5)(a) of the Constitution for its failure to provide basic services. A review of current and previous similar studies, government documents, reports and legislation will be done to better understand the problem in the context of Emfuleni.

The research then discusses the complementary model, which was identified as the most appropriate framework for this research. This is followed by a discussion of the study's proposed research strategy before concluding with recommendations on how the political-administrative interface can be improved for the greater good. This paper contributes to the public administration discourse, specifically the local government perspective.

1.2.3 Objectives of the study include:

1.2.3.1 Determine the nature of the interface between administrators and politicians in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

1.2.3.2 Determine the factors that affect the nature of the interface between administrators and politicians in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

1.2.3.3 Determine the political-administrative interface's role in the municipality being placed under administration for failing to provide basic services.

1.2.4 Research questions

1.2.4.1 What is the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality?

1.2.4.2 What factors affect the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality?

1.2.4.3 What role has the political-administrative interface played in the municipality being placed under administration for failing to provide basic services?

1.3 Delimitations of the Research

Although challenges around the political-administrative interface are not exclusive to the government but extend to Chapter 9 institutions and the private sector, as explained by Maseng (2014) and detailed in the King report (2002), this research will only focus on the local government, more specifically Emfuleni Local Municipality.

According to the State of Local Government in South Africa report (2009), the local government in South Africa runs on five-year political terms. This research covers the political time in which the Emfuleni Local Municipality was placed under administration in terms of section 139(1)(b) and (5)(a) of the Constitution, which was between 2016 and 2019.

Therefore, secondary data collected in this study, including reports and official documents, newspaper articles and previous studies conducted are limited to this period.

The study limited its sample of interviewees to former and current administrative officials, former councillors in Emfuleni Local Municipality, and the Gauteng Provincial Government officials who were involved in the process of placing the Local Municipality under administration. This research also interrogates the complementary model of the political-administrative interface to describe and explain the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality and its influence on service delivery. The model is the most common model used in the South African setting. As noted by Svara (2006), it

best explains the complexity of the relationship, including the distinction and overlapping roles.

1.4 Justification of the Research

This study contributes to the public administration and governance disciplines. From the public administration perspective, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the effect the political-administrative interface has on the delivery of public services by municipalities. Using the specific circumstances of Emfuleni Local Municipality, this study identifies multiple dynamics that can influence a Municipality's ability to provide essential services. From the governance perspective, this study contributes to narrowing the gap identified by Svara (2006) that most of the empirical research conducted on the relationship confines the debate to the political-administrative dichotomy, which is one of five elements that shape the political-administrative interface. The other elements Svara (2006) argues include political neutrality, professionalism, sharing and division of functions, and distinctive means.

Furthermore, although scholars such as Mafunisa (2003); Maserumule (2007); and Maphunye (2009) have made contributions to how politicians and administrators interact with each other, more needs to be said on how the two role players ought to interact to benefit the public interest, which is what this study seeks to address.

1.5 Preface to the research report

The report has six chapters. (Chapter 1) introduces the research study, Chapter 2 explains the effects of a strained political-administrative interface in the context of Emfuleni Local Municipality; identifies the knowledge gap; develops a theoretical framework used for interpreting the research results and findings; and finally, conceptualises the research method.

Chapter 2 starts by providing a description and history of Emfuleni Local Municipality to give the reader an appreciation of the research setting and how

the physical setting might have contributed to the problem under review. This is followed by a detailed account of the root causes (political interference, coalitions, personality clashes, amongst others), symptoms (accentuated role of party politics in municipal affairs, political factionalism, lack of ethical leadership, etc.) as well as consequences (lack of service delivery, corruption maladministration, government resources used for political agenda to name a few) of the strained political-administrative interface at the sub-national level. This is followed by a discussion of existing, previous studies and public documents to identify the knowledge gap this research seeks to narrow down and establish methods applicable to this study. The chapter then identifies public administration as the academic home of this research before concluding by identifying the complementary model as the most relevant explanatory framework on which to anchor the study. The section ends with a detailed discussion of the conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 begins by discussing the research design for this study, which is a qualitative research study. The study's objective, which is to better understand the phenomenon of the political-administrative interface, informed the choice of a research design. The study also opted for a case study (Emfuleni Municipality) research approach for its ability to limit the potential of any bias. The chapter also describes the data collection instruments used and the data collection process followed to identify research respondents, collect data, and process it. The chapter further discusses steps the research has taken to increase the reliability and validity of the research study. It ends with a discussion of the limitations of the study (both technical and administrative).

Chapter 4 reports on the research results of the implication of a strained political-administrative interface on service delivery in Emfuleni Local Municipality. It presents results from the key themes developed from the data analysis process. The chapter also presents the research results on the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality. The factors that affect the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in the Municipality and the role played by the political-

administrative interface in Emfuleni being placed under administration for its failure to provide essential services.

Chapter 5 interrogates the key findings presented in Chapter 4 based on the established framework, which is the complementary model.

Chapter 6 summarises the research report, records the study's limitations, concluding remarks and makes recommendations on improving the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The following section unpacks the problem in the context of Emfuleni identifies and discusses the knowledge gap. This is followed by establishing a theoretical framework, which will be used to interpret the research results and concludes with conceptualising the research approach.

2 REVIEWING LITERATURE TO DERIVE A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains the research problem in the context of Emfuleni Local Municipality (Sections 2.1 and 2.2). Section 2.3 identifies the knowledge gap. Sections 2.5 and 2.6, develop a theoretical framework for interpreting the research findings, and Section 2.7 conceptualises the research approach. In Section 2.1, the study briefly describes the research setting in preparation for Section 2.2, where the research problem is explained in detail. In Section 2.3, current and previous studies that have attempted to assess the interface between politicians and administrators at a sub-national level are reviewed, and their shortcomings are highlighted. With this insight, the research is located within the public administration field of study, and its essential components and attributes are discussed in Sections 2.4 and 2.5. Having identified the dichotomy, complementary, and political bureaucratic models as the most relevant interpretive frameworks for this research, these models are deliberated in Section 2.6. In conclusion, Section 2.7 provides a blueprint of how this research intends to assess the implication of the strained political-administrative interface on service delivery.

2.1 The history and description of Emfuleni Local Municipality

This section outlines the history and description of Emfuleni Local Municipality to give insights into the problem in the context of the Municipality and the contribution the physical setting has had on the Municipality's current situation. According to the Statistic South Africa Census Report (2011), Emfuleni Local Municipality is in Vanderbijlpark on the Western side of Johannesburg. It occupies an area of 987 km² with a population of 721 663. The report also notes that the Municipality shares boundaries with the City of Johannesburg Metro, Metsimaholo in the Free State, Midvaal and Rand West City and JB Marks in the Northwest province. According to Pieterse (2021), Emfuleni Local Municipality has authority over a portion of an interconnected unit, which

obscures spatial planning initiatives and local economic development amongst other things. As a result, the success of the Municipality is dependent on intergovernmental relations structures inside and outside of its district (Pieterse, 2021, p.6).

According to the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 and the Municipal Systems Act of 2000, local municipalities are governed through either an executive committee system or an executive mayor system. Emfuleni follows an executive mayor governance system. Under this system, municipal executive powers are bestowed on the executive mayor, whom an executive committee supports.

The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 explains that the executive mayor uses his discretion to choose members of the mayoral committee under this system. The members chosen are almost always made up of only the governing party's representatives. This tends to blur the lines of accountability and transparency and often promotes dictatorial decision-making, explains de Visser (2009). The South African Auditor General, Tsakani Maluleke's 2019-20 Municipal Finance Management Audit Report, adds that this deteriorating accountability and dictatorial decision-making in municipalities manifests itself in poor audit outcomes and financial mismanagement, as was the case with Emfuleni in the period under review.

The challenges faced by Emfuleni Local Municipality include poor service delivery, maladministration and corruption, and weak governance systems. Sebola Nkuna (2015) states that these challenges are common in most South African municipalities. In addition to these challenges, the Municipality, as explained in the Emfuleni Draft Financial Recovery Plan (2018), also experienced internal divisions, a failure to investigate irregular expenditure, a lack of accountability among senior managers, and tensions between politicians and administrators.

The magnitude of these challenges resulted in the Municipality's failure to fulfil its constitutional obligation of providing essential services for its residents. This led to the Gauteng Provincial Government evoking Section 139 (1) (b) and 139 (5) (a) of the Constitution, read with Section 139 on the Municipal Finance

Management Act (MFMA) (Act No. 56 of 2003) and placed the Municipality under administration in 2018.

2.1.1 Organisational Structure of the Municipality

According to the Emfuleni Local Municipality Draft Financial Recovery Plan (2018), the Municipal Council comprises 90 councillors, 45 of which are Ward Councillors and 45 are Proportional Representatives (PR) Councillors. The Independent Electorate Commission (IEC) describes the latter as the allocation of parliamentary seats in proportion to the number of votes a political party received in the elections. The political parties use their discretion to decide which of their members fill the allocated seats (Independent Electoral Commission, n.d). The structure of Emfuleni Local Municipality currently has 6,323 approved positions. The following section 56 managers in the organisational structure report to the Municipal Manager:

a) Public Safety and Community Development;

b) Basic Services;

c) Economic Development Planning;

d) Infrastructure Planning;

e) Corporate Services; and

f) Chief Financial Officer.

The Municipality also has a high vacancy rate in key management positions. According to the Emfuleni Draft Financial Recovery Plan (2018), all Section 56 positions within the Municipality were vacant during the period under review; those not filled by acting appointments contributed to the leadership vacuum, instability, and lack of accountability in the Municipality.

2.1.2 Political Landscape of Emfuleni

Since its establishment in 1999, the Municipality has had its fair share of political instability. As reported in the South African Cities Network Report (2014), between the establishment of the Municipality in 1999 and the 2016 local government elections, Emfuleni experienced two major governance interventions headed by the African National Congress (ANC) national executive committee. The interventions led to the resignation of six mayors and left five vacancies in the municipal manager's office. (South African Cities Network, 2014). The Local Municipality has also changed more mayors in nine years than any other Municipality with similar revenue and demographics in the same period. Such changes over a brief period highlight political instability and the complex structuring of party-versus-council accountability in municipalities governed by the executive mayoral system, as explained by Pieterse (2021).

Below is a map of Emfuleni Local Municipality to show its position and the provinces and cities with which it shares its boundaries, thus appreciating the role and influence local dynamics have in Emfuleni's woes.



Fig 3 Map of Emfuleni Municipal Area Source: https://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/how-the-anc-is-targeting-midvaal

This section has given a description and history of Emfuleni Local Municipality, its organisational structure and political landscape; by so doing, it provided insight into the contribution the physical context has had on the problem under investigation.

The next section will discuss the symptoms, root causes, and consequences of the political-administrative relationship in Emfuleni Local Municipality. It will also outline its dynamics and trend analysis using academic and non-academic literature. According to Wotela (2019), this is done to structure one's understanding of the research problem.

2.2 The strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality- Symptoms, Root Causes, and Consequences

This section structures the researcher's understanding of the strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality by discussing its symptoms, its root causes, how these have presented themselves over the years in Emfuleni, the effect they have on service delivery and the consequences of the problem if left unchallenged, using both academic and non-academic literature.

Below is a figure demonstrating the brainstorming to identify the symptoms, root causes and consequences of a strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

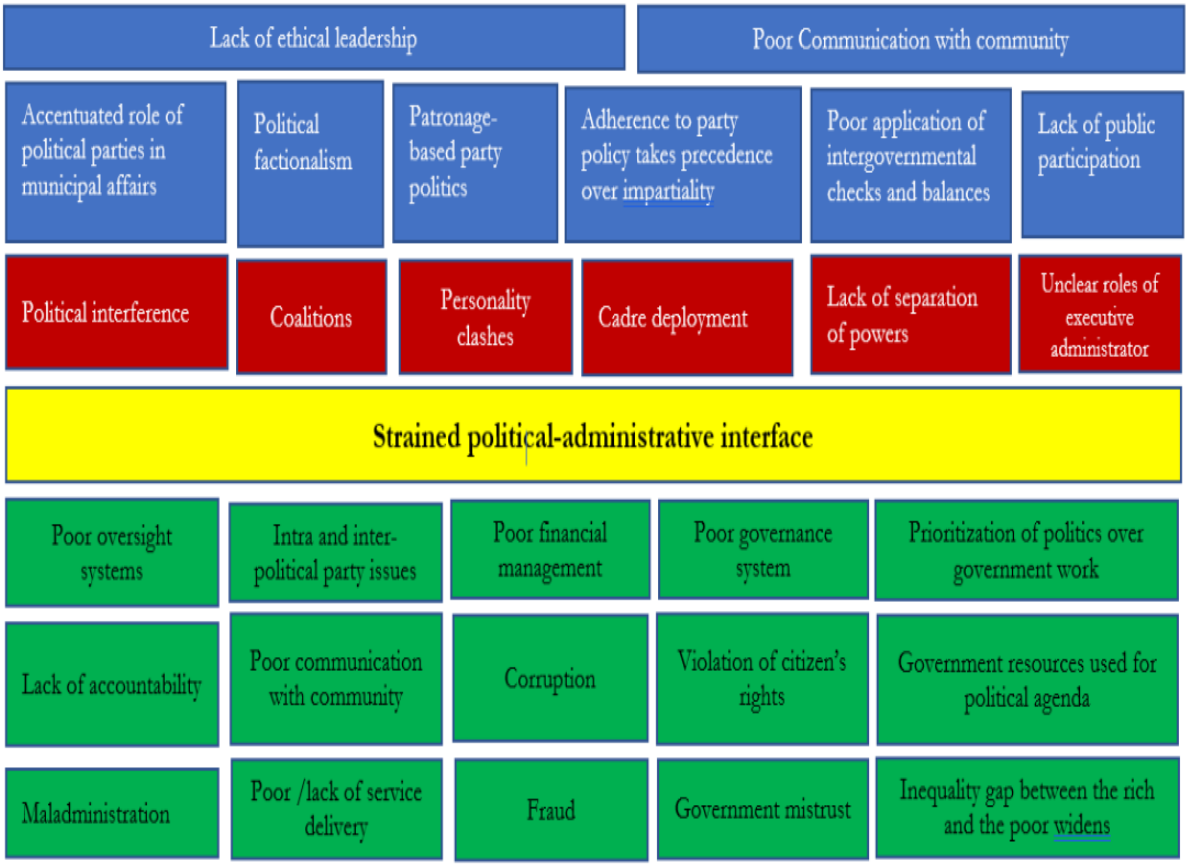


Fig 4. Problem tree on symptoms, root causes and consequences of the strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni adapted from Wotela (2016)
Blue - Symptoms; **Red-** Root causes; **Green-**Consequences

2.2.1 Symptoms of a strained political-administrative interface at the sub-national level

According to the State of Local Government Report (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009) and Mantzaris, Pillay (2014), symptoms of an unstable political-administrative interface include lack of public participation, weak application of intergovernmental checks and balances, political infighting, conflict between senior management and councillors, as well as the misappropriation of municipal resources and funds amongst others.

Scholars Thornhill (2014). Ndlovu (2016), Nzimakwe (2008), Mofolo (2016), Lodge and Mottiar (2016) define public participation as a process whereby

citizens are part of the administrative policy decision-making activities that affect them. These can range from outlining levels of services to decisions on the area's development. In South Africa, this right is enshrined in section 152(1) of the Constitution (1996), which prescribes that local government should be accountable to the communities they serve and encourage the participation of the communities in its matters. (RSA,1996). This means that municipalities have a constitutional obligation to ensure that residents form part of decision-making processes that affect them in their area of residence.

In Emfuleni Local Municipality, public participation "is coordinated through structures such "as ward committees, petitions committees, public hearings, Integrated Development Plan and Mayoral Imbizos. These forums are also utilised as report-back platforms for service delivery matters". (Emfuleni Draft Recovery Plan 2018, p.12). However, existing literature suggests that public participation still needs to be improved in most South African municipalities. Authors such as Mofolo (2016), Lodge and Mottiar (2016), and Carrim (2009) argue that lack of public participation has weakened the accessibility of local government. Maseng (2014) and de Visser (2005) agree and explain that although local government is democratic on paper, most municipalities in South Africa are ANC-led; therefore, most policy positions are ANC-orientated and do not carry residents' views as they ought to.

