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The Role of Ward Committees in the Development of Participative Governance

by

Troy Musandiwa Silima

Dissertation
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MASTER OF ARTS
in
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

at the

University of Johannesburg

Supervisor: Professor CJ Auriacombe

November 2013
DECLARATION

I, Troy Musandiwa Silima (Student Number:909907601), do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and that all the sources contained in this dissertation have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not previously, either in its entirety or in part, been submitted at any University in order to obtain academic qualification.

...........................................
Troy Musandiwa Silima

...........................................
Date
SUMMARY

The study deals with the nature and problems of the role of ward committees in the development of participative governance. Ward committees were introduced as the best placed system of local governance to ensure that the basic political commitment of democratic governance is adhered too. Ward committees function as a representative structure of the communities and form a bridge by coordinating and facilitating effective communication between the municipal council and the citizens they represent.

The methodological approach in this study is qualitative and interpretive. In order for this dissertation to achieve its purpose, the main study objectives were to provide the legal and policy framework for participation on the local government level; to determine the most important factors that impact on the role and functions in terms of the effectiveness of ward committees as participatory mechanisms in local governance. The dissertation proposed that participatory action research can be used as a tool by ward committees to develop participative democracy on the local government level.
KEY TERMS:

Accountability; Democracy; Local Government; Municipality; Participatory Democracy; Public Participation; Ward Committee.
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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

1.1. Introduction

This study aims to investigate the role of ward committees in the development of participative governance. This introductory chapter provides a background, rationale and guiding research question for the study in order to provide context for the study objectives. This is followed by the secondary research questions and study objectives that are formulated for the purposes of this dissertation. A concise description is given of terms frequently used in this dissertation in order to avoid misinterpretation.

The methodological approach in this study is descriptive, qualitative and interpretive. To clarify this approach, it has also been necessary to explain the research design and method employed as well as the manner in which data were gathered. This chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters contained in the dissertation.

1.2 Background, rationale and guiding research question

“Change in the lives of citizens can only be effected if they are able to plan, carry out and evaluate those activities intended to change their lives” (Vincent 2004). In recent years support for community development and participatory research has been revived and people's participation and empowerment has become a major concern in development thinking.

The importance of involving people in their own development is driven by the Millennium Development Goals set for community and societal development. Today community participation is high on the agenda. Democratic governance demands the participation of citizens in government structures. The participatory theory of democracy assumes that people’s participation fosters democracy. Therefore participation is the most important quality of a democracy.
Many countries have in recent years thoroughly re-evaluated the role of the state and the public service in their societies. As Hanberger (2006: 24) explains accountability and effectiveness have become the key words in public administration. Governments are therefore expected to render effective services and to be accountable to their citizens. This is even more evident in transitional societies such as South Africa where rapid changes take place and where the political and administrative roles are unclear. The renewed strength of the participatory approach is clearly evident in governments across the world. Edigheji (2010) states that “This means placing emphasis on cooperation and citizen participation by bringing people together across party lines, racial backgrounds and class divides”.

Newly established democracies and developing countries such as South Africa previously excluded from decision making in processes of governance now face the challenge to participate in the process of social reconstruction and development as full subjects able to take “up their political rights and duties. As is clear from extensive research pointing to the inability of the poor and marginalised to do so is not an easy task” (Esau 2007:1).

Many of the White Paper on Local Government of 1998’s recommendations were broadly aligned with current international “best practice” based on democratic principles. The new elected South African government adopted the basic philosophy of democracy. The vision, mission and goals for a democratic society were initially based on a fundamental re-definition of the role of the state from the former mechanical model of public service and development administration to a more organic, strategic, developmental and adaptive model of governance. This involved decentralisation of power which refers to the transfer of authority, responsibilities and functions as well as financial resources to a local government sphere. The effective functioning of local governments could thus be influenced by either inadequate transfer of authority or resources or both (Hilhorst and Guijt 2006:13).

Prior to 1994 the public service was highly centralised. The newly elected Government of 1994 amalgamated the then 11 administrations of South Africa. In the late 1990s the trend towards centralisation accelerated further when a report by the Presidency: Reviewing 10 years of government (The Presidency 2003:75) found
that the Government has more successes in areas where there was significant
control compared to those where there was limited control. This finding influenced
state thinking further. Under President Thabo Mbeki the notion of a developmental
state became more prominent.

According to Putu (2006:11) “The social and economic successes of Asia have
drawn global attention to the developmental state as a possible model for developing
countries”. “A developmental state plays an active role in guiding economic
development and using the resources of the country to meet the needs of the people
and one of the prerequisites for a developmental state depends on the development
of stronger and more effective linkages between the state and civil society” (Putu
2006:11). The South African Government has committed itself “to building a
developmental state that efficiently guides national economic development by
mobilising the resources of society and directing them toward the realisation of
common goals” (Putu 2006:11). Government places “the needs of the poor and
social issues such as health care, housing, education and social safety and the
rights of marginalised sectors such as women at the top of the national agenda”
(Putu 2006:11).

The Government prides itself in the belief that it is a participative democracy
functioning on the principles of good governance for the people by the people. It
therefore has committed itself to establishing structured and institutionalized
frameworks such as ward committees for participatory processes on the different
levels of governance in the public administration. Government firmly believes that
the involvement of residents in the democratic “process beyond just voting could
strengthen and deepen democracy” and could enhance the accountability of local
government (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet Source).

This is also “evident in the planning processes and policy formulation of local
government structures. Local government refers to those legislative and executive
institutions that guarantee order and justice within municipal boundaries through
legitimate authority” (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet
Source). This dissertation will focus on one such a structure namely the ward
committee.
Globally, local government is seen as the most participatory sphere of government. Citizen participation is critical to “(i) enhance development and service delivery, (ii) make governance more effective, and (iii) deepen democracy” (Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper 2007:5). As is evident from the literature promoting participation of citizens is critical to strengthen the quality of governance and more specifically effective service delivery and accountability. The assumption is thus that governance on a local level could enhance democracy and could contribute to development (Hilhorst and Guijt 2006:13). The importance of empowerment, participation and self-determinism of citizens in a democratic government structure is today globally seen as a vital process, especially for young democracies such as South Africa. Rahman (1993: 115, 117) explains it neatly when he says:

“In a given country with an oppressive social structure, organised struggle by the oppressed classes may bring down the prevailing social order. But unless the masses can take a leading role in rebuilding the society they will be liable to become subordinate again to some other social class or classes and lose the power to participate in the process of social reconstruction and development as full subjects ... With the above perspective, field animation work to stimulate purposeful initiatives and struggles of oppressed classes, aiming at promoting the participation of these classes as builders of a new society, should focus not on promoting mass demands for delivery of ‘basic needs’ by others, but on what the masses can do for themselves in meeting these needs” (Rahman 1993:115,117).

Local government is therefore not only “required to provide to residents within their demarcated areas water, electricity, sanitation, street lighting, solid waste disposal, and the construction and maintenance of roads, [but also to] become a key catalyst for locally-led social and economic development” (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet Source). Central to the role of municipalities “is the right of citizens to participate in governance and government processes which is enshrined in the Constitution (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet Source) of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 and further protected through legislation such as the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of
1998 and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) and various policy frameworks. These acts ensure that the metropolitan and local municipalities have ward committees as legalised structures to enhance participatory democracy in local government. Since then great strides have been made in the provision of extensive public service policies and law and the structures emphasising the role of citizens. However all practical efforts of government to build a partnership between local government and civil society has been in a steady decline (Esau 2007:15).

Despite the provision of this extensive legislative and policy framework as well as the commitment made to legalised participative structures such as ward committees and community development workers, the South African experience of participatory “democracy has not really produced the anticipated outcomes of improved service delivery, accurate identification of community needs and interests, or increased trust between communities and officials and politicians” (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet Source). In fact the public has over the past decade shown their dissatisfaction with service delivery on a local government level through escalating countrywide community protests and violence (Esau 2007:15). Therefore, a huge gap exists between the intentions of these policies and actual practice (Constitution for ward committees Internet source).

“The foundations for a capable state has been laid, but there are major concerns about the weaknesses in how these structures function, which concerns the state’s ability to pursue key development objectives” (The Presidency 2012:364).

Not only is it the lack of services that has reached disturbing proportions but the level of poor management and corruption is totally unacceptable. This poor situation is reflected by the fact that only seven municipalities out of the 237 (3%) reported on “received financially unqualified audit reports with no findings on either predetermined objectives or compliance with laws and regulations and thus had a clean administration” (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet Source). What is even worse is that 110 out of the 163 (67%) municipalities who did not get a clean administration qualification in the previous financial year failed to address their 2008-09 qualification findings in order for their 2009-10 financial
statements to be financially unqualified (Auditor-General of South Africa 2009:1). The Consolidated General Report on the Local Government Audit Outcomes 2009-10 (Auditor-General of South Africa 2009:1) states that “the level of non-compliance with laws and regulations applicable to municipalities was an area of great concern since the 2009-2010 financial year showed an increase in the number of municipalities who have contravened laws and legislation”. This resulted “in a substantial increase in the number of municipalities incurring unauthorised, irregular as well as fruitless and wasteful expenditure” (Auditor-General of South Africa 2009:1). Equally worrying was the fact that less than half of the audited institutions whose financial statements were financially unqualified had action plans in place to address these findings (Auditor-General of South Africa 2009:1).

The question now asked by experienced researchers and academia is why the South African government, which has made the necessary legal and constitutional reforms, is not experiencing the positive spin-offs on the local government level. Some of the factors identified as having a negative impact are the “…lack of capacity to participate, limited social capital, control by the elite, marginalisation of the poor, a general lack of trust in government, politicisation of the processes of participation and bureaucratic inertia” (Esau 2007:15). However, on a much broader level effective functioning of local governments involves the decentralisation of national government which implies the transfer of authority, responsibilities and functions as well as the transfer of financial resources to a local government sphere (Hilhorst and Guijt 2006:13).

Ward committees were introduced as a system of “local government best placed to give practical meaning and substance to the basic political commitment” (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet Source) of democratic governance. Ward committees should therefore function as “a representative structure of the community and of citizens. They should also form a bridge by facilitating proper communication between council and the citizens they represent” (Accountability and Community Participation No date: Internet Source).
“Through working directly with the municipality, ward committees serve as a cord which articulates the new system of local government to the majority of the people, more especially to previously disadvantaged communities” (Putu 2006:5).

“International experience has shown that citizen and community participation is an essential part of effective and accountable governance at local level. A great deal has been written about the legal and policy arrangements for citizens’ participation in different countries around the world. International experience has shown that one way of achieving successful and lasting models to ensure that citizen participation takes place is through establishing structured and institutionalised frameworks for participatory local governance” (dplg and GTZ 2005 A:10).

The South African government and people pride themselves in the belief that we are a participative democracy operating on the principles of government for the people by the people. What is now needed is a mind shift among public officials and citizens alike to enable empowerment and self-determination of communities such as that needed by a participative democracy promulgated by Agenda 21 (Department of Public Service and Administration 2003:12). It is clear that “government has committed itself to instituting improved implementation of local government development programmes in the country” (www.afesis.org.za). “The attempt to introduce participatory and direct democracy is evident in the planning processes and policy formulation of government structures” (www.afesis.org.za). “In the run up to the next local government elections, a lot more effort needs to be expended in the promotion of public participation in municipal processes as well as in the facilitation of more transparent and accountable governance” (www.afesis.org.za).

If Hanberger's (2006) view on democratic orientations is “taken as a point of departure then a participative democracy like South Africa mostly needs a participative development and evaluation strategy (such as a participatory action research (PAR) fostering the empowerment and self-determination of citizens. In fact, in terms of sustainable public governance the importance of empowerment and self-determinism cannot be overstressed” (Schurink 2005 490).
The overall goal of a ward committee is to work towards achieving the vision of local governance as set out in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996). To improve participatory democracy in municipal governance, committee members involved could be trained to take the lead in facilitating and coordinating community development together with other role players at the local government level. In fact, they are ideally suited to, in collaboration with communities, bring together all the relevant sectors (e.g. social work, health, justice, education, youth, women etc.) with a view to establish forums and develop integrated, multi-sectoral programmes. In this way ward committees will not only provide “an opportunity for government to communicate its action programme and the progress being made directly to the people and to highlight their concerns and grievances about the lack of quality services experienced, but it could promote real participation of the public in community development programmes aimed at improving their lives” (www.info.gov.za).

Therefore ward committees could help to build community capacity by creating awareness of neighbourhood strengths and weaknesses, strengthening neighbourhood support networks and forming relationships between lay and professional support networks and the public and private sector. In this way the participatory action research methodology could provide government officials with a powerful tool needed to facilitate primary prevention of social problems and for the development of community programmes that could enhance the quality of life of community members.

In this way the fragmented model of service provision to communities could be transformed into an inclusive, systems-based, preventative, participatory and development approach. Such an approach would be in line with the principles of sustainable public governance and could, instead of increasing community dependence and poor self-esteem, instill in community members
dignity, a desire for personal growth, the opportunity to learn and the will to take responsibility for their own lives.

If local authorities could manage to satisfy the above requirements PAR can be a valuable tool to promote productive and empowering civic involvement. According to Vincent (2003:145) a participatory action research process could bring a new focus on governance reform in terms of social justice, people’s options, the forces that drive or prevent civic action as well as the group and social network capacity to steer change.

In this way community development workers could be trained to become community change agents working together with ward committees. This training could empower them to deal more effectively with the current situation of communities mobilizing themselves into protest groups demanding services. Participatory action research could also open up the minds of public officials and ward committee members to new ideas to help advance indigenous social theory and practice and to become research-practitioners in the true sense of the word. It could provide the much needed knowledge base for the integration of community development, theory and research and also help government officials to, in collaboration with researchers and other sectors such as social work, develop preventative and developmental policies and programmes within the framework of sustainable public governance.

In view of the above account that captures the central problem of this research, the following guiding research question encapsulates the problem at hand: **How can participative democratic governance contribute to the development of participation in the ward committees on the local sphere of government?**

1.3 **Secondary research questions**

The following secondary research questions aim to determine feasible explanations for the research problem being studied. The aim and purpose of this dissertation is an attempt to undertake research that will lead to the discovery of possible solutions to the research problem, through asking the following questions:
What does the legal and policy framework for participation on the local government level entail?

What are the most important factors that impact on the effectiveness of ward committees?

What does the nature, role and functions of ward committees as participatory mechanisms in local governance entail?

How can participatory action research be used as a tool to develop participative democracy on the local government level?

1.4 Study objectives

In order for this study to accomplish its purpose, the main study objectives are:

- To describe the legal and policy framework for participation on the local government level.
- To determine what the most important factors are that impact on the effectiveness of ward committees.
- To explain the nature, role and functions of ward committees as participatory mechanisms in local governance.
- To explore how participatory action research can be used as a tool to develop participative democracy on the local government level.

1.5 Terminology

There is comprehensive conceptual clarification of terms specific to the research in each appropriate chapter. However, to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity in the interpretation of the concepts, terms used in the dissertation are also defined below.
- **Accountability**

Politicians and public servants must be accountable to the citizens of the particular state for their actions. Accountability is an obligation to expose, explain and justify actions within the context of governance (Hanekom 1987:34).

- **Citizen**

A legitimate inhabitant of a state or city (Cohen and Arato in Hartslief 2008:17)

- **Citizen participation**

Is defined as “purposeful activities in which people will take part in relation to political units which are legal residents” (Langton 1978:16 in Clapper 1993:24).

- **Community**

Individuals who form part of a cohesive group, which cohesion arises from (a) shared interest(s) and shared government service(s) or a shared environment (Hartslief 2008:23).

- **Decision**

The product of a choice between two alternatives (Hartslief 2008:23).

- **Democracy**

An ideology and a particular form of authority in a state. All the inhabitants of a state have a direct or representative say in the government of the state (Hartslief 2008:23).
• **Local government**

Local authorities comprise that sphere of government consisting of municipalities, and what must be in place for the entire country (Craythorne 2003:6).

• **Municipality**

As a geographic area, a municipality is defined as a municipal area determined in terms of the Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act 27 of 1998.

• **Participatory democracy**

An environment in which citizens may participate and voice, share and discuss matters of common interest (cf. Fischer 2003).

