An evaluation of the ward committee system as a mechanism for enhancing service delivery in Nkonkobe Local Municipality:

A case study of Middledrift.

Banguxolo Pule

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Public Administration in the Faculty of Arts at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Supervisor: Mr Asmah-Andoh, Kwame

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Declaration

I Banguxolo Pule hereby declare that:

- The work in this dissertation is my own original work,
- All sources used or referred to have been documented and recognized, and,
- This dissertation has not been previously submitted in full or in partial fulfillment of the requirements of an equivalent or higher qualification in any other recognized education institution.

........................................

Banguxolo Pule

January 2009
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Abstract

The South African local sphere of government has been mandated to provide a developmental and accountable local government and to ensure provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. As a key developmental agent, local government is obliged by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 to develop a culture of municipal governance that encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. In this regard, ward committees have been introduced to municipalities as community structures to play a critical role in linking and informing the municipalities about the needs, aspirations and problems of their communities.

In adherence to national legislation, such as the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 (Act 117 of 1998) and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) Nkonkobe Local Municipality established advisory structures in the form of ward committees throughout its area of jurisdiction to advise the municipal council on any matter within the council’s competence. As a representative structure of the community the ward committee is expected to serve as a link between the council and the community and for this purpose articulates community needs and aspirations to better the living standards of the community. Despite the stated objectives of ward committees, the Middledrift area has been identified by Nkonkobe Local Municipality IDP: 2007-2012 as the poorest area in Nkonkobe municipality with backlogs in infrastructure and service delivery. This study evaluates the extent at which the Middledrift ward committee (Ward 16) is enhancing service delivery in its area of jurisdiction.
Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to collect data for the study. The research questionnaire covered a wide spectrum of ward committee related activities ranging from powers and functions of ward committees, challenges experienced by ward committees, capacity of ward committee members in performance of their duties and involvement of the community in ward matters. Multiple choice questions as well as open ended questions were used to collect data for the study. The response rate was 100% as all the ward committee members responded to the questionnaires. The positive response rate therefore provided an acceptable scientific basis for analysis and objectivity to the study.

The study reached the following conclusions and recommendations amongst others:

- There is a general lack of knowledge and understanding among the ward committee members on their roles and responsibilities.
- There are inadequate facilities and equipment which compromise the ability of the ward committee to carry out the service delivery objectives of the municipality effectively.
- Ward committee members need continuous training in regards to their roles, functions and responsibilities.
- Possible revision of the mandate of the ward committee system from an advisory structure to that of a decision making structure is needed.
- The ward committee members must report to and continuously engage their communities on a regular and structured manner on municipal programmes and plans.

The study concludes with the suggestion that if the recommendations of this study can be considered and implemented the Middledrift ward committee will be able to enhance service delivery in its area.
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Chapter 1

Rationale and Background to the Study

1.1. Rationale to the Study

Ward committees have been established as community participatory structures in South African municipalities. In terms of Local Government Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) ward committees create an enabling environment for meaningful community participation in local government and thereby enhance service delivery. Local government is described as government committed to working with communities to find sustainable ways to improve the quality of life of citizens. These structures are an important mechanism for community engagement with local authorities.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the ward committee system serves as a mechanism to enhance service delivery in the Middledrift area of the Nkonkobe Local Municipality. As a formal communication channel between the community and the council, the ward committee system is intended to serve as a vehicle to channel communal needs and challenges to the council. Despite the expected role of the ward committee with regard to enhanced service delivery, Middledrift area is still faced with underdevelopment and poverty (Nkonkobe Municipality IDP: 2007-2012).

Nkonkobe Local Municipality IDP (2007-2012) states that the Nkonkobe Local Municipality is faced with underdevelopment which has resulted from historic consequences of the country’s politics. Unemployment and poverty levels within the municipality are high and are coupled with underdevelopment and service backlogs. The income levels of the people of Nkonkobe Municipal area are very low with a significant portion of 74% of the inhabitants without any income (IDP Nkonkobe Local Municipality 2007-2012). The municipality’s IDP (2007-2012) identified Middledrift as the poorest area in the municipality, with a backlog in infrastructure and service delivery.
Tshabalala (2007:2) states that the conceptualization of local government has been placed at the cutting edge of addressing basic national challenges such as underdevelopment, unemployment, stagnation and poverty. According to Section 74 (a) of Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, ward committees play a crucial role in assisting municipalities in addressing underdevelopment, unemployment and poverty through public participation. As a representative structure of the community, the establishment of the ward committee is intended to assist the municipality to respond to the needs, aspirations, potentials and challenges of local communities in terms of provision of such services in a sustainable manner.

As community structures, ward committees are expected to play an active role in taking part in core municipal processes such as Integrated Development and Planning, municipal budgeting and municipal performance management systems. Participatory local government ensures that communities through their legitimate structures own the process of development, and citizens are enabled to make a meaningful contribution to the development of their own lives. Without the ward committees, the system of democratic and developmental local government can not be said to be centered among the people (National Policy Framework on Public Participation, 2005:1).

According to the Department of Provincial and Local Government (2005:10) local government is committed to form partnerships that are genuinely empowering. The empowerment of communities involves a range of activities including creating community participatory structures such as ward committees, assisting those community structures to plan at a local level through community based planning, to implement and monitor those plans using a range of working groups and community based organizations, supporting community based services, and to support the local structures through the cadre of community development workers. The rationale for this study is to investigate the extent to which the ward committee system is able to perform its functions and enhance service delivery.

1.2. Background to the Study

The current South African local sphere of government derives in part from the past regime’s segregated local government and therefore retains some of the characteristics of the past. In South Africa it is a reality that the population is characterized by a plethora of diversity. It is also
true that South African local government has been managed in a discriminatory manner, due to the apartheid policies which caused towns and cities to become racially fragmented. Instead of becoming a bond to cement society, local government in South Africa was used as a mechanism which separated cultural and racial groups. The former local government policies resulted in underdevelopment and non-delivery of basic services and infrastructure to the majority of South African citizens.

Local government legislation including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 visualizes local government as a key developmental agent which will enhance community participation at local government level and provide better services to all citizens. The Constitution 1996 provides for a non-discriminatory local government and obliges local government to develop efficient, effective and democratic governance in its sphere of influence. In this regard section 152 (1) of the Constitution 1996 mandates local government to:

(a) provide a democratic and accountable local government,
(b) to ensure provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner,
(c) to promote social and economic development,
(d) to promote safe and healthy environments and
(e) to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in local government matters.

Furthermore, section 152 (2) of the Constitution 1996 stipulates that municipalities must strive within their financial and administrative capacity to achieve the objectives set out in section 152 (1) of the Constitution 1996 which emphasizes the need for participatory democracy at the third sphere of governance. Significantly, the Constitution 1996 also obliges municipalities to structure and manage their administration, budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community and to promote the social and economic development of the community. Therefore it becomes imperative that local authorities should develop mechanisms and processes which encourage the involvement of local citizenry in decision making, development and planning of local government matters. Within the framework of the Constitution1996, the 1998 White Paper on Local Government establishes the basis for a new developmental local government system, which is committed to working with citizens, groups
and communities to create sustainable human settlements which provide for a decent quality of life and meet the social, economic and material needs of communities in a holistic way. Mhotsha (2005) is of the opinion that decentralized decision making and planning at the local sphere allows the local populace to actively participate in the affairs that affect them directly.

As stipulated in the Constitution 1996, it remains clear that community participation in local government is a legislative obligation which seeks to facilitate mechanisms for community involvement in matters of local government so as to improve service delivery.

1.3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the extent at which the ward committee system serves as a mechanism to enhance service delivery in the Middledrift area, Ward 16. Through the concept of developmental local government, municipalities have attempted to ensure that communities participate in developing and implementing municipal plans and service delivery objectives through community participatory structures like ward committees; it is the people themselves who know what is best for them. The provision of sustainable municipal services is further enhanced by inclusion of ward committees in core municipal processes such as the Integrated Development Planning, municipal budgeting and municipal performance management system.

This study is motivated by the fact that community participation through the ward committee system is expected to enhance the provision and delivery of basic services in local municipalities. Key challenges within the Middledrift ward committee that adversely affect its role as a mechanism to facilitate service delivery will be investigated. The choice of Middledrift as a target area for the study is informed by the fact that both the Nkonkobe Municipality IDP (2007-2012) and the Nkonkobe Municipality Annual Report (2007/2008) have identified Middledrift area as the poorest area in the municipality with high unemployment and service delivery backlogs.
This study will seek to answer the following:

- The role and functions of a ward committee with regard to public participation and service delivery
- The resources and support for Middledrift ward committee.
- The extent to which the ward committee system influences decision making of the municipality.

1.4. Statement of the Hypothesis

The introduction of the ward committee system in Middledrift is expected to accelerate the process of service delivery through a ward participatory system, yet its impact and effectiveness in regards to service delivery is minimal given the high levels of poverty and underdevelopment in the area. The hypothesis of the study is based on the assumption that in order for the Middledrift ward committee to serve as an effective mechanism to speed up service delivery, it must be adequately capacitated on a regular basis with necessary skills and resources in regards to service delivery objectives. The study is further based on the assumption that for the ward committee to meet its developmental mandate it must possess greater decision making powers, as under the new mandate it only serves as an advisory structure.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

The study will be undertaken in Ward 16 in the Middledrift area of the Nkonkobe Municipality. The reason for the choice thereof is that both the Nkonkobe Municipality IDP (2007-20012) and the Nkonkobe Municipality Annual Report (2007/2008) have identified Middledrift as the poorest area in Nkonkobe Municipality. Nkonkobe Municipality IDP (2007-20012) states that unemployment and poverty levels within the Middledrift area are high and are coupled with service delivery backlogs. The study will be limited to the Middledrift ward committee.

1.6. Research Methodology

Research methodology is a system through which a researcher is able to collect, analyze and interpret data for the realization of the research aims. Research methodology refers to the
methods, techniques, and procedures that will be employed in the process of implementing the research plan (Welman & Kruger, 1999:39). The research will be conducted by employing both the qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative method will be used where quantities or figures are sought whilst the qualitative method will be used to gather verbal data. For the purpose of this study a case study research using Middledrift as a study area was undertaken. Goddard & Melville (2001:9) are of the opinion that a case study research is research in which a specific situation is studied to see if it gives rise to any general theories or to see if existing general theories are born out by specific situation. Denscombe (2003:30-31) is of the view that the logic behind the case study is that there are insights to be gained from looking at the individual case that can have wider implications and that would not have come to light through the use of research strategy that tried to cover a large number of instances.

