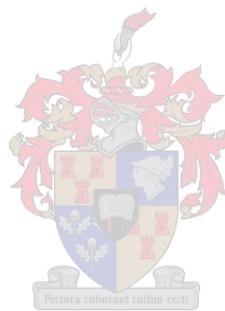


**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN IDP –
THE THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY**

by

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**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree Master in Public Administration
at Stellenbosch University**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The concept of public participation has gained wider acceptance in government circles as a tool to strengthen the pillars of this government's democratic structures. Globally, governments' accountability can be gauged by the extent to which they practise public participation in decision-making in facing up to the challenges of the day.

The concept of public participation arrived in South Africa in the 1980s and was supposedly applied to the inception of a true democratic dispensation in 1994. In the South African context, public participation cannot be over-emphasised as it underpins the democracy introduced in 1994.

Because of the great importance of public participation, the South African government has enacted a number of statutes such as the Constitution (1996) and the Municipal Structures Act (2000) that give substance to public participation. Even though public participation is applied at national and provincial government levels in South Africa, it is principally in the Local Government field where it is widely applied in order to enable good governance and sustainable service delivery.

This study examines the role of ward committees in public participation in Local Government, with specific reference to Thulamela Municipality. The study suggests that the transformation and democratisation of South African Local Government can be achieved through effective implementation of public participation at grassroots level. Apart from passing legislation, more needs to be done to stimulate public participation.

The study has furthermore found that even though statutes provide for communities to participate in a range of government-created regulatory structures such as the IDP Representative Forums and Ward Committees, municipalities need to develop strategies for public participation. Not only do municipalities need to develop strategies for public participation, they also need to develop proper mechanisms to encourage the participation of community stakeholders and organisations.

The study is primarily based on qualitative data collected from Thulamela Municipality through personal interviews with councillors, officials and ward committee members. Moreover, the study also rests on observations at IDP Representative Forums, IDP and Budget consultative meetings, focus group discussions and a review of local government statutes and literature providing knowledge on the subject under study.

OPSOMMING

Openbare deelname is 'n konsep wat in regeringskringe wyer aanvaarding geniet as 'n maatstaf ter verstewiging van die steunpilare van 'n regering se demokratiese strukture. Globaal gesproke kan regerings se aanspreeklikheid gemeet word aan die mate waarin hulle openbare deelname in besluitneming toepas ten opsigte van uitdagings waarmee hulle op 'n daaglikse basis te make het.

Hoewel die konsep openbare deelname maar eers in die jare tagtig binne die grense van Suid-Afrika posgevat het, is dit wyd gebruik en het as sulks teoreties tot 1994 – die beginjaar van die nuwe demokratiese regering – bestaan. Openbare deelname kan in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks nie genoegsaam benadruk word nie aangesien dit die demokratiese bedeling, wat in 1994 werklikheid geword het, ondersteun.

Weens die sentralisasie van openbare deelname, het die Suid-Afrikaanse regering 'n aantal verordeninge soos die Grondwet (1996) en die Wet op Munisipale Strukture (2000) uitgevaardig wat stukrag aan openbare deelname verleen. Hoewel openbare deelname binne die nasionale en die provinsiale regerings toegepas word, is dit hoofsaaklik op plaaslike regeringsvlak waar dit wyd aangewend word om sodoende effektiewe bestuur en volhoubare dienslewering te verseker.

Hierdie studie ondersoek die rol van wykkomitees met betrekking tot openbare deelname binne plaaslike regeringsvlak – met spesiale verwysing na die Munisipaliteit Thulamela. Die studie stel voor dat transformasie en demokratisering van Suid-Afrikaanse plaaslike regerings deur doeltreffende toepassing van openbare deelname op grondvlak bereik kan word. Benewens die uitvaardiging van wetsverordeninge, behoort meer gedoen te word om openbare deelname te stimuleer.

Voorts het die studie bevind dat hoewel wetverordeninge daarvoor voorsiening maak dat gemeenskappe aan 'n reeks regeringsgeskepte reguleringstrukture soos die GOP, Verteenwoordigingsforums en Wykkomitees kan deelneem, behoort munisipaliteite strategieë vir openbare deelname te ontwikkel. Die behoefte is nie net daar vir munisipaliteite om strategieë vir openbare deelname te ontwikkel nie, maar hulle behoort ook geskikte meganismes te ontwikkel om die deelname van gemeenskapsbelanghebbendes en-organisasies aan te moedig.

Hierdie studie is primêr gebaseer op kwalitatiewe data wat deur middle van persoonlike onderhoude met raadslede, beamptes en wykkomiteeledede van die Munisipaliteit Thulamela versamel is. Voorts maak die studie ook gebruik van waarnemings tydens GOP-verteenvoordingingsforums, GOP-en Begrotingskonsulterende vergaderings en fokusgroep-besprekings asook die bestuurdering van plaaslike regeringsverordeninge en literatuur wat kennis oor die onderwerp bied.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	:	African National Congress
DBSA	:	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DFA	:	Development Facilitation Act
DLG	:	Development Local Government
EXCO	:	Executive Committee of a Municipal Council
FAO	:	Food and Agricultural Organisation
GEAR	:	Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy
GNU	:	Government of National Unity
IAP2	:	International Association for Public Participation
IDP	:	Integrated Development Planning
IKS	:	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
ILO	:	International Labour Organisation
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
LED	:	Local Economic Development
LDO	:	Land Development Objectives
LGTA	:	Local Government Amendment Act
LPA	:	Social Learning Process Approach
MFMA	:	Municipal Finance Management Act
MPR	:	Municipal Property Rates Acts

MSA	:	Municipal Structures Act
MSA	:	Municipal Systems Act
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NT	:	National Treasury
PB	:	Participatory Budgeting
PMS	:	Performance Management Systems
PPP	:	Private Public Partnership
RDP	:	Reconstruction and Development Programme
TLC	:	Transitional Local Council
UN	:	United Nations
WPLG	:	White Paper on Local Government
WTO	:	World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH BACKGROUND, PROBLEM, HYPOTHESIS, METHODOLOGY AND KEY CONCEPTS

1.1. Working Title

An Assessment of the role of Public Participation in IDP - The Thulamela Municipality.

1.2. Background/Rationale

According to the Municipal Structures Act (1998), municipalities have been demarcated into three categories, namely: types of Category A - Municipalities or Metropolitan Municipalities; types of Category B - Municipalities or Local Municipalities; and types of Category C - Municipalities or District Municipalities.

The Thulamela Municipality, under the jurisdiction of the Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province is a Category B Municipality currently comprising 38 wards (see Annexure A). The Thulamela Local Municipality was constituted after the local government elections held on 5 December 2000. The municipality was founded in that year in terms of the provisions of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 Section 12, as a local municipality. It is an amalgamation of a number of component entities of the then disestablished Transitional Local Councils – TLCs - comprising Greater Levubu – Shingwedzi TLC; Greater Thohoyandou TLC; Greater Mutale/Masisi/Vhutswema TLC; Greater Nzhelele/Tshipise TLC; and Elim/Tshitale/Hlanganani/Vuwani TLC. The vastness of the municipality is thus a result of the amalgamation of the various former Transitional Local Councils.

The purpose of the study is to assess whether ward committees are enabling communities to participate in decision-making regarding activities and programmes that affect them on a daily basis.

Bekker and Leildé (2003:144) contend that “over the past decade, local government policy in South Africa has proposed a greater degree of local democracy and a greater degree of local public participation”. If local democracy can be advanced through public participation, to what extent do ward councillors understand the value of public participation and what progress can be made in promoting public participation at ward level? What is the role of ward committee members representing different groups such as the youth, women, the disabled and business, in mobilising communities to participate in ward committees? Do ward councillors view participation in ward committees by different structures as a threat to their hold on power or do they utilise this participation to uplift the community in general? Theron (2005c:113) argues that “Public participation is an elusive concept which acts as an umbrella term for a new style of development planning intervention.”

The research will assess whether public participation, as an arm of service delivery, does indeed fast-track delivery at ward level in particular, and at the local municipality level. It should be borne in mind that service delivery has become a pertinent question, not only at local level, but even provincially and nationally. In the process, the study will also attempt to fill the gap in the relevant literature, since the concept of public participation was not extended to all communities during the apartheid era, and as such, scholars are now exploring this field.

Masango (2002:52) argues that “prior to the introduction of a democratic dispensation, apartheid policies caused South Africa to be deprived of a history of good public participation in the making and implementation of policy.” As a consequence of State policy, the Black South African population was not afforded an opportunity to participate in general elections, or to contribute to the process of making and implementing the policies that affected them during the

apartheid era (Masango, 2002:52). The significance of the proposed study lies in the premise that public participation currently forms an important element of the South African government's policy on Integrated Local Economic Development, Integrated Development Planning and Private Public Partnership in Local Government (Van Rooyen, 2003:126). Theron (2005c:128) succinctly sums this up where he indicates that Integrated Development Planning (IDP) presents a framework through which a culture of public participation can be established in South African Local Government.

1.3. Problem Statement

According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:15) scientific investigation can only be effective with a well defined statement of the problem, which guides and focuses both the planning of the research and the research itself. The following statements will guide the research:

- The importance of public participation at ward committee level cannot be over-emphasised for a municipality's good governance.
- Are ward committees a key component of community-based public participation?
- Does public participation entail that change agents should recognise the value of the building blocks of development, viz. public participation, the social learning process approach, empowerment and sustainability?
- To what extent do ward committees and councillors promote public participation in IDP?
- Does effective representation in ward committees lead to effective public participation?
- Is public participation in IDP by ward committee members the backbone of sustainable service delivery at ward and local government levels?
- Ward committees should promote public participation because they enhance rather than impede the service delivery process.
- Does inadequate female gender representation in ward committees negatively impact on public participation?
- How does public participation promote self-reliance within the community through ward committees?

- Public participation at ward committee level ultimately ensures that the voice of the community is heard on development issues (Parnell & Pieterse, 2002:83).

1.4. Hypothesis

Brynard and Hanekom (1997:19) maintain that a hypothesis proceeds from a statement of the research problem, serving as a point of departure and also as a directive for planned research. The hypothesis of this research will be:

Ward councillors should act as change agents; if they fail in their duties, public participation at local government level may not achieve its aims.

Councillors as change agents need to conceptualise and contextualise the building blocks of development towards planning a development process. By adhering to the building blocks of development in planning a development process, change agents should move away from a top-down (i.e. us/the interveners) mentality towards a bottom-up (i.e. them/the beneficiaries) approach.

1.5. Preliminary Literature Study

This section will focus on the views of other researchers about public participation with specific reference to ward committees.

Davids (2005c:77) states that “Ward Committees, if established and managed properly, can become the vehicle through which government can realise the vision of the Freedom Charter that: ‘The people shall govern’.” This only serves to stress the importance of public participation at ward level as ward committees are generally seen as the conduit in the promotion of popular participation in local government issues (Stewart, 2003:44). The establishment of ward committees became an option for municipalities with the local government elections in

December 2000. Since then, most of the municipalities have introduced ward committees. Davids (2005c:78) contends that a “Ward Committee exists to ensure public participation in local government, and as such, it is a key mechanism for enhancing participatory democracy in local government.” Stewart (2003:9) asserts that “Although ward committees are not the only vehicle for community participation in local government, they exist currently as the most broadly applied and accepted model.”

Ward Committees can only be established through Section 12 of the Provincial Government Legislation and are confined to metropolitan and local municipalities of the ward participatory type (Davids, 2005c:78). This implies that district municipalities cannot establish ward committees since they play a co-ordinating role to a certain number of local municipalities under their jurisdiction.

In order to comprehend the concept of public participation, an explanation of a ward committee is necessary. Davids (2005c:78) agrees that a ward committee is an elected body which aims to enhance democracy, and is characterised by having:

- A committee of the council which is required to be transparent and accountable to the community as a whole.
- A community-based structure inclusive of all organisations, sectors and independent individuals within the community.
- A facilitating forum representing community interests and communicating these to the council.
- A link between the community and the council.

Ward committees exist through a legislative framework as enshrined in section 73 to 78 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998) which gives metropolitan and local

municipalities the option of having ward committees as one of the specialised structures to enhance participatory democracy in local government (Davids, 2005c:79).

Section 73 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (1998:52) states that “a ward committee consists of, (a) the councillor representing the ward in the council, who must also be the chairperson of the committee, and (b) not more than 10 other persons”. Moreover, Ward Committees ought to have equitable gender representation and reflect a diversity of interests. All in all, according to Stewart (2003: 9), Ward Committees exist to ensure participation in local government and as such, are key mechanisms for communication with the public. To this end, the Municipal Structures Act (1998:52) simply states that: “The objective of a Ward Committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government.”

The White Paper on Local Government (1998:4-5) addresses the issue of participatory democracy, by suggesting four objectives of public participation in local government that form the broad purpose of ward committees. The four objectives are:

- To ensure political leaders remain accountable and work within their mandate.
- To allow citizens (as individuals or interest groups) to have input into local policies.
- To allow service consumers to have input into the way services are delivered, and
- To afford organised civil society the opportunity to enter into partnerships and contracts with local government to mobilise additional resources.

Participation by ward committees is not only limited to the above issues; it also includes the following:

- Preparation, implementation and review of the IDP.

- Implementing and reviewing the performance management systems and performance outcomes.
- Budgeting.
- Consultation and service provision strategies (Stewart, 2003:66).

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (2000:30) also emphasises public participation, through ward committees when stating that “A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance”. To this end, the Municipal Systems Act (2003:30) further stipulates that a municipality must for this purpose:

- (a) Encourage, and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality including in -
 - (i) The preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan.
 - (ii) The establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system.
 - (iii) The monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance.
 - (iv) The preparation of its budget.

The Ward committees and councillors should enhance capacity for the local community to participate in the above-mentioned objectives.

Having outlined the existence of ward committees as vehicles of public participation, it is therefore necessary broadly to unpack the concept of public participation. The legislative frameworks, such as the Constitution (1996), the Municipal Structures Act (1998), the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003) and the Municipal Property Rates (2004) emphasise the matter of public participation in the affairs of local government, including that of ward committees.

Theron (2005c:113) defines public participation as “an elusive concept which acts as an umbrella term for a new style of development planning intervention”. In this regard, Theron (2005c:113) holds the view that it is impossible to suggest a development strategy or intervention which is not in some way “participatory”.

Davids (2005c:18) contends that participation is particularly important in the case of South Africa where, before the democratisation process, African, Coloured and Indian communities were excluded from the decision-making process through statutory discriminatory mechanisms such as the Group Areas Act (1950) and the Population Registration Act (1950).

In contrast to the then apartheid government, Davids (2005c:18) further argues that the new system of democratic local government is characterised by the space it offers to communities to participate in development decision-making and governance.

According to Bekker and Leildé (2003:144) public participation is synonymous with developmental local government which promises local residents engagement as voters, as citizens affected by local government policy, and as partners in resource mobilisation for the development of the municipal area. The White Paper on Local Government (1998:1) succinctly states that “Developmental local government is local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives”. Bekker and Leildé (2003:144) sum up this idea by indicating that developmental local government emphasises the participative planning of local economic initiatives as outstanding local government goals. Ward committee should ensure that participative planning takes place at local government level, more especially in matters of IDP and budget consultative meetings. Van Rooyen (2003:126) asserts that “Integrated Municipal Development Planning, Local Economic Development Projects, various forms of municipal partnerships, municipal taxation and services rating issues all require an effective community participation process.”

Participation requires that people have the ability to participate effectively (Davids, 2005c:25). This then places a legal obligation on the ward committees to contribute towards building the capacities of communities, enabling them to participate in municipal programmes and for councillors to foster public participation. This can only be realised if capacity building workshops for ward committees are unfolded and implemented by the public participation unit in the office of the speaker which deals with the empowerment of ward committees.

According to Theron (2005c:116-118), there are different modes of public participation, namely: (a) self-mobilisation – that is, participation where people “participate” by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems; (b) genuine public participation where public participation is an active process by which the public influence the direction and execution of a programme or project; and (c) public control – where the public has the degree of power necessary to govern a programme or project without the undue influence of those in authority. Theron (2005c:119) rightly argues that these modes of participation, which equate participation with empowerment, should be accommodated through policy interventions and proper strategies when putting public participation into context.

For Meyer and Theron (2000:1) “Public participation is a social learning process linking the building blocks of development”. These building blocks are participation, social learning, empowerment and sustainability. Meyer and Theron (2000:1) further contend that “public participation is normally associated with the action of the communities, groups or individual in relation to development, improvement or positive change in an existing less acceptable situation”. According to Kotze and Kellerman (1997:52) “Participation is a complex and ongoing process through which people are to exercise varying degrees of influence over development activities that affect their lives”. Theron (2005c:113) asserts that the problem of public participation in South Africa is the difference between valid sustainable participation which we do not follow and the other two methods often followed, i.e. consultation and involvement. Van Rooyen (2003:127) contends that the concept of public participation is employed to reflect the

interactive process of informing and consulting communities, but to achieve true public participation in the management of local government affairs, the process of stakeholder negotiation, rather than mere information and consultation should be followed.

Ambert (2000) as cited in Theron (2005c:111) states that “participation” a new buzz-word, obtained its popularity from a growing recognition of the need to involve stakeholders in development interventions. The international rationale for the promotion of public participation and partnership i.e Integrated Development planning (IDP), Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Local Economic Development (LED) in South Africa, rests on the belief that if the public participate in development programmes, then these programmes will be seen as legitimate (Theron, 2005c :111).

According to Theron (2005c:112) the Manila Declaration (1989) formulates four public participation principles, which are echoed in the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990), as basic to people-centred development, namely:

1. Sovereignty resides with the people, the real actors of positive change.
2. The legitimate role of government is to enable the people to set and pursue their own agenda.
3. To exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for the development of themselves and their communities, the people must control their own resources, have access to relevant information and have the means to hold the officials of government accountable (as in similar vein the Batho Pele Principles).
4. Those who would assist the people with their development must recognise that it is they who are participating in support of the people’s agenda, not the reverse. The value of the outsider’s contribution will be measured in terms of the enhanced capacity of the people to determine their own future.

For Burkey (1993:36) participation is a part of human growth, which is the development of self-confidence, pride, initiative, creativity, responsibility and co-operation. In other words, the

process of public participation and its assumption is as complex as human nature because it forms an integral part of human development.

1.6. Research Problems and Objectives

Brynard and Hanekom (1997:9) assert that in order to conduct useful research, the researcher should have absolute clarity on the problem to be investigated. A research problem “refers to some difficulty that a researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or practical situation to which he/she wants to obtain a solution” (Welman & Kruger, 2004:12).

The aim of the study will be to establish whether public participation in IDP by ward committees is fast-tracking service delivery at ward levels in the Thulamela Municipality. The study will also investigate the strengths and weaknesses of ward committees and councillors in creating an environment conducive to public participation.

The research problem to be investigated is: how ward committees and councillors, as change agents, can enhance public participation at ward level, thereby promoting developmental local government. The question arises as to what is developmental local government? “Developmental local government is local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives” (Parnell & Pieterse, 2002:79).

Dauids (2005c:27) maintains that participation brings with it potential advantages that include both instrumentalist and empowerment aspects such as the following:

- Participation can promote ownership of governance and development initiatives which in turn, can help strengthen democracy and bring about sustainable development.

- Participation can give women, youth and other groups of people, who are often marginalised, the opportunity to influence the outputs and outcomes of local governance and development processes.
- Participation can lead to capacity building, especially at a community organisational level.
- Participation can create a basis for understanding affordability issues which in turn, can create the necessary conditions for municipal cost recovery.

The above-mentioned factors, together with issues raised in the problem statement section, will constitute the research questions and objectives with specific reference to ward committees and councillors.

Meyer and Theron (2000:2) contend that current approaches to public participation tend to be *ad-hoc*, incremental, unstructured, unbalanced and uncoordinated; some even smack of window-dressing. These contentions will be examined by the study. The study will also investigate and consider, with regard to ward committees and councillors, the following limitations, constraints and disadvantages of public participation, identified by Davids (2005c:28) as:

- Participation can be time-consuming and therefore costly.
- Participation can increase the demands on municipal officials and councillors.
- Participation can bring latent conflicts to the surface.
- Participatory initiatives may not be broad enough and this may fuel existing perceptions that participatory initiatives cater only for a small section of the community.

