

# Integrated Strategies for Creating Citizen-Centric Public Sector Organisations

By

**Dr Okanga Boniface and Dr AM Sambumbu**

**Department of Business Management: University of Johannesburg**

## Abstract

The establishment of an effective citizen-centric public service system is an iterative process that requires investment in the appropriate e-government technologies and cultural change and transformation. This research evaluates effectiveness of the process for the establishment of a citizen-centric public service in South Africa. Conceptual analysis as a qualitative research technique was used to critically synthesize and triangulate theories for a citizen-centric public service system with the findings of the empirical studies on the implementation of a citizen-centric public service in South Africa. Findings indicated South Africa to have made significant strides by adopting relevant policies, legislations and technological frameworks to enhance the use of models such as one-stop-shop and walk-in centres. However, further analysis highlighted the initiatives to establish an effective citizen-centric public service is still inhibited by ineffective seamless integration and synchronisation of activities in government departments and units in different geographical regions. Other challenges were found to be linked to internet connectivity and affordability of telecommunication costs in the rural areas, and lack of change and transformation of the organisational cultural practices. In the light of these challenges, the study postulates a strategic framework emphasizing among others investment in the appropriate e-government technologies and change and transformation of the organisational cultural practices as part of the critical strategies for enhancing the successful establishment of a citizen-centric public service.

**Keyphrases:** citizen-centric, performance, public sector organisations, strategies

## INTRODUCTION

A citizen-centric public service enhances seamless integration and synchronisation of activities in different government departments (Sharma, Guttoo & Ogra 2014:8). This amplifies the overall level of efficiency and effectiveness of governmental operations (Sharma *et al.* 2014:8). Citizen-centricity also edifies cost and wastes' minimisation, and subsequently a government department's accurate responsiveness to the constantly changing and complex citizens' needs and expectations (Vincent 2014:2; Howard 2014). Conventional theories on the

strategies for public efficiency highlight a citizen-centric public sector system to connote a management philosophy that facilitates effective responsiveness of public sector organisations to the increasingly complex and changing needs of the population (Abdalla, Karanja, Kiragu & Adhiambo 2015:102; Tibco 2015:4). In addition to the necessary cultural and structural change and transformation, the overall effectiveness of a citizen-centric public service is also leveraged by the application of e-government technological platforms such as VSAT, MAP, HAP and WiMAX (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8). As far as the South African public service is concerned, empirical facts indicate significant strides have been made through the adoption of relevant policy, legislative and technological frameworks. All these are reflected in the promulgation of the “Batho Pele” principles, and legislations such as the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 25 of 2002, Electronics Communications Act No 36 of 2005, Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) No. 13 of 2000, and Sentech Act No. 63 of 1996 (Mkhize 2014; Mkhize 2015:1).

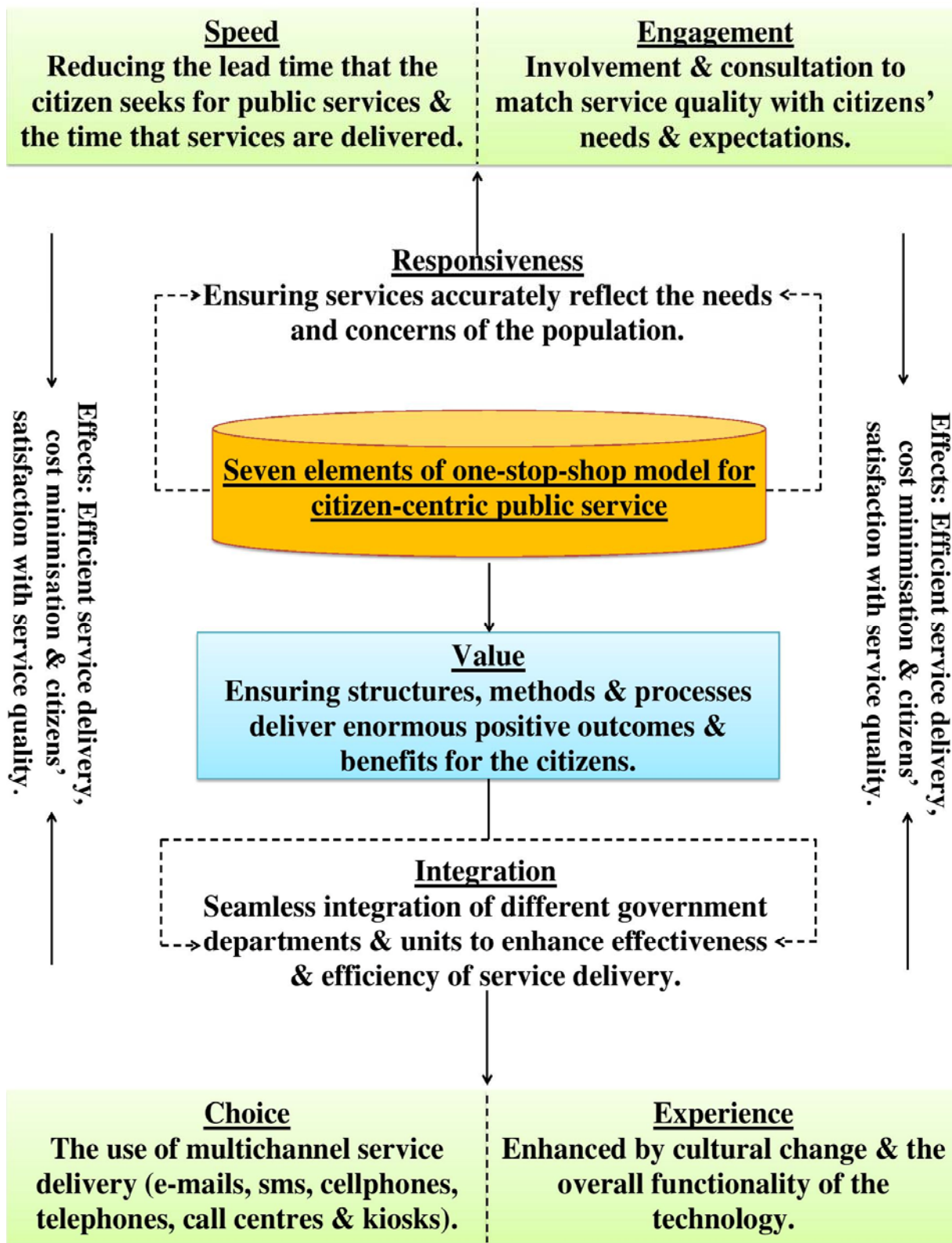
Despite the establishment of e-government and the adoption of citizen-centric models like the one-stop-shop models in the Western Cape Province (Western Cape Government 2012:19), studies indicate that the creation of an effective citizen-centric public service is still inhibited by difficulties to seamlessly integrate and synchronise activities in government departments and units in different geographical regions (Mutula 2013:59; Mpinganjira 2014:129). Other authors highlight challenges to be linked to internet connectivity and affordability of telecommunication costs in the rural areas, and lack of change and transformation of the existing cultural practices to support the use of e-government as a technique for enhancing a citizen-centric public service. Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the process for the implementation of e-government in South Africa. However, only a few studies examine the linkage between e-government and the creation of a citizen-centric public service (Froehlich 2008:1). This research therefore undertakes a holistic analysis of the strategies used for creating a citizen-centric public service in South Africa so as to identify the major inhibitors and the strategic remedial framework that can be suggested.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The central tenet of a citizen-centric public sector is to enhance the provision of public services to the citizens in as efficient and effective a manner as possible (Abdalla et al. 2015:102; Tibco 2015:4). The increasing embracement of a citizen-centric management philosophy is linked to the increasing awareness and expectations of the citizens of their rights to access quality public services (Abdalla et al. 2015:102; Tibco 2015:4). Besides budgetary constraints

