AN INVESTIGATION OF WARD COMMITTEES AS A MEANS FOR STRUCTURED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: THE CASE OF THE KNYSNA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Administration (MPA) in the Faculty of Arts at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father LUNGILE GLADSTONE NGQEGELE who, together with my mother MANTOMBI MARJORIE NGQEGELE, made me what I am today.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work contained in this treatise (i.e. An investigation of Ward Committees as a means for structured public participation: The case of the Knysna Local Municipality) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to any other University or for another qualification.

SANDILE WISEMAN NGQELE ...........................................

DATE: JANUARY 2010
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- Mr. Johnny Douglas, the Municipal Manager of the Knysna Local Municipality for granting me permission to undertake this study.
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- All Ward Committees, Ward Councillors and Senior Officials of the Knysna Local Municipality who participated in the interviews conducted for this study.
ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of Ward Committees in co-ordinating and facilitating authentic public participation processes at local government levels. This study focused specifically on the Knysna Local Municipality.

Before 1994 the majority of South Africans had never had the vote, and therefore, had not had the opportunity of participating in South Africa’s governance and administration (Hilliard and Kemp, 1999:40). In this governance system, local government was the lowest tier of government in a strict hierarchical structure; and it had no constitutional standing of its own, but derived its powers from the two superior tiers of government, namely national and provincial.

The local government elections of 5 December 2000 in South Africa provided municipalities with a historic opportunity to transform local government to meet the needs of the country for the next century. The local government transformation process (in tandem with the demarcation process that established the new municipal boundaries) introduced more developmental responsibilities to municipalities. In addition, this further implied that local government became an autonomous sphere of government with its own original powers and a broad developmental mandate. This had profound implications for local governance. An important element of the current local government system is the promotion of local democracy and participation in local governance. Public participation is an integral part of local democracy and is a legislative requirement for the local community to be drawn into the
municipal processes through *inter alia:* Integrated Development Planning (IDP), 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 developmental issues, the IDP under a Developmental Local Government (DLG) system now presents a framework through which such a culture can be established. The Ward Committees in particular, play a critical role in linking community needs with municipal planning processes.


These laws and policies are intended to be realised through development initiatives that require formal participatory processes and institutions in local governance. Since 2001 Ward Committees have emerged as a key institutional mechanism intended to contribute towards bringing about people-centred, participatory and democratic local governance. The rationale for Ward Committees is to supplement the roles of the elected Ward Councillors by creating a link between communities and the political and administrative structures of municipalities. These Ward Committees have been established in the majority of wards in municipalities across the country in line with the
requirements of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) which stipulates that:

Only metropolitan and local municipalities of certain types may have Ward Committees.

The main objective of the study was to investigate the overall functioning of Ward Committees within the Knysna Local Municipality and to determine their impact on democratic local governance thus far. The study will carry out an investigation into the effectiveness of Ward Committees: whether they are useful conduits for public participation in local governance; whether they are inherently capable of playing the critical role expected of them; and whether they actually create opportunities for real power-sharing between the Knysna Local Municipality and its communities. The study’s main objective stated above was achieved by breaking it down into realisable objectives, namely:

- A brief background of the Knysna Local Municipality, and in particular, an outline of its institutional arrangements and its Ward Committees in general.

- An evaluation of the theoretical and legislative framework of public participation and the Ward Committee System in local government.

- An analysis of the practical performance of Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality and to provide a research report on the empirical findings.

- Recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of Ward Committees at local government levels in general, and in particular, in the Knysna Local Municipality.
The hypothetical position of this study was that the maximum utilisation of Ward Committees as a means for public participation processes at local government levels, specifically in the Knysna Local Municipality, could improve communication between local municipalities and the public. Furthermore, this would also contribute towards the speedy delivery of services to communities, as Ward Committees could serve as the Local Municipality’s strategic partners in Council’s projects. Ward Committees should therefore be utilised to enhance a constructive interaction between a municipality and its local community.

This position was premised on the fact that authentic and empowering participation can be established at local government levels if Ward Committees act as a foundation for development and Ward Committee Members as development change agents in their respective wards.
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CHAPTER 1
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the effectiveness of Ward Committees in coordinating and facilitating authentic public participation processes at local government levels. Theron (2009a:117) defines authentic public participation as an active process by which the public influences the direction and execution of a programme or project, with a view to enhancing their wellbeing in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or any other values they cherish. This study focuses on the Knysna Local Municipality.

This introductory chapter will provide a motivation for the study to be undertaken. The problem statement, objectives and the hypothesis of the study are also provided. The method of research used will be explained and a section of this chapter will be dedicated to a definition of the key terms. This chapter also clarifies the reasons for the choice of this area of study.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Before 1994 the majority of South Africans had never had the vote; and, therefore, had not had the opportunity of participating in South Africa’s governance and administration (Hilliard and Kemp, 1999:40). Local government was then, the lowest tier of government in a strict hierarchical structure and had no constitutional standing of its own, but derived its powers from the two superior tiers of government, namely national and provincial.

The local government elections of 5 December 2000 in South Africa provided municipalities with a historic opportunity to meet the needs of the communities they served. The transformation process (in tandem with the demarcation process that established the new municipal boundaries) entirely redefined the conceptualisation, planning, budgeting and service delivery of municipalities. In of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,1996 local government became an autonomous sphere of government with its own original powers and a broad developmental mandate. This had profound implications for local governance. Developmental Local Government is defined by section b of the White Paper on Local Government (1998:17) as local government
committed to working with citizens and groups within the community in order to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs, and to improve the quality of their lives. In line with the above definition, Davids (2005:19) states that in the context of South African municipalities, the ideal would be an environment in which citizens have the capacity to claim their space as equal partners in development and governance by making their voice heard, and where local government has the administrative and financial capacity (as well as the political will) to respond to voiced concerns. In a situation where this ideal is realised, voice becomes influence. Thus, for voice to be translated into influence, there has to be action from below and from above (see Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1: Translating “voice” into “influence”**

![Diagram of translating voice into influence]

Davids (2005:19) argues that authentic public participation at the municipal level should result in transformed municipalities and a citizenry with real influence over public policy decisions. The impact of authentic public participation will emerge as local government’s actions (“from above”) in response to the community’s voiced concerns (“from below”) start producing tangible outputs and outcomes (e.g. new policies, poverty alleviation, redress of grievances and improved service delivery).
Theron (2009a: 113) states that year after year South Africans observe how change agents and policy makers struggle to meet the challenge to relate public participation ideals to tangible strategies. Theron (2009a: 113) goes further to say that this results in frustrated and disillusioned beneficiaries going to the streets to protest, and one resolution after the other new resolution to get the people to participate.

It can be argued that the everyday work of the Knysna Local Municipality creates opportunities for public participation. This is evident in various forms; namely public hearings to discuss the budget and the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), comments by various members of the public on policy issues, Stakeholder Organisations and political parties taking part in the IDP Representative Forum, and members of the public attending monthly Council meetings as observers. Each of the above public participation mechanisms has its own characteristic strengths and weaknesses. The main weakness behind all these mechanisms is that they are not binding; and sometimes the communication is not in a structured manner whereby feedback can also be provided to the broader public; and comments and remarks expressed by the public do not necessarily obligate municipalities to act in a specific way. Similarly, Buccus and Hicks (in van Donk, Swilling, Pieterse and Parnell, 2008: 529) argue that there are existing gaps for engaging with policy processes and that civil society needs to be better informed, positioned and active in order to engage with these; hence the study’s argument for the use of Ward Committees to coordinate and facilitate public participation.

The current democratic local government dispensation requires metropolitan and local municipalities of a certain type to establish Ward Committees (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998). Knysna Municipality falls within this category. The purpose of Ward Committees is to assist the Ward Councillor with encouraging participation from citizens and ensuring an ongoing engagement on issues of development within municipal areas. Although Ward Committees have no legal powers to make decisions, they are recognised structures, which can operate within a legislated framework, as stipulated in sections 72 to 74 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998). Ward Committees advise the Ward Councillor in representing the members of the ward. A Ward Committee is made up of not more than ten representatives from interest groups within a specific ward. This is a manageable
number that can contribute towards an authentic and structured public participation process, as opposed to unstructured public participation.

Grossardt (2003:4) defines a structured public participation process as a protocol for organising the integration of professional and non-professional input into complex development problems. Structured public participation is characterised by efficiency, accuracy and transparency (Grossardt, 2003:4). In line with the above discussion, Buccus and Hicks (in van Donk et al., 2008:531) argue that Ward Committees are ideally placed to facilitate community-based planning.

Ward Committee members are intended to facilitate community development, but lack the capacity and real power to fulfil this role. In municipality planning processes Ward Committees should facilitate a dialogue between community members and their municipalities. In Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and budget processes, for instance, Ward Committee members could facilitate community deliberation within their wards on community needs and priorities, and feed this information through to municipality planning and budgeting processes. The same process could be undertaken for IDP reviews, with community reflection and feedback on municipality implementation and performance being gathered at ward level and fed into municipality review processes. Ward Committees could provide feedback to communities on the outcome of their recommendations, and on any final planning decisions.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it will arrive at an empirically proven knowledge about the importance and the impact that Ward Committees can make in ensuring an ongoing relationship between the municipalities and the communities they serve. The findings of the study could be used as guidelines on the roles Ward Committees should play in bridging the growing divide between communities and municipalities, and advance measures that could facilitate greater public participation in municipality planning processes.

1.3 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher has held a position as Manager in Integrated Development Planning, Strategy and Performance Management. This required the organisation and implementation of public participation strategies including the establishment of Ward
Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality. While in this position, the researcher gained an understanding of the importance of public participation in municipal planning processes and was able to identify the weaknesses within the public participation methodologies of Knysna Local Municipality. Subsequently, the researcher developed a keen interest in ensuring an authentic public participation process in municipal affairs and also in public participation as an important field of study. The interest in this study was further developed by a growing uncertainty and confusion among Councillors and Senior Officials of Knysna Local Municipality about both the role and the importance of Ward Committees in municipal governance.

This study has an academic value, in that since the inception of the democratic local government, with the exception of the recent studies by Buccus and Hicks (2008), Nyalunga (2006), Putu (2006), and Smith (2008), there has not been much documented research that focuses on Ward Committees as a means for public participation. Many authors in this field of study have so far merely emphasised the importance of capacity building for Ward Committees to participate effectively in municipal affairs, but they have paid little attention to the actual role that Ward Committees should play in enhancing public participation in local government.

The above background further crystallised the importance of undertaking a study in the area of Ward Committees as a means for authentic public participation. This, it is hoped, will further clarify the role that Ward Committees should play in local government.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

According to Mouton (2001: 48), the statement of the research problem should be a clear and unambiguous statement on the object of the study (the unit of analysis) and the research objectives.

In South African local government, the commitment to public participation is reflected in a host of laws and policy documents (namely the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998), the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). This is intended to be realised through new modalities of development that require formal participatory processes and institutions in local governance.
Since 2001 Ward Committees were introduced to be key institutional mechanisms intended to contribute towards bringing about people-centred, participatory and democratic local governance. The rationale for Ward Committees is to supplement the role of elected Ward Councillors by creating a link between communities and the political and administrative structures of municipalities. These Ward Committees have been established in the majority of wards in municipalities across the country, in line with the requirements of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998). The ongoing service delivery protests across the country suggest that public participation continues to be a challenge in all municipalities in South Africa. The study intends to explore the extent to which Ward Committees serve as a means for structured public participation. The study will be conducted in the Knysna Local Municipality.

The above problem will addressed by investigating the overall functioning of Ward Committees within the Knysna Local Municipality and to determine the kind of impact they might be having on democratic local governance thus far. The study will investigate the effectiveness of Ward Committees: whether they are useful conduits for public participation in local governance; whether they are inherently capable of playing the critical role expected of them; and whether they can create opportunities for a dialogue between the Knysna Local Municipality and its communities. The study’s main objective stated above will be achieved by breaking it down into realisable objectives, namely:

- To provide a brief background to the Knysna Local Municipality, in particular an outline of its institutional arrangements and its Ward Committees in general.
- To evaluate the theoretical and legislative framework of public participation and the Ward Committee System in local government.
- To analyse the practical performance of Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality and to provide a research report on the empirical findings.
- To submit recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of Ward Committees at local government in general - and in particular in the Knysna Local Municipality.
1.5 HYPOTHESIS

Fox and Meyer (1995:59) refer to a hypothesis as a statement on the relationship between two variables, which needs to be subjected to empirical testing. It expresses a generalisation, which has not been conclusively proven or provided.

The hypothetical position of this study is that the maximum utilisation of Ward Committees as a means for public participation processes at local government level, specifically in the Knysna Local Municipality, could improve communication between local municipalities and the public. Furthermore, this would also contribute towards the speedy delivery of services to communities, since Ward Committees could serve as the Local Municipality’s strategic partners in Council’s projects.

Ward Committees should therefore be utilised to enhance a constructive interaction between a municipality and its local community. This position is premised on the fact that authentic and empowering participation can be established at local government levels only if Ward Committees act as a foundation for further development, and Ward Committee Members are prepared to act as development change agents in their respective wards.

The study will test the above hypothesis by investigating Ward Committees as a means for a structured public participation process within a municipal environment, with specific reference to the Knysna Local Municipality.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the premise that the use of Ward Committees as a means for public participation processes at local sphere of government, specifically in the Knysna Local Municipality, could bring about improved communication between the municipalities and the public. Furthermore, this would also contribute towards the speedy delivery of services to these communities.

The study focuses on a single case: the Ward Committees of the Knysna Local Municipality. This approach will enable the researcher to do an in-depth analysis of the Ward Committee processes, as a means of achieving authentic and structured public participation within the Knysna Local Municipality. This study draws on people’s
experiences (Ward Committee members, Ward Councillors and key Local Municipal Officials, i.e. the Director of Corporate Services, the Public Participation Manager and the Speaker of the Local Council), perceptions and interpretations on the performance of Ward Committees, and any possible factors that may have impeded the actualisation of authentic public participation through the use of Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality. The research includes a focus on a detailed account of one case (http://www.utexas.edu/academic/iar/glossary.php).

Approximately ninety (90) participants within the Knysna Local Municipality will be interviewed (see Annexure B: Questionnaire). Interviewees will be interviewed in the language of their own choice as regards the three main official languages used in the Knysna Local Municipal area (namely: Afrikaans, English and Xhosa). Secondly, relevant documents, including Knysna Local Municipality’s IDP and approved budgets from 2004 until 2009, will be analysed to provide a picture on how the Local Municipality promotes public participation. It will focus on the Ward Committees in particular. Thirdly, books, periodical articles, newspaper articles, journals and relevant legislation published from 1998 to date, will also be examined as part of the document analysis. The researcher has stayed in Knysna for sixteen years and has also worked as a Municipal Official in the study area. This, therefore, puts him in a good position to supplement the above-mentioned instruments with personal interviews, conversations and to draw upon personal observations. According to Theron (in Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2009a:165), participatory observation uses variations of conversation and observation. The study methodology will be mainly qualitative, rather than quantitative in nature.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Remenyi (1998: 110), there are three major ethical considerations to note when undertaking research. These are how the “information is collected”; how the “information is processed”; and lastly, “how the findings are used”. The researcher declares that this study will uphold all three major ethical considerations at all times during, and prior to, the interviews. The researcher will declare upfront the motivation for undertaking the research and will seek to show how the results could best be used.

Remenyi (1998: 114) also states that confidentiality should be upheld at all times, in order to avoid potentially “unsatisfactory practices, which could endanger the participants”. To
uphold these ethical considerations, the identity of all the respondents will be kept anonymous. Similarly, as mentioned under the research design and methodology section, the participatory observation methodology will also be used in this study. The researcher accepts that his position, as both the researcher and as an ‘insider’ in local government, could be problematic; therefore confidentiality should be upheld as far as possible. Furthermore, the researcher declares that written permission was obtained from the Municipal Manager of the Knysna Local Municipality (see Annexure: A) to conduct the research. All work and information gathered that is not the researcher’s own will be acknowledged. Participation in this study will be voluntary and written consent on this matter will, at all times, be sought. The researcher will undertake this investigation honestly and undertakes to seek the interviewees’ permission prior to recording: if this is considered as an option during interviews. All interviews conducted will strictly conform to the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) Ethical Standards of Research Protocol.

1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the effectiveness of Ward Committees in coordinating and facilitating authentic public participation processes at local sphere of government in general, and in particular as regards the Knysna Local Municipality in the Western Cape Province.

This study covers a period of approximately five years – from 2004 until 2009. This period could be divided into two phases: namely the initial phase (the first Ward Committees) and the current phase (the existing Ward Committees).

1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Clapper (1993:12) states that due to the problem of definitions, i.e. the explanation of different phenomena at different time periods, environments, and by different commentators, it is always necessary to clearly define specific key analytical terms in any scientific document that may lead to any terminological ambiguity.

In this study, the following terms are applied with a short definition of each.
1.9.1 Public participation

According to Kumar (in Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2009:115), the meaning of public participation differs, depending on the context in which it applies. As argued, under the background and rationale to the study section, this contributes to the confusion in which the public participation debate is steeped: in South Africa as everywhere else. For the purpose of this study, the definition of public participation calls for the interpretation given by De Beer (in Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2009:119). This is described as a strong interpretation of participation, which equates participation with empowerment.

Public participation as empowerment entails self-mobilisation and public control of the development process. Similarly, Clapper (1993:14) defines public participation as the efforts of all people included in a “public” to influence government activities, whether they enjoy the rights and obligations of citizenship or not. Public participation also refers to the formal participation of groups in government institutions. In the context of this study on public participation, the researcher advocates the maximum empowerment of Ward Committees in order that they should be able to perform their roles and responsibilities to the best possible advantage of the communities they serve.

1.9.2 Local Government

In terms of section 151(1) - (4) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- the local sphere of government consists of municipalities, which must be established for the whole of the territory of the Republic.
- The executive and legislative authority of a municipality is vested in its Municipal Council.
- A municipality has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the Constitution.
- The national or a provincial government may not compromise or impede a municipality’s ability or right to exercise its powers or perform its functions.
1.9.3 Local Municipality

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) defines a Local Municipality as a municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with the district municipality within whose area it falls. This is further described in section 155(1) of the Constitution as a Category B municipality.

1.9.4 Local Governance

Local Governance is governing at the local level, viewed broadly to include not only the machinery of government, but also the community at-large and its interaction with local authorities (Centre for Democracy and Governance, 2000:7). In the study the term local government is used to refer to the structures of the local sphere of government and local governance to the performance of the structures of the local sphere of government.

1.10 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This study is divided into chapters, which form a logical and sequential whole, namely:

- **Chapter One** contains a general introduction to the entire study. This includes the problem statement, the motivation for the study to be undertaken, the objectives of the study, the research method that will be used and a definition of the terms used. The overall objective is to investigate Ward Committees as a means for a structured public participation process within a municipal environment, with specific reference to the Knysna Local Municipality.

- **Chapter Two** deals with the evaluation and investigation of the available literature on public participation and Ward Committees within local government. This chapter is intended to further motivate the choice of this study within this area.

- **Chapter Three** focuses on the analysis of the legal and policy framework for public participation and Ward Committees in municipalities.
• **Chapter Four** focuses mainly on the analysis of the practical performance of Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality and provides a research report on the empirical findings.

• **Chapter Five** provides recommendations and conclusions for the Knysna Local Municipality to consider.
CHAPTER 2

THE BACKGROUND OF THE KNYSNA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief background of the Knysna Local Municipality. This chapter is aimed at outlining the institutional arrangements and the Ward Committees in general, within the Knysna Local Municipality.

2.2 THE KNYSNA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY PROFILE

Knysna is a tourist destination in the Western Cape Province located on the Garden Route, 60 km from George to the West and 37 km from Plettenberg Bay to the East (Knysna Local Municipality, 2008:15). The Knysna Local Municipality was established subsequent to the Local Government Elections of 2000 and in accordance with the provisions of section 12(1) of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998).

Since then, the Knysna Local Municipality has been extended to incorporate the former Councils of Brenton on Sea, Belvidere, Sedgefield, Karatara, Rheneendal, Noetzie, Buffalo Bay and Knysna (The Knysna Local Municipality’s 2008-2009 IDP). The Knysna Local Municipality consists of eight wards and is classified as a Category B municipality. In terms of section 9 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) the following are the types of Category B municipalities:

- a municipality with a collective executive system;

- a municipality with a collective executive system combined with a ward participatory system;

- a municipality with a mayoral executive system;

- a municipality with a mayoral executive system combined with a ward participatory system;
• a municipality with a plenary executive system; and

• a municipality with a plenary executive system combined with a ward participatory system.

The Knysna Local Municipality consists of diverse racial and socio-economic communities. There is a stark disparity between the wealthy and the fast-growing poor population. According to the latest study undertaken by the Western Cape Treasury (Socio-Economic Profile: Eden District, 2006), the total population of Knysna is 55 817. One of the key challenges that Knysna Local Municipality faces is to fulfil its developmental role and address the disparity in access to basic municipal services; to be a catalyst for local economic development and job creation; and, in addition, to provide homes for the homeless.

To address this daunting challenge in a financially sustainable and viable way, the Knysna Local Municipality launched its ‘Knysna 2020 Vision’. This takes a longer view of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). In this Vision, the Knysna Local Municipality views the communities as important partners in all its planning, implementation and monitoring processes. This, therefore, means that in order for the objectives of this plan to be realised, proper mechanisms for public participation need to be in place.

This Vision takes a holistic view of planning, which then presents a challenge to the Local Municipality to establish meaningful mechanisms for public participation. The Knysna Local Municipality’s area of jurisdiction is reflected in shown below (see Figure 2.1).
Figure 2.1: The Knysna Local Municipality’s area of jurisdiction

Source: Knysna Local Municipality Town Planning Department’s Geographical Information System (GIS) (Accessed on 1 September 2009)
2.2.1 Institutional arrangements

The political leadership and the administration complement each other in ensuring that they respond to the broad developmental mandate of the Council, as outlined by the communities through the IDP processes.

2.2.1.1 Administration

The Knysna Local Municipality has undergone a process of reviewing its organogram, whereby the Local Municipality conducted a critical analysis of its performance in the past decade within a broader institutional framework, and then set targets. The overall objective was to ensure that an effective and efficient administration is established, one which is informed by the strategies and programmes set out in the IDP.

In the Knysna Local Municipality the Public Participation Unit is located within the Directorate of Corporate Services and is currently understaffed, as it only has two officials. These are the Manager of Public Participation and the Co-ordinator of Public Participation. For them alone to offer administrative support to the Ward Committees of all eight wards is not to be expected. The recently approved Macro-Organisational structure of the Knysna Local Municipality (see Figure 2.2) illustrates where the public participation function is currently located within the institutional framework (The Knysna Local Municipality’s 2008-2009 IDP).
Source: Knysna Local Municipality’s Human Resource (HR) Department’s HR Information System
(Accessed on 1 September 2009)
2.2.1.2 Council

The Knysna Local Municipal Council consists of 16 Councillors, 8 Proportional Representation members and 8 Ward Councillors. The party-political and demographic representation is reflected in Table 2.1 below (The Knysna Local Municipality’s 2008-2009 IDP).

**Table 2.1: The Knysna Local Municipality’s Party-political and Demographic representation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Number of Councillors</th>
<th>Gender Distribution</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African National Congress (ANC)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Alliance (DA)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Democrats (ID)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National People’s Party (NPP)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.2.1.3 Council Structure and Committees

The Knysna Local Municipal Council has adopted an Executive Mayoral System; and this is led by the Executive Mayor, the Executive Deputy Mayor, the Speaker of the Council and two members of the Mayoral Committee (who together with the Executive Deputy Mayor chair the Portfolio Committees) to ensure the smooth running of all Council business (The Knysna Local Municipality’s 2008-2009 IDP).

The following are the Portfolio Committees, namely:

- Finance, Economic Development and Governance;
- Infrastructural Development and Integrated Human Settlements; and
2.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WARD COMMITTEES IN THE KNYSNA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

The Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality can be divided into two phases. Firstly, the initial phase and secondly, the current phase.

2.3.1 The First Ward Committees: The Initial Phase

In 2004 the Knysna Local Municipal Council resolved to establish Ward Committees in all its eight wards; and at the same time it adopted a Ward Committee Constitution to guide:

- the process to establish Ward Committees;
- term of office;
- powers and functions;
- meetings;
- remuneration and code of conduct for Ward Committee Members (Knysna Local Municipality Ward Committee Status Quo Report, 2005).

To facilitate the process of establishing Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality, Fair-Share Consultants from the School of Government of the University of the Western Cape were contracted. During October and November 2004, a series of twelve public meetings were held in the respective wards. The original plan of action was to conduct public meetings in each ward and afford the members of the public who attend these meetings the opportunity to identify the interest groups active in their specific ward and to elect Ward Committee members at the meetings. This did not materialise, as the public meetings were poorly attended. The interest groups active in each ward were identified. On 16 November 2004 the Consultants reported back to the Knysna Local Municipal Council; and it was clear that the original objective was not achievable. The
Knysna Local Municipal Council then decided that the process should be altered by identifying the organisations of which each interest group consisted. Meetings were to be held with these organisations with the objective that they nominate a candidate to represent their interest group in the Ward Committee concerned. It became apparent that even the effort to expedite the establishment of Ward Committees was hamstrung by the apathy of, not only the community, but also of the organisations which were the main role players. It was also found that the organisations were not organised into groups (Knysna Local Municipality Ward Committee Status Quo Report, 2005).

The Knysna Local Municipal Council at its meeting held on March 2005 resolved *inter alia* to amend the Ward Committee Constitution to the extent that if members of Ward Committees were not nominated at a public meeting held for that purpose in a ward, and no nominations were forthcoming from organisations and/or interest groups afterwards, a procedure should be placed in position, whereby the Ward Councillor nominates members for the Ward Committee in his or her ward, and the committee members be appointed by the Speaker of the Council(Knysna Local Municipality Ward Committee Status Quo Report, 2005).

The above approach proved to be unacceptable to the broader community of Knysna. A group of Knysna African National Congress (ANC) members disagreed with the actions of several Municipal Councillors who had personally appointed Ward Committee members in their communities without holding public meetings (http://www.theherald.co.za). The residents felt that they were bypassed in the selection of Ward Committee members and that the process was undemocratic. The residents even said that Ward Committee members would not be able to work with the communities. Ward Committees established in this phase served until the 2006 Local Government Elections and no meetings were convened except for the induction and training workshops.

### 2.3.2 The Second Ward Committees: The Current Phase

After the election of the new Council in March 2006, Knysna Local Municipal Council resolved to go ahead with the establishment of Ward Committees. This entailed a review of the Ward Committee Constitution, in particular the process of establishing Ward Committees. This was an attempt to introduce an inclusive process to the communities of...
Knysna. Consultants by the name of Ingelozi Management Solutions were contracted to facilitate this process. This process was very comprehensive, since it also included empowerment and capacity-building processes for both Councillors and interest groups in the Ward Committee System (The Knysna Local Municipality Ward Committee Status Quo Report, 2008).

In this phase, the process of establishing Ward Committees was not left in the hands of the Consultants. Ward Councillors, in particular the Speaker of the Council, took the ownership and leadership of the whole process. The community of Knysna felt part of the process, because the Ward Councillors had an opportunity to introduce and explain the process to their wards. The process had its ups and downs, as the interest groups wanted to politicise the nominations, but the Speaker of the Council effectively addressed these challenges. After the nominations had been concluded, the Speaker of the Council advertised the elected names for objections and comments. Objections and comments were received and considered by the Speaker of the Council, who also advertised the final list of Ward Committees.

The full term of office for the current Ward Committees is five years, which coincides with the term of office of the elected Municipal Council, but there are also procedures for dealing with vacancies and the removal from the Ward Committee contained in the Ward Committee Constitution. This process was followed by various inauguration meetings and subsequent training. This was conducted by the Institute of Sustainable Governance and Development (ISGAD) of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU).

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a brief background of the Knysna Local Municipality, in particular an outline of its institutional arrangements and the Ward Committees. In particular, this chapter has provided a brief synopsis of the Knysna Local Municipality. This included a municipal profile and a brief discussion of the processes that led to the election of the current Ward Committees. An analysis of questionnaire aimed at investigating the overall functioning of Ward Committees within the Knysna Local Municipality will be dealt with in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE WARD COMMITTEES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

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 (IDP), 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 programme, the IDP under a Developmental Local Government (DLG) 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.

This chapter will firstly discuss participatory governance within the context of DLG. Secondly, it conceptualises the Ward Committee System, namely its origins and how it has become a matter of policy discourse in South Africa. In addition, this chapter will discuss the relevant literature and legislation on public participation and Ward Committees. This will then lead to an explanation and discussion on how the current study will move beyond the previous works in the specific area of study.

3.1.1 A definition of Ward Committees

Ward Committees are the advisory structures of a Municipal Council that are established in terms of section 73 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (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. Ward Committees may make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward –

- To the Ward Councillor, or
• Through the Ward Councillor, to the metro or local council, the Executive Committee, the Executive Mayor or the relevant metropolitan sub-council.

Davids (2005:78) defines a Ward Committee as follows:

• A committee of the council, which is required to be transparent and accountable to the community as a whole.
• A community-based structure inclusive of all organisations, sectors and independent individuals in the community.
• A facilitating forum representing community interests and communicating these to the council.
• A voluntary structure where ideas and issues related to local governance and information are shared.
• A link between the community and the council.

Ward Committees are set up to increase the participation of residents in a ward in all democratic decision-making processes. Section 72 (1) of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) states that only metropolitan and local municipalities of certain types may have committees. In addition, section 72 (3) of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) outlines the object of a ward committee as being to enhance participatory democracy in local government. The main role of the Ward Committee is to make sure that voters participate in decisions that affect their respective wards. In line with the above, section d (2.3.2) of the White Paper on Local Government (1998:62) stipulates that the promotion of local democracy should be seen as a central role for any municipal government. It is extremely important to understand that any decision made in a Ward Committee meeting is not binding on the Ward Councillor and has no legal powers in terms of council decisions. The political power in a local area rests with the formal council meeting and binding decisions can only be made there. A Ward Committee has no power to force council to do anything and can only make recommendations to Council (Education and Training Unit for the African National Congress, 2002:10).
3.2 THE NEED FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The rationale for public participation advocates participation in formulating development plans at the formative stage of municipal plans such as the IDP, rather than after officials have become committed to particular choices. According to Brynard (in Bekker, 2004: 44-45), specific objectives for community participation must be outlined, thereby encouraging participants to:

- Provide information to communities;
- Obtain information from and about the community;
- Improve public decisions, programmes, projects and services;
- Supplement public agency work;
- Alter political power patterns and resources allocation;
- Protect individual and minority group rights and interests; and
- Delay or avoid complicating difficult public decisions.

Public participation takes a variety of forms. People may participate in development activities by providing information about the community, taking part in identifying needs, problems, priorities, taking part in decision-making on developmental goals, policies and strategies, or assuming responsibility and accountability for development actions (Kellerman in Kotze, 1997:52). Public participation usually comprises one of three types of opportunities. Firstly, there is structured participation, which means the formal establishment of one or more citizen bodies with defined prerogatives and responsibilities, such as advisory committees and community forums. The members may be chosen by the municipalities themselves, or by some other stipulated process. Secondly, open opportunities exist, which are those set out by the municipality and in which any person or group may take part – though these are limited by time, place and procedure, and are usually focused on one or just a few issues. These include enquiries and hearings, and exhibitions with a chance to comment. Thirdly, there are the informal means that centre on the accessibility of local officials to citizen-initiated comments and advocacy (Brynard in Bekker, 2004:45). Structured participatory bodies can be effective only when they attain legitimacy and the means by which to function. Brynard (in Bekker, 2004:46) reasons that an accumulation of expertise is possible if these structured participatory bodies are not merely admitted to occasional participation, but additionally enjoy ongoing participation in a wide range of municipal programmes. According to Monyemangene (in Putu,
protagonists of public participation provide several key reasons for its necessity. Firstly, it is argued that it provides an opportunity to influence the decision-making process; secondly, based on popular sovereignty, it ensures that the government is sensitive to the needs of the people; and, thirdly, it counteracts the sense of powerlessness in the poor.

Gaventa and Valderama (in Putu, 2006:11) hold the view that public participation in local government is crucial in multi-dimensional and integrated development plans. 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 the development of their own lives. In addition, Swanepoel (in Putu, 2006:12) argues, that community participation can be a learning process, only if the people really participate. Participation does not mean that people should be brought into a project when physical labour is required. By that stage, people should already have been involved for a long time. There is no other stage for people to begin to participate than right at the start of the project. People should not only do so, but their right and ability to think, seek, discuss and make decisions should also be acknowledged. Similarly, Caesar and Theron (in Theron, 2008b: 114) write that a concerted effort to make the ideal of participatory development a reality only began in the late 1990s. The constitutional, legal and policy frameworks were intended to specifically create spaces for ordinary people to participate in the processes of governance and development policy-making.

Despite the agreement among politicians, practitioners and academics on the importance of public participation in relation to good local governance and sustainable local development, implementing public participation in South Africa’s unique circumstances has proved to be a serious challenge. The idea of participatory developmental decision-making is by no means the subject of consensus. In the view of some, it is a blessing for the millions at the grassroots level who, for reasons that are well-known, were denied exposure to and experience in the practices that characterise a culture of public participation (Cooke and Kothari, 2001).

The impetus for forging democracy from below is faced by a myriad of challenges. It can be argued that the struggle for forging democracy from below requires conscientised, multi-skilled and empowered Municipal Officials and communities, if local government is to be transformed proactively and to effectively serve the diverse needs and challenges in
partnerships with the people. It is evident that Municipal Officials still feel comfortable performing functions the ways they used to do before the democratic dispensation. Such mindsets inhibit constructive dialogue with the communities they are supposed to serve. Public participation is one of the cornerstones for ensuring effective and accountable governance (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Ward Committees are an important practical approach for municipalities, such as the Knysna Local Municipality, when establishing structures that will allow for meaningful participation.

3.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

According to Craythorne (1996:55), public participation in local government entails *inter alia* salient elements, such as:

- A basis of elected representation;
- Caring and working for the prosperity and development of all citizens;
- A universal right of appeal against administrative and governmental or political decisions and actions;
- The acceptance that the welfare of the public ought to enjoy precedence over the interests of any special group;
- Acknowledging that the right to criticise presupposes that any criticism will be informed and objective.

The above elements presume that for democratic local government to exist, the public must govern, or at least actively participate in governance issues. In line with the above argument, the inclusion of ward committees in the South African local government legislation (such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (No: 32 of 2000) is meant to provide an opportunity for communities to participate in local government affairs in a structured and institutionalised way. Linked to the hypothesis highlighted in the introductory chapter, the existence and use of ward committees should bring about structured public participation in local government. In addition, the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:11) explains that a structured public participation includes the need *inter alia*:

- for the process of participation to be meaningful and to be seen as meaningful;
for both parties – the municipality and the public – to listen to each other;
to make it clear at the outset who makes the final decision. For example, if the views of the community are different from those of the Council, whose views will prevail?
for resources to support the process – in all examples of good practice, public participation must be funded;
to ensure that information relevant to the participative process is conveyed in a manner that is relevant and understandable to the communities participating. This may require the use of different languages;
to provide feedback on the participation process and the final decision that emerges;
to include officially elected councillors in the participatory process;
to ensure that policies exist that guide municipal staff in the manner and the reasons for their participation;
to recognise that meetings are only one form of participation and unless properly managed, bias input could be in favour of those that are vocal and/or more articulate.

In line with the above, it can be argued that South African Ward Committees could meet all of the above conditions should it be implemented in accordance with the applicable guidelines.

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

- They must help to address the concerns of all interested and affected parties;
- They must encourage citizen-focused service delivery;
- They must bring citizens closer to the designing and shaping of local public service;
- They must develop a clear sense of direction for communities;
- They must facilitate the utilisation of a whole range of resources in the community;
- They must identify alternatives to be considered when addressing issues;
- They must improve municipal credibility with the public;
- They must reduce levels of misconception or misinformation about a project;
- They must create a better understanding of any project and its objectives.
The above section has broadly discussed public participation in the local sphere of government. It will now be necessary to discuss the nature of public participation in the local sphere of government.

3.4 THE NATURE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Implementing public participation in the local sphere of government is not an easy exercise, as the form which participation takes is influenced by the overall circumstances and the unique social context in which any particular action is being undertaken. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (2001:9-10) highlighted some of the realities to be considered when undertaking public participation, namely:

- Public participation is a costly exercise and a time-consuming process. It may necessitate the commitment of a wide range of an organisation’s staff members over a long period of time;
- Due to the unpredictability of human behaviour, problems may develop at any time, despite proper planning and good intentions;
- Stakeholders may raise old, unresolved issues that have necessarily been extended to the current initiative;
- Stakeholders may use public participation as a platform to further their own agendas;
- It is likely that issues of a different focus will be raised and this could result in conflict. The way in which this conflict is managed will determine its effect on the public participation process. The conflict may be turned into a positive energy that aims at resolving issues, both those related to, and some beyond, the focus of the initiative;
- The outcome of a public participation process cannot be predetermined, because people are unpredictable. The process must be flexible in order to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. It is not always possible to satisfy everyone and this could result in some people not approving of the initiative.
- Public participation can lead to the realisation that the initiative is not feasible in practice.

In undertaking public participation, municipalities - in particular the Knysna Municipality - must always consider the above realities, in order to understand the challenges that are
sometimes associated with public participation. Consequently, they should not regard public participation as an obstacle to development, but rather as a means of achieving local development. Participatory democracy represents frameworks for direct democracy; where procedures for political participation are used to provide real possibilities for the enrichment of local political and administrative life, as well as for improvements in the responsiveness of public services to the needs of citizens. Ife and Tesoriero (in Mbambo and Tshisonga, 2008: 769) argue that in participatory democracy, people participate directly in making decisions. Municipal officials and Councillors often consider consultation and involvement to be the appropriate levels of engagement for IDPs. Drawing from the researcher’s practical experience, municipal officials experience an internal conflict between the desirability of consultation and involvement, and their desire to control the development policy-making process.

The public continue to feel excluded from the exercise of real political power; and this renders future participatory development interventions problematic. This argument fits well with Midgley’s anti-participatory and manipulative modes (in Mbambo and Tshisonga, 2008: 769). From the anti-participatory model the state is labelled as disinterested in the poor; and therefore unable to provide strong support for public participation. The focus is more on the elite and the accumulation of power. While in the manipulative model, the state supports public participation, but it has its own agenda, whereby the few selected are co-opted into pursuing the State agenda. Similarly, Arnstein (1971:3) has provided the ladder of citizen participation illustrated below (see Figure 3.1) as a measure that impacts on public participation in democratising development and democratic processes.
From the ladder, it is evident that those who pay lip service to the notion of public participation subjugate communities in consulting, informing, as well as in therapeutic and manipulative modes of public participation. This erodes any idea of public participation and critical engagement and further uses people to ‘rubber stamp’ any decisions that have already been made. As Mbambo and Tshisong (2008:773) argue, for democracy from below to benefit the poor South African majority, structures such as Ward Committees should be accompanied by linking public participation activities to actual development initiatives. Despite public participation being institutionalised through legislation (the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Local Government Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998), Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), this remains one of the challenges to South African local government.

Theron (2009a:131) reveals that the success or failure of public participation sometimes depends on the challenges which emerge from philosophical, theoretical, strategic, managerial and policy issues which require closer attention by Municipal Officials and Councillors. These challenges may be summarised as follows:

- Clarifying, however irrelevant it may sound, the definition of what a ‘community’ is or means;
- Clarifying the confusion surrounding the concept of public participation;
• Identifying the so-called ‘authentic’ public stakeholders, clients, concerned individuals, interested and affected parties, beneficiaries, role-players, lead authorities and proponents in the public participation debate and process;

• Deciding at which levels (national, provincial or local government) public participation engagement and intervention will be consolidated (whose responsibility is it?);

• Identifying the role of the IDP Office and Officer as change agents in relation to public participation; pinpointing who is ‘in-charge’ of public participation;

• Compiling, at local government level, an interdisciplinary public participation team (possibly located in the IDP Office) of local government change agents and stakeholders in the community who possess indigenous knowledge and people skills to collaboratively plan for public participation;

• Re-orienting the public, after more than 40 years of apartheid social engineering, on how to function within a top-down, system, maintaining a rigid culture of non-participation, to provide the opportunity to engineer their own destiny by making decisions which will affect their lives and empower them; and

• Re-training and re-orienting local government officials to become change agents, in a manner that assists them to shift from a top-down to a bottom-up planning approach (Theron, 2009a:131).

3.5 PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT

According to Deacon and Piper (2006:3), participatory governance refers to a set of structural and procedural requirements needed to realise what the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) terms as Community Participation in the operation (the legislative provisions for Ward Committees will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter). Thus, public participation is legislated; while participatory governance is the mechanism through which this is to be realised. According to the Department of Provincial and Local Government’s publication on Ward Committees (2004:3), this emphasis on public participation reflects a global trend: Throughout the world, municipalities have come to appreciate that the relation between government and those who are governed is as important as government itself. This is what is meant when people speak of the shift from government to governance. Governance is a way of governing. It takes the views and interests of those affected by government more seriously.
than has been done in the past. Relationships, partnerships and alliances have therefore become much more important for local government than they were in the past.

Drawing from the definition of Developmental Local Government (DLG), as discussed earlier in this study, three substantive aspects to the innovation of ‘participatory governance’ may be identified: the redefinition of the municipality, the requirements of public participation and the importance of Ward Committees. In essence, this means that the inclusion of local community, Municipal Councillors and Municipal Officials in the legal definition of a municipality are of vital importance. Most important are the imperatives to public participation around *inter alia* the annual budget, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the review process, the Performance Management System (PMS), and any relevant bye-laws.

In line with the discussion on authentic and empowering public participation in the introductory chapter, municipalities such as the Knysna Municipality should allow for maximum participation of Ward Committees (who will in turn report to the entire public) in the actual conceptualisation of their strategic planning processes. On the contrary, municipalities ‘consult’ on predetermined programmes and processes which constitute authentic and empowering public participation. This then, quite naturally, makes communities feel excluded and manipulated for legislative compliance by the municipality.

In line with the above view, Caesar, Davids and Theron (2008b:120-121) show that, with exceptions, the IDP implementers do not allow project beneficiaries to be empowered. Oakley(2009:124) identifies two basic views of empowerment. The first of these views empowerment as the development of skills and abilities which enable people to manage and/or negotiate better with the development delivery system. The second of these views empowerment as a process that equips people to decide on and take action regarding their developmental process.

3.6 AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PARTICIPATION [IAP2])

According to Caesar and Theron (2008b:117), the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has contributed to the practice of public participation by offering
seven core values that practitioners and others should expect of processes that are intended to make the public more effective partners in official policy-making. From these values a range of five forms or degrees of public participation have been proposed, while scores of strategies have been identified and considered.

In South Africa local governments are keen to promote consultation in connection with developmental planning. Davids (2005:13) argues that consultation should only be regarded as a limited form of public participation that may invite referendum-like approval of a plan or decision, or may structure dialogue in a limited way. For many ordinary South Africans consultation denotes a pseudo-process in which people are asked to give input, but the municipal officials ultimately define both the problem and its solution. Hence, consultation does not imply that the intended beneficiaries in the community will share in any decision-making, even to the modest extent of being provided with feedback on how public input has influenced the decision. As indicated above, Table 3.1 below presents an illustration of the IAP2 public participation spectrum.
Table 3.1: The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORM</th>
<th>CONSULT</th>
<th>INVOLVE</th>
<th>COLLABORATE</th>
<th>EMPOWER</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Participation Goal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision-making process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution</td>
<td>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Promise to the Public</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will keep you informed.</td>
<td>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</td>
<td>We will implement what you have decided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example Tools</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact sheets, Web sites, Open houses</td>
<td>Public comment, Focus groups, Surveys, Public Meetings</td>
<td>Workshops, Deliberate polling</td>
<td>Citizen advisory committees, Consensus-building, Participatory decision-making</td>
<td>Citizen juries, Ballots, Delegated decisions</td>
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According to Oakley (2009:124), in the eyes of many ordinary South Africans, involvement does not mean (as outlined by the IAP2) working directly with the public to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered and are directly reflected in the alternatives developed. It goes without saying that such interpretations contribute to mistrust in the system of local-level development planning in South Africa.

3.6.1 INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PARTICIPATION (IAP2) IAP2 Core Values and IDP

According to Caesar and Theron (2008b:117), the IAP2’s seven Core Values are applicable to Integrated Development Planning in South Africa. Using the IAP2 as a guideline does not necessarily indicate that the researcher agrees with these principles. However, these principles are internationally recognised and applied in planning towards participatory settings.

- There is a broad agreement in South Africa that, as a general proposition, ‘the public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives’ (IAP2’s core value 1). According to Caesar and Theron (2008b:117), most of the time, the say that the beneficiaries enjoy relates to IAP2’s Spectrum of Participation level 1 (inform participants) and level 2 (consult participants). Informing and consulting strategies, as interpreted through IDP, neither lead to authentic and empowering public participation, nor do they allow the beneficiaries of development (in a particular project) to direct or become the owners of a particular project.

- According to Caesar and Theron (2008b:117), there is the understanding, as IAP2 core value 2 states, that public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision in a particular programme or project. This is a contentious issue, since the public often have no say in IDP project management, which then obviously makes their level of influence in a programme or project very low. The public’s low level of say and influence in IDP often leads to frustration among the intended beneficiaries. Poor public participation by beneficiaries and poor project legitimacy sometimes spills over into protest and violence, for example on the housing issue in South Africa.
• Core value 3 states that ‘public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all the participants, including the decision-makers’ (Caesar and Theron, 2008b:118). The communication process underlying public participation in IDP still builds on a top-down, prescriptive and control-oriented foundation – the IDP officials make most of the decisions related to a project, but argue that they know the needs of the people and use participatory strategies.

• According to Caesar and Theron (2008b:118), core value 4 calls for public participation to seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision. The manner in which participatory strategies are employed in IDP does not contribute to establishing a culture of public participation. Top-down planning and implementation methodologies continue to be employed. The involvement of beneficiaries boils down to potential participants being informed about a project via what IAP2 refers to as techniques to share information.

• Core value 5 calls for public participation to seek input from the participants in designing how they will participate (Caesar and Theron, 2008b:118). In the South African context, people will participate only if they interpret the process (for public participation in planning and implementing a project) as being beneficial to them personally. Existing processes, however, are perceived by the public as window dressing for top-down decisions and as being highly prescriptive.

• Core values 6 and 7 state, respectively, that public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and public participation communicates to participants how their input has affected the decision. The IDP process is currently not structured in this manner. On paper, the IDP serves as a multi-dimensional strategic framework to correct many of the wrong-doings of the previous government system. This can be attributed to the fact that municipal Councillors and officials are not given training that could help them understand and appreciate the immense social and political gain that participatory developmental planning could contribute(Caesar and Theron, 2008b:118).
3.7 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WARD COMMITTEES IN LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

According to Buccus and Hicks (2008:526), in municipalities where Ward Committees are operational, these are marked by uncertainty, and in some instances, chaos. This largely stems from the fact that there appears to be no clear understanding of the role that Ward Committees are supposed to perform. In line with this viewpoint, the lack of proper space for Ward Committees to fully operate in Knysna Local Municipality’s public participation processes can be attributed to the growing uncertainty among Councillors and Senior Officials about both the role and importance of Ward Committees in municipal governance.

This results in the use of inappropriate mechanisms for public participation and ineffective Ward Committee structures within the Knysna Local Municipality. In addition, Nyalunga (2006:045) argues that the lack of understanding of the roles of Ward Committees leads to false perceptions and misconceptions about the performance of Ward Committees and other local government stakeholders in general. Much of the Ward Committee’s dilemma about their functions relates to their dislocation from what is supposed to be a broadly endorsed blueprint for development, namely the IDP.

Without a proper understanding of the targets and indicators for development, as set out in the IDP and the ability to disaggregate these to their own ward areas, Ward Committees cannot be expected to provide any empirical or qualitative feedback on local municipal delivery strategies and performance. The need to get Ward Committees focused on IDP-specific outputs and strategies needs to be stressed. This gap can be utilised as an ‘entry point’ to create some form of awareness to local municipalities, such as the Knysna Local Municipality on the role that Ward Committees should be playing in local government.

According to Manor (in Buccus and Hicks, 2008:526), participation mechanisms that are established to channel citizens’ input are not accessible to the majority of the population in societies characterised by inequality, particularly marginalised communities and sectors, and typically do not automatically benefit poor people and groups that have for long faced social exclusion. Similarly, in the situation of the Knysna Local Municipality, the current public participation structures do not create a platform to receive inputs from the broader public and report back on issues communicated to the municipality, because various
structures have got different reasons for their existence. These are sometimes far-removed from the interests of the broader public. In contrast, Nyalunga (2006:044) argues that the role of Ward Committees is to make sure that the electorate directly participates in any decisions made by Council. The Ward Committees should be set up in a way that they can reach most sectors and areas in the ward, since their main tasks are to communicate with the community in respect of development and service plans.

This study acknowledges the fact that Ward Committees on their own do not appear to be the only remedy to promote and facilitate public participation in decision-making at local government, but proposes that Ward Committees should be used as a structure to bridge the gap between municipalities and communities. According to Nyalunga (2006:045), the functions of Ward Committees have been restricted mainly to making recommendations to the Ward Councillor of a Municipal Council. This study regards the fact that Ward Committees are legally recognised structures to make recommendations to the Ward Councillor as both an opportunity and a starting point for a structured communication between the municipalities and the communities they serve. This study argues that the most important success factor in any effective public participation process is that the public must be recognised as an important role-player and offered an opportunity to influence decisions.

The Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:51) envisages one possible Ward Committee Participation Model (see Figure 3.2: Communication and Ward Committee Participation Model based on quarterly meeting programme) as effective for communication and public participation; and this could be adapted by municipalities to suit their own circumstances.
Figure 3.2: COMMUNICATION AND WARD COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION
MODEL BASED ON QUARTERLY MEETING PROGRAMME

According to the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:52), the above-mentioned model may be interpreted as follows:

1. Council Managers discuss issues and come up with ‘Resolutions’ as outcomes of the Council meeting; and they then inform officials in the Public Participation Unit attached to the Office of the Speaker.

1.1 The Public Participation Unit in the Office of the Speaker compiles the agenda with Standardised Official Reports for Ward Committees.

1.2 The Ward Committees have their **First Meeting Programmes** (preparatory meetings) where the agenda with the Standardised Official Report from Council is discussed to develop a common understanding on issues before consultative meetings with the general public and stakeholders.

1.3 Ward Committees conduct their **Second Meeting Programmes** (consultative meetings) with the general public or stakeholders on issues from Council, as well as on any new matters affecting the community in the ward. The Public Participation Unit assists the Ward Committees in the co-ordination or publicity needed for these meetings to succeed.

1.4 Ward Committees have their **Third Meeting Programmes** (consolidation meetings), where reports from their general public or stakeholders meetings will be compiled and consolidated with recommendations before submission to the Public Participation Unit for analysis.

2. The Council managers receive reports from the Public Participation Unit for administrative action or for consideration by management before submission to the Executive Committee or the Executive Mayoral Committee for political decisions.

3. Some issues are referred to the Council Portfolio Committees for further discussion and recommendations.
3.1 In some cases the Portfolio Committees further consult the key role-players and stakeholders affected by, or relevant to, the issue for more inputs in the local portfolio forums e.g. Transport or Electricity Forums.

4. The Executive Committee or the Executive Mayoral Committee receives recommendations from the Portfolio Committees and the Council Management which will then further inform the Council Agenda.

5. The Council Agenda is discussed in the party caucuses for party political positions in regard to issues on the agenda before the Council meeting.

6. The Council meeting takes decisions on matters on the agenda and the Council Managers take the process further under activity one to continue the cycle.

3.8 THE ADOPTION OF THE WARD COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

According to Craythorne (2006:9), the Ward Committee System first emerged in South Africa in 1786 in the Cape, as a result of the Cape Burghers pressing for a greater share in the government of the Colony. This body was later given certain municipal and policing functions. Their role evolved over the years into a form of contact between the people and the Municipal Commissioners. Ward Committees were then given new meanings, roles and functions.

It may be argued that there are similarities between the South African Ward Committee System and countries such as the United Kingdom (UK). This can lead to an assumption that the current South African Ward Committee System has been adopted from these countries. The functions of the Ward Committees in the UK include *inter alia*:

- to encourage and facilitate dialogue between the Council and local people within their ward, with a view to:
  - ensuring that the needs of the ward and key issues affecting local people are identified and assessed;
- ensuring that such needs and issues are clearly expressed to the relevant Departments of the Council; and

- generally, maximising the influence of local people on Council decisions;

- making recommendations to Council on any matters relevant to their ward (http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/).

Similarly, in the South African context section 72(3) of Act 117 of 1998 stipulates that the object of Ward Committees is to enhance participatory democracy in local government; while section 74(a) stipulates that a Ward Committee may make recommendations on any matter affecting its Ward –

- to the Ward Councillor; or

- through the Ward Councillor, to the Metro or Local Council, the Executive Committee, the Executive Mayor or the relevant Metropolitan Sub-Council.


3.9 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS (CDWs), COUNCILLORS AND WARD COMMITTEES

According to the Handbook for Community Development Workers (2007:21), most of the work of Community Developmental Workers (CDWs), Councillors and Ward Committees takes place within a ward. In essence this implies that their roles should complement one another, although their mandates and structures are different. Working collaboratively, their task is to be active development agents and to ensure government programmes aimed at improving the lives of people in the communities are being implemented. The nature of their collective task means they have to communicate constantly with each other and with the community, so that government programmes can make the greatest possible impact.
Table 3.2 below shows *inter alia* the different roles and responsibilities of CDWs, Councillors and Ward Committees.
Table 3.2: The different roles and responsibilities of CDWs, Councillors and Ward Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDWs</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>Ward Committees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regularly communicate government and other information to communities in an accessible way.</td>
<td><strong>The Ward Councillor:</strong> Chairs the Ward Committee</td>
<td>Takes issues of local concern to the Councillor, who in turn takes these to Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass concerns and issues on to service providers.</td>
<td>Convenes the constituency meeting to elect Ward Committee Members.</td>
<td>Has a direct say in the planning, decision-making and project implementation that have an impact on their ward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate teams of volunteers in community projects.</td>
<td>Calls Committee meetings.</td>
<td>Increases the participation of local residents in municipal decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate teams employed on public works programmes</td>
<td>Ensures a schedule of meetings is prepared, including Ward Committee and constituency meetings.</td>
<td>Is not politically aligned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help communities develop and submit proposals for inclusion in Integrated Development Plans to municipalities, other spheres of government or donors.</td>
<td>Works with the Ward Committee to draw up an annual plan of activities.</td>
<td>Should be involved in matters, such as the Integrated Development Planning process, municipal performance management, the annual budget, Council projects and other key activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDWs</td>
<td>Councillors</td>
<td>Ward Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate inter-departmental programmes and encourage integration.</td>
<td>Handles queries and complaints.</td>
<td>Can identify and initiate projects to improve the lives of people in the ward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain communication with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and workers.</td>
<td>Resolves disputes and refers unresolved disputes to the municipality.</td>
<td>Can support the Councillor in dispute resolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the principles of Batho Pele and community participation.</td>
<td>Should be fully involved in all community activities.</td>
<td>Can monitor the performance of the municipality and take issues of concern to the local ward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform communities about problems in the delivery of basic services.</td>
<td><strong>The Proportional Representative Councillor:</strong> Should attend Ward Committee meetings, constituency meetings and special meetings.</td>
<td>Can help with community awareness campaigns on issues such as waste, water and sewage, payment of fees and charges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help implement projects.</td>
<td>Can assist with resolving disputes and making referrals.</td>
<td>Forward names of prospective CDW candidates from their respective wards for learnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaise with and advocate on behalf of communities with parastatals, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private donors.</td>
<td>Can help with the implementation of projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from the Handbook for Community Development Workers (2007:23)
3.10 THE ROLE OF WARD COMMITTEES

According to Deacon and Piper (2006:5), there are at least three important theories of social and political life in South Africa which may cast light on the actual roles of Ward Committees. The first is closest to government’s stated intention of deepening local democracy. The second picks up on the concern of many political scientists with the dominant-party syndrome and how Ward Committees might further entrench this, or not function as intended, because of this. The last draws from literature on social movements and advances the case that Ward Committees are an attempt to push state-society relations in ways that are more convenient for elites with their neo-liberal agenda.

3.10.1 Ward Committees and Participatory Democracy

Ward Committees are primarily advisory bodies to the Ward Councillor, but they may also, if the Council decides, be empowered to assist the Ward Councillor in key functions, like identifying information and mobilisation functions. Robert Dahl (2006:6) argues that democratic decision-making in a community means that ‘all members are to be treated as if they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies of the community’.

Furthermore, Dahl (in Deacon and Piper, 2006:6) unpacks this notion of political equality in terms of five normative criteria. These are:

(i) Effective participation: members have equal and effective opportunities for getting their views known;
(ii) Equality in voting;
(iii) Gaining enlightened understanding;
(iv) Control of the agenda;
(v) Inclusion of adults.

In design Ward Committees mostly meet the criterion of (i) (effective participation). Thus in terms of section 6 of the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees (Notice 965 of 2005), generic training is to be provided for Ward Committee Members, including:
- Basic literacy;
- Communication;
- Interpersonal skills;
- Community upliftment;
- Conflict management and negotiation skills;
- Democracy and community participation;
- Identification, monitoring and the prioritisation of needs; and
- Leadership.

The one obvious constraint on effective participation is that the meeting must be chaired by the Ward Councillor who also sets the agenda; hence the failure to meet criterion iv. Ward Committees do not meet Dahl’s criterion (ii), as Ward Committees are not decision-making bodies since the power is explicitly reserved for the Municipal Council. Much of the role of Ward Committees is about information transmission; either from the community to the Ward Councillor or from the Council to the community. Ward Committees are designed to deepen local democracy in that they can improve the deliberative process leading to the making of decisions, but they cannot take any of these decisions themselves.

3.10.2 Ward Committees and the ‘Dominant-Party Syndrome’

According to Brooks (2006:7), the lack of party competition removes the key mechanism of elite accountability, opening more space for the potential abuse of State power by individuals, networks or even the party. Extended to Ward Committees, the dominant-party syndrome view raises the question of whether, especially in practice, Ward Committees will be little more than an extension of any local branch of a leading political party and its politics, thereby effectively pursuing a partisan agenda in the name of the local community.

3.10.3 Ward Committees and Social Movements

According to Deacon and Piper (2006:8), a second source of scepticism about Ward Committees emerges from the recent wave of local protests against poorly functioning municipalities. According to Magubane (2008:8), the question is: does government see the role of ward committees negatively, as a way of forestalling social conflict and
demobilising marginalised groups by institutionalising local discontent in more acceptable ways? Or, is it to be seen positively, as a means of making local government more responsive to local communities?

There may be some evidence that Ward Committees are intended to be aligned more closely to councils than to communities in the requirement that Ward Committees, as the official specialised participatory structure in the municipality, create cooperative partnerships between community and council. Moreover, national leaders, including the former Minister of Provincial and Local Government, Mr. Sydney Mufamadi (2005) have consistently affirmed the central role of Ward Committees as channels for providing information to communities about public services, programmes and development possibilities, not just locally, but for all three spheres of government. It is worth considering the idea that Ward Committees are intended as invited spaces for appropriate public input.

3.11 THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT OF WARD COMMITTEES

Since the inception of the democratic dispensation in South Africa, government efforts have concentrated on putting in place legislative and policy frameworks that seek to promote participatory governance. Amongst other initiatives, the South African government has enacted a host of legislation that demands public participation in municipal decision-making, planning, budgeting and finances. This legislation includes

*inter alia:*

- The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998;
- The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000;
- The Local Government: Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, 2001;
• The Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 2003;


All the above legislation describes the way in which local government should function and provide the framework on how municipalities should interact with communities, but they do not necessarily prescribe any relevant strategies. In essence, this means that municipalities should develop their own public participation plans or strategies within the framework provided by the above legislation. For the purpose of this study, and linked to the hypothesis outlined in the introductory chapter, the main focus of this chapter will be to articulate and analyse some of the legislative and policy framework that is relevant to public participation and Ward Committees in local government.

According to Putu (2006:16), the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 envisages a complete transformation of the local government system in which municipalities are given a distinct status and the role of building local democracy and socio-economic development. Such a process is meant to bring government closer to the people, and also to reinforce the two fundamental mechanisms of sustainable local democracy: which are the participation of the people and the accountability of local government.

In line with the above, section 152 (1) (a) and (e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 stipulates that the following issues are relevant:

• That the objects of local government are: –

  - to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;

  - to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.
In essence, this means that municipalities and their communities are expected to establish public participation mechanisms that will ensure the achievement of the above local government objectives. This study is therefore, advocating that municipalities should use Ward Committees as mechanisms for co-coordinating and facilitating public participation processes.

In addition, section 195(1) (e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 stipulates that public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution, including the following principles:

- people’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in any policy-making that affects them personally.

In line with the above, Ward Committees may be utilised to communicate on community inputs in policy-making processes, as it will be impossible for medium-sized municipalities, such as the Knysna Local Municipality to allow for direct participation.

In terms of section b (1) of the White Paper on Local Government (1998:17), DLG refers to local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community in order to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and to improve the quality of their lives. In addition, section b (3.3) of the said legislation (1998:33) stipulates that in order for this vision to be realised, municipalities should develop strategies and mechanisms (including, but not limited to, participative planning) to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups. In line with the above, section d (2.3.3) of the White Paper on Local Government (1998:65) stipulates that well-functioning Ward Committees should provide every municipal resident with a local point of access to municipal government and strengthen the accountability of Ward Councillors to local residents.

In terms of section 73 (1) of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998), if a metro or local council decides to have Ward Committees, it must establish a Ward Committee for each ward in the municipality. In addition, section 72 (3) of Act 117 of 1998 stipulates that the objective of a Ward Committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. In essence, this implies that the mandate of Ward Committees is mainly to encourage community participation in matters concerning
the municipality. Therefore community and interest groups need to always ensure that their needs and interests are well-known and represented by the Ward Committees.

In line with the above, section 19(1) of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1988 (Act 117 of 1998) compels Municipal Councils to strive within their capacity to achieve the objectives set out in section 152 of the Constitution. These include *inter alia*:

- Developing mechanisms to consult the community and community organisations in the performance of their functions and powers,

- Annually reviewing the community needs and municipal priorities and strategies for meeting those needs and involving the community in municipal processes.

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) further provides:

- A framework for the powers and functions of Ward Committees;

- Terms of office;

- Procedures for dealing with vacancies;

- A ruling on remuneration; and

- Procedures for the dissolution of Ward Committees.

In terms of section 16(1) of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), a municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance. In essence, this means that the provision of a democratic and accountable local government presupposes a form of participatory democracy that will not be in conflict with the system of representative democracy. Furthermore, this provides the gateway for municipalities to embark on public participation processes, mechanisms and procedures in a manner that will strengthen and facilitate the accountability by both municipal officials and Councillors. While the said Act does not deal specifically with Ward Committees, this
implies that Ward Committees are one of the structures through which participation by the local community in the affairs of the municipality can take place.

In line with the above, section 5(1) of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) places more emphasis on the rights and duties of the members of the local community and specifically outlines the citizens’ right to contribute to the decision-making processes of the municipality. The Act in itself provides a broad framework for public participation at local government. It is in this context that Ward Committees can provide a useful mechanism in representing the aspirations of the broader communities and provide feedback on an ongoing basis.

The purpose of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) is *inter alia* to bring about transparent and effective financial management in municipalities and municipal public entities. Although the said Act does not specifically deal with Ward Committees, it does, however, call for public participation in a number of processes related to how municipal resources are used and how they are reported on. These are *inter alia*:

**Making the budget and supporting documents available to the public**

In terms of section 22 of Act 56 of 2003, immediately after an annual budget is tabled in a municipal council, the accounting officer of the municipality must, in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act:

- make public the annual budget and the documents;
- invite the local community to submit representations in connection with the budget.

Ward Committees are a good way for the budget to be circulated and to facilitate representation and feedback from the community.
The Accounting Officer must put key financial information on the municipality’s website

In terms of section 75 of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 2003 (Act 56 of 2003), the accounting officer of a municipality must put key financial information in the public domain by placing it on the municipality’s website. This information includes:

- budgets and related documents;
- the annual report;
- performance agreements;
- service delivery agreements;
- partnerships agreements;
- any other documents providing insight into the state of the municipality’s financial affairs.

Since a minority of the public enjoys access to websites, this is clearly a limited form of transparency. Ward Committees are an important way of reaching the broader community, as they may be able to assist a broader spectrum of the public to access and understand this information.

Municipalities have an obligation to produce and table an annual report, as another important mechanism for accountability and transparency. In terms of section 121(2) (C) of the said Act, the purpose of the annual report includes “to promote the accountability to the local community for the decisions made throughout the year by the municipality or municipal entity”.

In line with the above, section 124(1)(a) of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 2003(Act 56 of 2003) stipulates that the notes to the annual financial statements of a municipality must include the particulars of the salary packages of senior
managers and show all the allowances and benefits of Councillors, as well as any arrears owed by councillors to the municipality. This information is usually of considerable public interest. Again, Ward Committees should ensure that this information is disseminated and understood by persons who would not ordinarily read technical reports.

In addition, section 130(1) of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) outlines the fact that the meetings of a Municipal Council at which an annual report is to be discussed or at which decisions concerning an annual report are to be taken, must be open to the public and any organs of State, and a reasonable time must be allowed –

- for the discussion of any written submissions received from the local community or organs of State on the annual report; and

- for members of the local community or any organs of State to address the council.

Although not a provision of the said Act, it is clear that Ward Committees can play a role in mobilising public attendance and even assisting in preparing community inputs for such meetings.

In June 2005 the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees were gazetted by the Department of Provincial and Local Government (Notice 965 of 2005). The purpose of these guidelines was to provide uniform and simplified guidelines to Ward Committee members, Ward Councillors; and metropolitan and local municipalities on the establishment and operation of Ward Committees. In terms of section 4 (1) of the Guidelines for the Establishment and the Operation of Municipal Ward Committees (Notice 965 of 2005), the object of a Ward Committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. In addition, section 4(2) of the said guidelines describes a Ward Committee as:

- an advisory body;

- a representative structure;

- an independent structure;
• an impartial body that must perform its functions without fear, favour or prejudice.

In terms of the functions and powers of Ward Committees, section 5(3) of the Guidelines for the Establishment and the Operation of Municipal Ward Committees (Notice 965 of 2005) stipulates that some possible powers and duties that municipalities may delegate to Ward Committees are namely:

• To serve as an official specialised participatory structure in the municipality;

• To create formal unbiased communication channels, as well as co-operative partnerships between the community and council through:

  - advising and making recommendations to the Ward Councillor on matters and policies affecting the ward;

  - assisting the Ward Councillor in identifying the challenges and needs of the residents;

  - disseminating information in the ward concerning municipal affairs, such as the budget, integrated development planning, a performance management system (PMS), service-delivery options and municipal properties;

  - receiving queries and complaints from residents concerning municipal service delivery, communicating these issues to council and providing feedback to the community on council’s response;

  - ensuring constructive and harmonious interaction between the municipality and the community through the use and co-ordination of ward residents’ meetings and other community development forums; and

  - interacting with other forums and organisations on matters affecting the ward.

In terms of section 5(3) (d) of the Guidelines for the Establishment and the Operation of Municipal Ward Committees (Notice 965 of 2005), no executive powers should be
delegated to Ward Committee members. In addition, a Ward Committee may express dissatisfaction with the non-performance of its Ward Councillor in writing to the Council.

3.12 CONCLUSION

Public participation in local government is to a large extent governed by the pieces of legislation discussed above. Although public participation is legislated, the implementation thereof is left largely to the discretion of individual municipalities. The manner in which municipalities approach public participation is often dictated by the capacity and structure of the municipality. Overall, this chapter provided a legislative framework for public participation and for the discussion of Ward Committees in South Africa. It is within this framework that municipalities should strive for effective structured public participation that can lead to better service delivery and improved livelihoods for the poor.

As explained in the introductory chapter, through public participation the beneficiaries of development share in, belong to, influence and direct the developmental process and establish dignity and self-esteem. This process is not done alone in isolation, but in a dynamic and mutual learning and capacity-building process which establishes a reciprocal relationship amongst the different stakeholders. Although the establishment of Ward Committees is currently not mandatory to municipalities, they are still obliged to provide communities with a meaningful opportunity to participate fully in any matters affecting them. It is clear therefore, that Ward Committees have a great potential to bridge the growing gap between communities and municipalities, and to facilitate greater public participation in municipalities’ planning, as well as in the execution of such plans.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first three chapters have provided a theoretical basis for the entire study. In essence, the discussion and presentation of the preceding chapters crystallised a foundation on which the current chapter should focus.

The overall objective of this chapter is to provide a report based on the empirical findings of the research which focused on the implementation of the Ward Committee System in the Knysna Local Municipality. A range of issues and concerns are commonly expressed around the practical functioning of Ward Committees. These have implications for their effectiveness in enhancing public participation in the running of the Knysna Local Municipality. The key findings of the field research which was conducted in Knysna Local Municipality are outlined below.

The research findings are preceded by a brief explanation of some of the relevant research methods.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Theron (2005c:172), a scientific document is the outcome of scientific research. Every statement made must be supported by evidence to prove to the reader that the argument is scientifically grounded and can be verified. There are different research methods that an author can use in the writing of a document. It is recommended that authors should undertake a thorough study of the appropriate research methods before writing any scientific document.

The study focuses on a single case: the Ward Committees of the Knysna Local Municipality. This approach will enable the researcher to do an in-depth analysis of the Ward Committee processes, as a means of achieving authentic and structured public participation within the Knysna Local Municipality. This study draws on people’s experiences (Ward Committee members, Ward Councillors and key Local Municipal Officials, i.e. the Director of Corporate Services, the Public Participation Manager and the
Speaker of the Local Council), perceptions and interpretations on the performance of Ward Committees, and any possible factors that may have impeded the actualisation of authentic public participation through the use of Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality.

4.2.1 The literature survey

This is the most basic and popular method. Authors are exposed to a great volume of data from which to select the most essential references. To scrutinise the available data authors can employ the mind-mapping method as part of the data filtering process (Theron, 2005c:172).

Mouton (2001:86) explains that a comparative literature survey method is important because:

- It sharpens and deepens the theoretical framework of the research.
- It guards against the duplication of previous research efforts and saves time.
- It identifies key analytical concepts and definitions as points of departure.
- It familiarises the author or researcher with the latest developments on the topic and related areas, i.e. it gives a holistic picture of the reality under research.
- The author is exposed to other authors’ problem statements, hypotheses, points of departure, results and recommendations (in this regard a thesis is of special value). Previous results or recommendations act as starting points for new research.
- It identifies gaps and shortcomings or weaknesses in previous research projects.
- It identifies links and contradictions between different research results, case studies and applications.
- It identifies the most appropriate research methods and shows why they worked.

4.2.2 The interview

Interviews are ideally used in addition to a comparative literature survey. They allow the researcher to probe more deeply, following questions put to an interviewee or respondent (Theron, 2005c:172). According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:32), the meeting of two minds, namely those of the interviewer and the interviewee, allows the researcher (with a set of structured questions) to access knowledge directly from an expert on the topic. This
face-to-face research method exposes the researcher to the practical realities of the research topic and is hands-on and outcomes-based in nature.

4.2.3 The questionnaire

Structured questionnaires, as Brynard and Hanekom (1997:38) explain, can be used as an alternative or in addition to the interview and other social research methods. As in the case of the interview method, based on a comparative literature review, the researcher will formulate a set of questions which the receiver of the questionnaire, who is not in face-to-face contact with the researcher, can answer on a hard copy document received by post or as an email attachment. After receiving the questionnaire, the researcher will analyse and quantify the answers to the questions.

4.2.4 The participatory method of research

Participatory research has two distinguishing characteristics, namely the relationship between the people involved in social research (the community) and the researcher; and the use of research as a tool for social change, as well as for increasing human knowledge. The participatory research method empowers the people to be involved in all the various aspects of a project, including the planning and implementation of the research and any solutions that emerge from the research (Theron, 2005c:172).

4.3 RESPONSES

A standard questionnaire was prepared to guide the interviews into all the categories, namely Ward Councillors, Ward Committee members and municipal officials. Approximately ninety (90) interviewees participated in this study, namely eight (8) Ward Councillors, eighty (80) Ward Committee members and two (2) relevant Local Municipal Officials. The questionnaire was divided into six sections, namely the establishment of Ward Committees, membership and composition, functions, roles and responsibilities, public participation processes, training and capacity building and general. Some of the questions that formed part of the questionnaire were general questions. However, the focus of this analysis will be specific to the questions that were aimed at testing the hypothesis for the study. That is: determining the effectiveness of the Ward Committees in improving communication between local municipalities and the general public.
4.3.1  WARD COUNCILLORS’ RESPONSES

4.3.1.1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WARD COMMITTEES

4.3.1.2 Has the Local Municipality adopted a policy on how Ward Committees should carry out their roles and functions?

100% of the respondents indicated that the Local Municipality had indeed adopted a policy on how Ward Committees should carry out their roles and functions. This symbolises the commitment that the Knysna Local Municipality has had on the whole concept of Ward Committees. However, all the Ward Councillors felt that more attention should be paid to the actual implementation of the policies, in order to witness more practical outcomes of the system.

4.3.1.3 Has the Local Council budgeted for the functioning and support of Ward Committees?

As many as 80% of the respondents indicated that there is a budget that has been put aside for public participation, but they were unsure whether it was mainly for the functioning and support of Ward Committees. Only the remaining 20% of the Ward Councillors confidently responded that Council had actually budgeted for the functioning and support of Ward Committees. One would guess that this 20% is comprised of those Councillors who serve in the Mayoral Committee, including the Speaker of the Council, as they are close to the key issues of Council.

4.3.2 MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION

4.3.2.1 What term of office has the Local Municipality set for Ward Committees?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that the term of office the Local Municipality has set for Ward Committees was five years. This is in line with the current Local Council’s term of office. Many attributed this decision of having a five-year term to the issue of continuity and alluded to the investment in the form of training and capacity building that the Local Council provides to the Ward Committee members. Some even alluded to the issue of institutional memory which is always necessary for issues of development within wards, as some of these members serve on community-development projects.
4.3.2.2 In your view are Ward Committees generally representative of race and gender?

All 100% of the respondents indicated that race and gender were not issues for them, due to the fact the current wards are still constituted by the former white/coloured / black townships. Instead they were more interested in ensuring sectoral representation. The Speaker of the Local Council repeated this point in very simple terms: “Ward Committees must reflect the same interests within Council, but at a local level.”

Issues of representivity would appear to be at the core of the Ward Committee’s purpose; i.e. legislative provisions make it clear that the policy intention was to bring a full spectrum of demographically defined and sectoral groups into the Ward Committee system.

4.3.3 FUNCTIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.3.3.1 Do the majority of Ward Committees have some form of mechanism to ensure accountability to their local constituency (sub-forums of the ward, regular meetings that are open to the public, community report-back meetings)?

The majority of the respondents (63%) felt that Ward Committees are accountable, in the sense that they have some form of mechanism to account to the local constituency for their actions and responsibilities. However a significant 37% did not agree. However, this portion mentioned the general dysfunctionality in the Ward Committees as being frequently related to a lack of resources.

4.3.3.2 Are you convinced that everyone (Local Municipal Officials, Councillors and Ward Committee members) fully understands his/her/their role with regard to the Ward Committee System?

A full 100% of the respondents felt that everyone fully understood his/her/their role with regard to the Ward Committee System. However, some indicated that Ward Committees
needed to be more exposed in practically exercising their roles. Some even indicated that although literacy levels differed they were confident that everyone understood his/her role.

4.3.3.3 What percentage of Councillors ensures that regular Ward Committee meetings are held in line with the agreed guidelines/Local Council policy?

All 100% of the respondents indicated that 100% of Councillors ensured that regular Ward Committee meetings are held. Some indicated that the Committee section of the Local Municipality is co-ordinating the submission of agenda items and the distribution of both the agendas and the minutes. This is done on a quarterly basis.

4.3.3.4 Has the Local Municipality delegated any specific powers to the Ward Committees? Briefly explain your answer.

It does not appear that there is any significant delegation of powers to Ward Committees – an option that exists within the legislation. A clear majority (67%) of the respondents indicated that no powers were delegated to Ward Committees; and only 18% disagreed with this view, while 15% were still unsure on this issue.

4.3.3.5 Is there a system within the Local Council to get report-backs from Ward Councillors on concerns raised by the Ward Committee?

As many as 100% of the respondents indicated that Ward Councillors are expected to hold public meetings at least once a month. It is at these meetings that they are expected to deal amongst other matters with Ward Committee issues.

4.3.3.6 Does the Local Council or any of its committees make provision for the tabling of reports by Ward Councillors on issues raised by Ward Committees?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that all the issues discussed at Ward Committee meetings are sent to the Executive Mayoral Committee. This then recommends them for Council adoption.
4.3.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

4.3.4.1 How would you define public participation in the context of the Knysna Local Municipality?

Although the respondents came up with different definitions, all their responses included the following: That all stakeholders including the broader public should be afforded an opportunity to make inputs in the municipal affairs.

4.3.4.2 Theron (2009a:117) defines authentic public participation as an active process by which the public influences the direction and execution of a programme or project with a view to enhancing their wellbeing in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish. In your opinion is this happening in the Knysna Local Municipality?

A whole 100% of the respondents felt that due to the fact that local municipalities are still grappling with the notion of public participation, not all of the elements mentioned above will be fully adhered to at this stage. However, an ideal situation would be to have such a state of affairs.

4.3.4.3 Have Ward Committees fully participated in the following matters:

- The IDP Review Process?
- The IDP Representative Forum?
- The budget?
- The Performance Management System?

All 100% of the respondents felt that the Ward Committees had fully participated in the above processes, as each Ward Committee was represented by two representatives throughout. However, it was indicated that there is still a strong need to allow Ward Committees to co-ordinate and facilitate these processes.
4.3.4.4 In your view have Ward Committees had any impact on the Local Council’s decisions?

Suprisingly, 47% of the respondents said “yes”; and a combined 53% were unsure or said that Ward Committees had no impact on the Local Council’s decisions.

4.3.4.5 Is there any link between Community Development Workers (CDWs) and Ward Committees?

In policy and operational terms there is clearly some potential for overlap in functions between Community Development Workers and Ward Committees. This question attempted to investigate whether a rational distribution of responsibilities is emerging on the ground. The largest percentage of respondents (42%) felt that there was no link; while 32% perceived a link and 26% were unsure. The Ward Councillor for Ward 7 provided the most positive assessment of Community Development Workers and Ward Committees’ relations:

“Community Development Workers and Ward Committees are both part of the government structures that serve the local people and have to work together to improve the lives of the poor.”

4.3.4.6 What are the challenges facing the implementation of the Ward Committee System and what remedial actions would you recommend?

A full 100% of the respondents felt that the only challenge facing Ward Committees was the lack of maximum exposure in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, they emphasised the need to put Ward Committee at the centre of Council’s developmental programmes.

4.3.4.7 In your view, do you think the Local Municipality is doing enough to promote public participation and the Ward Committee System?

A total of 100% of the respondents felt that the Local Municipality was actually doing enough to promote public participation and the Ward Committee system was fully functional, because all structures and systems for public participation were in place. It was also felt that the Local Municipality has achieved model public participation and possesses
a Ward Committee policy framework which needs to be translated into practice. However, it was also acknowledged that the full implementation of the policies will not be an overnight event, but rather an extensive process of trial and error.

4.3.4.8 What can be done to improve overall public participation in the Knysna Local Municipality?

Although the respondents came up with different viewpoints, the clear message from them was that Ward Committees should facilitate all public participation processes in the Knysna Local Municipality. All of the respondents felt that the non-partisan nature of Ward Committees is an important ingredient in the enhancement of public participation at local government levels.

4.3.5 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

4.3.5.1 What kind of training and/or capacity building have Ward Committees received in order to fulfil their intended functions?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that Ward Committees had received formal training offered by service providers. Respondents also mentioned the fact that the training was too generic and needed to be tailor-made to suit the individual requirements and needs.

4.3.5.2 In your view has this training improved the performance of Ward Committees?

The largest percentage of respondents (85%) said that this training had in fact improved Ward Committee performance; whereas 15% said it had not. Those who said that the training had been effective held the view that it had helped Ward Committee members and Councillors to understand their roles and therefore to become more effective. Generally, those who felt that the training had been ineffective did not explain how; and simply indicated that it had not produced the expected results.
4.3.6 GENERAL

4.3.6.1 In your view should Ward Committees be remunerated for their work?

Although this was said in different tones, 100% of the respondents felt that Ward Committees should be remunerated. The obvious reason for remunerating Ward Committee members is that many are drawn from indigent communities are obliged to undertake public interest activities, whereas their own livelihoods are not secure. It was, however, mentioned that the only significant form of compensation that has occurred was for transport costs. However, it was clear that most of the respondents would prefer an amendment to the legislation to allow for more comprehensive remuneration.

4.3.7 WARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ RESPONSES

4.3.7.1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WARD COMMITTEES

4.3.7.2 Has the Local Municipality adopted a policy on how Ward Committees should carry out their roles and functions?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that the municipality had adopted a policy on how Ward Committees should carry out their roles and functions. However, all the respondents felt that more attention should be paid to the full implementation of the policy.

4.3.7.3 Has Council budgeted for the functioning and support of Ward Committees?

As many as 80% of the respondents indicated that there is a budget that has been put aside for public participation, but they were unsure whether it was mainly for the functioning and the support of Ward Committees. Only 20% of the respondents confidently responded that Council had budgeted for the functioning and support of Ward Committees. One would guess that this 20% is constituted by those Ward Committee members whose Ward Councillors are serving in the Mayoral Committee or the Speaker of the Council, as they are close to the key issues of Council.
4.3.8 MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION

4.3.8.1 What term of office has the Local Municipality set for Ward Committees?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that the term of office that the municipality has set for Ward Committees was five years. This is in line with the current Council’s term of office.

4.3.8.2 In your view are Ward Committees generally representative of race and gender?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that race and gender were not issues for them, due to the fact the current wards are still constituted by the former white/coloured / black townships. Instead they were more interested in ensuring sectoral representation.

4.3.9 FUNCTIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.3.9.1 Do the majority of Ward Committees have some form of mechanism to ensure accountability to their local constituency (sub-forums of the ward, regular meetings that are open to the public, community report-back meetings)?

As many as 100% of the respondents felt that they were accountable, in the sense that they had some form of mechanism to account to the local constituency for their actions and responsibilities.

4.3.9.2 Are you convinced that everyone (Local Municipal Officials, Councillors and Ward Committee members) fully understands his/her/their roles with regard to the Ward Committee System?

A full 100% of the respondents felt that everyone fully understood his/her their role with regard to the Ward Committee System.
4.3.9.3 What percentage of Councillors ensures that regular Ward Committee meetings are held according to the agreed guidelines/Council policy?

As many as 100% of the respondents indicated that all the Councillors ensured that regular Ward Committee meetings were held.

4.3.9.4 Has the Local Municipality delegated any specific powers to the Ward Committees?

A clear majority (67%) of the respondents indicated that no powers had been delegated to Ward Committees; and only 18% disagreed with this view; while 15% were still unsure.

4.3.9.5 Is there a system within Council to get report-backs from Ward Councillors on concerns raised by the Ward Committee?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that Ward Councillors are expected to hold public meetings once a month.

4.3.9.6 Does the Local Council or any of its committees make provision for the tabling of reports by Ward Councillors on issues raised by Ward Committees?

All 100% of the respondents indicated that all the issues discussed at Ward Committee meetings were sent to the Executive Mayoral Committee. This then recommends them for Council’s adoption.

4.3.10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

4.3.10.1 How would you define public participation in the context of the Knysna Local Municipality?

Although the respondents came up with different definitions, all their responses included the following: That all stakeholders, including the broader public, should be afforded an opportunity to make inputs into the municipal affairs.
4.3.10.2 Theron (2009a:117) defines authentic public participation as an active process by which the public influences the direction and execution of a programme or project with a view to enhancing their wellbeing in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish. In your opinion is this happening in the Knysna Local Municipality?

A full 100% of the respondents felt that due to the fact that local municipalities are still grappling with the notion of public participation, not all of the elements mentioned above would be able to be fully accomplished at this stage. However, an ideal situation would be to have such a state of affairs.

4.3.10.3 Have Ward Committees fully participated in the following processes:

- The IDP Review Process?
- The IDP Representative Forum?
- The budget?
- The Performance Management System?

A full 100% of the respondents felt that the Ward Committees had fully participated in the above processes, as each Ward Committee had been represented by two representatives throughout the year.

4.3.10.4 In your view have Ward Committees had any impact on the Local Council’s decisions?

As many as 60% of the respondents said “yes”; and a combined 40% were still unsure or said they had had no impact on Council decisions.

4.3.10.5 Is there any link between Community Development Workers (CDWs) and Ward Committees?

In policy and operational terms there is clearly some potential for overlap in functions between Community Development Workers and Ward Committees. This question attempted to investigate whether a rational distribution of responsibilities is emerging on
the ground. The largest percentage of respondents (60%) felt that there was no link; while 30% perceived a link and 10% were still unsure.

4.3.10.6 What are the challenges facing the implementation of the Ward Committee System and what remedial actions would you recommend?

A full 100% of the respondents felt that the only challenge facing them was the lack of maximum exposure in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

4.3.10.7 In your view do you think the Local Municipality is doing enough to promote public participation and the Ward Committee System?

A full 100% of the respondents felt that the Local Municipality was doing enough to promote public participation and that the Ward Committee system was fully functional, because all structures and systems for public participation were in place. It was also felt that the Local Municipality had model public participation and a Ward Committee policy framework which needed to be translated into practice.

4.3.10.8 What can be done to improve overall public participation in the Knysna Local Municipality?

Although the respondents came up with different viewpoints, the clear message from all respondents (100%) was that the Ward Committees should be able to facilitate all the public participation processes in the Knysna Local Municipality.

4.3.11 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

4.3.11.1 What kind of training and or capacity building have Ward Committees received in order to fulfil their intended functions?

A full 100% of the respondents indicated that they had received formal training offered by various service providers.
4.3.11.2 In your view has this training improved the performance of Ward Committees?

As many as 100% indicated that this training had improved their performance. All the respondents held the view that it had helped Ward Committee members and Councillors to understand their roles and therefore to become more effective.

4.3.12 GENERAL

4.3.12.1 In your view should Ward Committees be remunerated for their work?

As many as 100% of the respondents felt that they should be remunerated. The obvious reason for remunerating Ward Committee members is that many are drawn from indigent communities and are obliged to undertake public interest activities, whereas their own livelihoods were not secure.

4.3.13 MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS’ RESPONSES

4.3.13.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF WARD COMMITTEES

4.3.13.2 Has the Local Municipality adopted a policy on how Ward Committees should carry out their roles and functions?

All the respondents indicated that the municipality had adopted a policy on how Ward Committees should carry out their roles and functions. This symbolises the commitment that the Knysna Local Municipality has shown on the whole concept of Ward Committees.

4.3.13.3 Has the Local Council budgeted for the functioning and support of Ward Committees?

All the respondents confidently indicated that the Council had budgeted for the functioning and support of the Ward Committees.
4.3.14 MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION

4.3.14.1 What term of office has the Local Municipality set for Ward Committees?

All the respondents indicated that the term of office that the Local Municipality had set for Ward Committees was five years. This is in line with the current Council’s term of office.

4.3.14.2 In your view are Ward Committees generally representative of race and gender?

All the respondents indicated that race and gender were not issues for them, due to the fact the current wards are still constituted by the former white/coloured / black townships. Instead they were more interested in ensuring sectoral representation.

4.3.15 FUNCTIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.3.15.1 Do the majority of Ward Committees have some form of mechanism to ensure accountability to their local constituency (sub-forums of the ward, regular meetings that are open to the public, community report-back meetings)?

All the respondents felt that Ward Committees are accountable in the sense that they had some form of mechanism to account to the local constituency for their actions and responsibilities.

4.3.15.2 Are you convinced that everyone (Municipal Officials, Councillors and Ward Committee members) fully understands his/her/their role with regard to the Ward Committee System?

All the respondents felt that everyone fully understood his/her/their role with regard to the Ward Committee System.
4.3.15.3 What percentage of Councillors ensures that regular Ward Committee meetings are held in accordance with the agreed guidelines/Local Council policy?

All the respondents indicated that 100% of the Councillors ensure that regular Ward Committee meetings are held.

4.3.15.4 Has the municipality delegated any specific powers to Ward Committees?

All the respondents indicated that there are no specific powers delegated to Ward Committees. However, it was also mentioned that every effort had been made to support them in their roles and responsibilities.

4.3.15.5 Is there a system within the Local Council to get report-backs from Ward Councillors on concerns raised by the Ward Committee?

All the respondents indicated that the Ward Councillors are expected to hold public meetings once a month. It is at these meetings that they are expected to deal, amongst other issues, with the Ward Committee issues.

4.3.15.6 Does Council or any of its committees make provision for the tabling of reports by Ward Councillors on issues raised by Ward Committees?

All the respondents indicated that all the issues discussed at Ward Committee meetings are sent to the Executive Mayoral Committee, which then recommends them for Council adoption.

4.3.16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

4.3.16.1 How would you define public participation in the context of Knysna Local Municipality?

Although the respondents came up with different definitions, all their responses included the following: That all stakeholders, including the broader public, should be afforded an opportunity to make inputs into the municipal affairs.
4.3.16.2 Theron (2009a:117) defines authentic public participation as an active process by which the public influences the direction and execution of a programme or project with a view to enhancing their wellbeing in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish. In your opinion is this happening in the Knysna Local Municipality?

All the respondents felt that due to the fact that local municipalities are still grappling with the notion of public participation, not all of the elements mentioned above would be fully adhered to at this stage; however an ideal situation would be to have such a state of affairs.

4.3.16.3 Have Ward Committees fully participated in the following processes:

- The IDP Review Process?
- The IDP Representative Forum?
- The budget?
- The Performance Management System?

All the respondents felt that the Ward Committees had fully participated in the above processes, as each Ward Committee was represented by two representatives throughout the year.

4.3.16.4 In your view have Ward Committees had any impact on the Local Council’s decisions?

All the respondents said “yes”.

4.3.16.5 Is there any link between Community Development Workers (CDWs) and Ward Committees?

In policy and operational terms there is clearly some potential for overlap in functions between Community Development Workers and Ward Committees. This question attempted to investigate whether a rational distribution of responsibilities is emerging on the ground. All the respondents indicated that there is still confusion in terms of the roles and functions of both the Ward Committees and CDWs. This sometimes results into
conflict. However, all the respondents indicated that this situation would improve with time.

4.3.16.6 What are the challenges facing the implementation of the Ward Committee System and what remedial actions would you recommend?

All the respondents felt that the only challenge facing Ward Committees was the lack of maximum exposure in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

4.3.16.7 In your view, do you think the Local Municipality is doing enough to promote public participation and the Ward Committee System?

All the respondents felt that the Local Municipality was doing enough to promote public participation and the Ward Committee system, as all structures and systems for public participation were properly in place.

4.3.16.8 What can be done to improve overall public participation in the Knysna Local Municipality?

Although all the respondents came up with different viewpoints, a clear message from them was that Ward Committees should facilitate all public participation processes in the Knysna Local Municipality. All the respondents felt that the non-partisan nature of Ward Committees is an important ingredient in the enhancement of public participation at local government.

4.3.17 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

4.3.17.1 What kind of training and or capacity building have Ward Committees received in order to fulfil their intended functions?

All the respondents indicated that the Ward Committees had received formal training offered by specific service providers.
4.3.17.2 In your view has this training improved the performance of Ward Committees?

All the respondents held the view that it had helped Ward Committee members and Councillors to better understand their roles, and therefore to become more effective.

4.3.18 GENERAL

4.3.18.1 In your view should Ward Committees be remunerated for their work?

All the respondents felt that the Ward Committees should be remunerated. The obvious reason for remunerating Ward Committee members was that many were drawn from indigent communities and were obliged to undertake public interest activities, whereas their own livelihoods were not secure. It was however, mentioned that the only significant form of compensation that had occurred was for the payment of transport costs.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a brief explanation of the relevant research methods used in conducting this research. This was necessary, as the analysis gave direction to the tools used for the empirical survey. The principal research method used was a standard questionnaire prepared to guide the interviews with all categories, namely Ward Councillors, Ward Committee members and the Local Municipal Officials. The purpose was to determine the level of effectiveness of the Ward Committees in co-ordinating and facilitating public participation processes at the Knysna Local Municipality. In the next chapter further recommendations from this study will be submitted.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter outlines the extent to which the objectives of the study have been realised. This chapter is concluded with a set of recommendations for the Knysna Local Municipality to consider.

5.2 THE REALISATION OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The first objective of the study was to provide a brief background of the Knysna Local Municipality, and in particular an outline of its institutional arrangements and the Ward Committees at a glance. In that regard Chapter Two of the study provided a brief synopsis of the Knysna Local Municipality. This included a municipal profile and a brief discussion of the processes that led to the election of the current Ward Committees.

The second objective was to evaluate the theoretical and legislative framework of public participation and the Ward Committee System in local government. Chapter Three discussed participatory governance within the context of Developmental Local Government. Secondly, it conceptualised the Ward Committee System, namely its origins and how it has come into the arena of policy discourse in South Africa. In addition, this chapter highlighted the theoretical exposition of the relevant literature and legislation on public participation and Ward Committees.

The third objective was to analyse the practical performance of Ward Committees in the Knysna Local Municipality and provide a research report on the empirical findings. This objective was achieved using a standard questionnaire which was prepared to guide the interviewers with all the categories of the respondents, namely Ward Councillors, Ward Committee members and the Local Municipal Officials. There was an overwhelming response on the positive impact of Ward Committees as a means for structured public participation.
The fourth objective is to submit recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of Ward Committees at local government in general, and in particular in the Knysna Local Municipality.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of the study was to test the hypothesis, as set out in Chapter One namely: The maximum utilisation of Ward Committees as a means for public participation processes at local government levels, specifically in the Knysna Local Municipality, could improve communication between local municipalities and the public. Furthermore, this would also contribute towards the speedy delivery of services to communities, as Ward Committees could serve as the Local Municipality’s strategic partners in executing the Council’s projects.

The literature review in Chapter Three was used to provide a theoretical perspectives on whether Ward Committees are useful conduits for public participation in local governance; whether they are inherently capable of playing the critical role expected of them; and also whether they create opportunities for real power-sharing between the Knysna Local Municipality and its communities. More significantly, use was made of a standard questionnaire which was prepared to guide the interviewers with all the categories, namely Ward Councillors, Ward Committee members and the Local Municipal Officials.

The results of the empirical survey were:

- Ward Committees ensure the accountability of Ward Councillors to their local constituency;
- The full participation of Ward Committees in the IDP Review Process, the IDP Representative Forum, the Budget and the Performance Management System. These improve the credibility of the processes as they assist in the mobilisation of communities for active participation.
- The Ward Committees are recognised structures to facilitate and co-ordinate public participation in particular participation in community projects.
- Ward Committees in general are an important means to enhance public participation at local government levels.
• The Local Council gives support to Ward Committees, but these are not fully exposed to the practical execution of the roles and responsibilities that are inherently entrusted on them. To that extent the hypothesis has been validated.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Following on from the research findings above, the following recommendations are submitted for the Knysna Local Municipality to consider, in order to improve the effectiveness of Ward Committees:

• **The Knysna Local Municipality should continuously provide Ward Committees with appropriate capacity-building or training in order for them to function effectively.**

Ward Committees’ training strategies should take cognisance of the unique nature of Ward Committees as fragile voluntary bodies that are still in the process of exploring and building upon this new and uniquely structured model of participatory democracy. These training programmes should also attempt to accommodate the different academic backgrounds of the ward committee members. The Local Municipality should also conduct a careful participatory review of ward committee experiences and local knowledge bases before planning any further Ward Committee training and capacity-building programmes. Some successful examples of capacity and training approaches emphasise the importance of building on past experiences and gains in capacity.

This can only be accomplished by working with beneficiaries in an interactive manner and focusing on the key development challenges and issues that are identified by both internal stakeholders and external service providers. Building the capacity of Ward Committees must go together with deepening the interaction between Ward Committees and the community, to ensure that it is really the community that can take advantage of newly empowered Ward Committees.
• The Knysna Local Municipality should have clear communication strategies to support Ward Committees.

The Knysna Local Municipality should put as much information as possible about the functioning of the municipal programmes and projects at the disposal of Ward Committees. Information should be carefully packaged to be as accessible as possible. This means that it should be written in an appropriate language, translated into local languages where possible, and should not use technical jargon. The Local Municipality also has the responsibility to communicate to citizens what Ward Committees are and what they exist to do.

• The Knysna Local Municipality should improve on the institutionalisation of the Ward Committees into its internal governance system.

Processes need to be institutionalised for input from Ward Committees to be channelled to the key decision-makers within council, such as portfolio committees and Executive Committees. In this regard the role of the Council Speaker is very important and adequate capacity within this office needs to be put in place, as there are currently only two officials dealing with this function in the Knysna Local Municipality. This would also include the administrative support for Ward Committees. In those instances where it is clear that the Municipality is unable to meet the demands of the citizens that are channelled through Ward Committees, this needs to be openly communicated back to communities with proper justification.

• The Knysna Local Municipality should integrate Ward Committees fully into the Municipal IDP and budget processes.

A central component of the communication role of Ward Committees should relate to the Local Municipal IDP and budget processes. Ward Committees should be a key conduit for back-and-forth communication between communities and municipalities on community priorities and development strategies. In order to effect this the Local Municipality should make available and package planning and budget information disaggregated to ward level in much more accessible and user-friendly formats, with which Ward Committees can then engage.
• **Ward Committees should receive incentives for their work.**

There appears to be an understanding that if Ward Committees are to be remunerated, it should be a modest sitting allowance only. This should not become a ‘blanket’ policy and the Local Municipality should retain the discretion not to pay Ward Committees. The principle of voluntarism should be protected by making it clear that only indigent members will receive allowances. Such payments are simply to avoid further pressures on marginal livelihoods.

A trial exercise should be conducted to test the impact on ward committee functioning and independence. A clear and public distinction should be made between those who receive payment and those that do not.

• **The Knysna Local Municipality should encourage and promote learning between Ward Committees.**

Exchange visits should be set up between different wards within and between municipalities, to highlight and generate learning about good and innovative practices.

• **A range of public participation strategies should be promoted.**

A one-size-fits-all approach to public participation should not be used. It is important to recognise that communities have different traditions and needs when it comes to public participation. For instance, poor communities would need much more intense forms of support and engagement in generating economic, social and service development, while wealthier, better-resourced communities would need a different, less intense, mode of engagement.

The researcher is proposing a Ward Committee Participation Orbit (see Figure 5.1 below) which is shaped within the context of the above recommendations, practical challenges and opportunities for implementing the Ward Committee System in the Knysna Local Municipality. In crafting this Ward Committee Participation Orbit, the researcher considered *inter alia* the model provided by the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005) which is presented in Chapter Three of the study (see Annexure C: Communication and Ward Committee Participation Model based on quarterly meeting programme).
In addition to the researcher’s personal experience of the Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee and public participation processes, this model guided him to objectively craft a Ward Committee Participation Orbit best suited to the circumstances of the Municipality.
Figure 5.1: Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee Participation Orbit

Source: Adapted from Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:51)
5.4.1 Interpretation of the Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee Participation Orbit

- The Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee Participation Orbit starts with the people’s needs which are translated into a strategy called the IDP. Council makes the final decision. An IDP is a process through which municipalities prepare a strategic development plan which extends over a five-year period. The IDP is a principal strategic-planning instrument which guides and informs all planning, budgeting, management and decision-making processes in a municipality.

- Through the IDP, which necessitates the participation of all relevant stakeholders (in this case the people are the key stakeholders), a municipality can:
  - Identify its key development priorities;
  - Formulate a clear vision, mission and values;
  - Formulate appropriate strategies;
  - Develop the appropriate organisational structure and systems to realise the vision and mission; and
  - Align resources with the development priorities.

- This Orbit puts Ward Committees at the centre of facilitating and co-ordinating the Council’s developmental agenda. This Ward Committees should be representative of all sectors that are active with the respective wards.

- The needs are prioritised for budgeting purposes. There are two forms of budget, namely the operational budget (which is for stationery, staff salaries) and the capital budget (which is for big projects, such as roads).

- In order to ensure that Council implements the programmes that are in the budget a Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) will have to be put in place. The SDBIP serves as a ‘contract’ between the Administration, Council and Community expressing the goals and objectives set by the Council as quantifiable outcomes that can be implemented by the administration over twelve months. This provides the basis for measuring performance in service delivery.
end-of-year targets and for implementing the budget. The SDBIP provides the vital link between the Mayor, Council (Executive) and the Administration, and it further facilitates the process for holding management accountable for its performance. The SDBIP is a management, implementing and monitoring tool that will assist the Mayor, Councillors, Municipal Manager, Senior Managers and the Community too.

- The SDBIP will feed into the broader Performance Management System. The Performance Management System is essentially concerned with the overall performance of the Local Municipality, i.e. the development and monitoring of performance indicators and standards for the municipality as an organisational entity. In order to ensure that the municipality meets its organisational performance indicators and standards it is appropriate to introduce a performance management system for the individual employees within the Local Municipality. Thus, each individual is given performance objectives, targets and standards that are linked to the objectives of his/her team, his/her department and ultimately his/her Local Municipality.

- The process of reporting back to communities needs to be continuous and is facilitated through Ward Committees and the annual report which reflects on the Local Municipality’s performance in the previous financial year.

5.4.2 The Key Principles of the Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee Participation Orbit

The key principles of Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee Participation Orbit include the following:

- The participation of poor people in planning;
- Systems that are realistic and practical, so that the planning process is implementable - using available resources within the municipality and integrated with existing processes;
- Planning is linked to a legitimate structure (the Ward Committee);
- Planning is not a once-off exercise, but is part of a longer process, with implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and annual reviews;
- Planning is people-focused and empowering, as it should be;
• Planning and implementation build on the strengths and opportunities, not on problems;
• Planning is holistic and should cover all the different sectors;
• Planning promotes mutual accountability between the community and the municipality.

5.4.3 The conditions for the success of the Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee Participation Orbit

The conditions for the success of the Knysna Local Municipality’s Ward Committee Participation Orbit are the following:

• The Council must meet at least once quarterly, as provided by section 18(2) of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act [No: 117 of 1998] to avoid congested communication and participation processes between the Council and the communities.
• The Council must adopt a delegation system, as provided by section 59 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act [No: 32 of 2000] to fast-track the decision-making and implementation processes.
• The Council must have a well-capacitated and resourced Political and Administrative Support Centre in the Office of the Speaker of the Council to ensure effective coordination.
• Ward Committees must be well-structured, capacitated and resourced, so that they can execute their meeting programmes and implement their mandate.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Swanepoel, H. 2006. **Community Participation can be a learning process** In Putu, M. **The Role of Ward Committees in enhancing Public Participation in Rustenberg Municipality: A Critical Evaluation** Citizen Leadership Unit: IDASA.


ANNEXURE A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THE KNYSNA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY’S WARD COMMITTEE SYSTEM

2009-05-28

Mr Sandile Ngqele
IDP Coordinator
Buffalo City Municipality
E-mail Address: sandilen@buffalocity.gov.za

Dear Mr Ngqele

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY’S WARD COMMITTEE SYSTEM

I acknowledge receipt of your e-mail of 22 May 2009 regarding the abovementioned matter and take note of your request.

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research on our Ward Committee System.

Our Manager: Public Participation, Mr Jacky Kalani is the contact person who is dealing with Ward Committees and you are welcome to contact him on (044) 302 6355 / jkalani@knysna.gov.za

Good luck with your studies.

Yours sincerely

JOHNNY DOUGLAS
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

cc - Director: Corporate Services, Reggie Smit
     - Manager: Public Participation, Jacky Kalani
ANNEXURE B: QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE MAGISTER PHILOSOPHIAE (MPHIL) DEGREE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AT NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY 2009

RESEARCH TOPIC: An investigation of Ward Committees as a means for structured public participation: The case of the Knysna Local Municipality.

RESEARCHER: Mr Sandile Wiseman Ngqele

SUPERVISOR: Mr K. Asmah-Andoh (Department of Political and Governmental Studies, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the effectiveness of Ward Committees in co-ordinating and facilitating authentic public participation processes at local government. This study focuses on the case of the Knysna Local Municipality.

Upon the completion of the study, the summary of the research results will be forwarded to the Knysna Local Municipality. It is hoped that these results will provide guidelines on the role Ward Committees should play in bridging the growing divide between communities and municipalities, and advance measures that could facilitate greater public participation in municipality planning processes.

Please note that the interview is expected to take approximately 15 minutes of the participant’s time. It is guaranteed that the information provided in the questionnaire will be treated anonymously and with complete confidentiality.

Questions of clarity may be directed to the Principal Investigator Mr Sandile Wiseman Ngqele at 079 392 6650 (and/or 046 – 624 1140 during office hours).
FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. INTERVIEWEE CATEGORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker of the Local Council</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director Corporate Services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Participation Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Councillor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Committee Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. WARD NUMBER (IF WARD COUNCILLOR OR WARD COMMITTEE MEMBER)

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ESTABLISHMENT OF WARD COMMITTEES

3. Briefly explain the Ward Committee establishment process.

4. Was there an electoral / nomination / other system designed and agreed upon?

5. Has the Local Municipality adopted a policy on how Ward Committees should carry out their roles and functions?

6. Has the Local Council budgeted for the functioning and support of Ward Committees?

MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION

7. What term of office has the Local Municipality set for Ward Committees?
8. In your view are Ward Committees generally representative of race and gender?

FUNCTIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

9. Do the majority of Ward Committees have some form of mechanism to ensure accountability to their local constituency (sub-forums of the ward, regular meetings that are open to the public, community report-back meetings)?

10. Are you convinced that everyone (Local Municipal Officials, Councillors and Ward Committee Members) fully understands his/her/ their role with regard to the Ward Committee System?

11. What percentage of Councillors ensures that regular Ward Committee meetings are held as according to the agreed guidelines / Council policy?

12. Has the Local Municipality delegated any specific powers to Ward Committees?

13. Is there a system within the Local Council to get report-backs from Ward Councillors on concerns raised by the Ward Committee?

14. Does the Local Council or any of its committees make provision for the tabling of reports by Ward Councillors on issues raised by Ward Committees?

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

16. How would you define public participation in the context of the Knysna Local Municipality?

17. Theron (2009a:117) defines authentic public participation as an active process by which the public influences the direction and execution of a programme or project with a view to enhancing their wellbeing in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or any other values they cherish.

In your opinion is this happening in the Knysna Local Municipality?
18. Have Ward Committees fully participated in the following process:

- The IDP Review Process?
- The IDP Representative Forum?
- The budget?
- The Performance Management System?

19. In your view have Ward Committees had any impact on the Local Council’s decisions?

20. Is there any link between Community Development Workers (CDWs) and Ward Committees?

21. What are the challenges facing the implementation of the Ward Committee System and what remedial actions would you recommend?

22. In your view do you think the municipality is doing enough to promote public participation and the Ward Committee System?

23. What can be done to improve overall public participation in the Knysna Local Municipality?

**TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

24. What kind of training and or capacity building have Ward Committees received in order to fulfil their intended functions?

25. In your view has this training improved the performance of Ward Committees?

**GENERAL**

26. In your view should Ward Committees be remunerated for their work?
ANNEXURE C: LANGUAGE QUALITY ASSURANCE CERTIFICATE
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We hereby certify that we have language edited the treatise prepared by Mr Sandile Wiseman Ngqele entitled AN INVESTIGATION OF WARD COMMITTEES AS A MEANS FOR STRUCTURED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY, and that we are satisfied that, provided the changes we have made are effected to the text, the language is of an acceptable standard, fit for publication.

Kate Goldstone

Patrick Goldstone

KB Goldstone

Dr PJS Goldstone

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9 January 2010