Pragmatic implementation and promotion of good governance principles in realizing Sustainable Development Goal Six (6) in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to uncover the ongoing challenges that South African municipalities are confronted with in realizing SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and also explore common good governance principles for sustainable development. To realize SDG 6, good governance principles should be promoted and pragmatically implemented. This is a conceptual article which assesses secondary data covering SDG 6 challenges and good governance principles. Existing literature was systematically reviewed from Google Scholar, online newsletters, and other databases from May–July 2022. Secondary data was analyzed using a Thematically Content Analysis (TCA) approach. The theoretical findings of this article show that there is growing concern about attaining SDG 6 due to the bad or weak governance practices in SA. In SA, progress on good governance has been encouraging, but challenges remain. Thus, this article recommends good and inclusive governance because, without it, SA will not achieve its socio-economic goals, like SDG 6. If SA is to achieve its development goals, it must establish mechanisms that promote constitutionalism, accountability, democracy, and good governance. Weak governance, which is characterized by corruption, bribery, mismanagement, and lack of public involvement, transparency, and accountability, should be addressed. SA should have sound governance that is responsive to community needs and fights toward the achievement of the localized SDGs.

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Introduction

In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which comprises seventy (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Those goals were grounded in the principle of leaving no one behind. The new agenda focuses on an all-inclusive approach to realizing sustainable development for all. Goal 6 of sustainable development mandates that all nations provide safe drinking water and sanitation to their communities. The pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has created several backlogs in achieving this aim, particularly in poor countries like SA that are struggling to provide safe drinking water to their populations.

According to Zindi & Shava (2022:1), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are intended to end poverty, eradicate inequality and injustice, combat climate change, etc. within predetermined timeframes, were established or adopted by the United Nations in 2016. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which established 25-year global development goals for signatory governments in 1990, served as the SDGs’ indicators. Governments across the world, including South Africa, have to split the proportion of people without sustained access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation (SDG 6) according to one of the MDGs. The installation of an upgraded sanitary facility in homes is one of the indicators used to monitor development. Naturally, water is a scarce commodity in Africa (Mamokhere, Kgobe & Chauke, 2021). According to the World Health Organization (2020), about 238 million people in Africa live in informal settlements or communities, which are characterized by a shortage or lack of clean drinkable water.
water. This shortage has made it challenging to even follow the COVID-19 pandemic regulations, which are meant to stop the virus from spreading quickly. As a result, the virus spread quickly across Africa, endangering millions of people. For instance, in South Africa and Malawi, the government has begun to supply its citizens with clean water and sanitation by building tanks and dams to provide enough water supplies for numerous towns (Yanow & Good, 2020). This is evidence that many African countries are devoted to realizing the SDGs, especially SDG 6.

In South Africa (SA), metros, districts and local municipalities are faced with numerous challenges when it comes to the provision of clean water and sanitation pre-and-during the occurrence of the coronavirus, commonly known as the COVID-19 pandemic. During COVID-19, there were delays in the supply and distribution of water tankers to various municipalities (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). Similarly, Mabeba (2022:181), indicates that COVID-19 has undeniably exposed service delivery challenges that communities are still confronted with. The media showed some of the areas around South Africa that were still struggling to have access to a clean and reliable water supply at the beginning of the lockdown. This was amply proven when some citizens argued that they could not afford to stay in their homes while having to fetch water in other neighbouring areas using cars, donkey carts, and wheelbarrows. Moreover, Yanow & Good (2020), cited in Zindi et al. (2022), opined that the attainment of SDGs has been threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic globally, which has severely affected the livelihoods of people in various unprecedented ways”.

This article intends to uncover the SDG 6 governance challenges in the South African context and also explore the implementation and promotion of the good governance principles for realizing sustainable development. Thus, to realize the aim of this article, the author will outline the following sections: the problem statement, the literature survey, and the research methodology; and conclude by providing recommendations based on the theoretical findings. The next section below outlines the problem statement.

Zindi et al. (2022), state that goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mandates that all nations provide safe drinking water and sanitation to their communities. Although SDGs are not legally binding, they must be localized to each nation's objectives. However, it is of utmost importance that each nation attains the SDGs. For instance, this goal 6 is also associated with the provision of Chapter 7 on local government of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The constitution mandates that municipalities must provide services to all citizens in a sustainable manner. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and other issues have created several obstacles to achieving this aim, particularly in poor countries like South Africa that are struggling to provide safe drinking water to their populations.

With that being stated, the author of this article argues there are many challenges associated with a shortage of clean drinking water and sanitation and it is not only about natural challenge” or scarcity as indicated in the study by Mamokhere, Kgobe & Chauke (2022). Some or most of the challenges are associated with local government governance and poor management practice. Bishoge (2021); Pichdara, Monin, Marong, Sivmuy & Saren, (2022), implies that there is an overuse of water service; increasing demand as the population grows; water pollution; poor management, unethical leadership, lack of infrastructure and competent staffing; and changes in weather patterns due to global warming are key stressors that affect the availability of freshwater across the world”.