that instigate the need for resource optimisation, the impetus for the increasing embracement of citizen-centric management philosophy is also explained by the increasing competition in the global business sphere (Sharma *et al.* 2014:8). The improvement of the efficiency of the governmental operations as a result of the adoption of a citizen-centric public service edifies improvement in a country's investment environment and conditions to thereby spur attractiveness of a country as a favourable investment destination (Vincent 2014:2; Howard 2014). Several authors postulate different models for the establishment of a citizen-centric public service system (Hong & Silvana 2008:114; Optus 2015:6; Sandeep, Seng & Wu 2015:438).

However, it is widely apparent that most of the authors share similar views with the articulation in the one-stop-shop model (Abdalla *et al.* 2015:102; Misra & Make 2010:78; O'Neill 2009:751; Tibco 2015:4). One-stop-shop is a service delivery model that emphasizes the importance of placing citizens at the centre of planning and implementation of service delivery strategies (Tibco 2015:4). It requires thorough analysis of citizens' needs, and the prevalent or probable factors that may affect effective meeting of such needs (Tibco 2015:4). The main motive of a one-stop-shop citizen-centric service delivery model is to improve citizens' experience in the journey of consuming public services (Tibco 2015:4). In the context of the illustration in Figure 1, this is often attained by integrating seven critical elements in the planning and implementation of service delivery strategies (Abdalla *et al.* 2015:102; Misra & Make 2010:78; O'Neill 2009:751; Tibco 2015:4). These seven critical elements encompass; speed, engagement, responsiveness, value, integration, choice and experience (Citizen Service Transformation-SCT 2011:5; Misra & Make 2010:78).



**Figure 1:** Seven elements of one-stop-shop model for an effective citizen-centric public service

Source: As derived from the interpretation of models on the implementation of a citizen-centric public service system (Abdalla et al. 2015:102; Misra & Make 2010:78; O'Neill 2009:751; Tibco 2015:4).

Speed involves shortening the lead time which is the time lag between the time that the citizen seeks for the public service and the time that it is delivered (Citizen Service Transformation-SCT 2011:5; Misra & Make 2010:78). Engagement deals with involvement and consultation of citizens to ensure that the quality of the delivered public services perfectly match the needs and expectations of the citizens (Citizen Service Transformation-SCT 2011:5; Misra & Make 2010:78). Responsiveness not only amplifies speed, but also the extent to which the provided services accurately reflects the needs and concerns of the population (O'Neill 2009:751). Value requires adoption of strategies to ensure that processes and operational methods in public sector organisations are driven by the motive to achieve enormous positive outcomes and benefits for the citizens (Optus 2015:6). Whereas integration involves the seamless integration of different government departments and units to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, choice emphasises the need for the establishment of a multichannel service delivery system (Optus 2015:6). This reduces the lead time, anxiety associated with waiting and inconveniences (Optus 2015:6). All these influence improvement of citizens' overall experience of the consumption of public services. Other authors nonetheless highlight experience to be predicted by the display of appropriate attitudes by front office staffs and the overall functionality of the technology (Hong & Silvana 2008:114; Sandeep et al. 2015:438). Although theories indicate that the establishment of an effective citizen-centric public service system is an iterative integrative process requiring the application of a number of strategies (Hong & Silvana 2008:114; Optus 2015:6; Sandeep et al. 2015:438), the process for the implementation of a citizen-centric public service system in South Africa seems to have only focused on the establishment of relevant policy, legislative, technological and structural measures (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8; Mpinganjira 2014:129; Mutula 2013:59; Western Cape Government 2012:19). Such approach ignores the importance of undertaking the necessary methodological and organisational cultural change and transformation of how activities must be accomplished in the newly established citizen-centric public service system (Citizen Service Transformation-SCT 2011:5; Misra & Make 2010:78). It is such limitations that motivate this research.

