

# A Critical Policy Review of the South African Fire Services White Paper

**M Ngoepe-Ntsoane**  
University of South Africa, South Africa

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**Abstract:** The fire services are a salient contestation which is often overlooked by the Social Science scholars. The Department of Cooperative Governance has ultimately promulgated a White Paper on fire services in May 2020. This study therefore aims to review and examine the legislation with a purpose of traversing the intricacies entrenched. This explicit dimension of the chosen study methodology serves to reconnoitre the variables prudently. The review and analysis of policies have the power to analyse the realities and the misnomer which are a perfect platform to create dialogue. They serve as powerful tools that bring important topics to the table in a captivating way that also spark conversation due to their in-depth and resourceful information. The theoretical framework which forms part of the discussion has a potential to attribute meaning of study perspectives to practicality and simplicity to avoid a complex situation. The gaps identified in the White Paper are uncovered and fully discussed. The content was studied, contextualised, and synthesised intellectually to derive meaning on all the aspects. It is the contention of this paper to attribute meaning to policy improvement in the fire services with a consequential contribution to the world of science for sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Cartel, Discrimination, Fire, Manipulation, Exploitation

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## 1. Introduction

Research published in public policy management journals about Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) performance is limited. Scholars like Andrews and Brewer (2010), Wankhade (2011), Heath and Radcliffe (2010) and Cochran (2005) are some who found an interest in this theme. This research was stimulated by the fragmentary nature of this sector in the South African context. The disjointed approach causes barriers to entry for most of the people who wanted to specialise in the industry. The downcast syndrome exercised within the fire protection industrial sectors as explicated by the South African Fire Development Association (2015) and Engelbrecht (2014) that fire services is a devastating landscape which has wreaked havoc towards service providers; particularly those that are just entering the sector. This condition is caused by cartels that have been within the sector for some time, who know the strengths and weaknesses of processes, shortcuts, advantages, and consequences of various actions. The barriers caused to the service providers are because of many factors which will be revealed in this paper. Some of the barriers to entry are the state tendering procedures which favour the cartel base, as the major dominant players in the sector. The cartels were taking advantage of a

lack of legislation in the fire services sector wherein a lot of things were not regulated, this then ended up in a self-regulating terrain as a result.

The above research problem gave an upsurge to the aim of this paper which is to provide substance towards the Fire Service White Paper published in 2020 on the important aspects omitted. This Fire Brigade Services Act (FBSA), 1987 (Act No. 99 of 1987) (FBSA) is the primary piece of legislation regulating fire services and provides for the establishment, maintenance, employment, co-ordination, and standardisation of fire brigade services (White Paper, 2020). In terms of the FBSA, local authorities can establish and maintain a fire brigade service for the purpose of preventing the outbreak or spread of a fire; fighting or extinguishing a fire; the protection of life or property against a fire or other threatening danger; and the rescue of life or property from a fire or other danger.

This paper assesses two perspectives (objectives) in this study to deliberate on the problem statement explicated above, the first being *to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector which are of critical importance*. The presence of a white paper is indeed playing a pivotal role with the guidelines it provides for institutionalising bodies with the

necessary vested powers to control and coordinate the fire services within the sector. The White paper also provides guidelines on skills development procedures and processes, research context, funding requirements and standards. *The second perspective assesses the policy gaps within the White Paper.*

## 2. The Situational Analysis of the Fire Services Sector in South Africa

According to the White Paper on Fire services (2020), fire is regarded as a serious environmental, human and infrastructure hazard causing loss of many lives and sustained injuries. While the White Paper (2020) views fire as a devastating problem, however, the state still took a long time in finalising the regulatory environment in the fire sector. The White Paper has been in a draft stage from 2016 and was only finalised in 2020. The problems highlighted above which are caused by the fire disaster, are confirmed by the statistics derived from Statistics South Africa, Causes of Death Survey (2018) where it is reported that 2 662 deaths are attributable to smoke, fire and flames in 2018 alone which is 7.2% of the South African population. The fire outbursts cost the economy over 2 billion Rands as postulated by (Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa, 2013). Largely, this is a proven factor that the pervasiveness and significance of a country's economy is compromised.