In Limpopo province, South Africa, the Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation explained that a major struggle is budget constraints, which have resulted in some projects running behind schedule and some incomplete. It identified the lack of maintenance of the infrastructure as a key challenge, despite municipalities being given a maintenance budget.

The political environment is challenging on the ground, and it noted challenges with traditional leaders, councillors, and communities. The Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation further noted the difficulty in retaining experienced engineers. The current system is not ideal for smaller municipalities as they cannot afford to retain professionally qualified engineers. Instead, they rely on outsourcing because their staff responsible for water purification and distribution are less qualified and older, and there is no retrenchment policy”.

There are growing concerns in South Africa in terms of the provision of clean water and sanitation. Scholars and civil society practitioners opine that the challenges of providing clean water service are beyond human control, while others claim that the challenge has to do with poor management and unethical conduct in local government. Thus, it is clear that achieving SDG 6 and other SDGs will not be easy in South Africa. Therefore, it is vital to implement and promote good governance practices in South Africa. Ethical and effective leaders should be deployed in all South African municipalities to realize sustainable governance and sustainable development.

The research question to be answered in this article is does sustainable development require good governance?” It is clear that many South African municipalities are led by corrupt and unethical people with no integrity, competence, and sound policy-making as shown in the media, and this can delay the realization of SDG 6 in South Africa. Mamokhere et al. (2021); Mabeba (2022) have indicated that many communities in Limpopo province, South Africa, still struggle with access to clean water due to poor management or mismanagement of funds for water projects. Thus, this article will uncover the good governance principles that should be put into practice to attain sustainable development in South Africa.

To achieve the purpose of this article, this article relied extensively on secondary data or materials (e.g. journal articles, newspaper articles, reports, legislative documents, and online documents). A qualitative research approach was adopted to uncover the good governance principles and challenges faced by the South African municipalities in the attainment of SDG 6. Specifically, Thematic...
Content Analysis (TCA) was embraced in this project. This assisted in reviewing all the obtained secondary data that are relevant to the theme under investigation. The TCA approach is mostly used in qualitative research as opposed to quantitative, which focuses on statistics. Mamokhere & Mabila (2021:92), argue that a qualitative research design that advocates document review enables in-depth scrutiny of the relevant literature to authentically and fundamentally understand phenomena. It is this belief that motivated the choice of this approach in order to understand different good governance principles that can be used to achieve SDG 6. In this case, existing literature was systematically reviewed and synthesized from different database such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Sabinet and Wos etc. This process involved the exploration of peer-reviewed journal publications, books, legislative documents, policies, newspapers, opinion pieces available on the Internet and other materials from May to July 2022. The following themes guided the systematic review of literature:

i. Conceptualization of Good Governance and Sustainable Development
ii. South Africa and the Sustainable Development Goal Six
iii. Governance Challenges of Realizing SDG 6 in South Africa
iv. Putting Good Governance Principles in Practice for Sustainable Development in South Africa

The next section focusses on the literature survey. The above themes guide the flow and the attainment of the objectives of this article.

**Literature Review**

This section uncovers a literature review related to good governance principles and sustainable development in South African context.

**Conceptualization of Good Governance and Sustainable Development**

The academic literature on governance, good governance, and sustainable development governance has grown rapidly. On the other hand, apart from the universal acceptance of its prominence, differences prevail in respect of theoretical formulations, policy prescriptions, and conceptualization of the subject itself, and no one can claim ownership of the definition of the concept of governance. Governance traditionally implies, the act or process of governing. However, modern theories have expanded the implications, concentrating on a large variety of instruments developed to channel the behaviour of individuals and collective actors (Loorbach, 2007; Adger & Jordan, 2009). Thus, the United Nations Development Program (1997) comprehends governance as the exercise of economic, political, and administrative power to manage a country's affairs at all levels”. It includes mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, and fulfill their participation, rule of law, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision. The concept of governance has also been interpreted in connection with regional sustainable development policy-making as stated (Berger, 2003) or in connection with the rule of law as indicated by Sachiko & Durwood (2005).

The European Commission (2001) defines principles of good governance by stating that the following elements are crucial to a complete understanding of governance: transparency, public participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. While the World Bank (1992) states that governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic resources for development”. Similarly, the study by Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi (2006) indicates a set of aggregate governance indicators based on: access to voice and accountability; lack of political instability and violence; minimum government effectiveness; existing regulatory burden, the rule of law, concrete and visible efforts to eliminate bribery and corruption in the provision of SDG 6 in South Africa. No matter its approach and interpretation, there is an international consensus on the need to promote good governance as a foundation for development.