## **PROBLEM INVESTIGATED**

Reliance on policy, legislative and technological frameworks without the use of strategies such as the establishment of multichannel service delivery system and transformation of the organisational culture limit the extent to which the South African public service is able to create an effective citizen-centric system.

## **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The main purpose of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used for creating a citizen-centric public service in South Africa so as to identify the major inhibitors and the strategic remedial framework that can be suggested.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses conceptual analysis, and specifically a meta-synthesis as a principle qualitative research technique (Blanchette 2012:5; Boghossian 2011:488). The process for the accomplishment of a meta-synthesis was guided by three critical research questions:

- How effective are the strategies used for the establishment of a citizen-centric public service system in South Africa?
- What are the inhibitors of the effectiveness of the strategies used for the establishment of a citizen-centric public service system in South Africa?
- Which strategic framework can be recommended for improving the effectiveness of the process for establishing a citizen-centric public service in South Africa?

In a bid to seek answers to these research questions, a meta-synthesis of different theories and prior empirical studies were undertaken using four main steps:

- Evaluation of theories and models for creating an effective citizen-centric public service
- Analysis of the findings of empirical studies and government documents and legislations for creating an effective citizen-centric public service in South Africa
- Triangulation of the theoretical with empirical findings to identify the major inhibitors and strategic framework that can be suggested.

The details of the results of meta-synthesis are as presented in the next section.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings are presented and analysed according to the following two sections:

- Theories: implementation of a citizen-centric public service
- Theories: implementation of a citizen-centric public service in South Africa

The details are as follows.

## **THEORIES: IMPLEMENTATION OF A CITIZEN-CENTRIC PUBLIC SERVICE**

The analysis of theories on the critical strategies for the implementation of a citizen-centric public service is accomplished according to two sections:

- Strategies for effective citizen-centric public service
- Citizen-centricity as a change and transformational process

The details of the analysis are as follows.

### **Strategies for effective citizen-centric public service**

Theoretical analysis indicate the critical strategies that influence effectiveness of a citizen-centric system to include listening to voice of citizens, reduction of silos, multi-channel service delivery, continuous improvement using citizens' feedback and setting a citizen-centric service standards (Hewlette Packard 2015:3; KPMG 2011:19; Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013:9; Leon, Simmonds & Roman 2012:6; Makanyeza, Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013:9).

### **Citizens' Voice**

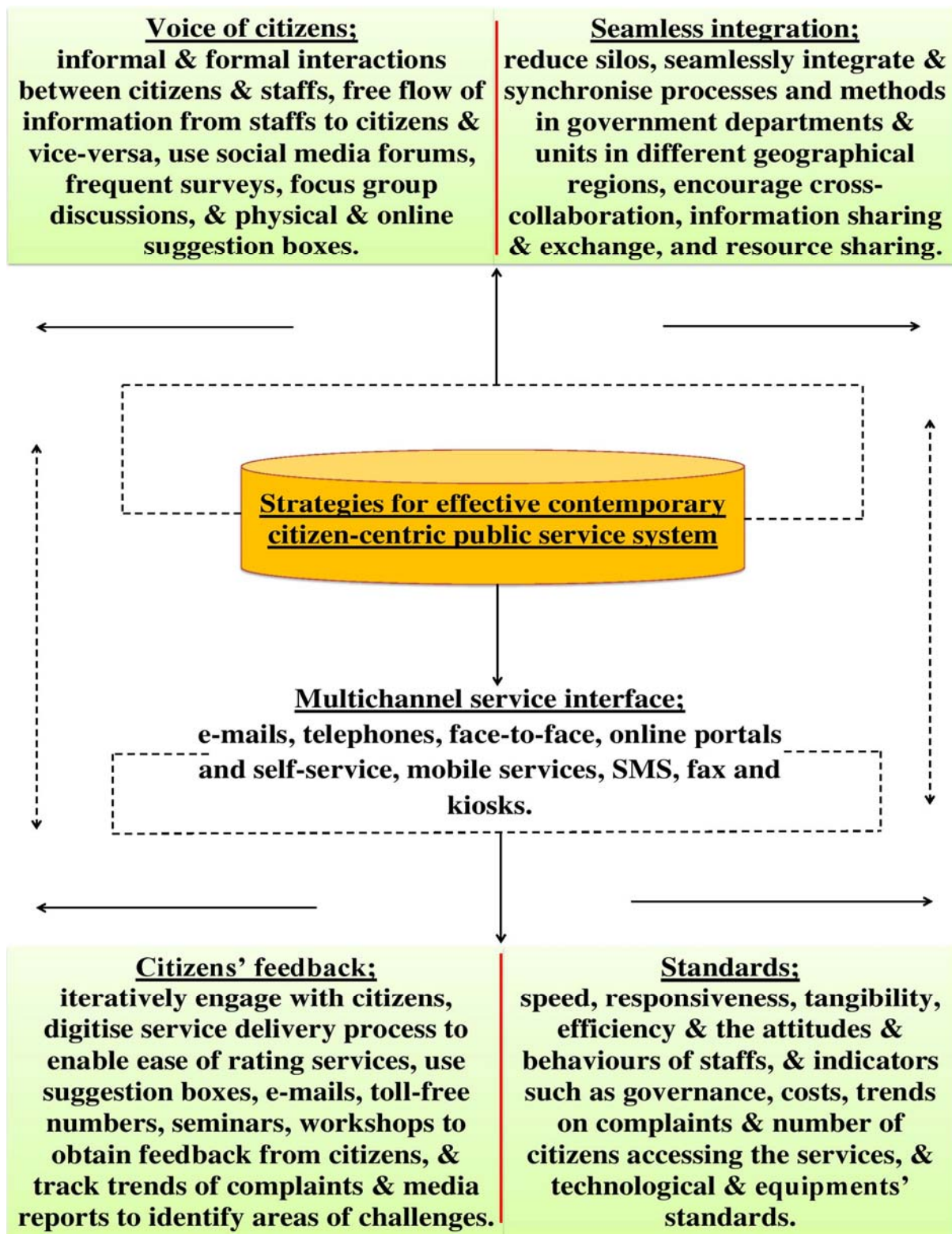
Voice of citizens involves encouraging informal and formal interactions between citizens and public sector staffs, and free flow of information from public officials to the citizens and vice-versa (Makanyeza et al. 2013:9). In addition to segmentation of citizens according to different categories, it also requires the use of measures such as frequent surveys, focus group discussions, and the establishment of the physical and online suggestion boxes (Makanyeza et al. 2013:9). This enables public sector officials to understand the needs of the citizens and map processes, methods and systems for service delivery along such needs (Hewlette Packard 2015:3). The use of these techniques also influences the identification of areas of challenges and the remedial and improvement strategies that can be adopted (Hewlette Packard 2015:3). The other values of the voice of the citizens are often reflected in the enhancement of the identification of citizens' touchpoints (Hewlette Packard 2015:3). This amplifies the identification of the strategies that can be used to improve the overall citizens' experience about the consumption of public services (Hewlette Packard 2015:3). Unfortunately, other authors note that unless the application of the techniques in the concept of voice of citizens is accompanied by the adoption of the structures that reduces silos; its overall positive

