AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF WARD COMMITTEES IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WITH REFERENCE TO THE KOUGA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Linda Simanga, do solemnly declare that this dissertation is my work, and has not been submitted by me for evaluation at any other University.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces a study on an assessment of the role of ward committees in public participation with reference to the Kouga Local Municipality in the Province of the Eastern Cape in South Africa. It first gives a background to the study and entails, among other things, the research problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, a literature review, research methodology, and an overview of the chapters.

1.2 Background and Rationale for the Study

The Republic of South Africa became a democratic country in 1994 after the historic democratic elections. This year also marks the year when South Africa’s first democratic parliament was convened. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act (no. 108 of 1996) was enacted in 1996. This Constitution provides for the creation of the three spheres of government, namely, the national level, which deals with matters of national importance, the provincial level, which deals with matters of provincial importance, and the local level which deals with matters of local importance.

Section 152(1) (e) of the above-mentioned Constitution stipulates that the object of local government, amongst others, is to ensure the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local governance. Section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act (no.117 of 1998)
also requires municipalities to establish ward committees in a manner that seeks to enhance participatory democracy at the local level.

Municipalities are established in terms of Section 12 of the Municipal Structures Act (no. 117 of 1998), wherein Members of Executive Councils (MEC’s) may, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, establish a municipality in each municipal area which the Demarcation Board demarcates in the province in terms of the Municipal Demarcation Act (no. 27 of 1998).

Sections 7 and 8 of the Municipal Structures Act (no. 117 of 1998) further stipulate the categories of municipalities as A, B and C. Category A is a metropolitan municipality with wards and ward committees. B is a local municipality characterized by the existence of wards and ward committees to enhance public participation. C is a district municipality, whose responsibility is to support local municipalities within its area of jurisdiction so that they are self sufficient and can manage their own affairs. This study focuses on the Kouga Local Municipality, which is a Category B Municipality as promulgated by the then MEC for Housing, Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Honourable MEC S. Kwelita in the Provincial Gazette (Gazette No. 1537) dated 23 May 2006.

The scenario above indicates that in the Kouga Local Municipality, ward committees are supposed to play a critical role in public participation. The study seeks to assess their role and to establish whether or not the ward committee system is effective in this regard. It is common knowledge that, whilst various pieces of legislation are clear in terms of what the role of ward committees should be, the question remains whether there is any adherence in municipalities to ensure that they fulfill their role in public participation, and hence the study.
1.3 Problem Statement

The introduction of the new system of local government in December 2000 changed the face of local government in South Africa. The implementation of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (no. 117 of 1998) introduced new structures and their functions in the local government system.

Category B municipalities with a Mayoral Committee System, combined with a ward participatory type system, refers to a local municipality which has wards where there must be a structured system for public participation. This specifically means that a local municipality must make every means effort to ensure that ward committees are established, so that the needs of communities are taken into consideration during the decision-making processes of council.

Public participation helps to build an informed citizenry with a sense of ownership. In development projects this allows communities to buy in and be partners in processes of governance. The question that must constantly be asked is whether communities actually participate in the making of decisions which affect their daily lives, or whether it is a top-down approach, with no consultation, to influence government programmes.

Municipal councils have an obligation to establish ward committees to enhance public participation, but the question always remains whether this is done and if so, how effective are those ward committees. The ward committees have been established in the Kouga Local Municipality, but it does not seem that they are realizing their initially intended objectives,
especially with regard to matters of public participation. Hence their effectiveness could be questioned in this regard.

1.4 Hypothesis

Zikmund (1994:487) defines a hypothesis as an unproven proposition or supposition that tentatively explains certain facts or phenomena. It is a statement, an assumption about the nature of the world. In other words it is a guess until it is tested to determine whether it is true or false.

Public participation in municipalities should be a process of strengthening and maintaining the country’s democracy and good governance. Hence it should ensure that communities are empowered for meaningful participation.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The purpose of conducting this study is to analyze the current system of ward committees in local government to establish whether it is fully effective as far as it relates to public participation in a manner that involves communities in the decision-making processes of municipalities. The research is intended to analyze critically the ward participatory system of local government with reference to the Kouga Local Municipality in order to establish whether the Municipal Council, through ward committees, actually reaches out to the communities, thereby enhancing public participation. This will indicate whether communities influence the decision-making processes of the Municipal Council.
Specific objectives of the study are:

- To assess the role of ward committees in public participation.
- To assess the extent to which ward committees interact with their communities.
- To assess the extent to which ward committees liaise between their respective communities and the Municipal Council.
- To assess the extent to which ward councillors, who are chairpersons of ward committees, act on behalf of their constituencies in Municipal Council meetings and Municipal committees.

The study will also investigate the challenges facing public participation in local government. Recommendations would be formulated to probably assist the municipality towards contributing in its organizational arrangements. This would also ensure that ward committees fulfill their role in public participation.

1.6 Research Methodology

Research methodology can be described as a method through which the researcher collects, analyzes and interprets data in order to achieve the research aims and objectives. Babbie and Mouton (2001:103) elaborate, saying research methodology deals with whom or what will be studied to collect information, identification of subjects and how information will be obtained.

According to Neuman (2006:151) there are two approaches to research, namely qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative researchers
often rely on interpretive or critical social science and emphasize conducting detailed examinations of cases which arise in the natural flow of natural life. Quantitative researchers rely on a positivist approach to social science, and emphasizing on measuring variables and testing hypothesis which are linked to general casual explanations.

For the purposes of conducting this study, the approach used is qualitative. The study focused on the assessment of the role of ward committees in public participation. Therefore, participants in the research were ward committees themselves with specific reference to their roles and functions. The other reason for undertaking the qualitative approach is that so much first-hand information must be obtained in order to get the correct version of information that will be obtained. The other factor that added value to the research is the fact that the setting for conducting the research was in the wards where the ward committees were elected as community representatives.

Ward committees are established in terms of Section 12 of the Municipal Structures Act (Act 117 of 1998), and therefore, conducting qualitative research on the role of ward committees was selected as an option. This made it possible to ascertain from research respondents to associate themselves with the study to an extent of stipulating shortcomings of the ward committee system. Whilst municipalities have a constitutional responsibility to ensure the participation of communities in matters of governance, they also have a responsibility for the establishment of ward committees.

The Guidelines for the Establishment and Operations of Ward Committees (Notice no.965 of 2005) stipulate that the composition of ward committees
is such that they consist of ten members, elected from the varying sectors of community, namely, representatives from youth, disabled persons, women, business, education and ratepayers to mention but a few. The intention for including all these groupings is to ensure that all issues affecting communities at large are considered when policy decisions affecting them are made.

Whilst focusing on the role of ward committees, it is also important to emphasize the role of ward councillors who are elected as chairpersons of ward committees. This is to ensure that the issues raised at the level of communities, through ward committees, are submitted to councils and report-back mechanisms are in place. It is through the identification of key role-players that the intended outputs of the research will be achieved in a way that will allow them to agree or disagree with the perceived phenomena, after which data will be analyzed with clear recommendations.

1.6.1 Population and Sampling

Babbie & Mouton (2001:100) define population as the group of participants from whom conclusions are to be drawn. Welman & Kruger (2001:46) further says the population is the study object which may be individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events or conditions to which they are exposed. The size of the population then determines whether it will be appropriate to include all members of the population or not. Other issues to consider during choosing the population are those in relation to time and cost-effectiveness.
The Kouga Local Municipality has ten wards with hundred ward committee members in each ward. Therefore, there are 100 ward committee members in the whole municipality. Out of the population of hundred ward committee members it would be costly and time consuming to engage all of them in the research. Hence sampling was be necessary in order to get their views.

Selected committee members from all ten wards of the Kouga Local Municipality, and all ten ward councillors participated in the study. A simple random sampling was done in order to select forty ward committee members to participate. Questionnaires were be used to collect data. They were hand-delivered and collected by the researcher.

On the other hand, through purposive sampling, three wards will be selected in order to find out the views of the members of the public with respect to their interaction with their ward committee members, and their participation in municipal affairs. The selection of the members of the public was confined only to members of ratepayers associations whose details were requested from the municipality. These members were also members of the ward committees but their specific interest centred on rates and services of the municipality. This exercise made the study manageable to the researcher. Questionnaires were used to collect data and the researcher delivered and collected the questionnaires by hand.
The responsibility for the establishment of ward committees resides with the municipal council, by ensuring that constituency meetings are convened for the election of the members. Once the ward committees have been elected, the municipality must provide the necessary support to allow them to perform their functions effectively. Interview sessions were conducted with the officials from the municipality. Their role and function in the municipality was for public participation and the effectiveness of ward committees, thereby involving communities in matters of local governance.

1.7 Ethical considerations

According to Zikmund (1994:56), in any research situation there are three parties involved, namely, the researcher, the sponsoring agent (user) and the respondent (subject). The interaction of these parties presents a series of ethical questions. Consciously or unconsciously, each party expects certain rights and feels certain obligations towards the other party.

When undertaking research, the subject must be willing to participate and provide true and honest responses. However his or her right to privacy must be respected. In return the researcher must be open and honest from the onset in a way that will not deceive his subject. In other words the purpose of the research must be clearly spelt out to the subjects in a way that will take recognize the rights and obligations of all the parties involved. This will allow for a situation where the integrity of the research processes are welcomed. Future research work may then be received with greater enthusiasm.
The research is a result of perceived phenomena and it is therefore anticipated that the subjects will participate voluntarily. However, it is important for the researcher not to lose sight of the elements of exaggeration, but to remain focused on the actual objectives of the research. It is therefore, important to note that, in this study, issues of confidentiality, anonymity and avoidance of psychological and physical harm will be given due attention throughout. It is thus incumbent on the researcher to exercise the highest level of professionalism and maintain the confidence of the subjects.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Hart (1998:13) defines literature review as the selection of available documents - both published and unpublished - on the topic, which contains information, ideas, data and evidence, written from a particular standpoint, to fulfill certain aims. The review also assists in expressing certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation in relation to the research being proposed.

The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) dictates that the object of local government amongst others is to involve communities in matters that affect them. The only way to achieve this is through enhancing public participation in a manner that ensures that municipalities build informed communities that positively influence the decision making processes of councils.

The Department of Provincial and Local Government (dplg), in its draft policy framework for public participation in South Africa (2005:1) reiterates public participation as building on the commitment of the democratic
government to deepen democracy. This is embedded in the Constitution as the concept of local government, which comprises of the municipality and the community.

Structured public participation, which is the basis of operation for municipalities which have ward participation, has proven to be very successful in many municipalities and case studies to this effect have proved this. All the information revealed in the ensuing chapters and could set a standard for the Kouga Municipality to follow suit. This is because local government is subjected to the same legislative processes and procedures to even assist in the recommendations.

1.9 Organisation of Chapters

Chapter 1 focuses on, among others, the rationale for the study, objectives to be achieved and research methodology. This forms the basis in terms of which the researcher decided to conduct the study and the manner in which information will be gathered.

Chapter 2 focuses on literature study. It is clear that the study is as a result of a perceived phenomenon. The study looked at available information in relation to the topic being researched to confirm or reject the findings.

Chapter 3 focuses the on the ward committee system in the Kouga Local municipality. It will examine specifically the role of Council in supporting the ward committees and the challenges that the municipality is currently encountering, thereby rendering the ward committees to be ineffective.
Chapter 4 deals with the research methodology, data collection and analysis. This is a stage where information was obtained from identified participants and provided a practical component of the research topic to allow for an objective analysis of the situation. This enabled the researcher to propose clear recommendations.

Chapters 5 focuses on the analysis of findings by way of consolidating data collected from the respondents used in the study. This is a stage where clear recommendations were provided in a way that would assist the Kouga Local Municipality to improve the role of ward committees in public participation.
CHAPTER 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

According to Hart (1998:13) literature review is the selection of available documents - both published and unpublished - on the topic, which contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims. The review will also assist in expressing certain views on the nature of the topic, how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation in relation to the research being proposed. Literature review is often done on the assumption that there is information available on the study to be researched, but focusing on the limitations of the study as a result of the identified problems in relation to the topic.

The ward participation system emanates from Section 8 of the Municipal Structures Act (no.117of 1998) which outlines the types of category B municipalities whose system of local government has been promulgated in the government gazette to adopt such a system. The focus of the study is more on enhancing the ward participatory system for Kouga Municipality as promulgated in the Province of the Eastern Cape Provincial Gazette (no. 1537 of 2006).

The categories and types of municipalities inform how municipalities must deal with both their executive and legislative authority and as such the ward system is a typical example of that system of local governance. The system of local government that came into effect in 2000 for South Africa correctly positioned municipalities where they are at the coalface of service delivery and give practical meaning to participatory democracy.
2.2 Legislative Framework Supporting the Ward Participatory System

The Constitution of South Africa Act (no.108 of 1996) allows for the existence of three spheres of government, namely, National, Provincial and Local Government. Section 151 stipulates that local government consists of municipalities whose executive and legislative authority is vested in its Municipal Council. This section further stipulates that a municipality has the right to govern on its own initiative and the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation.

The above exposition clearly indicates that municipalities are positioned to cater for the needs of communities and it is clear that when one talks about enhancing the ward participation system, mention must be made in terms of involving communities in matters of local government and hence public participation.

The Municipal Demarcation Act (no. 27 of 1998) provides for the criteria and procedures for the determination of municipal boundaries by the demarcation board and matters connected thereto. One criterion which is used by the demarcation board in determining municipal boundaries is to determine the number of wards against the population in a municipal area to inform the type and categories of municipalities.

Due to the geographic spread and vastness of Kouga, there are ten wards for whom the municipality manages and provides municipal services. In addition for effective management of the wards by the municipality, communities can never be left out on issues of local
government. The focus is to ensure that there is a structured system of participation through the establishment of effective ward committees. Council once more has the legislative authority to establish these committees to serve as a legal advisory structure.

Section 72 of the Municipal Structures Act (no.117 of 1998) stipulates that only certain local municipalities may have ward committees. Section 72 (3) further says the object of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. The Kouga Municipality is a Category B municipality with the Mayoral Executive System combined with the ward participatory system.

The legal framework for the establishment of Kouga places the obligation on the municipality to ensure that communities are part of local government processes. It is imperative that functional ward committees be established.

Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (no. 32 of 2000) stipulates that a municipality must develop a culture of community participation and must encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. The Systems Act further elaborates on the municipal affairs as:

- Preparation, implementation and review of the municipality’s integrated development plans (IDPs);
- The establishment, implementation and the review of the municipality’s performance management system (PMS);
- The monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance;
- The preparation of its budget; and
• Strategic decisions relating to the provisioning of municipal services.

2.3 The Nature of Local Government

Ismael et al (1997:2) define local government as a sphere of government that is centralized, a representative institution with specific powers delegated to it by a high level of government to deal with issues that are local in nature. Within the South African context, Chapter 7 of the Constitution Act (no. 108 of 1996) sets out a clear distinction about the structure of local government and its legal status in exercising both the legislative and executive authority.

The nature and structure of local government is designed in such a manner that there is close co-operation and integration between the council, comprised of councillors, communities, who influence municipal policies and programmes for planning purposes, and the administration whose responsibility is to legally advise Council and implement council decisions. For communities to participate meaningfully on issues of local governance it is imperative upon councils to design a structured system of participation.

The system of government which was promulgated for Kouga Municipality, is in terms of the Eastern Cape Provincial Gazette (no. 1537). This system allows for the establishment of ward committees through which communities are enabled to participate meaningfully on matters affecting them in the system of government. Whilst ward committees are designed to be the link between communities and council, it is clear that the system has its shortcomings due to the wide-spread perception that
municipalities do not consult enough resulting in limited influence of communities on issues of governance.

Ward committees are supposed to play a critical role in ensuring that national challenges such as poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment are reduced. Section 152 of the Constitution establishes representative and participatory democracy as two objects of local government. These objects, inter alia, to provide a democratic and accountable government for local communities and to encourage the involvement of communities in matters of local government.

Matters of local government are those issues relating to the development of municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDP’s), municipal budgets, performance management system and by-laws. These are critical issues upon which municipalities are obliged to consult, thereby enhancing participatory democracy through an effective ward committees system.

According to Gildenhuys & Knipe (2000:247) the structure of local government is the framework within which local public policy is made and implemented. In organizing local government, emphasis should be placed on contrasting, but not mutually exclusive, matters such as individual liberty and corporate authority, local political initiative, citizen participation and professional management.

The executive and legislative authority vested on municipalities by the various pieces of legislation does not absolve council of its responsibility to involve communities in participating in matters of local government, but to ensure inclusiveness through consultation. Local public policies that regulate how municipalities operate would normally undergo public
participation process before adoption, in order to ensure community buy-in and efficiency. This is a way of confirming the critical nature of public participation since it forms part of the solutions for good governance.

2.4 Basic Assumptions Underlying Public Participation

The Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2005:1) defines public participation as an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups, within selected communities, can exchange views and influence decision-making. It is further defined as a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives.

Within the local government context, public participation relates to the manner in which communities are enabled to participate in the affairs of governance through consultative processes, thereby influencing policies of government. The more the communities are informed, the easier it is for government to implement programmes that are community-driven and improve the living conditions, especially the poor communities.

According to the framework, basic assumptions underlying public participation are:

- Public participation is designed to promote the values of good governance and human rights. Good governance has to do with the manner in which municipalities account for their operations and how they respond to service delivery issues. Communities demand a range of services from municipalities. Municipalities in turn must deliver on those services through proper communication systems in
a manner which is transparent and understood by the ordinary citizens.

Delivery on basic services is a human rights issue which informs how effective the system of local government is supposed to be for communities. Participation of communities should therefore be enhanced to ensure that these issues are addressed. Mention can also be made of the fact that the main source of income for municipalities is ratepayers’ taxes. The more the communities pay for municipal services, the more the municipalities are expected to account on how their money has been spent. This goes back to the creation of good working relationships between municipal councils and communities through public participation.

• Public participation is designed to narrow the social distance between the electorate and the elected institutions. Municipalities are designed so that at the level of communities, in other words, at a ward level, communities will undergo an election process and elect a ward councillor. In the specific constituency, the ward councillors will conduct elections for the ward committee. The ward councillor will be the chairperson.

The handbook for ward committees (2005:5) defines the key role of the ward committee as the raising of issues of concern about the ward to the ward councillor. They will also have a say in decisions, planning and projects that the municipality undertakes which have an impact on the ward. The ward councillor takes the issues to the elected institution, which in this case is the municipality. Here the issues will be addressed and there will be report-back sessions to the
communities. Kouga is no different to this arrangement, since there are ward committees to perform this function, but the question remains whether the system is effective.

The focus in terms of the ward participatory system is to ensure that, whilst the structured participation is in place, it should be meaningful and objective for the benefit of the communities in their entirety.

### 2.5 Participatory democracy

A variety of legislation on local government has been promulgated, to ensure the involvement of communities. Zimmerman (1986:1) concurs with this notion, but further says whilst there is agreement that citizens should play an informed and active role in the governance system, the forms and the extent that citizen participation should take must be objective in order to achieve the desired outcomes. This is premised from the fact that if participation is not managed and controlled, it will lead to chaos and anarchy.

South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, and in the entire process of attaining democracy, the milestone of democracy was achieved when the first ever democratic elections took place in 1995. This year was marked by the participation of the country’s citizens in the election of a democratic government and the nominations into positions of power were done with all citizens exercising their constitutional right of association without exclusion either
through race or colour. Whilst participatory democracy ensures equal participation of all communities on issues of governance, with specific reference to South Africa, legislation places an obligation on government to consult in order to ensure that the outcomes of the promulgations of public documents undergo public participation. In other words, all public inputs must be consolidated into these documents.

According to Roger Southall (2004) in the International NGO Journal Vol. 1(3), “participatory democracy entails a high level of public participation in the political process through a wide variety of institutional channels”. Participatory democracy can only come into being when ordinary men and women from all sectors of society are afforded an opportunity to contribute actively and meaningfully to their own development and well being. The notion of participatory democracy is sometimes perceived as a mechanism where there are seemingly limitations that are meant to reduce the authority of government to deliver on its mandate.

The above notion may sometimes seem to be true since public participation includes elements of transparency, dialogue and accountability. Citizens perceive government in all spheres as being corrupt and lacking responsiveness to the plight of the poor due to the absence of connection between the elected representatives. As and when these perceptions emerge, the challenge is always for government to ensure that all public
participation initiatives are strengthened to make public participation a reality.

All attention should be focussed on the fact that democracy entails the election of a representative government where the interests of all communities, irrespective of political background, will be respected. Public participation is a process of responding to the needs of the people, but for it to be successful it needs the support of the people, hence the establishment of ward committees. Municipalities, both in their administrative and political capacity, need to display the highest level of sensitivity in dealing with the needs of the communities. Ward committees are a vehicle that can be utilized to achieve this objective.

2.6 Active Citizen Participation through Ward Committees

South Africa is a democratic country and is committed to public participation as a measure to ensure that people have a say on issues of government. The organisation for economic co-operation and development handbook (2001:16) defines active participation as a means through which citizens themselves take a role in the exchange on policy-making by proposing policy options, even though the final decision rests with government. Engaging citizens in policy making is an advanced two way relationship between government and, in this case, local government, and communities based on a principle of partnership.
Specifically for municipalities the only form for structured participation is through ward committees. Ward committees are legal structures which are best suited to ensure wide citizen participation thereby enhancing public participation as outlined by the various pieces of legislation. The institution of ward committees has a legislative responsibility in enhancing public participation, with specific reference in local government policy making processes.

In an effort to ensure their efficiency, the Department of Provincial and Local Government developed guidelines for their establishment and operations, (Notice no. 27699 of 2005). The following highlights are some of the issues outlined in the gazette:

- It is an advisory body in the sense that they are in a position to submit the needs of communities through the ward councillor to Council for consideration. This is somehow the way of exercising participation of the public, thereby influencing the decision-making processes of Council.

- Ward committees are a representative structure consisting of communities from all sectors of society. These sectors include religious groupings, health and education, the youth, business, ratepayers associations and people living with disabilities, to mention but a few. The representative nature of ward committees is an endeavour to ensure that all the diverse needs of
communities are attended to since people will not need the same thing at a time.

- A ward committee is an independent structure. This is so because communities always exercise their constitutional rights to freedom of association, including belonging to political parties of their choice. Whilst people exercise their rights in terms of political affiliation, ward committees must be sensitive and not be biased towards one party and forget the needs expressed by other political groupings. It goes without saying that they must perform their functions without fear or intimidation.

2.7 Benefits and Costs of Public Participation

On a yearly basis all spheres of government engage in the development of their strategic planning documents to respond to issues of service delivery. At the same time Schedule 4 of the Constitution stipulates the competencies of every sphere of government. Communities do not differentiate on whose role it is to do what in terms of these allocated competencies. This is a constant challenge, but enhancing public participation is the only tool that can alleviate this situation.
2.7.1 Benefits

According to Zimmerman (1986:3) the benefits for participatory democracy are:

• Active participation of communities makes them aware of government programmes that will affect their lives. This is evident because municipalities, on a yearly basis, develop their Integrated Development Plans (IDP’s) to outline programmes which must be prioritized and be allocated funds for implementation. The programmes are identified through a consultative process that involves meetings with communities in their wards to prioritize accordingly.

The programmes, once approved, are incorporated into service delivery and budget implementation plans for implementation with monitoring time-frames to ensure efficiency.

• A second potential benefit of citizen involvement stems from the valuable inputs which citizens can make regarding planning and the implementation processes, based upon their detailed knowledge of their local conditions, needs and desires. When the IDP’s are developed, the best audience to be in a better position to articulate ward based needs are the communities residing in that ward.
Municipalities have a responsibility to provide, amongst others, basic services to communities, like water, sanitation, health and electricity. The municipality must do is to provide the necessary funding for service delivery and improve the lives of the communities. This is a bottom-up approach, where drawing the line of responsibility comes into being.

- From the government’s standpoint, citizens who share the responsibility for decision-making with elected officers may have the advantage of facilitating the implementation of plans and programmes. This is always the case, because communities will be more willing to accept and work for the successful completion of projects if they themselves helped to plan the projects. They will understand better the reasons for the projects much better.

Every ward is led by the leadership of an elected ward councillor, who must ensure that there is a communication relationship between communities in the ward and council. On the other hand, for every project that is approved for implementation, there must be a feedback to communities before rolling out projects to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders. This is a process that ensures the buy-in of communities, especially because ward projects always benefit communities.
- Fourthly, involvement by communities has a democratic value by making it easier for them to hold elected and appointed officials accountable for their actions. In other words, municipalities have a responsibility to establish knowledgeable and informed communities that will contribute meaningfully to the processes of government. The ward committee system is designed to achieve the notion of responsibility and accountability by monitoring the performance of the municipality.

At the end of each financial year municipalities are obligated to prepare annual reports on performance and financial management and submit these reports to provincial and national departments as well as the Auditor General’s office. This is a means of ensuring accountability regarding service delivery on projects identified for communities. These reports, once completed, must be published for public comments.

Kouga has, for the first time in consecutive years, for the financial year 2006/07 received a qualified audit report, which is quite an improvement in terms of the institutions’ performance because they are able to report on their performance and shortcomings on service delivery.
2.7.3 Costs

Zimmerman (1986:3) further outlines the costs for citizen participation as:

- Government expenses may be increased by the added costs of keeping the public fully informed. The IDP participation processes in municipalities involves huge financial implications. These are the costs related to operations in providing for transportation, producing and printing documents, venues for meetings, and so on. However, even though the costs might seem great, consultation is a process that municipalities are obligated to undertake to ensure that the strategic plans are informed by the articulated needs of society.

- Limited competence in terms of knowing on how the system of government operates is another cost of public participation. This leads constantly to situations of not meeting set legal time-frames in the planning processes. An example of this is the fact that the Systems Act (no. 32 of 2000) requires that municipal councils adopt their IDP’s and budgets by no later than 31 March every year. By implication this tells one that the planning stages must begin as early as September each year in order to meet these deadlines. Kouga met these deadlines and, as a result, the draft IDP and budget for 2008/09 was adopted in a Council meeting that took place on 31 March 2008.
• The other associated cost with public participation is when the need identified benefits a few members of the communities instead of covering the entire geographical area and the communities at large. An example can be made between building a sports field and building a school. It is clear that the school should be the priority. On the basis of the allocation of funds, the schools will a long term effect because children will have a better chance to advance with their schooling and have a better future.

Whilst the benefits can sometimes outweigh the costs in relation to public participation, the costs should be seen as empowering communities to initiate programmes themselves especially those which will improve living conditions. As far as the decision-making processes are concerned, the tendency is to have communities which are well informed through an all-inclusive process where municipalities establish representative forums. These forums are well aware of government programmes and are in a position to represent municipalities in community meetings.

While these costs may be encountered in various public participation programmes, the costs are a small price to pay for the benefits of a healthy political system. The whole intention of involving communities in the processes of government is to ensure inclusiveness and a buy-in into the
programmes, so that communities can derive maximum benefits.

With the introduction of the new system of local government in 2000, responsibility was placed on municipalities to enhance public participation, thereby allowing communities to take part in the decision-making processes of Council. The categories and types of municipalities as determined by legislation dictate the system of governance that must be practised by a municipality.

The focus of this chapter has been on literature review to assess what information is available regarding enhancing the ward participatory system for the Kouga Municipality. This system of government allows for a structured way of participation through the establishment of ward committees with clear roles and responsibilities to the municipality.

On a number of occasions it becomes imperative to weigh the benefit and costs of public participation because, at the end of the day, the intention is build government structures that are legitimate and trustworthy where communities are informed and knowledgeable. At the same time this process does not absolve municipalities of their responsibility to exercise their legislative and executive authority to govern.
2.8 Conclusion

Public participation, with specific reference to the role of ward committees, stems from documents that are both published and unpublished, including the legislative framework governing local government. The key policy document for South Africa, which is the Constitution of South Africa Act (no. 108 of 1996), stipulate the object of local government, as amongst others, to involve communities in matters of local governance. The Constitution resulted in the promulgation of various pieces of legislation to serve as policy documents that will guide municipalities in enhancing public participation.

Local government is a sphere a government that is centralized, a representative institution with specific powers and functions delegated to it. Key stakeholders that must work in close co-operation with each other are the Councillors, communities and the administration. The role of each of these stakeholders is clear in relation to issues of public participation, especially on the role of ward committees.

The basic assumptions underlying public participation include issues such as how the values of good governance and human rights are promoted, including the manner in which communication is strengthened to ensure that communities are involved in matters of local governance. In essence, ward committees serve as a legal structure to enhance public participation in municipalities.
Chapter 3

The Ward Committee System in the Kouga Local Municipality

3.1 Introduction

Effective local democracy needs a combination of representative and participatory democracy. Representative democracy is a scenario where people elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. A typical example will occur during the elections of Councillors at the local government level where communities will elect councillors to represent them. In essence this means these elected representatives will get a mandate from their constituencies. Participatory democracy is a situation where communities make the decisions themselves. The affected people participate in the decision-making processes and there are no representatives who can decide on their behalf.

The local government system has been designed in such a manner that communities must be given the opportunity to take part in the decision making processes of government through the establishment of ward committees. This is evident in the establishment of the ward committees in their representation to ensure that all sectors of the community are represented and have a say in the decisions taken in municipal councils. After the local government elections that took place in 2000, Kouga changed from a plenary municipality to the Executive Mayoral Committee System combined with the Ward Participatory System. Ward committees were then established to ensure that public participation is given a priority and to ensure the ward committee system worked effectively. This somehow gave a true meaning to participatory
democracy to ensure that communities were involved in the democratic processes in a way that strengthen and deepened democracy.

3.2 Status of Ward Committees

According to the guidelines for the establishment and operations of municipal ward committees (notice 965 of 2005) a ward committee is an advisory body to council. Its advisory status emanates from the manner in which it is positioned in the various wards where communities are in a better position to articulate issues that affect them directly. An example can be given in situations where the municipality is engaged in the process of reviewing projects on the IDP, where the priorities must respond to the needs identified. In other words, ward committees are not above Council, but serve to advise Council to ensure that the voices of communities are heard.

A ward committee is a representative structure. It is represented in the sense that in its composition it represents a diversity of interests, thereby ensuring inclusion in terms of gender equity and various interest groups. The interest groups in the wards are, amongst others, women, youth, religious groups, the education sector, community-based organizations, people living with disabilities and so on. When Council makes programmes for communities, the needs are different and therefore provision must be made to respond in a manner that does not compromise one community to the detriment of another.
A ward committee is independent. Its independence is based on the fact that, within a ward, communities belong to various political affiliations, but issues of development affect all communities equally. It is common practice that politics will sometimes play a role in the allocation of resources on the basis of political affiliation, but ideally politics should not be a deterring factor to development.

Ward committees serve as a link between the communities and council through the ward councillor. To ensure that they play a meaningful role, the guidelines further states that council should develop capacity building programs for members of the committees.

The Organisation for the Economic Co-operation and Development Handbook (2001:18) enforces responsibility on government to strengthen government-citizen relationships for three reasons namely,

- Better public policy where citizens must be encouraged to spend time and effort on public issues. The more people are involved, the better it becomes to implement public policies and thus create a learning organization.

- Greater trust in government where communities will get information and be consulted about government plans. This will in a way enhance the legitimacy of government and the acceptance of political processes.
• **Stronger democracy.** This is as a result of meaningful participation where communities are afforded the opportunity to contribute on issues that affect them directly.

3.3 **Kouga Municipality - a Situational Analysis**

The Kouga Municipality is a category B municipality established in terms of Section 12 of the Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998), wherein Members of Executive Councils (MEC’s) may, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, establish a municipality in each municipal area which the Demarcation Board demarcates in the province in terms of the Demarcations Act (Act no 27 of 1998). In May 2006 the Municipality was promulgated into a Category B Municipality with the Executive Mayoral System combined with the ward participatory system, (23 May 2006, Gazette No. 1537 dated 23 May 2006).

The category and type of the Kouga Municipality is a clear indication that the system of government includes the participation of communities. A structured ward system ensures the involvement of communities on issues of local government. The Annual Report for the Municipality (2006/07), indicates that the population figures according to the 2001 statistics, was approximately 550 000 people.

The Municipality comprises of nine towns, i.e. Jeffreys Bay, Humansdorp, St Francis Bay, Cape St Francis and Oyster Bay, Hankey, Patensie, Thornhill, and Loerie. The geographical area of the municipality stretches over 24 194m². The geographic
The geographic spread of the municipality depicts an area that is vast and semi-rural. Council has to make every means possible to enhance public participation. They have to utilize community structures and ward committees whilst reaching out to the furthest areas.

The local government elections that took place in 2006 saw the election of ward councillors and subsequently the election of ward committees. To date, the municipality has ten wards which have been established with each ward having ten ward committee members elected from the various sectors of society. This scenario is an indication that Kouga fully subscribes to the notion of public participation through the establishment of the ten wards, thus adopting the ward participatory system.

The ward participatory system is a system which is meant to enhance public participation, thereby placing responsibility on municipalities to ensure the establishment of ward committees which will be functional and effective. Public participation is a matter of legal compliance and therefore systems and procedures must be in place to make the system work. Municipalities are delegated with both executive and legislative authority to govern their own affairs. Hence the development of appropriate systems and procedures are a prerequisite, more especially when one looks at the geographic spread of the Municipality.
Kouga has ten wards. Each ward has ten ward committee members resulting in there being hundred ward committee members in total. The question which arises is whether all the ward committees are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are functional. Ward committees are legal structures that are an advisory structure to Council. They influence the decision-making processes in a way that seeks to ensure that issues raised by communities are considered. Municipalities must reposition themselves institutionally to accommodate ward committees and provide them with the necessary support and capacity to fulfil their roles and functions.

According to the guidelines for the establishment and operations of ward committees (notice 965 of 2005) some of the roles and functions of ward committees are to make recommendations on any matter affecting their ward to the ward councillor, or through the ward councillor to council. Section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act no. 117 of 1998 stipulates that, if a council decides to have ward committees, they must be established for each ward and must provide administrative support to enable them to work effectively.

Kouga is a municipality whose establishment type dictates that ward committees should be established, and should institutionally be structured in such a way that the municipality responds to its legislative mandate of fulfilling the roles of these committees in a way that enhances participatory democracy in local government. Key people who must take
the lead in the whole functioning of ward committees are officials in the municipality who deal with ward committees, and must make sure to provide the administrative support.

Ward Councillors also play a critical role since they are chairpersons of ward committees. Their role is an important which will be given serious consideration in the process of gathering the necessary information.

3.4. The Role of the Council

Section 152 of the Constitution of South Africa Act (no. 108 of 1996) outlines the objects of local government, amongst others, as to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities and to encourage the involvement of communities in the matters of local government. Section 19 (2) of the Municipal Structures Act (no.118 of 1998) further stipulates that a municipal council must review the needs of the community annually, its priorities to meet those needs and the processes for involving the community. These statements, as outlined in the various pieces of legislation, place the obligation on municipalities to develop mechanisms for public participation.

The type and category of the Kouga Municipality gives a clear indication in terms of what the role of Council is as far as it relates to ward committees. Municipalities have both executive and legislative authority to govern and manage their own affairs effectively and therefore, the establishment of ward committees is a competency of municipal councils. Council must also provide ward committees with the necessary administrative support to enable them to perform their functions
effectively. They are a voluntary structure of Council on an advisory basis and representing the communities. There is no remuneration for ward committees. The support and administrative function of Council is to ensure that out of pocket expenses are provided. This allows them to assist with ward activities in the form of community meetings and community development projects.

Apart from Council’s responsibility to ensure the establishment of ward committees, they have other responsibilities related to service delivery. These include the role of ward committees, the development of the municipality’s integrated development plans (IDPs), the budget, the performance management system and municipal projects and initiatives. These responsibilities of Council involve a high level of public participation and, clearly, the role of ward committees can never be over-emphasized. Council can never reach out to all communities. The only way this can be achieved is by effective utilization of ward committees, and more emphasis on the administrative support.

One of the key requirements to ensure effective ward committees, is to ensure that the municipality provides them with the necessary skills. Whilst the induction programme is essential to introduce them to how the system of local government works, capacity building programmes for ward committees must be developed. This can be done through an intensive skills audit, so that training provided responds to identified needs. This again places the responsibility on Council to set funding aside to undertake the skills audit followed by the roll out of training programmes.
3.5 **Ward Committees and Public Participation**

Public participation is a principle that is accepted throughout all spheres of government. Participation is important because it is the only method whereby government can get a sense of what the needs and aspirations of the communities are. With specific reference to municipalities, public participation is enhanced through the establishment of ward committees. Members of ward committees are elected from the communities themselves and are in an advantaged position to know what communities actually want. Moreover, the laws governing local government, including the establishment of ward committees, dictate how communities must be consulted, especially on the legal structure of ward committees in municipalities.

Municipalities can only be effective when politicians, officials and communities work in consultation with one another. Consultation must be between all stakeholders, and will assist Council in making appropriate decisions. Municipal officials will be in a better position to develop strategic plans for implementation, fully aware of the needs of the communities. Through public participation and consultation, municipalities build communities which are better informed and input positively on the municipal programmes and resource limitations, thereby improving on service delivery. Whilst ward committees are the only tool utilized by municipalities for public participation, the following stakeholders also play an important role in enhancing public participation:
3.5.1 The Executive Mayor

Section 56 (2) of the Municipal Structures Act (no117 of 1998) outlines the functions and powers of the Executive Mayor as, amongst others, to identify the needs of the community and recommend strategies to Council to address priority needs through the IDP processes. He must ensure that recognition is given to public’s views and report on the effect of consultation on the decisions of Council. The Mayor plays the final political role in ensuring that the public is consulted on the programmes of Council.

The institutional arrangements in the Kouga Local Municipality are designed in such a way that, whilst the Mayor must ensure that the public is consulted, this should be as far as it relates to the processes of the IDP and the assessment of the needs and priorities of communities. The Speaker is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the municipality conforms to the legal framework governing public participation. This is in the form of ensuring that the public participation policy and the communication is in place, including the yearly plans for public participation. The Speaker must ensure that the ward committee system is effective, so that the ward committees perform their functions effectively. These include ensuring that the municipality puts a support system for ward committees in place since the members are not remunerated.

3.5.2 The Role of Ward Councillors

Ward councillors are elected public representatives of their specific wards in a municipality. They are ideally placed to be a link between the communities and the municipality, and they are ideally suited to bring the
needs of communities to the attention of Council. They report back to their constituencies on any progress regarding service delivery. As chairpersons of ward committees, they must work in close co-operation with the Office of the Speaker to ensure that elections are held for the appointment of ward committee members. They also need to ensure that training is provided for them in order to enable them to understand their roles and responsibilities.

The ward councillor, as a public representative who has a responsibility to his constituency, must develop a year planner of activities in his or her ward, including both public meetings and meetings with the ward committee. He must keep records of meetings as proof of efficiency and accountability purposes. The ward councillor should be in possession of the ward profile that indicates the strengths and shortcomings of the ward. When opportunities arise, communities within the ward should be the first to be considered as beneficiaries.

The municipality has a responsibility to ensure that monitoring is in place to assess the performance of ward councillors because they are remunerated in terms of the Remuneration for Political Office Bearers Act which is promulgated on a yearly basis to indicate the salary scales of councillors according to the level and grading of a municipality considering financial affordability. In terms of remuneration, it is expected that they have responsibilities to fulfill in their constituencies, to ward committees and to Council as well. The work of the ward councillors will be easy when the relationship between the ward councillor, the ward committee, communities in the ward councillor’s constituency and the administration is strengthened.
3.5.3 Community Development Workers

Government recently introduced a new cadet of Community Development Workers (CDW’s) in municipalities to work with ward committees at a ward level. To date each ward has been allocated a CDW to work together with the ward councillor. In Kouga an arrangement has been made where, currently, all ward councillors have offices and venues to convene ward meetings. Some offices have been allocated for CDW’s to allow them to do their work in the wards.

The CDW’s are as a result of a programme initiated by the Office of the Presidency, realize the challenges regarding service delivery which does not reach the intended beneficiaries. These public officials work with communities to identify the problems and needs of communities and channel those needs to relevant departments. An example can be made on the issuing of identity documents by the Department of Home Affairs. Other sections of the community will not know where to go, due to the challenges of illiteracy, but will think that the municipality is in a position to provide such documents. With the introduction of the CDW’s problems such as these have since been reduced. This is also an endeavour to strengthen inter-governmenntal relations to ensure that departments work together and also consult with municipalities thereby enhancing public participation.

As far as the linkages between the ward committees and CDW’s are concerned, the work of ward committees is strengthened, since ward committees are a structure which is meant to legally advise Council whereas CDW’s are public officials and are remunerated. It is a matter of
both the municipalities and government working closely together for the good of the communities.

3.6 The Role of Ward Committees in the Development of the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs)

Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (no.32 of 2000) requires that municipalities develop a culture of community participation by encouraging and creating conditions for local communities to participate in the affairs of the municipality including the development of the IDP. Section 23 of the Municipal Systems further stipulates that municipalities must undertake developmentally-oriented planning so as to ensure that it strives to achieve the objectives of local government, which, amongst others, is to ensure the involvement of communities in matters of local government. The guidelines for the establishment and operations of ward committees (notice 965 of 2005) outlines some of the roles and functions of ward committees is to ensure active participation of the community in the integrated development planning processes. The processes leading up to the development and finalization of the IDP involves the engagement of communities from the commencement of the processes until the IDP has finally been adopted by Council.

Ward committees reside in the wards and are in a better position to know the real needs of the communities in their respective wards. Because wards are so vast, and this will lead to limitations in the consultation processes, municipalities appoint members of ward committees to be part of the IDP Representative Forums and must, in turn, go back to the communities to explain all the municipal programmes.
To ensure an all-inclusive process during the IDP development, the municipality budgets for public participation, the Cacadu District Municipality, as well as the National Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) to provide grants to assist. Ward committees in Kouga are an important structure utilized for public participation, resulting in the development of IDP Representative Forums because not all committees can sit in the forums.

The members of the IDP Rep forums go back to their communities to give feedback on all IDP related issues until the IDP has been finalized. The rep forum serves as a structure for discussion and debate between the community and the municipality to monitor municipal planning and implementation. When the IDP has been finally adopted by Council, copies are provided for all ward committee members to monitor the IDP. The geographical spread of Kouga is such that the ward committees in the urban towns are most affluent and knowledgeable. This results in their meaningful participation during the IDP processes and lesser participation from the rural towns. Sometimes the attendance of the IDP meetings does not result in the desired outcomes due to the limited participation of communities owing to a lack of knowledge of the IDP processes. This situation leads to discrepancies in respect of bringing development to the rural towns and resources may not be distributed equally.

3.7 Making Public Participation a Reality

Ward committees are established in those municipalities where their promulgation is such that they have a ward participatory type. The role of the ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. They must be seen as independent advisory bodies to
Council and to serve as mobilizing forces for the benefit of communities especially during the IDP processes. Communication ensures that there information is disseminated on. Ward committees play a crucial role in ensuring that all important information reaches the relevant sectors of the community.

Municipalities have a responsibility to ensure that they build the capacity of communities, especially in the creation of sustainable communities, and that efforts be made to ensure that the dream of public participation is made a reality. Of the eight Batho Principles as outlined in the White Paper for Transforming the Public Service, the key principle that links up with public participation is consultation. This simply means that government at all spheres, including municipalities, must consult with communities especially about the level and quality of service to allow them to make informed choices on their priorities. Access in another principle that is key to public participation to ensure that communities gain equal access to services to which they are entitled. This is based on the fact that ward committee members must be free of political bias and serve communities without fear, but service communities irrespective of their political affiliation.

### 3.8 Conclusion

Participatory democracy is a situation where communities are given the opportunity to actively participate in matters that involve them, thereby influencing the decision and policy making processes. In the case of municipalities, as is the case with Kouga Municipality ward committees are community structures that are established to fulfill this objective. The establishment of ward committees is such that they represent he diverse
nature of communities per ward. In other words, sectors that are normally represented include amongst others, the disabled people, the education sector, youth, women, and many others. The political affiliation of ward committee members does not serve as a criterion for communities to avail themselves as members.

The establishment of Kouga Municipality fully subscribes to the notion of public participation through the establishment of ward committees and has a ward participatory system. This system is meant to enhance public participation, thereby placing responsibility on the municipality to ensure that ward committees are functional and effective. Public participation is a matter of legal compliance and therefore systems and procedures must be in place to make the system work.

Municipalities have a responsibility to involve ward committees in the development of the municipality’s integrated development plans (IDPs), the budget, the performance management system and municipal projects and initiatives. These processes involve a high level of public participation and, clearly, the role of ward committees can never be over-emphasized.

Council can never reach out to all communities. The only way this can be achieved is by effective utilization of ward committees and this can also be another way through which the relationship between municipalities and communities can be strengthened thereby strengthening participatory democracy.
CHAPTER 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Research methodology is the method in which data is collected, analyzed and interpreted in order that the aims and objectives of the research are achieved. There are various ways in which data can be collected, but research has everything to do with information which is scientifically proven through knowledge and by using objective methods and procedures. Research exists as a result of studies that have previously been undertaken, but there are gaps that still must be proven. Hence researchers constantly engage in studies that must be proven, either to be accepted or rejected. The reality of research is such that every individual can relate to it because more often than not, it significantly affects our daily lives and the manner in which we respond to those daily occurrences.

The study focused on the assessment of the role of ward committees in public participation in the Kouga Municipality. Reading on the topic itself, the subjects used to collect data include members of the ward committees without any doubt. The Kouga Municipality falls in the category of local government, a sphere of government which is located closer to communities, and therefore the study was more of a participatory research.

The new system of government, which came about as a result of the local government elections that took place in December 2000, placed the local government in a better position regarding participatory democracy.
In line with the study that is being researched, key people, who will add value to the topic, are the ward committees themselves, since they represent communities in municipalities. Even though ward committees are a legal structure, whose responsibility is to enhance public participation in municipalities, issues of local government affect them directly and they will be in a better position to assist in defining what they think their role is versus what legislation dictates it to be.

4.2 Research Approach

According to Neuman (2006:151) there are two approaches to research, namely qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative researchers often rely on interpretive or critical social science and emphasize conducting detailed examinations of cases that arise from the natural flow of life. Quantitative researchers rely on a positivist approach to social science, and emphasizing measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to general casual explanations.

For the purposes of this study, the approach used was qualitative research, since the focus was on a specific case of logic practicability. The topic under research was specific on the assessment of the role of ward committees in public participation. Therefore participants were none other than the ward committees themselves with specific reference to their roles and functions. The other reason for undertaking the qualitative approach is that so much first-hand information had to be obtained leading to getting the correct version of the information. The other factor that added value to the research was the fact that the setting for conducting the research was in the wards where the ward committees had been elected as community representatives.
Ward committees are established in terms of Section 72 of the Municipal Structures Act (no,117 of 1998), and conducting qualitative research on the role of ward committees made it possible to ascertain from research respondents to associate themselves with the study to an extent of stipulating shortcomings of the ward committee system. Whilst municipalities have a constitutional responsibility to ensure the participation of communities in matters of governance, they also have a responsibility for the establishment of ward committees, thereby enhancing public participation to the extent of outlining their roles and responsibilities.

Ward committees consist of ten members elected from the varying sectors of the community, namely, representatives from the youth, disabled persons, women, business, education and ratepayers, to mention but a few. The intention of including all these groupings is to ensure that all issues affecting the communities at large are considered when policy decisions affecting them are made. Whilst focusing on the role of ward committees, it is important to emphasize on the role of the ward councillors, who are elected as chairpersons of ward committees. The councillors ensure that the issues raised at the level of communities through ward committees are submitted to councils, and report-back mechanisms are in place.

4.3 Research Design

Welman & Kruger (2001:46) define research design as a plan according to which participants are obtained and information is gathered from them.
There is a clear description of what is to be done with the participants, with a view to reading conclusions about the research problem. The ultimate objective for research design is to ensure that the outcomes of the research eventually shed some light on the identified problem. Crucial elements which will assist in the realization of the truth, thereby alleviating the problem develop solutions.

The Kouga municipality is divided into ten wards. Each ward consists of ten ward committee members. This means there are hundred ward committee members in the entire municipality. Due to the large numbers of ward committee members, it was practically impossible to use all of them as subjects of the study and, therefore, a sample was selected from their total number. This is in line with the definition by Babbie & Mouton (2001:100) who maintain that the population is the group of participants from whom conclusions are to be drawn. Welman & Kruger (2001:46) further say the population is the study object which may be individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events or conditions which they are exposed.

4.3.1 Population and Sampling

The size of the population had to determine whether it would be practical to include all members of the population or not. Other issues were those in relation to time and cost effectiveness. Of the 100 ward committee members in the entire Kouga municipality, it would have been costly and time-consuming to engage all of them in the research. Hence
data was done from various wards to get diverse views on what their roles and functions should be. In the final analysis forty ward committee members were selected to take part in the research. The ten wards for the Kouga municipality, six wards are mostly urban in nature where there is a lot of economic activity, while four are mostly rural and farms. It then made sense to mix four wards, two from the rural areas and the other two from the urban towns of the municipality to avoid being bias towards one part of the municipality and ignore the views of the other wards. This resulted in the selection of the forty ward committee members. On identification of the wards questionnaires were then distributed to all of them.

All ward councillors were used to collect data since they are a manageable number. With the ten wards in the municipality, each ward is chaired by a ward councillor, in other words, there ten ward councillors that were interviewed during the study.

The diverse nature of ward committees assisted tremendously in obtaining information relevant to the study. Ward committees represent various sectors of the communities, amongst others, the youth, women, business, ratepayers and agricultural associations. The linkages among these groupings in public participation are vital. The youth is an example. Their interest will be the assistance that can be obtained from the municipality to develop youth programmes which will assist them in developing entrepreneurial skills. These skills could
help them to create employment opportunities, so that they do not engage in abusing drugs and other criminal activities.

In the process of public participation these issues are raised in order to allow the municipality to develop policies on youth programmes. Agricultural associations also need to participate, ensuring that policies are developed to assist emerging farmers, either by providing municipal land to allow them to commence agricultural activities that will improve the conditions of living of communities. Agriculture can enhance the relationships between the provincial and national departments of agriculture, as well as land affairs. When the public participates in agricultural issues, the municipality has to combine all available resources to be used maximally for the benefit of communities.

Ratepayers, as members of ward committees also play a critical role in public participation, since they represent the members of the communities in the payment of municipal rates and services. They normally are in a much advantaged position, since they take part at the very early public participation processes when the municipality prepares yearly budgets on rates and services. They also assist as resource individuals, to assist in municipal campaigns to ensure that communities pay for the services that they receive from the municipality, and what the consequences will be for those who do not pay.
Information relevant to conclude the findings of the research was obtained at the level of officials in the municipality who are charged with the responsibility of ward committees and public participation as their key responsible area. These officials occupy middle and junior management positions in the municipality and have been working for the municipality over a long period of time. They are well vested in the operations of the ward committees and have undergone training on all issues relevant to the effective operations of ward committees. They are also resource persons in knowing the ward profile for all the wards in the municipality.

Ward profiles contain information about every ward including the knowledge of indigent households, the levels of unemployment per ward, people living with disabilities and so on. Information from these officials was gathered through interviews as set out in Annexure 5. The institutional arrangements in the municipality are such that there is a manager that oversees the functionality of the ward committees. Reporting to the manager are four administrative clerks that who take turns in providing support services to ward committees in all wards. Interviews were scheduled with all these officials and appointments for the interviews were arranged with them to participate in the study. Fortunately they all agreed to participate and were very co-operative during the interviews.

Ward councillors were also sampled as participants in the study. The Kouga municipality has ten wards and each ward
has a ward councillor resulting in there being ten ward councillors for the municipality. All the councillors agreed to be part of the study. Information from them was obtained from them through arranging interviews. The annexure of the interview questions is attached as Annexure 4. Details of the councillors were obtained from the municipality since they are the custodians of the personal files for councillors of the municipality. Their role is critical in that they are representatives of the ward in council and also chairpersons of the very ward committees whose role is under research. This set-up ensured that there was wide coverage of the environment in which the core group researched.

4.4 Data Collection

For the purposes of obtaining information for the study, the researcher undertook survey research, which is the most commonly used method in social sciences. A letter requesting permission to conduct the research for the study was submitted to the Municipal Manager of Kouga Municipality, after which permission was granted. The subjects who were used to obtain information, were officials from the municipality who deal with ward committees, a sample of ward committees and ward councillors.

Information from respondents was gathered through use of interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were conducted with the officials from the municipality and the ward councillors. Telephonic contacts were made with them to secure appointments before commencing with the interviews.
This was also to ensure that they could also adjust their time schedules to provide time for the interviews. In the meetings preceding the interviews, letters from the Municipal Manager indicating the approval to conduct the research were shown to them. Subsequent to the approval letter, individual letters to both the ward councillors and officials were given to them indicating the intention for conducting the research and their voluntary participation.

The interviews took the form of highly structured and specific questions. An unstructured format was also used, in order to allow for a more relaxed environment and informal conversation. A high level of co-operation existed during these interview sessions, resulting in much information being gathered to assist in the study.

Information from ward committees was obtained using questionnaires in the different wards. Forty ward committee members were identified to take part in the study. Kouga is semi-rural and vast and therefore a portion of ward committees was selected from urban towns and the rest from the rural towns and farms. At the time that the questionnaires were circulated, a skills audit was conducted by the municipality on ward committees, where the majority of them were in attendance and they managed to receive the questionnaires and filled them in.

Of the forty questionnaires that were distributed to ward committee members, twenty five were returned for the purposes of data analysis. In
respect of the ward councillors, only six councillors availed themselves for
the interviews. From the part of the officials of the municipality, the section
is being managed by three officials and they all availed themselves for
the interview sessions and gave an insight on the functionality and role of
ward committees in the Municipality.

The study seeks to analyze the role of ward committees in enhancing
ward participation with specific reference to the Kouga Municipality. The
reason behind this research is because of a country-wide perception that
ward committees in local government are ineffective, thus impacting
negatively on public participation. A consequence of this kind of
perception, is that communities end up not participating in the decision-
making processes of municipalities.

Subsequent to the above, clear objectives of the study are:

- To assess the role of ward committees in public participation.
- To assess the extent to which ward committees interact with their
  communities.
- To assess the extent to which ward committees liaise between their
- To assess the extent to which councillors, who are chairpersons of
  ward committees, act on behalf of their constituencies in municipal
council meetings and municipal committees.

In trying to ascertain the truth behind the perceived lack of clarity on the
roles of ward committees, it is imperative that one moves from the known
scenario that local government, as a sphere of government, has a
responsibility conferred to it by the Constitution, and other pieces of
legislation to enhance public participation. Meaningful public participation in municipalities can only be effected through the establishment of ward committees, hence their clear roles become problematic if they are not functional.

4.5 Research Findings

Structured questions were developed for interviews with the officials of the Kouga Municipality. The responses were recorded manually to ensure that every detail of the information obtained was not lost and would assist in compiling recommendations. The first target audience of the research was municipal officials, where the function of ward committees and public participation is located. Upon introduction of the researcher and explaining the purpose of the research, the officials agreed to participate voluntarily and gave the assurance that they would provide their fullest co-operation. The questions posed to officials were the same and the following responses were recorded. The interview questions are attached as Annexure 4.

4.5.1 Analysis of Findings from Officials of the Kouga Municipality

The middle and junior management of the Kouga Municipality where the function of ward committees and public participation is located, clearly knew the category and type of the Kouga Municipality and what the implications in relation to the roles and functions of ward committees were. Eighty percent of the officials have been in the municipality for more that ten years. They were knowledgeable about the institutional arrangements and the background of the municipality since the local government elections which took place in December 2000 and the
amalgamation processes of the former Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) to the current status of municipalities.

An explanation was given on the background and the history of Kouga dating back to the period after the 2000 elections. Prior to the year 2000 Kouga consisted of different administrative units, namely, Jeffreys Bay TLC, Humansdorp, St Francis Bay, Oyster Bay, Hankey, Patensie, Loerie and Thornhill. The first local government elections resulted in the disestablishment of these TLCs and their amalgamation into one local municipality. Today there is one Kouga Municipality consisting of all these TLC’s known as administrative units. The institutional arrangement at present is that Jeffreys Bay serves as the Head Office, managing all the administrative units.

Kouga was then promulgated as a Category B municipality with a plenary type combined with the ward participatory type. This system sought to ensure that there were ward committees to enhance public participation. Unfortunately, the system of government at the time was such that, in terms of the political situation at the time, the Democratic Alliance (DA) was in power and the role of ward committees was ignored. The second local government elections took place in 2006 and the political reigns were taken over by the African National Congress (ANC). In May 2006, Kouga Council made an application to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government of Local Government and Housing to change the establishment from the plenary system to the Executive Mayoral Committee Type combined with the ward participatory type.

The latter type was applied for, to ensure that full-time councillors would be appointed to perform a political oversight role on Council
departments. The contents of the application included the appointment of the Executive Mayor, the Speaker and Portfolio Councillors on a full-time basis. This application was subsequently approved and promulgated in the Eastern Cape Provincial Gazette No. 1537, dated 23 May 2006.

Clear roles and responsibilities were then allocated, ensuring that public participation was located in the Office of the Speaker. Ward committees took their rightful place in Council again. The Kouga Municipality consists of ten wards, which means that in total there are hundred ward committee members for the entire municipality. Municipalities have a responsibility to ensure the establishment of functional ward committees, thereby enhancing public participation. Ward committees were revitalized. In terms of the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operations of Ward Committees, elections were facilitated leading to the launch that took place 1 December 2006.

Ward committees are elected from the communities in each ward, to serve as a representative structure of that ward and to inform the municipality about the needs of their people to enable Council to plan accordingly. The promulgation of the category and type of the Kouga Municipality confers that responsibility firstly, to acknowledge the category and type, and secondly, to ensure that the institutional arrangements make it possible for effective public participation.

4.5.1.1 Support for Ward Committees

In respect of the type of the support provided by the municipality to ward committees, the responses were:
• On a yearly basis there is a budget set aside for the operations of ward committees.

• After the launch of the ward committees, an induction programme was conducted wherein they were introduced into all processes of local government. Each ward committee was given the relevant legislation that governs local government.

• Amongst the documents were copies of the municipality's budget and the IDP.

The above support is the key strategy to ensure that ward committee members have the necessary knowledge of their roles and expectations. The management of the Kouga Municipality visits the various wards on a monthly basis to promote governance and transparency. These sessions are done also to give progress reports on service delivery and ward development specific to each ward.

Recently the municipality made an undertaking for the construction of fully-fledged offices for ward councillors. These offices have full-time ward assistants, an office for the ward councillor and a board room big enough to convene ward meetings and ward committee meetings. Of the ten wards, five ward offices were officially opened during the months of September and October 2008, and the intention is to have all offices fully functional in March 2009, since others must be built from scratch.

The municipality is vast and semi-rural and support is directed towards the most rural towns to allow ward councillors and ward committees to reach out to the furthest communities. To date even meetings of Council are convened in all the areas in a way that seeks to bring the political leadership to the communities. A schedule of Council meetings for the
year is normally publicized early in the year, so that issues which are raised in ward committee meetings are dealt with in Council. With the initiatives that the Kouga Municipality has undertaken, it is clear that ward committees are well aware of the system of government for the municipality.

4.5.1.2 Capacity Building for Ward Committees

At the time that the study was conducted, the municipality was engaging the services of a service provider to conduct the skills audit for ward committees on behalf of the entire municipality. This exercise links up with the extent to which the capacity levels for ward committees should be assessed. As a result of the induction that took place for all ward committees, the municipality decided to appoint a service provider to undertake a skills audit to ascertain what the capacity levels of the ward committees were. On completion, a comprehensive training programme would be designed to cater for the differing knowledge capacities of the ward committees.

The main intention of the municipality in conducting the skills audit is to ensure that training programmes will also be designed in such a way that, at some point, the training conforms to the National Qualification Framework (NQF). These programmes would ensure that ward committees obtain the necessary qualifications that will assist them in furthering their careers, thus building a learning society.

The view of the officials from the municipality on the capacity levels of ward committees is that there are high levels of illiteracy amongst them, resulting in minimal participation in matters that affect their wards.
However, the skills audit was an endeavour to address these shortcomings and to ensure that ward committees are functional and perform their meaningful role in Council.

An indication was given on the working relations that the municipality has established with the District Municipality, the Provincial Department of Local Government and the National Department of Local Government. It was established that in the previous two financial years, the municipality has been receiving grants to assist in the effectiveness of ward committees and capacity building.

4.5.1.3 Effectiveness of Ward Committees

The official from the municipality acknowledged that there was a perception that the ward committees were ineffective, especially in advancing public participation in the municipality. This is due to, amongst others, the lack of knowledge and capacity amongst the committee members and monetary incentives. Whilst the support of Council is intended to cater for out-of-pocket expenses when they have to attend meetings, legislation is clear that there is no remuneration for ward committees. In other words, they work on a voluntary basis to better the lives of the people in their constituencies.

The geographical spread of the municipality is such that only five out of ten wards are functional. This is evident in the manner in which reports of ward committee meetings are submitted to Council for implementation of issues raised at the ward level. One can conclude that some committees are not effective because there is no audit of activities in the those wards.
This is a challenge that the municipality must seriously look into, to ensure that all ward activities are recorded.

The guidelines for the establishment and operations of municipal ward committees clearly stipulate the roles of ward committees as, amongst others, to be involved in the development of the municipality’s IDP. Obviously if some ward committees are not effective, they cannot be part of the IDP processes. The only way forward is the development of the performance management system to measure the performance of the ward committees, whilst providing the necessary support to enable them to function effectively. This can always be done with the development of a communication strategy that demarcates the role of the ward councillor, the ward committee, communities and Council.

4.5.2 Interview Sessions with Ward Councillors

Interview sessions were then arranged with ward councillors who had confirmed their availability to establish their knowledge, in terms of their roles and responsibilities as chairpersons of ward committees and leaders in their communities. The first point to arise was the fact that ward councillors are elected representatives of the people. It is a process of a ward election, where communities from the different political parties would nominate a candidate to represent them in Council. Once that process has been formalized, elections are then conducted in the ward for the appointment of ward committees to assist the ward councillor.

With specific reference to Kouga, the Speaker has been assigned the responsibility to deal with public participation, hence the establishment of ward committees. The relationship between the Speaker and the Ward
Councillor should never be underestimated, instead they should work well together. Ward Councillors have a responsibility to ensure that they submit their ward action plans to the Office Speaker and also the invitation to both meetings of the ward committee as well as constituency meetings.

4.5.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Ward Councillors

All the ward councillors who agreed to the interview understood their key responsibilities, especially because they are chairpersons of the ward committees. Some of their key responsibilities include having to ensure that both constituency and ward committee meetings are convened on a regular basis. They must build strong relationships between the ward committee members, members of the communities and the municipality. Where projects are concerned, they should ensure that communities are informed since communities are beneficiaries of community projects. This will assist in resolving conflict situations which have the potential to disrupt progress.

All ward councillors agreed that the process of the elections of ward committees had taken place in their wards. The elections had been conducted in terms of the Guidelines for the Operations and Establishment of Ward Committees promulgated in 2005. The criterion for the election of ward committees was done in such a manner that it represented the diverse nature of the ward. The ward committee structure consists of representation from the education sector, to deal with education opportunities that will benefit the ward, the religious groups for moral regeneration, sports and culture, to ensure that communities engage in sporting activities and do not forget about their culture, the
ratepayers associations, to ensure that the ratepayers are informed about municipal projects as a result of the rates paid by communities.

They also confirmed that the ward committees underwent the induction training programme, and the ward councillors themselves were part of that same session. Upon the election of the ward councillor, constituency meetings were held to elect ward committees, and as such the ward committees are known by the members of the communities where they live. Lines of communication have since been developed between the members of the ward committee, the ward councillors and communities.

The ward committee meets once per month and meetings of the constituency are held once per quarter. The dates are arranged so that they do not clash with Council meetings. This makes it possible for ward councillors to be able to disseminate information and decisions of Council to communities timeously, especially those decisions that relate to project implementation. During these meetings important issues which are discussed, relate to service delivery and development to better the lives of communities in their wards.

Ward Councillors get financial assistance from Council in the form of transport arrangements for ward committees to attend meetings, since some of the wards are vast. During the proceedings of meetings, the municipality provides secretariat services to ensure that the minutes will reflect the exact proceedings of their meetings. With the offices that have been built for the ward councillors, this initiative has made their work very easy, since in the past, they had to convene meetings in the garages of their houses, a situation which is unbearable.
Some ward councillors indicated that there were varying development initiatives which had benefited their communities in their wards as a result of their participation. These initiatives range from the construction of infrastructure, in the form of the upgrading of roads, upgrading the sewerage system, and the establishment of community halls and sporting facilities. Local labour has been used to ensure that locals benefit from employment opportunities, thus improving their living conditions.

All ward councillors agree that the ward committee system is working well for Kouga. This is especially so with the responsibility of government to ensure participatory democracy in the country. The establishment of ward committees creates conditions where there is easy access to communities regarding their needs and aspirations. The representation into the committees is a clear indication that all community sectors are catered for, especially in trying to influence decisions to be taken by Council since the very affected groupings are given the opportunity to have a say on matters that affect them.

The availability of ward plans, schedules of meetings, participation in the IDP and budget processes, promotes the level of accountability and transparency of ward councillors and of ward committees. The Kouga Council, in providing the necessary support for ward committees, plays a crucial role, since none of the above can be achieved if the support is not made available. The competency levels of ward committees are still a challenge. This is an issue which was raised by some ward councillors since they are the ones who work with communities on issues concerning the ward.
During the elections of the ward committees, it is not the ward councillor who will have the final say regarding the election of the committee members. The municipality, with the assistance of the Speaker facilitates the elections in the wards where the communities vote for the members of the committee. In other words the communities have the say in the final appointment of ward committees. This practice takes one back to the notion that people must take on issues which affect them and exercise their democratic right to elect candidates of their choice to represent them in matters of governance.

4.5.2.2 Challenges Faced by Ward Councillors

There is a variety of challenges that ward councillors face. The critical one is the issue of the level of competency of ward committee members, including their qualifications, their understanding of local government and interpersonal relations. The geographical design of the Kouga Municipality is such that ward councillors from urban towns do not have as many challenges as their from the rural towns do in terms of competency issues. The level of commitment is an issue that needs serious consideration, since the researcher could sense from the ward councillors the feeling that sometimes they can operate without the existence of the ward committee. This situation will however have serious implications in that ward councillors get their mandate from communities in their wards, through a consultative process which includes engaging the ward committees.

In the various wards there are usually a lot of activities occurring in the form of services brought about by other sector departments. Some of these activities are applications for identity documents by the Department of
Home Affairs, the distribution of food parcels by the Department of Welfare, the provision of water by the Department of Water Affairs and many others. Obviously the first point of contact is the municipality, and with the assistance of the ward councillor, this will make the work of these departments possible. A issue that was raised sharply by the ward committees was the lack of inter-governmental relations for effective planning purposes. This matter also related to funds which had been earmarked for development in the wards where the same departments will just dump funds at the end of the financial year due to poor planning. The way forward should be a consultative forum between the municipality, all community structures and the sector departments.

All the ward councillors agree that the ward committee system is working for the Municipality since it is the constitutional obligation for the municipality to consult communities on matters of local governance. The only challenge is for the administration to make sure that institutional arrangements are enhanced to make it possible for ward councillors to operate effectively. They also appreciated the approach for the establishment of permanent structures as office space for them so that they can conduct themselves in a professional manner. Others also appreciated this endeavor since the public has easy access to their ward councillors.

The other critical issue that the ward councillors raised was the existence of Proportional Representative Councillors (PR) which seemed to create some confusion in their respective wards. The response from the ward councillors was that there was no confusion between them and the PR Councillors, except the work in support of each other on matters relevant to the wards.
4.5.3 Results from the Administration of Questionnaires from the Ward Committees

Information from ward committees was obtained through the distribution of questionnaires. These questionnaires were distributed to ward committees in the different wards and the spread was done in such a manner that information was gathered from ward committees from both the urban and the rural towns of the municipality since their operations were completely different. General information regarding the knowledge about the Kouga Municipality, in terms of the category and type of the municipality, details of the Mayor, ward councillors and the Municipal Manager, is the information that is known by all the ward councillors.

Responses to specific questions in relation to the roles of ward committees were totally different between the urban and the rural ward committees. There is consensus on all the ward committees that they are the elected representatives of communities in their respective wards and are aware of their roles and responsibilities. As ward committee members, they their main focus is to increase public participation in the decision-making processes of Council and must monitor the performance of the municipality, especially on issues relating to their wards.

4.5.3.1 Challenges Faced by Ward Committees

As ward committees they are faced with a number of challenges especially when the ward councillors must provide information on decisions taken by Council. All agreed that the induction programme, that was conducted by the municipality was an eye-opening session in
terms of outlining what their roles and responsibilities were. The challenge that they are currently facing is about enforcing legal compliance issues as outlined in legislation.

With specific reference to ward committees in the rural towns of Kouga, 60% of the members agree that their ward councillors do not consult with them. This situation leaves them wondering where they are getting the mandate from on critical issues facing the communities. A typical example was made in terms of sitting of committee meetings which they said they cannot even recall when the sitting of the committee was. They also indicated that the visibility of the political leadership was lacking and they saw only private companies getting into the wards undertaking huge projects without them being informed. There is a serious lack in the dissemination of information on issues of governance, and to them, there is a gap in terms of their roles as informed by legislation, versus what is happening on the ground.

In relation to project management and the creation of job opportunities, they perceive this state of affairs as if the function is being managed by the ward councillors and their friends and relatives get appointed by the service providers. They perceive the reason why they are being ignored as serious lack of accountability by the ward councillors. The other view that came out strongly was the fact that they were not informed about programmes of Council. The rural ward committees view the municipality as concentrating all its resources towards the urban towns and neglecting the other towns.

The absence of the profile of the wards is the other shortcoming which came out sharply as an indicator which can assist the ward councillor and
Council in selecting development programmes for wards. The ward profile, amongst other things, will indicate categories in relation to age groups to allow the municipality to budget for following:

- The implementation of the indigent policy for poor households,
- The levels of unemployment to allow the municipality to plan for employment opportunities,
- Families which are infected and affected by the scourge of HIV and AIDS,
- The ward profile can also assist in the enhancement of the intergovernmental relations which is a big challenge.

What is clear is that the communication gap is getting bigger and the problems are escalating, leaving them with no hope except for this group of ward committees to say the ward committee system is not assisting them. Their view is that the elections are around the corner and politicians will be canvassing for people to go to the polls and be given empty promises. However, the view of ward councillors in the urban towns was rather different to the rural towns. They are comfortable about their roles and responsibilities, but their biggest challenge is the lack of transparency of the municipality.

Whilst the role of the ward councillors is clear according to them, they feel that the consultation processes of the municipality should go beyond the ward councillor. They should be afforded the option to meet with Council on matters with which they are not satisfied and assist where they can. They say the municipality sees them as the enemy, yet they all are committed to service delivery that will change the lives of the communities for the better. They also feel that, as a matter of urgency, the municipality should finalize its communication strategy, the public
participation strategy and revisit the policy towards ward committees to render them more effective.

Whilst there are challenges that impact on the operations of the ward committees, there is consensus on their responsibility towards the communities in their wards. With the co-operation from the ward councillors most of the ward committees have a schedule of meetings for their constituencies where they sit with communities and discuss all ward-related issues. The chairperson of these meetings is usually the ward councillor. In the event where urgent meetings must be convened, assistance will be requested from the municipality for loud hailing and the distribution of flyers. Issues discussed in the constituency meetings normally relate to service delivery and projects that will improve the lives of the broader community.

4.6 Conclusion

Whilst experience has shown that ward committees are legal structures that can be used by municipalities to enhance public participation, the ward participatory system has a series of challenges that render the system ineffective. On the part of municipal officials these challenges are mainly as a result of limited skills and capacity from some ward committee members. Even though the level of support provided to ward committees has been increased, it will take some time before they are at the desired level of competency to ensure their fullest participation in matters of governance.

The institutional arrangements for Kouga Municipality are designed in such a manner that public participation is located in the office of the Speaker of Council. The issue that needs to be given serious consideration is
strengthening the relationships between ward councillors and office of the Speaker. On the part of ward committees, the challenges range from the lack of communication between the committees, the municipality, ward councillors and communities. To note is the fact that the institution of local government includes close co-operation between all municipal stakeholders to enhance participatory democracy.
Chapter 5
An Analysis of the Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The establishment of municipalities is designed in such a manner that they have both executive and legislative authority. This means that they are in a position to take their own by-laws and policies and govern their affairs without fear. However, legislation is clear and draws the line that, whilst they can manage their own affairs, they cannot contradict legislation promulgated at the levels of both national and provincial governments.

Government has provided for legal framework within which municipalities have an obligation to establish ward committees and ensure that they are effective. Ward committees are a legal representative structure whose responsibility is to advise Council, especially on issues that affect the communities in their wards. This involves a high level of public participation, thereby entrenching participatory democracy at the local level.

The Kouga Municipality is a category B municipality, which is the Executive Mayoral Type combined with the Ward Participatory System, a system that allows for the establishment of ward committees to enhance public participation. To date ward committees have been established, but it is evident that there are problems that inhibit them from being effective. This is also what transpired in the responses received from the sample of questionnaires which were received from the members of the ward committees that took part in the data analysis. There were significant
challenges raised by the participants into the research and these challenges are listed below.

5.2 An Analysis of the Findings

On the basis of the findings as stipulated in Chapter 4, the selection of respondents, in terms of the levels of officials, ward councillors and ward committees is justifiable. This is because all these groupings are supposed to work together to ensure that the municipality enhances public participation. The officials have a responsibility to implement Council resolutions, which includes ensuring the establishment of ward committees that are effective. There is confirmation to the effect that not all ward committees are functional, as stipulated in terms the establishment and type of the Kouga municipality.

The Municipal Structures Act is clear on the role of Council to establish ward committees. However, some are not functional and should be scrapped allow for further elections. Another role of Council is to provide the necessary support to allow ward committees to be effective. Considering that ward committees are a voluntary community structure, there is no expectation created during their elections that they will be remunerated. Remuneration has to deal with an individual getting a salary where there are statutory deductions, as is the case when somebody is employed.

Whilst the support of ward committees is consistent, an improved incentive system must be developed to motivate them. The lack of a communication strategy is a course for concern. It raises the question of how information on decisions taken by Council will filter down to the
communities, let alone being known by the ward committees themselves as representatives of communities. This state of affairs makes one wonder how ward committees actually perform the functions that they are supposed to, as outlined in legislation, especially when it comes to the development of the IDP for the municipality. In essence, the idea should be to develop the performance management system for ward committees. Whilst it can ensure the effectiveness of ward committees, institutional arrangements must first be sorted out, in order to form the basis for any assessment to be done.

On the analysis of the role of ward councillors in assisting the role of ward committees, key consideration is given to the fact that the election of ward councillors is dependent on the choice of the preferred candidate in a specific ward. The reverse of this situation is that the election of members of a ward committee is not dependent on who the ward councillor likes or dislikes to become a member, but on the basis of the preferred members as elected by the community members.

Whilst the role of the ward councillor is clear in terms of the findings, the element of accountability did not come out clearly in the findings. This is based on the fact that ward councillors are remunerated and get allowances from Council, and an accountable clause to ensure transparency, will obviously be attached.

The competency gap between ward committee members is a course for concern and needs serious consideration on the part of the municipality. The issue can then be raised on the criterion that is used in the elections of ward committee members and one of them should include at least some qualification and some understanding of local government. This will at
least alleviate the challenges of limited participation by some members of the ward committees. It is understandable that, on a number of occasions, elections to be members of ward committees is linked to an individual’s political association, when in fact as member of ward committees, this should not be the case.

In dealing with communities, ward committees represent the diverse sectors in a ward and therefore the election process should be managed to ensure that those members that are elected will speak on behalf of each sector. This will ensure equal representation of communities and hence influence the decisions of Council.

5.3 Overview of Challenges

There are three challenges that have a negative effect on the operations of ward committees:

I. Firstly at the level of the municipality to ensure that the ward committee system is perfect through the provisioning of the necessary support that will allow ward committees to work effectively.

II. Secondly at the level of the ward councillors whose roles and responsibilities must be clearly outlined to such an extent that the municipality must put systems in place to assess their performance.

III. Thirdly at the level of the communities in the various wards. It is a known fact that ward committees are elected from amongst the community members and therefore the communication and debate should be the order of the day on their activities and they should report back on issues that affect communities in the wards.
Ward committees must be recognized as an important advisory body of Council on matters affecting the wards, especially the poorest communities. At this point in time the institutional arrangements of the municipality are not conducive in terms of providing a sufficient support system to allow ward committees to function effectively. This is evident in the human resource component of the municipality which is not sufficient to cover all wards thereby rendering them ineffective. Their inefficiency is also caused, amongst other things, by the lack of capacity and incentives to persuade them to be fully committed to their work. It is known that ward committees are not entitled to any form of remuneration. However this does not mean that the municipality cannot provide an incentive system that can motivate them to be committed in the work that they are supposed to perform.

The lack of creativity on the part of ward councillors has a somewhat negative effect on the operations of ward committees. This happens where ward councillors do not convene regular meetings of the ward committee, resulting in the members feeling that they are being sidelined. This has everything to do with lack of information dissemination. The ward councillor gets his mandate from the ward and if no information is provided, one begins to question that whom ward councillors represent in Council. Whilst participatory democracy has triumphed as the political system of choice since South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, one wonders whether, if a survey were to be undertaken to ascertain the views of communities, what the outcome would be.

The lack of accountability on the part of the ward councillors is significantly high to an extent that others decide on their own who to elect as part of the ward committee, a situation which is anti-democratic
and not in line with the guidelines for the establishment of ward committees. Of all these challenges, community members have expectations from the ward committee and the ward councillors. The responsibility then reverts back to the municipality to develop intact institutional arrangements which address all these expectations, because it will be pointless to raise expectations of either ward councillors or the ward committees to be effective if the systems are non-existent.

5.4 Recommendations

Public participation should be seen as a strategic tool which is meant to assist Council in reaching out to the wider communities and needs strategic capabilities on the part of both the political and administration leadership in the municipality. In other words the efficiency of the ward participatory system should be enhanced by going back to basics, resuscitating the system by ensuring that:

- The establishment is in terms of the guidelines for the establishment and operations of ward committees.
- The roles and responsibilities are clearly defined channels for communication is clearly defined.
- The role of the ward councillor is clearly defined and known to all ward committees.
- Capacity building programmes for ward committees should be outlined to create a knowledge base for Council during the term of the current ward committees and beyond.
- The public participation policy must be developed as a matter of urgency to give clear guidance when communities should
participate on issues of governance as well as the role of ward committees.

- The by-law for ward committees should be developed to enable ward committees to understand their roles and responsibilities.
- The performance management system must be developed for ward committees, including the ward councillors. This is premised from the fact that ward committees have a specific role that they must fulfill in society. On the other hand, Council has a responsibility to ensure the establishment of effective and functional ward committees. In the event that ward committees are both ineffective and dysfunctional, Council also has a responsibility to disband them. It becomes difficult to disband a structure whose responsibilities are not clear. In other words, clear roles and responsibilities must be outlined to guide the operations of ward committees, followed by a process of establishing the performance management system for ward committees to assess their functionality.
- Public participation should be seen within the context of responding to public issues relating to social, economic and political issues. Communities are social beings who have set values and desires which must be satisfied at all times. Public participation can assist in bringing back the value system of communities and the moral fibre that seems to be a challenge in today’s society.

The economic dimension of public participation relates to the process by which people benefit within the economic mainstream of the economy and thus benefit from government programmes and projects, thereby improving their conditions of living. This can be done through the creation of job opportunities and gaining
access to financial institutions without causing any possible risks to either party.

The political dimension relates to the fact that political office bearers are elected through the election process. Whether one is a councillor or a ward councillor, they get their mandate from the constituencies that elected them. This state of affairs necessitates some element of public accountability. Through enhanced public participation processes, accountability can be enforced. The other factor that must be given serious consideration is the fact that councillors have a term of office within which they are elected and it is during this period that their performance can be assessed to ascertain whether they represent the will and aspirations of communities. Ward committees can serve as a vehicle to ensure that all three dimensions of public participation are achieved.

The municipality can always introduce an incentive system or a competition to award the best performing ward committee, however putting clear indicators along which the assessment will be done. This approach will then put the onus on the municipality to strengthen its support to enable ward committees to be effective in their operations. This system can always be linked to the performance management system of the ward committees.

Council can once more establish a Public Participation Committee whose members will be the ward councillors. This platform can assist the ward councillors to share their best practices and experiences in an endeavour to assist those ward committees that are not functional and enable them to operate according to the expected
standards. This is based on the premise that, whilst ward councillors belong to political parties of their choice, they should not be biased towards members of their parties, but to the communities and treat them equally.

5.5 Conclusions

The new system of government has provided for a legal framework that necessitates the establishment and the institutionalization of ward committees as a tool to entrench participatory democracy. Participatory democracy entails a high level of public participation where communities are represented in governance, thereby influencing the decision-making processes. Municipalities are at the epicentre of service delivery and therefore the participation of communities through ward committees becomes very important.

The establishment of ward committees is the duty of all municipalities to ensure that they fulfill their role of enhancing public participation. It goes without saying then that the institutional arrangements of Council must be organized in such a manner that they are enabled to function effectively. It is also of importance to note that the working relations between the ward committees and ward councillors should be enhanced to ensure that communities get the greatest benefit out of municipal programmes by way of a clear communication strategy.
Communities will always have high expectations from the municipality and therefore the capacity of ward committees should be of such a quality that people will not doubt their existence. It is building the capacity of ward committees that will enable the municipality to assess whether they fulfill their role in public participation.
Bibliography


Guidelines for the establishment and operations of municipal ward committees, Government Gazette no. 27699, dated 24 June 2005.

Government Gazette, Notice No. 965 of 2005

Province of the Eastern Cape Provincial Gazette No. 1537
dated 23 May 2006
Annexures

Annexure 1
Sample of the letter that was submitted to participants into the study

Dear Participant

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

I am currently registered for the degree of Master of Public Administration at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. My studies include a treatise with the following research topic.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF WARD COMMITTEES IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WITH REFERENCE TO THE KOUGA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

The main purpose of this study is to assess the role of ward committees in enhancing public participation in Kouga Municipality.

I hereby invite you to participate in my study by completing a questionnaire. Participation is voluntary with the option of withdrawing at any stage of the process and there will be no negative consequences linked to non-participation.

Your responses will be used for the purposes of the study only and I undertake to ensure that the information will be used in such a way that you cannot be identified. Therefore, the final report will not include identifying your personal information.

Questionnaires will be used to collect data and you are not obliged to answer all questions. If at any stage you feel uncomfortable to answer any question, you may withdraw your participation. By participating in the study, respondents could contribute towards the identification of the elimination of the barriers that inhibit ward committees in their role towards public participation and elimination and the elimination of such factors.
The research findings will be disseminated to Kouga Municipality in its endeavours to ensure meaningful role of ward committees in matters of local governance.

Your co-operation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Linda Simanga
The Municipal Manager  
Kouga Municipality  
P.O.Box 21  
Jeffreys Bay  

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH  

I am currently registered for the degree of Master of Public Administration at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. My studies include a treatise with the following research topic.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF WARD COMMITTEES IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WITH REFERENCE TO THE KOUGA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

The main purpose of this study is to assess the role of ward committees in enhancing public participation in Kouga Municipality.

I hereby request permission to undertake research in selected wards wherein the participants will be a selected group of ward committee members, ward councillors and members from the ratepayers. Participation of the respondents will however be voluntary with the option of withdrawing at any stage of the process and there will be no negative consequences linked to non-participation. An informed consent will be requested before the respondents’ participation in the research process.

Confidentiality will be ensured throughout the study. Information obtained will be used for the purposes of the study only and I undertake to ensure that the information will be used in such a way that the respondents...
cannot be identified. Therefore the final report will not include identifying the respondents.

Questionnaires will be used to collect data from selected respondents and they will be informed that they are not obliged to answer all questions. In instances where they feel uncomfortable to answer certain questions, they will be informed about their right to withdraw participation. By participating in the study, respondents could contribute towards the identification of the elimination of the barriers that inhibit ward committees in their role towards public participation and elimination and the elimination of such factors.

The research findings will be disseminated to Kouga Municipality in its endeavours to ensure meaningful participation of ward committees in matters of local governance.

Your co-operation in the regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Linda Simanga

Comments of the Municipal Manager

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Approved / Not Approved

DR E.M. RANKWANA
MUNICIPAL MANAGER
Annexure 3

Schedule of questions for ward committee members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the name/number of your ward?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a member of a ward committee?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the members of the ward committee elected or appointed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If elected, who elects them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If appointed, who appoints them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the members of the ward committee elected or appointed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If elected, who elects them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If appointed, who appoints them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you briefly explain the process of election of ward committee members?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you briefly explain the process of election of ward committee members?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose of having a ward committee?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are ward committees supposed to work together with members of the communities in their wards?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Yes, Can you give reasons for your answer in above?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If No, can you also give reasons why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do ward committees really work together with the members of the community? If Yes, Can you briefly explain how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do members of the ward committees communicate with the members of the community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do members of ward committees meet with the members of their community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What types of issues are normally discussed in those meetings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you say that ward committees really represent their constituencies in Municipal Council meetings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you elaborate on the answer you have given above?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you aware of any challenges experienced by ward committees with regard to public participation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Yes, can you elaborate on this issue?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you suggest can be done in order to improve public participation and consultation in the functioning of ward committees?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 4

Schedule of interview questions for a sample of Ward Councillors

• What are the processes took place to towards your election as a ward councillor?

• What do you reckon are your roles and responsibilities as a ward councillor?

• In your ward, has a ward committee been elected?

• If so, what are the roles of your ward committee?

• Do communities know that there is a ward committee in place?

• If so, how?

• What are the institutional arrangement between yourself as the ward councillor, council and members of the entire community in your ward?

• Do you get any support from Council?

• Are there any development initiatives that took place in your ward as a result of the involvement of ward committees in your ward?
• If so, what are they?

• Do you think the ward committee system is working for Kouga?

• If so, what are the best cases that have made significant improvement?

• If not, what can be done to improve on the ward committee system?

• What are some of the challenges that you encounter as a ward councillor that prohibits you from performing your functions?

• What do you think are the solutions to these problems?

• Is there a year planner for the municipality for community outreach and consultations?
Annexure 5
Schedule of questions that assist with the proceedings of the interview with officials from Kouga that are dealing with ward committees:

- What is the establishment category of Kouga Municipality as far as it relates to ward committees?

- What is the role of Council?

- Are there systems in place to support ward committees, and if so, what are they?

- In your view, are the ward committees aware about the system of government for Kouga municipality?

- What are the typical cases where ward committees themselves are really fully participating in the decision making processes of Council?

- Do ward committees for Kouga have the necessary capacity to understand their role?

- Are there communication strategies in place between Council, the ward councillors and ward committees?

- How involved are the ward committees in the development of municipal integrated development plans?
• Is there a yardstick to measure the effectiveness of ward committees in their ward?

• What is the role played by organs of state towards efficient functioning of ward committees, namely, the provincial department of local government, the national department of provincial and local government and Cacadu district municipality?