1.7. Research Design

Welman & Kruger (1999:46) describe research design as a plan according to which the researcher obtains participants and collects information from them. Mouton and Marais (1992:155) are of the opinion that there are two approaches to research design, namely, quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Neuman (2000:7) is of the opinion that a quantitative or empirical analytical research method relates to data being expressed as numbers, whereas the qualitative research method considers data in terms of words, pictures or objectives. For the purpose of this research, it is deemed necessary to employ both the quantitative and qualitative approach mainly because of the nature of the research which requires both figures to explain some instances and direct interrogation of the subjects and explanation in words of the phenomenon under study during the data collection stage.

The researcher employed more than one method of data collection in an endeavour to achieve reliability and validity of the findings. Data collection methods to be used include, face to face interviews, self administered questionnaires (depending on literacy level of the respondent) and studying existing documentation when necessary e.g. ward committee minutes. Given the varying levels of literacy among the members of the Middledrift ward committee, face to face interviews will be suitable in some instances, for example when the respondent is illiterate, the researcher here will explain or elaborate some questions in more detail. In this regard the
researcher will ask questions and record the answers. Self administered questionnaires will be used by ward committee members who are literate and showed clear understanding of the aspects posed in the research questionnaire.

1.8. Clarification of Concepts
The following section explains some terms in the context of this study

- **Municipality**

- **Category A Municipality (Metropolitan Municipality)**
  *Section 155 (1) (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)* defines category A municipality as a municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area.

- **Category B Municipality (Local Municipality)**
  *Section 155 (1) (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)* defines category B municipality as a municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a category C municipality within whose area it falls.

- **Category C Municipality (District Municipality)**
  *Section 155 (1) (c) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* defines category C municipality as a municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality.
• **Local Community**


(a) the residents of the municipality;
(b) the rate payers of the municipality;
(c) any civic organizations and non-governmental, private sector or labour sector organizations or bodies which are involved in local affairs within the municipality; and
(d) visitors and other people residing outside the municipality who, because of their presence in the municipality, make use of services or facilities provided by the municipality and include more specifically, the poor, and other disadvantaged sections of such body of persons.

• **Community Participation**

De Beers and Swanepoel (2002:20) asserts that community participation is normally associated with the actions of communities, groups or individuals in relation to development, improvement or positive change of an existing, less acceptable situation. Community participation is local, active and direct and communities must be fully involved in the local development process.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary reference describes the community as a collection of people living in the same area and sharing the same fundamental values. This community is made up of individuals and groups.

• **Public Participation**

The World Bank Learning Group defines public participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them. (World Bank 1995). From this perspective, public participation could be viewed from the level of consultation or even decision making in all phases of the programme or project cycle in the community, namely from needs assessment, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.
For the purpose of this study the terms public and community are used interchangeably.

- **Basic Municipal Services**
  According to *Act 117 of 1998* basic municipal service means a municipal service that is necessary to ensure an acceptable and reasonable quality of life and, if not provided will endanger public health or safety of the environment.

- **Integrated Development Plan**
  *Section 25 of Act 117 of 1998* defines IDP as a single inclusive and strategic plan which is undertaken for the development of the municipality. IDP *(a)* links, integrates and coordinates plans and takes into account proposals for the development of the municipality and *(b)* aligns the resources and capacity of the municipality with the implementation of municipal plans.

- **Capacity**
  The *National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government (2003:9)* defines capacity as the potential for something to happen. *Act 117 of 1998* defines capacity as the administrative, financial management and infrastructure that enables a municipality to collect revenue and to govern on its own initiative the local government affairs.

- **Accountability**
  Fox and Mayer (1995:1-2) define accountability as the responsibility of government and its agents to achieve previously set objectives and to account for them in public. Greer (1978:15) is of the view that accountability refers to a pattern of behaviour. Only if a pattern of behaviour exists can predictability and therefore, accountability exist.
1.9. Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1- Rationale and Background to the Study
The chapter explains the background and the rationale for the study. The research methodology and research design for the study will also be briefly explained.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical and Legislative Framework for Public Participation at the Local sphere of Government
This chapter presents a theoretical framework of public participation. This will be achieved firstly, by evaluating the significance of public participation in matters of local government. Secondly, the legislative and policy framework that facilitates public and community involvement in matters of local government will be analysed. Lastly, special attention will be focussed on the ward committee system as a mechanism to facilitate service delivery to local communities. Powers and functions of ward committees in matters of municipalities will also be presented.

Chapter 3- Research Methodology
The chapter outlines the research methodology and design of the study, the sample and sampling procedure, as well as the instruments used to collect data.

Chapter 4- Data Analysis and Interpretation
The chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations
The chapter draws conclusions on the role and the capacity of the ward committee system as a mechanism for enhancing service delivery. Recommendations based on the study with regards to Service delivery will be presented.
Chapter 2

Theoretical and Legislative Framework for Public Participation at the Local sphere of Government

2.1. Introduction

The South African government has committed itself to establishing a wide range of public participatory processes in all three spheres of governance. The advent of democracy in South Africa has catalysed new forms of governance and introduced new approaches to development and planning. The new approaches as put forward by the democratic government are aimed at introducing public participation, accountability and transparency in all levels of government thus bringing about fundamental policy changes in South Africa.

Local government is the third sphere of government which is deliberately created to bring government closer to the people. In this process, it gives the community a sense of involvement through participating in local government matters. Public participation is a principle that is acknowledged and accepted by all spheres of government in South Africa. Participation ensures that government addresses the real needs of communities in the most appropriate way. The Department of Provincial and Local Government (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. The new South Africa is constructed on the principles of democracy and participation for all, consequently, local government in South Africa was transformed to reflect these values. Democracy is however not only about formally electing representatives, it is equally important that the elected leaders and the community continually interact through established structures.

The role of local community in a democratic government becomes very different from other forms of government. In a democratic government like South Africa, the government must act on the will of the people. Citizens have a right and duty to express their opinions and views and be
involved in the way in which the government should work. Local government structures in the new democratic dispensation have a responsibility to promote local democracy, social and economic development of communities. Key to local government function is the provision of sustainable municipal services to communities. Houston, *et al* (2001:206) asserts that the local government legislation in South Africa makes provision for local authorities to establish a system of participatory democracy at the local level in the form of ward committees. The ward committees play a critical role in facilitating the attainment of local government objectives. Through working directly with the municipality, ward committees serve as a communication channel which articulates the new system of local government to local communities, more especially to previous disadvantaged communities.

In this chapter, a theoretical and legislative framework that facilitates public participation at the local sphere of government will be presented. This will be achieved by evaluating the significance of public participation at the local sphere of government. Secondly, the legislative and policy framework that facilitates community involvement in local government will be analysed. In this regard a special focus will be made on the ward committee system as a mechanism to facilitate service delivery to local communities.

### 2.2. Participation at the local sphere of government

Putu (2006:8) notes that for the last twenty years, the concept of public participation has been largely used in the discourse of development. For much of this period the concept has referred to participation in the social arena, in the community or development projects. Development has a diversity of meanings. For example, public participation is often viewed as ownership of the development process, bottom up planning, grass roots planning and collaborative planning (Putu 2006:8). Brayson (1993:3) is of the opinion that public participation is a means for local officials to obtain information about local conditions, needs, desires and attitudes. Public participation therefore enables the public officials to address the real needs of communities in the most appropriate way. Participation helps to build an informed and responsible citizenry with a sense of ownership of government’s developments and projects. It further allows municipalities to get buy-in and to develop partnerships with stakeholders.
The Draft Policy Framework by the Department of Provincial Local Government (DPLG 2005:5) regards public participation as an open accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making. The Draft Policy Framework by DPLG (2005) further states that public participation is a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect lives.

Public participation is an important cornerstone of democracy in that it is said to make government transparent and accountable, act on its electoral promises and also act within the law and the constitution in particular. Houston (2001:8) is of the opinion that participatory democracy reflects tendencies of “pure” or “direct” democracy, i.e. involving the citizenry to a greater degree in decision making than representative democracy. Bekker (1996:17) is of the view that democracy at local level is concerned with the political system based on aspects such as citizen participation, majority rule, consultation and discussion as well as responsibility of leaders to give guidance. In a democratic society, citizens can express their democratic rights in a number of ways such as voting in elections, participating in party politics, holding public demonstrations, petition local or national leaders, lobby decision-makers, make written or verbal submissions to committees, print and distribute leaflets, use local radio and TV shows to cover their issues of interests, refer their complaints to appropriate commissions such as the South African Human Rights Commission, the Public Protector and the Independent Directorate of Complaints (DPLG, 2005:7).

Cahn and Camper (1968:58) suggest three rationales for public participation. Firstly, they suggest that merely knowing that one can participate promotes dignity and self-sufficiency within the individual. Secondly, participation taps the energies and resources of individual citizens within the community. Finally, public participation provides a source of special insight, information, knowledge, and experience which contributes to the feasibility of community solutions. Public participation which is the cornerstone of participatory democracy enhances official responsiveness in local government matters by enabling public interests to be clearly expressed by the communities themselves. If public participation is properly instituted within government structures, it may constitute an effective check on the exercise of the discretion of
public officials, compelling the latter to be more sensitive and accountable to community needs (Cahn and Camper, 1968:78). Public participation needs to be pursued and encouraged for its own sake, on the basis that it is the inalienable democratic right of all citizens of a country.

2.3. Benefits of public participation

The handbook for public participation in local governance, produced by the Australia South African Local Government Partnership “Get involved with us” put forward what it terms the ‘benefit for public participation’. The following captures the benefits of public participation:

- Encourages citizen focused service delivery because the municipality has responded to stated community needs
- Develops a clear sense of direction for communities as the process of community consultation can help clarify and focus community’s issues;
- Makes the most of a whole range of resources in the community. A municipality will be unaware of the skills hidden in the community such as local expertise and knowledge if they never talk to community members;
- Adds value to municipality’s decision-making by drawing on these skills and the wisdom of the community members;
- Identifies alternatives to be considered when addressing issues – consulting and including a range of people will ensure various views;
- Improve municipal credibility with the public if the municipality takes the community’s opinions into account in their work.
- Creates a better understanding of a project and its objectives as the municipality has informed the community and invited them to be involved; and
- Enhances community ownership of decisions and resultant outcomes if the community has been part of the decision-making process (DPLG 2005:11)

‘Benefits for public participation’ as outlined above enables the municipality to involve the community in municipal programmes, thus public officials will understand challenges, strengths and aspirations of the local communities. The ‘benefits for participation’ also empowers local
communities with special skills and knowledge and they can take ownership of their municipality.