implications on the improvement of service delivery may tend to be only minimal(Hong & Silvana 2008:114; Optus 2015:6; Sandeep et al. 2015:438).

### **Integration**

In most cases, the adoption of a citizen-centric approach has not been accompanied by the review of the existing structures to enhance greater integration and synchronisation of activities across different government departments (Hong & Silvana 2008:114). This leads to disintegrated and silo-based structures that limit cross-collaboration, information sharing and exchange, resource sharing between different government departments and units (Hong & Silvana 2008:114). All these affect the quality of public services. For the adoption of a citizen-centric approach to influence improvement in service delivery, seamless integration of activities across different government departments is a prerequisite (Optus 2015:6). Seamless integration of activities and elimination of silos influences reduction in duplication of tasks, cost reductions and improvement of convenience that citizens undergo in the consumption of different public services (Sandeep et al. 2015:438). However, other theories indicate that unless accompanied by additional four strategies, it can turn difficult for public sector managers to create a seamlessly integrated governmental system (KPMG 2011:19; Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013:9; Leon et al. 2012:6).





**Figure 2:** Strategies for effective contemporary citizen-centric public service

Source: As derived from the interpretation of different theories on the strategies for the establishment of a citizen-centric public service system (Hewlette Packard 2015:3; KPMG 2011:19; Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013:9; Leon et al. 2012:6; Makanyeza et al. 2013:9).

These four strategies include providing visible leadership at the strategic level, and ensuring that the essence for creating a seamlessly integrated government system is a common goal in all government departments (KPMG 2011:19). Besides focusing on improving the front end of public service delivery, the other strategy requires ensuring that enable policy, legal and regulatory frameworks are put in place (KPMG 2011:19). With a seamless integrated public service system, it becomes easier for public sector managers to develop a multichannel service interface.

### **Multichannel**

Multichannel service interface refers to an integrated system that facilitates the provision of the same services to different citizens in different locations and time (Leon et al. 2012:6; Makanyeza et al. 2013:9). This contributes to the elimination of inconveniences and the overall citizens' satisfaction with the provided services (Leon et al. 2012:6; Makanyeza et al. 2013:9). Multichannel service interface involves the use of service delivery methods such as e-mails, telephones, face-to-face, online portals and self-service, mobile services, SMS, fax and kiosks (Leon et al. 2012:6; Makanyeza et al. 2013:9). All these influence improvement in the speed and efficiency of the process of service delivery as well as its overall cost effectiveness (Hong & Silvana 2008:114). The drawbacks of multichannel service interface are however often latent in the risks that in the remote villages, there could be challenges of accessing internet facilities (Hong & Silvana 2008:114). Although SMS and cellphones can be used, the high rate of illiteracy in the rural areas may also affect the ability of the population to effectively use the entire multichannel service interface (Hong & Silvana 2008:114). For multichannel service interface to be widely embraced by the population, the ability of the staffs to respond as speedily and efficiently as possible to enquiries and the services sought by the citizens is a prerequisite (Hong & Silvana 2008:114).

### **Feedback**

Citizens' feedback is an iterative process of engaging with the citizens who have undergone the experience of accessing public services (Sandeep et al. 2015:438). It facilitates the understanding of citizens' perceptions of services, and the identification of the areas challenges and the relevant improvement strategies that can be adopted (Sandeep et al. 2015:438). Their development of the appropriate citizens' feedback influence continuous learning and improvement that render it possible for the public sector organisations to develop excellent services (Sandeep et al. 2015:438). The critical techniques that can be used to improve citizens' feedback include digitisation of the process of service delivery process to enable ease of rating services after the consumption (Hewlette Packard 2015:3). The other techniques

include the suggestion box, providing e-mails and toll-free telephone numbers through which citizens can express their concerns, and seminars or workshops with the communities to evaluate the effectiveness of the process for the implementation of a particular government programme (Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013:9). As such mechanisms are being undertaken, public sector managers can also use indirect techniques involving the evaluation and monitoring of trends of complaints and media reports in order to identify the common areas of challenges (Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013:9). Some authors note though that it is not the techniques that influence the techniques of citizens' feedback, but the extent to which citizens are aware of their rights to provide the necessary feedbacks whether negatively or by way of complements (Akther, Onishi & Kidokoro 2007:38; Farelo & Morris 2006:4). This must also be accompanied by the development of a proactive strategy to enhance effective management of citizens' feedbacks.