Conversely, with a delayed and skewed implementation of the White Paper and legal frameworks in this aspect, these problems will continue to affect the citizens due to the improper functioning of the fire services in terms of detection, prevention, and protection. While noting the concerns raised in the above paragraphs, it should be emphasised that it is not only the responsibility of government, but the partnership become indispensable in ensuring success. An obligation on transposing the fire services from response-oriented fire services towards a fire risk reduction-based approach should be underscored in the strategy on the fire sector (White Paper on Fire Services, 2020). Effectively, as a point of emphasis, the White Paper on Fire Services (2020:10) calls for synergies with partners and stakeholders including those in the private sector involved in the provision of fire services.

Inevitably, there is also a need for a comprehensive review of the Fire Brigade Services Act, 1987 (Act No. 99 of 1987) (FBSA) which was propagated in 1987 as one of the old-order legislations. Inherently, a

Discussion Paper on the review of fire services legislation was published for public comments in March 2013 which aimed to align and harmonise the FBSA with other applicable legislation. It is discouraging to note that it took seven years to produce a White Paper for the fire services reform justifying that the government does not see the urgency in which the fire services deserve. Essentially, the delay could be due to the changing of political heads as it is noted that the department had more than three ministers since that time to now.

This White Paper on Fire Services (2020:10) explicates that the White Paper has been designed to outline key policy proposals that the proposed fire services legislation must address going forward. While the White Paper seeks to prioritise fire risk reduction as a core element of the proposed fire brigade services legislation, this article argues that there are still important aspects which were left out. The White Paper clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of national and provincial governments in the execution of fire services across the country (White Paper, 2020).

Naturally the legislation is necessary and of priority as it has provided lucidity in several areas such as the oversight role to be played in the local, provincial, and national spheres of government. This article reiterates the importance and urgency of the implementation of the aspects within the legislation to underscore the promotion of building safer and sustainable communities. Intrinsically, a robust fire protection service is instrumental in the economic upliftment of any country in the manner that, before investors make an undertaking for an investment, they look at significant factors which could have a bearing on the investment initiatives.

The following Acts are some that have unswerving commitment on the efficient provision of service within the fire protection sector. A summary of the various pieces of legislation which address specific provisions is presented below.

## 3. Exploration of the Current Legal Framework

There are at least nine government departments directly involved in fire fighting and fire safety. Their major responsibility being to manage fire fighting under their own legislative structures, details of each Act will however not be discussed.

### 3.1 Legislative Framework for Emergency Management Services (EMS) with Specific Reference to Fire Brigade Services

This study is under pretext that the above institutions are governed by the various policies which are described below within the context of this study. The Fire Brigades Services Act 99 of 1987 (as amended), is the overarching national fire legislation which governs the fire brigade management under the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA).

*The National Veld and Forest Fire Act 1998* (Act no. 101 of 1998): seeks to prevent and combat veld forest and mountain fires throughout the country.

*Disaster Management Act 2002* (Act no. 57 of 2002): focuses on the prevention and reduction of risks of disasters, fire protection service being one of them.

*Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997* (Act no. 75 of 1997): provides labour practices referred to in section 23 (1) of the Constitution by making provision for the regulations of basic conditions of employment which impacts on fire protection services as an essentially shift based service.

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 1993* (Act no. 85 of 1993): is about the health and safety of employees and the public.

*The National Environmental Management Act 1998* (Act no. 107 of 1998) section 30: deals with the control of emergency incidents and define incidents as sudden occurrences of emission, fire or explosion leading to danger to the public and environment.

*Safety of Sports, Recreation Act, 2010* (Act no. 2 of 2010): provides for safety of persons, sports, equipment, property and makes provisions for fire safety as well.

*National Health Act, 2003* (Act no. 61 of 2003): makes provision for fixed emergency medical services in the country.

*Criminal Procedures Act 1977* (Act no. 51 of 1977): makes provision for contravention of offences, penalties on by-laws or other regulations.

*National Building Regulations and building Standards Act, 1977* (Act no. 103 of 1977): provides standards on erection of buildings.

*National Water Act 1998* (Act no. 36 of 1999) section 20: deals with the control of emergency incidents fire being one of them.

*Systems Act, 2000* (Act no. 32 of 2000): outlines the mechanisms for the provision of services including fire services in municipalities.

*Municipal Structure's Act, 1998* (Act no. 117 of 1998) outlines the functions and powers of the municipality in relation to fire fighting services pertaining to planning, coordination, and regulation of fire protection services.

