

Innovation as a Tool to Improve Public Service Delivery: South African Government Perspective

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Abstract

South African citizens are still facing problems of poor service provision in the local, provincial, and national governments after 28 years of democracy. The standard of public service provision and implementation in South Africa is deteriorating. It is important to note that due to the country's high level of unemployment, the majority of South African citizens rely on government service provision. Because of the government's inability to reach every citizen with efficient and effective service provision, South Africa has the highest level of inequality and a huge gap between the rich and the poor, making efficient service provision a solution to bridge the gap and inequality. This article proposed that the government must develop techniques to boost innovation in the public sector to prioritize service delivery in the country, as there are many challenges surrounding the South African public sector. Qualitative approach was adopted in this research, through the review of recent secondary sources to address the objectives of this study.

Keywords: Citizens, Government, Innovation, Service Provision.

I. INTRODUCTION

Public institutions are under continual pressure to add more value to their communities. Innovative public services have the potential to empower public institutions to provide value-for-money services.¹ The public sector, like the private sector, operates in a more dynamic and unpredictable environment. This requires institutions to be inventive and develop an innovation culture. Innovation should be an intrinsic component of business in the public sector, resulting in better and more cost-effective service delivery to communities.² Citizens depend on public services; hence, quality assessment is necessary. Effective public services provided by public organizations can promote democracy, human rights, socioeconomic well-being, poverty, and, most significantly, public faith in the government. Building the government's capacity to innovate and solve society's challenges is important since public sector issues are complex, multifaceted, and unsolvable by traditional government

¹ Mahmoud Moussa, Adela McMurray & Nuttawuth Muenjohn, "A Conceptual Framework of the Factors Influencing Innovation in Public Sector Organizations" (2018) 52:3 *The Journal of Developing Areas*, p. 231-240.

² TI Nzimakwe, "Adopting Innovation Strategies to Enhance Service Delivery: Implications for Public Sector Institutions" (2015) 23:2 *Administratio Publica*, p. 57-72.

instruments and approaches.³ One of the only ways to address public-sector challenges is through innovation. Budgets in the public sector are under increasing pressure, resulting in financial gaps between the amount and type of service people anticipate and what is actually delivered.⁴ Public sector innovation may improve the efficiency, effectiveness, performance and legitimacy of government agencies.⁵ With increasingly limited resources, the public sector is under pressure to provide additional public services. In response, practitioners and scholars have called for greater innovation in government.⁶ Many scholars believe that innovation can help improve the quality of public services as well as the problem-solving capabilities of governmental organizations in dealing with social challenges.⁷ Politicians, business leaders, social organizations, and individuals prioritize innovation in the public sector. To solve major social problems, innovation is required.⁸ Many countries' public sectors are under tremendous strain as a result of new concerns such as aging populations and rising debt. Furthermore, this sector is facing rising demand for new and/or improved services, more cost-effective solutions, and new methods to communicate with its citizens.⁹ According to Demircioglu and Audretsch, public sector innovations include new or substantial modifications to the supply of services and goods, operational procedures, and organizational approaches.¹⁰ Albury alluded to that innovation is critical to the enhancement of public services; it is not an optional extra, but rather a core value that must be institutionalized.¹¹ Potts and Kastle expound that public innovation cannot simply be planned or institutionalized.¹² However, there are many things that governments can do to increase the likelihood that new ideas will benefit the general population. In addition to hiring experienced innovators, deliberately designing and testing promising new ideas, providing markets for solutions and outcomes rather than inputs, and creating safe spaces where radical ideas can develop, they can do more to cultivate and scan the hinterlands from which new ideas will emerge. To ensure effective and sustainable service delivery, governments must spend heavily in research, development, and innovation activities, programs, and projects that can serve as the foundation for strategic policies, frameworks, and models for public service delivery.¹³

³ Bevaola Kusumasari, Agus Pramusinto & Anang Dwi Santoso, "What Shapes Public Sector Innovation?" (2019) 18:4 *Public Policy and Administration*, p. 430–446.