Another symptom of a strained political-administrative interface is poor governance. As explained in the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) of the United Nations:

> A significant hindrance to a favourable relationship between political and administrative heads at the municipal level is poor governance, which includes the poor management of public resources and the lack of political will to punish poor-performing officials (Holtzhausen and Naidoo, 2011: p.736).

In the case of Emfuleni Local Municipality, there tend to be delays in addressing non-compliance to reporting disciplines relating to the financial

statements, inaccurate performance reporting and non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, as noted by Pieterse (2021, p.8).
According to the Emfuleni Draft Financial Recovery Plan (2018), forensic reports for three years, submitted to the previous Accounting Officer and Executive Management, were not acted upon, and the Municipality has a culture of non-adherence to the Financial Misconduct Regulations. More recently, Comperio Consulting released a damning forensic report on Emfuleni Local Municipality, implicating 33 officials of the local Municipality in what the report describes as a “looting spree which saw the Municipality spend more than R870 million in irregular contracts” (Mashego, Mdakane,2020, p2)

According to the Municipal Finance Management Audit Report (2021), this is the main reason for the increase in irregular and wasteful expenditure in most South African municipalities. Fruitless and wasteful expenditure often includes incomplete projects, payment/overpayment of service providers for preliminary work and extending contracts without following due processes.

2.2.2 Root causes of strained political-administrative interface at the sub-national government level

Thornhill (2005); Booysen (2021); and de Visser (2009), in their various contributions to the discourse, have identified personality clashes between political heads and administrative heads, cadre deployment, the appointment and promotion of unqualified/underqualified personnel into key leadership positions, political interference, inadequate separation of powers between political parties and municipal councils as some of the root causes a strained political-administrative interface. de Visser (2009) also adds that this list is not exhaustive without a lack of separation of powers between the municipal legislative and executive authorities, prioritising the governing party interests over those of the administration as well as the appointment of senior party-political office bearers within the administration. de Visser (2009) further notes that the latter tends to blur the lines of accountability more, especially when the incumbent is politically senior to the mayor, in which case they become the

political head, undermining the leadership of the mayor, which can lead to persistent power struggles that affect the delivery of services.

When referring to the interface, it is essential to consider the different governing styles of the two authorities, as this directly affects the nature of the interface between the two. Thornhill (2005) explains that the managing style of the administrators influences the extent to which the political head plays their political role vis-versa. Agreeable with this are Mbadlwa and Fagbadebo (2020), who note that good or poor leadership is determined by individual personalities rather than individuals' level of training (Mbadlwa, Fagbadebo, 2020, p1650). Maphunye (2005), adds that the cooperation between the two authorise is affected by mutual respect and personal compatibility.

Booysen (2021) adds that coalitions in local government have heightened the strained nature of the political-administrative interface. As observed during the Institute of Municipal Managers' annual conference in 2017:

> The extent of political interference was confirmed by municipal managers, who cited numerous instances of political pressure in the appointment of staff and the awarding of contracts, sometimes backed by threats to life and family members if they did not comply. (SALGA, 2017, as cited in Booysen 2021, p.271).

Chapter 12 of the South African Constitution (1996) states that all three government spheres have executive and legislative arms. There is a clear separation of powers, functions, and responsibilities between these two arms at the national and provincial levels. Still, the separation could be more apparent at the local government level. Some authors who have contributed to the South African local government discourse attribute this ambiguity to section 151(2) of the Constitution, which bestows executive and legislative authority to the municipal council. (RSA,1996). This means there needs to be a clear separation of powers between municipal executive authority (mayors) and the councils they report to. Not only does the absence of separation of executive and legislative functions in local government limit oversight and accountability, but according to de Visser (2009), it also makes it challenging

to hold members of the executive accountable for their actions/lack thereof, making municipalities' a breeding ground for political interference whilst promoting strained relations between political and administrative officials. Auditor-General reports on the state of municipal finances (2018/2019) highlight the degree to which political infighting in municipal councils and political meddling in municipal administrations continue to undermine the oversight function in municipalities, resulting in a lack of consequences for poor financial management.

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2009) explain that various municipal governance challenges are brought about by the implementation of the cadre deployment policy, which has had a disastrous effect on municipal performance. These challenges range from a lack of transparency and accountability to corruption and financial mismanagement.

In November 2020, Dlamini (2020) reported that the former executive Mayor of Emfuleni and ANC provincial secretary in Gauteng, Jacob Khawe, allegedly used his influence to ensure that his fiancé's company was awarded tender worth millions to provide insurance brokering services for the Municipality. This is despite the company not having the capacity and skills to perform the job. According to Dlamini 's (2020) report, the company was awarded the tender without following due processes. When the municipality's legal unit flagged the matter, and the Municipal Manager advised to cancel the contract, he did not act on the advice.

The problem of cadre deployment is broader than government institutions and includes Chapter 9 institutions, which are meant to be independent. Mesang (2014) argues that the fact that the president appoints heads of these institutions with the endorsement of the National Assembly, which is predominantly ANC, makes it hard for them to perform their duties independently.

Several authors, namely Cameron (2016), de Visser (2009), Mafunisa (2010), Mantzaris, Pillay (2014) and Pretorius (2017) agree that the cadre deployment policy needs to be reviewed; they, however, argue that this alone is not sufficient in addressing the political-administrative interface in municipalities.

They propose that the review be done in conjunction with clarifying the delegations' provision of the Municipal Systems Act of 1998 to outline the exact roles and duties of political office bearers, structures, and the municipal manager. de Visser (2009) explains that it must be accompanied by effective and efficient oversight structures within municipalities to ensure accountability and that there is no overreach between the authorities and performance management systems.

According to Reddy and Govender (2013), there is a view that sub-national government is concerned with political opportunism rather than advancing community interests. Political power and individual gain are often prioritised over governance principles and values. (Reddy and Govender, 2013: p.93).

2.2.3 Consequences of a strained political-administrative interface at sub-national government

Scholars Thornhill (2005). Svara (1999), Pretorius (2017), and de Visser (2009) highlight corruption, fraud, maladministration, poor service delivery, lack of accountability, weak oversight systems/mechanisms, and poor governance system, as some of the consequences of a strained political-administrative interface. Although there are tools at the local government level designed to detect corruption, abuse authority, and ensure accountability, Napier (2018) argues that these are either insufficient or poorly implemented.

Furthermore, a strained political-administrative interface promotes political interference, which weakens municipal officials' performance as the municipal council decides whom to appoint, as Masuku, and Jili (2019,) argue. Municipal managers are appointed to the municipal council; a decision which is influenced by the political party dominant within the Municipality (Mauku, Jili, 2019, p.2). Masuku and Jili (2019,) further argue that political interference affects an administration's ability to function efficiently and effectively.

Another consequence of a strained political-administrative interface is poor service delivery. According to the 2016/2017 Emfuleni Local Municipality's Annual Report, the Municipality is achieving the service level performance

regarding electricity, water, and solid waste removal services; however, sanitation services are lagging with 14% of households below the minimum services level. However, this needs to be revised with the realities of service delivery failures reported in the Emfuleni Draft Financial Recovery Plan (2018).

A strained political-administrative interface provides a breeding ground for service delivery protests, with community members choosing to take to the streets to voice their grievances rather than using prescribed official engagement channels. Moerane (2020), in the state of Emfuleni Local Municipality Address, indicated that the Municipality experienced a total of 14 service delivery protests over six months. The grievances ranged from electricity outages, housing backlogs, crime, and corruption to refuse collection (Moerane,2020, p.27). Simon Mokoena's administration, (Moerane's predecessor), fielded "over 81 public protests between the period March 2016 to April 2017" (Mokoena, 2017, p.50). According to Bhengu, Seleka and Dayimani (2021), the most common grievances raised in these protests include lack of access to clean drinking water, housing, crime, and corruption. On the other hand, Hough (2008, p.7) offers a fascinating opinion of a 'third force' in service delivery protests, of disgruntled councillors who are not featured on the political party list before municipal elections inciting protests. Agreeable with this view is Booysen (2007) who explains that although it differed from one community to the other, the constant feature in service delivery protests was the "mobilisation against incumbent councillors and, occasionally, infighting within structures of the governing ANC" (Booysen, 2007, p.23)

This section, discussed the symptoms, root causes, and consequences of service delivery to better understand the problem in the setting of Emfuleni. The next session will look at methods, data, findings, and conclusions of previous studies on the interface between administration and service delivery to identify gaps that need addressing or questions that have not been answered/answered convincingly by the last research; by so doing, justify this research.

2.3 Methods, data, findings, and conclusions of studies on the political-administrative interface at the sub-national level

This section aims to identify works/contributions that various authors on the identified problem have made, the methods they applied, and the results and conclusions reached. This process will enable the researcher to find gaps that need to be addressed and questions that still need to be answered/answered convincingly by previous research, thus placing the knowledge gap, and providing a justification for this research. This is done not only to demonstrate a deep understanding of the position of the body of knowledge in one's chosen field but also to prove that one's research addresses a gap in the literature.

The debate on the political and administrative interface within government is an age-old debate that dates to the 16th century. The debate has captured the interest of researchers from various disciplines, such as Thornhill (2005), de Visser (2010), Mantzaris; Pillay (2014), Matheson, Weber, Manning and Arnould (2007); Surty (2010); Makanyeza et al. (2013); Pretorius (2017); Ammos and Newell (1989) amongst others who have gone on to make significant contributions to the debate. All the studies show that the interface between the politician and administrator is complex, especially at the sub-national level. The nature of this interface affects the consistency between policy intent and the effect of implemented policies, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative process.

Methodologically, studies on this interface such as Pretorius (2017); Matheson, Weber, Manning and Arnould (2009); Mfuru, Sarwatt and Kanire (2018); Mogoshoa (2016) opted for a qualitative research approach, a case study was a firm favourite as far as the research design is concerned, for example, from a focus on assessing the effect of the interface in Public Administration in a single municipal authority, (Mfuru et al.,2018) to a comparative process evaluation in 12 municipalities across the Free State province (Pretorius,2017). Only 2 of the studies used a mixed-method research approach to evaluate the interface's effect on public administration (Mfuru et al., 2018); (Matheson et al.,2009). These studies as well as works by

Maserumule (2007); Maphunye (2009); Ncalane (2018) and others have given insights into strategies, designs, methods, procedures, and results helpful for this study.

Pretorius (2017) used a qualitative research strategy and twelve municipalities in the Free State as her case study to investigate the degree to which the misinterpretation of the roles between politicians and administrators has influenced competent local government and–administration. The study used interviews, academic literature, and focus group discussions for the collection of data. This was followed by the process of analysing data. One of the conclusions drawn by Pretorius (2017) is that municipalities can improve their performance by promoting a good working relationship between administrators and politicians, as well as the implementation of effective oversight structures. However, the study falls short on how this can be done.

Similarly, Mfuru, Sarwatt and Kanire (2018), whose study assessed the effect of the interface in Public Administration, used a mixed-method strategy. Data was collected from twelve public administration officers and eighteen ward executive officers from the Kibaha town council in Tanzania. The study used thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data collected and regression and correlation to analyse the quantitative data. Mfuru, Sarwatt and Kanire (2018) found that most of the challenges public administrators face in executing their responsibilities are a result of political meddling. This often translates to abuse of power, maladministration, unexplainable delays in municipal projects, and poor service delivery amongst other things. The study resolved that political interference was due to the inadequate separation of powers between politicians and public administrators.

Surty (2010) analyses the legislation which governs the political-administrative interface and how this legislation falls short in its implementation using a qualitative research strategy. The paper starts with a historical summary of the sub-national government system in South Africa and how it has evolved over the years. It also explains the municipal mayor and manager roles. It also paints a picture of what the legislation says about the interface compared to

how it is in practice. An analysis and dialogue of the probable consequence of legislative reform on the interface debate is provided (Surty, 2010). Several further solutions to counter the differences in practice are suggested in the conclusion. Surty (2010) used the qualitative research strategy and relied on previous studies, documentation, and interviews, just like the authors mentioned above. However, Surty's (2010) sample size is too small (only two former executive mayors and two former municipal managers were interviewed) and, therefore, does not represent the target population and cannot be generalised.

Mogashoa (2006), on the other hand, also relied on a qualitative research strategy and used the Limpopo Department of Education as a case study in investigating how the grey area between these roles almost paralysed the whole department. The study collected data from various sources, such as interviews, observation, and documentation, which are standard methods in a qualitative research study. The study investigates the nature and extent of politics and its relationship within the administration, and unlike Pretorius (2017), it offers workable mechanisms/models to resolve the problem. Although the author lists access to official documents relating to the topic as a limitation due to the topic's sensitivity, as well as the inaccessibility of senior officials, the author does not explain how these limitations affected the study's outcome.

Matheson, Weber, Manning and Arnould's (2009) study represents the way different countries have established institutional arrangements that stabilise the interface between politicians and administrators to avoid a self-serving public service, which is resistant to political leadership or an over-politicised public service that promotes political interests at the expense of national interests (Matheson, Weber, Manning and Arnould Arnould, 2009). The study reviewed public documents such as regulations, the countries' constitutions, and codes of conduct; to collect data. it also made use of a survey and subsequent interviews with 12 country contacts (Federal government of Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and South Africa). The

countries were selected based on the different political systems they follow. This case study was used in this research not to compare these states but rather to compare the interface across these countries. The sample comprised 12 country experts (current or former senior public servants), The country experts responded to a systematic survey that was conducted. A limitation that was identified in the study is the fact that:

> The conclusions of the study are inevitably somewhat speculative for two reasons. First, day-to-day practice can differ strikingly from constitutional, legal, or administrative theory – and without other survey data, it is hard to know how closely reported behaviours reflect reality. Second, political neutrality is not a sharply defined goal – it is a broad judgment that can be made only over a considerable period. The tensions between neutrality and responsiveness are not always evident in the short term". (Matheson, Weber, Manning and Arnould,2009, p.5).

Another limitation that needs to be documented in the study is that the survey limits political interference to staffing in the public administration and does not say much about how this interference affects the running of the administration. Studies such as Pretorious (2017); Surty (2010); Mogashoa (2016); and Ncalane (2018) opted for a qualitative research strategy; this was informed by the strategy's flexibility and the in-depth data associated with it. The studies that used the qualitative approach wanted to understand better the concept of service delivery and the political-administrative interface. In contrast, the one study that used the quantitative strategy was testing variables. Therefore, one can conclude that the kind of research strategy research will use is informed by the research's aim /objective, i.e., if the study wishes to test/confirm something, then quantitative analysis should be used. A qualitative strategy should be considered if the researcher wants to better understand a concept/experience which is the case with this research.

Case studies were a firm favourite for the authors in terms of research design; some opted for a single case study, and others more than one. The studies that used more than one case study

allowed for broader theoretical development and research than those that used one. “Case study results may be less generalisable than quantitative methods only in the case of within-population generalisation” (Tsang, 2013, p.3).
Pretorius (2017); Matheson, Weber, Manning and Arnould (2009); Mfuru, Sarwatt and Kanire (2018); Mogoshoa (2016) had a sample size representative of the target population, which means the results found from observations of the sample to the target population can be generalised. However, Surty's (2010) sample was not representative of the target population as it was too small.

Whilst extensive research has been done on the political-administrative interface in the broader context, ranging from how public administrators and elected officials related to each other to the nature and quality of communication between elected and administrative officials, most of the studies limit the political-administrative interface debate to the political-administrative dichotomy and fail to mention the other elements of the relationship which include political neutrality, professionalism, sharing and division of functions and distinctive means an explained by Svara (2006). Furthermore, most empirical research on this subject matter needs to explain the relationship between politicians and administrators or how it should be. The research methodology used in this study is qualitative research, and Emfuleni Local Municipality is a case study. The research also reviewed literature from previous similar studies, public documents such as government reports, legislation, and newspaper articles amongst other sources to collect data.

This section interrogated the research problem (the strained political-administrative interface and its effect on service delivery in Emfuleni. This was followed by examining the literature on previous studies, public documents such as government reports, and legislation to identify the knowledge gap. The section ended with identifying the qualitative research approach as the most suitable for this study, using Emfuleni as a case study and interviews, literature from previous similar studies, and public documents such as government reports, legislation, and newspaper articles amongst other sources as the most suitable data collection instruments.