The challenge facing all societies is to strengthen institutions, processes, and mechanisms that enable the full participation of citizens in setting an agenda for sustainable development. Diversity can only be manifested through the mechanism of democracy, which allows people's voices to be heard and conflicting interests to be peacefully resolved (Wijkman, 1998). Good governance is also based on the conviction that a system placing sovereignty in the hands of the people is more likely to invest in the people, channeling public resources to basic education, health care, and clean water and sanitation facilities. Poverty and the water crisis cannot be eradicated without such investments, and sustainable development will never be realized. Upholding the rule of law to bring security and predictability to social, political, and economic affairs is a cornerstone of good governance. Besides the demand for accountability in public affairs, efforts to promote transparency and openness, decentralization, and an increased role for civil society (Mamokhere et al., 2021).

The concept of sustainable development has been criticized in various ways. Gaghman (2020:174) opines that although the concept of sustainable development may be newly understood, it does not represent a pure modern, but it has existed since ancient times, as the reality of the emergence of this concept is linked to the production systems and consumption models used and resulting in obvious damage to scarce resources and biological and cultural diversity. The cost of neglecting the environment and irrational resources exploitation is so high for the current generation and more for the future generations. Thus, UNESCO (2015) defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. While, Gaghman (2020:175) also share the same sentiment that sustainable development is defined as to
meet the basic needs of people today without ruining the chances of future generations to do the same. However, sustainable development means different things to different people.

South Africa and Sustainable Development Goal (6) Six

Matona (2019:17), indicates that the 2030 Agenda’s SDGs have been very well received in South Africa since their adoption by the Heads of State and governments in September 2015. South Africa played a prominent role globally and on the African continent in guiding the process and negotiating the SDGs’ adoption. Furthermore, South Africa’s former First Lady, Ms Graca Machel, served on the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons, and South Africa’s former Statistician-General, Pali Lehohla, led the African team under the African Union banner in formulating the indicators for the African Common Position. South Africa is therefore regarded as one of the nine countries that are movers of the SDGs, leading and showcasing the way that SDGs domestication is being implemented. StatSA (2017a). The National Development Plan (NDP) recognises that water and sanitation services are cross-cutting issues and necessary enablers for addressing poverty, unemployment, inequality and economic growth. As such, the water agenda macro planning for economic-infrastructure-socio-environmental balance needs to be entrenched in the planning phases of all 28 government departments. The linkage between water provision and economic upliftment within the different sectors must also be clearly understood as a means of increasing the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) performance. Matona (2019) and StatSA (2017), further imply that the alignment of the NDP to SDG 6 is demonstrated through what the NDP envisages by 2030. For instance, the NDP implies the following in relation to SDG 6:

i. “All main urban and industrial centres need to have a reliable water supply to meet their needs, while increasing efficient agricultural water use will support productive rural communities.

ii. “Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSA) to be protected to prevent excessive extraction and pollution. The SWSA can be described as the country’s most important water source as it supplies the highest volume of water to the county’s demand”.

The implementation of the NDP is guided by the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. For instance, in South Africa, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, places a duty on the national government, in cooperation with other spheres of government, to make sure that the limited water resources are used to improve the quality of life for the people of South Africa. The Bill of Rights further provides for the right of every citizen to a healthy life, access to food and water, and to have the environment protected (RSA, 1996).

In South Africa, the provision of safely managed drinking water services has improved from (77%) in 2015 to (80%) in 2017. However, rural and urban statistics indicate that only (67%) of the rural population had access to safely managed water services in 2017, while (87%) of the urban population received safe water services. This indicates that there are water service provision disparities between rural and urban areas (StatSA, 2017a; StatSA, 2017b & Matona, 2019). However, some scholars, such as Zindi et al. (2022) and Mabeba (2022), indicate that the provision of clean drinking water is still a challenge in rural areas. They argue that the COVID-19 pandemic is evident that many municipalities are still unable to achieve the constitutional mandate. Mabeba (2022) clearly stated that the Covid-19 Lockdown in South Africa is a reminder that some communities are still brawling to have access to clean and constant water supply”. Based on the argument, the author further shares the same sentiment that indeed water supply in rural areas in South Africa is still a concern. Corruption is the root of most of the challenges in Africa and South Africa. Many countries, particularly African countries, appear to have more corruption in procurement than elsewhere. These findings are similar to those of the study, conducted by Mamabolo in 2013, where she argued that Municipal Service Partnerships (MSPs) are seen as a channel for corruption and cronyism instead of a mechanism for improving service delivery. Through observation and public knowledge, many tenders or bids for borehole systems in Limpopo province are still incomplete due to corrupt awarding. There is no accountability for the incomplete boreholes that are not even providing water service (Mantzaris, 2014, cited in Mamokhere, Mabeba, & Kgobe, 2022:65). Mothetha, Nkuna & Mema (2013) suggest that the discrepancies exist because rural municipalities often lack the capacity, infrastructure, skills, and ethical and effective leaders required to support water service provision. For instance, the 2017 indication above shows that 70% of the national population had access to basic sanitation services as compared to 67% in 2015. Progress in the reduction of sanitation backlogs is being hampered by infrastructure related challenges, such as lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and ageing infrastructure as a result of poor operation and maintenance, besides the utilization of sanitation infrastructure beyond the design capacity” (Matona, 2019:18).