⁴ Soroush Safarzadeh & Morteza Barzoki, "A Game Theoretic Approach for Pricing Policies in a Duopolistic Supply Chain Considering Energy Productivity, Industrial Rebound Effect, and Government Policies" (2019) 167 *Energy*, p. 92–105.

⁵ Mehmet Akif Demircioglu & David B Audretsch, "Public Sector Innovation: The Effect of Universities" (2019) 44:2 *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, p. 596–614.

⁶ Tommy Clausen, Mehmet Akif Demircioglu & Gry Alsos, "Intensity of Innovation in Public Sector Organizations: The Role of Push and Pull Factors" (2020) 98:1 *Public Administration*, p. 159–176.

⁷ H De Vries & L Tummars, "Innovation in the Public Sector: A Systematic Review and Future Research Agenda" (2016) 94:1 *Public Administration*, p. 141–166.

⁸ Victor Bekkers & Lars Tummars, "Innovation in the Public Sector: Towards an Open and Collaborative Approach" (2018) 84:2 *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, p. 209–213.

⁹ Richard M Walker, "Innovation Type and Diffusion: An Empirical Analysis of Local Government" (2006) 84:2 *Public Administration*, p. 311–335.

¹⁰ Mehmet Akif Demircioglu & David B Audretsch, "Conditions for Innovation in Public Sector Organizations" (2017) 46:9 *Research Policy*, p. 1681–1691.

¹¹ David Albury, "Fostering Innovation in Public Services" (2005) 25:1 *Public Money & Management* 51–56.

¹² Jason Potts & Tim Kastle, "Public Sector Innovation Research: What's Next?" (2010) 12:2 *Innovation: Management, Policy and Practice*, p. 122–137.

¹³ David Mhlanga, Emmanuel Ndhlovu & Costa Hofisi, "Assessment of the 4IR Challenges of Radical Innovation in Service Delivery in Africa" (2021) 56:4.1 *Journal of Public Administration*, p. 1002–1017.

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper used a qualitative approach, through the review of existing literature on innovative public sector to respond and meet the study objectives. It is important to recognize that the South African government is mandated by the South African constitution to provide basic services to citizens and to ensure that the services that are provided are of quality and valued and provided with dignity. The South African public sector is currently struggling to respond and to provide evidence of citizens' failures with the sector. Innovating the South African public sector could assist the government in carrying out its mandated duties effectively and efficiently in order to meet the needs of citizens and maintain a sustainable public sector in South Africa.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *South African Government Innovation Challenges*

The public sector is under increasing pressure to innovate. The argument stems from the chances and benefits that innovation offers in strengthening the public sector's capacity to provide high-quality services. However, how public servants and organizations respond to this appeal is impacted by a variety of factors, the most significant of which is the organization's governance style.¹⁴ Protests over service delivery highlight South Africa's terrible status of local government. Service delivery backlogs can be related to a lack of public sector innovation.¹⁵ South Africa also does not have a lot of local government support for innovation. In both the rural district and the local municipalities, it is clear that the government does not support innovation consistently¹⁶. The triple difficulties of poverty, inequality, and unemployment impede South Africa's search for inclusive innovation. Despite efforts by the current African National Congress government to promote inclusive innovation, structural disparities left over from apartheid impede the formation of a new social contract.¹⁷ South Africa has implemented a variety of innovative approaches to improve service delivery. However, these efforts are not integrated into the larger public sector or efforts to increase service delivery innovation.¹⁸ Many South African local municipalities are governed by a bureaucratic framework. A mechanism is in place to make decisions and approve plans. In effect, this paradigm determines whether and how innovation is adopted; it also influences politicians, public officials, and organizations' perceptions of their role in relation to innovation. For example, many officials in small rural communities believe that innovation capabilities or capacity exist outside of them or with National Departments with a funded innovation mandate. Therefore, the objective is to help towns learn and realize that, regardless

¹⁴ Anthony Arundel, Carter Bloch & Barry Ferguson, "Advancing Innovation in the Public Sector: Aligning Innovation Measurement with Policy Goals" (2019) 48:3 Research Policy, p. 789–798.