2.4 Conceptually situating the political-administrative interface and its key components within the public administration field of study

In section 2.3, we reviewed and discussed previous studies that provided valuable insights into the political-administrative interface. We also discussed these studies' methods, data, and findings to identify the knowledge gap and justify undertaking this research. The previous section ended with proposing the most suitable research design, strategy, design, procedure, and methods for the study. The purpose of this section is to locate the academic home of the study. This will be done by first describing the field of study (2.4.1), followed by discussing its purpose (2.4.2), its key components (2.4.3), its processes (2.4.4) and ending off with the discussion of facts (2.4.5) and critical issues (2.4.6). This is done to establish the theoretical underpinnings of the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

Motta-Roth (2009) defines academic context as the existing and accepted body of academic research and discourse on a given topic, which helps to ground the analysis by giving it a literary home. The literary context is as important as the physical context of the research. Based on the literature reviewed, this study resides within the broad governance and organisational analysis subcomponent context. The field of governance has traditionally been viewed as part of public administration rather than political science and public policy. Power comprises six components: accountability, stewardship, leadership, transparency, and integrity.

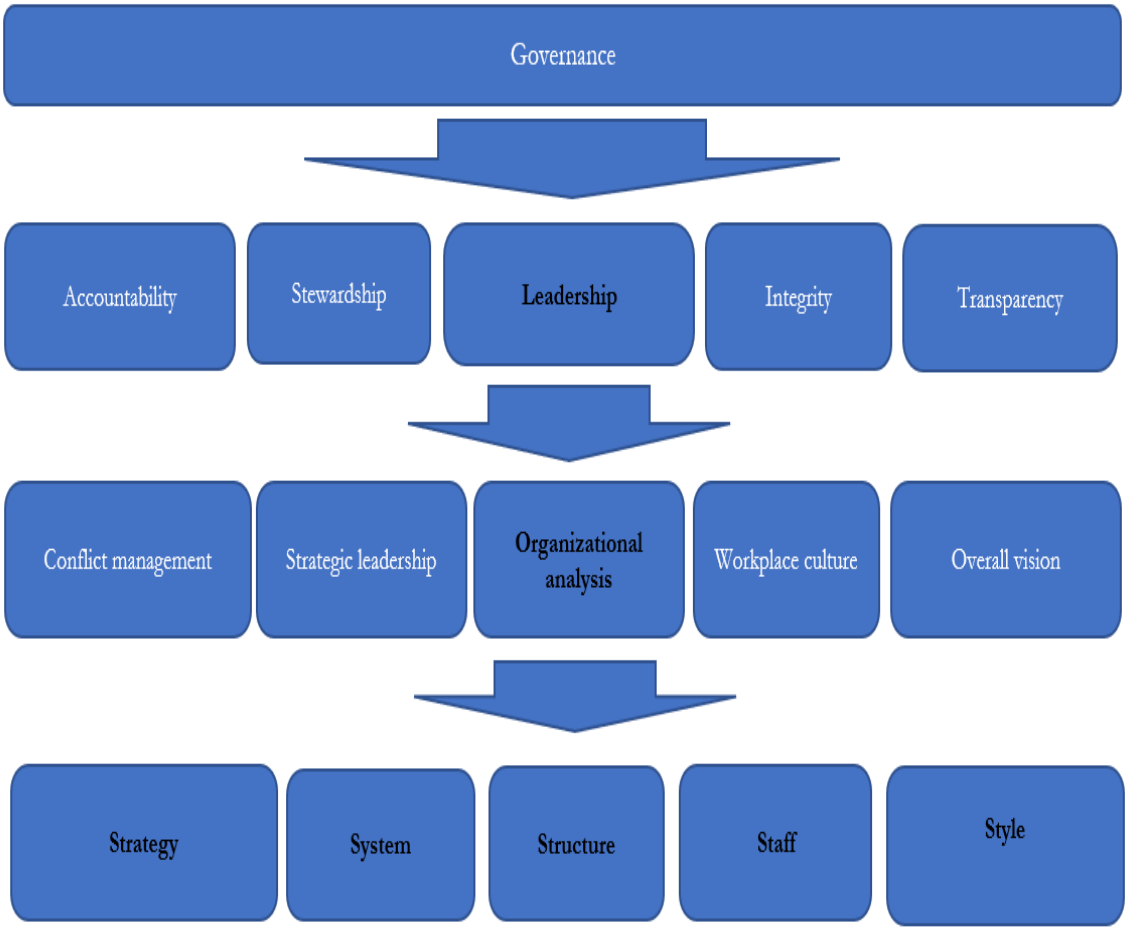


Fig 5 Components of governance and organisational analysis. Source Author

The above figure shows governance and its five components- accountability, stewardship, leadership, integrity, and transparency. This research will focus on the leadership subcomponent of governance, which is divided into five subcomponents; conflict management, strategic leadership, organisational analysis, workplace culture and overall vision. This study's specific area of interest is organisational analysis, which comprises strategy, system, structure, staff, and style sub-components. Not only does this process help in understanding the overall field of study as well as the specific area of interest within the field of study, but it also enables us to appreciate the facts in the discipline and draws our attention to contradictions, if any in the profession as argued by Remenyi, Williams, Money et al. (1998).

2.4.1 Describing Public Administration

A broad assessment of public administration based on the literature reviewed demonstrates that public administration has different definitions by various authors. According to Hodgson (1969), public administration is the culmination of all activities performed by people in government and its agencies to achieve the government's purpose. At the same time, Waldo (1968) views it as the discipline of management applied to the affairs of a country. Wilson (1887), one of the founding fathers of public administration, defines it as the detailed and methodical execution of public law. Wilson further explains that government institutions are divided into two separate sectors, i.e., politics and administration. Politics deals with policy formulation, whereas the administration deals with policy implementation. (Wilson, 1887).

Kettle & Fessler (2009) on the other hand describe it as the study of government decision-making, policies, the contributions that have produced the policies and the information required to improve and revise policies (Kettle & Fessler 2009, p.11). A comprehensive definition that includes all the tasks that fall under public administration is difficult to come up with. However, for this study, we shall draw on the diverse points of emphasis in the various definitions to define public administration as translating policy goals set by political decision-makers, providing goods and services to people, and implementing socio-economic development programmes to benefit society. Fox, Schwella and Wissink (1991) explain that the environment in which these officials perform these duties can affect their ability to achieve the objectives of the State.

Regarding the scope and nature of Public Administration, the content of administration, which refers to the significant concerns of Public Administration as both an activity and a field of study, is unclear, something Thapa (2020) attributes to the discipline's continuously evolving nature. The more citizens became aware of their rights and government duties, the more public administration had to develop to keep up with society's changing demands and needs. Since its acknowledgment as a field of study in the late 19th century, at

the beginning of the 20th century, Public Administration has undergone five development phases, i.e., public administration dichotomy (1887-1926), ideologies of administration (1927-1937), human relationship-behavioural approach (1938-1947), the study of administrative policy making and analysis between (1947-1970) and the new public administration (1971-Date). As a result of its evolving nature, Waldo (1975) argues that "public administration is suffering from an identity crisis, having enormously expanded its periphery without retaining or creating a unifying centre" (Waldo, 1975, p. 185).

As with the definition of Public Administration, there are various views on its scope, but over the years, the most prominent views have been the traditional and modern views. Thapa (2020) explains that the traditional idea restricts the scope to the executive arm of government and covers the organisation, personnel, practices, and procedures essential for the adequate performance of the civilian functions entrusted to the executive branch of the government (Thapa, 2020). At the same time, the modern view extends the scope of administration to all three arms of government (executive, legislative and judiciary). Scholars that advocate for this view, which include Gullik (1937), argue that in a democratic society, all administrative policies from the legislature also exercise control over the administration to ensure that the policies are implemented as they should. Thapa (2020) further explains that the judiciary can restrain public administration from unconstitutional, illegal, and arbitrary acts. Whilst public administration scholars differ on its definition, scope, and nature, they agree that organisation theory, bureaucratic behaviours, personnel management, policy analysis and administrative ethics are essential in understanding the discipline.

2.4.2 The Purpose of Public Administration

Public Administration as a field of study can be traced back to the 1880s to Wildrow Wilson, who sought to understand how governments were run. Peters (2016) explains that Wilson's main interest was identifying what the government could successfully do and how it could do it with the least number of resources without compromising quality. Starling (2013) adds that it serves as a form of arranging organisations to achieve results, whilst the Department

of Public Service and Administration (2017) explains that Public Administration plays a significant policy role in the development of norms and values for the public service, which ensures that service-delivery mechanisms, governance initiatives and institutional development, are aligned to the needs of citizens. Pillay (2016) adds that in the public administration setting, specifically institutional realities, and in operational processes, systems, allocation and management of resources, the availability/lack of skills and knowledge are essential in understanding its relationship to developmental service delivery. Therefore, the purpose of public administration is to translate policies and regulations into the government's plan of action, which leads to service delivery.

2.4.3 Major Components of Public Administration

The field of public administration comprises six components: governance, intergovernmental relations, general needs, public policy, social change, and organisational theory. Just like public administration, governance is variably defined, with authors such as Hubert (2012) describing it as "an authoritative policy-making process on a wide-ranging set of problems and the implementation of these policies" (Hubert, 2012, p.188). At the same time, Fukuyama (2013) views it as the administration's capacity to develop and implement rules and deliver the necessary services.

Notwithstanding the vast range of definitions of governance, there is a shared belief among several of the authors whose work was reviewed, namely, Hayden, Olowu & Ogendo (2000); Peters (1989); Page & Jenkins (2005) amongst others, that the upholders of accountability, integrity, and efficiency are the public officials who are expected to be ethical, trustworthy, and answerable to the public that they serve. The exercise of good governance, according to Prinsloo (2013), Page, Jenkins (2005), Hayden, Olowu, and Ogendo (2000), is informed by the following elements: participation, accountability, responsiveness, transparency, effective and competent government, and strategic vision amongst other things.

However, merely complying with these elements does not translate to the presence of good governance in an institution or organisation. These elements, Prinsloo (2013) explains, need to be accompanied by an environment where values are upheld, one where the minority has a voice, as well as politicians and administrators who are trustworthy and have high morals. In the context of local government, the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) of the United Nations states that:

> A significant obstacle to service delivery in South Africa, especially in local government, is poor governance, which includes not simply corruption but also poor performance on the part of leadership and government officials in their management of public resources, as well as a lack of political will to act against underperforming officials (Holtzhausen and Naidoo, 2011, p.736).

Another component of Public Administration is intergovernmental relations, which is concerned with the relations concerning the three spheres of government, in the South African context. The links between these spheres of government are governed by the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, which puts in place systems to ensure alignment between the three spheres of government on issues such as service delivery, poverty alleviation and the promotion of economic growth and development. Malan (2005) explains that the interrelatedness of these spheres of government refers to the responsibility each must cooperate, monitor one another, and intervene in one another's issues should the need arise as mandated by the South African Constitution.

According to Thornhill (2008), sub-national government is the sphere of government responsible for delivering basic municipal services, amongst other things. Failure by a Municipality to fulfil this constitutional obligation could result in section 139 of the Constitution being evoked, as was the case with Emfuleni Local Municipality, Makoti and Odeku (2018) explain that interventions could take various forms, such as support, monitoring, or a complete takeover.

The development and implementation of public policies is one of the critical roles of public administration. Anderson (1975) defines this as a process that entails the government deciding on a course of action to solve a social problem

and adopting a strategy for its planning and implementation. The process requires the participation of different actors, both state and non-state. Not only does the latter's involvement promote transparency, but it also legitimises the process. He further cautions that public policy formulation should be viewed as a function rather than a stage of the policy process. Hai Do (2010) explains that although there are many policy formulation models, such as Game Theory, Systems, Rational, Incremental, Group and Institutional Theories, the most dominant model in developing countries is the Bureaucratic model.

Over the years, much research has gone into understanding how organisations can be structured to improve their contribution to society. The knowledge and experience acquired from this exercise are collectively termed organisational theory. Crowther, Green (2004) explains that organisational theory originates from the founding fathers of sociology, namely Max Weber, Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim and concerns itself with understanding how groups of individuals act. Previously, theories of organisations initially opted for a more rational perspective, but a more diverse approach has since replaced this perspective. According to Crowther and Green (2004), a sensible organisation system comprises two significant parts: specificities of objectives and their validation. “The division of labour is the specialisation of individual labour roles, associated with increasing output and trade” (Crowther, Green, 2004, p.6). Most of the literature reviewed, which includes Cloete (1998); Thornhill (2005), and Peters (1989), notes that the more people implemented organisations over time, the more researchers experimented as to which organisational theory is the best fit. The theories of organisations include bureaucracy, the division of labour, and scientific management. On execution, each theory has different strengths and weaknesses.

2.4.4 Key issues and debates in Public Administration

Max Weber, one of the founding fathers of modern sociology, contends that for an administration to be effective and efficient, it must be detached from politics. It should be constituted according to the objective rules, with its personnel selected on merit and promotions awarded on performance instead of political affiliation (Max, 1978). However, authors Svara (1999); Evans

(1995); Alford et al. (2017) and Peters (2001), questioned the root of the separation suggested by Weber on the basis that it is almost impossible to detach politics from the administration due to their interconnectedness and interdependence. Alford et al. (2017) argues that most public-sector managers view the line between politics and administration as blurred, what Booysen (2021) terms “a zone of interaction within which a range of practices and behaviours take place” (Booysen, 2021, p.268).

In South Africa, the political-administrative interface has been a challenge since the inception of the current local government system in 2000. Booysen (2021) explains that a complete assessment of the new local government system in 2009 acknowledged extensive strains between politicians and municipal administrations, with inadequate separation of powers between political parties and councillors and, in turn, between councillors and the municipal administration. The review also found that political factionalism and polarisation contributed extensively to the weakening of municipal functionality. “This was ascribed to battles over access to state resources, which had led to a culture of patronage and nepotism’ and rendered the formal municipal accountability system ‘ineffective and inaccessible to many citizens” (de Visser, Steytler, and Machingauta 2009, p.99).

A wide array of South African authors has contributed to the political-administrative interface discourse since the dawn of democracy; these include Chipkin and Swilling (2020), Von Holdt (2010), Beresford (2015); Netshitenzhe (2012), Thornhill (2008) as well as de Visser (2009). With Chipkin (2016) describing the state's transformation process as the intentional effort of placing the state under political control, where loyalty and the promotion of political party agenda took precedence over the common good. Booysen (2021) explains that one of the challenges with the interface at sub-national government level is aresult of the terminology, i.e., executive committee, executive mayor, which she regards as confusing, as it suggests that all these role players have the authority to give effect to plans (Booysen, 2021, p.269). In contrast, the law limits this role to oversight and supervision.

2.5 Key Attributes of the strained political-administrative interface

After identifying Public Administration as the academic home for this research (Section 2.4) and following the discussion on its components and those of governance, this section breaks the part (s) where this research is located to identify and discuss the qualitative research attributes that are key to this research. On identifying these attributes, we discuss them, paying attention to their information needs and sources and how they link with each other. This will assist in strategically identifying how the empirical data will be collected, collated, processed, and analysed in the next section better to understand the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

However, before proceeding, we need to understand what attributes are clearly. Beck, Bryman, and Liao (2004) define an attribute as a characteristic that a respondent, subject, or case does or does not have, whereas Neuman (2013), Bryman (2016), and Kumar (2018) define qualitative research attributes as the changing characteristics of a given phenomenon. When collecting qualitative research information, we look for attributes to answer theoretical research questions. Therefore, there needs to be an explicit link between attributes and research questions.

As far as the key attributes of the political-administrative interface are concerned, the literature reviewed points to five qualities:political-administrative dichotomy, professionalism political neutrality, sharing and division of functions, and distinctive means as explained by Svara (1998).