1.7. Research Design

Burger (2005:11) argues that “a research design is a plan according to which we obtain research participants (subjects) and collect information from them”. Mouton (2001:49) states that a research design addresses the key question of what type of study will be undertaken in order to provide acceptable answers to the research problem and hypothesis. The research therefore,

indicates what types of research design will be followed in the study and why this research design was selected and what possible challenges or limitations in the design will require attention. Limitations or challenges, amongst others, are setting appointment dates for personal interviews with a Municipal Manager, Senior Managers and members of the Executive Committee, due to their busy schedules.

An empirical design will be chosen for the study based on observation, experience or experiment and not on theory. Evaluation research will be used because the research project is an assessment of the role of ward committees in public participation in the Thulamela Municipality. The research will be conducted in different wards within the Thulamela Municipality.

The study will make use of multiple methods of data collection which include a literature review consisting of a comparative literature survey, personal interviews, focused group discussions and observation methods.

Theron (2005a:172-175) explains a literature review, interviews and focused group discussion as follows:

- Literature review/comparative literature survey – this is the most basic and popular method, which exposes a great magnitude of data from which to choose the most essential references.
- The interviews – interviews used in addition to a comparative literature survey, allows the researcher to “probe more deeply” following questions put to an interviewee or respondent.
- The focus group – this type of interview is used more often nowadays and consists of the researcher and between four and eight interviewees from the same background who are carefully selected. It is recommended for use in addition to the personal interview and it also uses the same questions as the interview method.

Moreover, interviews, as Brynard and Hanekom (1997:32) explain, are the “meeting of two minds”; those of the interviewer and interviewee, allowing the researcher to gain knowledge directly from an expert on the topic.

1.8. Research Methodology

According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:25) research methodology is also referred to as the strategy for research, which indicates the methods of data collection. “Research methodology is the how of collecting data and the processing thereof” (Brynard & Hanekom 1997:27).

The researcher will conduct personal structured interviews with the Municipal Manager, Senior Managers and the speaker of Thulamela Municipality as stakeholders who administratively and legally interact with ward committees and who also encourage public participation in matters of local government.

Apart from interviews, the researcher will also use focus group discussions with the executive committee of the council, councillors, officials and ward committee members including stakeholders such as business people, traditional leaders, youth and the disabled.

A questionnaire to stimulate focus group discussions will be drafted, consisting of not more than 20 questions (see Annexure B). By virtue of the researcher being a former councillor, observation methods coupled with observation experience will also be utilised. The researcher will therefore do participatory observation at community mass meetings, council meetings, *imbizos*, budget and IDP consultative meetings. Lastly, the researcher will collect secondary data through textbooks, published works, periodicals and journals.

1.9. Outline of Chapters

Chapters in this research will be structured logically and chronologically in the following manner:

Chapter 1: Research Background; Problem Statement, Hypothesis, Methodology and Key Concepts.

This chapter shall cover:

Background and Motivation for Study

Research Problem

Research Hypothesis

Research Methodology

Definitions of Key Concepts for Study

Chapter 2: Public participation in the international context – an overview of the study.

This chapter shall form the introduction and background to the study and will briefly explain the concept of public participation from an international perspective, considering the Manila Declaration. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) and the African Charter for popular participation will also be discussed.

Chapter 3: The South African context for public participation.

This chapter shall examine literature sources that relate to the topic in order to explain the theoretical grounding of the research topic.

Chapter 4: Policy Context of public participation in South Africa

This chapter will consider the legislative framework and policy context which encourage public participation by communities in matters of local government, which includes: the White Paper on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994); the Constitution of the RSA (1996); the White Paper on Local Government (1998); the Municipal Structures Act (1998); the Municipal Systems Act (2000); the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003); and the Municipal Property Rates Act (2004).

Chapter 5: Public participation strategies for local government

This chapter shall consider:

Public participation strategies through “informing” participants – level I.

Public participation strategies through “consulting” participants – level 2.

Public participation strategies through “empowering” participants – level 3.

Chapter 6: IDP and the role of ward committees and councillors

“The IDP process has generated more public participation in municipal planning than ever before in the history of South Africa” (Davis, 2005c:63).

This chapter will unpack participation by ward committees and councillors in the IDP process.

Chapter 7: Research Findings, Interpretation and Presentation, Conclusions and Recommendations.

This will be the integration of theory and practice.

1.10. Defining key concepts for the study

- **Change agents:** These are persons who initiate a process of change and include local government officials, project managers, community development workers and consultants. “Change agents should be like waves on the sea; made of the same water, but which rise up above the water according to the needs of the situation and merge into the water again when the need is over” (Burkey, 1993: 76).
- **Capacity building:** Capacity building rests on the premise that people can lead their own change processes. It refers to the capacity of the people; those who used to be the objects and recipients of development become the masters of their own development. This can only be achieved through public participation in development programmes and projects.
- **Conscientisation:** As formulated by Freire (1972), this is a process in which people attempt to understand their present situation in terms of the prevailing socio-economic and political relationships in which they find themselves.
- **Empowerment:** It is through a process of meaningful participation that people are empowered to influence the decisions that affect their lives. A community should thus be empowered by actively engaging in all phases of a programme and project through the available structures.
- **Development Local Government:** This is local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and to improve the quality of their lives.
- **GEAR:** This market-driven economic strategy referred to as the Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy was set in motion in 1996 and was seen as an indication of a new approach to policy which is top-down, yet flexible and adaptable. It places great emphasis on an export-orientated economy which will lead to international openness and competition.

- **Governance:** Democratic governance should be forecast from an overall strategy and accompanying policy aimed at promoting sustainable human development needs founded on popular participation; i.e. the participation of citizens in all structures of governance, at all levels, from agenda-setting, through to policy formulation.
- **Integrated Development Planning:** The IDP is a product of an integrated development planning process that guides and informs all planning, budgeting, management and decision-making in a municipality.
- **The Manila Declaration:** This is an outcome of the inter-regional consultation on people's participation in environmentally sustainable development which was held in Manila, the Philippines in 1989. Here participants shared a common concern that the results of current development practice are not simply sustainable or inclusive.
- **Public Participation:** Public participation is normally associated with the action of community groups or individuals in relation to development, improvement or the positive change of an existing, less acceptable situation.
- **Reconstruction and Development Programme:** The RDP is an integrated, coherent social economic policy framework that seeks to mobilise the people and the country's resources towards the final eradication of the results of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist society
- **The social learning process approach:** The social learning approach extends the principle of bottom-up planning and public participation by arguing that change agents and development organisations should adopt a learning attitude. This is a bottom-up approach, avoiding the restrictions of a blue-print (top-down) approach
- **Sustainable Development:** The World Commission on the Environment defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Kotze 1997:10).

CHAPTER TWO: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT – AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

2.1. Introduction

Governments throughout the world should utilise public participation to democratise their institutions, and give voice to empower the electorate at grassroots level. Public participation strengthens the pillars of a government's democratic structures and makes them (the structures) more accountable. To this end Masango (2002:52) argues that "Public Participation lies at the heart of democracy."

Public participation, if implemented appropriately, can have positive spin-offs with regard to sustainable service delivery. This occurs more specifically at grassroots level, as it enhances rather than impedes the delivery of services. Government's accountability can easily be measured by the extent to which it involves public participation in decision-making in respect of the challenges confronting it on a daily basis.

The chapter will focus on how the understanding of public participation in the global context enables ward councillors to act as change agents so that public participation may be realised at local government level. It is because councillors are policy makers and overseers of the process of policy implementation that it is imperative for them to understand public participation from a global perspective.

2.2. Defining the concept public participation

Different authors have different perspectives of the concept of public participation. Theron (2005c:113) defines public participation as “an elusive concept which acts as an umbrella term for a new style of development planning intervention”. Furthermore, Theron (2005c:113) holds the view that it is impossible to suggest a development strategy or intervention which is not “participatory”.

According to Theron (2005c:113) the Economic Commission of Latin America (1973), considers contributions by the public to programmes, to the complete exclusion of any involvement in the decision-making process as “participation”. In this respect, Kumar (2002:23) holds the view that public participation means different things to different people. Public participation includes the people’s engagement throughout the decision making process, in implementing programmes, in the sharing of the benefits of development programmes and in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Kumar, 2002:24).

Theron (2005c:113), states that defining public participation should relate to the experience and exposure of that part of the process or intervention; thus, no definition should be rigid. In this regard, Theron (2005c:113-114) further asserts that the International Labour Organisation (ILO), through the Participatory Organisations of the Rural Poor Programmes, argue that their evaluations of international strategies have shown that the grassroots approach to public participation has generated the definition of public participation. Rahman (1993:150) states it as follows:

What gives real meaning to (popular) participation is the collective effort by the people concerned in an organised framework to pool their efforts and whatever other resources they decide to pool together, to attain objectives they set for themselves. In this regard participation is viewed as an active process in which the participants take initiatives and take actions that are

stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation and over which they can exert effective control.

The UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs (1963) as cited in Theron (2005c:114) states that the participation of the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living is expressed in programmes, planned to achieve a wide variety of specific improvements.

Theron (2005c:114) contends that the key issues identified in the definitions of public participation by the International Labour Organisation and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs are among others, as follows:

- Participation is an organised activity of the people concerned. The primary unity of participation is a collective of persons who participate in a relationship with the state.
- The taking of initiatives by the collective in gaining access to programmes and projects is a central feature.
- The origin of initiatives for programmes and projects is based on the people's own thinking and deliberations which direct their collective activities.

The above factors, as will be seen in the subsequent chapters, are lacking at local government level, in that ward committees are not properly organised and, worst of all, there seems to be little initiative taken by both councillors and ward committee members for programmes and projects. If the converse were true, it would enhance public participation.

According to Schulenburg (1998:41), at the 1991 FAO Conference it was documented that people's participation should be viewed as "an active process" in which people should be allowed to take initiatives and actions that are stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation and which they can effectively influence. The question arises as to whether practitioners of public participation are encouraging the people to take initiatives and actions that are stimulated

by their own thinking. If this is the case, then authentic public participation will be realised. Practitioners of public participation seem to be doing the converse of what Burkey (1993:211) points out: “Don’t do anything for people that they can do for themselves.”

The above issues belong to the view of public participation as the exercise of people’s power in thinking, acting and controlling their actions in a collective framework (Theron 2005c:114). Moreover, Theron (2005c:114) argues that if this is the point of departure, then public participation should lead to self-reliance; the same argument which Burkey (1993:50-54) supports, taking the lead from Paulo Freire’s (1972) classic formulation of the principle of conscientisation.

Schulenburg (1998:57), states that “conscientisation is a process in which people try to understand their present situation in terms of prevailing social, economic and political relationships in which they find themselves”. No developmental activity can be successful if the process of conscientisation does not take place implying that public participation can be enhanced through the process of conscientisation.

According to Meyer and Theron (2000:1) “public participation is a social learning process linking the building blocks of development”. These building blocks are participation, social learning, empowerment and sustainability. Meyer and Theron (2000:1) further contend that “public participation is normally associated with the action of the communities, groups or individuals in relation to development, improvement or positive change in an existing less acceptable situation”. According to Kotze and Kellerman (1997:52), “participation is a complex and ongoing process through which people are to exercise varying degrees of influence over development activities that affect their lives.”

Pieterse (2002:12) defines participation as “a process of social learning because it serves to empower uninformed, marginalised citizens about how they can advance their interests in conjunction with their (multiple) communities”. This implies that public participation is not a blanket solution for all development issues but a political practice that fosters access to relevant information; influence over the allocation of scarce resources; awareness about benefits of collective action in terms of strengthening livelihood strategies and increasing social capital and citizenship.

Bradshaw and Burger (2005:48) maintain that public participation is too often simply conducted as a “therapy” for stakeholders, while important decisions have already been taken. Public participation is measured by how much participation there is and how it is conducted, rather than on what is achieved by the process. Bradshaw and Burger (2005:49) compare the process of public participation to the “puzzle of public involvement, of which if the pieces of the puzzle are assembled in the right pattern; they can lead to more and better information being brought to the decision-making process, that will result in better and wiser decisions acceptable to the greater public”. Public participation is a concept with deep roots in political philosophy. The concept features strongly in the debate about democracy and in a push for a participatory form of government to involve wider sections of the population more directly in decisions affecting them (Bradshaw & Burger, 2005:52).

Burkey (1993:56-60) points out that public participation should not be limited to comments only, but should include giving the poor the following:

- greater control over their own life situations
- access to resources for the beneficiaries’ development
- exercising influence in the decisions affecting these resources
- the opportunity to positively influence the course of events

While Burkey's argument seems to be appropriate, the question remains: to what extent do practitioners and beneficiaries of public participation adhere to Burkey's point of departure regarding public participation? Globally, participation is still limited to comments, and only a shift from this mindset by both practitioners and beneficiaries of public participation can bring about a more participatory form of government.

According to Bradshaw and Burger (2005:48) the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) calls for extensive public participation in the form of interactive decision-making in public disputes, linking public participation to conflict management. The authors warn that it must not be taken for granted that public participation constitutes conflict resolution. Furthermore, Bradshaw and Burger (2005:48), point out that participation is not necessarily aimed at building consensus, but rather at generating a diversity of opinions and views.

To solve the conceptual confusion which surrounds the concept of "public participation", Meyer and Theron (2000:4) suggest that Burkey's (1993:56) definition can be used as a point of departure, namely:

Participation is an essential part of human growth that is the development of self-confidence, pride, initiative, responsibility, and co-operation. Without such a development within the people themselves all efforts to alleviate poverty will be immensely more difficult if not impossible. This process whereby people learn to take charge of their own lives and solve their own problems is the essence of development

According to Masango (2002:53) the public may also include individual citizens, community groups and interest groups. Masango (2002:53) argues further that public participation should therefore mobilise the participation of members of the public who are active and interested in the issue at stake. To this end, Craythorne (1997:99) aptly states "the secret of public participation is to ensure that the relevant 'publics' are approached on any particular issue." Masango (2002:53) opines that the public involved in a particular issue includes all organised and unorganised

citizen representatives who can (a) provide information about consumer preferences that might for example, be useful in resolving the public participation issue or (b) affect the ability to implement a decision by facilitating implementation.

Taking the above into consideration, Masango (2002:53) defines public participation as a process in which members of the public as individual group representatives deliberately take part in goal-oriented activities. It can therefore be said that the expression 'public participation' refers to an exercise in which members of the public – as individual citizen's interest group representatives - deliberately take part in relevant public policy-making and implementation processes.

Sanoff (2000:12) identifies four essential characteristics of public participation, namely:

1. Participation is inherently good.
2. It is a source of wisdom and information about local conditions, needs and attitudes; thus improving the effectiveness of decision-making.
3. It is an inclusive and pluralistic approach by which fundamental human needs are fulfilled and user-values reflected.
4. It is a means of defending the interests of groups of people and individuals; a tool for satisfying their needs that are often ignored and which are dominated by large organisations, institutions and their inflated bureaucracies.

Pieterse (2002:7) asserts that [public] participation and partnership with civil society are dominant themes in the wide range of development theories. The conferences that came one after another to maintain thinking on development policy, sponsored by the United Nations (UN), such as the Rio Summit in 1992, advocated prioritising poverty reduction and participation by the poor, more specifically the people of Latin American, Africa and South Asia, whose living standards plunged due to the economic crises of the 1980s.

According to Schulenburg (1998:41) “participation requires the direct face-to-face involvement of citizens in social development and ultimate control over decisions that affect their own welfare”. This means that through their involvement, the disadvantaged should be empowered at grassroots level and participates in the political process.

2.3. Factors that influence maximum public participation

2.3.1. Principles of public participation – The International Association of Public Participation – IAP2

Theron (2005c:113) holds the view that the public participation process should adhere to and apply the seven International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) principles and core values. François Español (2007:1) points out that the IAP2 by virtue of being an international leader in public participation has developed the “IAP2 core values for public participation processes”. He further explains that these core values were developed over a two-year period with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation which cut across natural, cultural and religious boundaries.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), has contributed to the practice of public participation by offering seven ‘core values’ that practitioners and change agents should expect of the process intended to make the public more effective partners in official policy making (Theron, Ceaser & Davids, 2007:8).

Furthermore, Theron *et al.* (2007:8) argue that the participation spectrum described by the IAP2 might help practitioners and change agents to begin to dismiss some of the prevailing confusion and disagreements over the meaning and practical implications of public participation.

The purpose of these core values is to help make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities (Français Español, 2007:1). These core values for the practice of public participation are limited by a global declaration and policy statements (Theron, 2005c:112).

According to Français Español (2007:1), the core values of public participation are identified as follows:

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decisions made.
3. The public participation process communicates the interest and meets the process needs of all participants.
4. The public participation process seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. The public participation process seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. The public participation process communicates to participants how their input affects the decisions made.
7. The public participation process provides participants with the information they need so as to participate in a meaningful way.

If public participation has to win participants to the process of public participation, the above IAP2 principles and core values should not only form part of the theory of public participation,

but should be practically implemented. People will willingly participate if assurance is given to the effect that the public's contribution will influence the decision. In most instances, public participation does not translate into the promise that the public's contribution has to influence the decisions. This currently seems to be the case in the South African situation, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

This tendency of conducting a public participation process, but undermining the input of the stakeholders, results in top-down decision-making in processes that are supposed to bring about bottom-up decision-making outcomes. In this way, organisations and officials end up complying only with regulations and statutes, but not genuinely implementing what has been outlined in the regulations and statutes.

2.3.2. The Manila Declaration on people's participation and sustainable development

The Manila Declaration (1989) was an outcome of the Inter-Regional Consultation on People's Participation in Environmental Sustainable Development held in Manila, the Philippines in 1989, where participants shared a common concern that the results of current development practice are not just, sustainable or inclusive (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2005:203-206).

The participants' vision was a people centred development that amongst others, seeks to broaden political participation, building from a base of strong people and participatory local government (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2005:203).

According to Theron (2005c:112), the Manila Declaration of 1989 formulates four public participation principles, which are echoed in the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990) as basic to people-centred development, namely:

1. Sovereignty resides with the people, the real actors of positive change.
2. The legitimate role of government is to enable the people to set and pursue their own agenda.
3. To exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for the development of themselves and their communities, the people should control their own resources, have access to relevant information and have the means to hold the officials of government accountable (such as through the *Batho Pele* Principles).
4. Those who would assist the people with their development should recognise that it is they who are participating in support of the people's agenda, not the reverse. The value of the outsiders' contribution will be measured in terms of the enhanced capacity of the people to determine their own future.

In essence, the Manila Declaration emphasises that public participation should become a way of life.

2.3.3. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation

The International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa was held in Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania in 1990, as an unusual collaborative effort between the African People's Organisations, the African Governments and the United Nations Agencies, in the search for a collective understanding of the role of popular participation in the development and transformation of the region (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2005:207).

The objectives of the conference were to:

1. recognise the role of people's participation in Africa's recovery and development efforts;
2. sensitise National Governments and the international community to the dimensions, dynamics, processes and potential of a development approach rooted in popular initiatives and self-reliance efforts;
3. identify obstacles to people's participation in development and define appropriate approaches for the promotion of popular participation in policy formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes; and
4. propose indicators for the monitoring of progress in facilitating people's participation in Africa's development.

The objectives of the conference are as relevant today as they were in 1990. It is a government – more specifically local government – which is closest to the people where public participation matters most.

2.4. Public participation as an instrument to democratise Local Government in South Africa

In the past, several governments were inclined towards dictatorship, due – in the main – to the complete lack of democratic structures. Leaders who were prone to clinging to power did not provide for modern-day democratic structures. Where they existed, they were there only to rubber-stamp the decisions of the leaders in power. As governments commenced adjusting to democratic practices, there was a need to ensure stakeholders' participation in the process of decision-making by governments.