¹⁵ Elvin Shava & Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad, "Fostering Digital Innovations to Accelerate Service Delivery in South African Local Government" (2022) 11:2 International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478) p. 83–91.

¹⁶ Irma Booyens, Tim G B Hart & Kgabo H Ramoroka, "Local Innovation Networking Dynamics: Evidence from South Africa" (2018) 30:4 The European Journal of Development Research, p. 749–767.

¹⁷ Madalitso Phiri et al, "Inclusive Innovation and Inequality in South Africa: A Case for Transformative Social Policy" (2016) 6:1 Innovation and Development, p. 123–139.

¹⁸ N E L Danielle & L Masilela, "Open Governance for Improved Service Delivery Innovation in South Africa" (2020) 12:1 International Journal of eBusiness and eGovernment Studies, p. 33–47.

of the institutions within which they work, they are also capable of being inventive and embracing innovation.¹⁹ Mhlanga et al. for example argue that the risks and constraints of radical innovation in the context of the South African public sector include the lack of necessary resources, infrastructure, and technical skill gaps.²⁰ It is critical that these difficulties are addressed in order to prevent the country from falling behind in terms of fourth industrial revolution innovation. Although South Africa has made some strides in creating institutions that foster innovation, more needs to be done to take advantage of multistakeholder partnerships, e-participation, and governance, skills development, access to infrastructure, research and development, entrepreneurship and localization, labor market restructuring, and lowering the high cost of access to services. Maintaining open governance efforts can promote service delivery innovation, create multi-stakeholder alliances, and improve openness, accountability, and citizen engagement.²¹

B. Innovation Techniques as a Solution to Poor Service Provision

Despite ongoing discussions that the public sector is not open to innovation, various research suggests that factors that drive innovation in both private businesses and public organizations are similar.²² These factors include, among others, economic, industrial, political, relational, and personal factors. The public sector is the largest service provider in South Africa, as improving services delivery effectively and efficiently to citizens is important to get closer to the transformation of public services and the development of people's lives as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The South African public services have been faced with poor service delivery in local government and government institutions. The growing expectations for service delivery require the public sector to redefine and remodel the way in which services are delivered - this is in focus to customer-centric and building innovative delivery mechanisms. According to Biljon, the most important innovation in the public sector is the improvement in the quality and quantity of service delivery by customizing services according to the needs of the citizens.²³ On the contrary, a setback is that in the public sector asking for innovation may not go as far if the organizational environment is not conducive to supporting innovation.²⁴ In South Africa, public institutions and local governments (LG) have shown interest in improving service delivery, although at a slower pace. The Municipal Innovation Maturity Index (MIMI) was launched and piloted through the Department of Science and Innovation with the aim of improving the capacity of municipalities to plan, integrate, and embed innovation and technology in their daily operations and to create an enabling environment for innovation in municipalities revealed that while few municipalities are at a maturity level, some of the municipalities were not yet prepared or implemented innovation practices. While this is the case, according to Sections 125(2) (d) and (e) of the Constitution (1996), the premier and the Executive Council are tasked with formulating and

¹⁹ *Municipal Innovation Maturity Index: Towards a Digital Platform: Refining and Aligning MIMI*, by I Booyens et al (2019).

²⁰ Mhlanga, Ndhlovu & Hofisi, *supra* note 13.

²¹ Danielle & Masilela, *supra* note 18.

²² SS Cankar & V Petkovsek, "Private and Public Sector Innovation and the Importance of Cross-Sector Collaboration" (2013) 29:6 *The Journal of Applied Business Research*, p. 1597-1606.

²³ Mareve Inge Madlyn Biljohn, *Social Innovation and Service Delivery by Local Government: A Comparative Perspective* University of the Free State,.

²⁴ *Innovating the Public Sector: From Ideas to Impact* (Paris: OECD Conference Centre, 2014).

carrying out provincial policy, as well as ensuring the execution of provincial policies and the coordination of duties between the provincial departments. These responsibilities include, among others, innovation, research and development of service delivery. This means that the government is required to implement innovation strategies to reduce poor service delivery.

