Making Intergovernmental Relations Work through inter-Spheres and intra-Sectoral Collaborative Partnerships: A Social Capital Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of intergovernmental relations (IGR) as the life blood of effective, accountable, proactive, and responsive local governance. Due to enormous and overwhelming socio-economic and political challenges, the poor tend to depend solely on the government for developmental service delivery. This citizens-state dependency has far-reaching implications, more so in terms of what the government can offer towards meeting such serious demands and needs. State inability to meet people’s demands has consequently led the people into mass demonstrations and protests for better service delivery. In this paper, the author reasons that fundamental to some of these state institutional deficits and impediments are the dysfunctional, uncoordinated, and understated potential power of IGR. The question raised by this paper is not so much what and why, but how to institutionalize the notion of IGR and make it work as inter-spheres and intra-sectoral collaborative panacea towards building a caring and responsible society-responsive and inclusive democracy. The paper uses social capital as an analytical framework to evaluate the operational side of IGR policy. The paper concludes by acknowledging that the policy of IGR is good on paper, but that its poor implementation record has devastating development outcomes that weaken the state machinery to deliver on sustainable services and developmental mandate.

Key words: Intergovernmental Relations, Collaborative Partnerships, Community Development, Social Capital, Health Promotion School Programs

Theoretical underpinning on IGR

The national government, including its various ministries, is entrusted through the Constitution and enacted public policies to look after people’s welfare. The difficulties is lack of human capacity and financial resources, poor and lack of
infrastructure, escalation of corruption and planning done without strategic alignment to the needs of the people.

Section 40 (1) of the South African Constitution stipulates that “In the Republic, government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government, which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated”. Levy (1999 in Powell 2001: 258) point out that the existence of national, provincial and local as spheres of government reflect a contradictory relationship due to its distinctive, interdependent and interrelated nature. In this regard, Levy and Tapscott (2001:1-21, Levy 1999 in Powell 2001: 258) examine interdependence as the degree to which one sphere depends on the other for proper fulfillment of its constitutional functions. Interdependence, therefore, is reflected in a core-relationship in which a particular sphere (national or provincial) has the responsibility of empowerment and oversight, as well as, under certain circumstances, intervention in the dependent sphere. Levy and Tapscott (2001:26) observe that intergovernmental relations have two important dimensions, the vertical and horizontal dimensions. They explain that at the vertical stage government institutes promote coordination of the activities of national and provincial departments. They note that the process is uneven where some departments report a high degree of integration and coordination of national policy across all spheres of government, while others experience difficulties in developing coherent policies. The authors view the horizontal level as an improvement of coordination at national level but they criticize it as far less coherent at the provincial level, where administrative capacity is more limited and where clear policy lines and clear channels of reporting are not sufficiently evident (Levy and Tapscott 2001: 18).

The distinctive nature of each sphere is the degree of legislative and executive autonomy entrenched in the Constitution of 1996, Chapters 3 and 4. One sphere is distinguishable from the others in its powers to make laws and execute them (Levy 1999 in Powell 2001:258). This means, that although the spheres have equal status, each sphere has distinctive legislative and executive competencies. This is a significant change from the previous order, with the national level at the top, and the local level at the bottom. Levy adds that, within the new system, the Constitution, through decentralization, grants each sphere of government the powers to define and express its own unique character. In the case of public service delivery, this is an essential development, in that services are best delivered at the level of local authorities that are closest to the people. Proponents of decentralization stress that
local government is best placed to provide services that reflect local needs and priorities, and the greater proximity between local government and the service users will encourage responsiveness. Decentralization in local government promotes allocative efficiency, as local authorities are better informed than central government about local realities. This means that local authorities are in a position to consult local communities through their elected councilors and other mechanisms. Thus they are more sensitive to local priorities and needs, and, given the requisite operational flexibility, can adapt service provision accordingly.

The different spheres do not operate in isolation from each other. The spheres are able to function because they are interrelated with each other. The interrelatedness of the spheres mean that each sphere has a duty to cooperate with other spheres in “mutual trust and good faith” (Section 41 of the Constitution, Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996), for the greater good of the country as a whole. Based on the distinctiveness of each sphere, the relationship is one of relative equality. However, this relationship must be realized within the duty of “co-operative federalism”. Consequently, a duty is imposed on each sphere to avoid litigation against another sphere (Levy, 1999:7).