Theron *et al.* (2007:1) argue that politicians, practitioners and academics agree on the importance of public participation in relation to 'good local governance' and sustainable local development. Implementing public participation in South Africa's unique conditions has, however, proved to be a serious challenge. This is attributable to factors such as poverty, the expense of servicing

municipal areas, poor public transport, language barriers, illiteracy and patriarchal social structures which continue to slow down the design and implementation of participatory development initiatives.

If local government is to be democratised, as Theron *et al.* (2007:2) argue, its champions should be innovative in seeking ways of engaging and empowering the public:

The existing local government landscape in South Africa is a complex developmental environment shaped by the legacy of apartheid-style social engineering, hopelessness, bred by overwhelming poverty, an often unresponsive and uninformed beneficiary community, inefficient government institutions and ineffective change agents – all at odds with the high expectations of a frustrated citizenry.

Theron *et al.* (2007:2) maintain that exacerbating this situation is the aforesaid negative attitude towards participation, which stems from two primary sources, namely: a lack of clarity in the definitions used to describe public (citizen) participation and the use of inappropriate strategies to achieve participation.

Good governance, as Theron *et al.* (2007:6) explain, means that grassroots-level participation in promoting development depends on a corps of effective change agents who will ensure that the beneficiaries of development are placed at the centre of the initiatives they promote.

According to Mhone and Edigheji (2003:348), South Africa now faces sustainable development, good governance and equitable growth challenges, as implied by the goals of sustainable human development. The researcher argues that the practice and implementation of public participation at local government level is contributing towards bringing about democracy and good

governance. Moreover, Mhone and Edigheji (2003:353) argue that in the face of inequality and relative underdevelopment, a lack of economic liberation has tended to compromise substantive democracy in post-1994 South Africa.

The unilateral implementation of Gear, according to some sectors of South African society, has circumvented the democratic process, resulting in the substitution of consultation, co-operation, consensus-seeking and compromise which are essential elements of governance, with nominal consultation, unilateralism and conflict (Mhone & Edigheji, 2003:353).

Mhone and Edigheji (2003:353) point out that even when consultation takes place, this serves primarily as an information-sharing mechanism rather than a platform for the public to make meaningful inputs and influence the policy agenda and outcomes. The researcher has observed that this state of affairs currently manifests itself at local government level.

Stoker (2002:32) maintains that democracy in the 20th Century achieved victory as an ideology through two core virtues: democratic arrangements fundamentally treat all as free and equal (one person, one vote); moreover, they help protect the basic rights of citizens by insisting on popular authorisation in the exercise of public power.

Regarding the benefit of democracy being put into practice through governance arrangements, Stoker, (2002:32) states that “Democracy provides a way to pass dispersed information relevant to problem-solving, and explore the range of possible solutions to practical problems: in short, a framework for collective learning.”

Tso (2007:7) argues that the South African local government modernisation agenda, largely set out within the 1998 and 2001 local government White Papers, is intended to bring about

improvements under key themes; including efficiency, transparency and accountability principles linked to democracy. It should also be noted that aspects of the modernisation agenda relating to public participation, council decision-making and wider governance is considered to be a programme for the democratic renewal of local government (Tso, 2001:7). Stoker (2002:33) sums this up succinctly when he states that “democracy helps to solve problems - that is the appeal that lies behind the new vision of local governance.”

Masango (2002:52) argues that democracy is a people-driven process in which public participation plays an important role. Good governance in democratic countries is a product of the democratic process. Linking public participation and democracy, Masango (2002:52) maintains that the introduction of a democratic dispensation in South Africa in April 1994 placed the idea of public participation in public affairs on centre stage.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994) policy framework states: “Democratisation requires that the structures and functioning of public institutions be re-established in such a way that they allow and encourage public participation”. Simply put, public participation provides mechanisms for democratising the planning process in general to such an extent that public participation in local government affairs is considered to be a democratic right in many countries (Masango, 2002:55).

In the South African context, public participation has become a government policy framework to be implemented by all spheres of government. At local government level it is a legal requirement through the Municipal Systems Act (2000), the White Paper on Local Government (1998) and the Municipal Structures Act (1998) compelling all municipalities to engage communities in public participation, thereby democratising their institutions. To this end, the Municipal Systems Act (2000:32) states that “A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance.”

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to unpack the concept and principles of public participation from a global perspective, starting with views by various authors, the IAP2, the Manila Declaration and the African Charter for Popular Participation. The thread throughout was that communities should be enabled and encouraged to participate in matters affecting their lives in all spheres of government, particularly in the local government sphere. The link between public participation and democracy was also stressed, indicating that in order for a democracy to flourish, a democratic government should exercise public participation; but this doesn't seem to be the case in the South African context.

Ward committees should act as vehicles for promoting public participation that should foster good governance at local government level. In order to promote public participation, ward councillors as change agents should mobilise various stakeholders who are represented on the ward committee to participate effectively in their spheres of local government. This can only happen if ward committees act as strong links between communities and the municipality. Ward committees should be structured in such a manner that they become effective systems for engaging communities in municipal decision-making. Not only are ward committees important in decision-making, but they are also key components of community-based public participation. Consequently, ward councillors should see to it that adequate resources are provided to enable ward committees to implement the public participation process which is inherent to the core meaning of democracy.

The following chapter will focus on public participation in the South African context, whilst considering more specifically, whether public participation in South Africa adheres to and harnesses the seven IAP2 principles and core values.

Public participation in South Africa has become the norm for engaging communities and stakeholders in decision-making, as reflected in *imbizos* organised by National Government that draw in leaders from provincial departments, district and local municipalities.

At local government level, the Integrated Development Plans [IDP], Private Public Partnership initiatives [PPP], and the Local Economic Development programme [LED] are instruments of public participation involving all sectors of the community. Most importantly, ward committees are a key component of community-based public participation. When we talk about public participation at local government level, we are directed to ward committees as tools for engaging the community in decision making. Functional ward committees are preferably placed to facilitate public participation.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

3.1. Introduction

Prior to 1994, South Africa was a divided country with four unequal groups, most of whom did not enjoy equal rights before the law. The advent of democracy in 1994 abolished the status quo and South Africa became a democratic country wherein all races now enjoy equal Constitutional rights. The concept of public participation which was hitherto foreign or existed only hypothetically was implemented by all spheres of State, starting with the national sphere of government and extending to local governmental fields. This was a way of democratising the institutions of government.

It is in the local sphere of government where public participation is generally applied in South Africa, in order to bring about good governance. It is characterised by accountability, transparency and openness. As Pieterse (2002:8) points out, public participation seeks to empower the marginalised and excluded groups within the community.

This chapter will focus on how the practice of public participation is empowering the marginalised groups in the community, more particularly in the field of local government. This implies that structures of public participation in local government, such as ward committees, should be strengthened and given more powers to enable communities to participate in local government issues. This can materialise only if ward councillors act as change agents implementing effective representation in ward committees leading to effective public participation. Change agents as experts, consultants, enablers, advocates, mediators and organisers should understand the relationship between the so-called 'building blocks of development' to facilitate the process of public participation. In this way, they would be

expected to implement development in an integrated holistic and beneficiary-empowering manner. Moreover, effective public participation can be realised if communities do not only influence the allocation of development resources, but are enabled through public participation to determine and control their allocation (Theron, 2005c:111).

3.2. Historical background of public participation

Theron (2005c:112) maintains that the birth of a new South Africa has accelerated the search for appropriate strategies to increase the participation of the public in all fields of government, particularly in the local government sphere. This becomes clear, asserts Theron (2005c:112-113), if a study is conducted on the foundation on which the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994), the Constitution (1996), the White Paper on Local Government (1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (2000) are built and implemented as IDP/PPP and LED.

Similarly, Hamann (2003:21) contends that “Public Participation in post-apartheid South Africa exists in an uneasy state of tension.” This uneasy state of tension as Hamann suggests is, on the one hand, a result of the Anti-Apartheid struggle, which in the mid 1990s reflected a rich tradition of civic activism characterised by many forceful vocal NGOs and Civic Associations. This tradition, Hamann (2003:21) further asserts, was supported by government and ANC policies as echoed in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994) and in the Constitution (1996), as well as through laws and policies related to development planning and local governance. On the other hand, public participation in South Africa has been negatively affected by the legacy of Apartheid, which has exacerbated challenges that are common to public participation.

Davids (2005c:18), when explaining the historical background of public participation in South Africa, maintains that “public participation is particularly important in the case of South Africa

where - prior to democratisation – African, Coloured, and Indian communities were excluded from the decision-making process through statutory mechanisms such as the Group Areas Act (1950) and the Population Registration Act (1950)”. After the April 1994 general elections, Davids (2005c:18) suggests that the new democratic government had the challenging task of undoing past injustices, resulting in the introduction of public participation in South Africa.

Prior to the introduction of a democratic dispensation, apartheid policies deprived South Africa of a history of good public participation in the making and implementation of policy (Masango, 2002:52). This state of affairs, was, as Masango (2002:52) explains, due to the fact that during the apartheid era, black South Africans, who were and still are in the majority, were not afforded the opportunity to participate in general elections, or to contribute to the process of making and implementing policies that affected them. Masango (2002:54) maintains that during the apartheid period, the participation of local citizens, especially blacks, was lacking in the extreme and was primarily limited to compliance. Masango (2002:54) further argues that those who wanted to participate in public affairs regarded the government as being undemocratic and illegitimate. Perceptions of this nature brought anger and frustration to the majority of the people; a pent-up anger and frustration which was released through boycotts and protest actions against public policies (Masango, 2002:54). It is worth noting that, currently, South Africa is faced with an unstructured type of public participation - though limited - in the form of protest marches for service delivery.

Development literature emphasises the need to link participation to the broader democratisation of local governance (Hamann, 2003:32). The researcher avers that this is indeed the case in South Africa today, as municipalities are required by legislation to practise public participation, which in turn promotes effective local governance and ensures the ultimate power of community voices in development at ward level. The wall-to-wall demarcation of municipalities in South Africa implies that every ward belongs to a certain municipality, and any development therefore, takes place at ward level. This means that ward committees are regarded as vehicles for public participation.

Local government, being the field of government closest to the community, was tasked with facilitating the process of “bringing people back in” (Davids, 2005c:18). In this regard, Davids (2005c:18) holds the view that a defining characteristic of the new system of democratic local government is the space it offers to communities to participate in development decision making and governance.

The question should then be asked: To what extent are communities participating in developmental decision-making processes? This therefore calls for ward councillors to act as change agents for public participation to be realised at ward level. Masango (2002:55) declares that “Democratisation requires that the structures and functioning of public institutions be established in such a way to allow and encourage public participation.”

Masango (2002:55) opines that public participation provides a mechanism for democratising the planning process in such a way that public participation in local government affairs, in many countries, is considered to be a democratic right. To achieve the democratisation of local authorities, Section B (1.3) of the White Paper on Local Government (Notice No. 423 of 1998), encourages Municipal Councillors to promote the participation of citizens and community groups in the design and delivery of municipal programmes.

3.3. How public participation enhances local democracy and good governance in South Africa

Hamann (2003:23) contends that before 1994, administrative decision-making, including public participation, was hierarchical, secretive, and deeply unfair to the majority of the people. The researcher has observed that currently the converse seems to be the case in as far as decision-making is concerned. No longer is decision-making following the top-down or blueprint

approaches, but rather the bottom-up approach. This is largely due to the Constitution (1996) as Hamann (2003:23) concisely points out: “The cornerstone of the South African government’s attempts, after 1994, to entrench civic rights for all and encourage citizens’ involvement in decisions that affect them is the Constitution.”

For Sithole (2004:2) public participation is a process through which to facilitate public decision-making, implementation and the evaluation of programmes affecting people’s lives. He further asserts that, currently, there is an emphasis on participatory democracy in all governance activities in South Africa. Constitutional mandates require municipalities to undertake service delivery activities with communities as local partners.

The link between public participation and democracy becomes more relevant in the South African context, where public participation is seen, as not only to play a pivotal role, but also to enhance local democracy. Putu (2006:11) points out that there is a general agreement that participation is a key to the success of the local development process; that there have to be representative and administrative systems through which the views of the citizens are heard and fed into policy formulation. In this respect, the ward committee systems become a relevant representative system through which such views are heard and implemented in the policy formulation framework.

Over the first 14 years of democracy in South Africa, there has been a wide range of participatory processes at work (Davids, 2005c:1). These participatory processes were due to constitutional and legal frameworks that were put in place seeking to create spaces for ordinary people to participate in the process of governance and development (Davids 2005c:1). Nevertheless, he avers there have been other processes, such as the unstructured public participation, that have limited people’s space, keeping them from engaging with local government.

Dauids (2005c:14) differentiates between structured and unstructured participation. The former takes place at local elections, wards and development forums, while the latter manifests itself in the anti-apartheid struggle for service delivery in the townships. The researcher has observed that recently, as highlighted in the preceding section, communities in South Africa seem to be abandoning forums for structured participation. This is an indication that ward committees and ward councillors are not adequately engaging communities in public participation processes. To this end, Dauids (2005c:15) contends that effective structured participation that leads to better service delivery and improved livelihoods for the poor will likely lessen the temptation of frustrated communities to resort to unstructured modes of participation. Theron *et al.* (2007:15) point out that if formal structures for public participation, such as the IDP fail, a frustrated citizenry sometimes has no alternative but to protest. Furthermore, if protest opens doors to public participation, the frustrated citizenry have every reason to engage in it. In the context of South Africa, protest historically has been an indispensable element of democratic public participation. As such, protest should be acknowledged as an option in the spectrum of public participation. The researcher maintains that the unstructured mode of participation tends, by its very nature, to be violent, with clear evidence of this in local print and electronic media reports.

3.4. The rhetoric of public participation

According to Meyer and Theron (2000:1) “Public Participation is a social learning process linking the building blocks of development.” These building blocks, which will be discussed under the next sub-heading, are: participation, social learning, empowerment and sustainability. According to Kotze and Kellerman (1997:52) “Participation is a complex and ongoing process through which people are to exercise varying degrees of influence over development activities that affect their lives.”

The conceptual problem with public participation is the difference between authentic and enabling sustainable participation, which are not followed, whereas the other two strategies, often are, i.e. consultation and involvement (Theron, 2005c:113).

Van Rooyen (2003:127) contends that the concept of public participation is employed to reflect the interactive process of informing and consulting with communities; but to achieve true public participation in the management of local government affairs, the process of stakeholder negotiation, rather than mere information and consultation should be followed (Van Rooyen, 2003:127). The highest degree of influence the public can achieve is empowerment which places the final decision-making authority in the hands of the public.

Meyer and Theron (2000:1) point out that the birth of the new South Africa and the first two democratic elections in 1994 and 1999 have accelerated the search for approaches to increase the participation of the public in all spheres of government. Meyer and Theron (2000:1) further argue that “Current approaches to public participation often tend to be ad-hoc, incremental, unstructured, unbalanced, and uncoordinated and above all, smack of window dressing.” Theron (2005c:113) asserts that the indiscriminate use of the term “public participation” to describe strategies that have little to do with authentic participation by the poor, has created misunderstandings and bottom-up expectations among the public, who are the so-called beneficiaries or stakeholders in development planning.

Theron (2005c:113) declares that there is a gulf between the rhetoric of public participation and what often happens in practice; the researcher has also made similar observations in the South African context. In developmental local government, politicians and local government officials always mobilise the communities to participate in the process of public participation, but little seems to influence the decisions to be taken by politicians.

The researcher reasons that it would seem that public participation meetings are held after decisions have already been taken, or, the community's inputs in public participation meetings are ignored or not implemented. This is in violation of one of the core values of the principle of public participation which states that "public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision" (Français Español, 2007:1).

The researcher argues that the tendency of not taking into consideration the inputs from the public in the public participation processes result in the non-attendance by the public of such meetings once they realise that the meetings are just another talk-shop. Theron (2005c:113), in adding his opinion of these perceptions, warns that participation, like sustainable development has become yet another catchword which everybody advocates but few put into practice.

Public participation as an all-inclusive concept can be distinguished through approaches, such as participation, as a means to an end, rather than simply by definitions (Meyer & Theron, 2000:2-3). Moreover, Meyer and Theron (2000:3) argue that participation as a means to an end, i.e. a social learning process, is considered necessary for the success of an initiative. In this regard, Meyer & Theron (2000:3) also maintain that the participation of communities is considered necessary for, amongst others, improving the outcome of a project through cost sharing, increased efficiency and improved effectiveness. Furthermore, Meyer and Theron (2000:3) hold the view that if public participation is used as an end in itself, beneficiary participation gives legitimacy to projects through endorsing a political imperative. In this way, participation is seen as an objective whose accomplishment symbolises a more qualitative than quantitative achievement (Meyer & Theron, 2000:3). Meyer and Theron (2000:3) maintain that the primary concern becomes not what public participation contributes to an end product, but what long-term gains are made to social advantages and sustainable development.

The distinction between participation as a means and participation as an end is illustrated by Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Comparative Analysis: Participation as a means and/or an end

Participation as a means	Participation as an end
Implies the use of participation to achieve some predetermined goal or objective.	Attempts to empower people to participate in their own development more meaningfully.
Attempts to utilise existing resources in order to achieve the objective of programmes/projects.	Attempts to ensure the increased role of people in development initiatives.
Emphasises achieving the objective rather than the act of participation itself.	Focuses on improving the ability of the people to participate rather than just achieving the predetermined objectives of the project.
More common in government programmes, where the main concern is to mobilise the community and involve them in improving the efficiency of the delivery system.	Finds relatively less favour with government agencies. NGOs in principle agree with this viewpoint.
Participation is generally short term.	Participation is a long-term process.
Participation as a means, therefore, appears to be a passive form of participation.	Participation as an end is relatively more active and dynamic than participation as a means.

Source: Theron (2005c:117)

Theron (2005c:117) asserts that apart from differentiating public participation as a means to an end (i.e. passive participation), or an end in itself (active participation); it can also be analysed as a system-maintaining or a system-transforming process. This distinction relates to public participation as involvement (i.e. weak public participation/co-optation/mobilisation/a top-down decision-making process/an anti-participatory and manipulative mode of participation) and

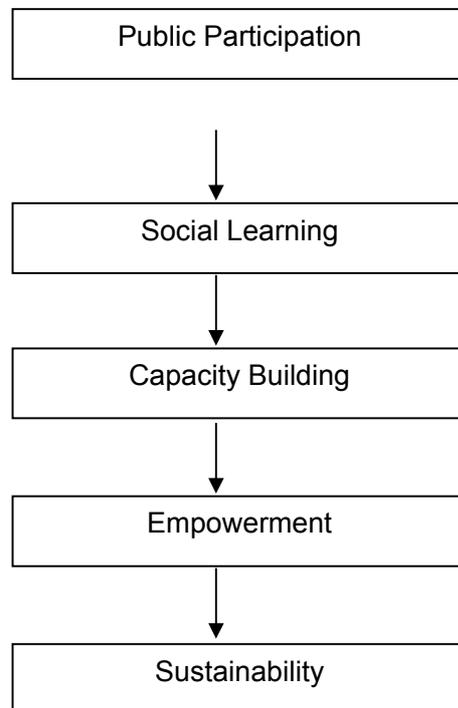
public participation as empowerment (i.e. strong public participation/social learning process/builds capacity/a bottom-up decision-making process) (Theron, 2005c:117).

The weak interpretation of public participation equates participation with involvement, which is probably the most problematic concept in the public participation debate (Theron, 2005c:117). Involvement has gained a negative reputation as being associated with co-option, placation, consultation, informing and similar ‘slippery’ concepts in development debate, whereas the strong interpretation of participation equates participation with empowerment. In linking the theory of public participation with reality, the key question is: “Who controls development?” (Theron, 2005c:117). In response to this question, Theron (2005c:117) points out that public participation as empowerment implies the decentralisation of decision making. The IAP2 spectrum for public participation shifts from what IAP2 refers to as increasing levels of public impact or influence which cover ‘participation’ that informs, consults, involves, collaborates and finally empowers participants. For example, the lowest level, the ‘inform’ level acts as a ‘promise to the public’ stating that ‘we will keep you informed’ and the final and highest ‘level of influence’ is the empowerment level which places final decision making in the hands of the public and promises that ‘we will implement what you decide’ (Theron *et al.*, 2007:15).