The most important step in developing an innovative strategy is realizing that it is not only about getting the greatest computer model; innovation also involves how public institutions operate and coordinate their efforts to provide services effectively (United Nations, n.d.). As such, Serrat raises the pertinent question: How can public institutions establish systems to lower costs, increase revenue, and generate value by delivering customers what they need rather than what they want?²⁵ Serrat cites Bason (2010) for the following action areas for innovation for public sector organizations in response to this query. Develop innovation consciousness, and innovation capacity, leverage coercion's power, and encourage leadership to give people the courage to innovate at all levels. The author asserts that the following factors should be taken into account when implementing the aforementioned strategies: Value, Resources, and Processes.²⁶ According to Plantinga, it is crucial to address and evaluate a number of action areas, including procedures, structures, skills, infrastructure, leadership, and awareness, in order to establish a government that is capable of innovation. Five innovation strategies are suggested by the United Nations.²⁷ Policy Draft on innovation and Sustainable Development Goals to improve service delivery in addition to the aforementioned action areas: a) Institutional and organizational innovation, especially collaboration on governance frameworks (inclusive of government and society approaches) to deliver integrated services; b) Transformation of leadership and public officials' capacities; c) Process innovation, including innovative channels and mechanisms for partnership building and people engagement; d) Organizational culture to promote integrity, the principles of the 2030 Agenda, knowledge sharing and management for innovation, transparency and accountability; and e) Leveraging the potential of ICTs, which creates new opportunities for innovation.

According to Kenya's Ministry of Public Service, Youth, and Gender Affairs Public Service Delivery Innovation Strategy, the replication innovation strategy is "one way of sharing best practices and successful innovations in relevant situations, thus expanding the benefits and impacts of innovations across the Public Service."²⁸ According to the Kenya Public Service Delivery Innovation Strategy, "Public Service institutions will establish systems and mechanisms of sharing information on innovations to enable replication of best practices."²⁹ According to a study by Kusumasari et al., this method has been used in Indonesia by several governments at the provincial, regional, and local levels.³⁰ To increase the quality of public service, the authors contend that the technique assisted in the transfer of knowledge among governments.³¹ The authors also contend that knowledge transfer, which encompasses

²⁵ Olivier D Serrat, "Innovation in the Public Sector" (2012) Knowledge Solutions, Asian Development Bank.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Paul Plantinga, "Innovation and the Public Service: Achieving Inclusive Service Delivery" (2021) Working Paper, Human Sciences Research Council.

²⁸ *Public Service, Youth, and Gender Affairs Public Service Delivery Innovation Strategy*, 2017.

²⁹ *Kenya Public Service Delivery Innovation Strategy*, 2017.

³⁰ Kusumasari, Pramusinto & Santoso, *supra* note 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*

technical, informational, and managerial components, is the most crucial factor to consider. Furthermore, Kusumasari mentioned that governments must identify practices that are replicable in developing their innovation, determine the scope, method or arrangement, and program of which the innovation is to be implemented - there must be a work plan that delegates responsibilities to personnel; determine the allocation of budgets; and evaluate the processes by transfer recognition, all of which are necessary for countries to innovate, particularly in the context of the South African public service.³² This may appear like a straightforward procedure or innovation approach to implement, but if the public sector has not innovated in recent years, it is a procedure worth giving priority to ensure the enhancement of service delivery to underserved communities. The source of all innovation strategies is the government's efforts to invest in research and development (R&D) to expand internal and external knowledge on new methods to best provide services to residents. As a result, LGs or public institutions must consider enhancing public workers' capacities to address new problems, disseminate information, and incorporate innovations into routine practice. In addition, "it is essential to address in an integrated and holistic manner strengthening institutional frameworks, processes, and mechanisms to deliver services equitably and effectively, human resources capacity building for equitable service delivery, and ICT development and utilization".