Below are other benefits of public participation:

- **Reduction of psychological suffering and apathy**

Strange (1972:35) is of the opinion that the most persuasive argument in favour of increased public participation is that public involvement is necessary in any effort to overcome a sense of powerlessness among the community. Bekker (1996:75) further suggests that the empowerment of individuals and groups to have a say in matters affecting their lives reduces psychological suffering and overcomes the apathy of ordinary citizens, and should be the fundamental reason for urging public participation. Kweit & Kweit (1977:35) are of the opinion that participation especially in local government increases the citizen’s sense of efficacy, that is, the belief on the part of the citizen that he/she has the ability and competence to influence government in its planning and decision-making.

- **Converting opponents**

Strange (1972:35) asserts that public participation may positively influence individual behaviour and provide a technique whereby those initially opposed to decisions may be co-opted into contributing positively to programmes, which traditionally have been replete with conflict. According to Southall (2004:54) 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, young and old are afforded an opportunity to actively and meaningfully contribute to their own development and well being. In a democratic society, community participation becomes a desired and necessary part of democratic processes which seek to deepen citizen involvement at local government level. Public participation enables citizens as individuals and groups to purposefully take part in local government matters that affect their communities. Decisions made without public input are often eventually rejected as illegitimate and antidemocratic, which can impede community development. As Spiegel (1968:31) notes “public participation is the process that can meaningfully tie programmes to people”. Bridges (1974:27) cites five advantages to be gained from active public involvement in community affairs:
The individual can bring about a desired change by expressing one’s desire, either individually or through a community group.

- The individual learns how to make the desired changes.
- The individual learns how to resolve conflicting interests for the general welfare of the group.
- The individual begins to understand group dynamics as it applies to mixed groups.
- The individual learns to understand and appreciate the individual needs and interests of all community groups.

As communities need local authorities to deliver essential services to them, the effective delivery of these services may be enhanced by the active involvement of these communities in service delivery initiatives of the municipalities.

### 2.4. Different forms of public participation

The concept of participation is related to rights of citizens and democratic government. It is a multi-faceted activity with different roles and varying degrees of community involvement. From this perspective, participation could be seen in the level of consultation or decision making in all plans and programmes of local government, from needs assessment, to appraisal, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

According to the *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London, (2002:10)* the following are different forms of participation that may be undertaken:

- The more traditional form (e.g. public meetings, consultation, documents, cooption to committees and questions and answer sessions) that have been used by local authority for some time.
- Those which are primarily customer orientated (e.g. service satisfactory survey, complaints/suggestion schemes) most often used in relation to service delivery.
- Innovative methods (e.g. interactive websites, citizen panels, focus groups and referendums) that tend to represent the new research techniques.
• Innovative approaches which encourage citizens to deliberate over issues (e.g. citizens’ juries, community plans/needs analysis, visioning exercise and issue forums).

2.5. Linking public participation to local government

According to Craythorne (1997:13), local government is multidimensional in that it does not exist only as a legal entity; it exists in and for communities at grassroots level closest to the communities. As such, local government operates in a number of dimensions and exists as a living and dynamic organism (Ntlemeza, 2006:3). Ismail et al (1997:2) state that local government is commonly defined as a decentralized, representative institution with general and specific powers devolved to it by a higher sphere of government (national or provincial) with a geographically defined area. It is also defined as a political subdivision of a nation or state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected.

According to Putu (2006:12) participation at local government is a complex mechanism, and in effect there is no single blue print. The laws governing local government stipulate that communities can participate in the local government decision-making process through various methods, including ward committees, consultation meetings, calls for public comment on issues and stakeholder meetings. The involvement of citizens in the democratic process beyond just voting serves to strengthen and deepen democracy.

Since the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1994, different views and expectations have been raised by interest groups on how government should relate to its communities. But, there seems to be a general agreement that participation is key to the successes of local developmental process. In South African context, it is undoubtedly that public participation is essential for nurturing our young and emerging democracy, as it sets a good foundation for government and society relations. A number of laws in South Africa make it compulsory for municipalities to consult or inform the community about its programmes and plans. Sometimes politicians and
officials view this process as something they are forced to do rather than something that will benefit them. Some are also scared of facing the community because report back or consultation meetings can easily become forums for complaint and protest about problems or against non-delivery.

Participation as one of the cornerstones of our democracy has equal benefits for politicians, officials and civic society:

- Consultation helps the municipal council to make more appropriate decisions based on the real needs of people.
- The more informed people are, the better they will understand what government is trying to do and what the budget and resource limitations are.
- Councillors can only claim to be accountable if they have regular interaction with the people they represent and if they consult and report back on key council decisions.
- Government cannot address all the development needs on its own and partnerships are needed with communities, civil society and business to improve service delivery and development (*Local Government in South Africa, 2005:30*).

In each municipality there are number of officials, structures and mechanisms that can play a role in public participation. Below is the summary of the main ones:

- **The Mayor**
  
  The mayor is the public face of the municipality and should be used in big public meetings, municipal stakeholders’ forums and media.

- **Ward councillors**
  
  Ward councillors are the representatives of specific communities and are ideally placed to be the link between the people and the municipality. They should bring peoples’ needs and problems to the municipality and consult and inform the community around municipal services and programmes.
• Ward committees

Ward committees are from different sectors in communities. Ten members are elected in each ward to assist and advise the ward councillor and increase community participation. They can be very useful for spreading information, assessing needs, building partnerships, consulting the community and picking up local problems with services.

• Community development workers

Community development workers are deployed by government to work in communities to make sure that people can access government services. They have to give advice, help people with problems, assess needs and work with local organizations to build partnerships with government. They usually know the community well, have good contacts with organizations and can help with consultation, research, spread information and monitor implementation.

• Stakeholder forum

Many different forums already exist - for example community police forums and IDP forums. Forums are very useful for quick and ongoing consultation as well as for building partnerships between the community and government.

• Community liaison officials

Most municipalities employ staff to liaise with community - they should be used as part of any outreach and public participation programme.

• Media

The municipality usually has access to its own media, for example notice boards, rates and water bills, etc. This can be used for spreading information about prices, new plans, budget priorities, etc. the commercial media as well as radio should also be used to inform people, and in some cases like phone –in programmes, to consult people (DPLG 2005).
2.5.1. Structured public participation at local government

Structured participation is largely based on the existence of a set of organizations with certain rights in the operations of the municipality. The way public participation is institutionalized and structured must provide sufficient room for diversity, for example for different participation styles from various stakeholders. For such participation to be effective, a municipality must introduce a common regulatory framework for participation which will guide the process of participation and add meaning to it. Setting clear minimum requirements for participation is important as well as providing a legally recognized organizational procedure for participation. While the organizational arrangements may differ widely in detail from area to area, the following minimum requirements have to be observed and adhered to:

- Stakeholder organizations which represent certain social, economic, gender or environmental interests have to be registered as “Stakeholder Associations” at municipal level through which they can participate in municipal programmes.

- Ward committees are the organizational framework through which communities in a geographic area can participate in municipal programmes.

2.5.1.1. Ward committee as a form of structured participation

In order to establish a formal structured communication channel between local government and the local communities, section 72-74 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) provides for the establishment of community participatory structures in the form of ward committees at the municipal level. The Municipal Structures Act, 1998 obliges municipalities to involve these community structures in municipal processes which determine priorities and strategies for meeting community needs. According to the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) the establishment of the ward committee system creates an enabling environment for improved service delivery and economic development. Section 72 (3) of The Municipal Structures Act, 1998 states ‘the objective of ward committees is to enhance participatory democracy in local government’. The aim is to give communities a
more direct voice in the governance of their local communities. In terms of *Section 17 of the Municipal Structures Act 1998* the ward committee consists of:

- The councillor representing the ward in the council, who must also be the chairperson of the ward committee, and
- Not more than ten other persons

The ward committees cannot replace the responsibility of the ward councillor to consult the community and other stakeholder organizations. The ward committee is expected to ascribe to all principles of democracy. They should be the instruments that complement the overall democratic order of the community. In 2004 a survey by the Australian-South African Local Governance Partnership suggested a few simple pre-conditions for the ward committee system to be successful. These included:

- For the process of participation to be meaningful and be seen as meaningful for both parties - the municipality and the community ought to listen to each other rather than just talk to each other.
- For adequate resources to support the process - in all examples of good practice, public participation is funded.
- For relevant information to be conveyed in a manner that is understandable to communities involved, this may require the use of local languages.
- There should be clear understanding and distinction between providing information; consultation and participation. *(DPLG: 2005)*

Ward committees serve as structures that make it possible to narrow the gap between local municipality and the communities as they have knowledge and understanding of the citizens and communities they represent (Tshabalala 2007:20).

### 2.5.2. Participation through ward committees

The primary purpose of a ward committee is to be a formal communication channel between the local community and the council. Ward committees were introduced in municipalities as
community structures to play a critical role in linking and informing local municipalities about their needs, aspirations, potentials and problems. Ward committees were established to form a bridge between municipal governance and communities by facilitating proper channels of communication between the council and the community. In terms of Section 74 (a) of the Structures Act 1998 a ward committee may make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward to the councillor or through the councillor to the municipal council. The ward committee would also serve as a forum for communication between the ward councillor and the ward community about municipal issues, community development initiatives and service options.

According to the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005) the central role of the ward committee system is the facilitation of local community participation in decisions which affect the local community, the articulation of local community’s interests and the representation of these interests within the municipal system. Henceforth, ward committees are regarded as a mechanism to allow for greater interaction between the municipality and the communities for enhanced service delivery.