### **Standards**

Clear standards on citizen-centric service standards enhance effectiveness of citizen-centricity in the contemporary public sector organisations (Maksym & Shah 2010:13). The critical areas that standards can be set for measuring effectiveness of citizen-centric standards include speed, responsiveness, efficiency and the attitudes and behaviours of staffs (Maksym & Shah 2010:13). This must be accompanied by developing indicators on the key areas of importance that include governance, costs, complaints, the number of citizens accessing the services, the kinds of services commonly demanded and why that particular kind of services (Maksym & Shah 2010:13; Optus 2015:6). Other critical areas require the development of technological standards that can be used to ensure that the service delivery processes are accomplished more effectively (Optus 2015:6). The development of clear standards on citizen-centric services enhances effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation, and the identification of major inhibitors and the improvement measures that can be adopted (Optus 2015:6).

Most authors however argue that the adoption of a citizen-centric management approach requires the undertaking of significant change and transformation in the structures and modes of operation of the contemporary public sector organisations (Bourgon 2007:19; Marson 2014:16; OECD 2009:26; PricewaterHouse-PwC. 2013:6; United Nation Development Programme-UNDP 2013:9).

### **Citizen-centricity as a change and transformational process**

In the citizen-centric operating models discussed by most authors, the implementation of a citizen-centric public sector organisation is however treated as a transformational process (United Nation Development Programme-UNDP 2013:9). This implies public sector managers

must undertake the necessary structural reforms (United Nation Development Programme-UNDP 2013:9). The critical steps highlighted by various theories in the required change and transformational process include removing the inefficiency and inconsistency across the value chain, and migrating high volume transactional interactions to self-service platforms (Bourgon 2007:19; Marson 2014:16; OECD 2009:26; PricewaterHouse-PwC 2013:6; United Nation Development Programme-UNDP 2013:9). This is often followed by the rationalisation of inefficient face-to-face access points, and improvement customer experience (Bourgon 2007:19). The inhibitors of such a process are however linked to the fact that it ignores the essence of structural reforms and change of organisational culture and attitudes and behaviours of the employees (Bourgon 2007:19). Such limitations seem to have been addressed in the models adopted by the Austrian and New Zealand public services for the implementation of a citizen-centric public service. In the model titled: “Embedding and sustaining change while transforming the public sector organisations”, ten critical steps are outlined for undertaking change and transformation associated with the implementation of a citizen-centric system (Marson 2014:16). These ten steps include creating a vision and clear strategy for the implementation of a citizen-centric system, and communication of why the adoption of a citizen centric system is critical for improving the quality and efficiency of the process for delivering public services(Marson 2014:16). This is followed by creating a coherent collaboration with all the key stakeholders (citizens, staffs, media and the civil society organisations) of change, and effective leadership and commitment among all the managers and employees(Marson 2014:16). As change is being implemented, the fifth step requires the management to use the initial successes to motivate employees to undertake further change and transformation (Marson 2014:16). This must be accompanied by frequent monitoring and evaluation to identify and eliminate inhibitors and subsequently consolidate the improvements attained (Marson 2014:16; PricewaterHouse-PwC. 2013:6). Other steps involve empowering of staff with the necessary skills and competencies, transforming systems, processes and culture to be supportive of change, encouragement of innovation and new approaches by investing in the appropriate technologies, and ensuring the sustainability of the adopted citizen-centric approach (Marson 2014:16).

## **THEORIES: IMPLEMENTATION OF A CITIZEN-CENTRIC PUBLIC SERVICE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The policy foundation for the entrenchment of the concept of citizen-centricity in the contemporary South African public service is traceable to the Promulgation of the “Batho Pele” principles in the 1999 White Paper (Farelo & Morris 2006). The phrase “Batho Pele” means

“people first”. It requires the design and implementation of different government programmes to be guided by the evolution of the views, needs and concerns of citizens (Mkhize 2014; Mkhize 2015:1). In the “Batho Pele” principles, citizen-centricity is fostered by encouraging greater degree of citizens’ involvement and consultation during the planning and implementation of different government programmes (Farelo & Morris, 2006). Since technology has turned into a critical factor for the implementation of a citizen-centric public service, later events involved the promulgation of different legislations to integrate the use of information systems to enhance the overall effectiveness of a citizen-centric public service in South Africa (Mkhize 2014; Mkhize 2015:1; SAP 2014:4). Some of these legislations included the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 25 of 2002, Electronics Communications Act No 36 of 2005, Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) No. 13 of 2000, and Sentech Act No. 63 of 1996 (Mkhize 2014; Mkhize 2015:1). The promulgation of these legislations was also followed by the establishment of the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) (Department of Communications 2005:11). Some of the positive effects of the use of information technology have been latent in the establishment of e-government services encompassing e-health, e-education, e-transport and e-home affairs (Western Cape Government 2012:14). Technology enhanced the improvement of the level of government-to-citizen, government-to-employees, government-to-government, and government-to-businesses’ interactions (Department of Communications 2005:11). Trends in the Western Cape indicate, technology also influenced the implementation of one-stop-shop model and multichannel model encompassing e-mails, use of social media and sms (Western Cape Government 2012:14). Despite significant strides towards the minimisation of operational costs, improvement of efficiency and the overall citizens’ experience, a meta-synthesis of prior empirical facts imply that there are still challenges undermining the creation of an effective citizen-centric public service (Mutula 2013:59).