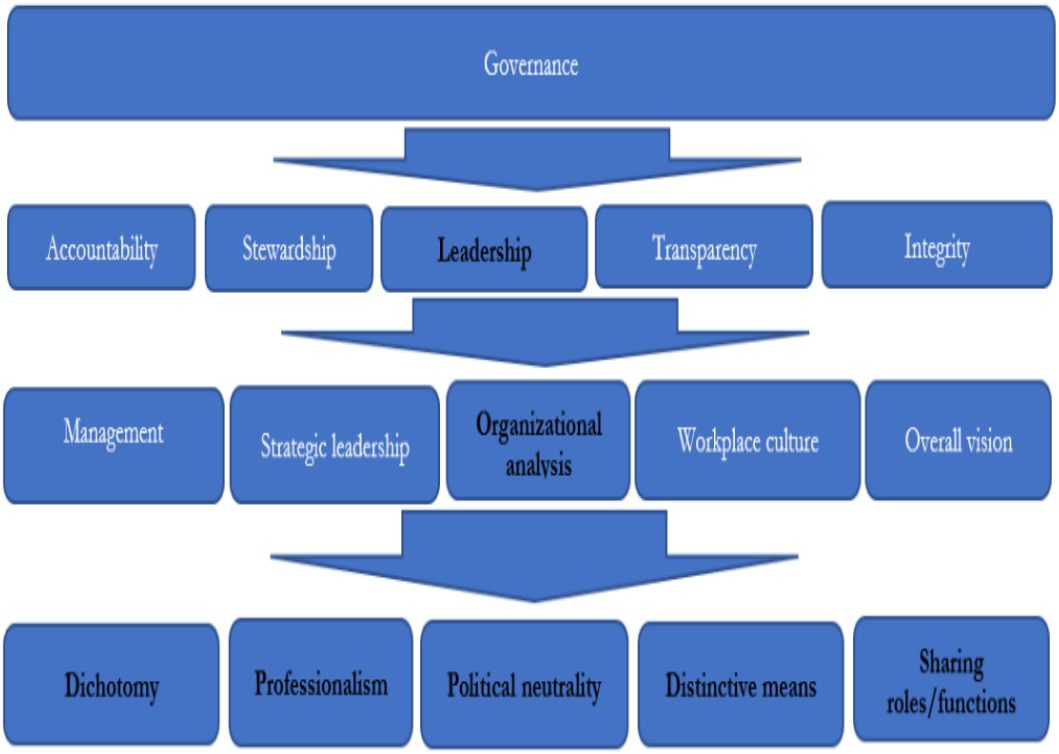


Fig 6: Key attributes of a political-administrative interface. *Source Author*

2.5.1 Dichotomy model

According to Svara (1998), this model is the most crucial theoretical construct in public administration; he attributes it to its usefulness in distinguishing between public administration as a field of enquiry and the relationship between the elected public office-bearers and appointed officials in a democratic society. Advocates of this model, Wildrow Wilson (1881) and Frank Goodnow (1900) argue that public administration is best separated from politics as failure to do so will hamper administrative efficiency. According to separation scholars, there must be a clear operational separation of authority between administrators and politicians to restrict undue political influence and conflict over administrators.

However, this model does not consider that public administration exists because of politics, and therefore suggesting that the two be separated implies that the one can exist without the other, something Long (1954); Pfiffner (1985), Bosworth (1958); and Miller (1993) explain is impossible as public administration is attached to the political process.

2.5.2 Professionalism

Chapter 10 of the South African Constitution (1996) stipulates that one of the basic principles of public administration is constantly promoting and maintaining a high level of professionalism in the three spheres of government. Professionalism in the public service requires an administrator to be free from political party affiliation and protected from them.

According to the National Implementation Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Service (2020), administrators must implement the political mandate but refrain from being political actors. According to the National Development Plan (2012), “the public service needs to attract highly skilled workforce whilst promoting professional common purpose and a commitment to developmental goals” (National Development Plan, 2012, p. 45). Agreeable to this is the Public Service Commission (2014), as cited in Maqoko, Asmah-Andoh (2019), which argues that whilst a professional public service that is free from political allegiance is essential for service delivery, it is futile in the absence of a conducive political-administrative interface. (Maqoko, Asmah-Andoh,2019, p.70)

Representatives are usually elected during elections to make decisions on behalf of their constituencies and address societal issues. This entails developing and implementing complex policies, which is a technical skill. Thornhill (2005) explains that a skilled workforce is thus appointed to assist the elected representatives in formulating policies and supervise administrators in translating political decisions into government plans of action, amongst other things.

However, one of the critical duties of an administrator is to provide advisory services to the political office bearer. This function needs to be performed by an administrator who understands the political adoptions of the governing party. In some cases, as argued by Thornhill (2005), a provision is made to appoint specific officials to ensure the advice provided by managers is aligned to political values. This right is also emphasised in Section 12A of the Public Service Act 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994).

2.5.3 Distinctive means

As explained previously, representative assemblies such as parliament, cabinet, and the executive council (politicians) cannot formulate policies independently; they need administrators' assistance with technical expertise. The latter translates political decisions into the government's plan of action. Ministers, Members of the Executive Council (MECs), and Members of the Municipal Council (MMCs), as explained by Cameron (2003) and Thornhill (2005), perform both oversight and governance functions in the departments they are responsible for. As a result, have regular interactions with the administrators. Thornhill (2005) argues that the governing style of an executive head determines the nature of the relationship they have with the administrator. Some political leaders prefer to be involved in the running of the administration, while others prefer to deal strictly with policy formulation, leaving its implementation to the administrators (Thornhill, 2005).

2.5.4 Sharing roles and functions

There are two spheres of governance within a Municipality: the Council, which is representative of the electorate, and the Administration, which is made up of officials that have been appointed to execute the decisions taken by the council. According to the Municipal Structures Act (1998) and Municipal Systems Act (2000), the Council makes decisions regarding legislation, by-laws, policies, and executive functions such as operations, projects, and management of finances. The administration is responsible for tasks and procedures set out in the legislation, which include the implementation of policies, resolutions and by-laws developed by the municipal council; rendering advisory services to the board and its structures; managing the provision of essential services; as well as managing municipal resources (Municipal Structures Act,1998). Maphunye (2005) adds that it is only after these day-to-day operations have been fulfilled that administrators can perform their policy implementation function.

Although a clear distinction is drawn between the roles and duties of the executive and administrative authorities at the local government level in theory, the boundaries between these two spheres of governance could be more precise. Thornhill (2005) refers to this as a "grey area within which politics must be distinguished from the administration" (Thornhill, 2005, p.189), and this is where the political-administrative interface occurs. The absence of clear boundaries between the executive and administrative roles impedes the delivery of services. Cameron (2003) argues that to separate political functions from administrative functions, there needs to be adequately educated and trained people in both offices. Failure to meet this condition often results in the executive institution being unable to endorse the policy ideas of the executive authority which leads to an administrative system that is not reflective of integrated political values (Cameron, 2003, p.58). Maphunye (2005) further notes that the conflict between these roles is inflated by the resources controlled by the two role-players. These include human resources and financial resources amongst others.

The strained political-administrative interface is more noticeable in the sub-national level of government, as lack of service delivery results in the aggrieved residents lodging their complaints directly to the municipal councillor. The councillor in turn escalates these to the manager concerned completely disregarding the chain of command required in lodging service delivery complaints (Thornhill,2005). This tends to blur the lines between the two functions.

2.6 Established frameworks in public administration that can help interpret empirical results arising between the strained political-administrative interface and service delivery

Contextualised with public administration (Section 2.4) and linked to critical attributes of the political-administrative interface (Section 2.5), this section identifies and discusses established interpretive frameworks that the research will employ to interpret the research results in Chapter 5.

Five interpretive frameworks were identified in the reviewed literature on the political-administrative interface: the political-administrative dichotomy, the complementarity model, political bureaucratic model, British permanent model, and the American hybrid model. Although this study will discuss all five models, attention will be paid to the political-administrative dichotomy, the complementarity model, and the political bureaucratic model, as jointly, these three presents an diagnostic and explanatory framework for the findings of the political-administrative interface. According to Verheijen (2010), these frameworks resulted from developments in public administration theory over the past two decades, which renewed interest in the relationship between elected representatives and appointed officials in government.

Levy and Ellis (2006) define framework as "... a generalised type of theory that indicates relationships between constructs or latent variables" whose purpose is to interpret research results (Levy and Ellis,2006, p.198)
Such a framework, according to Wotela (2017), "should include theories, models, and even constructs ranging from those that are descriptive and explanative to those that are predictive and interpretive" (Wotela, 2017, p.147).

2.6.1 Political-administrative dichotomy

The relationship between politicians and administrators in the public sector has been a general debate within the public administration field of study. At the centre of the discussion is the classic political-administrative dichotomy, which, according to Wildrow Wilson (1887) and Weber (1946), is based on the idea that politics and administration are inherently different and, therefore, should be separated from each other for the successful formulation and implementation of public policies. Wilson (1887) adds that although the administration exists because of politics, the works of the former must not be marred by the former.

This model has been debated by several public administration scholars, such as Loveridge (1968), Svara (1995), Overeem (2006), Demir (2008) and Mafunisa (2003), amongst others. These scholars have made significant

contributions to the debate, including the events that led to the model's establishment, how it was developed, its purpose, its advantages, and the model's limitations, amongst other things.

The majority of the scholars credit the establishment of the dichotomy ideology to Widrow Wilson, who, in his notorious 1818 essay "The Study of Administration," argued that administration falls outside the sphere of politics and should, therefore, be studied as a distinct discipline instead of a subfield. Wilson (1881) explains:

> Administration lies outside politics; although politics sets the task for administration, it should not be suffered to manipulate its offices. Politics is state activity in things great and universal, and administration is the activity of the state in individual and small items (Wilson, 1881, p.210).

Weber (1922) breaks this model down into six components: (i) clearly defined roles and authority between politicians and administrators, (ii) tiered structure of offices, (iii) clearly defined administrative processes, (iv) appointment based on knowledge and skills, (v) distinction between office holding as a career and office holding as a vocation, (vi) duties attached to the position and not position holder. This model is rooted in a clear separation of roles and functions between elected representatives and appointed administrators and insulating them from interference between the two, thus promoting accountability and limiting corruption. Not only does this model protect administrators from scrutiny, but it also aids the interests of the politicians who can delegate unpopular decisions to administrators, as argued by Peter (1995).

Weber (1946), Loveridge (1968), and Overeem (2006) agree with this ideology, with the latter explaining that just like the principle of separation of powers, the dichotomy ensures that power is not centralised. The politics do not infringe on the administration, and the administration does not infringe on politics, thus promoting a normative relationship between the two. Another common advantage cited by those who advocate for the dichotomy is that by separating politics from the administration, the model promotes democratic accountability, as argued by Vilakazi, Adethiba (2020), and Overeem (2006).

In an ideal world under this model, the politicians and administrators perform their assigned functions, resulting in a political-administrative system where administrators are experienced, and accountable to the politicians.

However, this model has received much criticism from scholars such as Peters (1987); Aberbach et al. (1981); Svara (1998); Demir (2008) and Hartley et al. (2015), amongst others. The most significant criticism against the model is its oversimplification of the relationship between politicians and administrators. Demir (2008) explains that the dichotomy model in its current form does not consider the overlapping roles and responsibilities between the politicians and the administrators, nor does it discuss how the politicians and administrators interact with each other or prescribe how they ought to relate with each other to establish a harmonious relationship which would benefit the public.

Svara (1985, 1999) adds that government processes are divided into four functions, i.e., mission, policy, administration, and management. The separation of duties and functions between politicians and administrators is apparent only in activities regarding assignment and management. At the same time, there is an overlap in activities regarding policy and administration.

This ambiguity, as explained in the DPME Political-Administrative Stability synthesis report (2019) is further heightened by the inconsistencies in the Public Service Association (PSA) and the Public Financial Management Act regarding Human Resources and financial accountability. The former states the political leader is responsible for the Head of the Department's performance, while the latter states that the Head of the Department is accountable for the department's financial performance (DPME Political-Administrative Synthesis Report, 2019, p.12).

In his more recent works, Svara (2001) argues that a complete separation of politics from the administration tends to overlook the policy role of administrators. Furthermore, Svara (2005), Demir (2008), and Hartley et al. (2015) argue that the dichotomy limits political neutrality to drawing an invisible line between the functions of administrators and politicians. In contrast, it also

includes active reflection by administrators and highly developed leadership, as explained by Torfing and Sorensen (2019).

Interestingly, Weber (1946), a staunch supporter of the dichotomy, adds an element that most scholars who advocate for this model tend to leave out in their arguments, the bureaucratic rule. Most literature highlights political interference in the administration and rarely refers to administrative interference in politics. To guard against the latter, Weber (1946) argues that systems must be implemented to limit the administrator's power. This includes the appointment of politicians.

2.6.2 Political Bureaucratic Model

The political, bureaucratic model can be traced back to classic studies which sought to investigate the role of politics in the public policy-making process. According to Jones (2010), the model was brought to the fore by Herring (1936), who acknowledged the role of administrators in politics. He was one of many scholars of the post-war era who became sceptical of the separating politics from the administration and offered a political, bureaucratic model as an alternative.

Scholars Appleby (1949) and Long (1949) highlight in their respective works the significance of flexible power, a broader political process, as administrators' involvement in policy formulation and implementation. According to this model, the mandate of the elected representatives is to manage and the appointed administrators, meaning no distinction is drawn between the two key role players as argued by Long (1954); (1985); Miller (1993). In the South African context, Mafunisa (2003) argues that this model gives politicians the power to dictate how government should be run. Mubangizi, Tshishonga (2013) and Hartley (2011) add this model has its foundation on the Cadre Policy and Development Strategy of the African National Congress (ANC), in South Africa. This policy was developed to ensure government recruits knew and understood the policy position of the African National Congress and on assumption of duties would ensure alignment of government programmes with the ANC policies in pursuance of its agenda.

Therefore, recruitment took place within the political party. Hartley (2011) adds that it was assumed that this policy would protect the new government from “possible sabotage by opposition parties” (Hartley, 2011, p.3).

The model has received much criticism over the years. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2009), cited in Shava Chamisa (2018), blames this model for the service delivery challenges experienced in municipalities across South Africa (Shava, Chamisa, 2018, p.4). Agreeable with this are Bach (2021), Halligan (2020), and Peters (2004), who contend that not only does the politicisation of public service affect the quality of services rendered, but it also promotes corruption within the administration. Another limitation is the assumption that the roles of councillors, members of municipal executives and officials are clear. This, de Visser (2010) adds, is intensified by unjustifiable political interference by political parties, which occurs when regional party structures meddle in the running of the Municipality. According to de Visser (2010), regional party structures are responsible for recruiting and deploying candidates to occupy municipal political offices and providing strategic guidance. However, they tend to focus on areas earmarked for the administrators, such as staff appointments and tender allocations, thus politicising the public service.

Another disadvantage of this model is that the division of labour tends to reduce the politician’s control over government action, and administrators can use this to their advantage by prioritising their agenda instead of the political mandate. This, Verheijen (2001), can be mitigated by creating conditions that mitigate bureaucratic non-compliance but favour the achievement of policy outcomes they desire.

2.6.3 Complementarity Model

Svara (1999) offers an alternative model to the dichotomy and political bureaucracy models in the form of the Complementarity model. This model recognises that as much as politicians and administrators have different functions (with politicians responsible for developing policies and administrators' implementation), these two groups are interlinked. Each has a

role in the organisational framework; therefore, one cannot be separated from the other, contrary to the dichotomy perspective. According to Svara (2001), this model's influence allows politicians and administrators to perform their specific interdependent tasks, working towards the common goal of service delivery for the people. The complementarity model relies less on formal tiered structures of government that explain the relationship between elected representatives and administrative officials in master servant terms. Nalbandian (1999) explains that pecking order bears no significance when addressing societal problems. What is required is innovation, communication, and cooperation (Nalbandian, 1999, p.194).

One of the advantages that the advocates of this model seem to agree on is its ability to study the distinct contribution of politicians and administrators in the democratic process. Svara (2001) explains that this model gives a positive approach on how political office-bearers and administrators can work together with their distinct but interdependent roles for the greater good.

2.7 Evaluating the political-administrative interface, a conceptual framework

The literature review aims to develop a conceptual framework to assess the effect of the political-administrative interface on service delivery. Maxwell (2013) defines conceptual framework as the systematic discussion of key ideas, and theories supporting the research strategy, design, procedure, and methods. Kumar (2014), on the other hand, views it as a blueprint of how the research will progress after the interrogation of literature. The conceptual framework in this section guides the process of gathering, managing, scrutinising, and interpreting the study's empirical findings.

Figure 5 below is an illustration of the research process the study took.