According to the Ward Resource Book (2005) ward committees in South Africa ought to operate and serve in the following manner:

- serve as an official specialised participatory structure in the municipality;
- create formal unbiased communication channels as well as co-operative partnerships; between the community and the council;
- engage with communities and the general public in matters of the municipality;
- advise and make recommendations to the ward councillor on matters and policy affecting the ward;
- assist the ward councillor in identifying conditions, challenges and the needs of residents;
- spread information in the ward concerning municipal affairs such as the budget; integrated development planning, service delivery options and municipal properties;
- receive queries and complaints from residents concerning municipal service delivery; communicate them to council and provide feedback to community on council’s response;
• have a say in decisions, project prioritisation, integrated development planning and the allocation of funds (budgeting) by the municipality;
• act in the best interest of the community

It is clear that the role played by ward committees is of crucial importance in ensuring that constructive and harmonious interaction between the municipal council and the community prevails. This will ensure that public participation is entrenched in all municipal plans and processes.

2.5.2.1. Participation through ward committees in municipal planning processes
Community participation is a means of obtaining information about local conditions, needs, desires and attitudes. If ward committees are involved in the municipal planning process, municipal authorities become familiar with community needs and aspirations and include these needs in municipal plans and programmes. A strong acknowledgement by the local authority of the value of community participation in municipal planning is vital. Ward committees should also be involved in the design and adoption of the planning processes.

Conyers (1982:102) notes some benefits of involving ward committees in the planning process “people are more likely to be committed to a project or programme if they are involved in its planning and preparation. They can identify with the project and even see it as their own”. Zimmerman (1976:65) is of the opinion that the quality of life is better in a local authority area with a well developed sense of community involvement. Ward committee involvement provides a mechanism to ensure the democratization of the planning process.

2.5.2.2. Ward committee’s role in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP)
Municipalities are required, in terms of legislation including, inter alia, the Constitution 1996, Municipal Structures Act 1998 and Municipal Systems Act 2000 to produce an Integrated Development Plan (IDP). IDP is a principal strategic planning instrument which helps municipalities to develop a coherent, long term plan for the coordination of all development and delivery in its area.
IDP is a process specially designed to enable local authorities and community structures to plan effectively for the development of their area, and it involves the following aspects:

- Working with the community to assess community needs
- Developing a common vision and stating priorities and goals
- Accessing what resources are available
- Designing programmes and projects with the community
- Making sure that municipal programmes are coordinated with those of the local, provincial and national authorities
- Making sure that plans for different sectors such as water, housing, waste and transport work well together and receive priority
- Proper financial planning and budgeting
- Creating and adopting plans for implementation
- On-going monitoring and evaluation of programmes to ensure that they are on track (IDP Guide 1997 in Bauer, 2000:98)

Ward committee participation in the IDP is imperative as it serves to fulfill the following major functions:

(i) Need orientation: ensuring that people’s needs and problems are taken into account;
(ii) Appropriateness of solutions: using knowledge and experience of local residents and communities in order to arrive at appropriate and sustainable problem solutions and measures;
(iii) Community ownership: mobilizing local residents and community’s initiatives and resources, and encouraging partnerships and co-operation between municipal government and the local community for planning, implementation and monitoring of plans.
(iv) Empowerment: making the IDP a community event thereby creating the basis for increased transparency and accountability of local government towards local community.

The developmental role of local government requires an improved and more effective manner of managing local resources. Local government councillors face new challenges in developing sustainable settlements which meet the needs and improve the quality of life of local communities. In order to meet these challenges, municipalities will need to understand the various dynamics operating within their areas and have to develop strategies and plans in partnership with other stakeholders’ particularly local communities. Stakeholders and target communities should be consulted throughout the IDP process to help identify needs, discuss strategies and develop projects.

2.5.2.3. Ward Committee involvement in municipal performance management systems

Performance management is a system that is used to ensure that all parts of the municipality work together to achieve set goals and standards. The municipality must have clear goals and specific targets of what has to be done to achieve set goals. Performance of individuals, departments and the municipality as a whole should be monitored to make sure the targets are met. Performance management ensures that plans are being implemented, that they are having the desired developmental impact, and that resources are being used efficiently. With the involvement of the ward committee, the municipality must identify key performance areas (KPAs) of the ward. In most wards key performance areas relate to major services that must be delivered such as water, electricity sanitation and roads. Municipalities should publish their KPAs, goals and targets in order to involve the public. Municipalities must also involve ward committees in the performance management processes so that the communities can actively monitor implementation, achieving/not achieving of targets and hold the municipal officials to account.
2.5.2.4. Ward committee’s role in municipal budget

A budget is a financial plan. It summarizes in financial terms, the activities planned for the forthcoming year by setting out the costs of these activities, and specifying where the income will come from to pay for the expenses. The financial year of South African municipalities runs from 1 July of each year to 31 June the following year. A participatory budget is a new and revolutionary public participation and public accountability instrument whereby communities have an opportunity to participate in the elaboration and control of the state budget (applicable only at Municipal level) Municipal authorities and the community deliberate on how to transfer public priorities into public policy agendas (Tshabalala, 2007:17). Key development projects, service level options, and new facilities on the draft budget are some of the items to be discussed with communities and stakeholders before being approved. After proper consultation with ward committees and other stakeholders the municipal council can approve the budget before the new financial year begins.

2.5.3. Importance of communication at local government

Communication and access to information is critical in enabling all citizens, particularly the poor and the marginalized, to exercise their rights. Public participation can not simply be a series of once-off events there needs to be continuous interaction between the community and the public officials. Every municipality has specific annual goals and plans. The municipality delivers services to the community, builds structures and supports development projects. A key part of the municipality’s annual plans should be to communicate all this to the public and to involve the public or community structures in decisions or as partners. This developed into a public participation and communication strategy. The strategy should look at all municipal plans and projects and set out where and how communication and public participation should play a role.

Communication and participation can be for different purposes - the former is not only used for consultation as part of the decision-making cycle. It can also be used to:

- Report back and account to residents about council decisions, plans and budgets
• Inform people of new services, tariffs, developments and policies

• Involve people in partnerships for delivery

Below are examples of different methods of communication and participation for different purposes which can be followed by the municipality

• For consultation
  Community meetings, meeting with sectors and community leaders, ward committees, door-to-door surveys, questionnaires included in municipal accounts, suggestion boxes and public hearings

• For reporting back or informing people
  Ward meetings or other public meetings, sectoral meetings, news letters, news papers and community radio, community notice boards, advertisements and posters.

• For involving people
  Meetings with affected community or relevant sectoral groups like religious, welfare, cultural, business, etc.

The municipality should ensure that its communication and participation strategy is properly resourced and supported. This means that a clear plan has to be developed that includes all events, meetings and media, that are responsible for implementation, what budget is required, by when it will happen and what other support is needed. For a communication and participation strategy to be effective it has to be clearly directed and the feedback that it generates must be integrated into other municipal plans. This means that the mayoral or executive committee and/or municipal manager must be central to the process and must get regular reports.
2.6. Challenges of participatory democracy

Bekker (1996:20-21) is of the opinion that if participatory democracy is instituted at local government level it does not necessarily and automatically mean that there will be a responsible government that responds to the needs of the people. Van der Vyver (1993:17) identifies the following as conditions that would contribute to the proper functioning of participatory democracy at the local government level:

i) There must be a certain level of education and intellectual sophistication among most members of society within the specific municipality.

ii) Information must flow freely and the public must also be informed about local government and its operations.

iii) A liberal ethos as a matter of public morality, and thus cherished in the hearts and minds of a cross-section of the inhabitants, must be in place.

iv) There must be a measure of material prosperity and economic development that more or less makes for comfortable living in the municipality.

v) A sense of national as well as local pride and loyalty to collective aspirations that transcends the impetus of self-interest, so as to facilitate promotion of general wealth, must exist.

vi) A situation of political stability and overall peace must prevail, which will permit the effective functioning of regular local government structures.

Van der Vyver (1993:18) asserts that when the stated conditions are wholly or partially absent, participatory democracy will in all likelihood not live up to its proponent’s expectations of securing responsible and responsive local governance. Bekker (1996:49) is of the opinion that the concept of public participation is of crucial importance in local government, as it strikes directly at the core of the structuring of relationships between citizens and their government. This is in fact the first time in the history of South Africa that all citizens and racial groups are able through the mechanism of public participation to make their voices heard in every sphere of government.
However, various challenges can be noted in implementing the notion of public participation. One major concern, according to Bekker (1996:50) is that the expectations that accompany attempts at community participation in many cases can be unrealistically high. Community participation cannot be considered a panacea for all the ills of society; it is simply a change in the process. Through this change in process, participation advocates claim that changes will occur in the even distribution of power in society, in the attitudes of citizens towards their government and in the type of policies produced by government. However, as already noted, it needs to be stated that instituting community participation does not guarantee that the expected effects of public participation will automatically materialize. If the communities are involved in municipal plans and programmes, the authorities will be able to know the immediate needs and aspirations of such communities and address them accordingly.

2.7. Policy framework for ward committees

The Constitution 1996 and other local government legislation such as the Local Government: Municipal Structures 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) and the Local Government: Municipal Systems 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) provides a legal framework for participatory local government and the ward committee system at the third sphere of government. The establishment of ward committees is both encouraged and emphasized in the above stated legislation as a way of providing an opportunity for local communities to be heard and be consulted in a structured and institutionalized manner.

The local sphere of government is often regarded as the sphere of government closest to the people. According to Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:10) international experience has indicated that one way of achieving success and effective structures of a community participatory system is to ensure that public participation takes place through institutionalised structures within the political system.

2.7.1. Origins of ward committee system in South Africa

The role of public participation at all levels of the political system in South Africa was recognised by the African National Congress (ANC) in its policy document, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), in 1994. ‘Reconstruction and development requires a
population that is empowered through expanded rights, meaningful information and education, an institutional network fostering representative and indirect democracy, and *participatory and direct democracy*’ (*Reconstruction and Development Programme [RDP]: 1994*).

From the above extract it is clear that the *RDP 1994* had already envisaged a new era of participatory democracy through public participation, which is the cornerstone of developmental local government. The *RDP 1994* further acknowledged the fact that no political democracy can survive and flourish if the majority of its people remain in poverty, without land, without their basic needs being met and without tangible prospects of better life. To achieve this, *RDP 1994* indicates, “We require an integrated and sustainable programme that is people centred. Our people, with their aspirations and collective determination, are our most important resource. Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and empowerment of citizens and local communities. The South African government therefore commits itself to maximum transparency and inclusivity”. In this regard the *RDP 1994* acknowledged the importance of community participation in achieving key government objectives.