## 4. The Social Context of the Fire Environment

It is found important to embark on the fire quandary in a social context. According to Mock, Peden, Heder, Butchart & Krug (2008), there are over 300 000 fire-related deaths per year with over 95% of all burn deaths occurring in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) globally. The most vulnerable groups are children aged 5 years and those aged 70 (Mock *et al.*, 2008). The injuries sustained from burns innately result in hospitalisation, disability, deformity and most of all resulting in humiliation, low self-esteem and rebuff. LMIC's (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2012) report that globally, about 11 million people sustained severe burns in 2004 alone. Developing countries are mostly affected by the fire catastrophe because of the low-income levels caused by poverty, unemployment, poor housing (overcrowded slums and shacks,) and abandonment by their family. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that fires contribute seven percent to the injury mortality in the country. The consequences because of these are dehumanising posing post-traumatic stress, withdrawal from society, anxiety, and depression. Most importantly, some even face loss of jobs, confusion, suicidal attempts necessitating psychological counseling. The Integrated Strategic Framework for the Prevention of Injury and Violence in South Africa Department of Health (2012) reports that the fire related burn death rate in South Africa alone is 8,5 per 100 000 which is greater than both the world average, which is five per 100 000, and six for Africa respectively. Relentlessly, the statistics on financial losses incurred from fires in 2011 and 2013 per sector (residential, institutional, Public Assembly, commercial, storage, industry, transport, and others) were reported to be at R2 158 223 582 (Department of Health, 2012).

## 5. Definition of Concepts

It is important to first put the concepts in context within this discussion by defining them. It is evident that the fire services sector is surrounded by acts of harassment, exploitation, and discrimination as alluded in the problem statement. Harassment is viewed by Cochran (2016), as exercises which carry within themselves spill over effects into general negative reaction. The concept of harassment is theoretically and logically sound and provides a thought-provoking normative understanding on the wrongs that characterise progressive capitalist economies. Cochran (2016) refers to manipulation as the act of systematic, continued, unwanted and annoying actions of one party or a group, including threats and demands (Cochran, 2016). Equally, he further states that purposes may vary, including racial prejudice, personal malice, and an attempt to force someone to quit a job or grant sexual favours or merely sadistic pleasure from making someone fearful or anxious.

Manipulation, according to Abrantes-Metz, Rauterberg and Verstein (2013:16), is a vague term used in a wide and inclusive manner, possessing varying shades of meaning, and almost always conveying the idea of blameworthiness, justified of depreciation. In its most common use, it has reference to a speculator, or to a group of speculators who buy or sell produce, in such a way as to give outsiders the impression that such buying or selling is the result of natural forces. Monopoly is referred to by Chamberlain (1986) in simpler terms as "control over supply". Discrimination according to Cochran (2016) is an unequal treatment of persons, for a reason which has nothing to do with legal rights or ability. These are linked to the partial reinforcement theory by Braiker (2004) who maintains that psychological manipulation as a type of social influence aims to change the perception or behaviour of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. At the very least, manipulation is forced influence used to gain control, benefits, and/or privileges at the expense of the others. Vilfredo Pareto's Theory of Elitism is also key to this notion of cartels that are manipulative and exploitive towards others due to the power they possess.

## 6. The Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is based on the situational context which has been coexisting in the

fire service which was dominated by the manipulative cartels. The partial reinforcement theory is the one selected for this part of the discussion. Braiker (2004) refers to psychological manipulation as a type of social influence that aims to change the perception or behaviour of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. Brennan (2020) posits that advancing the interests of the manipulator, often at another's expense, such methods could be considered exploitive, abusive, devious, and deceptive. Social influence is not necessarily negative.

Social influence is generally perceived to be harmless when it respects the right of the influenced to accept or reject and is not unduly coercive. Manipulation or emotional manipulation is the use of means to exploit, control, or otherwise influence others to one's advantage. In the extreme, it is a stratagem of tricksters, swindlers, and impostors who disrespect moral principles, deceive, and take advantage of others' frailty and gullibility. At the very least, manipulation is forced influence used to gain control, benefits, and/or privileges at the expense of the others.

Manipulation differs from general influence and persuasion. Influence is generally perceived to be harmless as it respects the right of the influenced to accept or reject it and is not unduly coercive. Persuasion is the ability to move a person or persons to a desired action, usually within the context of a specific goal. Influence and persuasion are neither positive nor negative. The manipulative and exploitive theories can be related to Vilfredo Pareto's elite theory which explicate that in any society, there is and must be a minority of the population which makes the major decisions in the society and rules the majority. This minority is called the "governing elite" or "political class" – they have their influence on government decisions and policymaking. A good example in this instance can be that of the Guptas in the South African context.