Achieving government objectives efficiently and effectively depends, to a large extent, on the organizational structuring of a particular government. It also depends on the extent to which the different structures are able to coordinate their efforts in an organized manner within the spirit of IGR. IGR refer to mutual horizontal and vertical relations and interactions among governmental institutions (Levy and Tapscott 2001: 17-18, Reddy 2001: 12). These mutual relations translate into actions and interactions, which enable effective implementation of the public service delivery programs. The term ‘mutual’ in this definition may be misleading in cases where tension exists between and within the various government structures. Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000; 285) define IGR as a process by which governments seriously negotiate for power, money, and problem-solving responsibilities. Thus whereas constitutionally, government structures may be obliged to mutually work together, the relations are often characterized by intense debates of negotiated power relations. Plano (in Du Toit 1998) defines IGR as continuous administrative political and legal relations between the various tiers (spheres) of government, including formal and informal networks that allow effective and efficient delivery of continuous negotiations for power
and resources aimed at achieving government objectives in an effective and efficient manner.

The basis for IGR in South Africa is the 1996 Constitution, Section 40(1), which stipulates that “government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated”. Section 41(1) of the Constitution enumerates eight specific principles of cooperative government and IGR. Devenish (1998) observes that IGR have become increasingly prominent and dynamic aspects of national, provincial, and local government service delivery. However, when one considers the three spheres of government, as well as the multiplicity of departments or unity within each sphere, the concept of IGR becomes difficult and complex to comprehend, let alone to implement. Du Toit (1998) emphasizes the magnitude of the task by defining IGR as a “complex interaction of government agencies within a dynamic multidimensional government environment”.

IGR through inter-spheres and intra-sectoral collaborative partnerships (case studies): Health Promotion Schools Programs (HPS)

Health Promotion Schools Program (HPS) in S.A have been implemented since 1999. Various schools across the country are implementing the concept of health promotion, with different initiatives at the provincial and district level. However, there have been provincial differences in the approach. It has become increasingly necessary to provide a national guide that would assist health promotion practitioners and schools in all the provinces. Although international and national theoretical frameworks have influenced the development of health promoting schools in South Africa, these guidelines arose primarily from practical experiences of development health promoting schools and provincial networks in South Africa. There are many examples of specific school projects, as well as wider development of networks in schools, that have proved to be valuable in the development of more effective teaching and learning environments, as well as in promoting the health and well-being of members of local communities.

Education and health are inseparable. Good health will always support successful learning and successful learning supports health. Healthy children are more likely to learn well. Health promoting schools are being recognized as an effective way to improve health and their ability to learn. The complex health challenges facing school-going children can be met through collaboration between
the education, health, and a number of other sectors. The school and other learning sites are settings where learners and educators spend a great proportion of their time. They are places where education and health programs can have their greatest impact on development, particularly during childhood and youth.

Source: Author’s analysis

Government Departments, notably Health, Social Development and Education, have recognized that schools and other sites of learning are ideal settings for addressing the many challenges facing the country at present, and for promoting optimal well-being and development of all members of the teaching and learning community. The health promoting schools approach provides a framework for pursuing this agenda. These national guidelines provide a broad framework for pursuing this in a comprehensive manner. A health promoting school views health as a physical, social and emotional asset. It strives to build health into all aspects of life at school and in the community. From country to country, even within different regions and communities of one country, schools have distinct strengths and needs. By building on these strengths and drawing on the imagination of learners, teachers, and administrators, every school can find new ways to improve health and address health problems. This is the foundation of becoming a health promoting school. School
Health Services is a core component of the healthy promoting schools is program and is included in the Primary Health Care package of services, which is one of the key functions contributing to the overall development and sustainability of health promoting schools (National Health Act for South Africa, 2004).