3.5. Public participation and the building blocks of development

According to Meyer & Theron (2000:4-5), Theron (2005c:120-123), Theron (2008:14-17) and Kotze & Kellerman (1997:37-41), in whatever context the complex concept of “development” is used, it must be seen as a “building block” consisting of the following processes in relation to one another, namely:

Figure 3: Building blocks of development



Source: Meyer and Theron (2000:5)

3.5.1. Public participation

Public participation, the first building block of development, is a component of the process of human growth. This means that the process of public participation and its assumptions is as complex as human nature because it is an integral part of human development (Theron, 2005c:120). Through public participation, the beneficiaries of development share in, belong to, influence and direct the development process. Above all, public participation establishes dignity and self-esteem in beneficiaries. Max-Neef (1991) in Theron (2005c:120) supports this assumption in his analysis of fundamental human needs, in which he identifies public participation as one of the nine basic human needs that should be satisfied through the development process.

Theron (2005c:120) maintains that public participation means that the most important role player is and should be, the public – the people or beneficiaries themselves. This implies that ward councillors, as change agents, when facilitating the process of public participation should always take the inputs of beneficiaries as of utmost importance. Ward councillors, as change agents, should realise that if beneficiaries, as discussed in detail in section 6.2, are given a chance in the development, the outcome might be more sustainably pleasing and legitimate. Change agents should drive the idea that development partnerships with beneficiaries will drastically change the development agenda and in order to empower the beneficiaries of development, ward councillors as change agents need to understand the dynamic workings of social capital and indigenous or social knowledge in beneficiary communities. Meyer and Theron (2000:1) further contend that “Public participation is normally associated with the action of the communities, groups or individuals in relation to development, improvement or positive change in an existing less acceptable situation.”

Public participation can be seen in a continuum as a way of explaining the relationship between interpretation and development analysis. According to Oakley and Marsden (1994) in Meyer and Theron (2000:1-2), the following four (4) explanations summarise this range:

- Public participation is considered a voluntary contribution by people to some public programme or other, which is supposed to contribute to national development, but the people are not expected to take part in shaping the programme or criticise its contents.
- With regard to development, participation includes people’s involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, in their sharing in the benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes.
- Public participation is concerned with the organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations for groups or the movement of those hitherto excluded from such control.
- Public participation is an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project.

3.5.2. Social Learning Process Approach

The building blocks of development approach calls for a second important block; the social learning process approach to be introduced once public participation has been set in place (Meyer & Theron 2000:5).

Kotze and Kellerman (1997:41) assert that the social learning process has its origin in the concept of the learning organisation, popularised by Senge (1990). Through this approach, ward councillors as change agents should adopt a learning-in-partnership approach with the beneficiaries of development. This learning-in-approach entails mutual learning from each other, respect and understanding, and a willingness to work together as equals. Theron (2005c:121) contends that the social learning process approach extends the principle of bottom-up planning and public participation by arguing that change agents and development organisation should adopt a learning attitude.

Furthermore, Theron (2005c:121) maintains that this radical shift in thinking and planning, as reflected in Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000:32), means adopting a learning attitude from the beginning in respect of all aspects of development action, so that the people, the “beneficiaries” of the action, are not included in the social learning process simply as partners and beneficiaries, but as actors in their own development.

According to De Beer (2000:288) “the Social Learning Approach aims to meet the need for a flexible sustained, experimental action-based, capacity-building style of assistance.” This is a bottom-up approach, avoiding the restrictions of a blueprint (top-down) approach and as a result, it envisages a development programme. The IDP Plan, where ward committees and ward

councillors can be engaged properly in the public participation processes, is a bottom-up type of development planning.

Theron (2005c:122) holds the view that the public, through the social learning process approach, contributes to a programme through their indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and experience. Thus, planning partnerships reduces the risk of inappropriate top-down planning and strategies being imposed on people. In this regard, Theron (2005c:122) argues that this relates to one of the challenges faced by the IDP as the challenges identified in Chapter 6.

3.5.3. Capacity building

Capacity building rests on the premise that people can lead their own change processes (Liebenberg & Stewart, 1997:21). They can be actors, not merely subjects of change. One way of achieving capacity building is through a learning process approach which aims at building capabilities for action through action. Liebenberg and Stewart (1997:22) further argue that capacity building refers to the capacity of the people – those who used to be the objects and recipients of development, to become the masters of their development. This can only be achieved through public participation in development projects. The process of capacitating ward committees to participate in the initiation, monitoring and evaluation of local government activities can be seen as capacity-building, because certain skills are transferred to individuals to perform certain tasks adequately.

3.5.4. Empowerment

According to Meyer and Theron (2000:3-4), in public participation as empowerment, the question to be answered - being one of the fundamental questions in the so-called “people-

centred” development debate - should be: “Who controls development?” In public participation as empowerment, the public should be the “active citizen” in partnership with government, the private sector, NGOs and aid agencies. People will emerge from their poverty and transform themselves into citizens with rights and responsibilities. Public participation, as empowerment and a social learning process, leads to collective action at grassroots level, making people self-aware and self-reliant (Meyer & Theron, 2000:4).

Theron (2005c:122) states that issues of public participation and empowerment in the planning process for service delivery are important for sustainable development. Participation and empowerment are fundamental to the planning process and to sustainable development. Empowered participation entails the requirement, through participation, of influence for the participants in a development process. Basically, participation should be able to directly influence the project planning process and project outcome. It is therefore incumbent upon ward councillors to work towards the realisation of this goal which unfortunately, seldom happens. Theron (2005c:122) again warns that participatory approaches have been subject to criticism with regard to the delivery of power to the individual concerned; the difference between the weak and strong interpretations of public participation is important (Theron, 2005c:123). He further maintains that development includes acquiring power for community stakeholders. They (the stakeholders) should influence decision-making.

3.5.5. Sustainability

Theron (2005c:123) states that with the other blocks of development, public participation should lead to sustainable development. Participatory development that leads to sustainability entails local choice, because the beneficiaries are the local experts of their meaning-giving social context. According to Theron (2005:123c), The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Moreover, he opines that in spite of the different views on sustainability, the challenge is how to promote it at grassroots level. Central to a grassroots, populist interpretation of sustainable development, is the ideal of public participation (Theron, 2005c:123).

Public participation and sustainability involve local choice in that people are the local experts in line with the idea of an IKS approach to public participation (Theron, 2005c:123). Through their social capital and IKS, beneficiaries should become the masters of their own development and not the change agent. Furthermore, public participation and sustainability also involve the devolution of power. Theron (2005c:123), cited from Smith (2002); Crook and Jerve (1991); and Tordoff (1994), avers that to secure effective public participation in development efforts, the people as local experts, should have access to decentralised institutions, which should honour their priorities. This means that these institutions, through the focus on developmental local government, are represented by the IDP at local government level.

3.6. The benefits of public participation

According to Sithole (2004:4) the benefits of public participation include, but are not limited, to the following:

- helps to address the concerns of all interested and affected parties.
- encourages citizen-focused service delivery.
- brings citizens closer to the designing and shaping of local public service.
- develops a clear sense of direction for communities.
- facilitates the utilisation of a whole range of resources in the community.
- identifies alternatives to be considered when addressing issues.
- improves municipal credibility with the public.
- reduces levels of misconception/misinformation about a project.
- creates a better understanding of a project and its objectives.

Moreover, Theron *et al.* (2007:3) also point out that participatory strategies have two primary benefits for the democratic policy-making process, namely: that public participation yields better policy outcomes and that it also helps people to develop their capacity for improving their lives.

3.7. Conclusion

The importance of public participation in South Africa cannot be overemphasised, since it underpins the democratic dispensation ushered in by the 1994 elections. Public participation enables change agents to correct the inequality of the past top-down, prescriptive approaches. Furthermore, it improves the chances of achieving sustainable development. Because of the centrality of public participation, the country has enacted legislation such as the Constitution (1996), the Municipal Structures Act (1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (2000) which give substance to public participation. These statutes, even though they give substance to public participation, are not implemented in a way that promotes authentic public participation. What happens at grassroots level is the converse of what the statutes advocate. Change agents adhere to consultation and the involvement of beneficiaries, rather than taking them on board through public participation, thus enabling beneficiaries of development to share in, belong to and influence and direct the development process. For this to happen, councillors as change agents should have an understanding of the relationship of the building blocks of development. Above all, councillors should recognise the value of the building blocks of development. A discussion of these Acts will be conducted in the next chapter.

Not only are municipalities required to practise and implement public participation, but even government departments from national to provincial levels of government should see to it that a culture of public participation is being entrenched in all government institutions. Apart from passing legislation, more needs to be done to stimulate the culture of public participation among the stakeholders. In other words, the stakeholders need to understand the importance of public participation. Ward councillors in their ward committees have the responsibility of promoting

public participation through developing a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance. Ward committee meetings are essential for engaging community groups in decision making. Ultimately, public participation ensures that democracy is embedded in the heart of the populace.

CHAPTER FOUR: POLICY CONTEXT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1. Introduction

South Africa democratised its institutions and government structures immediately after the watershed April 1994 general elections. This was followed by the enactment of statutes that entrenched democratic practices in all fields of government, particularly in the sphere of local government. Public participation, being the principle upon which democracy is founded in South Africa, has to be firmly entrenched by legal frameworks, such as the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994), the Constitution (1996), the White Paper on Local Government (1998), the Municipal Structures Act (1998), the Municipal Systems Act (2000), the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003) and the Municipal Property Rates Act (2004).

The South African government has implemented an impressive number of statutes dealing with local government that demands public participation in municipal decision making, planning and finances. These laws are supported by the Constitution, which stipulates that one of the five objectives of local government is to encourage the participation of community organisations in matters concerning local government (Davids, 2005c:20).

The Municipal Systems Act (2000) stands out as of particular relevance for promoting public participation, in that it requires municipalities to develop a culture of public participation by building the capacity of local communities, councillors and officials to participate in municipal affairs (Davids, 2005c:20).

Section 4.2 will assess how the above stated legal frameworks establish and encourage ward committees and councillors to implement Constitutional mandates relating to public participation.

4.2. Legal and regulatory frameworks of public participation

The principle of public participation in South Africa does not take place in a vacuum, but rather according to legislative frameworks as Putu (2006:15) points out. This legislation describes the way in which local government should function and provide the framework for how municipalities interact with communities. Moreover, these policies and laws, according to the RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:12), make provision for citizens to participate in a range of government created regulatory structures such as the IDP representative forums and ward committees.

In terms of South African policies, the participation of communities is important for effective service delivery (Sithole, 2004:4).

Constitutional mechanisms exist on how public participation should be implemented by ward committees and ward councillors. It is therefore imperative for ward councillors, as change agents, to implement these Constitutional mechanisms for public participation to achieve its goals. 'Change agents' is an umbrella term that represents those persons in government, the private sector, development institutions and NGOs who, as outsiders, intervene in a development process. The primary role of change agents is to release the creative energies in people (the beneficiaries of development). In this sense, 'release' means that the change agents should not use an omniscient approach. They should become partners in participatory processes to enable beneficiaries to assert themselves to solve their own problems. The following sections consider the legal and regulatory frameworks upon which public participation is based.

4.2.1. The White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994)

Regarding the issue of public participation in the Reconstruction and Development Programme, Davids (2005c:31) states that “the birth of a transformed nation can only succeed if the people themselves are voluntary participants in the process towards the realisation of these goals they have themselves helped to define.”

South Africa’s first democratically elected government considered it necessary to embrace people-centred development through its 1994 socio-economic policy framework – the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994), the point that Davids (2005a:18) holds. This was against the background of the country’s colonial and apartheid history of disempowerment and top-down decision-making (Davids, 2005:18). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994) was chosen as a primary vehicle to address the negative effects of centuries of colonialism and apartheid after South Africa’s first democratic national and provincial elections of April 1994 by the Government of National Unity (GNU). For Davids (2005a:19) the principle of people-centred development, formulated as the building block of development features strongly in the integrated people-centred approach advocated by the RDP.

Development through collective participation became a central theme of the RDP. To this end, the ANC (1994:5), stressing the importance of public participation, points out that the people of South Africa should together, regardless of their race or sex, or whether they are rural or urban, rich or poor, shape their own future. Moreover, the ANC (1994:5) further states that “Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry; it is about active involvement and growing empowerment”. The need for a participatory development strategy and a type of development that is people-driven is also emphasised by the RDP White Paper (Davids, 2005c:34).

Both the ANC (1994), the RDP (1994) document and the White Paper (1998) stress that for participation to be effective it must be brought through organisations freely formed by the people, which are inclusive of different interest groups in a given local community (Davids, 2005c:34). The ANC and RDP document more specifically makes reference for the need to establish “inclusive local and sub-regional forums in order to facilitate local consultation and participation” (Davids, 2005c:34). The question arises as to whether ward committees are established in such a way that they become inclusive of different interest groups. The researcher holds the view that if ward committees are inclusive of different interest groups, then public participation will become more effective, resulting in efficient and sustainable service delivery.

According to Davids (2005b:43), there is a difference between the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development, in that the former document was the election manifesto of the ANC, whereas the latter became an integrated socio-economic policy framework. This was, as Davids (2005b:43) explains, due to the fact that the ANC faced the challenge of implementing the principles contained in the RDP base document after the elections.

As an integrated socio-economic policy, the RDP (1994) aimed to do the following:

- empower people so that they could become self-reliant in the long run;
- build local capacity through development support; and
- initiate development programmes and projects on a participatory basis.

Public participation, as Davids (2005b:43) argues, received a major boost after the inception of the RDP in 1994, since there was widespread activity around the country as communities actively participated in setting up the RDP forums which the government had said were needed to facilitate development initiatives in their areas.

The RDP office was closed in March 1996, due to government's lack of capacity to respond to the enthusiasm for change at grassroots' level. Furthermore, government's policy also shifted from the people-centred development approach of the RDP to the neo-liberal prescription of the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, in line with the "Washington consensus" policies imposed on the world by the US through the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Davids, 2005b:43). This shift meant that public participation was dealt a heavy blow as the GEAR strategy does not rest on principles of public participation as compared to the RDP whose principles envisage public participation. Had the RDP principles been followed, public participation at ward committee level would have been better promoted than it is at present.

According to Davids (2005c:98-99) the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994), states the following regarding capacity building for effective participation:

1. Capacity building is essential for the effective participation of civil society in the implementation of the RDP. Through initiatives, such as presidential projects, ground-breaking approaches to public participation and local control will be explored.
2. A human resource and capacity development programme has been established by the national government to facilitate and co-ordinate RDP efforts. Provincial and local governments are the key areas of delivery of the RDP.
3. The government must ensure that its service arms are accessible to civil society, especially mass organisations with limited resources. They must be able to provide an even-handed equitable service even in areas where interests may be opposed to current government policies.
4. With respect to mass-based organisations of civil society, especially the labour movement and the civics, their role in the establishment of political democracy was central. A

vibrant and independent civil society is essential for the democratisation of our society such as envisaged by the RDP.

5. The RDP visualises a social partnership and the government should therefore provide services and support to all sectors, especially organised labour, civics, business, women's groups and religious and cultural bodies.
6. The government must therefore provide resources in an open and transparent manner and in compliance with clear and explicit criteria to mass organisations to ensure that they are able to develop or maintain the ability to participate effectively as negotiating partners of the government.

4.2.2. The Constitution of the RSA (1996)

The Constitution of South Africa, enacted in 1996, is the supreme law and as such, lays the foundation of the democratic political system of the country. Moreover, the Constitution looks for a complete transformation of the local government system in which local government plays an important role in building democracy and promoting socio-economic development (Putu, 2006:16).

According to the RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:11) the Constitution of 1996 and key legislation of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (2000) and of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998), provide a powerful legal framework for participatory local democracy and ward committees in particular. The RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:13) further declares that Chapter 7 (Section 152) of the Constitution sets out the objectives of local government. Public participation is an imperative with two objectives to:

- provide democratic and accountable government for local communities; and
- encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

Ward committees being enabled by ward councillors as change agents, are strategically placed to promote the objectives of local government and the developmental duties of municipalities, thus ensuring the effective participation of citizens and communities in matters of local government.

On the status of municipalities, the Constitution (RSA 1996:81) states the following:

1. The local sphere of government consists of municipalities that must be established for the whole of the territory of the Republic.
2. The executive and legislative authority of a municipality is vested in its municipal council.
3. A municipality has the right to govern the affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the Constitution.
4. The national or provincial government may not compromise or hinder a municipality's ability or right to exercise its powers or perform its functions.

Regarding the objectives of local government, the Constitution (RSA 1996:81) prescribes the following:

1. The objectives of local government are to:
 - provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
 - ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
 - promote social and economic development;

- promote a safe and healthy environment; and
- encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

A municipality must strive, with its financial and administrative capacity to achieve the objectives of local government. With reference to the developmental duties of municipalities, the Constitution (RSA, 1996:81-82) states that a municipality must:

- structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community; and
- participate in national and provincial development programmes.

4.2.3. The White Paper on Local Government (1998)

According to the RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:13), the White Paper on Local Government (1998) is often referred to as the “mini-constitution” for the local sphere of government. Putu (2006:16) states that the White Paper on Local Government, published in 1998, gives effect to the new vision of local government established in the Constitution, namely, in Developmental Local Government (DLG).

The RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:13) defines DLG as “local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find long-term or sustainable ways to meet the social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of the lives of the community”. To realise this vision, municipalities are encouraged to build local democracy by developing strategies and mechanisms to engage with citizens, business and community groups on an ongoing basis.

The White Paper provides some municipalities with the possibility of developing structures that would guarantee meaningful participation and interaction with councillors. These structures are like ward committees which are legislated in the Municipal Structures Act (1998) and in the IDP Representative Forums that always interface with communities and enhance public participation. The researcher holds the view that even though these structures have been established as per constitutional mandates by municipalities, they are not being implemented to their optimum, thereby denying the ultimate power of the voice of the community in development (Putu, 2006:17).

The White Paper on Local Government as a document that symbolised a fundamental renewal of local government in South Africa, gave meaning to the paradigm shift in terms of how municipalities should integrate development planning with community based goals. The White Paper on Local Government (1998) further emphasises the constitutional concepts of human dignity, human rights and democracy as important elements of DLG by including references to the redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor (Davids & Maphunye, 2005:60).

Section D of the White Paper on Local Government (1998:5) maintains that the most important role of the municipality is to promote local democracy. The White Paper on Local Government (1998:5) further alludes to the importance of the local sphere of government as a space where citizens can participate to shape their own living environments and extend their democratic rights. Not only does the local sphere of government provide space for the public's participation, but it is critical to cultivating participative democracy in that the public is more likely to exert some influence over a policy decision in a smaller local institution closer to home.

According to Davids (2005c:103), the important role of local government is to build local democracy, and as such, municipalities should develop strategies and make arrangements to engage with the public, business and the community. Davids (2005c:103) identifies four levels

wherein municipalities require active participation with communities, which are, amongst others, the following:

- As voters, to guarantee maximum democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are authorised to promote.
- Forums established from within or outside local government, by allowing organised groups to initiate policies and influence policy formulation, as well as participating in monitoring and evaluating activities.
- Structured stakeholders' participation in certain council committees, in particular when these are issue-oriented committees with a limited lifespan, rather than permanent structures.
- Participatory budgeting initiatives aimed at linking community priorities to capital investment programmes.
- Focus group participatory action research conducted in partnership with NGOs and CBOs which can generate detailed information about a wide range of specific needs and values.
- Support for the organisational development of associations, in particular in poor marginalised areas where the skills and resources for participation may be less developed than in more affluent areas.

4.2.4. Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998)

Putu (2006:17) contends that the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998) requires the municipality to strive, with all the capacity at its command, towards achieving the goals set out in Section 152 of the Constitution. According to the RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005: 14), these goals or objectives are the following:

- To develop mechanisms to engage with the community and community organisations in performing its functions and practising its power.
- To consider annually the needs of the community and municipal priorities and strategies for meeting those needs and engaging the community in municipal processes.
- Chapter 4 of the Municipal Structures Act (1998) requires that a municipality must establish ward committees with the objective of enhancing participatory democracy in local government (Putu, 2006:17).