Furthermore, Lues argues that social innovation should be seen as a fundamental component of better service delivery because it has not received much attention from the South African government.³³ He also mentioned that the separate responsibilities of LGs are to employ social innovation to improve service delivery by fostering collaboration, allocating authority and resources, and enabling and empowering citizens.³⁴ Although the South African government still lags behind in terms of innovative service delivery mechanisms, it is obvious that the government cannot continue to provide services based on traditional roles and procedures, but instead must recognize new opportunities.³⁵ These strategies are essential for governments that need to provide services to citizens while making a difference in their lives and expanding their overall innovation capacity, particularly in LGs. To improve service delivery, there must be a balance of relationships and collaboration to reduce the number of LGs and other government departments operating in silos, restricting the potential for innovation.³⁶ Integration of services is crucial to address the problems associated with poor service delivery.³⁷ In the same vein, Malan argues that collaboration and integration are crucial to ensuring that all government decision-making processes successfully meet the demands of the general public.³⁸ Furthermore, public officials in LGs and government institutions have a

³² *Ibid.*

³³ B Lues, "The Role of Local Government in Using Social Innovation for Improved Service Delivery : A 21st Century Strategy with Reference to South Africa" (2016) 9:3 African Journal of Public Affairs.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Machanduke Lucas Shipalana, *Innovative Management in the South African public service: a case of the Department Of Health in Limpopo province* Nelson Mandela University, 2019) [unpublished] publisher: Nelson Mandela University, Faculty of.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Xolani Thusi, Nzuzo Mayisela & Mandisi Matyana, "An Investigation Into the Effectiveness of Public Participation Mechanisms on Service Delivery Within the Newcastle Local Municipality" (2023) 12:4 International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478) p, 363–373.

³⁸ D Malan, *Toward the Validation of Dynamic Psychotherapy: A Replication* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2012).

reputation for poor performance and poor leadership, both of which impede any chance of innovation. Research on the connection between leadership and innovation in the public sector is still lacking.³⁹ Despite this, government institutions and personnel can still innovate by using their leadership and capacity. According to the OECD (2014), the public, managers, political leaders, and all others associated with structures and procedures are where innovation starts. As a result, government must develop individual capacities, skills, mindsets, and leadership at all levels to innovate successfully. Although Lewis et al., found that networking and other factors such as leadership are important in the examination of innovation where external and internal environments are assessed to produce innovative channels, leadership is frequently overlooked in this context.⁴⁰ Plantinga contends that in order to encourage innovative culture and performance, there is a need for a business-like or entrepreneurial government. In other words, it is important to look beyond an organization's formal training, incentives, and awards in order to take organizational culture into account, which defines and structures how people connect with one another and find meaning in their work.⁴¹

The South African government still faces a lot of backlash from the public regarding poor service delivery and its interactive methods to improve service delivery.⁴² To improve service delivery, Mawere and Simon posit that technological techniques and managerial performance can lead to quality service delivery.⁴³ The study by Mawere and Simon further revealed that a range of information technologies by government agencies and counties transforms government operations and service delivery. The authors contend that by improving good governance, and responsiveness, and reducing corruption, e-government is a step toward quality service delivery in government.⁴⁴ E-government is an ideal means to provide effective access to government services while upholding Batho Pele's principles. The National e-Government Strategy and Roadmap, a study by Engineering News on the importance of e-Government, indicated that technology is a crucial component of service quality and must be a central concern for all governments.⁴⁵

C. Benefits of Innovating the Public Sector

³⁹ Jenny M Lewis, Lykke Margot Ricard & Erik Hans Klijn, "How Innovation Drivers, Networking and Leadership Shape Public Sector Innovation Capacity" (2018) 84:2 *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, p. 288–307.

⁴⁰ Malan, *supra* note 38.

⁴¹ note 24.

⁴² Z Abraham, *Investigation into the Causes and Reasons for Service Delivery Protests in the City of Johannesburg from 2009 until 2014* University of South Africa, (2017) [unpublished].