The minority gains dominance due to influence through certain social, financial, religious, heredity or personal qualifications/achievements and this is beyond the concept of ordinary elections. Elitism has three main characteristics and are the factors why it thrives: "group cohesion, consciousness, and conspiracy which implies that elite rule only exists when elites are united". Power gives access to more power to obtain other social goods, economic

status, influence on social status, educational advantages and so on. This helps the elites maintain their domination over others for subsequent generations thereafter. The elite doctrine believes that the dominant minority cannot be controlled by the majority regardless of the democratic mechanism used. Pareto and Mosca described the phenomenon of 'circulation of elites' (Mustafa, 2018).

The reasoning behind the choice of these theories is related to the cartels that are manipulative and acting as elites in the fire sector making it a self-governing sector. It has been going on for a long time; cases were reported previously but to no benefit and support. Manipulation, harassment, discrimination acts were evident which left a lot of people discouraged, frustrated, to an extent of leaving the sector while some of those remaining formed opposition groups against the cartels. The main cartels were still dominant and were the ones being listened to as they have been in those positions for long. The South African Fire Development Association (SAFDA, 2015) has also observed a perplexing phenomenon in South Africa regarding the fire protection industry. This situation has allowed unqualified and untrained people to operate in the market with very little fear of prosecution or any other action against them.

## 7. Contextualising the Fire Services White Paper

The point of departure in this study is that the inclusivity, growth, and development path within the industry are valid and noble requirements for all citizens in this country seeking to be within the government's agenda. Unquestionably, this is also suitable for the fire industry which seeks to claim its participation to be within the government's priorities. The National Development Plan (NDP), as one of the key strategic policies within the South African government, sets to address the critical challenges faced by the country in terms of growth and development. It is elucidated in the National Planning Commission (2013) that "South Africa belongs to its entire people and the future of this country is the people's collective future and most importantly, making it work, is a collective responsibility for everyone".

All South Africans seek a better future for themselves and their children. Within this arena of action, it is critical to understand the attributions of the

NDP that it is a countrywide plan for the elimination of poverty and reduction of inequality by 2030. Of importance, to this conception of a capable state, is that the government will not achieve its plans alone as "a capable state alone is not sufficient" (National Planning Commission, 2012). This means that there should be joint efforts in all the plans for successful execution.

In the interest of improving the country, the government must be involved in keeping its citizens safe. With the presence of a white paper, guidelines to institutionalise bodies with necessary vested powers to control the means of production within the fire sector will be actualised. Fundamentally the White Paper (2020) also provides guidelines on skills development procedures and processes, research context, funding requirements and standards.

## 8. The Research Framework

This paper takes a nuts-and-bolts approach for policy analysis. Document analysis, according to Corbin & Strauss (2008), is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents. Document analysis has a potential to elicit information, gain an understanding and be developed into an empirical knowledge (Rapley, 2007). Atkinson and Coffey (1997:47) refer to documents as 'social facts', which are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways. Researchers typically review prior literature as part of their studies and incorporate that information in their reports. In this case, the documents were read and studied prior to the White Paper being released where it was found that there were numerous challenges experienced by the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) in the sector.

That was what motivated the researcher to carry out this study. This supports the view which says that prior literature has played a role in persuading this research from taking place. Bearing witness to past events, the documents consulted had provided background information as well as historical insight that helped with the understanding of the sociocultural, political, and economic context in which the fire services was operating. Documents supplied leads towards asking additional, probing questions. Information contained in documents also suggested events or situations that needed to be observed one of them being to review and analyse the White Paper. The analysis of documents was instrumental in refining ideas, identifying conceptual boundaries,

and pinpointing the fit and relevance of categories (Charmaz, 2003).

Five constructs were derived from the documents consulted which were investigated to fulfil the research objective which is: to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector. The second perspective assesses the policy gaps within the White Paper.

The other method employed in this study was the policy review. This paper explores the fire service sector from the point of view of the White Paper of 2020. It is noticed that the White Paper could help with identifying the risks brought by the fire hazard as well as stimulating the fire services industry. It may be stated that without specifics of the White Paper, a country would not be able to solve the acute problems like reducing death, destroying housing, and losing millions of rands. A gap analysis is packaged with the policy review process focusing on the challenges posed by existing policies and the opportunities for policy innovation to promote fire services more effectively. Glenn (2009) posits that those policies are ambiguous and complex and require rhetoric gap analysis and policy debates. Strosberg, Gefenas and Famenka (2014), postulate that the purpose of a policy analysis is to identify gaps which need to be corrected. A gap analysis is forward-looking, sets a direction, and involves planning.