The Municipal Structures Act (1998) binds the municipality to making rules controlling the procedure for electing members of the ward committee. Importantly, the Act makes provision for the establishment of ward committees as a possible way of encouraging public participation. In this regard, the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998:52) stipulates that ward committees may only be established by Metropolitan and Local Municipalities of certain types with a ward participatory system. The Municipal Structures Act, (1998:52) further emphasises that the aim of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government (Putu, 2006:17).

Upon the establishment of ward committees, which promote public participation, Section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act (1998:52) stipulates the following:

1. If a Metro or Local Council decides to have ward committees, it must establish a ward committee for each ward in the municipality;
2. A ward committee consists of:
 - a) the councillor representing that ward on the council and who must also be the Chairperson of the committee; and
 - b) not more than 10 other persons.

3. A Metro or Local Council must make rules regulating:

- a) the procedure to elect the 10 other members of a ward committee, taking into consideration the need for:
 - i) women to be equitably represented on a ward committee; and
 - ii) a diversity of interests in the ward to be represented;
 - iii) the circumstances under which those members must vacate office; and
 - iv) the frequency of meetings of ward committees.

4. A Metro or a Local Council may make administrative arrangements to enable ward committees to perform their functions and practise their powers effectively.

4.2.5. Local government Municipal Systems Act (2000)

According to Putu (2006:18) Chapter 4 Section 17(2) states that “a municipality must establish appropriate mechanisms processes and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality.” Similarly, the Ward Committee Resource book (2005:14) also confirms that the Municipal Systems Act (2000) requires municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance that works hand-in-hand with formal representative government within a system of participatory governance or public participation. The Municipal Systems Act (2000) further requires municipalities to develop mechanisms, processes and procedures for public participation (RSA Ward Committee Resource book, 2005:14).

The RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:14) outlines that Section 5 (1) of the Municipal Structures Act (1998) sets out “rights” and “duties” of members of the local community and the public’s right to:

- contribute to the decision-making process of the municipality; and

- submit written or oral recommendations, representations and complaints to the municipal council.

Municipalities are also required in terms of Chapter 3 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000), to create conditions that will allow for the most disenfranchised members of the community, such as disabled people, disadvantaged groups and people who are illiterate, to participate in the affairs of the municipality (Putu, 2006:18). To enable communities to participate effectively, Section 33 of the Municipal Systems Act (1998) states, as Putu (2006:18) points out, “municipalities must determine methods to consult communities and residents on their needs and priorities”. These methods of engaging communities abound in municipalities and are commonly referred to as strategies for public participation. The subsequent chapter will shed more light on public participation strategies employed by municipalities as a way of engaging communities in their activities. Public participation strategies such as consultation and involvement are not unique, together with empowering participatory strategies as has been shown by IDP outputs in South Africa. The most enabling and empowering public participation strategy is empowerment which entails the concept of public control; this strategy seems not to be in the South African political vocabulary, since no project is controlled by beneficiaries.

The Municipal System Act (2000) prescribes various steps on how public participation should be implemented by municipalities. With reference to the development of a culture of public participation, Section 16 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000:301) lays down - amongst other things - the following:

A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance and must for this purpose:

- a) encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in:-

- i) the preparation, implementation and review of its IDP;
- ii) the establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system (PMS); and
- iii) the preparation of its budgets.

b) Contribute to building the capacity of:

- i) the local community to enable it to participate in the affairs of the municipality;
and
- ii) councillors and staff to foster public participation.

Regarding the mechanisms, processes and procedures for public participation, Section 17 of the Municipal System Act (2000:301) requires, amongst other issues, the following:

1. Participation by the local community in the affairs of the municipality must take place through:
 - a) political structures for participation in terms of the Municipal Structures Act; and
 - b) the mechanisms, processes and procedures for participation in municipal governance established in terms of the Act.

2. A municipality must establish appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality and must for this purpose provide for:

- a) the receipt, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints lodged by members of the local community;
- b) Notification and public comment procedures, when appropriate;
- c) Public meetings and hearings by the municipal council and other political structures and political office bearers of the municipality when appropriate;
- d) Public participation sessions with locally recognised community organisations and, where appropriate, traditional authorities; and
- e) Report back to the local community.

On communication of information concerning public participation, Section 18 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000: 32) calls, *inter alia*, for the following:

1. A municipality must communicate to its community, information concerning:

- a) the available mechanisms, processes and procedures to encourage and facilitate public participation;
- b) the matters with regard to which public participation is encouraged;
- c) the rights and duties of members of the local community; and
- d) municipal governance, management and development.

Concerning the public notice of meetings of municipal councils, Section 19 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000:32), states, *inter alia*, the following:

The municipal manager of a municipality must give notice to the public, in a manner determined by the municipal council, of the time, date and venue of every:

- a) ordinary meeting of the council; and
- b) special or urgent meetings of the council, except when time constraints make this impossible.

4.2.6. Local Government Finance Management Act (2003)

According to the RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:17) the purpose of the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003) is to:

- bring about transparent and effective financial management in municipalities and municipal public entities;
- set up a municipal financial recovery service which allows the National Treasury (NT) to intervene where a municipality faces a financial emergency; and
- show the difference between short-term borrowing and long-term capital investment, in a chapter on debts.

Ward committees are expected to participate actively in the budget process because it is their responsibility to help ensure that financial transfers from National Government are used for the purposes for which they are intended, such as ensuring that the people get basic services (RSA Ward Committee Resource book 2005:17).

The Municipal Finance Management Act (2003:40) requires municipalities to engage communities in the following activities of the budget process:

- i) the preparation, tabling and approval of the annual budget;
- ii) the annual review of:
 - (a) the IDP in terms of Section 34 of the Municipal System Act;
 - (b) budget related policies; and
- iii) the tabling and adoption of any amendments to the IDP and budget-related policies; and

- iv) any public participation processes, relating to the preparation, review and tabling of budgets.

With reference to public participation on tabled budgets, Section 23 of the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003:40-41) states the following:

- i) when the annual budget has been tabled, the municipality must consider any view of:
 - a) the local community; and
 - b) the National Treasury, the relevant Provincial Treasury and any provincial or national organs of state or municipalities which made submissions on the budget.

The researcher has observed that in the Thulamela Municipality public participation receives a major boost during the budget process as every stakeholder has a keen interest in actively participating in the process. The reason behind the active participation by communities is seen to be the quest for stakeholders' projects to be prioritised in the budget and more specifically, those on the IDP priority list.

Similar public participation activities take place in the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil during the participatory budgeting process which results in decentralised planning. The participatory budgeting process in Brazil is a case of decentralisation of a special type meant to promote a more participatory form of local government. The dominant party system is a contributing factor to Brazil's participatory form of local government. Because of Brazil's dominant party system, a highly competitive electoral arena has forced parties to the left to work closely with civil society and social movement. The Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil has favoured participatory reforms as part of a strategy of strengthening beneficiaries at grassroots level. Conversely, the ANC in South Africa has little incentive to work with civil society due to the absence of a strong threat to its electoral power. Instead, the ANC has stressed the political objectives of consolidating its control over public institutions. In Brazil, PB has been closely linked to the new discourses of active citizenship that have grown directly out of the democracy movement.

PB, like the participatory thrust of the South African White Paper on Local Government (DPLG 1998) and the RDP, was particularly conceived as a vehicle for strengthening democracy and has its roots in civil society. PB is much more precise about the institutional challenges of promoting participation and the political obstacles to be overcome. In South Africa in general and particularly in the Thulamela Municipality, participation in DLG, such as the community development forums and IDPs have been either quickly brought under the control of party structures or replaced with a technocratic form of decision making after the introduction of GEAR.

Unlike the RDP and the vision of participatory DLG, PB regarded institutional reform first and foremost as a way of providing new platforms for mobilisation. The emphasis was less on promoting development and extending service delivery and more on nurturing a new form of state-citizen engagement, thereby changing the way in which choices about development are made. Participatory decentralisation in Brazil has resulted in three broad development gains, namely: the careful alignment of expenditures with democratic preferences; the reduction of the level of leakage due to higher levels of participation; and greater accountability and more redistributive allocation patterns. Lastly, PB has been about making existing local government structures more participatory rather than building completely new structures of governance and delivery. In the case of South Africa and Thulamela in particular, for beneficiaries to be mobilised for the budgeting and IPD processes at grassroots level, change agents have to restructure existing local government structures in such a way that they become more participatory.

4.2.7. Local Government Municipal Property Rates Act (2004)

According to Davids (2005c:117) the Municipal Property Rates Act (2004) requires the following on public participation:

1. Before a municipality adopts its rates policy, the municipality must:
 - a) follow a process of public participation in line with Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000).

2. The municipal manager of the municipality must:
 - a) Clearly display the draft rates policy for a period of at least 30 days-
 - i) at the municipality's head and satellite offices and libraries; and
 - ii) on an official website of the municipality; and

 - b) Advertise in the media a notice –
 - iii) stating –
 - (a) that a draft rates policy has been prepared for submission to the council; and

 - (b) that a draft rates policy is available at the municipality's head- and satellite offices and libraries for public inspection during office hours and that the draft rates policy is also available on the website; and

 - iv) inviting the local community to submit comments and representation to the municipality concerned, within a period specified in the notice which may not be fewer than 30 days.

3. A municipal council must take all comments and representations made to it or received by it into account when it considers the draft rates policy.

On the annual review of rates policy, Section 5 of the Municipal Property Rates Act (2004:18) states that:

1) A municipal council must annually consider, and if necessary, amend its rates policy. Any amendment to a rates policy must accompany the municipality's annual budget when it is tabled in the council.

2) Public participation in amendments to a rates policy must be effected through the municipality's annual budget process.

The researcher has observed that in the Thulamela Municipality there is always a tug-of-war between communities and local government representatives when rates are tabled and discussed, because the former prefers affordable rates, whereas the latter tries to impose rates which may not be affordable and sometimes does not address the needs of the communities, but rather the needs of officials and councillors; for instance, budgeting large amounts for improved offices and furnishings and new motors cars.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to unpack the various legislative frameworks in which public participation is rooted in South Africa. It is important for ward councillors and officials to oversee the proper implementation of the provisions of these Acts for promoting public participation. The statutes provide for communities to participate in a range of government-created regulatory structures, such as the IDP representative forums and ward committees. The problem regarding the implementation of these Acts stems from the notion that communities or the change agents do not understand these Acts and their implementation becomes difficult. There is therefore a need for ward committees and councillors to educate and inform beneficiaries of development about these Acts. Thus, the skills of the change agents are of utmost importance. If communities fail to understand and embrace the contents of these Acts, then service delivery will always experience setbacks and communities will not always be

supportive towards the payment of services, especially in the rural areas. For example, communities in rural municipalities fail to understand how the implementation of the Municipal Rates Property Act will eventually benefit them as beneficiaries of development. Change agents should constantly engage communities in public participation on every issue as public participation is a process and not an event.

Significantly, these laws require municipalities to develop strategies for public participation, to properly put into practice the provisions of the Acts. The ensuing chapter will discuss public participation strategies pursued by local government.

CHAPTER FIVE: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

5.1. Introduction

The challenges of a democratic system imply that public participation becomes imperative in planning and in decision making. Decisions taken without public participation in the planning process become questionable and the public cannot rally behind them. Proper planning, organising, monitoring and evaluation of local government programmes become more valid if the public have contributed to bringing about those decisions.

Good governance means working hand-in-hand with the public when carrying out government's activities. If the public is not taken on board in the activities of local government, they do not embrace the various programmes as theirs. Conversely, taking the broader public on board in every local government activity ensures public participation and leads to good governance.

This chapter will focus on public participation strategies for local government. These participation strategies promote public participation which may increase the voice of the people at grassroots level, thereby building people's power from below (Davids, 2005c:27). Furthermore, the proper implementation of public participation strategies will noticeably narrow the gap that exists between theory and practice (Theron, 2005c:124). This process should enable the public to influence the policy process and become more informed about how local government operates. The humanist thinking, the people-centred development paradigm and the necessity of participatory development call for the beneficiary of development to take centre stage in the development arena. Unfortunately, the public do not, through their lack of participation, direct and influence the development process.

This is mainly because public participation strategies, such as “informing”, “consultation” and “involvement” as applied in the IDP do not lead to authentic and empowering public participation.

The lack of these strategies does not allow the beneficiaries of development to “direct” or become “owners” of a particular project. Once a stage is reached where beneficiaries are enabled to direct and influence development, then empowerment occurs, which in turn, creates sustainable development. This becomes a challenge to the IDP processes in South Africa, in that change agents plan projects without the participation of project-beneficiaries from the project conceptualisation phase. Furthermore, participants are “informed” about what will happen, without having the power to influence or direct decision making.

5.2. Facilitating public participation

Public participation in development has become sought after throughout the world due to its usefulness in development projects, especially at the local government level. Moreover, public participation at grassroots level or local government level ensures efficiency, effectiveness and self-reliance (Kumar, 2002:27).

Public participation has many advantages in development projects despite its limitations. However, the balance between advantages and disadvantages is shown through the IDP, which is a good example of the application of the public participation strategy in South African municipalities (Theron, 2005c:123).

The researcher has observed that public participation in the IDP process in the Thulamela Municipality normally reaches its peak in the project identification phase as each stakeholder

wants his/her project to be included in the IDP priority list. This strategy of public participation, inclusive of people's knowledge, as Cooke and Khothari (2001:16) argue, can transform top-down bureaucratic planning systems. The researcher maintains that the IDP process to be discussed in Chapter 6, as a rule follows a bottom-up planning approach as opposed to a top-down approach. In other words, this type of planning takes into consideration the inputs of beneficiaries at grassroots level. However, this seems not to be happening in the case of South Africa, when the IDP is implemented. Instead, IDPs are still geared towards the bottom-up planning approach which is contrary to what the rule stipulates in a bottom-up planning approach.

Dauids (2005c:20) points out that there is no perfect model for public participation, in that the form participation takes is mainly influenced by the overall conditions and the unique social context in which action is being taken. Theron (2005c:124) states that to close the gap between rhetoric and practice, community stakeholders should be part of the process of planning and identifying and/or choosing the relevant public participation strategies. This is important in implementing grassroots participation programmes, such as the IDP Representative Forums, ward committees and the IDP summits and *imbizos*.

Different public participation strategies can be utilised to guarantee that the right to public participation is accessible (Dauids, 2005c:24-25). To this end, strategies should not be seen as blueprints because each situation calling for a public participation intervention will demand a specific and relevant combination of strategies (Dauids, 2005c:24-25; Theron, 2005c:125-126 and Theron & Ceasar 2008:112).

For Dauids (2005c:25), the golden rule for selecting an appropriate public participation strategy is: "select the strategy or strategies for the task at hand and always consider the gender implications of the selected strategies". Additionally, Theron (2005c:126) argues that the way to effective, efficient public participation relies on selecting the right combination of approaches for

a particular public participation process. Theron and Ceasar (2008:112) further stress that the golden rule for taking into account an appropriate participation strategy is a selection of the best “mix” of strategies for a particular context. These strategies will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

5.3. Public participation strategies through “informing” participants – level 1

Several authors, based on IAP2, (Theron 2005c:126-127; Davids 2005c:22-24; Meyer & Theron 2000:35-61 and Theron & Ceasar 2008:113-114) explain the following public participation strategies aimed at informing the public or participants:

1. ***Legal notices:*** informing the public of a proposal or activity that is required by law to be displayed at a particular location, such as a municipal notice board, for a specific period. Municipalities normally utilise this public participation strategy when, for instance, they want the public to adhere to a certain by-law which has been passed by the municipal council.
2. ***Advertisement:*** paid advertisements in national, as well as community newspapers to inform the public of a proposal or activity and the opportunity for participation; for example, a tender. This strategy of public participation is often employed by municipalities when advertising vacant posts for employment which exist in their establishment.
3. ***Magazines, news articles and press releases:*** stories, debates and articles which provide information about a proposal or activity, or a municipal or community newsletter. Municipalities utilise these strategies, but they rarely issue a press release and if they do, it is usually about a contentious issue. All municipalities should have newsletters published at regular intervals; for instance, on a quarterly basis.

4. **Background information material:** fact sheets, personal handouts, competitions, brochures or flyers distributed with bills through mail drops, direct shots or left at accessible locations to provide feedback and updates on progress regarding a planned project. Municipalities rarely make use of this participation strategy.
5. **Exhibits and displays:** information provided at an accessible location, such as a municipal buildings, library or a road show, to help raise public awareness regarding an issue, campaign or planned project. Municipalities often compel construction companies delivering certain projects to erect boards displaying the type of project being implemented by a municipality to raise awareness within communities. This also serves as a strategy to indicate that services are being rendered to communities.
6. **Technical reports:** special studies, reports or findings made accessible to the public at libraries, through the municipal newsletter or electronically on a website of the municipality. This strategy is seldom used in the Thulamela Municipality.
7. **e-democracy:** websites which contain information, announcements and documents and allow the public to express their views on an issue or project, and public debates on important issues via the Internet, etc. Municipalities are currently making inroads into utilising this Internet-based public participation strategy to cope with the demands of the modern-day technological world and for linking their organisations with provincial and national governments. This strategy has more benefits as the community and other relevant stakeholders can, depending on the level of their skills, easily access the municipalities and become informed about activities or programmes being implemented by the municipality.
8. **Field trips:** site tours to inform the public, officials, the media and other stakeholders about a specific issue or project to occur in the future. This public participation strategy is usually undertaken by municipalities when there is a site inspection for a project to be launched

where officials of the municipality, community and developers converge on the site where the project is to be implemented.

9. ***Press conferences:*** question-and-answer sessions at a community or municipal hall to allow the media and public to obtain and share information about a proposal or future planned activity. Municipalities appear to prefer this strategy if the activity in question has a major impact on the community or on intended beneficiaries.

10. ***Radio and TV talk shows:*** a presenter of a programme aims to elicit information about a proposal or project on behalf of the public through questions posed to the project manager or developer; for example, on community radio programmes or on talk shows and phone-in programmes. Radio talk shows are popular public participation strategies used by municipalities as they provide an interactive platform for the community and municipality to share information and clarify issues on mutual benefits concerning service delivery.

11. ***Expert panels and educational meetings:*** public meetings where the experts or planners provide information and the public and specific stakeholders are given an opportunity to pose questions. This strategy is used by municipalities in the higher echelons of municipal structures, especially at the level of executive committee meetings where planners are given time to make presentations for a certain type of development to be implemented before a recommendation is made by EXCO.

5.4. Public participation strategies through “consulting” participants – level 2

Several authors, based on IAP2, (Theron, 2005c:127-128; Davids, 2005c:22-24; Meyer & Theron, 2000:35-61 and Theron & Ceasar 2008:113-114) list and explain the following public participation strategies aimed at “consulting” participants in similar ways, as in the following instances:

1. **Public meetings:** well-planned and well-advertised formal meetings where the project manager, project team, development team or the donor meet the public or specific stakeholders at a public place, such as a community hall; open discussion and question-and-answer sessions are included. This is a popular and frequently utilised strategy by municipalities and it is favoured by all municipal officials, councillors and community structures alike.
2. **Public hearings:** similar to public meetings, but more formal and structured. Municipalities rarely use this public participation strategy, except in instances of land claim processes.
3. **Open days and open house:** stakeholders are given the opportunity to tour the site of a project and/or information is provided at a location made available to stakeholders and the public. This strategy is normally used by municipalities when officials from provincial local government departments want to monitor how projects are being implemented with a view to auditing and giving professional and technical assistance.
4. **Briefings:** regular meetings of social and civic organisations, clubs and other groups to inform, educate and consult stakeholders. When politicians from provincial and national governments visit communities for interaction with regard to the delivery of services, councillors and senior officials brief the people on the state of the municipality.
5. **Central information contact:** designated contact persons identified as official spokespersons for the public and the media. This seems to be one of the most effective public participation strategies, in that most, if not all, municipalities have designated spokespeople who inform the public or communities about current developments in which the municipality may be engaging.