• **Participation**

Through the process of policy-making in a democratic governmental system, participation of the affected, or rather concerned, citizens is inevitable. For the purpose of this study, community participation is identified as being obligatory, as presumed in Section 16 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000, where it states that "a municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance". Nzimakwe and Reddy (2008:670) explain participation to be the active participation where all stakeholders, citizens and communities are involved.

Participation can be understood to be the process through which the public can partake in contributing directly and influencing policy-making. As a result participation in local government can be fostered through the preparation, implementation and the review of a municipal IDP in accordance with Section 16 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000.
- **Policy**

Political agreement on the course of action designed to mitigate problems in terms of a political agenda (or lack thereof) (Fischer 2003:60).

- **Public participation**

The process by which stakeholders and citizens influence and share information within the context of the policy-making process and governance through participatory spaces (Hilliard and Kemp 1999:52).

- **Ward**

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines a ward as a divided area of a local government, which is represented by a councillor. The White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (1998:162), defines a ward as a geographic area into which a municipality is divided.

- **Ward committee**

Ward committees are committees based in specific areas “whose boundaries coincide with ward boundaries” (White Paper on Local Government of 1998:64). “These committees have no original duties and powers; hence they are established as the committees that play an advisory role to the metropolitan council” (White Paper on Local Government of 1998:64). It is important to note that ward committees are not committees of the council, and as such they do not have legal status in council.

- **Ward councillor**

The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 defines a councillor as a “member of a municipal council”. Furthermore, a ward councillor can be understood to be an
elected person to represent the ward on a council. The “ward councillor is the Chairperson of the ward committee” (Section 73 (2) (a) of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998).

1.6 Qualitative research approach to the methodology

The concept “qualitative research usually refers to any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Auriacombe Methodology Class Notes 2007). According to Auriacombe (Methodology Class Notes 2007) one “can refer to research about persons’ lives, stories, behaviour, but also about organisational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships between phenomena. Some of the data may be quantified, as with census data, but the analysis itself is a qualitative one. One can think of qualitative research metaphorically as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colours, different textures and various blends of material. This fabric is not explained easily or simply. Like the loom on which fabric is woven, general frameworks hold qualitative research together, we conduct an ethnographic study, we engage in developing a grounded theory or we explore a specific case. “What is the common ground? Qualitative research is an inquiry of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words or concepts, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Cresswell 1998).

“Contrary to the research approach of quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers believe that data can only be effectively interpreted when they maintain a close relationship with the object of study and come as close as possible to it” (Mouton in Webb and Auriacombe 2006:597).

“Qualitative research displays a number of characteristics. Firstly, it is dedicated to viewing events, norms and values from the point of view of the people who are being studied. Secondly, such researchers provide detailed descriptions of the social settings they explore. This enables them to understand the subject’s interpretation of what is going on. Thirdly, the researcher as participant observer attempts to
understand the events and behaviour in the context in which they occur, following a holistic approach. Fourthly, quantitative research views life as streams of interconnected events, an interlocking series of events and a process of constant change” (Bryman in Webb and Auriacombe 2006:599).

“There is no uniform definition for qualitative research and therefore it could be seen as an umbrella term for different approaches with each having its own theoretical background, methodological principles and aims” (Flick in Auriacombe 2011:56). “How qualitative research methods and methodology are understood is closely linked to the ways in which qualitative researchers conceptualize themselves and the research they are doing. In this respect, qualitative research can be sorted along a continuum with the one dimension marked by a holistic - somewhat paradigm – like conception, and the other by situationally pragmatic and opportunistic methodological practices” (http://www.qualitative research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/216/477).

1.6.1 Research method

The first step in any research involves a careful examination of the problem, what is known about the problem and what other scholars studying it have learned, in order to unearth different answers, conflicting results and multiple opinions. As noted before, the research approach in this study is qualitative in nature and will of necessity require careful description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the data as well as drawing on a variety of sources for the purpose of obtaining information and relevant data.

Design decisions were also made in order to get answers to important questions. It was decided that the assessment would be a qualitative design with both a conceptual analysis and a documentary case study (ward committees as interpreted by legislation, policies and literature) as the appropriate research method for the purpose of this dissertation.

The conceptual framework of an empirical study refers to the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories informing the research and is
generally regarded as an explanation proposed to reach a better understanding of the social reality/phenomena under investigation (Maxwell 2005 in Auriacombe 2011:67). The function of the conceptual framework is to assess and refine the goals, develop realistic and relevant research questions, provide substantiation to arguments, clarify the theoretical framework and logic or reasoning used, define concepts, justify decisions, and directs data collection and analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008 in Auriacombe 2011:68). The conceptual framework is the operationalisation of the theoretical framework of a study and therefore forms an intricate part of the research design. Qualitative researchers utilize a conceptual framework to develop typologies, models and theories from the bottom up (Auriacombe 2011:78).

1.6.2 Literature study

Scholars disagree about when the relevant literature should be reviewed and how it should be incorporated into a mixed qualitative study (field research focusing on grounded theory and a case study). The research design may dictate whether a literature review should be used to ground the problem statement of the study, as in many quantitative designs; or whether the literature should not be carried out until after data have been collected, as in a grounded theory or phenomenological study, in which the literature is used to add depth of understanding to the themes elicited by those interviewed about the phenomenon.

The literature is used differently in case study research depending on the study’s questions and research design. However, in most conceptual and case studies, the literature review should be used to establish the rationale for the research and questions to be asked. The literature review helps identify what is known about the context and focus of the study from research and, sometimes, from practice. Prior research, plus theory, helps the researcher find out what information he or she should be sure to gather because others have found it to be important. The literature review therefore shapes the design of the study (Creswell 1998; Merriam 1998; and Merriam and Simpson 1995).
Once the findings have been identified, the literature can help the researcher understand patterns in the data and therefore theorise about dynamics, relationships, and links in the data. When conclusions have been drawn, the literature helps compare the findings of the study to those of other studies and identifies how the current study builds the knowledge base. Case studies are all about context, the literature review can point to studies in similar or different contexts to help the researcher understand the limits of the findings of the study in question. This helps the reader to better understand how to use findings in a different setting (Creswell 1998; Merriam 1998; and Merriam and Simpson 1995). The researcher specifically concentrated on the conceptualisation of, as well as theories and models applicable to, these concepts.

In an effort to gather information and knowledge relevant to the field of study and research methods, the researcher relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. In this regard, two main research instruments were employed, namely: the literature study and a document analysis of key documents relating to participation and ward committees in local governance.

1.6.3 Data collection methods

The general principle for any research is collecting data from multiple information sources. This requires more than a single source, but covering the same phenomena. The importance of document use is to corroborate and argue evidence from various sources. Documentary sources from which secondary data were obtained included:

- Relevant published textbooks.
- Unpublished dissertations and theses.
- Published and unpublished research reports.
- Articles from scientific journals; reference works; newspapers articles, media statements and magazine reports.
- Speeches and papers, where appropriate.
• Unpublished lectures, documented interviews, periodic reports and
documented cases.
• National and international conference papers.
• Legislation.
• Internet sources.

1.7 Overview and sequence of chapters

After completion of the research, the collected material was integrated and
coordinated so that the facts and observations could form a logical and sequential
whole.

Chapter One provides the general orientation of the entire study. The chapter
provides the background, rationale and guiding research question for the study,
followed by the subsequent secondary research questions and specific study
objectives. The terminology used throughout the study and the explanation of the
qualitative research methodology and the research and data collection methods
used in this study are also provided. Finally the chapter offers in conclusion the
organisation of the rest of the dissertation in terms of a concise description of the
following chapters.

Chapter Two discusses the legislative framework in which ward committees
operate. This framework mainly consists of five main documents: The Constitution of
South Africa of 1996, the White Paper on Local Government of 1998, the Local
Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, the Local Government: Municipal
Systems Act 32 of 2000, the Municipal Planning and Performance Management
Regulations of 2001, and Community Participation by–laws. The legislation
describes the way in which local government should function and provides the
framework for interaction with the respective communities.

Chapter Three pays attention to the most important factors that impact on the
effectiveness of participative ward committees. The chapter starts off with a
comprehensive overview of the important aspects related to the effective functioning
of a ward committee. This is followed by the representation of ward committees, the limitation to the powers of ward committees, a lack of skills, a lack of timeous information and resources, and the legislation and policy formulation problems.

**Chapter Four** discusses participatory research as an approach to be used as a tool for the development of participative democracy on the local governance level of government. It highlights the principles of participatory action research, the involvement of all stakeholders, equal partnership building, self-development, meaningful participation, mobilisation of external group resources, and the mobilisation of internal resources. The process of participatory action research is also explained in terms of the analysis/preparation phase, the development phase, the implementation phase and the evaluation phase.

**Chapter Five** provides a summary of the main objectives of the dissertation, conclusions and the findings of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PARTICIPATION ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

2.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide an answer for the first secondary research question posed in Chapter One (see section 1.3): **What does the legal and policy framework for participation on the local government level entail?**

This chapter pays attention to how the different pieces of legislation on public participation in municipal decision making relate to one another and how they should be implemented and interpreted to promote the successful functioning of ward committees. The legislative framework on ward committees mainly consists of five main documents: The Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1996), the White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa 1998A: Section 1.3), the Local government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998B), the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000), the Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulation, 2001, and community participation by–laws. The legislation describes the way in which local government should function and provides the framework for interaction with communities. These are the “pillars on which the legal regime of local government is built” (dplg and GTZ South Africa 2005A:51).

2.2 The Constitution of South Africa of 1996

The Constitution of South Africa of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 1996) “is the supreme law of the country”. As such municipalities should adhere to the values that are embedded in Chapter 2 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996). Furthermore, this chapter of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) Section 195(2) identifies “principles for public administration”, as noted in section 2.6. These constitutional values and principles are true to the spirit of democracy and apply to
all organs of state, spheres of Government and public enterprises” (Republic of South Africa 1996 Section 195(2).

The Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) visualises “a complete transformation of the local government system” where it has a specific role in building a democratic government and promoting socioeconomic change and development. Furthermore the “process is notably meant to bring government closer to the people and thus reinforce two of the fundamental mechanisms of sustainable democracy, namely participation of the people and accountability of the local government” (Republic of South Africa 1996). “Local government has a critical role to play in rebuilding communities as the basis for a democratic society” (Republic of South Africa 1996) Section 195(2).

Chapter 7 (Section 152) of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) sets out the specific objectives of local government:

- “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.
- Encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government”.

“Local government must also promote the Bill of Rights, which reflects the nation's values about human dignity, equality and freedom, and uphold the principles enshrined in the Constitution” (Republic of South Africa 1996).

An important concept is “public participation”.

“Public participation is a principle that is accepted by all spheres of government in South Africa. Participation is important to make sure that government addresses the real needs of communities in the most appropriate way. Participation also helps to build an informed and responsible citizenry
with a sense of ownership of government developments and projects. It allows municipalities to get the buy-in of citizens and to develop partnerships with stakeholders” (Accountability and Community Participation Internet source).

The Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) “establishes the following categories of municipality” (www.treasury.gov.za):

- “Category (A): A municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area.
- Category (B): A municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a Category (C) municipality within whose area it falls.
- Category (C): A municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality” (www.treasury.gov.za).

Clearly these stipulations go far beyond just consulting communities on local government issues affecting them (Buccus; Hemson; Hicks and Piper 2007:10). The new developmental mandate for local government as key catalyst for locally-led social and economic development set out in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) was further explicated in the 1998 White Paper on Local Government (1998:36).

### 2.3 White Paper on Local Government of 1998

The White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa 1998A) which is often referred to as the ‘mini-constitution’ for local government gave structure to the vision of the developmental local government as envisaged in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996). Developmental Local Government is described as a local government committed to develop structures and strategies that would enable cooperation and co-ordination between “citizens and groups within the community” and local government with the aim to find long-term or sustainable ways to improve service delivery, “to meet social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of citizen’s lives” (Republic of South Africa 1998A).
The active participation of citizens is required on at four levels (dplg 2009:10) namely:

- “voters to ensure the accountability” of local government;
- participants in policy- and decision making processes;
- “consumers and end-users of services”; and
- “partners” in mobilising resources such as “businesses, non-governmental organisations and community-based institutions” for the purposes of development (dplg 2009:10)

The White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa 1998A) establishes the basis for a system and policy process needed to build local democracy. It provides detail on the framework and processes “in terms of which the existing local government system could be radically transformed” (Republic of South Africa 1998). “The process of transforming the institutions of the South African state is premised on the fact that the new democratic state has a specific mission; that of meeting the new developmental objectives which will help to create a better life for all” (Republic of South Africa 1998). The core of the document lies in the importance of understanding the concepts of developmental government, transformation, desentralization and community participation.

More specifically according to Section B of the White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa 1998A) developmental Local Government provides a vision of a government focussing on the participation of “local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives” (Republic of South Africa 1998A). It states that “…national government is committed to providing support to enable municipalities to utilise the options and tools put forward in this White Paper to make themselves more developmental” (Republic of South Africa 1998:1). “A framework is provided for the use of municipalities to develop their own strategies for meeting local needs and promoting social and economic development of communities” (Republic of South Africa 1998A).
In this regard “…local government is required to take a leadership role, and to involve and empower citizens and stakeholder groups in the development process, in order to create social resources and engender a sense of common purpose in finding local solutions for sustainability. Local municipalities therefore have a critical role to play as influential policy makers and as institutions of local democracy. It is in this regard that local municipalities are now being pressurised to become strategic, visionary and vastly influential in the way they operate. The South African government decentralised power in order to create better opportunity for direct participation in service delivery, policy and decision-making processes by civil society. These actions were conducted in an effort to speed up reformation of developmental local government.” (South African Local Government: 10 Years Later Internet source).

Section B of the White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa 1998A) highlights the four characteristics of developmental local government as the ability to:

- “maximise social development and economic growth;”
- integrate and coordinate all spheres of government, communities and private organisations within the municipal area;
- democratise development; and
- build social capital by playing a strategic policy-making and visionary role, to find local solutions for increased sustainability by means of the following strategies:
  - working in partnerships with business, trade unions and community-based organisations;
  - providing easy access to knowledge and information;
  - enhancing local democracy by raising awareness of human rights issues and promoting constitutional values and principles;
  - building an awareness of environmental issues;
  - investing in youth development;
  - empower the most marginalised groups in the community and encouraging their participation in local government; and
• empowering ward councillors as community leaders to build a shared vision and mobilising community resources for development” (Republic of South Africa 1998A).

To realise this vision, municipalities must “focus on developmental outcomes such as household infrastructure and services; the creation of liveable, integrated cities, towns and rural areas; and the promotion of local economic development and community empowerment and redistribution” (Republic of South Africa 1998:23). “Local government is encouraged to build a local democracy by developing strategies and mechanisms to participate with citizens, the business sector and community based organisations” (Republic of South Africa 1998:23).

Section B states (Republic of South Africa 1998:23) three strategies to help local government to become more developmental, namely:

• “integrated development planning as a mechanism to enable prioritisation and integration” of all spheres of government in planning processes;
• “a performance management system for local government”; and
• work in cooperation with local communities and business partners (Republic of South Africa 1998:23).

According to the Treasury (www.treasury.gov.za) the main steps in producing an IDP are:

• Assess the “current social, economic and environmental reality in the municipal area”;
• Determine “community needs through” a process of closed participation;
• “Developing a vision for development in the area”;
• Undertake “an audit of available resources, skills and capacities in the area”;
• Prioritise “needs in order of urgency and long-term importance”;
• Develop “integrated frameworks and goals to meet these needs”;
• Formulate “strategies to achieve the goals within specific time frames”;
• Implement “projects and programmes to achieve key goals”; and
• “Use monitoring tools to measure impact and performance”.

The plans for integrated development of land should according to the Development Facilitation Act (Act 67 of 1995) (Republic of South Africa 1995) “meet the requirements of communities and different departments such as the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the Department of Transport, the Department of Housing and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism” (www.treasury.gov.za). “Local government can only meet these challenges by working together with local citizens, communities and businesses, and adopting a developmental approach which enhances their capacity as policy and planning centres, able to mobilise and manage a range of development initiatives, resources and processes through a coherent vision and integrated planning framework for their local area” (Republic of South Africa 1998:35).