It describes the process and connects the various components of the reviewed literature.

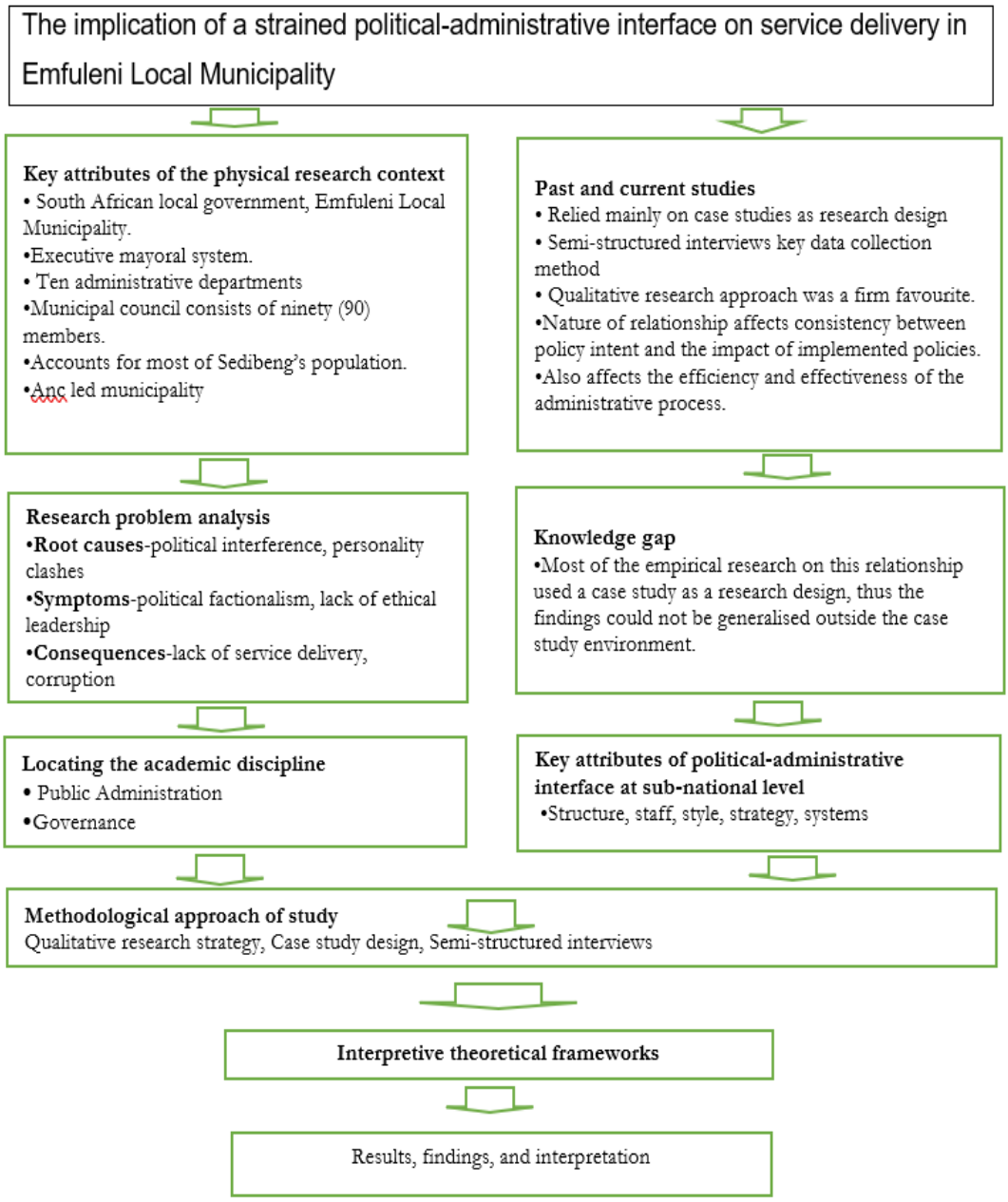


Fig 7: A conceptual framework for the implication of a strained political-administrative interface on service delivery Source adapted from Wotela (2016)

The framework demonstrates the general direction of the study, which is to examine the implication of the political-administrative interface on service delivery in Emfuleni Municipality. According to Wotela (2016), this is done by describing the research setting, which identifies significant physical attributes that link the setting to the research study. The study then moves on to locate the research problem in the public administration field of enquiry, specifically the local governance perspective and in the Emfuleni Local Municipality

setting. The study identified the problem as the strained interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality. The literature identified and reviewed several studies investigating the nature of the political-administrative interface at local government and how the misinterpretation of these roles has influenced effective and competency of local government and administration. The studies include Mantzaris; Pillay (2014); Matheson, Weber, Manning and Arnould (2007); Surty (2010); Makanyeza, Kwandayi, Ikobe (2013); Pretorius (2017); Ncalane (2018); Mfuru, Sarwatt & Kanire (2018) amongst others. It emerged through this process that Surty (2010), Pretorius (2018); Mngomezulu (2020); Ncalane (2018) and Mfuru, Sarwatt & Kanire (2018) relied on the case study design of one or more cases to illustrate the effect the interface has on public administration.

Local past studies place this study within the public administration and governance fields. The study identified six key components linked to the public administration field of research, and it explored intergovernmental relations, governance, public policies, public needs, social change, and organisational theory as the key components in public administration. The study also defined critical attributes of organisational analysis, namely system, structure, style, staff, and strategy. The study used these attributes to recognise key models that helped explain certain aspects of these components and opted for the political-administrative dichotomy, the political and bureaucratic model, and the complementary model to better comprehend the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The study used a qualitative research strategy and a case study design to investigate the implication this interface has on service delivery in Emfuleni Municipality. The study's findings were explained using three key interpretive frameworks: the political-administrative dichotomy, the political and bureaucratic model, and the complementary model. This conceptual framework combined different research components to establish a complete study. This was based on Wotela’s (2016) recommendation to use system thinking to resolve research and reporting complexities. The following section

deals with the research strategy, design, procedures, and methods applied in this study.

3 RESEARCH STRATEGY, DESIGN, PROCEDURE AND METHODS

In the previous section, literature was reviewed to develop the explanatory and conceptual frameworks that informed the research strategy, design, procedure, and methods this study used to answer the research questions posed in the earlier section of this research. This chapter explains and discusses the research strategy (Section 3.1), the research design (Section 3.2), and the procedure, and methods (Section 3.3) used by the study to gather, process, and analyse empirical evidence. The chapter also describes the reliability and validity measures that enhanced the credibility of the study (Section 3.4) that this research applies to make it credible, as well as the limitations of the choices made (Section 3.5).

3.1 Research Strategy

Research strategy, otherwise known as a research approach, is a general plan of how the research will be undertaken by guiding the researcher in planning and executing the study. Bryman (2014) describes a research strategy as a general direction the social science research will take. At the same time, Creswell (2014) defines it as the specific procedures involved in the research process, i.e., data collection, analysis and report writing. On the other hand, Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012) describe it as an outline that guides the research. There are three research strategies to choose from when conducting social science research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Based on the reviewed literature in Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, this research study committed to a qualitative research strategy due to its exploratory nature.

This research strategy is popular in research that uses human experience to understand a social phenomenon/problem. The qualitative research strategy relies on personal observation and the experiences of interviewees or participants in a research study to understand a social problem. Most of the authors describe this strategy as one that seeks to understand a social phenomenon/problem through the experience/observation of individuals.

Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012) describe this approach as one that seeks to understand a social problem through the eyes of the research participants; Creswell (2012) describes it as one that is deployed when trying to understand the meaning individuals attribute to a social problem. The choice of research strategy was also influenced by the objectives of this study, which is to examine what the respondent of the survey narrates, understands, and interprets the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality. As explained by Bryman (2012), the strategy's ability to support narration and the interpretation of the social world is one of its advantages.

As highlighted in section 2.3, this strategy was a firm favourite in most studies on the political-administrative interface. One such study was by Pretorius (2017), who used the research strategy to explore the nature and extent of the political-administrative interface in Free State municipalities. The research also examined how the misunderstanding of roles influences/ed administration in the municipalities (Pretorius, 2017). Using the qualitative strategy, the researcher could analyse (descriptive) certain events and the contribution of various role players involved in the defined field of work. (Pretorius, 2017).

In another study, Surty (2010) used a qualitative research strategy to analyse the legislation that governs the relationship and assess how the legislation falls short during implementation. This choice was informed by Surty's (2010) desire to understand the political-administrative interface using a small sample more openly instead of prescribed questions.

A study by Mngomezulu (2020) examined the consequences of political meddling on service delivery in the uMlalazi Local Municipality. This choice was influenced by the need to explore a social occurrence from various meanings. Creswell (2012) explains that the methods deployed by the strategy include case studies and participant observation, which gives a descriptive account of a setting, practice, or occurrence. By relying on description, qualitative discussions have the potential to let the participant/respondent take control of the data collection process, which can lead to in-depth, rich data.

3.2 Research design

Research design is the general approach used to stitch together the different elements of the research coherently. The literature reviewed states that a research design outlines how the intended research will be conducted, i.e., how data will be collected, analysed, interpreted, etc. Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012) define it as a plan of how the researcher will conduct the research process. This is usually informed by factors such as theoretical framework and research questions. Bryman (2012) defines research design as a strategy (informed by the research objectives) which provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data.

Bryman (2012) explains that the research objectives could demonstrate a relationship between variables, generalise findings of a particular sample or explain a behaviour attitude in a social context, amongst other things. These objectives can be achieved using one of five generic research designs, which Bryman (2012) lists as experimental design, case study design, longitudinal design, cross-sectional, and comparative design.

This study committed to a case study design. Broadly explained, a case study is a thorough examination of a person or community, emphasizing the developmental factors of the setting. Creswell (2012) defines a case study as a detailed investigation of an activity, event, process, or individuals using extensive data. Whereas Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012) view it as a design that entails empirical investigation of a phenomenon in a natural setting to increase its understanding.

Although case studies can be used in both quantitative and qualitative research studies, they are most common in qualitative studies, something Bryman (2012) attributes to the ability of the design to focus extensively on the case under investigation. However, its most significant limitation is that case study research findings cannot be generalised. According to Bryman (2012), its strength is the design's ability to undertake theoretical enquiry supported by an exhaustive analysis of a single case. A case can be single or multiple.

The decision to use a case study for this study was based on the need to understand the political-administrative interface in the context of Emfuleni Municipality. Furthermore, this research design enabled the researcher to contain the study and produce setting-dependent data on the political-administrative interface at the local government level in South Africa. The political-administrative interface has been mainly investigated through case studies. One such investigation was by Shazi (2016), who used a multi-case study research design to understand politics and administration in the context of South Africa. Shazi (2016) focused on three cases between 1999 and 2009 where the working relationship between administrators and politicians was under a lot of strain. The research design was chosen for its ability to familiarise the case method with actual circumstances to understand real life and knowledge development.

Another study that applied the case study approach was by Goma (2017), which explored the leadership and the political-administrative interface within the Department of Human Settlements in the Gauteng province. The research design was chosen based on the required depth of understanding. One of the advantages of this research design is that it is suitable for understanding complicated issues in an actual setting, and people's outlooks in those settings.

3.3 Research procedure and methods

This section documents the actual procedure and the processes employed in this study to gather, process, and analyse empirical evidence. Generally, section 3.3.1 details the data and information collection instruments. Section 3.2.2 details the target population and sampling of respondents. The ethical considerations during the research process are discussed in section 3.3.3. This is followed by the discussion of the data and information collection process and storage in section 3.3.4. It concludes with the data and information processing and analysis in section 3.3.5, as well as the background description

of the respondents who provided empirical evidence for this research study (Section 3.3.6).

3.3.1 Research data and information collection instruments

In broad terms, data and information collection instruments are tools used to gather and measure information systematically to answer research questions. Creswell (2012) explains that data collection tools include in-depth interviews, document analysis, observation, and audio-visual materials analysis. At the same time, Barbie (2012) describes them as tools used to collect information to assist with measurement and analysis in a research study. According to Bryman (2012), Creswell (2009), Locke, Silverman and Spirduso (2010), the most common information collection instruments in qualitative research studies are interviews and observations. This research study used interviews, document analysis, and observations as data collection instruments. The choice of tools is informed by the research questions the study seeks to answer and the option of research strategy, which is qualitative research strategy.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interview Schedule

This study opted for semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool. This was informed by the researcher's need to obtain in-depth information on the study and capture the participant's experience. As the name suggests, the interviews are not fixed. Semi-structured questions are flexible as they allow the researcher to change questions and add new questions as the interview proceeds and new ideas surface from the interview process. They also allow for follow-up questions in which the participant's response is unclear.

Eight interviews were conducted at the research site (Emfuleni Local Municipality), and two were conducted at the Office of the Premier. The researcher scheduled the interviews beforehand with the research participants. The interviews took place between 15 February – 16 February 2023. Each interview was allocated 45 minutes, but some interviews took longer than the given time, whilst others were shorter than the given time. The

participant's willingness to share more information informed the interview duration. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview with each of the respondents before commencing the interviews. The respondents were also given consent forms that explained the purpose of the study, to sign.

According to Beardsworth and Keil (1992), the flexible, conversational nature of semi-structured interviews allows for a process of enhancement where lines of thought recognised by earlier interviewees can be offered to other interviewees. Creswell (2005) explains that the open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview allow the participants to express their experiences freely without the influence of the researcher's attitude. This data collection instrument allowed the researcher to establish if the reflections contained in research about the political-administrative interface conducted in earlier years still apply today; if not, what has changed and to what end.

Pretorius (2017); Surty (2010); Mngomezulu (2020); and Magashoa (2016) used semi-structured interviews as a primary data collection instrument. Pretorius (2017) used semi-structured interviews to understand how the participants experienced the political and administrative interface. The study In this study, the "semi-structured interviews were a two-way conversation between the researcher and the participant and focused primarily on the ideas, beliefs, views, experiences, and opinions of the participants/interviewees in the applicable work environment". (Pretorius,2017, p.14)

Another study that deployed semi-structured interviews in its quest to understand the political-administration interface better was Surty (2010). The study represents what practice exposes the relationship between the executive mayor and the municipal manager and how the intended legislation differs. Surty (2010) explains that this data collection method allowed her to compare candidates and explore topics relevant to the participant objectively.

Based on the literature reviewed, the interview schedule comprised fifteen flexible questions and 45 minutes were allocated for each interview. The

source of the interview questions mainly was the reviewed literature and prior research.

3.3.3 Research target population and selection of respondents

The target population is the group of people or community the researcher wishes to make the research findings relatable. Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012) define the target population as the population or collection of people that a researcher wishes to research and analyse.

This research's target population is the administrative and executive authorities in Emfuleni Local Municipality. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 participants comprised of senior managers and former senior managers from Emfuleni Local Municipality, former Emfuleni Local Municipality councillors (opposition and governing party), and a provincial government advisor on service delivery. The research participants were chosen using purposive sampling a process of selecting people based on the assumption that they know more about the topic under study, due to time constraints.

3.3.3 Ethical Considerations When Gathering Research Data

Ethical considerations are a set of principles and values that ought to be followed when conducting any research, especially that which includes people. They guarantee that research is conducted in a principled way. Creswell (2007) explains that social and behavioural science research entails gathering data from people and about people. Therefore, social science researchers need to ensure that the participants in such study are kept safe from all forms of harm during the study.

Bryman (2012) adds that several principles that need to be considered in social science research include informed consent, avoiding harm to participants, invasion of privacy and deception, data protection, affiliation, and conflicts of interest. Ensure that a researcher conducts research in the highest ethical order; failure will harm the intended study. Creswell (2013) explains that before any analysis can be conducted, permission must be sought from the various

stakeholders involved in the study, i.e., the university, participants, and research site.

Before the commencement of this research, authorization was sought from the Wits School of Governance to conduct this research study, which was granted via the issuing of an ethical clearance certificate **(Appendix 1.5)**. Permission was also sought from the research site (Emfuleni Local Municipality) and was granted **(Appendix 1.4**). The researcher also sought the consent of the research participants to take part in the interviews. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced herself, the reason for her being there and the purpose of this research. This was followed by the researcher asking if the participants consent to taking part in the study and asking them to sign consent forms.