6. ***Field offices or information centres:*** specific offices or multi-purpose community centres staffed by officials able to answer questions. They distribute information and respond to enquiries to encourage information interaction with the public. Some municipalities have set up field offices which are generally referred to as satellite offices to enable community members to pay for services closer to their residential areas. This can also be an effective public participation strategy because while community members are paying for their services, they can at the same time, read notices and be informed about municipal programmes.
7. ***Comments and response sheets:*** structured questionnaires distributed to the public to gain information on the public's concerns and preferences and to identify key issues. This might be difficult to administer with few municipalities using this method. Nevertheless, it can have fruitful results.
8. ***Surveys and Polls:*** specific information from a sample of the public or specific stakeholders is gathered and scientifically analysed and presented. This can be done by phone, but is less accurate than face-to-face interviews. Due to a lack of cost effectiveness, municipalities generally avoid this method, though if used it could be a reliable measure.
9. ***Interviews or focus group discussions:*** one-on-one meetings with the public, or a selected sample or group of specific stakeholders, based on semi-structured interviews, and open-ended questions. Data are analysed and presented scientifically by a researcher. This public participation strategy is restricted due to an insufficient number of researchers conducting research based on this type of methodology. However, if applied, it may prove to be very productive.
10. ***Telephone hotlines or complaints register:*** telephone numbers of key officials supplied to the public in printed format by hand or mail; for example in the municipal newsletters, lines or offices staffed by professional officials who know the project or activity, or by an ombudsman are printed. Calls must be recorded and feedback given to callers.

Municipalities make use of this public participation strategy for the purpose of rooting out corruption and unblocking obstacles to service delivery. This public participation strategy is frequently employed by municipalities whereby telephone numbers of key officials are printed in municipal calendars. The only shortcomings are that callers do not always receive feedback.

11. **Electronic democracy:** the Internet, webpage ‘discussion room,’ tele-voting and on-line communication; records are kept and feedback given to participants. This public participation strategy is still too advanced and requires technologies which most municipalities currently do not have.

5.5. Public participation strategies through “empowering” participants – level 3

Several authors, based on IAP2, (Theron, 2005c:128; Davids, 2005c:22-23; Meyer & Theron, 2000:35-61 and Theron & Ceasar 2008:113-114) list and explain the following public participation strategies aimed at “empowering” participants, as in the following instances:

1. **Workshops, focus groups and key stakeholder meetings:** small group meetings with stakeholders in an interactive forum to share and provide information through mutual learning, about a particular topic or issue may be preceded by presentations by stakeholders. Almost all municipalities utilise workshops as a public participation strategy for empowering participants. This is obviously the most common strategy used at local government level and has positive spin-offs in that participants share knowledge amongst themselves after experts have delivered keynote addresses on identified topical municipal issues. Furthermore, municipalities ensure that councillors and ward committees are taken to attend several workshops to be properly empowered to implement sustainable service delivery.

2. ***Advisory Committees and Panels:*** to advise the decision-makers and to debate specific issues; often composed of stakeholder groups such as community leaders, NGOs, CBOs and scientific experts or consultants representing the community. Though not often used, this strategy can empower participants and consultants whose expertise can represent communities in instances where communities are likely to be exploited by developers.
3. ***Task force:*** a group of specific stakeholders or experts that is formed to develop and implement a specific proposal. This public participation strategy is normally more likely to be utilised by provincial and national governments than by municipalities.
4. ***Citizen Juries:*** a small group of public representatives or stakeholders who are brought together to learn and exchange information regarding an issue, cross-examine witnesses or experts and make recommendations. Municipalities do not always apply this public participation strategy for participants.
5. ***Charities and consensus conferences:*** meetings or workshops with the purpose of reaching an agreement or resolving conflict on particular issue. This public participation strategy is currently employed by municipalities, as a public participation strategy for empowering the participants, when communities have stand-offs with local government representatives or councillors in respect of service delivery.
6. ***Imbizo:*** interactive governance aimed at partnerships between government planners and stakeholders. This public participation strategy is frequently used by municipalities in a joint effort with other spheres of government, with participants afforded an opportunity to ask questions and/or give input on issues addressed by politicians from national, provincial and local government.
7. ***Indaba:*** forum for open and frequent dialogue between stakeholders to identify and address issues of common concern. Dialogue between municipalities and stakeholders can minimise

service delivery protest actions which communities seem prone to embark on when dissatisfied. However, municipalities are not yet accustomed to this strategy which, if applied properly, can stem the tide of service delivery protest actions.

8. ***Participatory appraisal/participatory learning and action:*** appropriate people and issue-centred research methodology through which the concerned people conduct their own research in partnership with the researcher or official. Municipalities are currently not employing this public participation strategy rooted in appropriate social development research methodology.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has endeavoured to argue the pros and cons of public participation strategies for local government. However, it has been established that even though these strategies abound, municipalities have not as yet reached the stage where they are able to utilise most of them. The utilisation of these public participation strategies will firmly entrench the culture of public participation, thereby resulting in sustainable service delivery to communities. It should be pointed out that public participation strategies, move from less to more desirable public participation. Municipalities are developing these strategies for public participation, but the problem seems to be that these strategies are not being properly implemented. If these strategies are successfully implemented, public participation would be promoted and thereby enhance decentralised decision making. It is therefore incumbent upon the ward committee structures to engage councillors as change agents to work towards empowering the public at grassroots level through these strategies.

Theron (2005c:129) opines that if every government department formulated a detailed public participation strategy within the ideals of cooperative and integrated governance, it could well lead the way to “wall-to-wall” participation and community building, and ultimately holding the possibility of establishing a culture of public participation in South Africa. The IDP which will

be discussed in the next chapter is a good example of the application of a public participation strategy for local government in South Africa.

CHAPTER SIX: INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (IDP) AND THE ROLE OF WARD COMMITTEES AND COUNCILLORS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will assess, among other matters, the policy framework of the IDP, the challenges of the IDP at grassroots level and the participation of ward committees and ward councillors in the IDP process. One of the objectives of ward committees, under ward councillors, is to promote public participation for the enhancement of service delivery. In all these instances, it will be shown how public participation in the IDPs mobilises the communities and stakeholders to actively participate in the IDP Representative Forums and budget consultative meetings.

Transformation and democratisation as the two most important concepts in post-apartheid South Africa can be achieved through public participation. Local government can transform and democratise if there are tools for bringing this about. At local government level - the sphere of government closest to the people - the IDP may be regarded as one such tool for transforming and democratising government at grassroots level. The IDP can therefore be regarded as a planning approach that plays a pivotal role in establishing a culture of public participation. The IDP is the leading instrument of local planning in South Africa as stated in the White Paper on Local Government (1998). It provides municipalities with a tool to align budgeting and project implementation with strategic priorities. Due to a capacity problem in many of the new local municipalities, the first round of IDPs was prepared mainly by private consultants, who failed to make the paradigm shift required in post-apartheid South Africa. In preparation for the final phases of local government transformation, government put in place the Municipal Systems Act (2000). One of the legislated requirements of the IDP process is public participation, which if municipal planning takes a more progressively technocratic direction, will result in deepening local democracy and transparent decision-making.

Unfortunately, the slow technocratic pace of South Africa's IDP has been implicated in the demobilisation of South Africa's civil society. A comparison of the IDP with budgetary and planning processes in Porto Alegre, Brazil, concludes that IDPs in South Africa have been prescriptive and state-led. As such, they have not allowed the kind of creative input, innovation and learning that popular budgeting in Porto Alegre has generated.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the IDP has proved to be very limited as an instrument of participatory or popular democracy, and does not compare with some of the more innovative practices in Brazil.

Theron (2005b:133) emphasises that local government is the key element in transforming and democratising development in South Africa; and the vehicle for mandating grassroots development planning is the IDP. Articulating a similar point, Davids (2005c:63) points out that the "IDP process has generated more public participation in municipal planning than ever before in the history of South Africa". The importance of the process of the IDP cannot be over-emphasised in that transformation at local government level from regulatory to developmental local government is presented by the IDP (Cele, 2003:9).

6.2. IDP background

According to DBSA (2000:4), before 1994, local government was mainly concerned with service provision and the implementation of regulations. However, the introduction of the new Constitution (1996) and new legislative and policy frameworks of local government require municipalities to be developmental in their approach and activities. Theron (2005b:133) contends that based on an evolution of new thinking and action in accordance with policy frameworks, local authorities are required to be developmental in orientation and are charged with democratising local government; that is, bringing people back into local government.

According to Andrews (2003:997), the 1995 Development Facilitation Act (DFA) requires municipalities to develop Land Development Objectives (LDOs), aligning budgets to the provision of services and infrastructure. “The 1996 LTGA further institutionalised the role of plans in the budgeting process, requiring the preparation of a financial plan in accordance with the LDOs (now renamed, Integrated Development Plans or IDPs (Andrews, 2003:997). According to Liebenberg (1998:18) both the DFA (1995) and LGTA (1996) legally compel municipalities to change their traditional systems of planning and functioning in order to focus on issues of development. Parnell and Pieterse (2002:84) also contend that local authorities are required to produce an IDP that complies with provincial LDOs. Smith and Vawda (2003:32) hold a similar view on this issue when stating that the 1996 Local Government Transition Amendment Act introduced the concept of integrated planning, budgeting and management. The IDPs were introduced for purposes of building the capacity of local councillors to represent the interest of the public on how the municipal budget should be spent.

Cesar (1999:24) states clearly that the Local Government Transition Act, Second Amendment (1996) was the first document that referred to an IDP. This plan, as Cesar (1999:24) indicates, was first in the post 1994 phase.

According to Davids (2005c:64) the IDP in South Africa evolved from the Development Facilitation Act (1995), the Local Government Transition Act, LGTA (1995), the Second Amendment Act (1996) which introduced the IDP as a planning instrument in 1996, and the Local Government White Paper (1998) which specified IDPs as tools of development local government.

The Municipal Systems Act (2000) section 25(1) mandates that: “Each municipal council must adopt a single, inclusive plan for the development of the municipality.

Change agents also know that the most basic assessment of whether they talk about consultation/involvement on the one hand or authentic/empowering participation on the other, relates to the difference between top-down and bottom-up planning. The most important issue in the participatory development debate is the question concerning the level of “influence”, “decision” and “ownership” that the participants gain at the end of the participatory process. Public participation should be about equity and empowerment (Theron, 2008:234).

For Theron (2008:257), participatory development is still not a life-changing process for most of the poor around the world, because change agents still decide on behalf of beneficiaries. In other words, the lives of the beneficiaries do not get better because of the way participatory development is conducted, because participatory development empowers the change agents rather than the beneficiaries. Participatory development should, therefore, be beneficiary-focused by allowing beneficiaries to decide their own development. If beneficiaries of development are given a greater chance in their own development, the result might be more sustainable and legitimate. For this to be achieved, change agents should therefore drive the idea that development partnerships with beneficiaries will drastically change the development agenda.

Practitioners in the development industry should consider capacitating change agents to drive towards de-linking and disempowering themselves in establishing an authentic and even a relationship of power and action between themselves and the beneficiaries of development. A mutually beneficial social learning process now shifts from “power over” (i.e. control by change agents over the beneficiaries) to “power to” (i.e. the empowerment of the beneficiaries of development) and “power with” (i.e. power-sharing partnerships between change agents and beneficiaries) (Chambers, 2005:207-211).

Lastly, the change that change agents should facilitate in their partnerships with the beneficiaries of development relates to how the latter will be capacitated and empowered to direct, influence and own their development programmes/ projects.

As DBSA (2000:4) states the developmental role of local government calls for a strategic approach to planning. The establishment of decentralised local government is regarded as the most important aspect of post-apartheid reconstruction (Parnell & Pieterse, 2002:79). Moreover, Parnell and Pieterse (2002:83-84) succinctly argue that local government holds the promise of being the most important sphere of extending democracy to all South Africans and a change to the traditional relations of power and wealth.

According to Davids (2005c:64) the IDP in South Africa evolved from the Development Facilitation Act (1995), the Local Government Transition, (LGT), the Second Amendment Act (1996) which introduced the IDP as a planning instrument in 1996, and the Local Government White Paper (1998), specified IDPs as tools of developmental local government (Davids, 2005c:64). These policy frameworks of IDPs will be discussed in the following section.

6.3. Public participation and the IDP process

Cele (2003:10) explains that public participation in the IDP process is regarded as essential in accordance with Section 152(1) of the Constitution (1996), which encourages the participation of communities and community organisations in local government.

Cesar (1999:21) states that “an Integrated Development Plan, IDP discerned to be the central idea within post-apartheid planning on Local Government”. The researcher agrees with Cesar (1999:28-29) who further maintains that an IDP is arguably the best mechanism which can bring about the transformation of local government through a process of greater public participation. According to DBSA (2000:1), the IDP requires municipalities to align their physical, sectoral and resource planning and co-operate in co-ordinating the engagement of other areas of government spheres in its localities within that region.

According to Plan Act (2001:18), the IDP is regarded as a vehicle for development because of its participatory approach to integrate economic, sectoral, spatial, social, institutional, environmental and fiscal strategies in order to support the optimal allocation of scarce resources. To this end, the Plan Act (2001:18) states that one of the goals of IDP is the transformation of municipalities into developmental structures through public participation.

Davids (2005c:64) states that the IDP mainly provides strategic framework for democratic municipal governance because it sets out the vision, needs, priorities, goals and strategies of a municipal council to develop during its five-year term of office. According to Theron (2005b:136) and the RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:56) the IDP is a process through which municipalities prepare through public participation, a development plan which extends for a five-year period. Furthermore, Theron (2005b:136) asserts that the IDP is a product of an integrated planning process that guides and informs all planning, budgeting, management and decision-making in a municipality conducted with public participation principles.

According to Parnell and Pieterse (2002:84), “an IDP is a process through which a municipality can establish a development plan for the short, medium and long term”. Such a plan enables the municipality to:

- Assess the current reality in the municipal area, including economic, social and environmental trends, available resources, skills and capacities,
- Assess the varied needs of the community and different interest groups,
- Prioritise these needs in order of urgency, importance and constitutional legislative imperative and budget effectively with limited resources and meet strategic objectives.

IDP planning process should take into cognisance the knowledge and skills that people at grassroots level possess through public participation. The IDP process should be people-driven and not determined by what change agents know as is currently happening in municipalities. If this bottom-up approach, which gives rooms for authentic public participation is realised in the IDP process, then local governance will be democratised.

The research has deduced that the lack of Performance Management Systems to oversee the process of the IDP project implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review, widens the gap between rhetoric and reality. What is more, the municipal budget should be linked to the IDP projects; if not, these projects will become only a 'wish-list' as is currently the case in some municipalities, where identified priority projects for a specific financial year are not executed due to a lack of funding.

According to Theron (2005b:136) the IDP, as previously stated, is a major strategic planning instrument which guides and informs all planning, budgeting and decision-making in a municipality. It is, as the IDP for the Thulamela Municipality states "A guiding principle in the improvement of the lives of our people by maximising economic growth through the development of Local Economic Opportunities and Community Empowerment through interaction with other stakeholders in government and with different service providers" (Thulamela IDP Review, 2007:6).

Both Davids (2005c:64) and Theron (2005b:135) state that public participation in the IDP process regarding planning, implementation, monitoring and review is obligatory as stipulated in Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000). The Municipal Systems Act (2000) Section 29 formulates the guidelines or criteria for the process to be followed. Section 29 (1) of the Municipal Systems Act (2000) states specifically, that when a municipality drafts its IDP, such an IDP must:

- a) be in accordance with a predetermined programme specifying time frames for the different steps;
- b) through separate mechanisms, processes and procedures be established in terms of Chapter 4, and allow for:
 - i) the local community to be consulted about its development, needs and priorities;
 - ii) the local community to participate in the drafting of the development plan; and
 - iii) organs of state, including traditional authorities and other role players to be identified and consulted on the drafting of the integrated development plan.

Ceasar (1999:37) succinctly argues that “Unless IDPs are conveyed into the local government budget, they will run the risk of becoming mere wish-lists.”

Theron (2005b:137) states that the management of the IDP drafting process, in accordance with section 30 of the Act, is done by the Executive Committee, the Executive Mayor or the Committee of Councillors of the Municipality. The responsibility for drafting the IDP can be delegated to the Municipal Manager. The completed draft plan is finally submitted to the Municipal Council for adoption (Theron, 2005b:137).

On the issue of an annual review and amendment of an integrated development plan (IDP), the Municipal Systems Act - Section 34 (2000) states that a Municipal Council – (1) must review its integrated development plan annually based on its performance measurements and (2) may amend its integrated development plan in accordance with a prescribed process.

Concerning the status of an IDP (Theron, 2005b:137) declares that “An IDP adopted by the council of the municipality is the primary strategic planning instrument which guides and informs all planning and development and all decisions with regard to planning management and development in the municipality”. Furthermore, the Municipal Systems Act (2000) in Section 35 quoted by Theron (2005b:137), additionally states that the Municipality is bound to its IDP and

that it must give effect to its IDP and conducts its affairs in a manner which is in agreement with its IDP.

6.4. Challenges of IDP at grassroots level and implementation of participatory development by change agents

IDP implementation also fails because municipal officials who are supposed to implement the IDP, with the participation of local communities do not fully understand the concepts, purposes and strategies of development planning and project management (Theron, 2005b:137).

Theron *et al.* (2007:7) argue that local governments possess insufficient capacity to implement and manage participatory development efforts such as the IDP. This inadequate capacity on the part of IDP change agents or municipal officials, has resulted in municipalities being turned into ‘cash cows’ for consultants, while at the same time giving government staff little incentive to develop their capacity to act as advocates for and facilitators of participatory development (Theron, *et al.* 2007:7). The researcher argues that unless managers and politicians are properly trained on how to design and plan the IDPs of their respective municipalities, an IDP will only become a well-written document in the manager’s office with no one holding the key to activate it.

Several authors, (Davids, 2005c:68; Liebenberg, 1998:19; Parnell & Pieterse, 2002:85), point out that integration is an important principle of the IDP in that it requires that various departments within a municipality should co-ordinate and operate holistically and interdepartmentally. This is a challenge to most municipalities because the diverse departments do not operate in an integrated fashion, but appear to work in ‘silos’.

Theron (2005b:139) contends that the municipal manager should ensure that the IDP is managed in such a way that it does not become the responsibility of one department only. “Each municipal department, by breaking down the ‘silo’ approach should link with the vision of the IDP as a holistic entity” (Theron, 2005b:139). This, as Theron (2005b:139) avers, calls for an interdisciplinary approach amongst departments and municipal officials as change agents, as well as engagement with the community through an IKS approach.

Davids (2005c:68) holds the view that planning should be linked to the municipal budget, meaning that finance must be allocated from internal and external funding to the identified projects. Parnell and Pieterse (2002:85) agree with Davids when they point out that maximum impact can be achieved if the budget process is linked to the IDP, because the best integrated plans devoid of dedicated resources will not achieve anything. The researcher has observed that sometimes funds that are allocated in writing to the identified projects end up not being generated, resulting in projects not being implemented.

Service delivery at local government level, as Theron (2005b:137) states, is not always appropriate and does not always reach the intended beneficiaries due to the following factors which are linked to IDP challenges:

- Lack of skill at local government level;
- Weak interpretation and co-ordination;
- Insufficient dissemination of information;
- Human resource and management problems; and
- Lack of an organised voice for the poor between elections.

Theron *et al.* (2007:4) state that the challenges of IDP arise through the absence of clarity and consensus with regard to questions such as the following:

- What does participation mean?

- What are its characteristics?
- How does it differ from engagement, involvement and consultation?
- Who 'owns' the participatory process as delivered through the IDP?