Section C of the White Paper (Republic of South Africa 1998) deals with Cooperative Government. The prime principle here is that it states that: “...strong and capacitiated local government can play a critical role in enhancing the success of national and provincial policies and programmes, and building sustainable human settlements for the nation. In a spirit of cooperative governance, national and provincial government should seek to support and enhance the developmental role of local government”. This places local government within an intergovernmental system. The White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa 1998A) further states that cooperative government is based on the principle stipulated by the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) that local government should function as “a sphere of government in its own right, and not a as function of national or provincial government” (Republic of South Africa 1996).

This section provides a visionary outline of the roles of local government and sees it as a point of integration and cooperation of all spheres of government (national, provincial and local government) (Republic of South Africa 1998:64). It emphasises the important role of local government to enforce municipal, provincial and national government policies to implement effective and accountable service delivery in a municipal area. “It also provides a summary of national departmental programmes which impact on local government” (Republic of South Africa 1996).
Section D deals with municipal institutional systems needed to maximise economic and social development on a local government level.

A ward committee must be established by The Metropolitan Council “for each ward falling within its area of jurisdiction. Ward committees are chaired and convened by the councillor elected to the ward” (Putu 2006:17). The “Metropolitan Council must develop procedures and rules to govern the membership and proceedings of Ward Committees” (Republic of South Africa 1998:55). The most important role of Ward Committees is to facilitate local community participation in planning and decisions affecting them and to present local community interests to local government structures (Putu 2006:17).

The White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa 1998A) provides “a general outline on the system of ward committees, their function, composition and role, the vision of ward committees as a channel of communication, powers, and duties of ward committees and also the administrative arrangements”. “These general outlines express the vision of ward committees and its main role, which is the facilitation of local community participation in the decisions which affect the ward, the articulation of local community interests and the representation of these interests to the municipality” (Putu 2006:17).

“In other words, ward committees have been tasked to raise issues about the local ward, link communities and municipalities, and participate on behalf of the community in the planning, decisions, IDPss, performance management and in all the budgetary processes” (Putu 2006:17).

“Ward committees are area-based committees whose boundaries coincide with ward boundaries” (Putu 2006:17). Ward committees have an important role in the development of Integrated Developmental Plans (IDPs), budgeting and the municipal performance management process. However apart from advisory powers ward committees have no powers and duties. Their “functions must be delegated from the Metropolitan Council and they have the right to be consulted on specific issues prior to Council approval” (Putu 2006:17). As such there is a need for the construction of
an IDP as a mechanism to identify community needs and priorities and to develop strategies and programmes to fill the needs.

2.4 Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998

The Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998B) is the first piece of legislation to formalise the concept of a democratic local government. Section 17(1), chapter 4 part 4 of the Act “states that participation by local community in the affairs of the municipality must take place through political participation structures”. The Act “requires a municipality to meet the objectives set out in Section 152 of the Constitution” of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 1996) namely:

- “to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- to promote social and economic development;
- to promote a safe and healthy environment; and
- to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government”.

The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998B) provides a powerful legal framework and structure for participatory local democracy on a local government level. More specifically it describes the structure, functions and “functionaries (executive committee, executive mayors, metropolitan sub-councils, ward committees, other committees of municipal councils, participation of traditional leaders and municipal managers) that enable municipalities to meet their objectives” (Putu 2006:17). However, it is important to note, the Municipal Structures Act (Republic of South Africa 1998B) regulates the statutory powers and functions of ward committees as advisory bodies. It determines the establishment, functioning and powers of ward committees.

In terms of Part 4 of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 “each ward has an elected local government ward councillor that is responsible to present the needs,
aspirations and diverse interests of the community/communities residing in the ward to the Municipal Council and at the same time serve as a link between the ward and provincial and national government as far as the planning and implementation of provincial and national programmes impacting on the ward are concerned” (dplg and GTZ 2005 A:10:17).

The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998B) “makes provision for the establishment of ward committees as a way of encouraging community participation in municipal matters”. According to Section 72(3), Part 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (Republic of South Africa 1998B:53) “the objective of a Ward Committee is to work towards achieving the aims of local governance as set out in the Constitution” (Republic of South Africa 1996) and thus “to enhance participatory democracy in local government”.

Ward committees therefore (on behalf of the ward that it represents) participate in Integrated Development Planning, in decisions affecting communities, in municipal performance management, in budgeting, in the planning of projects, and the allocation of funds. As is clear from the above the overall function of the Ward Committee is to represent the ward, working towards sustainable service delivery, social and economic development and the health and safety of citizens.

This system also referred to as development forums or residents associations in South Africa was introduced in 2000 and is currently operating in 3895 wards demarcated within the six metropolitan and 231 local municipalities of South Africa. This represents 99% of municipal wards. However the establishment of a Ward Committee is not mandatory for a municipality and thus not all municipalities have to have them (Putu 2006:2).

The Municipal Structures Act (Republic of South Africa 1998B) brought the necessary structures “for citizens to directly participate in their own governance” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009).
Esau (2007:4) states that “Ward committees were included in the legislation as a way of providing an opportunity for communities to be heard at the local government level in a structured and institutionalized way”. They are the institutionalized structures with the exclusive task “to narrow the gap between local municipalities and communities, since ward committees are more able to understand the problems and needs of citizens and the communities they represent” (Esau 2007:14).

Part 4 of Chapter 4 of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 sets out the establishment and composition of ward committees and the election of ward committee members, “as well as a framework for the powers and functions of committees, the term of office of committee members and procedures for dealing with vacancies and the termination of committees” (Esau 2007:14).

More specifically with regard to the establishment and composition of ward committees the Act of 1998 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.”

The Municipal Structures Act (Republic of South Africa 1998B) “requires that all municipalities with ward committees make administrative arrangements to enable ward committees to perform their functions and exercise their powers effectively”. “Municipalities have broad discretion in framing the local operating policies for their ward committees” (Republic of South Africa 1998B). Section 73 (5) (a) (c) (d) as amended states that “out of pocket expenses must be funded from the budget of the municipality”. The aim of this funding system is to improve the participation of citizens in local government structures (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009).

This Act of 1998 also makes provision for the participation of “traditional leaders identified in terms of subsection (2), in the proceedings of the council of that municipality, and those traditional leaders must be allowed to attend and participate
in any meeting of the council” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009).

Before a “municipal council takes a decision on any matter directly affecting the area of a traditional authority, the council must give the traditional leader in question the opportunity to express a view on the matter in question” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009). “The number of traditional leaders that may participate in the proceedings of a municipal council may not exceed 20 per cent of the total number of councillors in that council, but if the council has fewer than 10 councillors, only one traditional leader may participate” ([Para. (b) amended by s. 5 The Municipal Structures Act (Republic of South Africa 1998B).

While the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 makes provision for political participation structures such as ward committees to regulate the participation of citizens in the development, implementation and review of the Integrated IDP, the municipal performance management system, and municipal budget, the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) takes the concept of democratic government as set out in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) further by providing the legal framework for regulated systems and procedures to assist local government in the fulfilment of its objectives.

2.5 The Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

More specifically the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 emphasises the development of a democratic and accountable government fostering local community participation. The Preamble of the Act (32 of 2000) acknowledges that the “…new system of local government requires an efficient, effective and transparent local public administration that conforms to constitutional principles”. This Act of 2000 focuses on requirements, mechanisms, processes and procedures for participatory governance. The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) section 16, “obliges municipalities to 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
IDP; (ii) the performance management system; (iii) performance, (iv) the budget (v) and strategic decisions relating to services”.

More specifically the Act of 2000 regulates the “…interaction between the regional management of the municipality and:

- the ward councillor or other councillor responsible for that part of the municipality’s area;
- any Sub-Council or Ward Committee, where applicable, in that part of the municipality’s area; and
- the local community in that part of the municipality’s area” (Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000).

“Municipalities must enable participation in municipal processes, such as integrated development planning, performance management, municipal budgeting, and strategic decision-making regarding the delivery of municipal services of all citizens, specifically the poor and the disadvantaged” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009) (see also the Preamble of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000) (Republic of South Africa 2000). The mechanisms, processes and procedures for the participation of citizens in “a range of government created structures such as IDP representative forums and ward committees are stipulated as follows in Section 17(1), chapter 4 of the Act” (Republic of South Africa 2000)

“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;
(b) the mechanisms, processes and procedures for participation in municipal governance established in terms of this Act;
(c) other appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established by the municipality;
(d) councillors; and
(e) generally applying the provisions for participation as provided for in this 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) consultative sessions with locally recognised community organisations and, where appropriate, traditional authorities; and
(e) report-back to the local community.

(3) When establishing mechanisms, processes and procedures in terms of subsection (2) the municipality must take into account the special needs of—

(a) people who cannot read or write;
(b) people with disabilities:
(c) women: and
(d) other disadvantaged groups.

(4) A municipal council may establish one or more advisory committee consisting of persons who are not councillors to advise the council on any matter within the council’s competence. When appointing the members of such a committee, gender representivity must be taken into account”.

therefore have the duty to develop a culture of public service and accountability amongst public service officials, and taking measures to prevent corruption” (Putu 2006:18). Municipalities must at the same time encourage, and create conditions for the local community to participate in the mechanisms, processes and procedures for democratic local government.

Section 16 (1) of the Act of 2000 draws specific attention to the fact that municipalities should enhance the participation of the local community in decision making regarding the IDP, performance management systems, municipal budgets, and strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services. More specifically, although not directly mentioned ward committees should therefore not only represent local communities but empower them to participate in the processes and procedures of local governance. According to the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) the specific task of ward committees is to act as a mechanism to promote public participation and to build the capacity of residents and help councillors and municipal officials to engage in participatory processes (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009).

Section 5 places more emphasis on the rights and duties of the citizens.

Section 5 (1), chapter 2 of the Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) sets out rights and duties of citizens in relation to municipal functions (Putu 2006:18). This section of the Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) specifically outlines a citizen’s right to:

- “contribute to the decision-making process of the municipality; and submit written or oral recommendations, representations and complaints to the municipal councillor to another political structure or a political office bearer or the administration of the municipality
- prompt responses to their written or oral communications, including complaints to the municipal council
be informed of decisions of the municipal council, or another political structure or any political office bearer of the municipality, affecting their rights, property and reasonable expectations”.

On the other hand Section 5(2) specifies that citizens have specific duties namely:

a) “when exercising their rights, to observe the mechanisms, processes and procedures of the municipality;

b) where applicable, and subject to section 97(1)(c), to pay promptly service fees, surcharges on fees, rates on property and other taxes, levies and duties imposed by the municipality;

c) to respect the municipal rights of other members of the local community;

d) to allow municipal officials reasonable access to their property for the performance of municipal functions; and

e) to comply with by-laws of the municipality applicable to them”.

A democratic and accountable local government requires specific conditions for community participation as set out in Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000):

- “the preparation implementation and review of its integrated development plan in terms of Chapter 5;
- the development and implementation of its performance management system in terms of Chapter 6 of the Act (32 of 2000);
- the monitoring, evaluation and annual review of its performance according to the Performance Management System;
- the provision of an annual report on performance for the councillors, the staff, the public and other spheres of government;
- conducts an internal audit on performance before tabling the above report;
- has the annual performance report audited by the Auditor General;
- the preparation of its budget; and strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services in terms of Chapter 8 of the Act (32 of 2000);
• capacity building of the local community and councillors and staff to foster community participation; and
• the use of municipal resources and budgeting, as may be appropriate for the purpose of enabling citizens to participate in the affairs of the municipality”.

Municipal authorities are legally committed to involve citizens in municipal planning, budgeting and municipal performance management processes through legalised (ward committee) structures. Municipalities must therefore “provide the community with information about municipal governance, management and development, thus enabling the community to make informed inputs into participatory processes” (Republic of South Africa 2000). The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) obliges “municipalities to provide notice to the public of the date, time and venue of council meetings. Municipalities must set aside space for the public in their meeting venues. With a few exceptions all meetings of a municipal council and its committees should be open to the public (including the media)” (Esau 2007:12).

“Integrated Development Planning is a process through which municipalities prepare a strategic development plan for a five year period” (Esau 2007:12). This plan must take the participative and developmental role of local government and its role in the promotion of socioeconomic change and development, as stipulated in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa of 1996) into consideration. It is a comprehensive plan for an area that provides a framework for policy and development and a basis on which annual budgets must be built. “An IDP guides and informs all planning, budgeting, management and decision-making processes in a municipality” (Esau 2007:12). It also aligns the resources and capacity of the municipality with the actions taken by it. The IDP and the Performance Management System as well as the annual “budget present a measuring tool for evaluating a municipality’s performance against planned service delivery” (Esau 2007:12).

Section 26 states that an IDP should reflect:
a) “The vision of the municipal council for the long term development of the municipality with special emphasis on the municipality’s most critical development and internal transformation needs;
b) an assessment of the existing level of development in the municipality, which must include an identification of communities which do not have access to basic municipal services;
c) the council’s development priorities and objectives for its elected term, including its local economic development aims and its internal transformation needs;
d) the council’s development strategies which must be aligned with any national or provincial sectoral plans and planning requirements binding on the municipality in terms of legislation;
e) a spatial development framework which must include the provision of basic guidelines for a land use management system for the municipality;
f) the council’s operational strategies;
g) applicable disaster management plans;
h) a financial plan, which must include a budget projection for at least the next three years; and
i) the key performance indicators and performance targets determined in terms of section 41” (Republic of South Africa 2000).

Section 25 (1) states that each municipal council must, within a prescribed period after the beginning of its elected term, develop an inclusive, integrated strategic plan for the development of the municipal area. This plan should be coordinated with national and provincial development plans and policy. Section 29 (1), Chapter 5 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) requires specifically that the participation of community members is “central to the preparation, implementation and review of the IDP, the accompanying budget and the Information Management system”. It stipulates that before such a plan is developed the “local community must be consulted on its development needs and priorities”. Local community structures, including traditional leaders should also take part “in the drafting of the IDP”. “The local community should also be involved in the development, implementation and review of the municipality’s performance. In particular the community should be involved in the setting of appropriate key
performance indicators and performance targets for the municipality” (Republic of South Africa 2000). The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) requires “municipalities to promote public participation and to build the capacity of residents, councillors and municipal officials to engage in participatory processes. As a means of tracking progress in this area, the executive of a municipality is obliged to report annually on the level of public participation in municipal matters”.

“Once a municipality has adopted an IDP, it must, within fourteen days, notify the public. The municipality must make copies of the plan, or extracts from the plan, available for public inspection. It must also publicise a summary of the plan” (Republic of South Africa 2000). Once an IDP has been adopted by a municipal council it may be amended. An adopted IDP “will remain in force until a new IDP is adopted by the next elected council” (Republic of South Africa 2000). Section 34 determines that “a municipal council must annually in accordance with an assessment of its performance measures” review its IDP (Republic of South Africa 2000). The council may also if needed amend its IDP in conjunction with a stipulated process.

“Such interaction between local communities and political institutions at grassroots level is seen as necessary for realising service delivery and good governance. The involvement of local communities in the preparation and formulation of instruments such as the IDP and budget of a municipality therefore allows for two things. The first is that local communities are directly involved in matters affecting them. In this way they can assist the municipality in identifying the best way to address their needs. The second is that local communities can hold both appointed and elected officials to account” (Esau 2007:13).

2.6 Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003

The aim of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 is to ensure “sound and sustainable management of the financial affairs of local government”. The underlying principles in the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 (Republic of South Africa 2003) are in accordance with other local government legislation.
Regarding the role of local communities this Act of 2003 clearly indicates that no more than 5 days after the annual budget has been tabled, the municipal council must make it available to the public for their views and comments. A key requirement outlined in the Municipal Finance Management Act (Republic of South Africa 2003) is therefore to make available the following information to the public:

- “budgets and related documents;
- the annual report;
- performance management agreements;
- service delivery agreements;
- partnership agreements;
- related contracts;
- private partnership agreements;
- all quarterly reports; and
- any other documents providing insight into the state of the municipality's financial affairs”.