⁴³ Chris Simon, Dickens Ouma Mawere & Kipkorir Sitienei, "Technology and Performance Management: Strategies in Quality Service Delivery" (2021) 21:6 *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: An Administration and Management*, p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The South African service delivery could be improved in innovative ways. Scholars such as Nowacki & Monk (2020)⁴⁶; Yigitcanlar *et al.*⁴⁷ believe that innovation brings some advantages or benefits in governance, and it is proven by other countries such as China⁴⁸ that innovation is a vital solution to poor service delivery. Today's innovation is mainly based on the adoption and use of technology. According to Makridakis, the use of technology and its developments has a positive impact on the production of goods and services. The following benefits of innovation are explored in this study:⁴⁹

1. *Improve Productivity*

Improved productivity is the dream of each government institution. Productivity remains the main driving factor behind achieving institutional goals. Surya *et al.*, support that government productivity should be the main concern of every manager or chief official in governance.⁵⁰ These scholars further indicate that productivity plays a crucial role in ensuring that government policies are achieved as planned. So, to achieve this milestone, government officials must use technological developments to improve their decision-making. Safarzadeh & Rasti-Barzoki observed productivity as a solution to combat many issues facing governments. These issues include the competence of employees, red tape, low pace of providing services, corruption, failure to complete projects, etc.⁵¹ Productivity should respond to these governance issues.⁵² These issues cannot be solved simply verbally or addressed verbally. According to Myeni *et al.*, for governments to achieve productivity, they must provide different tools and equipment.⁵³ These may include resources and infrastructure to support innovation. When tools and equipment are provided, the quality of goods and services to be provided by the institution is also improving. Improved quality automatically gives rise to better productivity. Bello *et al.*, state that productivity not only assists the institutions but goes further and improves general state development.⁵⁴ Productivity helps communities improve their standards of living, as institutions provide vital services effectively. It also helps to elevate non-money poverty due to improved service delivery to communities.

2. *Reduce Service Delivery Costs*

⁴⁶ Caroline Nowacki & Ashby Monk, "Ambidexterity in Government: The Influence of Different Types of Legitimacy on Innovation" (2020) 49:1.

⁴⁷ Tan Yigitcanlar *et al.*, "Responsible Urban Innovation with Local Government Artificial Intelligence (AI): A Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda" (2021) 7:1 *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, p. 71.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Spyros Makridakis, "The Forthcoming Artificial Intelligence (AI) Revolution: Its Impact on Society and Firms" (2017) 90 *Futures*, p. 46–60.

⁵⁰ Batara Surya *et al.*, "Economic Growth, Increasing Productivity of SMEs, and Open Innovation" (2021) 7:1 *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market and Complexity*, p. 20.

⁵¹ Safarzadeh & Barzoki, *supra* note 4.

⁵² Aynalem Haile *et al.*, "Community-Based Breeding Programmes are a Viable Solution for Ethiopian Small Ruminant Genetic Improvement but Require Public and Private Investments" (2019) 136:5 *Journal of Animal Breeding and Genetics - Zeitschrift Fur Tierzucht und Zuchtungsbiologie*, p. 319–328.

⁵³ Lindumusa Myeni *et al.*, "Barriers Affecting Sustainable Agricultural Productivity of Smallholder Farmers in the Eastern Free State of Sotuh Africa" 11:11 *Sustainability*, p. 3003.

⁵⁴ Lateef Olalekan Bello, Lloyd J S Baiyegunhi & Gideon Danso-Abbeam, "Productivity Impact of Improved Rice Varieties' Adoption: Case of Smallholder Rice Farmers in Nigeria" (2021) 30:7 *Economics of Innovation and New Technology*, p. 750–766.

People may assume that governments have unlimited funds; however, that is not always the case. According to Neumayr & Pennerstorfer, governments also face some scarcity. They usually have limited funds to meet the unlimited needs of people or communities, as most people have placed their hopes in changing their lives for them.⁵⁵ Therefore, to change the lives of people, governments must use the available funds efficiently and effectively. They must always look for innovative ways to reduce the costs of delivering services while also maintaining the good quality of services they provide to the people.⁵⁶ In support, YuSheng & Ibrahim state that government institutions must maintain innovation and be able to reduce the costs of their services. This helps speed up the service delivery and to improve the citizen's happiness about the services provided.⁵⁷ Wirtz argues that reduced costs and effective service delivery usually do not go in the same direction, even though some institutions are able to steer them in one direction.⁵⁸ The Wirtz argument is based on the fact that some institutions when they are reducing service delivery costs the quality of services to be provided is usually compromised. In other words, reduced costs can lead to poor quality of services to be provided. Therefore, it is very important that service delivery institutions train their employees in a manner that they can transform the institutions to be more productive and cost-effective while also maintaining the low costs of service delivery.⁵⁹ Such training may include the effective use of innovative tools and equipment in place and the importance of maintaining ethics when performing their work.