Furthermore, Theron *et al.* (2007:4) list factors which compel change agents to persist with implementing participatory development in the ways of thinking and acting with which they are familiar and comfortable, due to a vacuum created by unclear thinking and uncertainty about participation as a concept and as a mandated policy goal. The factors Theron *et al.* (2007:5-6) list, include the following:

- Change agents understand neither the idea of social capital nor the grassroots reality that is rich (or at least potentially rich in a usable capital). Because of this unreflective thinking, change agents continue to take for granted that ordinary people do not always have a clear understanding of what they need. Therefore, it is the change agent's job to determine what people need and to provide it. Change agents do not draw from social capital and the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) already in the possession of beneficiaries and this only perpetuates beneficiary dependency, rather than improving their conditions.
- Change agents in government are provided with training programmes that accentuate planning for people, rather than planning with people. Proper training would help agents to become facilitators rather than designers and implementers of development policy decision making. The researcher has observed that change agents, at the IDP representative forum meetings want only the participants or beneficiaries to endorse decisions already taken by change agents and politicians, rather than taking the input from beneficiaries, who are supposed to control the participatory development planning process.
- Change agents in government do not realise how limited their understanding of contemporary reality - social, political, economic and environmental - actually is. Because government itself is structured as a cluster of functionally isolated 'silos', it is difficult for agents to initiate development intervention except by taking institutionally fragmented approaches. If municipal officials do not work in teams across departmental

lines, they will not pave the way to partnering with the intended beneficiaries of development planning. Currently, change agents seem to consult beneficiaries after decisions have already been made.

- Change agents, both inside and outside government, fail to understand that members of the community will participate in the planning and implementation of a development project only if it is clear to them how they will benefit from the effort. It is of utmost importance to make people's first experience of participation positive. Failure to achieve this may cause prospective beneficiaries to become even less disposed to participating in the future than they were formerly. Theron *et al.* (2007:6) declare that "In the absence of a meaningful first experience with participation, it may seem as much a 'tyranny' as the authoritarian government was." Finally, "grassroots-level participation in development promoting efforts depends on a corps of effective change agents who will ensure that the beneficiaries of development are placed at the centre of the initiative they promote" (Theron *et al.*, 2007:6).

6.5. The role of Ward Committees and Councillors in the IDP

As stated in the introductory chapter, ward committees can only be established through section 12 of the provincial legislation and are confined to Metropolitan and Local Municipalities of the ward participatory types (Davids 2005c:78). Stewart (2003:9) argues that "Although ward committees are not the only vehicles for community participation in local government, they only exist currently as the most broadly applied and accepted model."

Davids (2005c:78) declares that a ward committee is an elected body which aims to deepen democracy and is characterised as:

- a committee of the council which is required to be transparent and accountable to the community as a whole;

- a community-based structure inclusive of all organisations, sectors and independent individuals in the community;
- a facilitating forum representing community interests and communicating these to the council; and
- a link between the community and the council.

With regard to ward committee representation, Section 73 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998) states that “a ward committee consists of (a) the councillor representing the ward who must also be the chairperson of the committee and (b) not more than 10 other persons. Ward committees ought to have equitable gender representation and reflect a diversity of interests” (Stewart, 2003:9). It has been found that most ward committees lack equitable gender representation. Significantly, as Stewart (2003:9) argues, ward committees exist to ensure participation in local government and as such, are key mechanisms for communication with the public. The study has established that currently ward committees are not functioning effectively as key mechanisms for communication with the public. There is no smooth dissemination of information from the municipality to ward committees and then to the public.

Ward committees and councillors participate in the IDP through structures such as the IDP Representative Forum and Budget Ward Committee Consultative meetings.

The RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:57) states that the IDP Representative Forums have been established for general public participation. Davids (2005c:66) states that the IDP Rep Forums comprise the following:

- Members of the Executive Committee of a Municipal Council (EXCO);
- Councillors, including district councillors;
- Traditional leaders;
- Ward committee chairpersons;

- Heads of departments and senior officials from municipal and other government departments; and
- Representatives from organised stakeholder groups, etc.

Ward committees and councillors should participate in the municipality's IDP Representative Forum which is normally convened in a central municipality venue, accessible to all stakeholders. The RSA Ward Committee Resource book (2005:57) states that through the IDP process, the ward committee can become involved in:

- identifying its key development priorities;
- formulating appropriate strategies; and
- developing the appropriate system to realise the vision and mission of municipalities.

These meetings are convened for the purposes of reviewing IDP priorities before they are submitted to the Municipal Council for approval. Ideally, these meetings are intended to afford community representatives a chance to make an input and endorse the document before it is approved by council.

Nevertheless, the researcher has observed that these IDP representative meetings do not empower the beneficiaries as the participatory process at these meetings is controlled by officials and politicians rather than by the intended beneficiaries of the development participatory process. Time for questions, comments and input by the stakeholders and beneficiaries is greatly restricted.

Ward committees and councillors also participate in the IDP and Budget Consultative meetings, which are convened at decentralised venues for a particular municipality. Structures which participate in the IDP Representative Forums, also participate at this level. Municipalities should unveil programmes for the IDP and Budget Consultative meetings which are generally well attended by officials in community structures. In these types of consultative meetings, politicians

and officials brief communities and stakeholders on the IDP and budget and then allow them to ask questions in batches of five at a time. These batches of five questions, comments and inputs are limited to two or three batches at most.

The researcher has observed that this type of public participation strategy in the IDP and budget is limited merely to consultation, because the input of the beneficiaries has no influence on what has already been decided by politicians and officials. Furthermore, it was observed that the time allocated for questions, comments and input was always deliberately restricted.

6.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the importance of public participation in the IDP process and the role of ward committees and councillors. It was found that public participation in the IDP process still leaves much to be desired. In other words, the IDP process as a means of fostering public participation at local government level is regarded by some as the ‘entry point’ to South African politics and it is facing a huge challenge in its implementation. The structures that have been set up to implement public participation are unable to deliver fruitful results in respect of the IDP process. Change agents do not possess the required knowledge to implement the IDP process in a transformed South Africa. Ward committees, as structures that should promote public participation, are not effectively represented and their input has little impact on transforming the IDP into a grassroots vehicle for authentic public participation. Public participation would have influenced the IDP processes if IDPs had been formulated through the necessary community inputs rather than through largely inappropriate inputs from consultants. It is evident that the IDPs have followed a top-down approach instead of a bottom-up approach.

It is of seminal importance that the IDP of a municipality should be able to link up with other spheres of government, as well as government departments so that there is proper co-ordination

and implementation of service delivery to beneficiaries. In other words, the IDP if properly implemented should include aspects of both participatory and representative democracy. In the South African context, the question is whether the IDP as the leading instrument of planning is mobilising the beneficiaries of development in popular public participation, as is the case in the participatory budgeting process in the city of Port Alegre in Brazil. It is therefore incumbent upon wards councillors as change agents to put in place vibrant ward committee structures that enhance public participation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RESEARCH FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter will assess the role of ward committees and councillors in public participation from a practical perspective. How the Thulamela Municipality adheres to the legal framework of public participation will be scrutinised and how it encourages its residents to take part in the affairs of local government. The participation of communities in the affairs of local government promotes good governance and sustainable development, as well as sustainable service delivery.

It is incumbent upon ward committees and ward councillors to mobilise communities to take part in the structures of public participation provided for by the Thulamela Municipality, such as IDP forums and ward committees, to name a few. For public participation to achieve its aim at local government level, it requires ward councillors to act as change agents, as was argued in the hypothesis of this study. The validity of the problem statement as mentioned in section 1.3 of this study, which stipulates, among others, that “public participation at ward committee level ensures that the voice of the community is heard on development issues” (Parnell & Pieterse, 2002:83) will be assessed. Furthermore, the hypothesis as stated in section 1.4, namely that “ward councillors should act as change agents; if they fail in their duties, public participation at local government level will not achieve its aims”, will also be tested.

7.2. Data Gathering and Analysis

This section explains the methodology of data gathering in the Thulamela Municipality as stipulated in Chapter 1 (Sub-heading 1.8) of this study.

The Municipal Manager of the Thulamela Municipality, as well as Senior Managers and Councillors on the Executive Committee of the municipality, ward councillors and ward committee members were interviewed (see Annexure B1) to assess their role in facilitating public participation. The researcher conducted interviews and focus group discussions (see Annexure B2), as well as engaging in observations at the IDP representative forums, budget consultative meetings and the IDP Reviews, in order to determine whether public participation has resulted in enhancing good local governance and sustainable development.

Interviews with the Municipal Manager Mathivha (2007.11.21) and Senior Managers of the Thulamela Municipality revealed that public participation in the Thulamela Municipality is given special priority, but practically, this does not seem to be the case.

Councillors in the Executive Council of the Municipality, ward councillors, PR councillors and Ward Committee members interviewed suggested that both ward committees and ward councillors have the mammoth task of enhancing public participation.

7.3. Findings, Interpretation and Presentation

The Thulamela Municipality, as stated in the background section (Sub-heading 1.2), was established in 2000 as a local municipality in terms of Section 12 of the provisions of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998). The administration offices of the municipality are in Thohoyandou Town, with other offices in Malamulele Town (Thulamela, 2007:1).

According to the IDP Review (2007:176), the Thulamela Municipality is a local municipality situated in the north-eastern section of the Limpopo Province. The municipality has identifiable settlement areas, situated within the geographical area; namely, the Northern Section (the former

Thohoyandou and surrounding rural and urban settlements) and the Southern Section (Malamulele and the surrounding rural and urban settlements).

Thulamela is a *Karanga* or *Shona* word which means ‘The place of giving birth’. The ancient Thulamela settlement, which has been declared a national heritage site, is situated north of the Kruger National Park, next to the Punda Maria Gate. The original inhabitants of the area were the *Shangaan* who had developed strong trade links with traders from the Middle East, when they were in this area.

7.3.1. The establishment of Ward Committees in the Thulamela Municipality

Ward committees are legislated in the Municipal Structures Act to ensure and improve community input and public participation in governance processes. Decisions taken or issues addressed in ward committees are brought to the attention of the council through the ward councillor. Ward committees can only be effective when they are supported by pragmatic and more inclusive mechanisms for public participation. As a central way for communities to engage with municipal governance, ward committees and ward councillors thus generate a milieu of consensus.

Participants at focus group discussions indicated that the ward committees in the Thulamela Municipality were established in 2006, immediately after the local government elections. Owing to the considerable size of the municipality, the process of establishing ward committees extended over a period of two months, namely, May and June. Respondents indicated that the office of the Municipal Speaker, assisted by deployed councillors facilitated the establishment of ward committees. Councillors who were specifically deployed to work with the speaker and municipal officials facilitated the entire process. The ward committees were established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998) (Davids, 2005c:78).

Stewart (2003:9) states that “Although ward committees are not the only vehicles for community participation in local government, they currently exist as the most broadly applied and accepted model”. Most respondents confirmed the above view. They have indicated that the main objectives of the ward committees are among others: to be the link between the community and the municipality, as well as to facilitate communication between the community and the municipality, so that information from the community can be relayed to the municipality. Additionally, ward committees can disseminate information from all government sectors to the communities. Some of the respondents remarked that ward committees provide platforms for people to exercise their right to democratic governance; in other words, through ward committees, people have a say in the government of the day. Other respondents have pointed out that ward committees are a communication link between the community and the municipality and are thus seen as the mouthpiece of the community.

Interviewees such as Councillors Musalafu ME and Mutoti NW (2007.11.19) were explicit in pointing out that ward committees provide a platform for public participation in the affairs of the local municipality and deepen democracy by strengthening public participation. An interview with a member of the Executive Committee and former Chief Whip of the Thulamela Municipality, Councillor Malindi (2007.11.18) revealed that ward committees are the entry point of development and are therefore obliged to facilitate public participation in the affairs of the municipality. This view reaffirms Stewart’s (2003:9) assertion that “Ward Committees exist to ensure participation in local government and are as such, key mechanisms for communication with the public”. Moreover, the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998) states that “The objective of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government.”

7.3.2. Representation of Ward Committees in the Thulamela Municipality

According to Stewart (2003:10), Section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act (1998) requires that members of ward committees be elected from a diverse pool of interest groups. Most of the participants at focused group discussions reported that ward committee members were indeed elected from diverse groups within the ward. This variety of interests ensures a diversity of input. Committee members included among others, women, civic organisations, youth, religious groups, sport and culture, health and welfare, the business community, safety forums, disabled people and traditional leaders.

The Limpopo Province's guidelines for the establishment and operation of municipal ward committees (undated:2) states that a ward committee consists of councillors representing that ward on the council, with a chairperson of the committee and not more than ten (10) other persons. It should also be noted at this point that the tasks of ward committees are, among others, the following:

- Ward committees create formal unbiased communication channels and co-operative partnerships between the municipality and the community within a ward;
- Ward committees facilitate public participation in the process of development and review and implement the management of the IDP of the municipality;
- They ensure contact between the municipality and the community through the use of, and payment for services;
- They act as an advisory body on council policies and matters affecting communities in the ward;
- Ward committees serve as official organs of governance, identifying and specialising in participatory structures in the municipality;
- Ward committees serve as a mobilising agents for community action; and
- They may receive and record complaints from the community within the ward and provide feedback on council's responses (RSA Ward Committee Resource book 2005:38).

Respondents have indicated that the representation on ward committees in the Thulamela Municipality conforms to these requirements and the numbers are consistent with the guidelines. However, some respondents felt that the 10-member representation on ward committees does not meet the needs of the wards in rural areas, particularly in a vast municipality such as Thulamela. The respondents felt that a 10-member ward committee can only really operate effectively in an urban municipality, where there is a high population density. The researcher is of the opinion that the representation on ward committees should be reviewed to cater for the needs of rural municipalities.

The respondents remarked that initially, strong interest was shown in serving on ward committees. This interest did not translate into the effective functioning of ward committees as some members were under the impression that there would be some benefits, such as reimbursement for transport costs and even being considered for employment. When these expectations were not met, many ward committee members became disillusioned and withdrew from serving on the ward committees, leaving committees with the task of bringing about effective and sustainable service delivery to the community at grassroots level. Ward committee members had hopes that the delivery of service would be swift. Slow service delivery resulted in frustration and a reluctance to explain such tardiness to the constituency.

Respondents also indicated that there is a political dominance on ward committees in the Thulamela Municipality by members of the current ruling party. Respondents felt that had political dominance been in the hands of opposition political parties, there would have been no change in the slow rate of delivery due to a perception that opposition parties, within the Thulamela Municipality, appear to have little understanding of how local government operates.

On the issue of encouraging communities to pay for services to ensure sustainable service delivery, most respondents were of the opinion that ward committees were not doing enough

work to achieve this, as even some ward committee members failed to pay for municipal services. A further reason cited for not encouraging payment for services was the fear of unpopularity. The situation is worsened by the fact that ward councillors as change agents are not disseminating information to the community in a satisfactory manner for public participation to gain momentum at the ward level.

It should be pointed out that, as stated in section 1.10 under the definition of key concepts, 'change agents' could be referred to as 'mediators' between two sets of knowledge; namely external technical knowledge and internal social knowledge (social capital or IKS). Change agents should act as experts, guides, enablers, advocates, mediators and organisers. The most important role of the change agent may be compared to the notion of a spark plug – where he or she should only start or activate the creative energy of the beneficiaries and 'idle along' as the social learning partner in the capacitating process which normally follows. However, change agents should not aim to act as supermen or -women. Their intervention should leave the beneficiaries of development adequately enabled to take control of their own circumstances. It is crucial that, whatever the role of a change agent might be, he or she is expected to implement development in an integrated, holistic and beneficiary-empowering manner. The process of development that is initiated by a change agent should not be a unilateral directive from outside but rather be a development process that is based on a partnership-in-planning approach between the change agent and the beneficiaries of development (Theron, 2008:1-22).

Furthermore, respondents indicated that naturally, people do not want to pay for services and therefore, negative sentiments sometimes discourage people to feel guilty about the non-payment of services. Participants in focus group discussions, cited lack of understanding as to how local government operates as another factor contributing to the non-payment for services. The researcher argues that communities do not realise that for local municipalities to deliver services they have to generate their own income through, among other things, the payment of services.

Despite the negative perception about the payment of services, more especially within historically rural areas within the municipality, the respondents reported that payment for services in the former R293 towns and surrounding semi-rural areas within the municipality is satisfactory. Here the majority of residents understand the value of paying for municipal services. Respondents also indicated that communities with functional ward committees disseminated information to constituencies and explained why people should pay for services.

7.3.3. Participation by Ward Committees and Ward Councillors at IDP forums within the Thulamela Municipality

As stated in the previous section, an IDP is a major strategic planning instrument which guides and informs all planning, budgeting and decision making in a municipality (Theron, 2005b:136). The Thulamela Municipality IDP Review (2007:172) states that the IDP is a development plan for the municipality which guides it in taking planning decisions. The Thulamela Municipality has mechanisms for creating conditions for public participation, among them, the following:

- Engaging the public and specific stakeholders and encouraging them to participate in the Thulamela IDP Process;
- Establishing the Thulamela Municipal IDP Representative Forum, comprising representatives of geographical areas (wards), stakeholder organisations and disadvantaged groups (IDP Review, 2007:180).

The respondents confirmed that the Thulamela Municipality has an IDP, which is a developmental plan for short-, medium- and long-term goals; one that is also endorsed by the ward committees. Thus, the absence of service protest marches in this municipality is evident, although communities do send delegations to the municipal offices to indicate their dissatisfaction with service delivery. This IDP plan, according to respondents, acts as a formal structure for public participation by ward committees and ward councillors.

Ward committee members and ward councillors do participate in the IDP Representative Forums, Budget Consultative meetings and IDP Review meetings in the Thulamela Municipality.

According to the Municipal Manager, Mathivha (2007.11.21), public participation in IDP representative forums and budget consultative meetings are hampered by the fact that these meetings are often conducted during working hours when some of the ward committee members, who may have important contributions to make, are working elsewhere. These meetings are therefore normally attended by those who are unemployed and whose main interest lies in finding employment. The Municipal Manager further indicated that input at these meetings does not drastically change that which has already been prepared by officials. Nevertheless, officials are flexible regarding amendments to the IDP document, so as to meet the interests of the communities. An interview with ward committee member, Nemakhavhani (2007.11.01), confirmed that the importance of IDP meetings is undermined by conducting them during working hours as most committee members with relevant input are unavailable.

In contrast, Ward Councillor, Mutoti indicated that stakeholders particularly ward committee members, do provide input that would normally warrant the amendment of the IDP document, but officials do not seem to be flexible enough to consider these inputs seriously, thus hampering a community-driven result. Respondents report that meetings are generally attended but differ in opinion on the time given for input and the clarification of issues. Some respondents indicated that time is generally too restricted while other respondents reported that participants are given sufficient time for these matters. In an interview with an Executive Committee member, Councillor Mulaudzi (2007.11.21), she indicated that some of the inputs from communities at IDP representative forum meetings cannot be implemented due to financial constraints. Municipal resources are always limited when weighted up against community needs that are always unlimited.

In an interview with a Senior Manager attached to the Department of Community and Protection Services, Masangu (2007.11.19) suggested that it is because of effective participation and being part of decision making in IDP review meetings coupled with an understanding of the challenges that communities do not participate in *ad hoc* protest action.

According to the Municipal Manager, the IDP within the Thulamela Municipality is linked to the budget process. The Manager indicated that a credible IDP should be linked to the budget. As a municipality, Thulamela has moved away from the tendency to have an IDP with a long list of priorities which is not linked to the budget and that ultimately becomes a mere wish-list.

The Thulamela Municipality, like other municipalities in South Africa, has to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (2000), which requires municipalities to develop mechanisms, processes and procedures for public participation. The Municipal Manager reports that ward committees, ward councillors and community stakeholders engage in public participation at different forums. The respondents indicated that the municipal area has been divided into seven (7) different zones, which comprise specific numbers of wards. In these zones, ward committees, community stakeholders and traditional leaders normally meet once a quarter to discuss issues of common interest. These types of meetings are also referred to as cluster meetings. Some ward committee members have reservations about these cluster meetings. Ward committee member, Gundula pointed out, in an interview, (2007.11.25), that cluster meetings are not properly planned in conjunction with ward committee members. They are not effective for public participation because community needs differ from ward to ward and at these cluster meetings, there is no specific focus on the relevant ward.

Participants in focus group discussion agree that cluster meetings are generally attended satisfactorily, but attendance and public participation always reach a peak at IDP Representative Forums and IDP Review Meetings because ward committee members and stakeholders need to verify whether their projects have been included in the IDP priority list. The researcher has observed that if the projects of the ward committee members and stakeholders have been included in the IDP priority list, they appear to feel re-assured that these projects will be

implemented. At these meetings, representatives have a tendency to become vociferous, the thinking being that by so doing, their projects will be included in the priority list of a particular financial year.