With that being said, it can be affirmed that South Africa has adopted the implementation of the SDGs by localizing them through the NDP. What is lacking currently is the promotion of effective governance principles when implementing the SDGs. South African municipalities have to deploy ethical and effective leadership with integrity and a high standard of professional ethics. The next section outlines the governance challenges that the South African municipalities as the implementers of SDG 6 encounter.

Challenges of Good Governance in Realizing SDG 6

In South Africa, many issues hamper the attainment of sustainable development goals. One of the challenges is the lack of public participation in strategic planning and budgetary governance. Thus, the lack of public participation, as discovered by many studies, such as the study conducted by Fourie & van der Waldt (2021), Mamokhere & Meyer (2022), and Sibanda & Luens (2021), indicates that there is a continuous lack of community involvement in the municipal strategic planning known as an integrated development plan, and this affects the prioritization of the provision of services such as the supply of constant water service. Again, Rameli
(2021:717), indicates that public participation in development planning is a failure. This has led to difficulties in making balanced development decisions due to the lack of feedback on the wants and needs of the citizens on development in their area. Rameli (2021:715) also shows the significance of public participation as one of the effective governance principles and constitutional basic principles governing public administration in South Africa. He indicated that participation is a great opportunity for society to play a part in shaping and influencing the objective and direction of future developments. Public participation is required in every stage of development planning to ensure the effectiveness of the planning system. As a result, it is critical for information about publicity and public participation to reach a targeted group via an accessible broadcasting method that is compatible with today.” In terms of achieving goals such as SDG 6 and others, public participation involves the entire development process that requires the public to participate directly in order to determine the direction of desired development (Samah, 2002; Rameli, 2021).

Newport & Jawahar (2003) argue that an effective development plan cannot be carried out without the participation of the target group. Another challenge that impacts negatively on the realization of SDG 6 is the lack of accountability of public officials and politicians tasked with the responsibility of ensuring basic service delivery such as water, electricity, refuse removal, and roads. Through observation, the authors of this article argue that there are many unfinished or incomplete water projects, especially in Limpopo Province, without holding responsible service providers and authorities accountable. For instance, Limpopo's Lepelle Northern Water wasted R9 million in incomplete water boreholes and the official escaped in Mashamothane village after an investigative report found that the water board paid for work that was not done,” according to City Press (2020). It is only fair that the shortages of water in Limpopo province can be blamed largely on corruption and mismanagement in water boards and municipalities. Van Zyl (2019), indicates that the problems in municipalities are continuing and, to make matters worse, no culture seems to exist where individuals are held responsible for transgressing laws. Municipalities are also using consultants, at a huge cost to taxpayers, to try and get their books in order retroactively, instead of implementing regular controls. These were some of the discoveries of the late Auditor-General (AG), Kimi Makwetu, in his consolidated general report on the local government audit outcomes.

Van Zyl (2019), stated that the AG was very critical of the role of leadership in the municipalities and their reluctance to address deficiencies in the internal control mechanisms. He pointed out that municipalities are not adhering to legislation, are not preventing unauthorized expenditures, and are not complying with supply-chain-management prescripts. Thus, it is evident that the deteriorating accountability for financial and performance management is not being addressed, as there are no consequences for those who fail to comply with legislation”.

According to Zindi et al. (2022), a lack of accountability in water provision programs for underprivileged communities is detrimental to achieving SDG 6. Christopher (2015) identifies the lack of transparency and accountability measures in various South African municipalities as triggering inequalities and distracting municipal efforts from providing clean water and sanitation to the communities in need. In another study, Sibanda & Lues (2021) lament the lack of accountability measures in municipalities that affect the effective delivery of goods and services to satisfy human needs. For instance, in South Africa, Sibanda & Lues (2021) denounce rampant corruption in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, which may adversely affect the provision of clean water and sanitation to communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The absence of strong control systems and institutional cultures for accountability triggers service delivery backlogs and deters the attainment of SDG 6 amidst the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, it is clear that there are growing concerns, especially about corporate governance. There is unethical conduct by leadership, corruption, and mismanagement of funds (Mamokhere, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many countries to undermine their governance protocols, especially in the procurement of essential services. Many tenders have been awarded without following due policies and procedures (Mmolkhere, Mabeba & Kgobe, 2022).

Phakeng (2022), also highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted sustainable development goals. Phakeng (2022) has emphasized how the COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on institutional and international collaboration in South Africa. COVID-19 has set us back as a community, country, and continent, and it is going to take collaboration on multiple levels to get back on track with the United Nations sustainable development goals”. Phakeng (2022), indicates that collaboration has been affected and further promotes those countries across the globe and municipalities should work together to overcome the dire pandemics such s climate change, poverty and lack of access to clean drinking water.