3. Increase Competitiveness

Some of the government goods and services are provided in the competition spectrum. Of which the competitors usually be the private sector. For example, in South Africa, South African Airways (SAA) is a government flight company that offers flight services to the public. This company is expected or compete with other flight companies such as KULULA Airways, Flysafair Airways, etc. that are providing flight services as well. Therefore, SAA must be managed and controlled in a way that remains relevant and competitive in the market. In a highlight of the above short background, Udriyah states that there is a positive relationship between innovation and competition.⁶⁰ In other words, innovation contributes to or assists institutions to be more competitive in their respective markets. Innovation improves the performance of institutions. This performance can be directly or indirectly depending on the competitive advantage over the market. Improved performance is very important, as it

⁵⁵ Michaela Neumayr Pennerstorfer Astrid, "Government Funding" in *The Routledge Companion to Nonprofit Management* (Routledge, 2020) p. 438.

⁵⁶ Mandisi Matyana & Xolani Thusi, "Making Public Service Delivery More Accessible to People with Disabilities: The South African Government Narrative" (2023) 12:7 *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147- 4478) p. 413–418.

⁵⁷ Kong Yusheng & Masud Ibrahim, "Service Innovation, Service Delivery and Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in the Banking Sector of Ghana" (2019) *International Journal of Banking Marketing*.

⁵⁸ J Wirtz, "Organizational Ambidexterity: Cost-Effective Service Excellence, Service Robots and Artificial Intelligence" (2019) 49:3 *Organizational Dynamics*, p. 1–9.

⁵⁹ Chege Thenya Muchiri, "Effects of Work Stress on Service Delivery, Productivity, Service Quality and Corporate Image in Kenya Disciplined Services" (2022) 3:1 *Journal International of Business Management*, p. 38–52.

⁶⁰ Udriyah, Jacqueline Tham & S M Ferdous Azam, "The Effects of Market Orientation and Innovation on Competitive Advantage and Business Performance of Textile SMEs" (2019) 9:9 *Management Science Letters* p. 1419–1428.

improves the operational ability and satisfies the expectations of both shareholders and customers. Distanont & Khongmalai state that innovation must be able to push local businesses and institutions to compete equally or better than global businesses and promote sustainable development.⁶¹ To achieve this milestone, strategic management remains the key consideration that must also be planted with employees.⁶²

4. *Improve Citizens Trust in Government*

It has almost three decades since South Africa has received its freedom from apartheid governance. Most of the South African citizens and communities have been transformed and better than in the apartheid era.⁶³ However, there are still serious service delivery issues in South Africa that leave most citizens stuck and lonely. This assertion is supported by various scholars such as Maphumulo & Bhengu;⁶⁴ Lemanski;⁶⁵ Matyana & Mthethwa.⁶⁶ According to these scholars, there are many disparities and challenges in the delivery of services within South Africa that must be solved to change the living standards of many citizens. Masuku & Jili states that most of the citizens have lost hope to the South African government due to rising governance challenges such as corruption, financial irregular expenditures, maladministration, poor performance, and inefficiency.⁶⁷ These governance challenges automatically reduce the productivity of government institutions, more especially the local government.⁶⁸ They disrupt the provision of services to the people; as a result, sometimes citizens become furious and protests.⁶⁹ To solve this disruption, innovation could play a crucial role in solving current existing governance challenges and ensuring that citizens have trust in government. This is also supported by Helliwell, that innovation plays a crucial role to ensure that citizens are happy due to government productivity.⁷⁰ Ma & Christensen state that in order for governments to continue to gain trust from their citizens, they must always protect the societal risks facing the citizens such as health issues, safe issues, etc.⁷¹

⁶¹ Anyanitha Distanont & Orapan Khongmalai, "The Role of Innovation in Creating A Competitive Advantage" (2020) 41:1 Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences, p. 15–21.