Some respondents attribute the high attendance at IDP Representative Forum meetings to community members' fear that officials and politicians may decide to plan for the people rather than planning with them. For instance, when development plans are imposed upon them, respondents felt that planning for people undermined the knowledge of local people, more specifically the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) which communities possessed and survived with, prior to the advent of so-called Euro-centric knowledge. This seems to hold true, as Theron *et al.* (2007:6) argues that currently, change agents seem to consult beneficiaries after decisions have already been made.

The researcher has observed that since the adoption of the IDP in 2000 by Thulamela Municipality, the IDP has been implemented without a built-in mechanism such as a performance management system. The question may well be asked as to whether the implementation of IDP is up to standard in Thulamela Municipality?

With regard to the issue of public participation in the drafting of the development plan, the researcher has observed that the Thulamela Municipality allows communities, more especially through ward committees, to identify the needs and priorities for a particular ward. These are then submitted to the municipality by a ward councillor. However, the identified needs and priorities are further prioritised against those of the entire municipal area to formulate a single IDP priority list. This places a huge responsibility on ward committees and councillors to identify projects that will have an impact on people's lives, rather than have an endless 'wish-list' of needs and priorities, as most ward committees are currently compiling.

The researcher has further observed that even though Thulamela Municipality has adopted IDP and is supposed to conduct its affairs in a manner which is consistent with its IDP, there are instances where it deviates from the IDP priority lists. A case in point may be the service delivery issue where sometimes a village that has been prioritised for a mass electrification project for a specific financial year is by-passed for a village which was not on the priority list, or was at the bottom of the priority list.

The reasons for re-arranging a priority list without the stakeholders' endorsement is always questionable because if it is not managed properly it may be seated in nepotism and corruption, irrespective of the reasons advanced and this can result in service delivery protest action. Communities which have been prioritised for a service in a particular year unquestionably need to receive the service as promised.

Further observation by the researcher deduced that the lack of IDP understanding by politicians, Municipal Managers and Senior Managers at Thulamela Municipality has compelled them to employ the expertise of consultants or outsiders who do not understand the realities at the grassroots level. In most cases, these consultants prepare IDPs along Eurocentric approaches which are not rooted in the communities' Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). The consultants do not take into consideration the principle of people-centred development, which Theron, *et al.* (2007:4) advocate.

7.3.4. Public participation strategies utilised by the Thulamela Municipality

As stated in Chapter 5, different participation strategies can be utilised to guarantee that the right to public participation is accessible. At the Thulamela Municipality, respondents interviewed indicated that these strategies consist of community meetings, mayoral *imbizos*, budget consultative meetings and radio announcements, to name just a few.

- Public meetings, as highlighted in Chapter 5, are a popular and frequently utilised public participation strategy by municipalities. The respondents indicated that these meetings are often held at the kraal of the headman, where every community member is allowed to raise questions. An interview with Communication Manager, Tshiila (2007.11.15), revealed that these meetings are often used for the purposes of reporting back to the community and for updating community members on any development which the municipality is undertaking. The researcher is of the opinion that this public participation strategy is used strategically to cement a good working relationship between the municipality and traditional leaders.
- IDP representative forums and budget consultative meetings are the most frequently used public participation strategies in the Thulamela Municipality. All the stakeholders at the municipality regard this as the most effective public participation strategy for planning purposes as it gives room for a bottom-up approach to planning. Respondents reported that generally, community structures delegate representatives to these meetings, the only drawback being that representatives on occasion do not report back to the structures that mandated them to attend the meetings in the first place. An interview with PR councillor, Matambele (2007.11.18), suggested that there is no consistency in the selection of those delegated to attend. Different representatives are mandated to attend later meetings rather than maintaining a consistency which would mean continuity in understanding of what went before.
- Local Communicator forum meetings, according to communication manager Tshiila, are held on a quarterly basis with secretaries of ward committees and spokespersons of the various departmental sectors. At these meetings participants discuss problems encountered by communities and departmental sectors regarding issues such as service delivery, the dissemination of information and communication breakdowns between the municipality and communities. Problems discussed at these meetings are referred to the municipal speaker for attention and resolution.

- Ward committee meetings: every ward within the Thulamela Municipality has a ward committee established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998). Ward committees can be an effective public participation strategy to be embarked upon by the municipality if the committees are fully operational. In an interview with PR Councillor Nethononda (2007.11.15), he revealed that ward committee meetings are not well attended (see Annexure C), and therefore do not function effectively. The reason is that when elected, some ward committee members think that they will be reimbursed for transport/travelling costs.
- Advertisements: respondents indicated that as far as paid advertisements in national as well as community newspapers are concerned, the Thulamela Municipality performs excellently. All tenders, vacant posts and even public participation activities are advertised in local and national newspapers.
- Radio announcements and broadcasts: based on the interview with the Communication Manager Tshiila, it was established that apart from conveying important issues through radio broadcasting, the municipality regularly requests a time slot to be allocated to the communication manager to address matters that benefit the community.
- Mayoral *imbizo*: the respondents indicated that the Thulamela Municipality, in a joint effort with other sectors of government, frequently use this public participation strategy. Here, politicians do not talk; they only listen to communities talking. The respondents further reported that inputs made at these *imbizos* continue to enrich the Strategic Development Programmes of the Municipality.
- Private-Public-Partnership (PPP): this public participation strategy, according to the Municipal Manager, entails communities/villages contributing a certain amount of money to fund a project of their choice. The municipality in turn, subsidises this with a substantial sum to kick-start the project. Currently, the Thulamela Municipality is implementing electricity

supply projects in partnership with communities. This PPP started in 2003 and has subsequently fast-tracked the electrification of communities within the Thulamela Municipality. Interviews with the Senior Manager attached to Technical Services Department, Muneri (2007.11.20), revealed that in this type of public participation strategy, the Thulamela Municipality is exemplary, winning the Vuna Award at national level in 2005-2006 for being the best municipality in South Africa to successfully implement Public – Private – Partnerships.

7.4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the assessment of the role of ward committees in public participation through the IDP. These recommendations will hopefully help to boost service delivery within the Thulamela Municipality.

It is recommended that:

- Properly enforced programmes or modules should be developed in consultation with the speaker to enable ward committee members to become *au fait* with policies, regulations and by-laws by training them immediately after they have been elected into office. This training could be easily undertaken in partnership with training institutes and specialists NGOs;
- Mechanisms like bi-monthly reports by ward councillors to the Speaker's office should be introduced. Such reports have to be checked and feedback be given on to each ward councillor, thereby ensuring that ward councillors are planning and are making decisions with communities rather than acting on behalf of the communities. Furthermore, such reports must also indicate that councillors are attending community meetings and are listening to issues raised and then plan according to the views of the people at grassroots level.
- Ward committees should be given adequate training through workshops on the IDP, budget processes, how ward committees function and municipal legislation, such as the Municipal Structures Act and Municipal Finance Management Act;

- The public participation unit created specifically to enhance public participation by communities should recruit knowledgeable, dedicated and committed personnel;
- Communities should be urged to make themselves available for public participation in the programmes. Ward councillors should attend outreach programmes such as community or village meetings;
- Ward committees should hold monthly meetings in different villages within the ward for report back purposes;
- Ward committee members should take part effectively in public participation through the identification of their project priorities if the budget for projects is ward-based rather than municipality-based, as the former approach constitutes a bottom-up planning exercise, whereas the latter is more inclined to top-down planning;
- Municipalities should establish ward committee and council offices to serve as a centre for contact with the ward councillor and as an information centre;
- Both Senior Managers and some Executive Committee members together with administrators in the municipality's Public Participation Unit should undergo training in other global public participation strategies, such as the one employed by the City of Port Alegre in Brazil;
- Municipalities should budget for the reimbursement of transport costs and stationery for ward committee members;
- Beneficiaries of development should be properly mobilised in public participation, if the spirit of the RDP's commitment to people-driven development is to be resuscitated by amongst others, the re-establishment of Community Development Forums;
- Steps should be taken to amend the Municipal Structure Act, so as to be more inclusive on the issue of representation of communities at ward committees in rural areas;
- PR Councillors should be elected in accordance with constituency-based elections, since a proportionally-based election promotes party loyalty;
- Communities should be organised in order to take a more effective role in public participation by attending IDP Representative Forum meetings, budget consultative meetings and ward committee meetings;
- Ward Councillors should assist traditional leaders to understand the role of the municipality;

- Ways should be explored to enable ward committees to function effectively and to develop funding from both provincial and national government. Ward Councillors should be enabled to understand the programmes of both central and provincial government;
- Ward committee members should be accountable to the structures that elected them onto ward committees by reporting back to their respective structures, e.g. a youth representative to report to the youth formation after the meeting and carry the mandate from the structures rather than representing him/herself;
- Ward committees should broaden the base of their discussions to encompass issues such as bills and both national and provincial budgets, in addition to matters at ward level;
- Authentic public participation by the community should be encouraged to be part of the municipality and to support its programmes, as well as paying for the services rendered rather than setting up in opposition to it;
- Ward councillors should assist in giving support to communities and reflect positions on policy at all times;
- Parallel ‘mirror’ subcommittees of the various municipal departments should be set up at ward committee level. Ward committee members should consult constantly with residents;
- Government departments should be responsible for local government, assisting ward committees, since every category of development takes place at ward level; and

7.5. Conclusions

The Thulamela Municipality, as one of the largest municipalities in the Limpopo Province, is destined to become the model for public participation and good governance through its strides towards encouraging communities in the public participation process. The Thulamela Municipality provides opportunities for its residents to make inputs through ward committee representatives at IDP meetings which are normally convened at a central venue, such as the Thohoyandou Indoor Sports Centre or the Thohoyandou Arts and Culture Centre. At these meetings, the inputs from various stakeholders are then worked into an IDP document to be reflective of residents’ views. Similarly, budget consultative meetings, which are normally

conducted at various demarcated municipal areas, also allow residents to make inputs that form the basis of the planning process.

However, there are still some cardinal aspects regarding public participation on which the Thulamela Municipality has still to improve. As has been shown in the case study, communities' commitment towards promoting public participation is nevertheless, not what it should be. Change agents still lack the required knowledge to engage communities in public participation, because they do not seem to be the new corps of change agents that the DLG requires. Consequently, a new body of change agents is required to transform the public participation process (Theron, 2008:1-22). The beneficiaries of development are still not regarded as the owners of the development process, due to a tendency to employ top-down prescriptive approaches to development that do not empower the people (Chambers, 2005:207-211). As has been articulated in the focus group discussions, ward communities are still not functional, and in certain cases, meetings are postponed indefinitely due to the lack of a quorum. The inputs which beneficiaries give at public participation forums are not taken as the bases on which the municipality starts its planning, but are taken so as to adhere only to constitutional requirements.

The researcher has observed that the Thulamela Municipality has, in the main, adhered to the basic requirement of the Municipal Structures Act (1998) in establishing ward committees consisting of a ward councillor and nine other members who have been elected. Furthermore, the need for female representation and representation of different stakeholders, such as the youth, the disabled, business and traditional leaders, has been addressed. The tasks of ward committees are, among others: a) to ensure and improve community input and participation in governance processes; b) to build partnership for service delivery; c) to disseminate information to communities; and d) to identify problems in the ward and bring these problems to the attention of the municipality. However, it should be pointed out that most ward committees in the Thulamela Municipality are not fully functional as far too often, scheduled ward committee meetings are held in the absence of a quorum leading to indefinite postponement.

As for the dissemination of information to communities, the Thulamela Municipality sometimes does this spontaneously through ward councillors and Community Development Workers. The information is disseminated to the communities and communities in turn, are always encouraged to take part in public participation forums. However, the only stumbling block is that communities are not properly mobilised to take part in the public participation meetings that are conducted by the municipality. This then places a huge responsibility on the ward councillors as change agents to mobilise communities in such a way that they see the importance of public participation.

Regarding the issue of building partnerships for service delivery, the respondents indicated that the Thulamela Municipality excels more especially in the implementation of the electricity supply project in partnership with communities. The ward committees as vehicles of public participation and ward councillors as change agents have contributed greatly to the success of this initiative.

On the identification of problems in the ward and bringing the same to the attention of the municipality, ward committees are constrained due to the fact that ward councillors are functionally challenged because there is no clear way in which ward committees' concerns become a structural part of council agenda. Compelled by political party caucus processes and party structures, ward councillors are often seated lower in political party hierarchies with proportional representation councillors shaping party policy decisions.

This chapter examined how the Thulamela Municipality implements some of the public participation strategies from a practical point of view. It also assessed the progress made by ward committees and ward councillors in mobilising communities to become active participants in the public participation structures provided for by the municipality.

Significantly, the chapter focused briefly on the views of respondents and how their role in public participation in the affairs of local government promotes good governance and sustainable development. The mobilisation of communities in the private/ public partnerships of electrification projects demonstrates that ward councillors are acting as change agents to enable public participation to achieve its aim. The concept of private-public partnership was first implemented in 2003 in the electrification of projects in one of the wards of Thulamela Municipality. It was the vision of a ward councillor who realised that the electrification of villages through IDP priority lists, which catered only for four villages per year out of \pm 200 villages, would result in the electrification of these villages somewhere in 2018 if the electrification units (i.e. number of houses to be electrified) given to the Thulamela Municipality did not increase. He then convinced residents of his village to contribute R1000. per household. After the funds were collected, he persuaded the Thulamela Municipality to assist with the electrification of the village. The Thulamela Municipality gave a subsidy of R1500. per household and the villages were then electrified. The initiative of this councillor was imitated by other councillors whose villages were at that time not yet electrified. Soon the initiative enabled the municipality to fast-track the electrification of villages throughout the whole forum area. Through this partnership, more and more villages are being electrified. Moreover, the Thulamela Municipality has stepped up the subsidy to the tune of R7000. per household due to the escalating costs of electrification.

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ANNEXURE B1:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PERSONAL STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

NAME OF STUDENT: SIPHUMA Z.R

STUDENT NO : 14239000

THESIS TOPIC : AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION IN IDP - THE THULAMELA
MUNICIPALITY

UNIVERSITY : STELLENBOSCH: SCHOOL OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
AND PLANNING

SUPERVISOR : FRANCOIS THERON

DATE : NOVEMBER 2007

1. Who facilitated the establishment of ward committees in the Thulamela Municipality?
2. What, in your opinion, are the main objectives of ward committees?
3. When ward committees were established, community members showed a lot of interest in serving in the structure. Was that interest translated into the effective functioning of ward committees?
4. Do communities pay for services being rendered by the Thulamela Municipality?
5. To what extent are ward committees encouraging communities to pay for municipal services?
6. What are your observations of public participation by ward committees in the IDP Review, the IDP Representative Forums and Municipal budget, in terms of attendance, clarity- seeking questions and inputs?
7. Why does public participation always reach a peak at IDP Representative Forums and IDP Review meetings?
8. To what extent is Thulamela Municipality fulfilling the requirement of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 200) in terms of public participation processes?
9. What are the stumbling blocks towards maximising public participation at ward committee level with Thulamela Municipality?
10. Developmental Local government seeks not only the democratisation of local government, but also the transformation of local governance. Are ward committees working towards the realisation of these goals in the Thulamela Municipality?

11. The developmental council will facilitate and co-ordinate service delivery, poverty alleviation strategies and local economic development initiatives within its jurisdiction. Does the Thulamela Municipality conform to this description?

12. The White Paper on Local Government (1998:27) defines IDP as a process through which a municipality can establish a developmental plan for the short, medium and long terms. Does the Thulamela Municipality have such a plan and do ward committees embrace it?

13. Which public participation strategies does the Thulamela Municipality often pursue to engage communities at ward committee level?

14. Do you agree that if formal structures for public participation (such as those provided for by the IDP) fail, a frustrated citizenry sometimes has no other alternative but to protest?

ANNEXURE B2:

QUESTIONNAIRE TO STIMULATE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

NAME OF STUDENT : SIPHUMA Z.R

STUDENT NO : 14239000

THESIS TOPIC : AN ASSESSMENT OF THE
ROLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN IDP - THE
THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY

UNIVERSITY : STELLENBOSCH: SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

SUPERVISOR : FRANCOIS THERON

DATE : NOVEMBER 2007

1. Who facilitated the establishment of ward committees in the Thulamela Municipality?

2. What, in your opinion, are the main objectives of ward committees?
3. When ward committees were established, community members showed a lot of interest in serving in the structure. Was that interest translated into the effective functioning of ward committees?
4. Are ward committees in the Thulamela Municipality dominated by members of a particular political party? If yes, which specific political party?
5. To what extent are ward committees encouraging communities to pay for municipal services?
6. What are your observations of public participation by ward committees in the IDP Review, IDP Representative Forums and Municipal budget, in terms of attendance, clarity-seeking questions and inputs?
7. Do contributions or inputs, if any, at the above-mentioned forums influence the decisions to be taken by municipal officials?
8. Why does public participation always reach a peak at IDP Representative Forums and IDP Review meetings?
9. Developmental Local government seeks not only the democratisation of local government, but also the transformation of local governance. Are ward committees working towards the realisation of these goals in the Thulamela Municipality?

10. The developmental council will facilitate and co-ordinate service delivery, poverty alleviation strategies and local economic development initiatives within its jurisdiction. Does the Thulamela Municipality conform to this description?

11. The White Paper on Local Government (1998:27) defines the IDP as a process through which a municipality can establish a developmental plan for the short, medium and long terms. Does the Thulamela Municipality have such a plan and do ward committees embrace it?

12. Is it true that change agents (officials, politicians and Community Development Workers) in government, plan **for** people/communities instead of planning **with** them?

13. Do you agree with the notion by politicians, officials and academics that public participation promotes good local governance and sustainable local development?

14. Which public participation strategies does the Thulamela Municipality often pursue to engage communities at ward committee level?

15. Do you agree that if formal structures for public participation (such as those provided for by IDP) fail, a frustrated citizenry sometimes has no other alternative but to protest?

THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY WARD 21 MEETING PROGRAMME: 2008

NO	TRADITIONAL LEADERS	WARD COMMITTEE MEETING	WARD COUNCIL
1.	19/01/2008	26/01/2008	27/01/2008
2.	-	23/02/2008	24/02/2008
3.	-	29/03/2008	30/03/2008
4.	12/04/2008	19/04/2008	20/04/2008
5.	-	24/05/2008	25/05/2008
6.	-	28/06/2008	29/06/2008
7.	05/07/2008	26/07/2008	27/07/2008
8.	-	23/08/2008	24/08/2008
9.	-	20/09/2008	21/09/2008
10.	11/10/2008	25/10/2008	26/10/2008
11.	-	29/11/2008	30/11/2008
12.	-	06/12/2008	07/12/2008
STARTING TIME:	09H00	11H00	07H30


 THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY
 WARD No. 21
 P/BAG 5066
 THOHAYANDOU 9950
 TEL 015 962 7500
 FAX 015 962 4020
 WARD COUNCILOR

THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY
 WARD No. 21
 P/BAG 5066
 THOHAYANDOU 9950
 TEL 015 962 7500
 FAX 015 962 4020
 WARD COUNCILOR

ENQ : CLLR. MUTOTI N.W **CELL: 082 8823 024**
: SEC. TSHISIKULE A.A **CELL: 073 2267 522**

P.O. Box 413
Makonde
0984
13th August 2007

The Municipal Manager
Thulamela Municipality
Private bag X 5066
Thohoyandou
0950

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a student at the University of Stellenbosch and conducting research for a Masters degree in Public Administration. The title of my thesis is "An assessment of the role of Ward Committees in Public participation – The Thulamela Municipality".

I would appreciate your help in my research. The research will involve the following activities:

1. ½ hour of semi-structured interview with Yourself, the Speakers and Senior Managers.
2. 45 minutes focus-group discussion with at least 6-8 ward committee members of the selected wards.

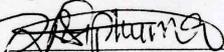
Both the semi-structured interview and focus group discussion will be based on issues that are related to your organisation's public participation activities.

Necessary arrangements will be made prior the actual date of the activities stated in 1 and 2 above.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely

Siphuma Z.R.


Signature

13/08/2007
Date