*Section 152 (1) of the Constitution 1996* sets out the objectives of local government which is centred on public participation as follows:

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

It is evident from the *Constitution 1996* that the underlying principles contained in the *Reconstruction and Development Programme 1994* is now entrenched in the constitution. The *Constitution 1996* clearly stipulates the new developmental role of local government hence the new mandate for local government. Shaidi (2006) is of the opinion that although the *Constitution 1996* does provide for the new developmental mandate of local government, it does not stipulate the structural framework within which public participation must take place. It was in fact the *White Paper on Local Government, 1998* which provided a framework for public participation in local government.
2.7.2. Developmental local government through ward committee system

In March 1998, the cabinet of the Republic of South Africa approved the *White Paper on Local Government* which was to precede the implementation of *Chapter 7 of the Constitution 1996*. The *White Paper on Local Government 1998*, introduced new concepts that changed the landscape of local government in South Africa. It translated the objectives of *section 152 and 153 of the Constitution 1996* into the term ‘developmental local government’ and defined the new mandate as:

‘Local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives’.

According to the *White Paper 1998* the characteristics of developmental local government are:

- Maximizing social development and economic growth (stimulating local economies and job creation);
- Integrating and coordinating (mainly through the integrated development planning);
- Democratizing development (harnessing the involvement, input and energy of local citizens); and
- Leading and learning (building social capital at the local level to enable local solutions to development problems).

De Visser (2005:73) is of the opinion that the key outcomes that the *White Paper 1998* envisages developmental local government to achieve are:

- Provision of household infrastructure and services;
- Creation of livable integrated cities, towns and rural areas;
- Local economic development; and
- Community empowerment and redistribution.
To fulfil this vision, municipalities are encouraged to build local democracy by developing strategies and mechanisms to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups. The *White Paper 1998* prescribes that municipal councillors should promote the involvement of citizens and community structures in the design and delivery of municipal programmes. Therefore it can be argued that developmental local government is embedded in the notion of active citizen participation in municipal programmes for the attainment of local government objectives. The *White Paper 1998* states that building local democracy is the central role of local government, and municipalities should develop strategies and mechanisms (including but not limited to, participative planning) to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups. In this regard *White Paper 1998* requires active participation of communities in municipalities at four levels, as:

- **Voters** – to ensure maximum democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are empowered to promote.
- **Participants in the policy process** - as citizens who express via various stakeholder associations, their views before, during and after the policy development process in order to ensure that policies reflect community preferences as far as possible.
- **Consumers and service users** – as consumers who expect value for money, affordable services and courteous and responsive service
- **Partners in resource mobilisation.** – as organised partners involved in the mobilisation of resources for development via for-profit business, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community based institutions.

As the *White Paper 1998* is not an Act of Parliament and as such could not oblige municipalities to carry out its provisions. For this reason public participatory structures such as ward committees could not be established on the basis of the *White Paper 1998* alone. To ensure the effectiveness of the provisions of the *White Paper 1998*, developmental local government legislation had to be promulgated. Local government legislation such as the *Municipal Structures Act 1998, Municipal Systems Ac, 2000 and Municipal Electoral Act, 2000* (Act 27 of 2000) were passed. Because local government is regarded as a sphere of government closest to the people, the core of the above stated legislation is to craft and facilitate ways to ensure that the citizens are consulted and are involved in decisions affecting their municipalities.
2.7.3. Powers and functions of ward committees

Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 was the first developmental legislation that dealt specifically with the structures and processes required to effect community participation in matters of the municipality. Section 19 of the Municipal Structures Act 1998 requires municipalities to strive within its capacity to achieve the objectives set out in Section 152 of the Constitution 1996, namely to:

(i) Develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organisations in performance of its functions and exercising its powers,

(ii) Annually review the needs of the community and municipal priorities and strategies for meeting those needs and involving the community in municipal processes.

In essence, the provisions of the Municipal Structures Act 1998 promulgate a process where communities could be involved in municipal governance, including planning, implementation, performance monitoring and review of municipal plans and programmes. Communities could be empowered to identify their needs, set performance indicators and targets and thereby hold municipalities accountable for their performance in service delivery. To institutionalise community involvement in municipal matters, Chapter 4 (Part 4) of Municipal Structures Act 1998 requires the establishment of ward committees within municipalities. According to section 73 (3) of the Municipal Structures Act 1998, “the objective of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government”. This therefore provides municipalities with insight on the role and objective of the ward committees.

Section 74 of Municipal Structures Act 1998 provides that a ward committee may make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward. In essence ward committees serve as advisory structures and as such hold no decision making powers. Chapter 4 Municipal Structures 1998 further provides that the ward councillor shall be the chairperson of the ward committee and the section further gives a framework for the powers and functions of ward committees, their term of office, and procedures for dealing with vacancies, remuneration and their dissolution. According to the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005) where ward committees exist as the main form of community participation, there is an obligation on the municipality to involve these
committees in municipal programmes, setting of key performance indicators and targets and monitoring of these indicators and targets.

If good democratic governance refers to working with and listening to citizens and the society as a whole, it is undoubtedly that public participation plays a critical role in bringing government closer to the people thus deepening our democracy in all spheres of government.

Section 16 (1) of the Municipal Systems Act 2000 requires municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government (elected leaders) with a system of participatory governance (community participation), for the purpose of encouraging and creating conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. Section 16 (1) (a) further requires municipalities to encourage, and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality including in-

(i) the preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan;
(ii) the establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system
(iii) the monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance;
(iv) the preparation of its budget; and
(v) strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services.

Section 17 (1) of Act 32 of 2000 further suggests that participation by the local community in the affairs of the municipality must take place through political structures for participation and other appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established by the municipality or the councillor.

Section 17 (2) of Municipal Systems Act 2000 obliges municipalities to establish appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. When establishing such mechanisms, processes and procedures, section 3 of Act Municipal Systems Act 2000 legislates that the municipality must take into account the special needs of –
(a) people who cannot read or write;
(b) people with disabilities;
(c) women; and
(d) other disadvantaged groups

With regards to the establishment of ward committees, section 17 (4) makes provision for a municipal council to establish one or more advisory committees within municipal wards consisting of persons who are not councillors to advise the council on any matter within the council’s competence. The Act advises that when appointing such a committee, gender representivity must be taken into account.

The above provisions clearly indicate the imperative role of ward committees as a mechanism of interaction between the council and the community.

Section 5 (1) of Municipal Systems Act 2000 sets out the Rights and Duties of Members of the Local Community and specifically outlines the citizen’s right to:

(a) (i) be involved in the decision making process of the municipality; and
(ii) submit written or oral recommendations, representations and complaints to the municipal council or to another political structure or a political office bearer or to the administration of the municipality.

(b) prompt responses to their written or oral communication including complaints

(c) be informed of decisions of the municipal council

(d) demand proceedings of the municipal council and those of its committees to be open to the public.

The active citizen participation in municipal matters contributes to the decision making process of the municipality and helps bring government closer to the people.
2.8. Conclusion

The South African model of a ward participatory system is in line with international experience of advanced democracies which view community participation and consultation in local government matters as a core value in participatory democracy. Citizens need to participate more fully in local government, whether in making decisions or by taking part in the direct management of services. The result both strengthens representative democracy and encourages participative democracy. This helps to reconnect citizens to their local authority and increase a sense of local identity and ownership of the municipality. Ward committees that work well with both their community and municipal officials will afford every citizen a say in municipal governance and will also make municipal officials accountable to the people.
Chapter 3
Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction
This chapter describes the research methodology used for collecting data for the study. According to Leedy (1989:91) methodology is an operational framework within which the facts are placed so that their meaning may be seen more clearly. Babbie and Mouton (2001:103) explain research methodology as whom or what will be studied in order to collect information, identification of subjects and how information will be obtained. Research Methodology is seen as a system through which a researcher is able to collect, analyze and interpret data for the realization of the research aims. In this chapter both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies will be discussed as research methods used to collect data for the study. Secondly the chapter outlines research survey as a method of collecting data from the respondents. In this regard both interviews and questionnaires will be discussed as survey methods to collect data and how they were used. The chapter will conclude by indicating how the data was analysed.

3.2. Research Design
Welman & Kruger (1999:46) describe research design as a plan according to which the researcher obtains research participants (subjects) and collects information from them. The researcher also describes the purpose and role of the participants with a view to reaching conclusions about the research problem (research hypothesis or research questions). Labovitz & Hagedorm (1981:42) are of the opinion that research design is a set of logical procedures that if followed enables the researcher to obtain the evidence to determine the degree to which he/she is right or wrong; that it was indeed X not Y, and not something else, that led to “poor service delivery in Middledrift”. Research design is often referred to as the ‘glue’ that holds the research project together.

Research design is used to structure the research, to show how all the major parts of the research project – the samples or group measures, programmes and methods of assignment work together to try to address the central research question (Welman & Kruger, 1999:46-47).
3.2.1. Research Approach

Mouton and Marais (1992:155) are of the opinion that there are two approaches to research, namely, quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative and quantitative approach describes groups of research methods, rather than being methods in their own right. Any given method of conducting research will therefore belong to one or the other. Neuman (2000:7) is of the opinion that the quantitative research approach relates to data being expressed as numbers, whereas the qualitative research approach considers data in terms of words, pictures or objectives.