**Community Development Workers’ Program (CDWP)**

The introduction of the Community Development Workers’ Program (CDWP) prioritizes community development as an approach to deal with problems relating to poor or lack of service delivery and escalating poverty and other developmental ailments, particularly in the rural communities and municipalities. The program places and introduces a new category of professionals, whose core business is to assist and fast-track service delivery. In order to execute their tasks, Tshishonga and Mafema (2008: 371) state that community development workers are obliged to execute multiple tasks such as promoting social transformation through conscientizing people, changing mind-sets of community development workers (CDWs) and communities; network with other stakeholders to bring about development through door-to-door campaigns for inclusive and participatory development while at the same time, mobilizing communities. As activists they track and intervene in partnerships with pro-development people and structures and monitor and evaluate service delivery. In addition, the authors argue that CDWs disseminate information from communities to relevant government departments and *vice versa*, as well as linking communities with government structures and bringing government closer to the people, especially at grassroots level. Finally, as researchers, they identify needs, problems, challenges, and solutions (ibid).
The Ministry of Public Administration-CDW Unit (2007: 8) asserts that CDWs are to help enrich the quality of government services for communities, in particular by identifying new programs and creating linkages, and by coordination with other community stakeholders. This implies that development workers are links between municipalities and citizens. In this paper, Tshishonga and Mafema (2008) suggest that relocating development workers within developmental local government compels them to strike a balance between participatory democracy and decentralized development, in partnership with the people. Although municipalities are oversubscribed and face multiple challenges they however take a centre stage as precursors of mobilizing resources for people-centered development, which require multi-skilled, conscientized and empowered development workers as agents of change (ibid). Former President Thabo Mbeki, in his State of the Nation Address in 2003, continued that “the government needed to create a public service cadre of multi-skilled community development workers who would have direct contact with the most economically vulnerable people of South Africa”, in pursuit of social economic and political development (Tshishonga and Mafema 2008: 361). Unlike other categories of development workers, such as community health workers (CHWs), and community
home-based carers (CHBC), to name but two types of community development workers in South Africa, are commissioned by the President to carry out cross-cutting developmental work in their communities (CDW Unit 2007-DPSA). Thus the CDWs would be employed by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) to linking local government offices to what the Foundation for Contemporary Research (2006: 42) describes ‘as the link between the municipality and outlying townships, small towns and rural areas’. Under what conditions can formally created spaces for community interaction at the local level become effective mechanisms for community participation? How can such spaces become sites for communities’ active engagement with the local government, in contexts where the local government’s relationship with communities has traditionally been one of paternalism or clientalism?

1.1. One Home, One Garden

KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize, in his State of the Province Address on Mandela Day, said. “The major cause of ill-health and death in the developing world is hunger, poverty…” Local statistics back up his statement: approximately 35% of the population in KwaZulu-Natal is encountering hunger on a daily basis. The Premier then announced a rural development initiative, the ‘One Home, One Garden strategy’, as a response to this shocking reality. As exciting as the Premier’s proposed strategy to fight hunger in the province may seem, there are some current programs with the same intention which are failing to deliver the expected results.
This ‘One Home, One Garden” strategy was initiated by the distribution of food parcels. Thereafter seed and fertilizer packages were distributed out for people to commence their gardening activities. During this stage, secondary cooperatives were formed, so that training and support services could be provided. The KZN Premier also promised that the currently stalled mechanization program of the Department of Provincial and Local Government and the Department of Agriculture (that provided power hoes to subsistence farmers) was to be re-launched, as one way providing support to these cooperatives. The aims of the mechanization program were to ensure that agricultural land is cultivated, to prevent child labour among farming communities and to assist women and orphans to produce food for their families. Financial assistance in the form of credit was provided to the cooperatives through financial development institutions such as Ithala.

Source: Author’s analysis
IGR: Analysis of case studies through social capital: IGR and social capital

Social capital plays both a bonding and bridging role in intergovernmental relations. There are two types of social capital: (i) bonding, which unites people across a community; and (ii) bridging capital, which connects people to others outside of their immediate group (McAslan 2002: 140). McAslan emphasizes the importance of distinguishing the two types of social capital, because it helps explain why a community may participate regularly in informal social interactions, yet still be socially isolated from the valuable resources in the wider city or region (ibid). She adds that communities may be rich through bonding but may lack bridging capital to gain access to important economic opportunities. The World Bank (1999) states that bridging is an important way of connecting the poor to the mainstream resources and improving access to the wider markets and formal credit systems and mobilizing funds and better services from the state. Narayan (1999) explains that ‘when power between groups is asymmetrically distributed, it is cross-cutting ties, the linkages between social groups, that become critical to both economic opportunity and social cohesion’. Social capital, according to Fine (2007: 124-125), is one of the key terms the of development lexicon, adopted by international organizations, national governments and NGOs. He adds that it is the ‘missing link’ in development. Social capital includes networks, culture, and public goods. Hyden (1997 in Fine 2007: 126) locates the concept of social capital within different approaches to the relationship between the state and civil society as development proceeds, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, concerned with grand theory and systematic analysis from whatever perspective.