Denyer and Tranfield (2009) postulate that systematic review should not be regarded as a literature review in the traditional sense, but as a self-contained research project that explores a clearly specified question, usually derived from a policy or practice problem, using existing studies. The results of the review combine theoretical understanding and empirical evidence and focus on explaining the relationship between the context in which the intervention is applied, the mechanisms by which it works and the outcomes which are produced (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). The aim is to enable decision-makers to reach a deeper understanding of the intervention and how it can be made to work most effectively. This paper considers an innovative use of the method to advance and refine academic knowledge and illustrates this through a small-scale study of the literature on the fire service.

The data collection process involved searching of Policy Documents which was followed by screening and selection. Preliminary conclusions on the

policy review process exhibited shortcomings and uncertainties in the White Paper.

## 9. Population and Sample

During the search of policies, 14 policies related to the fire prevention and protection were perused and discussed briefly. The policies are highlighted in the discussion below. Within those policies, the dimensions selected from the population are listed on Table 1 as well as the research variables and policy gap variables.

Table 1 has displayed the associated legislation for the fire services which in this case are regarded as a study population. The legislation is dispersed in the departments which are dealing with fire vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the second column has displayed the aspects which are included in the White Paper for Fire Services. The third column has listed the research variables identified from the previous documents consulted forming part of the first perspective of the study. The last column has identified and listed the variables which were omitted in the entire White Paper which are a bone of contention in this paper forming part of the study perspective. While the variables which are fundamental for putting the discussion in context are highlighted, there has been weaknesses identified in the prior literature reviewed which also form the backbone of the discussion as highlighted in the introduction and the research framework. The findings of the research which are discussed are aligned to the first study perspectives originating from the prior literature on the following dimensions and variables as marked in the Table:

- Compliance to the legal framework.
- Supply Chain Management.
- Skills Development and Training.
- Sustainable Job creation.
- Technical exclusion.
- Risk management.

Whereas the identified policy gaps are the following:

- Critical Infrastructure.
- Designated groups.
- Rural Development.
- Research/ Academia.
- Timelines.
- Mining and Agriculture.
- SME's.
- Supply Chain Management.

**Table 1: Population, Policy Dimensions and Policy Gaps**

<b>Legislative Framework</b>	<b>Policy Dimensions</b>	<b>Research Variables</b>	<b>Policy Gap</b>
The Fire Brigades Services Act 99 of 1987 (as amended)	Socio-economic constructs	Compliance to the legal framework ✓	Critical Infrastructure ✓
The National Veld and Forest Fire Act 1998 (Act no. 101 of 1998)	Climate change	Supply Chain management ✓	Designated Groups ✓
Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act no. 57 of 2002)	Fire risk	Skills Development and Training ✓	Rural Development ✓
Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997 (Act no. 75 of 1997)	Governance	Sustainable Job creation ✓	Research/ Academia ✓
Occupational Health and Safety Act 1993 (Act no. 85 of 1993).	Fire safety	Technical exclusion ✓	Timelines ✓
The National Environmental Management Act 1998 (Act no. 107 of 1998) section 30	Housing	Risk management	Mining and Agriculture ✓
Safety of Sports, Recreation Act, 2010 (Act no. 2 of 2010)	Fire prevention		SMEs ✓
National Health Act, 2003 (Act no. 61 of 2003)	Community Programmes		Supply Chain Management ✓
Criminal Procedures Act 1977 (Act no. 51 of 1977)	Fire protection		
National Building Regulations and building Standards Act, 1977 (Act no. 103 of 1977)	Education		
National Water Act 1998 (Act no. 36 of 1999) section 20	Water reticulation systems		
Systems Act, 2000 (Act no. 32 of 2000)	Fire risk assessment		
Municipal Structure's Act, 1998 (Act no. 117 of 1998)	Partnership		
The Fire Brigades Services Act 99 of 1987 (as amended) Affairs (COGTA).	Research		
	Funding		
	Training		
	Institutional arrangements		
White Paper on Fire Services, 2020			

Source: Author

## 10. Discussion of Results

The Fire Services White paper 2020 is a comprehensive document which managed to cover a wide array of aspects and within an arena of events, it managed to navigate the Socio-economic area, climate change, fire risks, governance structures, fire safety, housing, fire prevention, community Programmes, fire protection, education, water reticulation systems, fire risk assessment, partnership, research, funding, training, and institutional arrangements.