3.2.1.1. Quantitative Research

According to Welman & Kruger (1999:7) a quantitative research method may be described in general terms as that approach to research in the social sciences which is more highly formalized. It is more explicitly controlled with a range that is more exactly defined in terms of the methods used and is relatively close to the physical sciences. Jackson (1985:13) is of the opinion that quantitative research seeks to qualify human behaviour through numbers and observations. The emphasis is on precise measurement, the testing of hypotheses based on a sample of observations and a statistical analysis of the data recorded. Jackson (1995:13) continues, the relationship among variables is described mathematically, and the subject matter is, as in physical science, treated as an object. Brynard & Hanekom (1997:29) are of the view that in quantitative methodology the researcher assigns numbers to observations, by counting and measuring, data is produced. This approach therefore deals with data that is highly numerical. Welman & Kruger (1999:7) further suggest that measures that are mostly used in this type of method are highly structured, tend to use primarily closed ended questions and may be administered in either a questionnaire or interview format. According to Leedy (1989:100) certain requirements must be met in order to apply quantitative method, these are:

- The problem has to be properly defined;
- Analysis of such a problem must be meticulous and comprehensive; and
- Solutions must take place consciously, rationally, logically, systematically and scientifically.
3.2.1.2. Qualitative Research

Welman & Kruger (1999:186) state that qualitative research is orientated towards exploration, discovery and inductive logic. Data is collected through observations, interviews and other qualitative methods. The product of the research is a new model, theory or hypothesis (Welman & Kruger, 2001:5). According to O’Sullivan and Rassel (1999:36) a qualitative research method produces verbal data, which is difficult to convert into numbers. It is defined by its extensive use of verbal information and its preference for developing full information. However, Merriam (1998) is of the opinion that qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural setting. Welman & Kruger (2001:5) recorded the following about qualitative research:

- The data is in the form of words from documents, observations or transcripts.
- Theory can be causal or non-causal and is often inductive
- Hypotheses are frequently undeclared or merely in the form of a research goal.
- Concepts are in the form of themes, generalizations and taxonomies.
- Research procedures are particular and replication is very rare

The verbal encounter between the researcher and the respondents relies heavily on interviews that are usually unstructured and those that concern mainly open ended questions and in-depth probes (Welman & Kruger 2001:5).

The skilled social researcher carefully chooses the most appropriate approach to a particular problem. In nearly all cases the line between qualitative and quantitative method is somewhat blurred. In fact a comprehensive study will use both methods and thus cannot strictly be called either qualitative or quantitative (Denzin & Lincoln’s 1994). As qualitative research uses sources that exist prior to research and also uses primary sources e.g. annual reports, strategic plans, legislation, minutes of meetings Integrated Development Plans, budget, interviews, questionnaires and own experience, the qualitative approach was used to test the hypothesis of
the study. The quantitative approach also suited the objectives of the study as some responses had to be quantified to reach conclusions, hence the use of both methods in the study.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

According to Mouton (1996:107) the data collection method refers to the way in which data has been collected or some of its intrinsic properties or is the way a researcher is going to collect data. In this study data was collected through a survey.

3.3.1. Survey

Moore (1983:10) is of the opinion that a research survey is the most widely used method of collecting data in the social sciences. Moore (1983:10) further states that the primary function of surveys is to collect information which can then be analyzed to produce conclusions. Surveys can be divided into two broad categories, namely the questionnaire and the interviews. Questionnaires are usually paper and pencil instruments that the respondent completes whilst interviews are completed by the interviewer based on the responses of the respondents. The following section will discuss questionnaires and interviews as data collection methods in research and why they were preferred to gather data for this study.

3.3.1.1. Questionnaire

Mouton (1996:107) defines a questionnaire as a set of questions on a form which is completed by the respondent in respect of a research project. Denscombe (2003:159) suggests the following as some of the advantages of questionnaires:

(i) Questionnaires are economical - Questionnaires are economical in the sense that they can supply a considerable amount of research data at relatively low cost in terms of material, money and time.

(ii) Easier to arrange - Questionnaires are easier to arrange than for example, personal interviews. They can be simply sent unannounced to the respondent.

(iii) Questionnaires supply standardized answers - Respondents are posed with exact same questions, with no scope for variations to slip during face to face contact
with the researcher. Data collected is unlikely to be contaminated through variations in the wording of the questions or the manner in which questions are asked.

Labovitz & Hagedorm (1981:68) suggest the following as major disadvantages of questionnaires:

(i) The population under study is restricted because the respondents must be able to read and write.

(ii) There is a high degree of self-selection, leading to a comparatively low response/return rate (a 30% return is not uncommon)

(iii) The questionnaire must be restricted in length and scope, because respondents lose interest or become fatigued.

(iv) There is a lack of depth interviewing or probing for the meaning of the statements.

3.3.1.2. Individual Interviews

Clark and Sartorius (2004:15) are of the view that interviews are qualitative, in-depth and semi-structured. They rely on interview guides that list topics or questions on the particular phenomenon under study. Labovitz & Hagedorm (1981:68) state that the interview guide comprises of questions (structured or unstructured) that are asked and filled in by an interviewer in a face to face situation with the respondent(s). Schnetler et al (1989:16) state that this type of data collection method allows the interviewer to communicate by asking questions using voice, body language, facial expressions and it also allows the interviewee to formulate his/her responses making use of voice, body language and facial expressions.

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:111), identify three advantages of individual interviews as a form of data collection method. Firstly, this method of data collection can be administered to illiterate respondents. Because the interviewer reads the question and writes down the response, the respondent does not have to be able to read or write. Secondly the interviewer has the opportunity to further explain a question or words in a question if he/she senses that the
respondent does not fully understand the question. Thirdly, by using the interview method, the interviewer can ensure that all questions are answered and that challenging or difficult questions are not left out. This is made possible by the fact that the interviewer is personally administering the questionnaire.

Other studies list the following as further advantages of individual interviews:

(i) Misunderstood questions and inappropriate responses can be clarified.

(ii) Fewer incomplete responses.

(iii) Higher response rate.

(iv) Greater control over the environment that the survey is administered in.

(v) Additional information can be collected from respondents.

Jackson (1995:122) identifies two challenges of individual interviews. Firstly, using the individual interview as data collection method is one of the most expensive methods of survey. Secondly, it is a very time consuming method of data collection as an interviewer can only handle a limited number of respondents per day. For the study, the interviews were limited only to the Middledrift ward committee and were only conducted to respondents who could not self administer the questionnaire.

3.3.2. Choice of Survey Method for the Study

Weighing both the advantages and disadvantages of the outlined types of survey, the researcher used both the questionnaire and individual interviews based on semi structured interviews. Questionnaires were mainly used to gather data focusing on the demographics and basic operational necessities of the ward committee by simply ticking in the appropriate box or indicating Yes/No in the box provided. The use of individual interviews was informed by the fact that interviews enabled the researcher to adapt the formulation of the interview including the terminology to fit the background and educational level of the respondents. Interviews also allowed the researcher to use probes to clear up vague responses, or to ask for clarification of
incomplete answers. During data collection, the interviewer read the question and recorded the response himself. In addition, ‘interviews are more personal than questionnaires and tend to produce a better response rate. They also provide the researcher with more control of the survey, making it possible to collect information at precise times’ (Moore 1993:27).

3.4. Population and Sampling

Brynard and Hanekom (1997:43) suggest that population refers to subjects, objects, phenomena, cases, events and activities which the researcher would like to study in order to gain some new insights. Bobbie and Mouton (2001:100) define population as the group of participants from whom conclusions are to be drawn. Welman & Kruger (2001:46) further suggest that 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 usually determines the practicality of whether to include all members of the population or not. Issues like time and costs determine if it is possible for the researcher to involve all members of the population in a research project, this situation often leads the researcher to select a sample from which to obtain data. The research population for the study was all the members of the ward committee (Ward 16). Data collected from the ward committee members will be analysed and interpreted in the next chapter.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter outlined and gave an analysis of the methodology used in conducting the research. This was necessary as it gave direction to the tools used for the empirical survey. Both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used as research methods to conduct the study. This was deemed necessary as both numerical and verbal data were suitable to test the hypothesis of the study. A principal survey method used was the open-ended questionnaire as it allowed the respondents to explain their responses. Data was compiled and recorded to determine conclusions and recommendations for the study. Data was then analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively and graphs were used to measure the rate of responses recorded.
Chapter 4
Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Background of the study area
The Nkonkobe Local Municipality is a product of the amalgamation of the now disestablished TLC’s and TRC’s of Alice, Fort Beaufort, Middledrift, Hogsback, Seymour, Victoria East, Fort Beaufort, Mpofu and Middledrift. The municipality is the second largest local municipality covering 3 725km², and constitutes 16% of the surface area of the Amatole District Municipality with an average population density of 43 persons per km or 0.43 persons per ha (Nkonkobe Local Municipality IDP 2007-2012). According to Census, (2001) Nkonkobe Local Municipality has an estimated population of 133 434 with 36 116 households. There are 21 wards within the municipality.

This study has been conducted in Ward 16. According to the Ward Profiles: Nkonkobe Municipality (2003) ward 16 has a total of 2289 households. The majority of the population in the municipality (61%) reside in villages. According to South Africa Census (2001) the dominating racial group in the municipality are Africans who account for 95% of the population, the coloured group accounts for 3%, the white group 1.2% and other groups at 0.4%. Notice No 22 of 2000 of the Municipal Demarcation Board which is submitted in terms of Section12 of the Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act, 1998 provides for the establishment of Nkonkobe Local Municipality.

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of the empirical research that was conducted in Nkonkobe Local Municipality. Data was gathered from ten ward committee members of ward 16 (Middledrift). The purpose of the empirical research was to determine the extent and effectiveness of the ward committee as a mechanism for improving service delivery in Middledrift area. All the interviews were conducted at the Nkonkobe municipal offices in Middledrift.
During the first week of October 2008 an introductory letter was sent to the councillor of Ward 16 (Middledrift) in Nkonkobe Local Municipality to request permission to conduct a study using committee members of the aforementioned ward as a research population. The introductory letter was also used to inform the ward councillor about the nature of the study and to stimulate interest and to encourage participation by the ward members. Permission to conduct the study was ultimately granted by the ward councillor and a date was also indicated by the councillor for the researcher to meet the ward committee members.

The researcher met the ward committee members for the first time on 20 October 2008. In this session the researcher verbally explained the purpose and aim of the study and why Middledrift area was chosen as a study area. Full participation by the ward committee members was encouraged and stressed specifically in the context of developmental local government.

4.2. Key areas of the questionnaire

The research questionnaire was divided into three components, namely Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3.

Section 1 of the questionnaire was used to collect data on the demographics of the chosen ward committee in terms of gender, disability, age, level of education and employment status. Sections 2 & 3 of the research questionnaire were developed to identify weaknesses and strengths in the chosen ward committee with regard to aspects such as municipal support, resources and ward community involvement in municipal matters. Such aspects would enable the study to establish the challenges and limitations of the committee in its service delivery objectives.