According to Section 75 of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (Republic of South Africa 2003) this key financial information should be put on the municipality's website. However, since only a small percentage of the public has access to websites, this is clearly a limited form of transmitting information to local communities. Other structures such as ward committees who have direct contact with the public can be a much more effective source of information. After considering "submissions, the council must give the mayor an opportunity to respond to the submissions and if necessary, to revise the budget and table amendments for consideration by the council" (Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003:42).

2.7 Batho Pele White Paper of 1997

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Department of Public Service and Administration 1997) is commonly known as the Batho Pele White Paper. Batho Pele is a Sotho expression meaning 'People First'. Its aim is to make
service delivery a priority in the public service and thus to encourage public participation and promote citizens’ ability to know and claim their rights. The Batho Pele White Paper (Department of Public Service and Administration 1997) is the national government’s key policy and practical strategy for transforming public service delivery. The broad objective of the Batho Pele White Paper (Department of Public Service and Administration 1997) “is to improve public service delivery by supporting the transformation of the public service into a citizen-orientated organisation. It calls for an improvement in the way services are delivered with the emphasis on the needs of the public” (Cameron 2009: 25).

In broad terms Batho Pele is a transformation strategy representing a framework supported by the following requisites, namely (Batho Pele Handbook Internet source):

- Improved systems, work processes and institutional structures needed for effective service delivery. These include the following: “effective performance management systems; organisational structures” supporting “work objectives”; “processes to use staff optimally and minimise inefficiencies; the use of appropriate forms of technology; and improving conditions of service”.
- The interface between the public service and citizens should be prioritised in service delivery. This is the ‘face’ of government visible to citizens in direct service delivery.
- Prioritise “good internal communication building a strong organisational culture of customer service”.
- Prioritise good external communication by first defining the services and then informing the public about their rights and obligations and available services as well as how these services can be accessed. External communication should help to build constructive partnerships between local government and the public.

There are eight Batho Pele principles namely, consultation with citizens on the level and quality of services; the setting of service standards; equal access and accessibility; courtesy and consideration; provision of information on eligibility; openness and transparency regarding costs and responsibilities, redress and value
for money (Republic of South Africa 1997). This complies with the notion of a participative democracy and entrenches the principle that the public are customers. The eight principles portray transparency and information sharing as key concepts of accountability and effectiveness. This means that officials should be empowered to provide information and service to the public at the point of delivery (see The Presidency 2012:427).

Aligned with the Constitutional principles, the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Republic of South Africa 1997) "calls on all national and provincial departments to make service delivery a priority". "It provides a framework to enable national and provincial departments to develop departmental service delivery strategies" to put the Batho Pele principles in action and to promote continuous improvements in service provision. Chapter 11 of the Batho Pele White Paper (Department of Public Service and Administration 1997) requires national and provincial departments to:

- Consult users of services (public) about current and new services;
- develop a mission statement for service delivery;
- identify the services to be provided, where and when;
- adopt the principle of affordability, and use it to redirect "resources to areas and groups previously under-resourced";
- increase openness and transparency;
- outline "specific short, medium and long term goals for service provision";
- give "annual and five yearly targets for the delivery of specific services", and report back to national and provincial legislatures on their achievements;
- set service standards, define "outputs and targets, and performance indicators";
- benchmark services "against comparable international standards";
- develop evaluation plans designed to monitor and "measure progress and introduce corrective action", when needed;
- develop "plans for staffing, human resource development and organisational capacity building, tailored to needs for effective service delivery"; and
- providing more and better information;
• “redressing the imbalances of the past, while maintaining effective service delivery to all levels of society”;
• re-shuffling human and other resources according to needs;
• develop “financial plans that ‘link budgets directly to service needs and personnel’”;
• form “potential partnerships with the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOS) and community-based organisations (CBOS)” in an effort to “provide more effective forms of service delivery”; and
• develop a “culture of customer care and of “approaches to service delivery that are sensitive to issues of race, gender and disability”.

Regarding the improvements of complaint systems it should be brought in line with the following principles:

• Accessibility of complaint system.
• The speed by which complaints can be made and responded to.
• Fully investigating complaints and making use of an independent avenue if the complainant is dissatisfied.
• Protection of the confidentiality of the complainant.
• Responsiveness taking full consideration of the people’s concerns and feelings.
• Review of complaints systems and “feeding back suggestions for change to those who are responsible for providing the service” (Department of Public Service and Administration 2003:23).
• Training should be given to all staff on procedures for dealing with complaints.

From the above it is clear that Batho Pele calls for an approach putting the needs of the public first. This involves the development of customer driven strategies for service provision enabling citizens to hold public servants accountable for the service they receive. However, as stated in the Batho Pele White Paper (Department of Public Service and Administration 2003:23) the Public Service cannot “develop a truly service-oriented customer driven culture without the active participation of the
wider community, including the private sector and citizens themselves”. In essence a service delivery improvement programme consists of the following steps (Department of Public Service and Administration 2003:23):

- Establish who the recipients of service are by doing a stakeholder analysis;
- The knowledge of “customer's needs and priorities as the starting point” to set indicators/standards for service delivery;
- Establish accurate information on the service baseline, i.e. the “current level and quality of service essential” to improved service delivery;
- Establish the ‘improvement gap’ i.e. the “gap between what customers want, and the level of service quality of service currently provided”;
- Set service standards to close the gap;
- Provide the necessary human resource training and refocus service delivery systems and procedures; and
- Ensuring that service standards are met by using “monitoring and reporting systems which would enable senior management to check on progress” (Department of Public Service and Administration 2003:23).

2.8 Izimbiso

The term ‘izimbizo’ derives from the South African Zulu language, meaning ‘the callings-together’ while ‘izimbizo’ is the plural form of the word and imbizo the singular form. The Zulu verb biza means ‘call (together)’ or ‘convene’. The South African Government Information website provides the following information:

“Imbizo is a forum for enhancing dialogue and interaction between government and the people. It provides an opportunity for government to communicate its Programme of Action and the progress being made. It promotes participation of the public in the programmes to improve their lives. Imbizo also highlights people's concerns, grievances and advice about government's work” (The South African Government Information website Internet Source).
The Presidential Public Participation Programme (*izimbizo*) is a community based consultation forum aimed at enhancing and sustaining two-way dialogue and interaction between key public officials and communities. The focus is on the establishment of permanent community-based consultative groups who together with the President and a high level delegation including senior public service managers could meet regularly to discuss and monitor problems regarding service delivery in the community.

“It gives the President and others direct access to what people say and feel about government and service delivery, to listen to their concerns, their grievances and advice about the pace and direction of government's work” (The South African Government Information website. Internet Source).

If functioning well the *izimbizo* has the potential to, as ward committees, enable “ordinary people to hold the three spheres of government accountable and influence governance and service delivery” on a local level (The South African Government Information website Internet Source). This is aligned with the resolutions taken by the World Summit putting the challenge to citizens to not only hold governments and corporations accountable for their decisions and actions but to also become involved in structures and processes helping to address service delivery problems on local government level (Hilhorst and Guijt 2006:13).

### 2.9 The Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations

Section 15 of the Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations (Internet Source) stipulates “that if there are no other municipal-wide structures for community participation, a municipality must establish a forum. The forum must be representative of the residence of the local community. In addition the forum must enhance public participation in monitoring, measuring and reviewing municipal performance” (Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations Internet Source).
Table 2.1: Legislation to gain an understanding of participation of ward committees

- The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 Sections 73 and 74 explaining the rules and regulations about the establishment of ward committees.
- The National Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees, 2005 providing a detailed explanation of the setting up and running ward committees.
- Municipal resolutions passed to adopt the ward committee system explaining the state of commitment to the ward committee system.
- Municipal Public Participation Policy explaining the communication strategy between local government and community members.

(Source: Taken from dplg and GTZ South Africa 2005)

More specifically the “functions of the forum include” (dplg and GTZ South Africa 2005):

- “consultation and monitoring of the IDP and its implementation and review
- discussion of the Public Management System (PMS) and its implementation and review
- monitoring of municipal performance according to the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and targets set by the municipality” (dplg and GTZ South Africa 2005).

Municipalities may pass “by-laws, sometimes also referred to as regulatory frameworks, for ward committees falling under their jurisdiction” (dplg and GTZ South Africa 2005). These are important official documents that assist to regulate the establishment, operations and functioning of ward committees.
2.10 Summary

This chapter provided information about different pieces of legislation on public participation in municipal decision making and explained how they relate to one another. Attention is also paid to how they should be implemented and interpreted to promote the successful functioning of ward committees. The legislative framework on ward committees discussed in this chapter mainly consists of five main documents: The Constitution of South Africa of 1996, the White Paper on Local Government of 1998, the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, the Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulation of 2001, and community participation by-laws.

In essence, Government visualizes "a process where communities will be involved in governance matters, including planning, implementation and performance monitoring and review. Communities would be empowered to identify their needs, set performance indicators and targets and thereby hold municipalities accountable for their performance in service delivery" (dplg and GTZ South Africa 2005).

The setting for a democratic local government should to some extent ensure that a municipality will deliver what it is mandated to deliver. However this is not always the case since mechanisms such as ward committees are often under-utilised or not used at all. Therefore the provision of structures, mechanisms and procedures as provided by the Municipal Structures Act (Act No. 117 of 1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa 2000) is no guarantee for good governance and an accountable local government.

For accountability and community participation structures, systems, procedures and mechanisms to be able to enhance public service delivery and economic growth on the local level an enabling environment is needed. This environment should empower both public officials and community members, including the illiterate and disabled to exercise their right to participate in the decisions taken by municipalities and to hold public officials accountable. Citizens can only be empowered if local
government creates an environment shaped by empowerment, “transparency, trust, access” to opportunities for development and accurate and “timeous information” (Esau 2007:13). The question is what is, aside from the provision of government’s constitutional and statutory regulations, “being done to create an enabling environment for meaningful citizen participation in all forms and levels of government?” (Esau 2007:13). In the next section we will discuss these enabling factors, or the lack of them in greater depth.
CHAPTER THREE

FACTORS IMPACTING ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A WARD COMMITTEE AS A PARTICIPATORY MECHANISM

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the secondary research question, as posed in chapter one (see section 1.3): “What are the most important factors that impact on the effectiveness of ward committees?”

In this regard this chapter starts off with an overview of the functioning of ward committees as participatory mechanisms as well as the public participation challenges of ward committees. The chapter also discusses the lack of interest of the public, lack of support and assistance of municipalities, the operational and human resources challenges in municipalities as further factors detrimental to the effectiveness of ward committees.

Other factors impacting on the effective functioning of ward committees that are discussed in this chapter include: representation of ward committees, the limitation of power of ward committees, lack of skills in ward committees, lack of timeous information and resources and legislation and policy formulation problems.

3.2 Functioning of ward committees as participatory mechanisms

The main assumption of the National Framework is that improved participation of citizens in local government processes could enhance democracy on a local level, bring about “greater community ownership of ward committees and make councillors more accountable to the communities with their diverse interests and needs” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009: 5). “Ward committees thus have an important role to play as a link between the municipal council and the community” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009: 5).
“They primarily have a representative and monitoring function and their overall aims are” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009: 5) to:

- “Enhance economic empowerment of communities;
- Improve infrastructure and services in the community;
- Enhance local democracy and accountability; and

More specifically according to the National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009:18):

- “Ward committees should create formal unbiased communication channels and cooperative partnerships between the municipality and the community within a ward;
- Ensure contact between the municipality and the community through the use of, and payment of, services;
- Create harmonious relationships between residents of a Ward, the ward councillor, and geographic community and the municipality;
- Facilitate public participation in the process of development, review and implementation management of the IDP of the municipality;
- Act as advisory body on council policies and matters affecting communities in the ward;
- Serve in officially recognised and specialized participatory structures in the municipality;
- Make recommendations on matters affecting the ward to the ward councillor or the local council, the executive committee and the mayor;
- Serve as a mobilizing agent for community action; and
• Monitor development, and plan for and monitor implementation of ward based projects and ward discretionary funds (note control of funds and implementation rests with council)

This is clearly a very tall order for a structure that according to section 4.6.1 of the National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model (2009: 5) has only “the power to make any recommendations to the ward councillor and/or through the ward councillor to the metropolitan or local council, on matters affecting the ward” and who has to In addition, perform any other duties the metropolitan or local council may delegate to it. Yet it is today a well accepted fact that “ward committees have an important role to play in actively taking part and monitoring core municipal processes, such as Integrated Development Planning, municipal budgeting and municipal performance management processes” (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009: 5). Hence the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 “requires that all municipalities with ward committees make administrative arrangements to enable ward committees to perform their functions and exercise their powers effectively”.

In the bottom-up approach, citizens should hold public officials accountable for service delivery. The hierarchical top-down accountability therefore needs to be enhanced by improving bottom-up mechanisms such as ward committees to enable citizens to communicate their grievances and get a form of redress at the point of delivery (The Presidency 2012:427). The National Planning Commission stresses that:

“More work needs to be done to emphasise the responsibilities that citizens have in their own development and in working with others in society to resolve tensions and challenges. The refrain, ‘sit back and the state will deliver’ must be challenged – it is neither realistic nor is it in keeping with South Africa’s system of government” (The Presidency 2012:37).

However, this bottom-up approach could only be effective if local government creates an enabling environment that could empower both public officials and
community members, including the illiterate and disabled to participate in the decisions taken by municipalities and to hold public officials accountable. It is of critical importance to realise that the different “municipalities in the country have different capacities and are faced with different social and economic challenges” (Esau 2007:13). Citizens can only be empowered if local government is able to create an environment shaped by empowerment, transparency, trust, access to opportunities for development and accurate and timeous information (Esau 2007:13).

3.3 Public participation challenges of ward committees

It is clear that legalised participative institutions such as ward committees could play a significant role in the promotion of community participation on a local government level. Although there were no comprehensive studies done on the functionality and effectiveness of ward committees as depicted in Table 3.1 public surveys highlight a number of broad issues and by implication the factors impacting on the effectiveness of ward committees that need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of ward committees (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009:14).

Table 3.1: Public participation challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Statement</th>
<th>Possible responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Government structures (IDP ownership and leadership of ward committees) are not sufficiently facilitating a democratic culture of negotiation at a local level.</td>
<td>Better ownership and leadership of participatory processes and engagement with technical information by councillor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The result in many cases is technically or consultant driven outcomes. Some community groups are deliberately not engaging with the formalities of Local Government structures and are finding other means of pursuing their needs and interests.</td>
<td>Adopt facilitation methodologies that are controlling of the engagement processes and more rigorous in developing strategic choices and options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In lower income areas social mobilisation is taking place sometimes resulting in protests. In wealthier</td>
<td>Improved community ownership of ward committees. Ward committees should be seen to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas residents are pursuing their interests through residents associations and lobbying officials and councillors directly. The ward committees are therefore operating at the margins.</td>
<td>Representing the community's needs as a whole and not only of certain sections. Local Government legislation may address this matter regarding the role of ward councillors in the ward committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ward level development is not explicitly and prominently addressed in municipal councils.</strong></td>
<td>Make role of wards relevant in council decision making link participation more directly to the allocation and control of resources for ward based projects. Reform the budgeting system in municipalities through mandatory provision for ward-based allocations. Municipal budgets could have three elements:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The result is that ward councillors that chair the ward committees have limited influence thus making ward committees less relevant.</td>
<td>&quot;Strategic, municipal-wide programmes.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Municipalities are not supporting ward committees sufficiently in order for them to function properly.</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Allocations per ward based on projects identified through participatory means and determined by councils.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building and training. Local Government legislation strengthens the role of municipalities. Funding model:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Discretionary ward funds to be prioritised and used by the ward committees based on community vote (&quot;community-voted&quot;) funds.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Guide to municipalities for budgeting for ward functioning.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak communication and interaction systems</strong></td>
<td>Influence intergovernmental fiscal framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve national support to LG communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that extend beyond the formal participation structures.

The extent and scale of communication with communities is underestimated. The means of communication and interaction, including mayors assemblies, door-to-door campaigns, citizen satisfaction surveys, community radio, use of multilingualism, etc is not sufficiently implemented.

| Weak or non-existent complaint management systems in municipalities. | Systems and methods (LG Communication system established with the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)). Promote multilingualism. Local Imbizos, Mayor's assemblies, community media, and radio. |
| Weak capacity of communities to participate and influence development. | Guidelines for complaint management systems in municipalities. Local Government Batho Pele hotline/call centre with tracking and logging system -response management. |
| Inadequate accountability by all three spheres of government to ward committees | Further institutionalising participation forums and structures but more importantly the need to actively build social capital and encourage organisation of communities as key change agents. |

Source: (Taken from National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009:14)

Judging from the above table the problems related to ward committees in South Africa do not mainly originate from a lack of legal machinery but rather from the fact that “existing policy frameworks, institutional mechanisms and programme interventions are failing to comply with government’s constitutional and statutory obligations” (Hemson, Hicks and Piper 2007:4). Another side of the problem is that should these policy frameworks exist they are often not properly implemented (Esau
2007:13). This failure of municipalities to fulfil legal requirements that could help local government to develop an enabling environment for the active participation of communities in local government processes makes this situation even worse.
3.4 Lack of interest of the public

One of the most serious issues, from a grassroots perspective, further jeopardising the success of ward committees, is the seeming lack of interest of the public to become involved in local government structures. According to Esau (2006:24) this lack of can be ascribed to the following:

- The influence of poverty on people results in a breakdown in their sense of community belonging and doing something for the common good.
- The breakdown of social networks due to forced settlement of communities.
- Lack the resources to participate in local government structures studies conducted by government indicate a strong link between sufficient financial resources and the effective functioning of ward committees.
- Limited comprehension of citizenship that only involves a meaning related to voting at national and/or local elections.
- A lack of trust between citizens and public organisations.
- The high levels of functional illiteracy and thus inability of ordinary citizens to participate (Esau 2007:22).

The above problems in many ways reflect the realities that confront young democracies, such as South Africa, “where political participation is limited by class, education, self-esteem, community solidarity, and other factors that effectively exclude the poor and marginalised from processes and structures of accountability” (Esau 2007:11).

3.5 Lack of support and assistance of municipalities

The situation clearly shows that the majority of South African citizens and community structures are not in a position to bring governance to the local sphere without the assistance and support of municipalities because they are either or:

- under-resourced;
- not properly structured;
not properly informed about their duty to hold municipalities accountable for the effectiveness of their service delivery;

- used as a rubber stamp by councillor;
- apathetic towards their role as watchdog; or
- not able or empowered to fulfil their function by actively participating in the main municipal functions, such as Integrated Development Planning, municipal budgeting and municipal performance management.

According to Esau (2006:27) the realities of the South African society namely “poverty, unemployment, the lack of community resources and a narrow understanding” by citizens of their own rights and duties are the main reasons for the lack of participation of community members on local government level. Government’s approach is that one of the major causes of this unsatisfactory situation “is the serious lack of leadership and governance in municipalities, especially the weak responsiveness and accountability of public officials to communities” (Esau 2006:27). “Closely related to these is the high rate of financial mismanagement and corruption” (South African Local Government: 10 Years Later Internet source).

### 3.6 Operational and human resources challenges in municipalities

The human resource capital of our municipalities is clearly not able to empower ward committee members to undertake the activities stipulated by Section 4.8.2 of the National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model (2009:19):

- “Organise and attend meetings of the Ward Committee, council, community and sector consultation and feedback meetings. Receive and record complaints from the community within the ward regarding service delivery, payment systems and others and provide feedback on council's responses;
- Visiting relevant sector organisations and communities for the purposes of information gathering, information sharing, council feedback, intervention, networking, community mobilization, conflict resolution and other reasons;
• Participating in the stakeholder cluster forums;
• Being represented in the council’s study groups by their chairpersons;
• Coordinating ward programmes;
• Participating in the IDP Review and Representative Forum;
• Information gathering;
• Identify priorities/reprioritize/add new projects;
• Attend review exercises;
• Serve on representative forum to liaise with residents;
• Oversee development projects emerging from the IDP;
• Attend public IDP meetings;
• Participating in budget processes;
• Public hearing per ward;
• Mayoral Committee and Finance Committee outreach programmes;
• Discussions with ward councillor;
• Attend budget meetings as community members;
• Attend community meetings and budget road-shows;
• Discuss budget;
• Participating in performance management functions;
• Monitor performance of ward councillor in specific areas;
• Engaged in performance review of the IDP;
• Raise concerns regarding off-schedule capital projects and service delivery requests;
• Develop Key Performance Indicators;
• Taking part in the IDP reviews;
• Provide written comments on the level of proposed service delivery; and
• Execute other functions as delegated by the municipality”.

In an effort to overcome these obstacles government drew up a Department of Local Government (DPLG) support programme and a National Framework describing a model to support and fund the operations of ward committees (National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model 2009: 5). However despite these guidelines there is no standardized way in which municipalities should assist ward committees. In practice the support
given to ward committees is determined by affordability. According to the National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model (2009: 20) municipalities could be of assistance in the following areas:

- “Municipalities could provide an induction process into Local Government for ward committees when they are established.
- Provide ongoing training in various areas of management in order to assist ward committee members to perform their duties efficiently.
- Provide relevant information to ward councillors on an ongoing basis in order to assist them in the implementation of their responsibilities. Such information may include: Copies of relevant legislation, National Guidelines, Council policies on public participation and ward committees; a copy of the demographic data for the ward to assist in compiling the ward profile; an overview of the municipality's IDP; an overview of the municipality’s Performance Management System; a summary of the municipal budget; information about reporting processes and procedures; etc.
- Provide for other readily available resources within the municipality such as: venues for meetings, office space, stationery, publications, branding of meetings, telecommunication systems, catering for meetings, and various equipment as needed. This would assist the ward councillors in that the funding to be received from National Government could then focus on the most critical cost that has been identified: travelling. The proposed R1000.00 a month for each ward committee member to cover their expenses for their work, in reality is just a minimum to cover travelling, telephone, and refreshment expenses.
- The municipality could set up a public participation team internally that would facilitate easy liaison with the ward committee members outside of council for easy flow of information, reduced turnaround times, easier access to needed resources, easier access to key government officials needed to address public meetings from time to time and better tracking and monitoring of registered public concerns.
- Municipalities could also assist with the project management and events organizing of some of the bigger meetings and events through the deployment of their administrative personnel/teams and provision of resources”.

In ward committees, the National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model (2009: 21) states that support should be given in at least three basic areas namely:

- **Technical support** (this will include municipal staff dedicated to ward committees, provision of stationery for monthly meetings, training and induction of ward committees, community research surveys and translation of key documents, and the provision of venues for ward committee meetings);
- **Communication Plan** (municipal campaigns to introduce ward committees to communities e.g, know your ward committee campaign, provision of identity cards for ward committees, engaging community radio stations, broadcasting, publishing and dissemination of fliers); and
- **Out of pocket expenses** (these should include travelling expenses incurred, telephone/cellular phone costs, refreshments and meals during ward committee meetings, and other forms of reimbursement due to ward committee members as a result of doing council work)

Despite these guidelines a recent study by Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper (2007:5) found that despite all the talk about the importance of public participation for a democratic society and even the support of councillors, in practice very little is done to promote public participation in a real sense. In fact according to them most municipalities in their study are not even able to meet their statutory obligations in this regard. Therefore, the effective functioning of ward committees would require more than a face lift from the side of national government.

### 3.7 Factors impacting on the effective functioning of ward committees
According to Smith (2008:11) a useful starting point is to identify the most serious factors impacting on the effective functioning of ward committees. The following issues were identified by him namely: the representation of community members, the limitation of power, lack of skilled committee members, access to information and resources, legislation and policy and party politics.

3.7.1 Representation of ward committees

An important objective for democratic governance is to guarantee that the representation of ward committee members is derived from an inclusive nomination and election process. Ward committee members should truly strive to at all times represent the community they serve. From the literature review it is first of all clear that the main focus of both the ward committee members and the public officials should be on partnership building and more specifically on the building of a participative democracy. As Hilhorst and Guijt (2006:15) state:

“Smooth partnerships are essential for efficiency, to avoid duplication and prevent gaps. However, this is easier said than done. In a multi-stakeholder setting, being clear on responsibilities and quality standards, sharing information, undertaking joint analysis, and honouring agreements is often a challenge”.

This calls for shared knowledge, and critical reflexive thinking between all stakeholders. Therefore participation in ward committees should be meaningful to local stakeholders, including marginalized groups. The partnerships among public officials should be continuously strengthened through dialogue, reflexivity, joint actions and the mutual benefits they share. The partners should be committed to the joint decisions taken and the strategy to implement these decisions. A two way communication channel is needed, where knowledge, information and regular feedback is provided by public officials, and where committee members could feel free to share their feelings, aspirations, experiences and the service related problems people at grassroots level experience.

The establishment of ward committees remains a difficult issue. One of the most difficult problems the election of ward committee members poses is that there are
many interest groups that could form part of a local government structure. However according to The Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 there can be a maximum of ten members in a ward committee. This problem could be addressed by ex-officio representation. However, the danger remains that ward committees would not represent legitimate interest groups and would therefore merely replicate political positions already represented in council. Wards are made up of citizens of different parties. Therefore if ward committees are “seen to be controlled by a single party, interest groups and individuals aligned to other parties will not feel inclined to participate” (dplg and GTZ 2005 A:41). The State of Local Governance Report (in GOGTA 2009A:10) revealed that party politics accompanied by greed and a general lack of values, principles and ethics contributed significantly to the progressive deterioration of municipal functionality. Unfortunately there are many officials and public representatives for whom public service is not a concern and they are only interested in self-enrichment.

3.7.2 Limitation of power of ward committees

The limitation of power is legislatively imposed on ward committees by means of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998. This Act of 2000 confines the powers of ward committees to that of communication and mobilisation providing advice and acting as a support system to ward councillors. “Although the Act makes provision for municipalities to delegate certain powers and duties to ward committees”, according to Smith (2008:14) “only a few municipalities have done this in any meaningful way”. The role of ward committees to monitor the performance of ward councillors as independent civil structures is another difficult issue. Not only is this role not properly defined but on the whole ward councillors resist being evaluated by ward committees (Smith 2008:14).

One of the most important “tests of the effectiveness of ward committees is their impact on municipal decision-making. In this regard research suggests that ward committees in general have no significant influence on the decisions made by council” (Smith 2008:16). The community members, although on the whole supportive of the idea of participation, expressed a feeling of “being tired to be used
as rubber stamps in Mickey Mouse games. The experience of public participation was almost entirely limited to izimbizo gatherings” (Smith 2008:16).

Some assessments showed that many Ward Councillors do not bother to attend ward committee meetings and even if they do ward committee issues are often not prioritised in Council meetings. Furthermore ward committees are often poorly resourced and could therefore not meet the expectations of residents. There is as a rule not a good relationship between ward committees, community development workers (CDWs) and councils. As a matter of fact the extent of the reported tensions between these parties is of such a nature that it often undermines the functionality of ward committees and may be one of the reasons why community protests are escalating. The State of Local Governance Report (in COGTA 2009A:10) explains the situation as follows:

“Assessments revealed that party political factionalism and polarization of interests over the last few years, and the subsequent creation of new political alliances and elites, have indeed contributed to the progressive deterioration of municipal functionality. Evidence has been collected to dramatically illustrate how the political / administrative interface has resulted in factionalism on a scale that, in some areas, it is akin to a battle over access to state resources rather than any ideological or policy differences. The lack of values, principles or ethics in these cases indicates that there are officials and public representatives for whom public service is not a concern, but accruing wealth at the expense of poor communities is their priority” (COGTA 2009A:10).

An additional “concern is that municipalities with traditional leaders in their areas of jurisdiction, as a rule reported a poor working relationship between themselves and these leaders” (COGTA 2009A:17).

3.7.3 Lack of skills of ward committees

According to Smith (2008:14) the “effectiveness of ward committees is considerably jeopardised by the levels of education, skills and expertise of ward committee members” . He further (2008:14) states that “a skills audit of 373 ward committee
members in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality carried out by the Project for Conflict Resolution and Development (Bendle 2008) found that only 34 of the members (9%) had any post-matric training or qualification and 59 members (16%) did not have matric”. It should be noted that this study reflects the situation in a metropolitan municipality, therefore it could be expected that the situation in rural municipalities is far worse.

This low level of education makes it difficult for committee members to understand, interpret and fulfil their role. The need for capacity building and training enabling active community participation is widely recognised and emphasised by the National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model (2009:21) and legislation such as the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 and the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000).

3.7.4 Lack of timeous information and resources

Lack of communication or poor communication between the municipality and the ward committees is detrimental to any meaningful participation in municipal processes. The ability of ward committees to function effectively “is constrained by poor municipal communication strategies and a lack of accessible information and resources at ward level” (Smith 2009:21). This is specifically true in relation to municipal planning processes such as the IDP and the municipal budget. If targets and indicators for development and budget allocations were not made known and were not properly explained ward committees could hardly make any input or be held accountable (Smith 2009:21).

3.7.5 Legislation and policy formulation problems

In general the implementation of laws fall five to seven years behind the time the law has been promulgated. Up to now there is still only a draft national policy on public participation. This is the situation despite the commitment in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) and the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 to develop a culture of participatory governance. Laws and policy related to public
participation through ward committees or any other civic structures therefore had only limited success in that “participation is limited to consultation, rather than formal empowerment of citizens in political decision making” (Smith 2009:21). There are currently no direct guidelines regarding the responsibility of citizens to participate in formal local government structures. Hence public participation is not entrenched in our country.

What is worse is “that the opportunities created for public participation whether through ward committees or public meetings” (Smith 2009:21) are only making provision for public consultation and not actual participation of civil society in decision-making or implementation. The “law makes it very clear that decision-making power resides with municipal councillors and responsibility for implementation remains with these officials” (Smith 2009:21). However, the empowerment of ward committees to truly be able to fulfil their functions and to act as a catalyst for community development demands standardised, direct, extensive, interceptive and creative action from the local government's side. Therefore the support of local government for ward committees cannot be built on promises and the discretion of individual municipalities.

3.8 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the functioning of ward committees as participatory mechanisms. It also discussed the public participation challenges of ward committees. The chapter paid attention to the lack of interest of the public, the lack of support and assistance of municipalities, and the operational and human resources challenges in municipalities as further factors that hamper the effectiveness of ward committees.

Other factors impacting on the effective functioning of ward committees that were discussed in this chapter are the representation of ward committees, the limitation of power of ward committees, lack of skills in ward committees, lack of timeous information and resources and legislation and policy formulation problems.
Assessments of municipalities country wide undertaken by COGTA (COGTA 2009:10) showed that the reasons for the malfunctioning of local government is locked up in:

- “tensions between the political and administrative interface;
- poor ability of many councillors to deal with the demands of local government;
- insufficient separation of powers between political parties and municipal councils;
- lack of clear separation between the legislative and executive;
- inadequate accountability measures and support systems and resources for local democracy; and
- poor compliance with the legislative and regulatory frameworks for municipalities”.

The most common factors impacting negatively on the effectiveness and efficiency of ward committees “can be divided into three main categories namely”(COGTA 2009A:15-17)"

- “Governance: Political infighting, conflict between senior management and councillors and human resource management issues.
- Financial: Inadequate revenue collection, ineffective financial systems, fraud, misuse of municipal assets and funds.
- Service delivery: Breach of sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution” (Republic of South Africa 1996) which outline service delivery obligations of municipalities (COGTA 2009A:15-17).

As noted before “local government legislation has consolidated and opened up new spaces for citizens to directly participate in their own governance. To date, ward committees have been established in 99% of the municipalities. In short, all the ingredients are there for effective, responsive and participatory local government” (dplg 2009:4).
While the escalation of structures for service delivery and a high level of commitment to the promotion of a culture of participation on a local government level cannot be denied, the question remains whether and how well these set conditions are met. Meeting the conditions set by laws, principles and policies are as important as an officially endorsed legal structure (dplg and GTZ 2005 A:12). It was found that most municipalities still have to provide a physical enabling environment to the ward committees in their community. This despite the provision of extensive guidelines and policy to follow, where provision is made for an enabling environment by means of sufficient funding, capacity building, opportunities for meaningful participation, impact on decision making and communication structures between Councils and ward committees.

The continued community protests in the country can be perceived as a lack of trust and dissatisfaction with local governance in the country (dplg 2009:16). In the next section the nature, role and functions of ward committees will be investigated. More specifically we will look into how these committees are set-up and supported, what their nature and role is and how they could best fulfil their functions and help local government to contribute to social and economic development and a safe and healthy environment to the citizens they serve.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATURE, ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF PARTICIPATIVE WARD COMMITTEES

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four addresses the secondary question that was posed in Chapter One (Section 1.3) “What does the nature, role and functions of ward committees as participatory mechanisms in local governance entail?”

In an attempt to answer the above question this chapter provides an overview of the nature of ward committees as participatory mechanisms. It also addresses the advisory functions of ward committees. The chapter pays attention to certain service delivery and governance problems that affect the success of ward committees as participatory mechanisms. Finally, the chapter discusses key drivers for developmental local governance in terms of the role that ward committees can play.

4.2 Nature of ward committees as participatory mechanisms

In essence laws and policies on local governance envisage a process where communities could participate in municipal planning, implementation and performance monitoring and evaluation. In this way “communities would be empowered to identify their needs, help set indicators and targets for performance thereby deepening democracy and holding municipalities accountable for their actions and the services they deliver” (dplg. 2005:56). Section d (2.3.2) of the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998A:62) stipulates that “the promotion of participative democracy should be seen as a central role for local government”.

Chapter 7 of the Constitution of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 1996) creates an autonomous framework for local governments, making them more independent of national and provincial government. This means that local governments are now more accountable to their local communities, especially in providing effective and efficient services. More specifically Section 51 of the Municipal
Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) specifies that: “A municipality must, within its administrative and financial capacity, establish and organise its administration in a manner that would enable the municipality to:

a) be responsive to the needs of the local community;
b) facilitate a culture of public service and accountability amongst its staff;
c) be performance orientated and focused on the objectives of local government set out in section 152 of the Constitution and its developmental duties as required by section 153 of the Constitution;
d) ensure that its political structures, political office bearers and managers and other staff members align their roles and responsibilities with the priorities and objectives set out in the municipality’s IDP;
e) establish clear relationships, and facilitate cooperation, co-ordination and communication, between –
   i. its political structures, political office bearers and its administration
   ii. its political structures, political office bearers and administration and the local community;
fg) organise its political structures, political office bearers and administration in a flexible way in order to respond to changing priorities and circumstances;
h) i. perform its functions through operationally effective and appropriate administrative units and mechanisms, including departments and other functional or business units; and
   ii. when necessary, on a decentralised basis;
i) assign clear responsibilities for the management and co-ordination of these administrative units and mechanisms; and
j) hold the municipal manager accountable for the overall performance of the administration” (COGTA 2009A:9).

Furthermore, according to the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa 2000) the specific “function of ward committees is to act as a mechanism to promote public participation and to build the capacity of residents and help councillors and municipal officials to engage in participatory processes” (dplg 2009).
Laws and policies should be realised through formal participatory processes and structures in local governance. Contrary to informal participation there is structured participation, which entails the formal establishment of citizen bodies. These bodies e.g. ward committees have defined roles and responsibilities. The members of these bodies are chosen by the local government structures or by some other formal process. Ward committees are the key institutional mechanism intended to assist local government in “bringing about people-centred, participatory and democratic local governance” (COGTA 2009A:15-17). The reason for the establishment of ward committees is to extend the roles of the elected ward councillors by creating a link between communities and local government. It is quite clear that this is not happening on a wide scale. The reasons for this as discussed in the previous chapter is actually quite understandable and obviously lies in the base line fact that ward committees do not have the legal mandate to fulfil these functions and also do not have the capacity to do so.

Ward committees are established to enhance “the participation of residents in a ward in democratic decision-making” processes (COGTA 2009A:15-17). Ward committees have a non-political and advisory status and are established in terms of section 73 of the “Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, and they consist of the councillor representing that ward in the council, who must also be the chairperson of the committee, and not more than 10 other persons” (COGTA 2009A:15-17). The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 emphasises “that (i) ward committee members be representative of the community and have knowledge and understanding of the particular needs of the community; and (ii) the committee consists of the widest possible range of interest groups in the ward” (Esau 2007:13). Ward committees have direct communication lines to the ward councillor and the community it serves and “may make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward to the ward councillor” (Esau 2007:13).

Hence, section 72 (3) of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 states that “the objective of a ward committee as enhancing participatory democracy in local government”. In this regard “committees have an important role to play in actively taking part and determining core municipal processes, such as the Integrated Development Planning, municipal budgeting and municipal performance
management processes” (Esau 2007:13). The most important task of the Ward Committee is to facilitate the participation of citizens in decisions affecting their wards and to “make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward to the ward councillor, or through the ward councillor to the Council through the Sub-council” (Esau 2007:13). The Ward Committee also needs to create an awareness of and sensitivity to community needs by identifying and reporting on it (Esau 2007:13-14).

More specifically the ward committee members have to be able to represent the needs of the community to such an extent that they can at least influence council planning, participate in the local government developmental programme and be involved in drawing up of the budget. They should help the council to ensure public participation in the areas of the IDP and the development of policy (municipal by-laws). Furthermore ward committees should also be able to monitor and oversee service delivery in communities (Esau 2007:13-14).

4.3 Advisory functions of ward committees

“An important element of the current local government system is the promotion of local democracy in municipal governance. Public participation is an integral part of local democracy and a legislative requirement for the local community to be drawn into the municipal planning processes through *inter alia*: Integrated Development Planning, budgeting, performance management and ward committees. Although the old South African local government system did not have an extensive history in ensuring a culture of actively engaging communities in local government developmental programmes, the IDP under a Developmental Local Government presents a framework through which such a culture can be established. The ward committees, in particular, are expected to play a critical role in linking community needs with the municipal integrated planning processes” (Ngqele 2010 :22)

However, in view of the fact that a ward committee can only operate in an advisory capacity the question is whether it is possible for these committees to perform these functions. It should be clearly understood that operating in an advisory capacity means that no decision made in a ward committee meeting is binding on the Ward Councillor or has legal powers regarding council decisions. The decisive legal
“power in a municipality rests with formal council meetings and binding decisions can only be made there” (Ngqele 2010:23). “Ward committees may have certain powers and functions delegated to them by the municipal council and thus acquire more power to act” (Ngqele 2010:23). The problem is that structured participatory bodies such as ward committees can only be effective when they are seen as legitimate structures by community members (Bekker 2004:46).

“Councillors need to be careful in their use of election procedures to claim legitimacy for ward committees. At best ward committees could be regarded as structures with a partial public mandate that need to remain as open as possible to further public representation” (Smith 2008:18).

This situation makes it extremely difficult for ward committees to function as they should, since community members may see them as puppets of the Council who are not able to bring service improvement and or social and economic development. In fact many questions are asked about the effectiveness of ward committees as a mechanism for community involvement in local governance. More specifically whether ward committees “as spaces created for formal public participation are capable of playing a critical role in this regard” (Smith 2008:4). According to Smith (2008:4) scholars tend to think that although ward committees could play a major role in being the “voice of communities, most committees in the country are not functioning as intended and have” in fact done more harm by displacing other existing formal channels such as resident organisations. In this sense it could be said that “rather than enhancing the environment of participatory governance ward committees have actually undermined it by displacing many other former channels for public participation” (Smith 2008:4). The question is whether this failure is due to a lack of functioning of ward committees because of capacity and resource issues, or whether there are more fundamental issues related to legitimacy, lack of legal power and power struggles with ward councillors or public officials and decision-making processes in municipalities (Smith 2008:5).

4.4 Service delivery and governance problems affecting ward committees
In an effort to meet the needs of communities, national government made a study of the obstacles that have a negative impact on the delivery of services as well as the growth and development of municipalities in general. Apart from the problem that ward committees have regarding the lack of municipal leadership, resources and legitimacy and legal power a number of other persistent service delivery and governance problems affecting ward committees have also been identified as priority areas (COGTA 2009A:4). These include:

- “insufficient separation of powers between political parties and municipal councils”;
- problems with political appointments in municipalities;
- “poor compliance with the legislative and regulatory frameworks for municipalities”;
- poor organisational capacity and more specifically “poor ability of many councillors to deal with the demands of” communities and ward committees;
- poor communication and poor relationships between communities and local government;
- “poor financial management, e.g. negative audit opinions”; 
- “inadequate accountability measures and support systems and resources for local democracy”;
- bad governance practices and corruption and fraud;
- lack of relevant policies and programmes for community development;
- a serious backlog in service delivery to communities e.g. housing, water and sanitation leading to escalating unhappiness and loss of trust in government and culminating in more violent protests;
- inadequate staffing and systems;
- inability to plan and budget;
- service delivery protests;
- weak civil society formations to represent the various sectors in communities; and
- insufficient capacity of both the public officials and community leaders to fulfil their respective roles due to a lack of skills.
On the whole the effective functioning of a municipality depends on effective, capable and ethical political leadership. The reason for poor service delivery often lies in unstable governance. Poor leadership in municipalities is fuelled by the “high incidence of irregular or inappropriate appointments, coupled with low capacities, poor skills and weak institutional management” (COGTA 2009A:29). “Those municipalities in remote areas experience the added challenge of access to skills and little understanding of their spatial and economic realities. They generally lack the financial and human resources to deliver on their constitutional and legal mandate and on citizen expectations” (COGTA 2009A:29).

From evidence gathered for The State of Local Governance Report (in COGTA 2009A) “…it is clear that much of local government is indeed in distress, and that this state of affairs has become deeply-rooted within our system.” (COGTA 2009A:4). A growing number of municipalities are unable to deliver effective services and are confronted by escalating community protests (COGTA 2009A:23).

It stands to reason that the above state of affairs needs to be urgently addressed. The State of Local Governance Report (COGTA 2009A) resulted in the development of the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS), published in November 2009. The LGTAS was tasked to develop strategic objectives to guide necessary actions and support the Ward Committee framework.

4.5 Key drivers for the role of ward committees in developmental local governance

Five strategic objectives were identified as the key drivers to rebuild “a functional, responsive, effective, efficient, and accountable developmental local government system” (COGTA 2009B:10):

- “Ensure that municipalities meet the basic service needs of communities;
- Build clean, effective, efficient, responsive and accountable local government;
- Improve performance and professionalism in municipalities;
• Improve national and provincial policy, oversight and support; and
• Strengthen partnerships between local government, communities and civil society” (COGTA 2009A:29).

This “is in line with the objective of ensuring that communities own the process of development and that the people are enabled to make a meaningful contribution to their own development” (Ngqele 2010:25). Community participation should be a learning process where people really participate. Participation does not refer to some artificial involvement of communities but to the involvement of citizens right from the start and over a period of time. The right of people to think, discuss and make decisions on matters affecting them should be acknowledged as a prerequisite for development (Ngqele 2010:25).

For more effective fulfilment of their duties, enablement structures, procedures and strategies supported by the leadership, implemented by management and monitored by those charged with governance, are required. A system of monitoring and evaluation allowing for the systematic gathering of credible data supporting the implementation of strategies and programmes should be put in place. This evaluation system should be driven by a detailed set of indicators to assess performance. Therefore, the root of the problem lies in political control and poor institutional management and governance, lack of compliance to policy and law, service delivery failures, the lack of capacity and performance, and the inability of municipalities to be financially viable and sustainable. It is primarily against these problems and the Constitutional specifications that indicators for the measurement of the effectiveness of municipal performance should be developed and measured (COGTA 2009A:9).

Government sees the proposed Turn-Around Strategy as an opportunity, to “together with civil society partners and stakeholders”, turn the current situation around and take a new direction to develop “internal and external” enabling “environments that could shape local government” to meet the vision for functional, responsive, efficient, effective municipalities “set by the Constitution” (Republic of South Africa 1996) (GOGTA 2009A:75).
The strategy to follow should aim to:

- “mobilise people to become active in their own development;”
- coordinate activities, initiatives and resources especially finances; and
- establish a partnership between the public and the private sector” (GOGTA 2009A:75).

Hence, according to Esau (2007:18)ward committees should:

- “participate in activities that develop their communities”;  
- “support”, promote and monitor IDPs;  
- be involved in the “performance management system and the monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance”;
- be involved in “the preparation” of budgets;
- be empowered to plan, design, implement and evaluate programmes;
- “foster real partnerships with a wide range of partners in development”; and
- address economic and social development “in a systematic and sustained way” (Esau 2007:18).

However, as previously stated, to achieve the above aims local government should function in an enabling environment. According to the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) municipalities are obliged to develop an enabling model for participatory democracy in the local government. A shift should take place from the dependency model within which Government is expected to do everything for communities, to the community empowerment model, within which communities do things for themselves. The problem is that the Public Service is still operating within an over-centralised, hierarchical, rule-bound dependency framework that discourages partnership building between government and communities and the empowerment of citizens to participate in their own development. The core of the current system therefore still revolves around an elitist democracy where society is used to getting rational feedback from government and good governance without taking part in the process (Schurink 2010).
What is worsening the situation even further is that community leaders and politicians on local government level encourage this helplessness of community members because the best way to attract resources is not to show how self-reliant the community has become but how needy the community members are and how serious the problems are that they are experiencing (Mathie and Cunningham 2002). This needs-based approach can potentially have devastating consequences if people “start to believe what their leaders are saying and begin to see themselves as incapable of taking charge of their lives and of the community” (Mathie and Cunningham 2002).

One of the main challenges of Government is to deal with complex social systems and the interaction of a wide (and often changing) variety of actors with different values, interests, and motives. This problem could be addressed by means of partnership building between community members and local government. In fact building a partnership between local government and civil society has become a key principle to achieve the goals set for a more effective and accountable local governance system (The Presidency 2009:1).

4.6 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the nature of ward committees as participatory mechanisms. In this chapter the role and functions of ward committees were highlighted. The chapter addressed the advisory functions of ward committees, certain service delivery and governance problems that affect the success of ward committees as participatory mechanisms and provided key drivers for developmental local governance in terms of the role of ward committees.

It was suggested that focus should be on community development, more specifically, social and economic development instead of mere service delivery. This developmental strategy is a prerequisite for constructing an integrated service delivery system which could facilitate the development of human capacity and self-reliance within a caring and enabling environment. It is clear that in order to meet this challenge, a new and more inclusive
paradigm is needed that provides for assumptions based on both objective observation as well as subjective understanding.

It is through formal participatory processes and structures in local governance that laws and policies are realised. One of the most serious stumbling blocks impacting on the functionality of ward committees is the lack of legitimacy and legal power to perform its functions. Apart from the problem that ward committees have regarding their lack of leadership, legitimacy and legal power a number of other persistent service delivery and governance problems affecting the role and functions of ward committees have also been identified as priority areas for government action. The importance of community ownership of the development process and the empowerment of people to make a meaningful contribution to their own development was stressed.

It was stated in Chapter One (see section 1.2) that a participatory action research (PAR) process could bring a new focus on governance reform and social justice and people’s options and the forces that drive or prevent civic action as well as the group and social network capacity to steer change. This paradigm could also help public officials to enhance local government effectiveness and the standard of community development and empowerment. The next chapter will discuss specific issues that need to be addressed if the participatory action research approach is to be used as a tool for the development of participative democracy on the local government level.
CHAPTER FIVE

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A TOOL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY IN WARD COMMITTEES

5.1 Introduction

According to the Turnabout Strategy (COGTA 2009B:3) the core of efficient, effective and accountable service delivery at local government level is the mobilization of people on the ground to participate. Up to now the main strategy for the training of ward committee members has been singular event-centred initiatives such as workshops. To achieve the maximum output capacity-building training needs to be long-term, interactive and participatory (dplg 2005A:68).

This chapter aims to answer the fourth secondary research question posed in chapter one (see section 1.3): “How can participatory action research be used as a tool to develop participative democracy on the local government level?”

In this regard, the chapter highlights the concept of participatory action research (PAR) and discusses the principles of PAR including the involvement of all stakeholders, equal partnerships, partnership building, self-development, meaningful participation, mobilisation of external group resources, and the mobilisation of internal group resources. The chapter also pays attention to the process and phases of PAR. This is done in terms of the analysis/preparation phase (stakeholder analysis, the situation analysis), the development phase (setting of goals and objectives, planning of activities, development of indicators, development of a research strategy), the implementation phase and the evaluation phase.

5.2 Concept of participatory action research (PAR)

Participatory action research (PAR) is based on the anti-positivist (qualitative) or post-modern world-view that there is no outside “true” reality which could be discovered by researchers in an objective, detached way. As already stated they believe reality could only be understood “by discovering the meanings that
people in a specific” setting attach to it in contrast to the positivist researcher who sees “the researcher as subject within a world of separate objects” (cf. Reason 1994:9). The anti-positivistic qualitative researcher asserts that the researcher is inherently part of the world being studied. Reality could thus “only be discovered when researchers actively involve their research subjects in the research” (Reason 1994:9), turning them into research participants. In this sense participatory action research goes further than merely revealing an understanding of the life worlds of research subjects; it interrelates understanding and action by enabling communities to take action after they have gained knowledge of their situation. Therefore PAR is a type of research which aims to contribute to the improvement of people’s quality of life. In addition, participatory action research builds human capacity. The ultimate result should be improved self-esteem, self-reliance and self-determination.

5.3 The principles of participatory action research

A review of the literature (White 1991, Rahman 1993, Lammerink 1994, Pretty 1995), and shared learning experiences such as the Chatham Workshop (see Pound, Snapp, Vernooy, McDougall and Braun 2003) begin to indicate the development of patterns of good research practices for PAR and the principles set to achieve it. PAR rests on the following important principles:

5.3.1 The involvement of all stakeholders

Decision makers and ward committee members should be involved in the entire process. The buy-in of donors, leaders and decision makers at local government level and their participation throughout the entire process is essential. Their participation and regular feedback will ease the way for community members to feel part, participate in and sustain projects developed through PAR.

5.3.2 Equal partnerships
In order to facilitate a participative and collaborative approach to problem solving ordinary citizens should be empowered through the PAR process to be equal partners alongside local government officials or more specifically community development workers or change agents.

5.3.3 Partnership building

A clear and coherent, transparent and collaborative agenda among stakeholders that contributes to partnership building is needed. The partners should be committed to the joint decisions taken and the strategy to implement these decisions. This calls for a movement beyond the simple mapping of local knowledge and comparison of ideas, to ‘collegiate design’ or ‘dialogic research’, based on shared knowledge, and critical reflexive thinking between all stakeholders and between stakeholders and community members.

5.3.4 Self-development

A shift should take place from the dependency model within which community workers (from their superior knowledge perspective) do everything for communities, to the community empowerment model, within which communities do things for themselves. To help achieve this all research participants should have easy access to information and a range of skills and opportunities to stimulate participation, self-awareness, self-respect, ownership, a sense of purpose and the development of a new way of thinking and behaving that would enhance their self-reliance.

The epistemological premises of PAR conform to those of pragmatism and dialectical materialism - two schools of scientific research. Research should thus be value (ideology) directed and purposive, i.e. aimed at practical problem solving and improvement in the quality of life of the research participants. Therefore the research process should consist of an iterative “learning approach, in other words cycles of diagnosis–intervention–assessment–diagnosis–intervention–assessment” (Vernooy and McDougall 2003:124).
This means that a process of collective reflection and self-conscientisation is followed that encourages individuals in a group to share and discuss their experiences, perceptions and thoughts and that mobilises collectives to take action that would lead to social transformation, reconstruction and sustainable development. The “participatory process should be well documented in a research journal or diary and the analysis of results and authorship of published materials must be shared between all stakeholders” (Vernooy and McDougall 2003:139).

5.3.5 Meaningful participation

Information dissemination happens throughout the process through multiple exchanges between change agents, stakeholders and residents, from the community grassroots level to the level of local and national government. Therefore an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between role-players should be created by the community development worker/change agent. This requires constant self-evaluation and self-learning of stakeholders. The differentiated perspectives and interests of different groups of local stakeholders and community members, including marginalized groups, based on gender, class, age, ethnicity etc. should be taken into account.

5.3.6 Mobilisation of external group resources

The environment in which the PAR process takes place should be supportive by providing the necessary human capacity, expertise, funds, time, and place where activities will be implemented. This could help to encourage all stakeholders dealing with a specific issue (e.g. lack of clean water) to participate actively and to become involved in decision making.

5.3.7 Mobilisation of internal group resources

The power of folk wisdom in the empowerment of individuals and communities should be realized and respected. An appreciation should be shown for local knowledge, capabilities and core values, and the many forms of expression such as
music, drama, sports, storytelling etc. The starting point of PAR is the “mobilisation of internal group resources such as skills, knowledge and experiences” (McDougall Prabhu and Kusumanto 2003:189).

5.4 The process of participatory action research (PAR)

The research process is aligned with traditional and scientific knowledge worlds. It should therefore be realized that because the world is so complex, no single methodology or data-gathering technique could provide the full picture. The research methodology uses a diversity of methods and tools and is therefore multi-perspective and could include both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (e.g trianguiation) and various data-gathering methods (focus group interviews, questionnaires, participant observation).

The research process is as already stated “based on iterative learning and feedback loops and there is a two-way sharing of information” (Schurink 2010). The community development worker/change agent or councillor has to act as a facilitator, co-learner and team builder and should constantly interact with the ward committee and community members “to discuss, reflect on and verify findings, rather than acting as an expert in charge of a project. More specifically the research should have regular monitoring events involving key stakeholders and the outcomes of monitoring activities should be translated into revised actions” (Schurink 2005).

“Continuous learning (leading to people’s increased ability to solve problems) is one of the key features of participatory research. It is therefore crucial that the research design allows for systematic, regular and critical exchange and reflection upon both the research process and the results (learning and outcomes). A central aspect should be the meaningful participation by the different stakeholders in these activities” (Ashby 2003:21).

The following steps could be identified in the process of participatory action research (see Bawden 2004).
Firstly, a committed community change agent (community development worker) starts an inter-sectoral process of community mobilisation in cooperation with other existing government structures. It could be extremely fruitful to cooperate and link ward committees up with the izimbizo where the President and high level delegations meet with communities to exchange views on service delivery (Government Communications Handbook 2003). In preparation of the izimbizo an agenda can be prepared together with stakeholders for the negotiation process. The Presidential visit to communities (izimbizo) could take place in a workshop format where members and community members can discuss the identified issues, debate unresolved issues and collectively come up with suggestions of how to address the most important issues. This workshop could also be used to identify more stakeholders who could act as representatives of community members on ward committees. In this way municipalities would be able to address the real problems and provide the community members with relevant information during their visit. This could help to build a trusting relationship between the community and the Government.

Within this proposed framework izimbizo deliberations and ward committee meetings allow not only for communication, but also for teaching and learning through the evaluation process, as both evaluator and evaluand strengthen their understanding of their social responsibility.

Space for the necessary structures such as workshops and community meetings should be created to enable the community to feel part and to fully participate. Right from the start, people in the community should have the opportunity to participate in the dialog aimed at fostering collective intelligence and a collective sense of sharing and exploring different perceptions and insights regarding issues that need to be addressed.
5.5 The major phases of the PAR process

The major phases of the PAR process are the following:

- The analysis/preparation phase
- The development phase
- The implementation phase
- The evaluation phase

5.5.1 The analysis/preparation phase

The analysis phase consists of the following steps:

5.5.1.1 Stakeholder analysis

“Stakeholders are those people (beneficiaries, funders, decision makers etc.) who are directly or indirectly influenced by and have an influence on the situation that needs to be addressed” (Örtengren 2004:3).

The main purposes of stakeholder analysis are to:

- understand the interests of different groups, and their capacities to address identified problems, and
- design an appropriate strategy for citizen participation and action.

This process is started by discussions with community leaders, followed by meetings with community members where representatives/stakeholders of as many interest groups (women, children, youth, senior citizens health and welfare, business, environment, education, employment, citizen safety, rate payers associations etc) as possible are represented. At the workshops, the change agent will provide information that will sensitise the participants to their situation and how they could reframe their situation by becoming part of action-taking structures e.g. ward committees. Stakeholders should then come to
an agreement as to who should be nominated to represent their sectoral interest in
the Ward Committee. At a follow-up community meeting the nominated stakeholders
will be elected.

To counteract the negative backlash from communities against local government, it
is absolutely essential that first of all whatever nomination or election process is used
to nominate ward committee members, should be seen as a legitimate process
agreed upon by all stakeholders. Secondly that the process is transparent and that
records of the election process are kept and are available for public scrutiny.
Following on this committee members should be empowered to develop ward plans
to address the problems experienced by the ward and should be enabled to monitor
and evaluate the process (Ward Committee Resource Book 2005:25). The
methodology of participatory action research is ideally suited for this.

- Training of ward committee members

The stakeholders should be empowered to together with the change agent
participate fully in the process. Therefore the training of ward committee members is
an ongoing process. It is extremely important that ward committee members should
first of all understand the elements and process of PAR and share all decisions
regarding focus, methods, analysis, interpretation and dissemination with the change
agent.

However, training in PAR is not sufficient to empower ward committee members to
act as a bridge between the municipality and residential areas. To bring about
participation of community structures often means that they must be trained in
various other aspects that may seem straightforward to us and empowered to give
their comments and suggestions in matters affecting them.

The National Ward Committee Guidelines (Ward Committee Resource Book
2005:25) identify the following capacity-building and training needs:
**Generic training needs:**

- “Basic literacy
- Communication
- Interpersonal skills
- Conflict management and negotiation skills
- Democracy and community participation
- Identification, monitoring and prioritisation of needs, including basic training in research methodology
- Leadership” (Ward Committee Resource Book 2005:70)

**Training needs on municipal policies and processes:**

- “The establishment, terms of reference, nature and functions of ward committees
- Municipal structures, legislation and processes
- Municipal Service Partnerships
- Principles of good governance” (Ward Committee Resource Book 2005:70)

**General training components:**

Ward committee capacity-building and training generally encompasses the following topics:

- “Roles, responsibilities and functions of ward committees
- Effective communication between ward committees and broader community” (Ward Committee Resource Book 2005:70)

**Committee meeting procedures:**

- “Matters related to the establishment and operation of ward committees
- Integrated development planning and review thereof
• Related to the above, municipal budgeting and citizen participation in the budgeting cycle
• Municipal Performance Management Systems
• Ensuring adequate community participation in all municipal functions and processes. This includes an overview of the National Guidelines for Ward Committees
• Other legislative provisions that relate to community participation in municipal governance, including the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003” (Ward Committee Resource Book 2005:70).

5.5.1.2 The situation analysis

“Many things can go wrong in the implementation phase of a project, but if the design is flawed, implementation starts with a severe handicap” (Logic Framework approach Internet source). “A situation analysis describes the situation surrounding the problems to be addressed. The core of this step in the process is to i) get clarity on the problems identified and their relevance; ii) Identify a core problem; iii) Identify the causes and effects of the problem and their relationship to each other; and iv) gain an understanding of the impact of the problem on the different parties involved (e.g. stakeholders and target group members)” (Problem Tree analysis tool. Internet source http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/issues-tools/tools/problem-tree.html).

“The situation statement also establishes a baseline for comparison at the planning stage of a programme” (Schurink 2010). This baseline “provides a way to determine whether change has occurred and what the essence of the change was” (Schurink 2010). “Describing who is affected by the problem (problem statement) allows assessment of who has benefited. A situation statement or problem statement is therefore the foundation for programme development” (Schurink 2010). “A correct understanding of the situation is vital since misunderstanding of it will affect all further steps” in programme development and evaluation (Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models. Internet source). A situation statement should be
drawn up through the participation of all the ward committee members and should according to Schurink (2010) include the following:

- “What is the main focal problem? Why is the intervention needed?
- A statement of the problem (What are the causes? What are the social, economic, and/or environmental symptoms of the problem?);
- What effect does the problem have? (Why is it important to solve the problem? What are the likely consequences/effects if nothing is done to resolve the problem? What are the actual or projected costs?);
- A description of who is affected by the problem (Where do they live, work, and relax? How are they important to the community? Who depends on them—families, employees, organisations?); and
- Who else is interested in the problem? Who are the stakeholders? What other projects address this problem?”

It is important to note that “evaluation and program success rely on the fundamentals of clear stakeholder assumptions and expectations about how and why a programme will solve a particular problem, generate new possibilities, and make the most of valuable assets” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation 2004:5). “The focus here is on the problem or issue and the reasons for proposing the solution” (Schurink 2010).

“Noted evaluator and program theorist Carol Weiss (1998) explains that for program planning, monitoring, and evaluation, it is important to know not only what the program expects to achieve but also how. We must understand the principles on which a program is based, a notion not included in evaluation until recently. Discussions about the whethers, hows, and whys of program success require credible evidence and attention to the paths by which outcomes and impacts are produced” (W.K. Kellog Foundation 2004:10).

The stakeholders “must also make a risk analysis of all identified factors, which could affect the possibilities available to the project to achieve its objectives. An analysis of possible critical external and internal factors/risks gives the stakeholders an opportunity to assess the conditions that the project is working under. After a risk
analysis has been done the stakeholders need to develop a *risk management plan*, i.e. a plan of *how to avoid* the potential risks*"* (Örtengren 2004:17).

After analysing their situation systematically in cooperation with the community change agent a development process should follow. Throughout the PAR process ward committees should continuously reflect critically on the research findings, to reframe and prioritize community problems in collaboration with the change agent and community members and take action based on the endorsed findings. Ward committee members must be assisted to document their findings in their own research report and to articulate their experiences during the process of participatory action research. Other cultural ways of disseminating information to community members such as plays, dances, dramas and ballads should be encouraged.

### 5.5.2 The development phase

The development phase consists of the following steps:

#### 5.5.2.1 Setting of goals and objectives

After completion of the analysis phase, the findings of the diagnosis should be disseminated and discussed at community workshops. An action plan (to address the problems) will be developed by ward committee members and the community in cooperation with the change agent. The action plan must be evaluated periodically and adapted by the ward committee and community members. People should be encouraged to review their progress collectively and to formulate a future course of action based on the positive and negative outcomes of the participatory action research process.

In this step, according to Schurink (2010) “the problem statement is developed further into a goal and objectives aimed at reaching desired results by restating the problems as objectives”. She also states that (Schurink 2010) “during the objectives analysis, the project planning group should set three levels of objectives:
Overall objectives or goals

Project purpose

Results”

“The highest level of objectives is the overall objective, which states the direction the project shall take” (Schurink 2010). This is the long-term vision of the project (Örtengren 2004:12). Reaching the goals of a project requires achieving the set objectives.

A project “purpose is the reason why the project is needed. The purpose/objective describes the expected results of the project that rests on certain assumptions. The project purpose and the results must be specific, measurable, approved by the stakeholders, realistic and time bound” (Örtengren 2004:11-12). “The results or outputs are the direct results of the activities that are implemented within the framework of the project. Outputs are actual, tangible results that are a direct consequence of the project’s activities” (Örtengren 2004:14).

The desired results of the programme should be identified and prioritized. The stated problem, “lack of sufficient clean water”, could for example be re-formulated into a goal as “provision of sufficient clean water”. The objectives will be linked to the causes of the problems namely: “fixing the water system” “providing more service connections” “change the administration of the water service”. The main objective becomes the project goal or purpose and the lower order objectives become the outputs or results of the programme. More specifically the evaluator will be working with stakeholders in deciding what major research questions are useful to address the particular situation. Attention should also be given to external factors (political and ethical considerations) that may influence the programme outcome.

5.5.2.2 Planning of activities

“Activities are the means to achieve the objectives, the means to eliminate the causes of the focal problem” (Örtengren 2004:10). “The activities are therefore focused on the causes/reasons for the focal or core problem(s), the roots of the tree.
The activities are the work that is done by those involved in the project” (Schurink 2010). The success of the project depends on the implementation of activities, if the activities are planned and implemented in a scientific manner, the results will be achieved. This, in turn, will lead to the achievement of the project purpose and, in the long term, will also influence the goal of the project.

When planning for activities provision should also be made for the planning of resources. Resources needed to implement activities include human capacity, expertise, funds, time, and place where activities will be implemented.

At this stage it is vitally important that stakeholders are (through the training received) empowered to give feedback on the goals, objectives and activities developed through the PAR process to community members in their residential area. This is important because one of the main aims of PAR is that the outcomes of reflexive processes should be translated into revised actions.

“Continuous learning (leading to people’s increased ability to solve problems) is one of the key features of participatory research. It is therefore crucial that the research design allows for systematic, regular and critical exchange and reflection upon both the research process and the results (learning and outcomes). A central aspect should be the meaningful participation by the different stakeholders in these activities” (Ashby 2003:21).

5.5.2.3 The development of indicators

“Once a programme has been described priorities can be set and critical measures of performance can be identified” (The Logic Model for Program Planning and Evaluation Internet source). These performance measures are called indicators. An indicator can be identified as a “quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor” (Central Research Department 2006:7). “Developing appropriate and measurable indicators during the planning phase of a programme is the key to a sound evaluation” (Central Research Department 2006:7).
However a critical issue in developing good indicators is not precision in measurement but credibility. Indicators do not provide scientific “proof”. To explain this one can say that the moving leaves of a tree is an indicator that the wind is blowing. The most credible indicators are developed in cooperation with stakeholders (Falcone. Internet source.). Indicators should be specific or “valid, measurable, attainable, relevant and the monitoring must be undertaken within a specific time framework” (Central Research Department 2006:7).

“Is the project achieving its goals? To answer this question, the project group needs to identify indicators, which make it possible to measure the progress of the project at different levels” (Örtengren 2004:15).

Once indicators have been developed means of data collection or means of verification (MOV) such as questionnaires and interview schedules should be established for each indicator. Outcomes, inputs and outputs need to be developed to be able to demonstrate the programme’s progress.

5.5.2.4 The development of a research strategy

The development phase of the research also focuses on generating a research strategy. Evaluators have “a variety of options to choose from: qualitative and quantitative data, naturalistic, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, purposeful and probabilistic sampling, greater and lesser emphasis on generalizations, and alternative ways of dealing with validity and reliability” (Schurink 2010). In particular, “the discussion at this point will include attention to issues of methodological appropriateness, credibility of the data, clarity, accuracy, balance, practicality, propriety and cost” (Central Research Department 2006:7). “The overriding concern, as in all parts of the process, is utility. “ (Patton 2008:2).

5.5.3 The implementation phase

“The implementation phase of a project commences when activities are implemented in the programme. Activities are geared towards achieving the expected
outputs/results. Implementation of the project should be guided by a detailed plan of action or workplan. The workplan should consist of elements such as ‘activities’, ‘resources needed’, ‘training requirements’ and responsible person(s)” (Logical Framework Analysis Internet source).

5.5.4 The evaluation phase

“This phase mainly focuses on formative and summative evaluation. It is vitally important to identify accurate indicators for change at critical times of programme development” (Frectling 2004:5). “Formative evaluation typically focuses on input – and output indicators and summative evaluation on outcome indicators. Formative evaluation therefore provides evidence of progress towards the identified outcomes and summative evaluation shows us whether the desired outcomes have been reached. It is important that both formative and summative evaluation is undertaken” (Frectling 2004:5).

To focus the evaluation even more the logical framework process could be used to formulate clear research questions. A comprehensive list of questions can be developed by analyzing the situation, external factors impacting on the programme, the inputs, outputs and outcomes. “There are two different types of evaluation questions: formative evaluation questions help to improve programmes and summative questions help prove whether a programme reached the intended results” (Schurink 2010). “Both kinds of evaluation questions generate information that determines the extent to which a program has had the success expected and it also provides a foundation for sharing with others the successes and lessons learned from the programme” (University of Arizona Rural Health Office and College of Public Health Internet source).

However it should be noted that the success of the PAR process lies in it's reflexive participative nature. The partnerships among stakeholders “should be continuously strengthened through dialogue, reflexivity, joint actions and the mutual benefits they share” (Schurink 2010). “The partners should be committed to the joint decisions taken and the strategy to implement and evaluate these decisions” (Schurink 2010).
The ward committee’s dependence on the change agent should gradually be phased out. Furthermore, ward committee members should be encouraged to share their skills and experiences with other less privileged communities as soon as they feel they have something to offer. Because participatory action research enhances self-awareness and knowledge, it has great potential for empowering people to develop and execute their own action plans and systematically review and evaluate their own progress and thus for the development of participatory governance on all levels as visualized by the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996).

5.6 Conclusion

Chapter five firstly discussed the concept of participatory action research (PAR). The principles of PAR including the involvement of all stakeholders, equal partnerships, partnership building, self-development, meaningful participation, mobilisation of external group resources, and the mobilisation of internal group resources were also discussed. The chapter also paid attention to the process and phases of PAR in terms of the analysis/preparation phase (stakeholder analysis, the situation analysis), the development phase (setting of goals and objectives, planning of activities, development of indicators, development of a research strategy), the implementation phase and the evaluation phase.

In line with Agenda 21 the Government needs to provide democratic and accountable government and be accountable to citizens. Quite a few studies and reviews have also been undertaken. The problems faced by the South African local government are therefore well known. Up to now various laws and policies as well as support programmes aimed at rectifying the situation have been developed without success. National government has recently (2012) taken serious steps to provide an enabling environment for the effective functioning of local government and more specifically ward committees. Ward committees are seen as the core of a democratic and accountable local government. Provided that they function in an enabling environment and are structured, standardised and legalised (dplg 2009B:5), ward committees could be utilised to mobilise communities to become active partners of
local government and to help council to become truly responsive to the needs of the community members.

Therefore, PAR could play a significant role in facilitating a culture of public service where both local government and citizens take responsibility for the provision of effective and sustainable “services to communities, social and economic development and a safe and healthy environment” (Schurink 2010). PAR could thus be the instrument to reach the dream as set out in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) of a participatory democracy.
CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation aimed to investigate the role of ward committees in the development of participative governance. The transformation and development of local government in promoting participative democracy and effective and efficient service delivery is a high priority on the Local Government agenda. Significant strides have been made in as far as the developmental objectives, transformation and participation of the public are concerned. Through the use of ward committees, local government is able to ensure a representative local democratic structure, where community based participation and decision making is fostered. Consequently, public participation is established to narrow the social disparity between the electorate and the elected institutions, thus it should include all relevant stakeholders.

More importantly, the legislative framework that informs a need for public participation, serves as a theoretical pedestal that establishes ward committees. In achieving development in the local government sphere, legislation such as the Municipal Structures Act of 1998, and the Municipal Systems Act of 2000, has as mandated by Chapter 7 of the Constitution of 1996, the development of the local sphere of government. The White Paper on Local Government of 1998, serves as the terms of reference for the transformation and development of a democratic local government. The following guiding research question encapsulated the central problem of this dissertation: How can participative democratic governance contribute to the development of participation in the ward committees on the local sphere of government?

Taking this into consideration, this last chapter provides for a general summary of the research objectives in terms of a synthesis of the findings of each previous chapter that explicate the most obvious implications and conclusions. The chapter also provides some recommendations in terms of the context of the research
problem. In order for this study to accomplish its purpose, the main study objectives were to:

- Describe the legal and policy framework for participation on the local government level.
- Determine the most important factors that impact on the effectiveness of ward committees.
- Explain the nature, role and functions of ward committees as participatory mechanisms in local governance.
- Explore how participatory action research can be used as a tool to develop participative democracy on the local government level.

6.2 Synthesis, findings and conclusions of the study

The study was divided into five chapters, where descriptions, an explanation and observations were made in an attempt to critically explore the role of participatory action research as a tool to improve participatory local governance in ward committees.

Chapter one introduced the study and provided the background to the rationale and problem statement of the study. This was followed by the guiding research question, the secondary research questions as well as the study objectives that were formulated for the purposes of this dissertation. A concise description was given of terms frequently used in this dissertation in order to avoid misinterpretation. To clarify the methodological approach, the chapter explained the research design and method employed as well as the manner in which data were gathered. This chapter concluded with an overview of the chapters contained in the dissertation.

Chapter two provided information about the legal and policy framework by way of an overview of the different pieces of legislation on public participation in municipal decision making and explained how they relate to one another. Attention was also paid to how these legislations should be implemented and interpreted to promote the successful functioning of ward committees. The legislative framework on ward

In essence, “Government visualizes a process where communities will be involved in governance matters, including planning, implementation and performance monitoring and review. Communities would be empowered to identify their needs, set performance indicators and targets and thereby hold municipalities accountable for their performance in service delivery” (Esau 2006:12).

The setting for a democratic local government should to some extent ensure that a municipality will deliver what it promised. However this is not always the case since mechanisms such as ward committees are often under-utilised or not used at all. Therefore the provision of structures, mechanisms and procedures as provided by the Municipal Structures Act (Act No. 117 of 1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa 2000) is no guarantee for good governance and an accountable local government.

For accountability and community participation structures, systems, procedures and mechanisms to be able to enhance public service delivery and economic growth on the local level an enabli ng environment is needed. This environment should empower both public officials and community members, including the illiterate and disabled to exercise their right to participate in the decisions taken by municipalities and to hold public officials accountable. Citizens can only be empowered if local government creates an environment shaped by empowerment, “transparency, trust, access to opportunities for development and accurate and timeous information” (Esau 2007:13).

Chapter three outlined the functioning of ward committees as participatory mechanisms. It also discussed the public participation challenges of ward committees. The chapter paid attention to the lack of interest of the public, the lack of support and assistance of municipalities, and the operational and human resources
challenges in municipalities as further factors that hamper the effectiveness of ward committees.

Other factors impacting on the effective functioning of ward committees that were discussed in this chapter are the representation of ward committees, the limitation of power of ward committees, lack of skills in ward committees, lack of timeous information and resources and legislation and policy formulation problems.

Assessments of municipalities country wide undertaken by COGTA (COGTA 2009:10) showed that the reasons for the malfunctioning of local government are locked up in:

- “the tensions between the political and administrative interface;
- the poor ability of many councillors to deal with the demands of local government;
- the insufficient separation of powers between political parties and municipal councils;
- lack of clear separation between the legislative and executive;
- inadequate accountability measures and support systems and resources for local democracy; and
- poor compliance with the legislative and regulatory frameworks for municipalities” (COGTA 2009:10).

The most common factors impacting negatively on the effectiveness and efficiency of ward committees can be divided into three main categories for example:

- **Governance:** Political infighting, conflict between senior management and councillors and human resource management issues.
- **Financial:** Inadequate revenue collection, ineffective financial systems, fraud, misuse of municipal assets and funds.
- **Service delivery:** Breach of sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) which outline service delivery obligations of municipalities” (COGTA 2009A:15-17).
According to the dplg (2009:4) “local government legislation has consolidated and opened up new spaces for citizens to directly participate in their own governance. To date, ward committees have been established in 99% of the municipalities. In short, all the ingredients are there for effective, responsive and participatory local government” (dplg 2009:4).

While the escalation of structures for service delivery and a high level of commitment to the promotion of a culture of participation on a local government level cannot be denied, the question remains whether and how well these set conditions are met. Meeting the conditions set by laws, principles and policies are as important as an officially endorsed legal structure (dplg and GTZ 2005 A:12). It was found that most municipalities still have to provide a physical enabling environment to the ward committees in their community. This despite the provision of extensive guidelines and policy to follow, where provision is made for an enabling environment by means of sufficient funding, capacity building, opportunities for meaningful participation, impact on decision making and communication structures between councils and ward committees.

The “continued countrywide community protests can be viewed as an expression of dissatisfaction with local governance in the country” (dplg 2009:16).

In Chapter four, an overview of the nature of ward committees as participatory mechanisms was provided. In this chapter the role and functions of ward committees were highlighted. The chapter addressed the advisory functions of ward committees, certain service delivery and governance problems that affect the success of ward committees as participatory mechanisms and provided key drivers for developmental local governance in terms of the role of ward committees.

It was suggested that focus should be on community development, more specifically, social and economic development instead of mere service delivery. This developmental strategy is a prerequisite for constructing an integrated service delivery system which could facilitate the “development of human capacity and self-reliance within a caring and enabling environment”
It is clear that in order to meet this challenge, a new and more inclusive paradigm is needed that provides for assumptions based on both objective observation as well as subjective understanding.

It is through formal participatory processes and structures in local governance that laws and policies are realised. One of the most serious stumbling blocks impacting on the functionality of ward committees is the lack of legitimacy and legal power to perform its functions. Apart from the problem that ward committees have regarding their lack of leadership, legitimacy and legal power, a number of other persistent service delivery and governance challenges affecting the role and functions of ward committees have also been prioritised as areas for government action. The importance of community ownership of the development process and the empowerment of people to make a meaningful contribution to their own development was stressed.

It was stated in Chapter one (see section 1.2) that a participatory action research (PAR) process could bring a new focus on governance reform and social justice and people’s options and the forces that drive or prevent civic action as well as the group and social network capacity to steer change. This paradigm could also help public officials to enhance local government effectiveness and the standard of community development and empowerment.

Chapter five discussed the concept of participatory action research (PAR). The principles of PAR including the involvement of all stakeholders, equal partnerships, partnership building, self-development, meaningful participation, mobilisation of external group resources, and the mobilisation of internal group resources were also discussed. The chapter also paid attention to the process and phases of PAR in terms of the analysis/preparation phase (stakeholder analysis, the situation analysis), the development phase (setting of goals and objectives, planning of activities, development of indicators, development of a research strategy), the implementation phase and the evaluation phase.

In line with Agenda 21 the Government needs to provide democratic and accountable government and be accountable to citizens. Quite a few studies and
reviews have also been undertaken. The problems faced by the South African local
government are therefore well known. Up to now various laws and policies as well as
support programmes aimed at rectifying the situation have been developed without
success. National government has taken serious steps in 2012 to provide an
enabling environment for the effective functioning of local government and more
specifically ward committees. Ward committees are seen as the core of a democratic
and accountable local government. Provided that they function in an enabling
environment and are structured, standardised and legalised (dplg 2009B:5), ward
committees could be utilised to mobilise communities to become active partners of
local government and to help council to become truly responsive to the needs of the
community members.

Hence, regard PAR could play a significant role in facilitating a culture of public
service where both local government and citizens take responsibility for the provision
of effective and sustainable “services to communities, social and economic
development and a safe and healthy environment” (Schurink 2010). PAR could thus
be the instrument to reach the objective as set out in the Constitution (Republic of
South Africa 1996) of a participatory democracy.

6.3 Final recommendations

Legislation does not specify a conceptual framework to serve as a guideline for local
governments that could be implemented to regulate the functioning of ward
committees other than the Municipal Structures Act of 1998. Such a framework could
promote a sense of responsibility and ownership by ward councillors who view their
political mandate as opposed to the concerns of the residents generally.

Protests over service delivery are to a reasonable extent caused inter alia by the
non-involvement of the residents in municipal affairs. It has been established that the
non-involvement of the residents in municipalities has a negative impact on the
development of the democratic nature of the South African government.

It is suggested that the municipality should channel resources towards the
development of PAR to ensure efficient involvement of the residents in municipal
affairs. Depending on the needs of a particular ward, it is important to acknowledge that for the public involvement initiatives to be successful, it is imperative that the agenda setting of public meetings in a particular ward has to be inclusive of all the issues that concern that ward. More importantly, demonstration through protests by the communities to show their dissatisfaction in terms of the elected institutions could be regarded as a negative form of participation. Accordingly, protests as negative participation is to an extent, observed as participation that emanates from the receiving end and this could assist in understanding the concerns of the residents even better, except that it tends to be passive and after the decision has been made.

Critically, the involvement of the public is of great value to decision making in the municipality, and after all, participation promotes the democratic ideals where maximum involvement by the residents promotes democracy in the local sphere of government. “It is important for the municipality to formalise the processes of ward committees, because through a perceived legitimate ward committee, it is inevitable that community members will converse and subsequently participate in their government” (COGTA 2009:10).

It is imperative that the public servants and the municipal officials understand the importance of the legally correct legislative interpretation of their roles. If the key decision makers are provided with training in legal interpretation, they will be able to clearly understand the importance of correct interpretation of legislation and policies. Ward committee members should also be trained to acquire a basic knowledge of democratic principles, municipal governance and local economic development in order to work effectively and efficiently.
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