Considering the way, the fire services has been operating before the White Paper on how the cartels have been functioning within the space, the paper had orbited the sector through the lens to identify anomalies which coexisted. Compliance with the standards was identified as a weakness which is believed to be resolved by the White Paper. Other areas of weaknesses which are discussed below were unregulated skills development and training, supply chain management, technical exclusion, sustainable job creation, and risk management.

## 11. Perspective 1: Uncover Salient Issues in the Fire Services Sector Which Are of Critical Importance

### 11.1 Compliance with the Standards

The frustrations levelled against the SMEs by the heroes in the fire sector are highlighted. Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority of 2001 (Act no. 2001) (PSIRA) governs all organisations that are involved in the installation of alarm systems in South Africa. The alarms for fire detection and related systems should be installed according to the South African National Standards (SANS) for complying with the standards and quality. The national institution for the promotion and maintenance of standardisation and quality in connection with commodities and services is the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).

### 11.2 Supply Chain Management

The supply chain management was also flawed which is another feature of corruption (Engelbrecht, 2014:16). This approach has led to numerous price wars overtime between various installation companies and equipment suppliers. The cost of looking at the industry from only a technical approach, has robbed it of being in sync with country' priorities and being at the forefront of job and skill creation

### 11.3 Skills Development and Training

Before the White Paper could be promulgated, the fire services sector had multiple challenges associated with lack of regulations which turned the sector into a self-governing entity in most cases. Some of the barriers were on accessing certain opportunities within the fire sector by the SME. It was a downcast condition which left SMEs to suffer. The barrier was caused by the proffered heroes who were dominating the industry and performing multiple roles in the industry and in turn manipulating the sector. The challenges identified in training were surrounded by factors such as operating in a space where the cartels are self-regulated. Equally, the self-regulated cartels, who are offering training to fire operators, did not have the South African accreditation status from organisations such as Sector Skills Education and Training (SETA), South African Communications Framework (SAQA). It is a positive attribute currently as the matter has been made explicit in the White Paper and it is believed that there will be a relief on

that aspect which allow everyone a space to operate without hindrances.

### 11.4 Sustainable Job Creation

The fire industry according to SAFDA (2015:18) has a potential of creating more than 1.5 million direct and indirect jobs in 10 years. Existing jobs can be retained and sustained particularly with SAQA accredited National training. The poor institutional arrangements which were eminent previously did not provide fair opportunities within the industrial axis. Marginalisation based on gender, youth, and race was evident where nepotism, favouritism, were practiced due to lack of clear governance and reporting guidelines meaning that the Employment Equity Act, (Act no. 55 of 1998) was not observed.

### 11.5 Technical Exclusion

The exclusion of people with technical expertise has been a major problem in the sector. Employment was based on favouritism and nepotism due to unethical practices. The fire protection industry, according to Cochran (2016) seems to be suffering from a crisis of ethics or lack of ethical integrity. Some leaders have expressed a concern that this problem of integrity, or ethics, is partly the result of a fire service culture so burnished with the moniker of "hero", related to the theory of "elitism" by Pareto and Mosca. The formulation of strategies to reduce the problems experienced in the fire service is indispensable. The state laws such as Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act no. 55 of 1998); Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997 (Act no. 75 of 1997); Public Service regulations 2001; and Public Service Management Act 2014 (Act no. 11, 2014) prohibit discrimination in employment, rates of pay, right to promotion, educational opportunity, civil rights, and use of facilities based on race, nationality, creed, colour, age, sex, or sexual orientation. An implication for fire protection service leadership is to establish a clear policy prohibiting harassment and discrimination.

### 11.6 Risk Management

Fire risks were not well managed previously but a more of a reactive approach was practiced. Prevention is therefore eminent than being reactive only after the fire disaster. This notion has been emphasised more than once in the Fire Services White Paper. Taking cognisance that fire is a major risk in everyday lives and globally, with additional effects on climate change, it



is imperative that it be enforced in all departments so that there can be clear policies on how to deal with the safety of its employees. Intrinsicly, fire risk is dynamic and context specific. Fire safety and prevention are the core elements to save the loss of lives, injuries, property damages, infrastructure, and environment for global warming. The risk of fires is influenced by a variety of socio-economic factors as alluded in the White Paper (2020).