The importance and the challenges of collaboration were also noted in the article by Mamokhere, Mabeba & Kgobe (2022), who attempted to comprehend the contemporary challenges municipalities face in effectively implementing municipal service partnerships”. In their arguments, it was found that when the national lockdown was put in place by the state president Cyril Ramaphosa on the 26th of March 2020, many South African municipalities were and still are pushed to look for assistance from their partners in the private sector to help with addressing the challenges, imposed by the pandemic, especially, service delivery backlogs. Municipalities are entering into service contracts with the private sector for the provision of basic services that are deemed essential in terms of the national lockdown regulations. In curbing the spread of the virus in their communities, municipalities extended their efforts by commonly cooperating with private partners. For instance, most municipalities went to the extent of collaborating with private partners and other government agencies like Rand Water for the provision of water and water tanks at different schools and communities across the provinces”. 

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Lastly, another challenge that hinders South Africa in the realization of SDG 6 is the shortage of qualified or professional staff in the municipalities. Municipalities rely on outsourcing, which is expensive. Cloete et al. (2016:1), Skills development in South African municipalities is in a potential crisis. The research finding by Cloete et al. (2016) suggests that there are incompetent or unskilled personnel in municipalities who cause poor service delivery. In conclusion, it can be affirmed that indeed the major causes of poor service delivery (e.g. water and sanitation) are councillor interference and political manipulation, corruption and lack of accountability and transparency, inadequate citizen participation, poor human resource policies, failure to manage change, lack of employee capacity, poor planning, and poor monitoring and evaluation,” as indicated by Makanyeza, Kwandayi, & Ikobe (2013:1). Thus, the key approaches to increasing sustainable service delivery can be increasing community participation in municipal affairs through partnership or collaboration with the communities and promoting good governance principles.

Based on the discussion aforementioned, it can be affirmed that the challenges that municipalities face are corporate governance practices. It is found that there is a lack of public participation, ineffective collaboration or partnership, and a lack of accountability, mismanagement, and corruption. Lastly, it is found that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted municipal operations by forcing municipal officials to award tenders without following procurement policies and procedures. It is further noted that a shortage of skilled personnel has a negative impact on service delivery, such as SDG 6.

Analysis of the above arguments, therefore, shows that to realize SDG 6 amid the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, municipalities must maintain and promote transparency and accountability, which are vital elements in guaranteeing that funds meant to provide clean water projects are utilized for the intended purpose without any unnecessary deviations. However, the next section focuses on the implementation and promotion of effective governance principles for realizing SDG 6 in South Africa.

Putting Good Governance Principles in Practice for Realizing Sustainable Development

In fulfillment of the above-discussed challenges, it is found by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019), that the municipalities, public and private sectors play an important role in the realization of all SDGs. However, public sector reforms required to attain the SDGs persist as a key challenge in many countries, such as South Africa, due to ineffective governance principles. To address the challenges concretely, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019); IASIA (2022); & Bouckaert, Chawdhry, Fraser-Moleketi, Meuleman & Pizani (2018), opines that several key principles of effective governance have been developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) of the (United Nations, 2018) to promote effective governance for sustainable development. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019), directly stated that the essential purpose of these voluntary principles is to provide practical, expert guidance to interested countries in a broad range of governance challenges associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019); IASIA (2022); & Bouckaert et al. (2018), indicate that the need for effectiveness has been emphasized, namely competence, sound policymaking, and collaboration. Another critical focus area is accountability, with integrity, transparency, and independent oversight being the critical elements. The focus on inclusiveness underscores the notion of leaving no one behind through non-discrimination; participation; subsidiarity, and intergenerational equity, which are imperative for the sustainability of future generations”.

The author of this article argues that practically applying the endorsed eleven (11) principles of effective governance and related strategies to all public institutions can strengthen local, provincial, and national governance abilities to realize the 2030 Agenda and other international agreements.

Figure 1 depicts these principles in order to help understand their implications and pragmatic contribution.

![Figure 1: SDGs Effective Governance Principles; Source: Author (2022)](image-url)
The United Nations team of experts has developed 11 principles to guide the achievement of SDGs in order to assist countries around the world in developing and building strong public institutions for the realization of sustainable development goals such as water and sanitation, which is goal 6. Different good governance principles are discussed below in an attempt to respond to the problem statement question of concern, which is: does sustainable development require good governance?

**Accountability**

The first governance principle to be uncovered in this article is accountability. The article argues that public institutions, especially in South Africa, have to appoint responsible public officials with good ethical conduct, honesty, and openness. Accountability is divided into three elements, namely integrity, transparency, and independent oversight, as shown in figure 1 above. According to Ubisi (2018) cited in Kgobe et al. (2021:3), accountability is taking responsibility for your actions, accepting consequences, and learning and improving from them. Accountability as a constitutional mandate is one of the mechanisms that promote good governance globally for sustainable development. Equally, the Council of Europe (2022) implies that accountability has to do with all decision-makers, collective and individual, taking responsibility for their decisions. Their decisions are reported on, explained, and can be sanctioned. There are effective remedies against maladministration and against actions of local authorities which infringe civil rights. Lastly, Makanya, Kwandayi, & Ikobe (2013:4), indicate that accountability in the provision of public services pertains to the political, bureaucratic, and commercial sectors. It refers to the process of placing certain people in a position to make decisions as well as the system of punishment and reward consequent on the acts made by officials. From the South African perspective, Munzhedzi (2016) opined that public accountability is a constitutional prerequisite in all three spheres of government.

