

Knowledge uptake by technical professionals and decision-makers for developmental water services

Part 2: Individual competencies

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Abstract

While significant knowledge appears to be available on developmental water services (a term for service provision, to meet developmental objectives, with an emphasis on poor communities, in which a range of factors other than purely technical factors are addressed), there appears to be insufficient uptake of this knowledge (meaning the acquisition, comprehension and application in context) by technical professionals and decision-makers responsible for service provision, as evidenced by persistent service delivery backlogs and poor sustainability. This investigation developed and documented an exploratory methodology based primarily on in-depth interviews and a literature review which enabled the collection of evidence and development of a 'first pass' typology of knowledge, context and individual competencies with respect to developmental water services. This paper addresses individual competencies. The aspects of knowledge and context, as well as the overall methodology, are addressed in the companion paper (Part 1).

International literature reports a comprehensive list of competencies required by individuals working in the provision of water services. The interviewees participating in the research corroborated the list of the competencies found in the literature. The key individual competencies were classified as methodical competencies and social competencies or competencies of personage and presented in tabular form. In the South African context numeracy, knowledgeable analysis, adaptation to change and various communication competencies as well as an ability to make sound judgments were considered particularly important and given more significance by the interviewees than ascribed in the international literature.

More generally, the investigation established that for effective provision of water services within a developmental context, there is a close relationship between the 3 components of knowledge, context and individual competencies; and that it is difficult to address any one of the 3 components without reference to the other two.

Keywords: knowledge, developmental, water services, decision-makers, technical professionals, context, individual competencies, bureaucracy, interviews