The risk of fire is caused by factors resulting from combustion of fire, which is influenced by several factors such as smoking, cooking in areas without electricity and in those areas where electricity is expensive and people using gas stoves particularly those living in squatter camps. The materials used in the erection of shacks also elicit risks in catching fire. The cutting of electric wires by electric thieves (Izinyoka) poses the fire risks.

According to the first perspective which is to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector, while reflecting on certain attributes of cartels on the harassment and exploitation of SMEs, it seems that these practices are an illustration of the abuse of power. Evidence on the above is provided by Engelbrecht (2014:12), who is regarded as one of the champions within the industry when he says, "there are literally hundreds of small businesses that are unable to do business in the fire protection industry due to the draconian activities of a few who have some form of a foothold in the market". These problems used to exist before the sector was regulated through the White Paper because of monopolies and cartels who seemed to dominate the market. The sector was dominated by consultants who were self-regulated for self-enrichment, applying favouritism and nepotism.

This paper has managed to identify the salient and intricate issues within the fire services which the White Paper has also managed to unravel the complexities which are also strong attributes. The previous challenges affecting this sector were presented in this part of the discussion while the forthcoming section illuminates the current gaps in the White Paper which should be considered in the Fire Services Act as a way of fulfilling the second perspective.

## **12. Perspective 2: Assessment of the Policy Gaps Within the White Paper**

This section of the study relates to the second objective which is the main essential ingredient for

the study which is on policy gaps within the White Paper. It has been discovered that the White Paper has excluded certain matters of importance and interest.

### **12.1 Critical Infrastructure**

The caring of critical infrastructure is the first gap which is identified. The White Paper was supposed to outline what measures were necessary for protecting the critical infrastructure to avoid incidences such as the December 2021 burning down of parliament. Fundamentally, there are also several incidences of this nature where the critical infrastructure is affected, and the policy is supposed to outrightly tap on such issues for detection, prevention, and protection.

### **12.2 Designated Groups**

It is of critical importance for the White Paper to include the special designated groups as the critical points of transformation for balancing the injustices of the past. Gender inclusivity was an aspect which was omitted in the White Paper on the socio-economic considerations which should focus on including women. Duncan (2018) expounds that the feminist theories and the feminist movements have vehemently demonstrated that knowledge cannot be considered neutral or objective.

Traditionally, researchers have engendered knowledge based on the dominant perspective and behaviour in society, which was the male one (androcentrism) (Duncan, 2018). Consequently, knowledge has been blind to the specific historical, political, social, and personal conditions on which it was reported, making invisible gender differences on gender mainstreaming and racial balance.

Feminist epistemologies have claimed that knowledge is dynamic, relative, and variable and that it cannot be considered an aim, but a process. The youth and people living with disabilities are also excluded from the White Paper. It is a well-known fact that physical activity can help support daily living activities and independence. Any amount of physical activity that gets your heart beating faster can improve your health therefore meaning that the people living with disabilities are not supposed to be excluded from the mainstream fabric of the society. Social protection plays a key role in realising the rights of persons with disabilities of all ages:

providing them with an adequate standard of living, a basic level of income security; thus, reducing levels of poverty and vulnerability.

### **12.3 Rural Development**

The White Paper articulated on the importance of the prevention approaches for rural development through awareness creation. It emphasised on the involvement of traditional leaders and Municipal Councillors as vehicles through which the community structures can be reached for participation. These will ensure that the re-thinking of the machinery for fire services is pervasive to a certain extent. The roles of the traditional leaders and other stakeholders within the communities were not clearly articulated. The awareness should be reinforced by training of community members on self-care, prevention, self-protection, and rescuing of children, and rescuing one another. The first point of entry for the awareness campaigns should be in schools.

### **12.4 Research/Academia**

Profoundly, a scientific research is one other critical area of consideration in the fire sector. Very little scientific research on fire service thematic areas exists as mentioned in the opening statement under the introduction. The decisions and policies taken are not based on the scientifically robust foundations. Naturally the research helps with the determination of the adequacy of current methodologies utilised by fire services in the execution of its mandate. Practically, the research will be able to provide statistics to make the fire sector to be statistically based with a database on fire statistics.

The statistics will be useful in terms of compliance with national and world statistics. It is acknowledged that the White Paper did include the aspect of a research unit but excluded the academicians in the discussion. The partnership between academic institutions and the Fire sector, CogTA is necessary to be able to actualise the research aspirations as highlighted in the White Paper and strengthen the research agenda.

### **12.5 Timelines**

One other aspect which was omitted in the financial model and plan is the timelines on when the funds should be made. Funding within the sector is another salient area which requires to be regulated.

National government funds for capital projects in fire services are authorised by CogTA (White Paper, 2020). Municipalities use its revenues to fund fire protection services.

### **12.6 Agriculture and Mining**

The other essential sectors such as the mining and agriculture which are at the centre of a multi-layered approach towards economic development are not mentioned in the White Paper. Most importantly the White Paper has defined clear delineation of roles between the national, provincial, and local spheres of governments which is another area posing challenges in a few sectors. Development is also an essential ingredient within the sector where the mining and agriculture being the pillars of sustainable development were omitted knowingly with mining being a fire risk factor. The loss of yield on the agricultural produce, small stock and large stock can be destructive due to fire risk. It is crucial for the agricultural sector to play a detective, safety, preventative, and protective role. Learning from best international practices should be considered as an advantage.

### **12.7 Small and Medium Enterprises**

The long over-due lack of the national fire legislation has resulted in the monopolisation and manipulation of the system by dominating organisations which cause a painful discrimination and exploitation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to enter the market for trading in that occupation. The barrier to entry bears long term negative effects on national priority areas such as employment creation, poverty, and generally, an inclusive economy. Whilst there is a great amount of uncertainty and unconstitutional issues in the fire protection industrial axis environment, the issues of corruption, collusion and exclusion of SME's are laid squarely at the floor due to the absence of legislation to regulate the business environment (Engelbrecht, 2014). The current White Paper is still silent on the role expected to be played by the SMEs in the fire services sector.

### **12.8 Supply Chain Management**

In view of the narrative on the funding model, and the advanced hi-tech equipment recommended for an improvement within the fire services, the supply chain system was not highlighted. It is of

critical importance to lay a base through which the functionaries could be able to operationalise the deliverables in a plan. It is imperative that the registration and database of companies in the fire services sector are included in the Central Supplier's Database (CSD) to give everyone a fair chance to do business in the fire services industry.

An insight and understanding of the White Paper were provided albeit the limitation of the in-depth discussion due to paper limit. While the White Paper itself presents the governance structure for the fire sector, the paper embellishes that instituting a commission on fire services like any other sector such as the Water Research Commission, Land Commission, and others, is a matter for consideration. These will ensure that the fire service ethical foundations are gnarled.

### 13. Conclusions and Recommendations

The article addressed the contextual aspects of the fire services sector, its challenges, and opportunities. The legal framework has been reviewed extensively and explored. The perspectives were broadly discussed, lessons learnt, and recommendations made along the way. There is value in diversity of thought, and the fire services sector's ethical approach should support this basic concept of stakeholder relationships and fairness for an inclusive economy. There are ample opportunities to reverse the institutional technical capacity to ensure that governmental institutions regain their proficiency in the regulatory management and leadership of the industry. The White Paper (2020) has effectively incorporated important factors on training with the training academy being of essence. The national training academy will suffice since it would be expected to provide a comprehensive training on fire prevention, safety, protection, detection, and all aspects related to the fire industry. Additionally, the accredited colleges should be able to offer various levels of the course to the trainees from introduction to advanced level for allowing the sector to have qualified professionals to avoid hindrances to entry and to qualify as reputable fire operators.

The two research objectives referred to as the research perspectives which were to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector which are of critical importance and the assessment of the policy gaps within the white paper were clearly addressed

towards the commitment to address the challenges faced by fire services. The discussions are expected to be executed towards building safer and sustainable communities. The results of the study were discussed according to the study perspectives. The industry will not be successful without the necessary political guidance. Fire is as much a threat to life and limb and the loss of property as would be a civil war. Broadly speaking and commendably, the contents of the White Paper are in order, addressing most concerns amid few omissions which were highlighted in the paper. What is crucial currently is implementation. The road is still uncertain currently but for it to be linear, straight forward, implementation can have a potential to make changes to the current situation. The study contributes to policy improvement in the fire services with a consequential contribution to the world of science within sustainable development and public administration.

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