

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To achieve the aims and objectives of this study, various methods were employed as instruments for in-depth understanding of the area of study. Therefore, the research methodology of this research will be discussed under the following sub-headings as used during data collection: research design, sample and sampling, research procedure, data collection and analysis, scope of the research and ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research was conducted through the use of qualitative methods to gain relevant information. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), qualitative research refers to a generic research approach in social research according to which research takes its departure point as the insider perspective on social action. This method was chosen because of various reasons; namely, respondent's perspective/experiences is emphasized, it takes into consideration people's interpretation, it allows for flexibility, or it is manageable (no complex methods or calculations required), it does not emphasize issues such as reliability, fairness on its researches and it focuses on processes rather than outcomes. However, its limitations are that it is very subjective in nature; one cannot generalize on the basis of this method.

3.3 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

The population for this study is municipal officials. The researcher managed to interview LED unit's officials to get relevant and in-depth information. It was the aim of this study to interview Staff members of the EMM's LED unit, given the fact that the purpose of this study was to establish whether they are adequately equipped to implement their strategies and programmes, to understand the extent to which their practices and policy are aligned to national Policy Guidelines for Implementing Local Economic Development in South Africa.

3.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is important to include conceptual framework when doing any form of academic work. One of the critical chapters of this study is conceptual framework. The conceptual framework assists in terms of structuring the dissertation as well as having knowledge in terms of previous literatures. The conceptual framework entails stating the purpose of the study, inserting principles giving direction to a stud, and the definition of concepts (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). For the purpose of this study, conceptual framework will include the definition of LED, and its historical background at international and South African Context. The conceptual framework will also uncover, the theoretical base concerning the case study as well as current debates concerning municipal economic development capacity. Yin (1993) indicates that a theoretical framework is fundamental because of different reasons; firstly, it assists on the selection of case study; secondly, it gives a proper guide on what is being explored, particularly when one is undertaking an explanatory case study; thirdly, it offers an opportunity to explore different theories or perspectives when doing case study.

3.5 CASE STUDY

According to Handel (1991), case study refers to an intensive investigation of a single unit or component. This unit can differ from social groups, organizations, and institutions, events and countries. The case study was chosen on the basis of trying to get a comprehensive understanding in terms of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality's capacity in relation to LED. However, the major weakness of the case study could be that one cannot make a general conclusion based on one case study. But, at the same time, it is not the intention of this study to reach a general conclusion based on Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality's capacity with regard to LED.

Moreover, there are a variety of strategic tools that were used to accrue relevant information for this research; namely, interview schedule, documents regarding to the meetings, workshops and other activities in relation to LED unit as well as focus group. Interviews were held with LED officials, the researcher had face-to-face interviews with seven staff members individually, and telephonic interviews in the form of follow up interviews was also used. By and large, the researcher interviewed the following people to get appropriate information, primarily because they are members of staff and people who are directly involved in LED programs of the municipality: Implementation manger; Project Manager; Investment monitor; two Project officers; Contact Officer; and Ward Facilitator (see more details under appendix B).

The researcher also communicated with other staff members through emails and faxes. The main aim of using emails and faxes was to get electronic documents, hard copies (fax), to arrange appointments, as well as communicating with those that one could not manage to secure

appointments with. Nevertheless, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001), qualitative interviews refer to an interaction between a researcher and respondent. The researcher has to have a general plan of enquiry but not necessarily specific set of question that respondent has to answer. In this case, the researcher's general plan was to interview the respondents in relation to the capacity of the municipality in facilitating LED.

One focus group was chosen for this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001:292) made it very clear that "focus groups are useful because they tend to allow a space in which people may get together and create a meaning among themselves, rather than individually. Moreover, advantages of focus groups are that they give researcher an opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a particular topic in a limited period; they also give direct evidence in terms of similarities and differences in participant's opinions. However, one major weakness in terms of using focus groups is that those that are in high position within the organisations might dominate others, or those that are in lower position might feel intimidated to express their genuine views. Furthermore, a variety of documents regarding to the meetings, workshops and other activities in relation to LED unit were used. The main reason for this was to get information regarding to their progress, especially information that was not provide during interviews.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The researcher chose to use a case study for the purpose of this research. This is because case study investigates the contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, it gives a space to investigate and focus more in depth on the study. It's an explorative study, which is aimed at getting in-depth analysis of the subject matter. Case studies cannot be generalized because they can be subjective. However, the rationalization for using case

study is to get the realistic information regarding the experiences of the LED officials dealing with issues pertaining to local economic development. Institutional challenges can be universal in most instances, thus the case study will represent some of the general experiences experienced by other municipality nationwide.

Semi-structured questions were employed during the collection of data to allow flexibility of the conversation. Questions were at the same time "open ended questions", whereby the respondents were providing their own answer to the questions. This was also encouraging or allowing flexibility, as respondents felt free to the extent that they were even introducing issues that interviewer would not have thought of or asked about them. However, other information is derived from,

In terms of data analysis, the researcher will analyze by organizing it into categories based on themes or concepts, which will directly answer the main question. The research findings are also organized in terms of major themes and concepts, which emerged during interviews. Themes are crucial with regard to reflecting views and issues raised by interviewees.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Time will be one of the limitations for this study. Respondents were municipal officials who often busy or out for meetings. It was difficult to secure an appointment with them. The researcher did not interview some of the officials because of time constraints, and for this reason, the researcher had to use other resources such as email as an alternative mode of communication. There was also a lack of published literature concerning the area of local economic development capacity because LED is still new in South Africa.

The results of this research will be difficult to reach a generalized conclusion because it is a case study. The conclusion of the study will only be limited to local government, with a strong focus on Local Economic Development (LED) Unit. Nonetheless, the issue of generalization is not that problematical because the main objective is not to generalize, but to reflect on a number of the challenges featuring in EMM's LED unit and also to suggest recommendations specific to the main context.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In terms of ethical issues, the researcher ensured that respondents are informed about the objective of the study, and was also frank that this is for academic purposes only. The researcher also promised to make copies of the findings available for respondents if required. Moreover, the researcher pledged not disclose the names of the participants if they are not willing to be named in the final report, anonymous responses will be used in the report.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapter discussed research procedures, which were deployed when this study was undertaken. To mention but few things that this study applied, the study used various literature, ranging from books, journal articles, academic articles, policies and constitution. It also used interviews whereby municipal officials of EMM were interviewed. Therefore, the main objectives of the next chapter are to present findings as well as analyzing them. Nevertheless, this research is qualitative.