### **Integration**

In terms of the establishment of e-government to facilitate the creation of a citizen-centric public service in South Africa, the positive results have been reflected in the establishment of a gateway projects to support the improvement of service delivery across the country (Mutula 2013:59). Some of the significant achievements include the Cape and Gauteng gateway projects, increasing provision of government services through internet portals, and the establishment of walk-in Centres (WIC) and Call Centres (CC) (Western Cape Government 2012:14). However, the creation of a coherent South African public service system is still a challenge (Weaver 2009:4). The different divisions and layers of governments reflected in the

division of government structures according to provinces and other layers falling down to the municipalities and ward levels render the undertaking of the coherent integration of different governmental systems not reasonably possible (SAP 2014:4; Weaver 2009:4). The purpose of the one-stop-shop model of a citizen-centric system is latent in the extent to which citizens from all over the country can be able to access services through a single point of entry(SAP 2014:4; Weaver 2009:4). This is yet constrained by the divisions and layers in the government structures aligned to different systems. Such a finding echoes Segole's (2015:19) view that the challenge of realising a coherently integrated citizen-centric public services in South Africa are linked to diverse and fragmented ICT planning methods, inconsistent plans and reporting, and incomplete ICT system inventories in government, and poor collaboration and activities' coordination.

### **Internet usage**

The use of a citizen-centric framework involving the application of the internet technologies has only been successful in the urban areas (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8). In the rural areas poor connectivity to the internet has been a hindrance. The enormous costs involved in the investment in the relevant IT infrastructures and softwares such as VSAT, MAP, HAP and WiMAX have made the government only focus on a few areas (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8). The roll-out of free wi-fi is going on (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8). However, the major focus is still largely in the major cities and municipalities. Although the use of public internet cafes has been able to fill such a gap, frequent power and energy shortages have also been a hindrance (Mutula 2013:59). Even in instances where the population are able to access the internet, the simple processes and steps required for accessing different public services through the internet still often been challenging the rural population that are largely illiterate (Mutula 2013:59). This affects the overall application of the internet in the facilitation of the implementation of a citizen-centric approach. It is not only the rate of illiteracy which is affecting the use of the internet, but also poverty. Most of the South African government departments and municipalities have developed multichannel service delivery involving the use of e-mails, SMS, faxes, telephones and cellphones (Pickworth 2013:1). However, abject poverty among most of the rural population implies most the service users are unable to access certain services. The telephones costs as well as the costs of sms remain quite higher for most of the rural population (Pickworth 2013:1). All these limit the use of the internet in the rural areas as a means for enhancing effectiveness of a citizen-centric public service.

### **Contents**

Content development is one of the areas posing challenges to the use of technology as a strategy for enhancing effectiveness of the citizen-centric government (Weaver 2009:4). In a research conducted on the citizen-centricity and mobile (m)-government in South Africa, Weaver (2009:4) highlights that lack of skills and the required specialists are still affecting the operationalisation of m-government as an influencer of a citizen-centric government. Lower bandwidth and the small screen nature of mobile technologies, the successful development of a m-government requires appropriate skills and expertise (Segole 2015:3). In effect, most of the e-government contents are not supportive for the creation of an ideal m-government (Weaver 2009:4). This also affects the use of m-government as a predictor for effective citizen-centric public service (Weaver 2009:4). Differences in languages also undermine the creation of a coherent of the system and the use of the system by population not familiar with the language used (Segole 2015:3). Unless the importance of content development in all the eleven languages is recognised by policies, the use of m-government may still not influence the overall effectiveness of the South African citizen-centric public service (Segole 2015:3).

### **Change**

The adoption of a citizen-centric framework requires significant structural and behavioural changes and transformation (Western Cape Government 2012:14). This must be accompanied by the change and transformation of the overall organisational culture (Western Cape Government 2012:14). Unfortunately, empirical facts indicate that as much as significant resources has been committed towards the establishment of appropriate technologies, change and transformation in the operational methods and culture have not been effected (Western Cape Government 2012:14). In most cases, communication which in a physical environment is supposed to be interactive has been replaced by one-way communication (Froehlich 2008:6). In this process government officials tend to only send messages and information either through sms or e-mails without providing the avenues through which citizens can respond (Western Cape Government 2012:14). This limits the interactive nature of the communication which is required for influencing citizens' experience. Poor responsiveness of the online government staffs is the other major inhibitors. Most of the e-mails or sms from citizens are often not answered or responded to immediately (Kaisara & Pather 2009:121). This provokes most of the citizens to prefer the tedious process of physically visiting government offices instead of accessing the services on line (Kaisara & Pather 2009:121). In other words, the online service quality still remains quite poor to enable the luring of most service users from preferring the actual physical access to services by visiting government offices (Kaisara & Pather 2009:121).

Even for government departments that have invested in the use of call centres, empirical facts indicate that delay to respond to calls and lack of sufficient knowledge to provide appropriate advice to citizens is marring the usage of call centres as techniques for enhancing effectiveness of a citizen-centric government in South Africa (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8).