Given the political nature of the study as well as the timing of the investigation, it was anticipated that this study could be used to promote the political party ambitions of opposition parties in the upcoming elections. Although this could not be avoided, the researcher tried to align the views expressed with those expressed in official documents and previous interviews. According to Sarantakos (2004, pg.3), complete impartiality in qualitative research is not always viable.

A consent form **(Appendix 1.3)** was shared with the participants. The document outlines the purpose of the research and its duration and makes the following assurance:

> (ii) Assure the research community that the participants will not be deceived.
>
> (iii) Assure the research community that you will not harm or stress the participants (physically or developmentally) or drive them to the point of 'losing self-esteem'.
>
> (iv) Assure the research community that you will obtain informed consent to interview them and, if applicable, record them.
>
> (v.) Assure the research community that you will protect the respondents, including securing the data you obtain from them and not revealing their identity.

3.3.4 Research data and information collection, processing, and analysis

The data and information collection process refers to the processes of gathering, measuring, and analysing data from various sources to answer research questions.

According to Creswell (2012), this process includes in-depth interviews, document analysis, observation, and audio-visual materials analysis. Bryman (2012) describes the process as collecting research data to answer research questions. He explains that collecting research data is paramount in any research project. He argues that this process carries much weight when determining the quality of a research report. As much as the assessment of the quality of the information relates to all components of the information, the data collection process component carries much weight. (Bryman, 2012). Participant observation, interviews (face-to-face, telephone, or internet-based), focus group discussion, and documents are some of the data collection modes available to a researcher.

To realise this study's objectives, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations were used to collect data for a thorough understanding of the political-administrative nterface.

3.3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview is a form of data collection where the researcher asks interviewees open-ended questions. According to Creswell (2012), this technique is deployed when a researcher wants to get in-depth information on a research topic. As much as the questions are predetermined, a researcher can add follow-up questions to seek more clarity as the interview unfolds. These questions allow the interviewee to communicate their opinions on their own terms.

3.3.4.2 Document analysis

Information from academic articles, journals, books, research dissertations (published and unpublished), as well as government documents, is usually already cleaned and stored electronically; not only is using such data collection

mode cost-effective, but it allows the researcher to spend less time on gathering data and more time analysing it.

This data type is kept in an electronic format and is ready for analysis by the researcher. Creswell (2012), however, cautions that when making use of such data, the researcher needs to ensure the collected data is trustworthy by critically evaluating the data by comparing it with authenticated sources.

Using different data collection methods enables the researcher to build on the strength of the method, thus increasing the validity and reliability of the study.

3.3.4.3 Research data and information analysis

Creswell (2013) explains that data/information analysis comprises the following steps: data coding, data cleaning, transcribing and interpretation of the findings and results. When appropriately implemented, the steps can emphasise what is believed, highlight gaps in existing data, or expand on the current interpretation. According to Bryman (2012), data analysis outlines how research data will be analysed. Unlike quantitative data analysis, which occurs after data collection, Bryman (2012) explains that qualitative data analysis is continuous throughout the research, especially when applying data analysis strategies such as grounded theory and analytical induction. As a result, “while grounded theory and analytic induction are described as strategies of analysis, they can also be viewed as strategies for data collection” (Bryman, 2012, p.566). The most frequently used data analysis strategies in qualitative research include cluster analysis, content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis and grounded theory.

Based on the literature reviewed, this study used inductive thematic analysis because of the exploratory nature of the study. The researcher did not have preconceived themes but created themes from the data sets derived from the 10 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with participants. These were transcribed manually by the researcher. The Delve online qualitative research software was used to analyse interview data; inductive coding was done using the same tool. The researcher used descriptive (summarised the content of the transcripts into a description) and in vivo coding methods (used the

participant's direct quotes to keep their intent and meaning as accurate as possible). When the coding was completed, the researcher collated the codes with extracts. Grouping codes into themes followed by an evaluation and revision of the themes before concluding the process with a write-up.

3.3.5 Description of the research respondents

Every research study needs to describe the research respondents to give readers an appreciation of who the research findings apply to once the study has been completed. This process also helps with the generalizability of the study as well as any limitations the study might have. Enargo Academy (2019) states that this process is essential for future research. The description of research respondents includes the population pool, the number of research respondents in the study sample, the type of sample the respondents represent, i.e., snowball, random, etc., the age, and the gender of the respondents.

This study's research respondents are different role players in the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality. These were divided into two groups, i.e., public office bearers (politicians) and municipal officials (administrators).

The table below lists the respondents and describes the essential characteristics of the research respondents.

Respondent	Number of years in ELM	Age	Sex	Date of interview
Appointed Officials				
Participant 1	20	50	Male	15/02/23
Participant 2	10	35	Male	15/02/23
Participant 4	15	55	Male	15/02/23
Participant 5	10	58	Male	15/02/23
Participant 6	10	45	Female	15/02/23
Participant 7	8	Did not disclose	Male	16/02/23
Elected Officials				
Participant 8	5	35	Female	16/02/23
Participant 9	5	42	Male	16/02/23
Participant 10	5	52	Male	16/02/23

Source: researcher's formulation

3.4 Research strengthens—reliability and validity measures applied

Reliability and validity measures are used to assess the quality of research. According to Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012), reliability is the consistency with which the chosen data collection instrument measures its intended measure. In contrast, validity refers to how well the collected data covers the area under investigation. At the same time, Creswell, and Poth (2013) explain fact as assessing the correctness of results as depicted by both the researcher and the respondents. Bryman (2012), on the other hand, explains that reliability is whether the results of a study are repeatable, and validity describes the integrity of the research findings and observation. According to Bryman (2012), there are various types of validity: measurement validity, internal and external validity for a quantitative research strategy or credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability for a qualitative research strategy (Bryman, 2012, p.56).

To increase this research's validity, the researcher used triangulation, a process Patton (1999) describes as using different data sources to develop a holistic analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. Triangulation ensures that the data collected is not only sound but also replicable and that the findings are accurate. Data for this research was collected from sources such as books, journals, government documents, the internet, and previous and current studies.

Gomba (2017) whose study investigated effective leadership that drives organisational change to improve service delivery, using the Department of Human Settlements as a case study, deployed this method. This method was used to ensure the validity of the information in the study. Gomba (2017) explains that this method was preferred to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collected by verifying it with alternative sources.

This method was also used by Mogashoa (2006), whose study sought to investigate the destructive relationship between the Office of the Executive Authority and the Office of the Accounting Officer in the Limpopo Department of Education.

3.5.1 Research Weaknesses – technical and administrative limitations

The study needs to present a generalised picture of the political-administrative interface in South African local government. It uses a case study as a research design, meaning the findings cannot be generalised outside the Emfuleni Local Municipality. To alleviate this limitation and ensure the study remains relevant, the researcher intensely engages a single case and demonstrates its relevance to theory.

At the time the research was conducted, the researcher was working in the secretariat that placed Emfuleni Local Municipality under administration, meaning the researcher had the potential to be biased. According to Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012), biases are perceived as part of the process in qualitative studies, and researchers are encouraged to engage with them.

The bias in this study was mitigated by comparing through document analysis on Emfuleni Local Municipality and disclosing the motives and assumptions in the study process.

Interviewing more elected politicians proved difficult due to the political nature of the research. Some potential participants who were approached did not want to risk divulging “sensitive party information,” so they refused to take part in the study. Another possible participant who was asked to participate in the study declined to participate, in his own words: “*purely for safety reasons as he might end up stepping on people’s toes*”. Thus, this study might be thin on the executive authority’s views on the interface. This limitation was mitigated by using data triangulation, which uses various data sources to reduce potential bias in the study (Kulwich Hollard,2013).

4 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

This section presents the research results on the information gathered on the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality. The following research questions directed the collection of information on this research:

1. What is the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality?
2. What factors affect the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality?
3. What role has the political-administrative interface played in the Municipality being placed under administration for its failure to provide basic services?

The research results explain the information gathered through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with ten employees (former and current) and councillors (former and current) affected (directly and indirectly) by the strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality during the period under review. The questions are connected to the attributes identified and discussed in section 2.5.

4.1 The nature of the political-administrative interface at Emfuleni Local Municipality

This section addresses the first question of the study: *What is the nature of the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality?*

To understand the nature of the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality, one must clearly understand the roles and functions of each of these authorities. As Thornhill (2005) explained, lack of clarity on these leadership roles can affect a Municipality's ability to perform its core functions.

4.1.1 Presentation of the empirical results

4.1.1.1 Discussion of key themes

Theme 1: Separation of roles

The research results demonstrate that all the participants understood the roles and duties of the political authority (executive mayor) at the sub-national level and could explain these based on their understanding. Altogether 80% of the participants explained that the executive mayor oversees the administration and ensures that the administration implements policies and decisions made by the municipal council. *Participant 3* went further with his explanation and added that the executive mayor is responsible for monitoring the implementation of all the agreed Integrated Development Planning (IDP) programmes by the head of the administration (municipal manager). *"Through that process, the executive mayor facilitates that the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) is reduced to Strategic Development Planning (SDP) and reports back to council on the performance of the Municipality."*

Similarly, participant 4 explained that the functions of the executive mayor are well-defined in the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2002, and the Municipal Finance Management Act: "*We also have systems of delegations that define the powers of the mayor as well as those of the municipal manager".* Of course, one of the difficulties in this relationship is the thin line between intervention and interference. The participants again showed a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the administrative authority at the sub-national level. The most common description amongst the participants was that a municipal manager is responsible for implementing the Municipality's objectives. Similarly, Participant 5 explained that *"the municipal manager is responsible for executing that which the council has approved in terms of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP)".*

Some participants feel that the municipal manager, as the accounting officer, is responsible for the Municipality's finances and the running of the administrative arm of the Municipality. Participant 3 stated that *"the municipal manager makes decisions in procurement and employment of staff based on*

the organogram of the Municipality." Similarly, Participant 8 said, "*The municipal manager is responsible for implementing that which the council has approved in terms of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP)."*

When asked, based on their understanding and observation, if they think the political and administrative authorities know and understand their roles and and responsibilities as stipulated in the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2002, These were some of the responses: Participant 1 felt the administrative authority because they are career public servants and professionals who know their roles and had this to say: "*Municipal managers understand their roles and responsibilities very well. There is nobody who would intentionally risk their qualification. But they are forced by the politicians to do things that fall out of the scope of their work. Before an Auditor-General comes into a Municipality, There is an internal audit process, but these internal structures have collapsed due to political interference. Once the municipal manager gives in to political pressure, it affects the entire value chain, thus affecting service delivery".*

Participants 1, 3, 5 and 8 felt that the executive arm did not fully understand their roles and responsibilities and attributed this ignorance to a lack of education. According to Participant 1: "*Most of the mayors that have been elected to preside over Emfuleni in the past few years have not had formal knowledge. I doubt the current one even has a matric.*

Participant 2 noted that "*most of the councillors when they are voted into positions, usually have no background knowledge of municipal operations. They need to familiarise themselves with the municipal legislation, systems act, structures act, municipal financial management act, and these are not legislation that can be studied and understood quickly.*
By the time they have familiarised themselves and are comfortable with the legislation, their term of office is over."

These views support Thornhill (2005) and Cameron (2003), who argue that to distinguish between administrative and political functions successfully, the assumption is that educated and skilled people must occupy both these roles.

Theme 2: Political interference

The political-administrative interface at the sub-national level is more complicated than the other two government spheres. This is because politicians are said to be the face of municipalities and not administrators. As a result, communities engage politicians over issues, who liaise with the official/manager involved to address the issue. According to Thornhill (2005), this tends to blur the division between the two functions.

The Mayor of a Municipality, also known as the executive authority, is elected to office by the electorate to make decisions on their behalf. The executive authority, one of the key role-players in the political-administrative interface as set out in Section 159 of the Constitution (1996), oversees the municipal administration. The administrative authority, a Municipal Manager, is the other key role player in this complex relationship. The municipal manager's core function as the administration's head is to implement political decisions/policies by the executive authority supported by the council. Cameron (2003) cautions that this relationship is more complex than a master and servant relationship. Although the Constitution and municipal legislation outline the roles and responsibilities of these two authorities (and all the participants interviewed confirmed this), there is no clear demarcation on where the roles and responsibilities of the one authority begin and end, which creates a breeding ground for political interference in the administration.

Participant 2 explains that *"the problem starts when the councillors want to interact with junior employees, stating that they want this and that. Also, the issue of the community where you have projects, people have been appointed through tender processes correctly, and the ward councillor wants to interfere on who must work in the project".*

In the case of Emfuleni Local Municipality, according to a Sunday Times Daily report (2020), the former Emfuleni Local Municipality Mayor was found to have used his power to influence the awarding of a "lucrative tender to his fiancé to provide insurance brokering services to the Municipality". According to Madisa

(2016), the tender was flagged as proper processes were not followed in awarding the tender.

One of the participants confirmed this practice and added that the executive authorities often want to have a say in the Municipality's procurement processes and Human Resource processes, thus placing administrators in compromising positions when they are expected to act outside their scope, thus straining the relationship. Another participant noted that as much as administrators are clued up on their functions and responsibilities and are public service professionals, some succumb to political pressures.

Participant 4 attributes the interference to misunderstanding the roles of the executive authority and those of the administrative authority. *"…Especially when it comes to procurement, they might have views on how appointments are made,* contravening section 118 of the Municipal Financial Management Act (MFMA), which forbids councillors' involvement in the municipal tender processes. *"Unfortunately, we must follow legislation regarding whether people are qualified for those projects".*

One of the issues that was picked up by most of the participants is the issue of lack of training of politicians on their roles, responsibilities, and power. They assume positions and think they can start dictating what should be done and how it should be done.

Participant 8 *explains that after every five years, people are elected into public office bearer positions. Most of these people are unfamiliar with municipal operations and come into office with certain expectations and promises they would have made to their constituency. Unfortunately, some of these promises do not find expression in the municipal plans, budget and IDP because you cannot do what you do not have funds for".*

Participant 3 explains that in 2016, "the *political head, which was meant to play an oversight role, had taken over the running of the Municipality…The*

executive head took the decisions meant to be taken by the Municipal Manager".

Other participants feel that sometimes the interference is from the administrative arm of the Municipality. An example cited by Participant 8 is that the previous executive mayor was *"clueless both politically and administratively. The then municipal manager took advantage of the situation and made him sign off on projects that did not exist.*

In a similar instance cited by Participant 6, which took place in 2022, the interference came from the administration in the form of the then Chief Financial Officer (CFO). According to Participant 7, the former CFO *"irregularly appointed 40+ high-paying support staff in the executive mayor's office".*

Other participants felt that during the former CFO's tenure, the interference was not necessarily from the executive mayor's office but from administrators colluding with politicians outside the mayor's office, i.e., the speaker and the chief whip). For example, Participant 6 indicated, "*During this period, council decisions were made by the trio and the executive mayor side-lined."*

Similarly, participant 4 explains that power struggles characterised this period. *"It was politics vs. administration. When I say administration, I am not referring to the municipal manager himself, but rather other political powers behind the scenes that neither the mayor nor the municipal manager had control over".*

4.1.1.2 Response to the Research Question

The question intended to understand the nature of the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

In responding to this question, the research generally interrogates the attributes of the governance component of public administration discussed in section 2.5 to provide context to the research question. The political-administrative interface is closely linked to the professionalisation attribute.

According to Cameron (2003), a complementary political-administrative interface depends on the role players' ability to separate their functions and

responsibilities. To achieve this, Cameron (2003) explains that it is assumed that the people occupying both these positions are skilled and talented. In several interviews with the research participants, it became apparent that this condition is not met in Emfuleni Local Municipality, as explained by one of the participants: "*Most of the executive authorities that have presided over Emfuleni Local Municipality have low or no formal education let alone on the municipal operations.*

Participant 5 went as far as questioning if the current mayor has a senior certificate. Therefore, the research findings show a strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

4.1.2 Comparison of results to similar studies

A similar study by Mogashoa (2006) conducted qualitative research where he sought to explore the nature of politics and its interface with the administration at the Limpopo Department of Education. According to his research findings, the relationship between the two has proven to be complex. It depends on several factors, such as the delegation of powers, implementation of mandates and priorities, etc. Mogashoa (2006) adds that the latter requires expertise that cannot be separated from the allocation of powers. The skills and knowledge of the employee are critical.

