

THE PROMOTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF DITSOBOTLA MUNICIPALITY

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DECLARATION

I declare that: "The promotion of public participation in local government: The case of Ditsobotla Municipality" is my original work, that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this mini-dissertation was not previously submitted by me or any other person for degree purposes at this or any other University.

E.M.S. MATSHE: -----

Signature

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Date

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ABSTRACT

Public participation has become an important concept and practice in democratic societies. Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, municipalities have increasingly been obliged to promote the participation of people in municipal affairs. The research report in this study deals with the promotion of public participation in local government with the Ditsobotla Municipality as a case study.

The objectives of this research was to explain the phenomenon “public participation” within the context of the new system of local government in South Africa, to analyse relevant legislations and other sources regarding this phenomenon, further to analyze existing mechanisms and systems that are in place in the Ditsobotla Municipality in order to promote public participation and lastly to evaluate the efforts being made by public representatives of Ditsobotla to promote public participation and to recommend practical and sustainable mechanisms that can be used to enhance participation by the public in Ditsobotla.

A random sample of 20 participants took part in the study. A questionnaire was used as a major tool for data gathering from the participants, that is councilors and ward committee members. Literature study was utilized to support the empirical research and to check compliance of the Ditsobotla Municipality to existing theories, legislations and regulations regarding public participation.

It was discovered that the Ditsobotla Municipality has inadequate structures which are not properly used and also not enough efforts have been made to promote public participation. This study therefore recommends that existing mechanisms and systems to promote public participation in the Ditsobotla Municipality be reviewed and be systematized.

OPSOMMING

Publieke deelname het 'n belangrike konsep en oefening geword in demokratiese gemeenskappe. Sedert die aanbreek van demokrasie in Suid Afrika, word munisipaliteite meer verplig om deelname in munisipale sake te bevorder deur alle mense te betrek. Die navorsing in hierdie studie handel oor die promosie van publieke deelname in Plaaslike Bestuur met Ditsobotla Plaaslike Munisipaliteit as gevalle studie.

Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om die verskynsel "publieke deelname" binne die konteks van die nuwe sisteem in plaaslike bestuur in Suid Afrika te verduidelik, en om relevante wetgewing en ander bronne in hierdie verskynsel te analiseer. Dit gaan ook verder om bestaande meganismes en stelsels te analiseer, wat in plek is in die Ditsobotla Plaaslike Munisipaliteit om publieke deelname te bevorder en laastens om die pogings deur publieke verteenwoordiging te evalueer in Ditsobotla om publieke deelname te bevorder en om praktiese en volgehoue meganismes aan te beveel wat gebruik kan word om deelname deur die publiek van Ditsobotla te verhoog.

'n Steekproef is gemaak deur 20 deelnemers te betrek in hierdie studie. 'n Vraelys is as vernaamste instrument gebruik om inligting vanaf deelnemers te bekom. Deelnemers het bestaan uit raadslede en wykskomitee lede.

Daar is tot die ontdekking gekom dat Ditsobotla Munisipaliteit onvoldoende strukture het wat nie behoorlik gebruik word nie en nie genoegsame pogings aangewend word om publieke deelname te bevorder nie. Hierdie studie beveel dus aan dat die bestaande meganismes en stelsels om publieke deelname te bevorder, hersien en hervorm moet word in die Ditsobotla Plaaslike Munisipaliteit.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

The participation of the public in governance appears to have become an important issue in democratic societies. In South Africa, the new political order ushered in by the abolition of apartheid system of rule, seems to have brought about expectations of increased participation of ordinary people in governance. According to Masango (2002:52) the introduction of a democratic dispensation in South Africa in April 1994, drew the idea of public participation in public affairs into the spotlight.

The subsequent adoption of the new Constitution of 1996, by the parliament of the Republic of South Africa following the 1994 democratic breakthrough, further appears to have created new ways through which the elected public representatives are expected to relate with the people. At local government sphere, a new system was introduced to give effect to the new constitutional provisions related to democracy for people at a local level. Central to this process is the need to regulate the participation of people on matters of local governance.