### **Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation is noted by most of the authors to be one challenges limiting the adoption of a citizen-centric governmental framework in South Africa (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8). The implementation of most the frameworks for ensuring effectiveness of a citizen-centric public service has not been followed by frequent monitoring and evaluation to enable the immediate identification and elimination of glitches (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8). The implications are reflected in the fact that by the time the deviations are discovered, its magnitude will have been too much and quite costly to reverse (Maksym & Shah 2010:5). Considering that the government also faces the challenge of optimisation of the limited resources, technological failures associated with lack of repairs have often forced staffs and citizens to reverse back to the old system of public administration (Froehlich 2008:6). The other limitation is linked to the fact that the monitoring and evaluation frameworks used in the contemporary South African public sector organisations are tailored to the old system of public administration (Weaver 2009:4). This undermines effective evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of a citizen-centric government which is largely online based (Weaver 2009:4). The fact that only a few governments have so far successfully adopted a citizen-centric approach also limits the availability of partners against which the South African public service can benchmark its citizen-centric approach (Maksym & Shah 2010:5).

### **DISCUSSION**

Theoretical analysis implies the effectiveness of a one-stop-shop model for a citizen-centric public service is predicted by the seven critical elements encompassing speed, engagement, responsiveness, value, integration, choice and experience (Akther, Onishi & Kidokoro 2007:38; Farelo & Morris 2006:4). It was also apparent from theories that the overall effectiveness of the one-stop-shop model is enhanced by the application of the accompanying strategies that often include listening to voice of citizens, reduction of silos, multi-channel service delivery, continuous improvement using citizens' feedback and setting a citizen-centric service standard (Bourgon 2007:19; Marson 2014:16; OECD 2009:26). Triangulation of these theoretical findings with the results of empirical studies indicated that significant evidence exists that there are enormous efforts to create a citizen-centric public service system in South Africa. Following the promulgation of the "Batho Pele" principles, empirical facts



suggest the legislative and policy foundations for a citizen-centric public service was further entrenched by the promulgation of the legislations such as the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 25 of 2002, Electronics Communications Act No 36 of 2005, Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) No. 13 of 2000, and Sentech Act No. 63 of 1996 (Mkhize 2014; Mkhize 2015:1). It is also apparent that enormous investment has been committed on technology to create the technological platforms for the establishment of e-government services encompassing e-health, e-education, e-transport and e-home affairs (Western Cape Government 2012:14). Through strategies the government has been able to influence the improvement of the level of government-to-citizen, government-to-employees, government-to-government, and government-to-businesses' interactions (Department of Communications 2005:11). Despite significant strides towards the minimisation of operational costs, improvement of efficiency and the overall citizens' experience, a meta-synthesis of prior empirical facts imply that there are still challenges undermining the creation of an effective citizen-centric public service (Mutula 2013:59). Some of the challenges were identified to include difficulties to seamless integrate and synchronise activities in government departments and units in different geographical regions (Kaisara & Pather 2009:121). Whereas internet connectivity and affordability of telecommunication costs in the rural areas were noted to be major challenges, the other inhibitor was noted to be latent in lack of change and transformation of the existing cultural practices to support the use of e-government as a technique for enhancing a citizen-centric public service (Kaisara & Pather 2009:121). In other words, there was limited evidence reflecting the use of a one-stop-shop model or most of the critical strategies (listening to voice of citizens, reduction of silos, multi-channel service delivery, continuous improvement using citizens' feedback and setting a citizen-centric service standard) for creating an effective contemporary citizen-centric public service (Kaisara & Pather 2009:121; Maksym & Shah 2010:5). Such findings imply that the process for the development of an effective South African citizen-centric public service system is largely in its infant stage.

## **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The managers in the South African public sector organisations can therefore considering utilising the existing policy, legislative and technological foundations to develop and establish an effective citizen-centric public service. This will require the application of the six steps' strategic framework in Figure 3. It is argue in Figure 3 that the first step for the creation of a citizen-centric public service will require ensuring that the process for the design and implementation of different government programmes are guided by critical issues that are of

concerns to the larger population. Some of the strategies that public sector managers can use in this endeavour include establishing forums for citizens' involvement and consultation, use of surveys, focus group discussions, media reports and identify areas of frequent public outcry.