> "The interface is about politics and administration; therefore, the required skill cannot be separated from the conduct of the Executing Authority and Accounting Officer. The behaviour provided shows that the human element in a regulated interface can potentially unsettle the interface" (Mogashoa, 2006, p.61).

4.2 Factors that affect the nature of the relationship between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality

This section addresses the second question of the research study: *What factors affect the nature of the interface between administrators and politicians in Emfuleni Municipality?*

According to Reddy (2017), at the heart of the political-administrative interface is the relationship between the political authority and the administrators, as the nature of this relationship determines whether municipal programmes and policies are successfully implemented.

4.2.1 Presentation of empirical results

4.2.1.1 Discussion of key themes

Theme 1: Political instability

Several of the participants felt that the interface between the politicians and the administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality during the period under review was strained, with some participants using terms such as *"hostile", "chaotic", in conflict", and "non-existent"* to describe the relationship.

Participant 4 feels that the interface between the two authorities during the period under review was "*complex because the Municipality had three executive mayors and different relationship dynamics characterised each tenure".*

Party-versus-council accountability

Participant 6 believes that the relationship in Emfuleni Local Municipality is not between politicians and administrators but rather politicians and other politicians disguised as administrators. "*Politicians capture the administration in Emfuleni Local Municipality. The people within the Municipality's administration are former leaders in the political structure that occupy administrative roles".* This situation is heightened by political infighting. "*During*

the tenure of the previous executive mayor, there was political infighting between him, the speaker, and the chief whip. The speaker and the chief whip were conspiring with the Chief Financial Officer. So, council decisions would be made by the trio and the mayor side-lined".

Agreeable, Participant 7 notes, *"Remember, for people to occupy these mayoral positions, a conference sits and voting for a suitable candidate takes place, now the sitting politician is usually the direct beneficiary of these people who campaigned for them to win. So, they cannot dismiss these people after they successfully ascended to the mayoral position. This is why there was a decision in Polokwane in 2007 that said if you are in the employ of the government, you cannot occupy a leadership position in a political structure. This decision was confirmed recently. However, what we have in Emfuleni is that we have people who work in the Municipality, who are senior leaders in the political structures and are leaders of the very same bosses in the political structures that have employed them in government.*

Similarly, Participant 5 explains that the ANC organisation at the regional level is so divided and has many factions. Each faction has its agenda and its plan on how to use the Municipality to fulfil it, i.e., "*there were many hands in the cookie jar during the period under review. There are still too many hands even now. Those hands controlled both the mayor and the municipal manager one way or the other. These characters were just puppets".*

Participant 2, on the other hand, explained that the relationship was not necessarily strained but was "*affected by political instability, which resulted from the continuous changes in political leadership, which led to institutional instability".*

Participant 6 explains **"***that some of these people might not have qualifications to fall back on. This is a challenge on its own because, if you know, it becomes exceedingly difficult to deal with that reality come to the end of your five-year term. So, for them, being a councillor is a full-time job, even though it is meant*

to be part-time. Those are some of the things that have the potential to create tension between the politicians and administrators at the municipal level".

Theme 3: Different personalities

The participants felt that the personalities of the politicians and the administrators influenced the relationship between the key role players.

Eight participants felt that the hostile relationship between the two key role-players resulted from personality clashes. For example, participant 5 states that the Emfuleni Local Municipality executive mayor 2016 (Simon Mofokeng) was elected ANC regional chairperson for the fifth time in 2016. "*He was politically powerful, feared by many and had a dominating personality; no one could say no to him. He would abuse his political power and override professional advice from the municipal bureaucrats on issues about the Municipality".*

Similarly, Participant 6 states that the Chief Financial Officer in 2020 was politically connected and enjoyed political protection from the speaker and chief whip. It was making him much more influential than the mayor. "*His personality was much more dominating than that of the executive mayor, and it showed that he would bypass the mayor on procurement processes and report to the speaker and the chief whip. The mayor during that time was reduced to a ceremonial mayor."*

Theme 4: Policy differences

The municipal executive authority is responsible for developing policies, and the administrative authority is responsible for implementing the policy, a specialised function. The latter might not always agree with the former on a particular policy and instead use their technical skills and knowledge to advocate for a specific cause of action.

According to Participant 4, this is precisely what happened with the previous mayor, unfamiliar with municipal processes. "*He was taken advantage of by the municipal manager and used to promote the municipal manager's agenda".*

In a different case, as narrated by Participant 5*, "The mayor in 2018 was not interested in service delivery. He used his position as mayor to fulfil his political ambitions of becoming ANC provincial secretary".*

4.2.1.2 Response to the research question

In responding to the second question, reference is made to section 2.5.2, where the shared roles/responsibilities were identified as a critical attribute in public administration. This attribute gives context to the research questions.

Undue political interference in the running of the administration and strained relations between politicians and administrators are a regular occurrence in South African municipalities, something de Visser (2010) attributes to the absence of division of powers between executive and legislative authorities, amongst other things. The South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) states that all three government spheres have executive and legislative arms. There is a clear division of powers, functions, and duties between these two arms at the national and provincial levels, the separation is not so clear at sub-national government. Some authors who have contributed to the South African sub-national government discourse, such as Thornhill (2005), de Visser (2009) and Mantzaris, Pillay (2014), attribute this ambiguity to section 151(2) of the Constitution, which bestows executive and legislative authority to the municipal council. (RSA, 1996). This means there is no clear division of powers between municipal executive authority (mayors) and the councils they report to. Not only does the absence of separation of executive and legislative roles at the sub-national level limit oversight and liability, but according to de Visser (2009), it also makes it challenging to hold members of the executive, liable for their actions/lack thereof, making municipalities' a breeding ground for political interference whilst promoting strained relations between politicians and administrative officials.

Some participants noted that the lack of accountability and consequence management is a cause for concern in Emfuleni Local Municipality. Participant 1 explained that in 2016, the then-executive mayor abused his power as the

political head. “He had made himself a mass power feared by many”. According to an article in the Sunday Times Daily, “the mayor’s scandals whilst at the helm of the Municipality include suspicious transactions amounting to R2 million at the Shakespeare Inn, Vandabijlepark, using municipal security to guard his house, and submitting fraudulent financial statements for services rendered at Shakespeare Inn.” (Molothwa,2018, pg.2).
All these transgressions went unpunished. The former mayor resigned not because of the crimes but for allegations levelled against him that he sexually molested and groomed a 14-year-old in 2018.

According to Reddy, and Govender (2013), at the local government level people are concerned with furthering their political ambitions rather than promoting the interests of those they are meant to serve. Political power and individual gain are often prioritised over governance principles and values.

In several interviews with the research participants, it became apparent that a lack of trust and confidence in public office bearers in Emfuleni Local Municipality, as explained by one of the participants: “*Most of the executive authorities that have presided over Emfuleni Local Municipality have low or no formal education let alone on the municipal operations.*

4.3 Role of the strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni being placed under administration for failing to provide basic services.

This section addresses the third question of the research study: *What role did the political-administrative interface have in Emfuleni Municipality being placed under administration for its failure to provide basic services?*

“Effective delivery of public services largely depends on the mutual understanding and co-operation between executive and administrative authority” (Maserumule,2007, p.5).

4.3.1 Presentation of empirical results

4.3.1.2 Discussion of key themes

Emfuleni's local Municipality has been marred with service delivery challenges for five years. The Municipality's inability to provide basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation and refuse removal led to the provincial government placing the Municipality under administration by section 139 (1)(b). One of the participants highlighted the irony in the name Emfuleni. "*The area's name is EMFULENI, which is Zulu for River; it is in a region called SEDIBENG, which is Sotho for Well. Rand water gets water from the Vaal dam in Emfuleni to supply the province, yet Emfuleni has no water".*

Whilst many factors can affect a Municipality's ability to deliver basic services, scholars Makanyeza, Kwandayi, and Ikobe (2013) allege that poor service delivery at the sub-national level is due to poor planning, lack of monitoring and evaluation, inadequate citizen participation and corruption amongst other things. However, several participants in this study cite the strained political-administrative interface as the leading cause.

Theme 1: Governance

The continuous change in the political leadership over a short period in Emfuleni Local Municipality highlights political instability and the complex structuring of party-versus-council accountability in municipalities governed by the executive mayor system, as explained by Pieterse (2021).

Most participants agree that this political instability also leads to changes within the administration because the municipal manager's term of the contract is often linked to the executive mayor's term of the contract. Participant 2 explained *that when the tone at the top is incorrect when you do not know who the mayor or the MMC is, it creates a problem because both might have different expectations regarding service delivery priorities".*

Participant 4 feels that in some cases, you will have acting people who cannot stamp their authority because everyone sees you as someone passing by. There is a delay in signing off things, which impedes the delivery of services.

Participant 8 *reflects that "during the period under review, all section 56 management positions were vacant; the few that were not had people acting in them. These are managers who report directly to the municipal manager. Some vacant positions were basic services manager, CFO and Economic development manager".*

Several participants agree that the high vacancy rate in the Municipality was because everyone wanted a say on who gets appointed to these positions, to the detriment of service delivery.

Theme 2: Service delivery inadequacies

Conflicting priorities between politicians and administrators affect service delivery as limited municipal resources are used to fulfil both preferences.

An example of conflicting priorities between the two authorities, as explained by Participant 2, is that the *administrative leadership might view fixing the sewerage problem as a top priority. In contrast, the political leadership views fixing potholes as more pressing because he might have promised residents better roads in his campaign. To stay true to his promise, he might insist on this project being elevated at all costs, even if it was not budgeted for in the current financial year.*

Most of the participants feel that the politician would instead divert funds from a project that was planned, budgeted for, and included in the IDP to one that is not intended and budgeted for to serve their political ambitions, with Participant 8 noting that "*administrators' decision on what services to prioritise is informed by what has been agreed to by council and contained in the IDP, whereas political ambitions drive political decisions on what services to prioritise.*

Participant 10 notes that *Emfuleni has about 46 incomplete projects precisely because funds have been diverted and misused. This includes the sewer spillage in the Vaal; we had 46 pump stations, 10 of which are dysfunctional,*

and 10 still sit here unattended for the past 7, 8 years despite the intervention, precisely because the Municipality's dysfunctional state benefits the elite.

Theme 3: Cadre Deployment

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2009) explain that various municipal governance challenges are a result of cadre deployment policies. The implementation of this policy has had a negative effect on the performance of South African Municipalities. Some of the challenges brought about by this policy include financial, lack of transparency and accountability, corruption, and maladministration.

All 10 participants raised the issue of cadre deployment. Several participants felt cadre deployment strains the relationship between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality, as it is not limited to the political office but also extends to the administration.

Participant 5 explains that during Simon Molefe's tenure, 41 employees were appointed in the political office as support staff. At the end of his tenure, these employees were absorbed into the administration without any clear roles. "…*this created instability in the Municipality's organogram, as their conditions of employment were not clear".*

Participant 1 felt cadre deployment in the political office is acceptable; however, whoever gets appointed should at least have basic knowledge of the office they will occupy to do the work they have been elected to do. "*Previously, a reverend presided over Emfuleni, who did not have any political knowledge nor operational knowledge of how to run a Municipality; he interacted for the first time with the legislation in his new position. In this instance, you have a municipal manager taking advantage of the executive mayor, making him sign off on projects, only to find out that the projects are non-existent".*

Some participants felt that in Emfuleni, cadre deployment happened at junior levels. For example, participant 4 alluded that getting into the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in Emfuleni required political connections. "*Ward councillors collect Curriculum Vitaes (CVs) for Expanded Public Works*

Programme (EPWP); if you get into the programme without political connections, you must consider yourself incredibly lucky."

Cadre deployment within the administration results in appointing officials who must gain the skills and qualifications to perform their jobs. According to participants 4 and 6, *the administrative arm of the Municipality has employees with titles such as engineers, but they do not even have engineering qualifications. As a result, when a situation needs an engineer, the Municipality must outsource because the person occupying the position within the Municipality cannot perform the function.*

Similarly, Participant 4 states that the Municipality outsources most of its functions because "*most of the people appointed to perform these functions do not have the necessary skills to perform those functions.*

Cadre deployment also affects the awarding of tenders. According to Participant 4, "*Some politically affiliated people have a sense of entitlement to the tenders advertised by the Municipality, whether they meet the requirements of the projects or not. When they get the tender, they mess it up".*

Theme 3: Non-payment of services

"Based on my experience, the reality is that Emfuleni faces a massive backlog in service delivery. It was an unfortunate situation that the economy was based on the steel industry, which led to many retrenchments when the steel companies left the area, leaving scores of people unemployed; because of that, you have a Municipality that is growing in terms of the number of people, but who are indigent, and unable to pay for services. Suppose you are sitting with 56% unemployment, and those working are not necessarily earning a high income to cross-subsidise the unemployed. In that case, the ability of the Municipality to recover through tariffs from those who are working becomes a challenge", said Participant 1.

Participant 10 is agreeable and adds, "*In the case of Emfuleni, too many RDP houses were built in Emfuleni, where industries had collapsed. As a result,*

revenue generation almost came to a standstill. Because of this, you have a big problem regarding the maintenance of infrastructure, not only roads, sewerage infrastructure, water infrastructure, etc.

Theme 4: Inadequately resourced

Several participants cited a lack of funds contributing to the Municipality's inability to provide essential services. While inadequately resourced cities are well known, this challenge is often heightened by what the late former Auditor-General termed wrong hands in the till. Agreeable to this were participants 9 and 3, who noted that nothing can replace solid and ethical leadership. "*You can throw in money Emfuleni, scrap off the Eskom and Rand Water debt, but nothing will move in Emfuleni Local Municipality without strong ethical leadership. It would be best to have a team of good, ethical leaders, political and administrative leaders. Leaders who know this does not fall within my authority, so I cannot interfere. People who know that they are making decisions for the benefit of society and not for their interests".*

4.3.1.2 Response to the research question

In responding to the third question, the research interrogates the dichotomy attribute discussed previously in section 2.5.

The political-administrative dichotomy is one of the models that is often used to describe the relationship between politics and public administration. Mufanisa (2003) notes that infusing politics into the administration would impede administrative efficiency. The challenge with this model in the South African local government context is that politics form an integral part of governance. Agreeable with this is Maape (2017), who explains that an apolitical Municipality does not exist in South Africa, given that politics at the local government level are characterised by disproportionate structural power brought about by undue political interference in the administration. This undue influence often takes the form of cadre deployment within the administration. All the research participants in the study referred to the crippling effect cadre deployment had on the Municipality.

Participant 1 explains that *"there are so many officials employed by the Municipality, but you cannot put a finger on what they are employed to do. You currently have employees whose title is engineers in the system, but they do not have engineering qualifications. As a result, when an engineer is needed, the Municipality is forced to outsource the responsibility because the person in the position cannot perform the function".*

These sentiments are echoed by Twala (2014), who explains that concerns around poor service delivery at the local government level are centred around issues such as unskilled personnel and politicians who put their needs before those they are meant to serve.

Agreeable with this is Anuzu (2015), who notes that the protracted debate on the political-administrative interface is vital for countries such as South Africa, where administrators and politicians are in competition with each other and tend to assert themselves in their quest for political power at the expense of service delivery.

In several interviews with the participants, it was noted that a strained political-administrative interface harms service delivery. Therefore, the research findings show that whilst several factors affected Emfuleni Municipality's ability to deliver services, such as lack of resources and non-payment of rates and taxes, the strained political-administrative interface in the Municipality was the leading cause.

4.3.1.3 Comparison of results to similar studies

In a similar study by Ncalane (2018), which sought to investigate the effect of the political-administrative interface on service delivery in Ndwandwe Municipality in KZN, the research study found that whilst the political-administrative interface at Ndwandwe Municipality is not terrible, more needs to be done to develop it which will improve municipal efficiency.

4.4 Conclusion

This section presented the research results based on the themes emanating from the data analysis process. The results were submitted under the following statement: The nature of the interface between the politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality (Section 4.1).
The research results were presented under the following themes: separation of roles and political interference.
The results show that the political authority's lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities often led to them interfering in the administration, which resulted in the strained political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The second set of results was presented under the following statement: Factors that affect the nature of the relationship between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality (Section 4.2)
The research results were presented under the following themes: conflicting policy views and personalities and lack of trust between the politicians and administrators are factors that affect the nature of the interface between administrators and politicians in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The third and final set of results were presented under the following statement: The role played by the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality being placed under administration for failing to provide essential services (Section 4.3).
The research results were presented under the following themes: governance, service delivery inadequacies, cadre deployment, inadequately resourced, and non-payment of rates and taxes. The results found that whilst many factors can affect a Municipality's ability to deliver essential services, the strained political-administrative interface is the underlying cause.