The prerequisite is mandated by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which is the supreme law of the country. Realizing sustainable service delivery in South African municipalities as enshrined by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and SDGs can be achieved only if good governance is implemented and promoted in public institutions. Roy (2016:209), implies that good governance ensures and promotes participation of all the actors in society in achieving equity, transparency, greater accountability, pluralism, and the vibrating rule of law with a true democratic spirit, which may only curb corruption, violence, and poverty, etc. effectively. Thus, below are some of the principles which serve to address accountability in relation to the achievement of SDGs;

**Integrity, transparency and independent oversight**

Integrity is the discipline of being truthful and demonstrating a steadfast and unwavering devotion to high moral and ethical standards. According to Banerjee (2020), integrity is defined in ethics as being honest, true, or accurate in one’s activities. Thus, to serve in the public interest, public officials are to discharge their official duties honestly, fairly, and in a consistent manner with the soundness of moral principles. This is about the promotion of anti-corruption policies, practices, and bodies, codes of conduct for public officials, competitive public procurement, elimination of bribery and trading in influence, conflict of interest policies, whistle-blower protection, and the provision of adequate remuneration and equitable pay scales for public officials (Bouckaert et al. 2018 & United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). It can be argued that King Codes like King Code IV also promote the role of ethical and effective leadership with integrity. Hence, today’s leaders must deliver seamless strategy and operational excellence. This leadership role encompasses: providing direction to organizations through strategy; giving effect to that strategy through the development of appropriate policies; providing oversight over management’s implementation of the strategy and demonstrating accountability and transparency through disclosure. The discharge of these duties and the adoption of the King IV code, provide an organization with the necessary building blocks for a sound foundation of good governance. Transparency is a vital principle in the public sector. Thus, it should also be promoted and implemented in line with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to realize SDG 6. The term transparency, according to Alma'arif & Wargadinata (2022:23), refers to the practice of guaranteeing people’s freedom to obtain information about policies, right from formulation to evaluation. Transparency is also related to the government's efforts to enhance active community participation in the public policy process, including development planning (Da Cruz et al., 2016; Alma'arif et al. 2022). Also, Chiyamwaka (2007) outlines transparency as an act of ensuring that information is available that can be used to measure the authorities' performance and to guard against any possible misuse of power. Transparency in democratic governance can also mean honesty and openness.

Equally, Bouckaert et al. (2018) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019), indicate that to ensure accountability and enable public scrutiny, institutions are to be open and candid in the execution of their functions and promote access to information, subject only to the specific and limited exceptions as are provided by law. Examples are proactive disclosure of information, budget transparency, open government data, registries of beneficial ownership, and lobbying registries. From a South African perspective, transparency has to be promoted as stated by many pieces of legislation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, provides a chapter on the values and principles of public administration. This chapter demands that there should be transparency in all the services that are provided by the state organs. This paves the way for decisions to be taken which should be informed by rules and regulations. As per chapter two of the Bill of Rights, the information should be made available to anyone who wants to access it. This includes the concept of consultation, which forms the basis of governance (Mamokhere, 2020). The last principle that addresses accountability is independent oversight. To maintain trust in government, oversight agencies must act solely on professional grounds, separate from and unaffected by others (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). Commonly used strategies include the promotion of the independence of regulatory agencies such as the Auditor-General and
Corruption Watch. These institutions are often regarded as mechanisms that ensure accountability, as indicated by Kgobe et al. (2021) in their conceptual study. Kgobe et al. (2021) indicate that the Chapter 9 institutions such as the Auditor-General are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the government is accountable for its financial decisions.

**Effectiveness**

According to Gaghman (2020:179), effectiveness mainly refers to management efficiency. It has two essential meanings: rational administrative structure, scientifically designed administrative procedures and flexible administrative activities; and minimized administrative costs. The higher the level of good governance is, the higher the effectiveness of administration will be. In South Africa, public administration should be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. In terms of section 195 (1) (b), a public administrator should utilize government resources in an efficient, effective, and economic manner (Mamokhere, Musitha, & Netshiedzivhani, 2021:5). To realize sustainable development, municipalities need to be effective in rendering services such as fresh water and sanitation facilities. Thus, Roy (2016:9), indicates that sustainable governance can be used as an effective tool to face global challenges as still, a large chunk of the population of the world is fighting hunger, poverty, and basic amenities of life, i.e., food, clothes, shelter, water, health facilities, and sanitation, coupled with horrible environmental degradation. As shown in figure 1, some of the principles that serve to address effectiveness in relation to SDG achievement are as follows;

**Competence, Sound Policy-Making and Collaboration**

It is found in this article that the South African municipalities are challenged with a service delivery backlog due to poor human resource policies, lack of competence and skilled personnel. Therefore, the government should ensure that it only deploys individuals who are skilled and competent with recognized professional qualifications. Therefore, Bouckaert et al. (2018), indicate that the government should deploy personnel who can perform their functions effectively. They further indicated that institutions should have sufficient expertise, resources, and tools to deal adequately with the mandates under their authority. Commonly used strategies include promotion of a professional public sector workforce, strategic human resources management, leadership development and training of civil servants, performance management, results-based management, financial management and control, efficient and fair revenue administration, and investment in e-government.