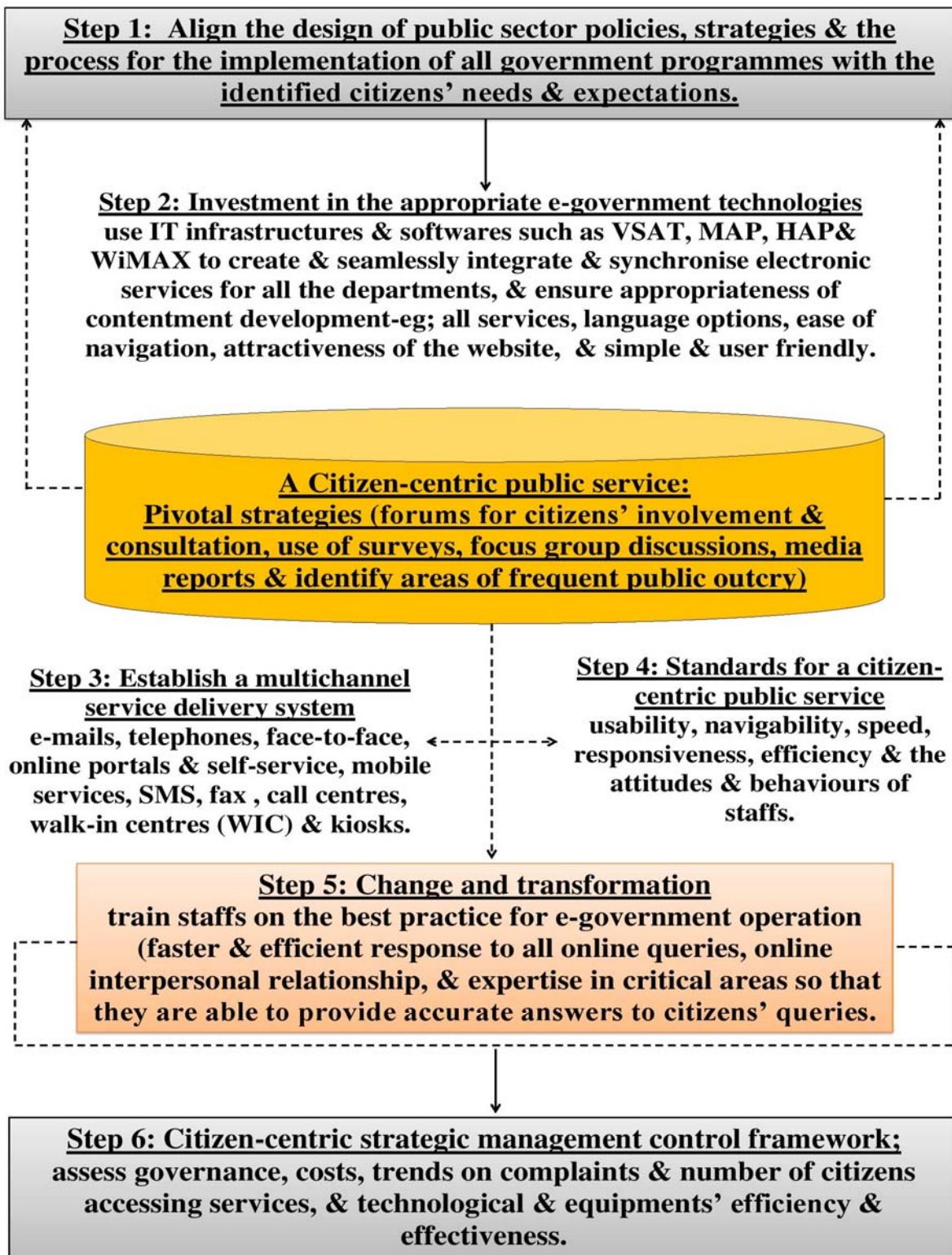


Figure 3: A strategic framework for establishing an effective citizen-centric public service

Source: Derived from the triangulation of theories on the strategies for the establishment of a citizen-centric public service system (Hewlette Packard 2015:3; KPMG 2011:19; Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013:9; Leon *et al.* 2012:6; Makanyeza *et al.* 2013:9) with the empirical studies on citizen-centricity in the South African public sector (Maumbe & Owei 2011:8; Mkhize 2014; Mkhize 2015:1; Segole 2015:19).

After the integration of the citizens' voice in all government programmes, it is noted in Figure 3 that the government must establish approach technology framework through which the creation of a citizen-centric framework can be enhanced. This can be accomplished by investing in relevant IT infrastructures and softwares such as VSAT, MAP, HAP and WiMAX to create electronic services for all the departments, eg; e-education, e-health, e-justice, e-social welfare, e-tourism, e-transport, e-tax, e-water, e-electricity, e-municipality, e-rates, e-police etc. Silos that can emerge from such systems can be reduced through seamlessly integration and synchronisation to create a coherent linkage with all e-government departments. As part of the strategies for ensuring e-government's effectiveness, public sector managers must also ensure appropriateness of contentment development. This can be accomplished by assessing whether web contents provide all services and language options. It should further be accompanied by evaluation of whether the websites are easily of navigable, attractive, and simple and user friendly. With an effective technological platform, public sector managers can then establish a multichannel service delivery system facilitating the delivery of services through e-mails, telephones, face-to-face, online portals and self-service, mobile services, SMS, fax, call centres, walk-in Centres (WIC) and kiosks. To facilitate ease of the assessment of the extent to which the established e-government technological platforms are contributing towards enhancing the effectiveness of a citizen-centric public service, critical standards for a citizen-centric public service will need to be outlined to assess usability, navigability, speed, responsiveness, efficiency and the attitudes and behaviours of staffs. In the context of the argument in Figure 3, it is not only the technology that will influence improvement of the effectiveness of the newly established citizen-centric public service system, but also the undertaking of relevant change and transformation of the organisational culture and practices. This can be undertaken through training and development of staffs on the best practice for e-government operation. Some of the areas to be improved include improving capabilities and competencies to provide faster and efficient response to all e-mails and online queries, and online interpersonal relationship. Other areas include improving competencies of staffs to anticipate frequent queries from citizens and prepare ready model answers, as well as training and developing staffs and call centre personnel on the expertise in the areas that they provide services so that they are able to provide accurate answers to citizens' queries. Once relevant change and transformation have undertaken and the citizen-centric public service is operational, constant monitoring and evaluation can be undertaken to eliminate the identified inhibitors. In this endeavour, use indicators such as governance, costs, trends on complaints and number of citizens accessing services, and technological and equipments' effectiveness

and efficiency to assess the effectiveness of the process for the implementation of a citizen-centric public service system.

## **CONCLUSION**

The embracement of a citizen-centric approach is critical for improving the quality of public services in the contemporary public sector organisations. Significant strides are made in South Africa by adopting policies, legislations and technological frameworks that enhance the creation of an effective citizen-centric public service. However, findings indicated that the initiatives to establish an effective citizen-centric public service is still inhibited by difficulties to seamless integrate and synchronise activities in government departments and units in different geographical regions, internet connectivity and affordability of telecommunication costs in the rural areas, and lack of change and transformation of the existing cultural practices to support the use of e-government as a technique for enhancing effectiveness of a citizen-centric public service. This research sought to remedy such challenges by postulating the strategic framework. However, future studies can still explore the implications of change and transformation of the organisational culture on the successful establishment of a citizen-centric public service.

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