According to Makume (1999:26) the new system of local government in South Africa has characteristics of both representative and participatory frameworks of democracy. These seem to be at the core of changes towards the new system of democratic governance. Makume (1999:26) contends that the process of change in South Africa is as a matter of fact underpinned by the fact that the democratic state is an organ of people's representation and as such the democratic state has always been seen as one of the important organs through which people can express their thoughts. Given these developments and political changes,

representative and participatory democracy appears to be the context within which legislations were passed to give practical meaning to the ideal conditions ensuring that participation of the people is implemented.

De Villiers (2001:32) takes up one of the complex matters regarding public participation in the submission that the promotion of public participation is hampered by the lack of capacity as well as lack of resources amongst those whose participation is most desired, namely, people at the grassroots level. Whilst public participation may be viewed as a form of empowerment, the danger is that it is only the already empowered who are enjoying the benefits of the new dispensation. The rich people and the educated section of the community have the material resources and technical skills that put them in an advantaged position to participate and benefit from the process. The conclusion made by De Villiers (2001:32) is that the empowered section of the society is in fact reaping the fruits of democracy at the expense of the historically disempowered. The governance systems and processes are seemingly expected to deal with this challenge in a manner that defends the right of ordinary people to participate in the affairs of their municipalities.

The complexity of public participation is also acknowledged as a challenge by those with political authority. According to the ANC (2000), elected public representatives have not been successful in bringing about visible and fundamental changes to the relations of the public with institutions of governance at local level and instead participation has benefited mainly those who have access to resources and are better organized. This suggests that access to resources as well as the economic position of participants have a bearing on public participation especially at local level. It appears that people's participation in the governing process, especially at local government sphere, is more complex than anticipated. Given these complexities, it would be incumbent upon the elected public representatives at local level to make efforts to promote participation of members of the public in local government affairs.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem investigated in this research is the promotion of public participation in the affairs of the Ditsobotla Municipality. The Ditsobotla Municipality is situated in the Central Region of the North West Province approximately 230 km from Johannesburg and on the main route to the provincial capital, Mafikeng (North West, 2005:4). Political developments and events such as community protests, poor interaction between councilors and communities at a local level seemingly affirm and indicate the complexities of public participation. Whereas there are different levels at which to locate the problems related to public participation including attitudes, resources, knowledge, capacity, mechanisms and systems, in this study much focus is on the mechanisms for public participation with a limited reflection on the systems.

Despite the introduction of new legislations, it seems there are still signs of inadequacy of local structures and systems in addressing the problem of participation by the public in a convincing manner. Conflict between municipal councilors and their constituencies in the Ditsobotla Municipality has been experienced from time to time and this has manifested itself in incidents of violence and intimidation (Ditsobotla, 2002:12). These events suggest that public representatives are seen not to be doing enough to promote public participation.

In examining the promotion of public participation in the affairs of the Ditsobotla Municipality, the following questions have been raised:

- What is really meant by the phenomenon “public participation” within the context of the new system of local government and what does the legislation say about this phenomenon?
- What are the existing mechanisms and systems in place in the Ditsobotla municipal area to promote public participation?

- What efforts are being made by public representatives of Ditsobotla to promote public participation and what practical and sustainable mechanisms can be used to enhance public participation in Ditsobotla?

3. OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are to:

- Explain the phenomenon “public participation” within the context of the new system of local government in South Africa and to analyze relevant legislations and other sources regarding this phenomenon.
- Analyze existing mechanisms and systems that are in place in the Ditsobotla Municipality to promote public participation.
- Evaluate the efforts being made by public representatives of Ditsobotla to promote public participation and to recommend practical and sustainable mechanisms that can be used to enhance participation by the public in Ditsobotla.

4. CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENTS

- Participation requires the direct, face-to-face involvement of the people in social development and ultimate control over decisions that affect their own welfare (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:10).
- Municipal councilors, should in addition to representing community interest within Council, promote the involvement of citizens and community groups in the design and delivery of municipal programs (SA, 1998:20).
- Existing mechanisms and systems to promote public participation are inadequate and those that exist are not properly utilized in the Ditsobotla municipality (Ditsobotla, 2004a:2).

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study has both quantitative and qualitative research design characteristics. It employs a descriptive survey research and document review. The theory of public participation and its application to local government has been covered by means of a literature study.

A statistically processable questionnaire was compiled and distributed to the councillors and ward committees who were randomly sampled from across the different wards of the Ditsobotla Municipality and thereby striving to make the study as representative as possible. An analysis was then made on the responses of ward committees and councillors on public participation.