The Council of Europe (2022), implies that the professional skills of those who deliver governance should be continuously maintained and strengthened to improve their output and impact. Public officials should be motivated to continuously improve their performance so that they can achieve SDG 6. Practical methods and procedures ought to be created and used to transform skills into capacity and to produce better SDGs”. Also, sound policy-making ought to be promoted and implemented effectively. For South African municipalities to achieve their intended results, their public policies must be rational and clear with one another and founded on true or well-established grounds, in full accordance with fact, reason and good sense. This regards strategic planning and foresight, regulatory impact analysis, promotion of coherent policymaking, strengthening national statistical systems, monitoring and evaluation systems, science-policy interfaces, risk management frameworks, and data sharing (Bouckaert et al., 2018; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).

To promote effectiveness in municipalities, it is advisable to enter into collaboration either with communities, non-government organizations, or business groups. Thus, the last principle that addresses effectiveness is collaboration. Lai (2011) and Alma'arif et al. (2022), see collaboration as mutually beneficial cooperation in coordination to solve common problems. In other words, collaboration is the mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve a problem together. Collaborative interactions are characterized by shared goals, asymmetry of structure, and a high degree of negotiation, interaction, and interdependence “. Similarly, according to O'Donnell (2012:12), collaboration is defined as an intentional, collective approach to address public problems or issues through building shared knowledge, designing innovative solutions, and forging consequential change. When used strategically, collaboration has a positive impact: stakeholders committed to policy or program change, and individuals and organizations' capacity to work effectively together “.

For South African municipalities to address socio-economic challenges such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and lack of clean water and sanitation facilities, the government should strengthen the municipal service partnership in a collaborative approach. Local government is confronted with a high level of complexity and has many challenges that must be addressed. The need for collaborative planning and practice is important to support the required standard of performance (GGLN, 2017:11). Currently, the public sector engages in partnerships to strike a balance between conformance and performance, to overcome the challenges they are faced with and to enhance their capacity and ability to improve service delivery (Bayne, Schepis & Purchase, 2017). Tauté (2021:1), indicates that by involving the government, the private sector, or the voluntary sector, a collaborative partnership can place the government in a position to strategically deliver services by leveraging the stakeholder's core competencies and resources to address the failure of government and optimize the creation of social value.

The reliance on the expertise of public officials and external stakeholders places a collaborative partnership in a unique position to improve the quality of services by actively selecting and managing stakeholders' interdependencies and differences. Also, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) states that to address problems of common interest, institutions in all spheres of government and all sectors ought to work together and cooperatively with non-governmental actors towards the same goal,
purpose, and effect. While Mamokhere & Meyer (2022) indicate in South African municipalities, collaboration can be promoted through public participation during development planning. Municipalities in South Africa are encouraged to foster active public participation in municipal affairs in terms of the Municipal Systems Act, Municipal Structures Act and Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Furthermore, to reduce service delivery backlogs, South African municipalities must be innovative by collaborating with private sectors, as demonstrated by the municipal service partnership in the White Paper on Local Government, 1998. Lastly, O’Donnell (2012) clearly states that strategic collaboration is a good governance principle which offers participating actors a way to achieve their goals (SDG 6) and objectives in cost-effective and innovative ways. Collaborative partnerships can improve service delivery (SDG 6) in South African local government (Tauté, 2021).

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness is addressed by five principles, which are outlined in figure 1 above. According to Allegretti (2022), inclusiveness is defined as the trait of incorporating many different sorts of individuals and treating them all fairly and equitably. It is the practice or policy of giving those who may otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those with physical or mental impairments or members of other minority groups, equal access to opportunities and resources. Thus, this governance principle implies that there should be no discrimination, people should be consulted to understand their aspirations, needs, and desires, and also, no one should be left behind when the municipalities render basic services, such as SDG 6. The provision of water and sanitation facilities should be based on discrimination of race, age, gender, or disability. The principles that address inclusiveness in detail are outlined below:

Leaving no one behind, Non-discrimination, Participation, Subsidiarity and Intergenerational equity

The principle of leave no one behind” is the key emphasis of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Leave no one behind” represents a commitment by all UN Member States and governments around the world to ensure that the SDGs are achieved. At its core, leave no one behind” can be viewed as supporting the SDG inequality agenda for inclusive development, supporting marginalized and vulnerable groups excluded from social opportunities, focusing on income and wealth distribution, addressing challenges related to extreme inequality and reaching out to the poor (IASIA, 2022). It can be argued that the notion of leaving no one behind” has never been more relevant due to the socio-economic outcome that the COVID-19 pandemic caused globally. During the pandemic, gains made in poverty reduction and inequality were lost, and the divide between the rich and the poor increased. It is widely acknowledged that the pandemic has, since its outbreak in December 2019, resulted in increased poverty and food insecurity, reduced access to clean water and healthcare, the unequal distribution of vaccines, job losses, and interrupted education (Mamokhere, Musitha & Netshidzivhani, 2021).