Case of Health Promotion Schools Programs

The Health Promotion Schools program is a very interesting initiative in terms of providing a critical analysis of intergovernmental relations in action. It is a program in which governmental departments are involved, participate and form partnerships in promoting the well-being of the school community. Bourdieu’s (in Fine 2007: 127) approach to the concept involves the deployment of various different types of social capital, such as cultural and educational, and the consideration of how these are converted into one another, and the attachment of such capitals to individuals and to socio-economic groupings. The following table shows the roles played by various departments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Department</strong></th>
<th><strong>Roles and responsibility</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td>• School health services and health promotion activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical assessment of Grade R and Grade 1 learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Training and in-service education for educators and learners on different health-related issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Awareness campaigns for the school community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Celebration of some health days especially the priority program, e.g. TB day, candle-light memorial, World AIDS Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>• Employ youth and deploy them in schools as Learner Support Agents (LSAs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Play a vital role in identifying the needs of learners, and social problems. Refer them to relevant agencies for further assistance and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Development</td>
<td>• Work closely with LSAs deployed at schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify destitute learners. Conduct household visits to assess the situation at home</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Support with uniforms and food parcels to those in need</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assist with social grants to those who qualify</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>• For recreation, this department is responsible for building and maintaining play-ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build ramps for free movement of physically challenged learners, educators, and community members</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Public Works

- For recreation, this department is responsible for building and maintaining play-ground
- Build ramps for free movement of physically challenged learners, educators, and community members

Different departments share a platform to ensure that learners are fed to get stamina for learning and teaching. Thus, in this case, the national departments are converged through the Health Promotion Schools Program. In South Africa, government is structured into specific departments, where each department bears specific responsibilities, even though all spheres are interrelated and interdependent. Similarly to Bourdieu’s approach, Tapscott (2001: 258) explains the interdependence of government spheres as a degree to which one sphere depends upon the other to fulfil its constitutional rights to serve its children and the youth. The Health Promoting Schools Program is one of the key national priority programs that contribute towards promoting healthy lifestyles for the school community. The Department of Health’s primary role is to facilitate and champion a health promotion thrust within schools and the community that pulls together a wide range of service areas, such as School Health Services (SHS), and many more. Since 1999, the Departments of Health and Education have worked together to develop and implement the school health program guide by the Primary Health Care (PHC) package of South Africa (standard and norms) document of 2001. Some of the initiatives included implementation of primary school nutrition a program and school food gardens to increase food security in the families of the learners in school. A common point of progress of health promotion in schools is the sanitation facilities that have been installed in many schools. The process of covering the remaining rural schools is being facilitated through collaboration with the relevant partners, the reconstruction and development program and the rural development and renewal projects.

Community Development Workers’ Program (CDWP)
A number of theorists have argued that social capital can be utilized as a tool to reduce poverty (The World Bank, 1998). This suggestion is based on the idea that social capital is viewed as a concentration of assets that bring benefits to poor individuals. The main premise of social capital agrees that a number of social and economic benefits can be brought to individuals by generating and extending their social relations. This suggests that social capital is a social phenomenon understood from the power of permanent social interactions over individuals (Bourdieu, 1997, Coleman, 1988, Fukuyama, 1999, Putnam, 2000).

Social capital as a resource is utilized by individuals as well as institutions. However, this capital is argued to be present only when collective actions are conducted. Collective action should be fundamental for social capital utilization, where individuals or organizations are protagonists as actors having social interactions. As Winter (2000) points out, it is possible to analyze kinds of social capital present by identifying kinds of collective action conducted by individuals. The collective action in this instance is between community development workers and the community who bond over problems that affect the community. Community development workers act as glue that bonds municipalities and communities. The relationships formed between the community development workers and communities assist municipalities in finding amicable ways of providing and fast-tracking service delivery and other development projects in communities. Thus bonding as a social capital is, in many ways, important in keeping communities and their municipalities united to achieve development goals. In this instance, community development workers strike a balance between participatory democracy and decentralized development in partnership with the communities.

Bridging social capital is one that is used by community development workers to bridge the gap between communities and the local government. Community development workers in this instance are the linkage between the municipalities and the citizens. Since community development workers usually are community members of a particular community whom they work for, and in the case of families become part of the community family. They, together with the community, are able to help identify and prioritize problems and relate them to the municipality who, in turn, provides resources and finances to develop communities. Social capital has become a broadly used concept to identify issues linked to poverty. It plays the facilitation and referral role to relevant departments through community development workers. Social capital
Quillian and Reed (2006) define social capital as a result of the establishment of relationships among different social factors. In this paper the two types of social capital, ‘bonding and bridging’, are the integrating components used by community development workers in partnership with communities and their municipalities to promote equal development.

One Home, One Garden

One Home, One Garden is one of the crucial initiatives from the KZN Premier’s office to combat food insecurity in the province. Through the program, homes, schoolgrounds and communities are encouraged to start gardening aimed at reducing poverty and underdevelopment, thereby promoting a nutritious diet. In order to get the program started, inter-departmental task teams on food security have been set up to execute the plan. The teams are to report to the Premier’s office. Government departments, academic research institutions, and commercial farmers were asked to collaborate and share expertise, information, and capacity for the strategy to be a success. The Premier urged agricultural sector trade unions to help monitor the farmers and assist the government in improving its strategy towards rural development. Agriculture was going to be the platform to fight poverty and build the economy. As South Africa envisions a better life for all through a unified and prosperous agriculture, Dr Mkhize made it clear that it was time that communities do things themselves. He affirmed that they would place emphasis on rural development and agrarian and land reform programs, to turn the current situation around.

Putnam and Fine concur over the concept of social capital, in that it encompasses all spheres of life. In this instance it focuses on the networks, culture and public goods in order to develop economically. McAslan (2002: 141) states that social capital is celebrated as the cure for a number of developmental issues, from environmental management in the case of One Home, One Garden empowering the communities, and schools and individuals, to provide food for themselves (healthcare). She adds that empirical research has uncovered many instances in which social capital has had a positive impact on development. Rose (1999 in McAslan 2002: 142) opines that social capital offers tremendous potential to ‘do’ development differently, meaning self-reliance in terms of food sustenance at community level. McAslan adds that the concept presents a rare possibility of providing an integrating framework,
which, in turn, facilitates dialogue about development between discipline and across national and regional boundaries. One Home, One Garden, in essence, is instrumental in terms of bringing in departments such as the Department of Provincial and Local Government (now Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs) and the Department of Agriculture.

Conclusion

South Africa is a diverse country in terms of geographical spread, historical origins, culture, and ethnicity. It is also a country recovering from the disparities and developmental and service delivery backlogs created by apartheid. Implementing intergovernmental relations for service delivery can prove to be particularly challenging, and yet, without intergovernmental relations effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery for the well-being of the citizenry will be compromised. According to the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (13) of 2005, integrated and coordinated government is essential for improving service delivery. The effective and proactive programs, such the Health Promotion Schools Program, Community Development Workers Program and One Home, One Garden, can prevent unnecessary duplication and promote the sharing of scarce resources at national, provincial, and local government level.

With regard to the three case studies, the implementation of IGR is viewed in this paper as placed to provide services that reflect the needs of the local population. HPS, CDWP, and One Home, One Garden, as matters of principle and practice, are strategically placed at local government level in order to link with and consult with local communities through elected councillors, spheres of government and other departmental channels. They are more sensitive to local priorities and needs and, given their requisite operational flexibility, can adapt service provision appropriately. The mutual relations between government institutions translate into actions and interactions, which promote effective and efficient implementation of public service delivery programs. Thus, Fine (2007: 128) argues that ‘social capital’ is important when dealing with politics and the state. The notion of intergovernmental relations considers the diversity intimated above, but at the same time recognizes that there is a common history and destiny beyond these divisions. Levy and Tapscott (2001:39) point out that the experience of multi-sphere regimes everywhere suggests that a general political culture of co-operation and mutual respect is paramount for effective
intergovernmental relations. The paper provided an analysis of three case studies. The need for tolerance towards diversity and autonomous experimentation ends the effects of the ‘evil triplets’ of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. This entails anchoring social capital aimed at reviving economic development, as proved by Putnam’s (1993b: 38 in Fine 2007: 128) study: social capital has become a vital ingredient in economic development around the world. Scores of studies of rural development have shown that a vigorous network of indigenous grassroots associations can be as essential to growth as physical investment, appropriate technology, or (that nostrum of neo-classical economists) ‘getting prices right’.

Bibliography