⁶² S Bonsu, "Strategic Management: The Concept of Competing With Self - ProQuest" (2019) 10:2 Journal of Marketing and Management, p. 20–444.

⁶³ Mandisi Matyana & Xolani Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 predictions" (2023) 12:6 International Journal of Development and Sustainability, p. 212–226.

⁶⁴ W T Maphumulo & B R Bhengu, "Challenges of Quality Improvement in the Healthcare of South Africa Post-Apartheid: A Critical Review" (2019) 42:1 Curationis, p. 1–9.

⁶⁵ Charlotte Lemanski, "Infrastructural Citizenship: The Everyday Citizenships of Adapting and/or Destroying Public Infrastructure in Cape Town, South Africa" (2020) 45:3 Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, p. 589–605.

⁶⁶ Mandisi Matyana & RM Mthethwa, "Community Participation Conundrum in the Winnie Madikizela Mandela Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan: Exploration of an Enhanced Future" (2020) 11:2.

⁶⁷ Mfundo Masuku & Nokukhanya Jili, "Public Service Delivery in South Africa: The Political Influence at Local Government Level" (2019) 19 Journal of Public Affairs.

⁶⁸ Xolani Thusi, Mandisi Matyana & Nokukhanya Jili, "Lack of Political Will: A Barrier to Public Service Delivery in South Africa and a High Cost for Citizens" (2023) 9:2 Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities, p. 137–147.

⁶⁹ Mandisi Matyana & R M Mthethwa, "Service Delivery Disparities at Winnie Madikizela Mandela Local Municipality: Prospect and Challenges" (2022) 11:6.

⁷⁰ John F Helliwell, Haifang Huang & Shun Wang, *Happiness and the Quality of Government* (Rochester, NY, 2020).

⁷¹ Liang Ma & Tom Christensen, "Government Trust, Social Trust, and Citizens' Risk Concerns: Evidence from Crisis Management in China" (2019) 42:2 Public Performance & Management Review, p. 383–404.

5. *Partnerships and Relationships*

The government may partner with other different stakeholders to improve the delivery of services and the well-being of citizens. These include private companies, non-profit organisations, international companies, and other governments. These partnerships can be established to serve different purposes for governments and at different levels of governance. However, regardless of the establishment, they must be well managed and controlled so that they can have a full impact on societies and ordinary citizens. Doblinger indicates the importance of innovation in these partnerships and relationships.⁷² Doblinger indicates that the use of innovative technology in these agreements assists in achieving the aims and goals of the establishments. This is also supported by Ruijter & Meijer that innovative technology in these agreements stimulates the transparency of the agreements, improves citizen participation where necessary, and, more importantly, improves the economic and social development of the state.⁷³

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The South African public sector is characterized by poorly performing governmental departments and entities which has had a negative impact on public service delivery, as more service delivery protests have flooded the public sector. The authors conclude that the government can explore innovation techniques that will have a good impact on uplifting the government's performance, subsequently improving public service delivery. It is important to note that sustainable public service delivery is essential in South Africa, so more citizens depend on the government for the provision of services. Innovation techniques will also improve the performance of government employees, which has been cited as poor by the customers of public services 'citizens', making innovating the public sector more relevant and essential in the present times when the government is the sole provider of free public services.

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⁷² Claudia Doblinger, Kavita Surana & Laura Diaz Anadon, "Governments as Partners: The Role of Alliances in U.S. Cleantech Startup Innovation" (2019) 48:6 *Research Policy*, p. 1458-1475.

⁷³ Erna Ruijter & Albert Meijer, "Open Government Data as an Innovation Process: Lessons from a Living Lab Experiment" (2020) 43:3 *Public Performance & Management Review*, p. 613-635.

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