IASIA (2022) and the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2021) indicated that residents should have access to government services, support, and information to guarantee that no one gets left behind.” By concentrating on policies and making decisions that leave no one behind, governments must make sure they are inclusive and responsive to the demands of residents. With limited resources, governments must interact with their constituents and practice inclusivity and accountability. If certain social groups are marginalized, excluded, and poor well-being is sustained, sustainable and equitable development is impossible. States need to refocus their emphasis on sustainable development and at the same time battle corruption to ensure that the SDGs are fulfilled. This may be done through multi-level and excellent governance as well as the idea of subsidiarity. It is crucial to make sure that marginalized populations are included in public governance, particularly in planning, decision-making, service delivery, and sustainable development, and are given the power and respect necessary to participate on an equal footing. In the end, leaving no one behind” calls for political and managerial will, as well as public servants who are determined to address inequities while concentrating on the needs and expectations of the public in a challenging and complicated environment (Brown, 2022). Public participation should be promoted and strengthened in South African municipalities as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2021), directly states to have an effective state, all significant political groups should be actively involved in matters that directly affect them and have a chance to influence policy. Free and fair elections; a regulatory process of public consultation; multi-stakeholder forums; participatory budgeting; and community-driven development are examples of commonly used strategies.” This participation, according to Alma’arif & Wargadinata (2022:22), often comes in issues that relate to communication of development, politics, and governance issues between the government and the community. In other words, participation is seen as community involvement or taking part in organizational activities. Thus, public participation is a vital governance principle for ensuring that citizens have their desired needs (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). Similarly, Hansson, Belkacem, & Ekenberg (2015) posit that the absence of public participation in the public policy process, generates public distrust in the government” and ultimately will delay SDG 6 achievement if not prioritized. Intergenerational equity should also be implemented and promoted. To promote prosperity and a quality of life for all, institutions should construct administrative acts that balance the short-term needs of today’s generation with the longer-term needs of future generations (Bouckaert et al. 2018). In the end, governments across the world should play a key role in ensuring that the most vulnerable groups and countries get the support they need to realize SDG 6.

Conclusions

In South Africa, societies are still in search of solutions for sustainable development. Good governance has always been recognized to be a critical tool for advancing sustainable development and a crucial element to be incorporated into sustainable development
goals. Given the difficulties that South African municipalities face in providing consistent and equitable water and sanitation services, good governance must be promoted by encouraging transparent, accountable, and effective governance in public institutions. Those appointed into positions of authority have to promote accountable governance, responsiveness, openness, and effectiveness. Effective, responsive, and accountable state institutions can be implemented and promoted by improving municipal capacity (e.g., the quality of public administration) or the ability of municipalities to form and implement policy across the whole of their jurisdiction, which is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development through decentralizing government. Openness and transparency should be fostered by ensuring that the public has access to information. More openness and transparency in all institutions is necessary to achieve sustainable development. With more focus on informed citizens and the private sector, as they are better able to engage in developing policies.

Transparency in government behaviour sends strong signals to citizens and investors, and evidence shows that the more information a government releases, the greater the investment and subsequent effect on growth. There is a wealth of evidence that corruption in South Africa is a major hindrance to sustainable development, with a disproportionate impact on the poor and marginalized populations. Corruption has a negative impact on clean water and sanitation provision, health and education outcomes, equity, the rule of law, and foreign investment. Anti-corruption organizations such as Corruption Watch should play a critical and uncompromised role in addressing the mismanagement of public funds and other unethical conduct. Public participation should be regarded as the cornerstone of democracy, and it must be encouraged by ensuring that local communities are consulted and can voice their concerns in strategic development planning, policy, and decision-making. Thus, this article recommends good and inclusive governance because, without it, South Africa will not achieve its social and economic targets. South Africa must establish mechanisms that promote constitutionalism, accountability, democracy, and good governance if South Africa is to achieve its development goals, such as SDG 6.

Weak governance, which is characterized by corruption, bribery, mismanagement, and lack of public involvement, transparency, and accountability, should be eliminated. South Africa should have sound governance that is responsive to community needs and fights toward the achievement of the localized SDGs. Lastly, it is clear that good governance principles are required in order to realize sustainable development in South Africa. Good and inclusive governance is imperative for South Africa's future. Progress on good governance has been encouraging, even though the challenges remain at the forefront.

The article concludes by recognizing that the key elements of good governance are accountability, transparency, combating corruption, citizen participation, and an enabling legal framework. Where necessary, South Africa has to undertake institutional reforms that will result in a significant change in governance structures and put in place a new set of leaders or government that will prioritize SDGs.

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