- Gender & Disability

The aspect will assist the study in determining equity and representivity in the ward committee in terms of gender and disabilities. In terms of section 17 (3) of Act 32 of 2000 when the municipality establishes mechanisms, processes and procedures for community participation, it must take into account the special needs of-
(a) people with disabilities;
(b) women;
(c) and other disadvantaged groups.

Section 17 (4) of Act 32 of 2000 further states that a municipality may establish one or more advisory committees consisting of persons who are not councillors on any matter within the council’s competence. When appointing the members of such a committee, gender representivity must be taken into account.

❖ Age
The age category sought to determine representivity in the ward committee in terms of various age categories as determined by the study. Are all age categories equally represented? The respondents were required to choose between the ages of A.18-30, B.31-40 and C.51-60 and 61 and above. The choice of the different age categories is informed by various needs among the different age groups.

❖ Level of Education
The category on level of education sought to determine the degree of literacy among the ward committee members. Section 17 (3) of Act 32 of 2000 states that when the municipality establishes community advisory committee(s), it must take into account the special needs of people who cannot read or write. The respondents will be required to choose from four categories, namely, Below Matric, Matric, Diploma, and Degree.

❖ Employment Status
This aspect sought to determine whether the respondent is employed or not. Inclusion of this aspect is informed by the high levels of unemployment in the study area as recorded in the Nkonkobe Local Municipality IDP (2007 – 2012).

4.2.1. Key questions posed in sections 2 & 3
A total of twenty research questions were composed for Sections 2 and 3. The questions were designed to elicit responses on key aspects derived from the hypothesis of the study. The research questions focused on:

❖ The powers and functions of ward committees.
• Level of municipal support for ward committees.
• Challenges experienced with regard to community participation.
• Skills and capacity of ward committee members for effective execution of their duties

4.3. Report on Interviews
The researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data from ten members of the Middledrift ward committee (Ward 16). All interviews were conducted face to face. The initial part of each interview took the form of a conversation between the researcher and the respondent so as to put the respondent at ease. Furthermore respondents were assured that their identities would remain anonymous, this was done to promote honest responses.

4.3.1. Gender and Physical Characteristics
Out of ten members of the ward committee including the ward councillor, only two ward committee members are female and there are no physically challenged members on the committee. The findings illustrate that the ward committee does not conform to the stipulations set in Section 17 (2) of the Municipal Systems Act which obliges community advisory structures to be representative of women and the disabled.

It can therefore be concluded that the committee is not gender balanced and furthermore is not gender representative as reflected by ward community members. Since there is not a single member of the ward committee who is physically challenged, the committee does not comply with the stipulations of the Municipal Systems Act 2000, that physically challenged individuals must also be included in community structures. Non-involvement of such individuals in the ward committee may impact negatively on community members who are physically challenged as their interests and needs may not receive priority. For example, all public places including official buildings must be accessible to every member of the public including the physically challenged.
Figure 4.1 Gender Representativity of the ward committee.

4.3.2. Age Category

Ward committee member’s responses indicate that all age categories used in the study are represented on the ward committee. The responses further reveal that 60% of the members of the ward committee fall between the ages of 31 and 50.

Table. 4.1. Age composition of ward committee members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>No. of ward comm. Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3. Education Level

Table 4.2. below (education level) indicates that 50% of the ward committee members possess education levels below matric, whilst 40% of the committee members have successfully completed senior certificate. There is also one member of the committee who has acquired a post matric qualification. In this regard the municipality has a challenge to capacitate the committee members with special skills and knowledge which will enable them to function more effectively in their duties as some of the municipal plans and programmes require a certain standard/ level of education to enable an individual to comprehend.

Table 4.2. Education level of ward committee members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>No. of ward comm. members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Matric</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.4. Employment Status of Ward Committee Members

Except for the ward councilor, all members of the Middledrift ward committee are unemployed. This poses a challenge on the operations of the ward committee as committee members may not be able to meet some of their obligations. For instance ward members need transport fares to attend ward committee meetings as municipal offices are situated in town. Lack of employment therefore impacts negatively on the attendance rate of ward committee meetings.

The following section gives a report on ward committee members’ responses on research questions posed in section 2.

1. Frequency of meetings of the ward committee and if such meeting times are sufficient

All the respondents responded that they hold their meetings once a month. Regarding their views of whether such meetings are adequate, 60% of the respondents were of the view that such
meeting times are enough while 40% were of the view that such meeting times are not enough. The latter respondents are of the opinion that sometimes there are pressing matters affecting the community that need to be addressed urgently. So if the committee meets only once a month some issues will be left unattended.

**Figure 4.2. Graphic description of respondent’s views on monthly meetings.**

2. Level of support the ward committee receives from the municipal council.

60% of the respondents indicated that the level of support from the municipal council is average. Whilst 10% and 30% indicated that the level of support received from the municipal council is adequate and inadequate respectively.
Figure 4.3. Graphic description of the municipal council’s level of support to the ward committee

3. Frequency of consultation by the municipal council in regards to programmes and projects undertaken in the ward.

40% of the ward committee members felt that they are seldom consulted by the municipal council with regard to developmental programmes or projects in the ward, while 60% of the respondents were of the view that they are always consulted by the council before it undertakes any developmental program in the ward’s jurisdiction.
4. Ward committee members’ views on whether the ward committee possesses sufficient powers to influence decisions on service delivery objectives of the ward

Research findings indicate that 40% of the respondents were of the view that the ward committee possesses sufficient powers to influence decisions on service delivery objectives of the ward, while 60% disagreed by responding that their ward committee does not possess sufficient powers to influence decisions on service delivery objectives of the ward. The latter respondents claimed that most decisions were taken without them being consulted or asked for an input.
Figure 4.5 Graphic description on whether the ward committee has sufficient/insufficient powers to influence decisions on service delivery objectives of the ward.

5. Level at which the municipal council considers the ward committee’s recommendations.

60% of the respondents indicated that the municipal council considers the ward committee’s recommendations satisfactorily. Whilst 40% of the respondents felt that their recommendations were not considered satisfactorily by the municipal council.
6. Responses on whether the ward committee members must be given more skills and knowledge so as to execute their duties effectively

All the ward committee members responded that they needed to be given more skills and knowledge to execute their duties more effectively. They felt that they still lacked basic skills with regard to public participation and municipal programmes like IDP and municipal budgeting.

7. Training or workshops received as ward committee members.

60% of the respondents answered that they did receive training in their capacity as ward committee members. 40 % indicated that they are still to receive training as ward committee members. Those that have received training recorded that such training has improved their capacity to perform their duties effectively.
When asked if they needed further training in their capacity as ward committee members, all the respondents expressed that they needed more training in order to enhance their capacity as ward committee members.

Figure 4.7. Graphic descriptions on training or workshops received as ward committee members.

The following section gives ward committee member’s responses on research questions posed in section 3 of the questionnaire.

1. Role of ward committee in municipal governance and administration?

70% of the ward committee members were aware of their roles in municipal governance and administration. The following were responses given by the ward committee members.

- That the ward committee serves as a contact and link between the communities and the municipal council.
That the ward committee ensures community participation in government programmes.
That the ward committee serves as a channel of communication between the municipal council and community to ensure service delivery.
That as a committee they communicate the needs and aspirations of the community to the municipal council
That the ward committee serves as an advisory body in council policies and matters affecting communities.
That the ward committee serves as an official recognized participatory organ in municipality.

The responses given illustrates that most committee members were aware of their roles and responsibilities within the notion of developmental local government. The responses captured the vision of ward committees which is the facilitation of local community participation, the articulation of local community interests and the representation of these interests within the municipality. Such knowledge can enable the committee to deliver on its mandate.

2. Relationship between the ward committee and the municipal council.

There were mixed responses to the above question. About thirty percent of the responses suggested that the relationship between the council and the ward committee is good as there is a sound working partnership between the two committees. A further twenty percent of the respondents felt that the relationship between the two committees was average/fair as their requests and suggestions were not all fully responded to. The remaining 50% felt that the working relationship between the ward committee and the municipal council was not good. The following are some of the common responses rendered.

- That the two committees were working “hand in hand”.
- That the relationship between the ward committee and the municipal council is not “good enough” it needs to be strengthened.
- That there is sometimes communication breakdown between the municipal council and the ward committee.
• That it sometimes takes time for the municipal council to respond to community needs as advocated by the ward committee. Aspects such as community projects, housing, road, electricity and sanitation are still among the urgent needs of the people and

2. Role of the ward committee in the process of the Integrated Development Planning

Ward committee member’s responses indicated understanding of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). These are responses given in respect of the question.

• IDP set out priorities of the municipality.
• IDP ensures good use of municipal resources
• It facilitate public participation of communities
• IDP serves as a ‘bible’ which informs the municipality on its service delivery objectives.
• IDP is where community’s needs are listed and the ward committee’s role is to ensure that such needs are responded to.
• The ward committee’s role with regard to the IDP is to evaluate and monitor if such needs and priorities of the municipality are achieved.

3. Capacity challenges experienced by the ward committee

Responses from the respondents clearly indicated that the Middledrift ward committee is experiencing some major challenges which impact negatively on the performance of their functions. The following are responses given:

• Clear understanding of local government policies is inhibiting the ability of ward committee members to execute their duties effectively.
• Sound knowledge of municipal processes for example municipal planning and budgeting and project evaluation pose some challenges for ward committee members.
Respondents felt that some of the skills needed include but are not limited to leadership skills as they serve as leaders of their respective communities, interpersonal skills, report writing skills, computer literacy skills and budgeting skills.

Other respondents felt that lack of resources e.g basic office equipment like computers, telephones, stationary, printers and faxes limits the ability of the ward committee members to do their duties. Lastly, transport was not provided to ward committee members to enable them to attend ward meetings and to service their constituencies.

Respondents felt that they can overcome these challenges by being fully capacitated in skills they need. 60% of the respondents suggested that an ongoing training of ward committee members is needed. Furthermore respondents felt that they must be afforded the opportunity to participate in all processes of the municipality or even put pressure on the municipal council so that their voices can be heard.

4. Community participation

All the respondents understood their roles with regard to public participation. They felt that their main responsibility is to facilitate community participation in municipal matters. This they ensured by channeling the needs and aspirations of the community to the council. The respondents stated that as a ward committee they must also create an environment of good relations and cooperation between the municipality and the communities. If this atmosphere prevails service delivery will be achieved.