5 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter deliberates the findings of the research in detail using the established frameworks outlined in Section 2.6, i.e. complementary and leadership models. This is done to assess what the results point to, and how they relate to existing literature on the political-administrative interface.
This research set out to demonstrate that although a municipality's ability to deliver basic services is influenced by a variety of factors, a strained political-administrative interface is the leading cause.

The results were presented under the following statements:

1. *The nature of the interface between the politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality.*
2. *Factors that affect the nature of the relationship between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality.*
3. *The role the political-administrative interface played in the Municipality being placed under administration for its failure to provide basic services.*

Section 5.1 discusses the findings on the nature of the interface between administrators and politicians in Emfuleni Local Municipality using the complementary model. This is followed by a discussion of the factors that affect the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality (Section 5.2) using the leadership model. It concludes with a discussion of the role played by the political-administrative interface in Emfuleni Local Municipality being placed under administration for its failure to provide essential services before drawing a conclusion in section 5.3.

5.1 Political-administrative interface as postulated in the complementary model

Governance appeared as one of the recurring themes of research. The participants of this study outlined that most of the councillors and other executive members had to familiarise themselves with the legislature, structures, and acts. The fact that local municipalities had members who were

unaware of how to operate the local sphere of governance showed that there would be a lack of accountability through performance audits because most of the executive was not well equipped to carry out key policies. This lack of governance hinders essential decision-making prerogatives because there is an overlapping and over-stepping of the role-players in their fulfilment of duties. One of the respondents raised how the office of the CFO was blocked from doing what he was hired to do because of political collusions.

Corruption tends to reduce pressure for policy change and weaken the governmental bureaucracy, which is regarded as functional for political institutionalisation and a lack of public accountability. The participants highlighted that administrative corruption affected the relationship breakdown between political and administrative authorities. The respondents share their awareness of the involvement of political figures in the tender procurement processes. This thoroughly explains how administrative corruption has intersected all parts of municipal governance.

The relationship between politicians and administrators in the public sector has been a general debate within the public administration field of study for many years. At the centre of the discussion is the classic political-administrative dichotomy, which, according to Wildrow Wilson (1887) and Weber (1946), is based on the idea that politics and administration are inherently different and, therefore, should be separated from each other for the successful formulation and implementation of public policies. Politicians are responsible for making policy, and administrators implement policy.

It is suggested that the Emfuleni Municipality needs help harmonising the interface between politicians and administrative officials because of an uncoordinated institutional mandate. There are often contradictions regarding the Municipality's objectives, leading to maladministration and misuse of public funds. The two authorities need a clearer understanding of their institutional structures, as failure to do so decreases their potential to produce high-quality results within the Municipal structures. Merton (1957) shared that those organisational structures shape the behaviours of the individuals and

institutions within them. Respondents shared that a tighter and more well-organized affairs system would improve their techniques and performance in their Municipality. The findings demonstrate that some of the politicians who presided over the municipality struggled to apply the separation of powers doctrine, and this led to more disorientation as political figures wanted to fulfil responsibilities that were best understood by the administrative figures. It brings one to argue that politics had gone so far in misplacing the core administrative organisation of municipalities, collapsing the Emfuleni Municipality's systems. Institutional disorientation seemed to be a distraction and plot to undermine the professional bodies and operations that were placed to ensure that this was a clean-running Municipality.

5.2 The political-administrative interface in the context of Service Delivery

Service Delivery inadequacies were highlighted as some of the causes of the interface between the political and administrative authorities by the respondents. Emfuleni Municipality has resorted to widespread corruption and maladministration and has neglected the need to prioritise the needy and vulnerable. The responses shared that the locals feel disconnected from public officials and need more trust to receive any decent service delivery. This is also heightened by the respondents who shared that the absence of consequence for those who have been found guilty of misusing government resources intended for service delivery in the municipality has led to them losing hope in Emfuleni’s woes improving. One respondent stated that for as long as there is no ethical leadership in Emfuleni, things will remain the same.

The answers also point to a significant concentration on political warfare as opposed to the social welfare of its populations. Harmonising service delivery is the need to view even the most basic services as essential for social and economic development. The respondents also shared that relaying services to political members of the Municipality only tended to exclude the administrators from fully understanding what benefits they could provide to the people of Emfuleni.

5.3 The political-administrative interface in the context of the leadership model

The findings showed an understanding of the role of both entities; the respondents are aware of their leaders' portfolios and can quickly outline their roles and responsibilities. The responses indicate that the problem is not a lack of clarity and capabilities but interference. On the contrary, the interference discredits qualified and component leaders and jeopardises the Municipality's standing. The Emfuleni Municipality is experiencing significant political interference, which weakens the leadership credibility of the institution and rewinds any efforts to build an efficient leadership force. The responses expressed the need for more proficient political leadership, contributing to the strained interface between these two role players. Emfuleni's leadership indicates a loss of technical performance and internal direction within the Municipality. Leaders are meant to define and defend an organisation's mission; with their stance and upholding those principles, the political-administrative ties become strong. According to the PSC (2016) cited in the DPME report on political-administrative stability report (2019) administrative authorities often find themselves performing a balancing act of aligning the executive authority’s pronouncements with the department’s strategic decisions (PSC,2016, p.26) which is not always feasible.

6 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises the critical facts emanating from the discussion of the research deliberations of the research report. It also provides conclusions about the summary points and responses to the study's objectives. The researcher also uses this section to discuss their general limitations in conducting this research. It concludes with an outline of recommendations for studies on the political-administrative interface that can be pursued in future in line with this study.

6.1 Summary

This research study sought to investigate the implication of the strained political-administrative interface on service delivery at Emfuleni Local Municipality. The study assessed the nature of the interface between administrators and politicians in Emfuleni Local Municipality, factors that influenced the nature of the interface, as well as the effect of the interface in the municipality being placed under administration in 2018.

The literature reviewed showed that the nature of the interface in Emfuleni is strained and this is attributed to factors such as political interference, coalitions, personality clashes, cadre deployment, the appointment of public office bearers within the administration, and the unclear separation of roles and functions of administrators and politicians amongst other things.

Reddy (2017) notes that the successful implementation of policies and service delivery depends on a cooperative, harmonious relationship between the politicians as the policy developers and the administrators as the implementing agents. The starting point in building this ideal relationship between these critical actors in the policy-making process is understanding each other’s roles and responsibilities and the factors that affect the nature of this interface.

The views of the participants indicate that whilst many factors contributed to the challenges faced by Emfuleni Municipality principle amongst these is the

strained political administrative interface which is a result of political interference in the day-to-day running of the municipality, and the side-lining of competent and skilled administrators in favour of cadre deployment has had dire consequences on service delivery. The reviewed literature also shows that most of the studies conducted on the interface are fixated on the separation of powers in local government, something De Visser (2010) argues although important, it does not outweigh the need to sensitize the relevant political and administrative authorities of the consequences their relationship with each other has on the performance of the municipality's performance and service delivery.

6.2 Conclusions

This research study explored the implication of the political-administrative interface on service delivery at sub-national government, using Emfuleni Local Government as a case study.

The findings from the first question: *What is the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality?*
The findings reflect that the nature of the relationship between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality depends on the key role-players' ability to separate their roles and responsibilities from each other. This finding is supported by Cameron (2003), who argues that the ability to separate the roles and responsibilities of the two assumes that educated and skilled people occupy both positions. This finding also complements the public administration's professionalism and separation of functions and responsibility attributes. However, as established through the data collection process of the research, the politicians at Emfuleni Local Government do not meet this requirement as they lack education and skills, as indicated by the research participants, as evidenced in their inability to distinguish their roles and those of the administrators. This research concludes that the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators is strained because of this.

The findings on the second research question: *What factors affect the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality?* Some of the factors that affect the nature of the interface between politicians and administrators include cadre deployment, political interference, and the appointment of public office bearers within the administration. Cadre deployment was mentioned by most of the research participants as the biggest influence on the strained nature of the interface. Cadre deployment was also emphasized in the Public Service Commission (2017), which states that underqualified and incompetent heads are appointed based on their political affiliation which not only heightened poor performance in the organization/department but also the delivery of services.

Furthermore, the Public Service Commission (2016) cited in the DPME report on political administrative stability (2019), states that the overlapping roles, political meddling in the day-to-day management of the municipality, prioritizing political interests over the municipal objectives and disregard of municipal officials by political heads are some of the factors that contribute to the strained political-administrative interface. (DPME report on the political-administrative stability, 2019, p.12). As established during the data collection process, some of the politicians appointed in the municipality during the period under review flouted municipal processes to get their way and prioritise their political interests over the interests of those they are meant to serve.

The findings on the third research question: *What role did the political-administrative interface have on Emfuleni Local Municipality being placed under administration for failing to provide essential services?* Although many factors can affect a Municipality's ability to provide basic services, the underlying cause is the nature of the political-administrative interface.
The findings reflect that some of the causes that contributed to Emfuleni Local Municipality's inability to provide essential services for its residents during the period under review include the municipality being inadequately resourced and non-payment of rates and taxes by residents, amongst other things, however, the main cause was the strained political-administrative interface. This view was supported by Anuzu (2015), who notes that the protracted debate on the

political-administrative interface is essential for developing countries such as South Africa, where administrators and politicians are in competition with each other and tend to assert themselves in their quest for political power at the expense of service delivery. As established during the data collection process, during the period under review, the politicians elected to make decisions on behalf of the residents put their political ambitions and personal needs before those of the electorate.

6.4 Recommendations

The following are recommendations emanating from the data analysis and capturing of the study to improve service delivery and the political-administrative interface at the local government level.

The first recommendation echoes Ncalane's (2017) suggestion that councillors, upon assumption of duty, should be trained on municipal operations and legislation to help them understand their roles and responsibilities, especially the oversight function.

Secondly, in the words of the late former Auditor-General, Kimi Makwetu, **"**not much to go around, yet not the right hands at the till**"** (MFMA, local government audit outcomes 2018/19, p.1). Data collected and analysed show that Emfuleni uses a significant portion of its budget on outsourcing services and consultants. This points to a vacuum in specialised management, which can be addressed by employing senior management with the right qualifications and skill set to do the job.

Municipal councils need to be firmer in enforcing accountability and consequence management as they need to do so to ensure service delivery and municipal administration.

Protect the municipal administration from political infiltration by ensuring that political office-bearers are not appointed within the administration. Not only does this practice blur the lines of accountability but also creates two centres

of power, particularly if the office bearer holds a senior position within the political party.

Based on the data collected and analysed, the placement of Emfuleni Local Municipality under partial administration in terms of section 139 (1)(b) for its failure to deliver services did not achieve the intended result. This is because the problematic politicians were kept in the Municipality but continued to make decisions, bypassing the administrators, and placing further strain on the political-administrative interface. In the future, the placement of a Municipality under administration must include the dissolving of the council for it to be effective.

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Appendix 1.1: Research data/information collection instrument

Name of Interviewee:

Current Position:

Number of Years in Position:

Date of Interview:

1. Briefly describe what you understand the political-administrative relationship to be.

2. In your view, what do you understand the role/function of an executive mayor (executive authority) in a municipality?

3. In your view, what do you understand the role/function of a municipal manager (administrative authority) to be in a municipality?
4. In your view, how are these roles/functions separated to ensure no interference between the authorities in the execution of their responsibilities?

5. How would you describe the nature of this relationship between these two authorities in Emfuleni Local Municipality?

6. How can a ruling party strike a balance in giving leadership to affect its policy mandate (manifesto) in a municipality on managerial and administrative matters?

7. Should senior local government officials base their decisions on technical or political criteria or both?

8. Are the politicians and administrators in Emfuleni Local Municipality executing powers and functions as stipulated by local government legislation? Can you give reasons for your answer?

9. In your view, what do you understand as a service delivery?

10. How would you describe the level of service delivery in Emfuleni Local Municipality?

11. Are the politicians and administrators of the municipality executing powers and functions as stipulated by the various pieces of local government legislation? Can you give reasons for your answer?

12. Do you have any other issues you think need addressing regarding the politics-administrative relationship in Emfuleni Local Municipality?

Appendix 1.2: Participant consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of project: **The Implication of a strained political-administrative interface on Service Delivery in Emfuleni Local Municipality**

Name of researcher: Bongo Ntshangase

I, ……..., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please tick the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this research study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the research study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview/other activity may be audio-recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I want my participation to remain anonymous (my name should not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview/other activity (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my	YES	NO

name and any personal information will not be used or passed on

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher)
…… (date)

Appendix 1.3: Consent Letter

Wits School of Governance
University of the
Witwatersrand
2 St David's Place
Johannesburg
2050

Date

Dear Councillor/Ms/Mr

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN DATA COLLECTION PROCESS FOR A MASTERS RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Bongo Ntshangase, I am a registered master's candidate with Witwatersrand University's School of Governance. I am undertaking a data collection exercise towards my research entitled "**The connotation of a strained political-administrative interface on subnational service delivery: A case of Emfuleni Local Municipality**"

The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Kambidima Wotela. The purpose of my research is to establish what role this relationship played in the municipality being placed under administration for its failure to provide basic services.

I am hereby seeking your consent to interview you as part of my data collection process.
I have attached to this letter:
(a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University;
(b) A copy of a permission letter from Emfuleni Local Municipality
(c) A copy the research instrument which I intend using to collect the data

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or me supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

- Dr Kambidima Wotela, Wits School of Governance, kambidima.wotela@wits.ac.za /0712603260
- Bongo Ntshangase bongo.mgazi@gmail.com /0760852899

Sign: _____

Appendix 1.4 Permission letter from Emfuleni Local Municipality



EMFULENI
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
Vaal River City, the Cradle of Human Rights

EMFULENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
Corporate Services / Human Resources
I certify that the goods have been received in good order and condition and / or services have been rendered satisfactorily, and that the prices are reasonable and in accordance with contract.
Received: 10/02/2023 Certified

SHARED SERVICES CLUSTER
HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
Tel: +27 16 950 5640
E-mail:solr@emfuleni.gov.za
P.O. Box 3
c/oKlasieHavenga Street and Frikkie Meyer Boulevard
VANDERBIJLPARK
1911
Web: www.emfuleni.gov.za

10 February 2023

Ref: S. Roets

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Approval to Conduct Research viz. Mr B Ntshangase.

This serves to confirm that **Mr. Bongo Ntshangase** – an employee of the Gauteng Office of the Premier -has been granted permission to conduct research at Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM)in pursuance of hisMasters in Management dissertation titled ***"The connotation of the political-administrative interface at sub-national level: A case of Emfuleni Local Municipality"***

ELM is granting*Mr. Ntshangase*access to its premises and relevant personnel in designated Departments (and related Units) for the purposes of conducting this research.
The research access will terminate automatically and immediately upon the completion of the research period as stipulated.

The general rules and regulations of the ELM Code of Good Conduct will be binding on *Mr.Ntshangase* whilst on the premises of ELM.

This includes any confidentiality obligations imposed by the research project as agreed.

Breach of any such prescripts as contained in the ELM Code of Good Conduct may result in immediate termination of the research access approval and ELM will reserve its rights to take any concomitant mitigating action where necessary.

ELM accordingly wishes *Mr.Ntshangase* well in his research endeavour.

Yours in good governance.

ELM Training Manager: Mr. S Roets

10/02/2023
Date

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Appendix 1.5 Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE **PROTOCOL NUMBER:** WSG-2023-11

PROJECT TITLE	The connotation of a strained political-administrative interface on subnational service delivery: A case of Emfuleni Local Municipality
INVESTIGATOR	Bongo Ntshangase
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	Wits School of Governance
DATE CONSIDERED	21 February 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally.
RISK LEVEL	MINIMAL RISK
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 22 February 2023 **CHAIRPERSON** Rekgotsofetse Chikane
Rekgotsofetse Chikane

cc: Supervisor:

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES