

# How Thuli used root cause analysis

The report, "State of Capture", prepared by the former public protector has certainly put the proverbial cat among the pigeons in some high level circles. And it makes riveting reading - all the press reports and speculation detailed in an official document! So how did Thuli Madonsela set about the investigation?



*In her "State of Capture" report, Thuli Madonsela applies a technique called "Control Barrier Analysis".*

In the section "Approach to the investigation", she explains how she uses an enquiry process to find out:

- What happened? This is resolved through a factual enquiry relying on the evidence provided by the parties and independently sourced during the investigation.
- What should have happened? This focuses on the law or rules that regulate the standard that should have been met by the President and the implicated State Owned Entities to prevent maladministration and prejudice.
- Is there a discrepancy between what happened and what should have happened and does that deviation amount to maladministration?
- In the event of maladministration what would it take to remedy the wrongful acts; what are the options for redressing the consequences of maladministration.

This is a high level application of a Root Cause Analysis technique called "Control Barrier Analysis".

Control Barriers are measures put in place to prevent undesirable outcomes from a process. There are two types:

- Physical control barriers, as their name suggests, physically prevent undesirable outcomes. A good example is the steel barrier on the side of the road to prevent a motor vehicle veering off the road down a mountain side.

- Administrative control barriers are operating procedures, standards and policies that we put into place to prevent the undesirable outcomes. They are more reliant on people taking heed and observing them than the physical ones. For example, unless they have a speed control governor fitted to their motor vehicle, people aren't physically forced to obey speed limits.

When failure happens in spite of the control barriers being in place, it is an excellent opportunity to analyse the relevance, feasibility and strength of the barrier. In addition, it is a good time to see whether people are fully aware and understand the purpose of the barrier. When reading the public protector report on state capture, you could be forgiven for wondering whether some of the people implicated were actually aware of the control barriers in the form of the laws and rules that apply.

Your application of control barrier analysis may not be as high a profile as the public protector's, but it is nonetheless a valuable technique for your problem solving.