5. Challenges with regard to community participation

Responses on challenges to community participation include the following:
Poor attendance of community meetings called by the ward committee members. In such meetings, mostly older people attend while the youth and the employed simply stay away from meetings. Another challenge cited was that people have to walk long distances to the meeting place as different villages are clustered in the ward. Unavailability of transport in such villages
further exacerbates the problem of non attendance and even when transport is available people can not afford it as it is expensive.

Lastly the respondents claimed that there is a general lack of commitment from people to participate in municipal programmes. In this regard the respondents stated that people are tired of empty promises from the municipality with regards to service delivery.

6. Participation of the community in community and municipal matters

All the respondents answered that they report back on municipal plans and programmes to their respective communities. This helps to trigger community participation. Interest groups like business and religious formations are also invited to participate in such meetings. Youth plans and programmes by the municipality are also reported on so as to attract the youth to be involved in municipal matters.

7. Success of the ward committee in meeting developmental duties of local government

60% of the respondents felt that they were still experiencing some challenges in performing their duties effectively so as to meet the objectives of local government. They stated that developmental programmes to uplift the community were not done by the municipality. Budget proposals and IDP are not followed by the municipal council. One respondent even claimed that the municipality has not yet developed a performance management system. There are also inadequate reports on projects and service delivery targets achieved.

40% of the respondents responded that they are succeeding in achieving the developmental duties of local government but there is a need for a closer interaction and cooperation between the municipality and the community. The respondents further suggested that to achieve local government objectives there should be more capacitating of ward committee members so that they can facilitate service delivery objectives of local government in their communities.
8. Remuneration of ward committee members.

All the respondents felt that there is a great need for ward committee members to be remunerated. Responses recorded supported the need mainly because there is high rate of unemployment in Nkonkobe municipality and above all, all the ward committee members of Middledrift ward are unemployed and as such have no source of income. To take part in ward matters such as attending and organizing ward meetings, ward committee members need to have transport. As they are unemployed it is very difficult for them to secure a taxi fare. This has often led them in incurring debts due to ward responsibilities. Some responses recognized a vast need specifically because the ward committee members have to forsake their own responsibilities for community needs without any pay.

4.4. Conclusion

The findings indicated that community participation has a key role to play in enhancing development and effective service delivery to local communities. Development and changing people’s lives in a democratic society is inconceivable without community participation. The hypothesis of the study was based on the assumption that in order for the ward committee to serve as an effective mechanism to speed up service delivery, they must be adequately capacitated on a regular basis with necessary skills and resources with regard to service delivery objectives.

What emerged during the study is that the Middledrift ward committee is still experiencing fundamental challenges with regard to the performance of its duties in an effective manner. It must be pointed out that, ward committee capacity building and training has an impact on preparing the ward committee to perform its duties and functions in a satisfactory manner. The involvement of local communities in ward meetings needs to be stressed as it is the communities themselves who know what is best for them. Ward meetings serves as:

- A forum to organize and discuss community issues relating to poverty, unemployment and service delivery;
- A platform to share information and strategies between different sectors
• A forum to highlight problems and challenges experienced in the ward and to seek solutions.

Such meetings take important decisions which inform municipal plans and service delivery objectives. The council must also take an initiative to encourage the community to attend the ward meetings.

As an essential member of the committee, the ward councillor must be able to identify challenges and weaknesses of his/her ward and bring about appropriate intervention to counter those challenges and weaknesses. For this reason, sound relations and support between the ward councillor, the ward committee and the municipal council is essential. Good performance of the ward committee therefore relies heavily on the relationship the ward committee has with the municipal council. Furthermore, the municipal council must have both the political will and commitment to use these community structures as mechanisms to facilitate better service delivery to all communities under its influence.
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction
Firstly the chapter gives an outline of the extent to which objectives for the study have been realized. Then the chapter will give conclusions based on the research findings. And finally the chapter ends with a set of recommendations for the Middledrift ward committee (Ward 16).

5.2. Realization of the objectives of the study
The first objective of this study was to give a theoretical exposition of the concepts of public participation and ward committees. In that regard, chapter 2 of the study provided a literature review on the concept of public participation as a basic objective of ward committees. This was realized by outlining the importance of participatory democracy in developmental local government. It was stated that local government is mandated with developmental functions obliging it to work together with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet the needs of the communities and to improve their quality of life. An essential route towards attainment of this mandate is working with ward committees as a link between the municipality and the local community.

The second objective was to describe mechanisms and processes for the functioning of ward committees within the pillar of public participation. This was achieved through analysis of local government legislation including the Constitution 1996 and Reconstructive and Development Programme 1994 (RDP). Local government legislations including the White Paper on Local Government 1998 are the foundation of community participation at local government level. The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998 and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 2000 are a legislative imperative that encourages local government to create conditions for local communities to participate in the affairs of their local municipality. For this purpose they legislate for the establishment and functioning of ward committees in municipalities. As the
representative structure of local communities the ward committees enhance and strengthen community participation in municipal decision making thus improving service delivery.

Thirdly, the objective of the study was to evaluate the extent of the ward committee system in serving as a mechanism for enhancing service delivery in Nkonkobe Municipality. This objective was tested by means of an empirical survey with the use of questionnaires. Data was collected through qualitative and quantitative methodologies as the methods were deemed fit to realize the objectives of the study. The response rate was 100% as all the members of the ward committee responded to the questionnaire. This therefore adds to the objectivity and reliability of the study.

5.3. Conclusions
From the research findings, it could be concluded that:

- Community participation in local government matters is crucial if past imbalances and underdevelopment are to be addressed.
- Public participation is meaningless if communities do not take ownership of municipal plans and programmes.
- There are inadequate facilities and equipment which compromise the ability of the ward committee to carry out the service delivery objectives of their community effectively.
- The ward committee members need continuous training with regard to municipal plans and programmes.
- The ward committee members need continuous training with regard to their roles, functions and responsibilities.
- Ward committee members have to understand that their role is only advisory and as such do not possess any executive or decision making powers.
- That there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding among the ward committee members on their roles and responsibilities.
- The literacy level among ward committee members sometimes poses a challenge in enabling them to understand municipal plans and programmes.
5.4. **Recommendations**

This study has arrived at the following recommendations:

- Possible revision of the mandate of the ward committee system from an advisory structure to that of decision making structure is needed.

- For effective development and execution of municipal plans and programmes, citizen participation must not be reduced to consultation alone but communities must also be actively involved in the planning and decision making of the municipalities.

- As the ward committee serves as a link between the communities and the municipality, good working relationships between the two should be of paramount importance if adequate service delivery is to be achieved.

- An audit of the capacity of ward committee members should be undertaken to identify training needs.

- A performance management system must be established for Nkonkobe Local Municipality ward committees with a view to monitor, evaluate and manage these ward committees.

- The ward committees must report to and continuously engage their communities in a regular and structured fashion on municipal programmes and undertakings.

- Communities should be encouraged to attend ward/public meetings.

- As ward committee work is not remunerated under local government legislation, there could however be an ‘out-of-pocket stipend’ to help to offset traveling costs of ward committee members on ward duties.

The expectations of enhanced service delivery through public participation on one hand, and the realities of poverty on the other suggest a need to understand more fully the dynamics and barriers of public participation at local government.

The extent of poverty within the Nkonkobe Local Municipality suggests that redressing underdevelopment and service delivery backlogs is still a challenge that requires maximum cooperation between local community structures like ward committees and the municipality. If the ward committee system as introduced in local municipalities is to become a real vehicle for
transformation of those communities and enhance service delivery, then it is vital that such committees should be given a greater and more significant role to play in local government.
Bibliography


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Annexure: Research Questionnaire

Section 1
Demography Schedule

Mark x in the space provided:

1. Gender
   - M
   - F

2. Physical characteristic.
   - P
   - C
   - N
   - PC

3. Age Category
   - A. 18-30
   - B. 31-40
   - C. 41-50
   - D. 51-60
   - E. 61 and above

4. Education.
   - Below Matric
   - Matric
   - Diploma
   - Degree

5. Employment Status
Section 2

Indicate in the appropriate box (Yes/No) or as suggested.

1. How frequently do you hold your ward committee meetings? Please indicate using the grid below.

   | Weekly | Fortnightly | Monthly | Other: ………… |
---|---------|-------------|---------|---------------|

2. In your opinion do you think such meeting times are sufficient in order for you as a ward committee to fulfill your mandate?

3. Indicate the level of support your ward committee receives from the municipal council in relation to aspects such as human resource, office space, financial support and etc so as to perform its duties effectively.

   | Adequate | Average | Inadequate |
---|----------|---------|------------|

4. How often does the municipal council consult your ward committee before undertaking developmental programmes or projects in your ward?

   | Seldom | Always |
---|--------|--------|

5. In your opinion do you think your ward committee possesses sufficient powers to influence policy decisions on service delivery objectives of the ward?

6. Indicate the level at which the municipal council considers the ward committee’s recommendations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Not Satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. In your own opinion do you think that ward committee members must be given more skills and knowledge to execute their duties effectively?

8. Have you received any induction, workshop or training in your capacity as a ward committee member so as to strengthen your ability to fulfill your duties?

9. If yes has such induction, workshop or training improved your capacity in any way?

10. Do you feel you need further training in your capacity as a ward committee member so that you can fulfill your duties more effectively?
Section 3

Interview Schedule

1. Question: In your own opinion what is the role of a ward committee in municipal governance and administration? Please Explain.
Answer: ..............................................................
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2. Question: How do you view the relationship between your ward committee and the municipal council? Please Explain
Answer: ..............................................................
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3. Question: What is your understanding of the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and how do you understand your role as a ward committee member in this process?
Answer: ..............................................................
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4. Question: What are the overall capacity challenges experienced by your ward committee?
Answer: ..............................................................
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5. Question: How do you think the ward committee can overcome these challenges?

Answer:  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
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6. Question: How do you understand your role as a ward committee member in relation to community participation?

Answer:  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
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…………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Question: Are there any challenges you encounter in terms of community participation? Please explain

Answer:  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
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…………………………………………………………………………………………

8. Question: How do you ensure that the community participates fully in community and municipal matters?

Answer:  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
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9. Question: In your own opinion is the Middledrift Ward Committee succeeding in meeting the developmental duties of local government? Please Explain.

Answer: …………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………
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10. Question: What is your opinion on remunerating ward committee members? Do you see a need? Please explain.

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