From both the theoretical and empirical study records, conclusions and recommendations were regarding the promotion of public participation in the Ditsobotla Municipality. A detailed account of the research methodology used appears in chapter 4 of the mini-dissertation.

6. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Concepts are building blocks of theory. According to Neuman (1997:40) every culture is filled with concepts, but many of them are vague and full of definitions. Sallies (1996:21) is of the opinion that it is imperative to clarify concepts in any study as they may bear different meaning for the people, and as a result may lose their connotative meaning. In this study, concepts below will be defined.

6.1. Public participation

Midgley *et al.*(1986:23) defines public participation in a manner that makes a distinction between this term and popular participation. Popular participation in terms of that distinction is concerned with broader issues of social development and the creation of opportunities for the involvement of people in the political, economic and social life of a nation whilst public participation connotes the direct involvement of ordinary people in local affairs.

According to Masango (2002:53) public participation involves the participation of members of the public who are involved and interested in the issue at stake. Broadly speaking therefore, public participation means the active involvement of community into the affairs of government or government agencies. Bruch and Filbey (2002:2) define public participation as a process that seeks to ensure that members of the public have the opportunity to be notified, to express their opinions, and ideally to influence decisions regarding projects, programs, policies, and regulations that could affect them. For the purpose of this study, the submission by Bruch and Filbey will be used as working definition.

6.2. Local government

According to Meyer (*in* Reddy,1999:10), local government refers to local democratic units within the democratic system which are subordinate members of the government vested with prescribed, controlled governmental powers and sources of income to render specific local services and to regulate the geographical, social and economic development of defined local areas.

Gildenhuis and Knipe (2000:247) define local government as an infra-sovereign geographical subdivision of sovereign states that provides public services in particular areas. Du Toit and Van der Walddt (1998:233) define a local government as an institution established by law for the residents of a particular

area, exercising authority in the demarcated area, autonomous with powers and authority to provide services and amenities to residents in its area of jurisdiction to maintain and promote their well-being. It is therefore the delivery agency of what the government intends doing or rather the intentions of the government of the day for its citizenry.

6.3. Democracy

According to Laqueur (as quoted by Geldenhuys, 1996:12), democracy is derived from the Greek words for “people” and “power”. Originally it referred to the right of the citizens of the former Greek city-states to participate directly in the act of government. Today this is usually reserved for political systems that acknowledge certain basic assumptions. These assumptions are often written into a constitution of a country. Democracy can be regarded as a power exercised by the people as a whole. Its opposite is a government exercised by a small group (Geldenhuys, 1996:12).

Van Der Waldt and Helmbold (1995:5) define democracy as indicative of elections, referendums, majority decisions and a society that controls decision making. Within the South African context, the concept “democracy” can be associated with certain specific principles like majority rule, consensus, mandate and the principle of acceptable resistance and opposition.

7. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study consists of the following:

CHAPTER 1

Chapter one provides the general orientation to the study and also introduces the readers to the research problem. The study is conceptualized and the research question, aims, motivation and methodologies are introduced and discussed.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter two provides a literature review about what entails the theoretical background to the study of public participation.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter three describes the regulatory, legislative and policy framework for public participation.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter four takes an in-depth look at research design and methodology used for data collection and study participants are also introduced and discussed in this section. Different methods employed for data collection are presented, including a questionnaire and document analysis. Public participation mechanisms and systems for the Ditsobotla Municipality are further discussed.

CHAPTER 5

In chapter five all the data collected through the questionnaire is presented. All the research data gathered is then analysed, discussed and clearly presented. The findings, limitations and possible recommendations based on the study are presented in this chapter.

8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter an introductory overview and background to the investigation were presented. According to Neuman (1997:89-90), a literature review creates a link to a body of developing knowledge and presents different theories that purport to explain the same thing, before evaluating how well each accounts for findings.

Thus, in the next chapter it will be necessary to review relevant literature so as to uncover the theoretical background underpinning public participation in the Ditsobotla Municipality.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Masango (2002:52), prior to the introduction of a democratic dispensation, apartheid policies caused South Africa to be deprived of good public participation in the making and implementation of policy. Currently the new political dispensation has ideals of participatory forms of democracy, which by its nature recognizes the centrality of the people in matters of governance. This has brought into the picture the notion of the participation of the public in the affairs of the state.

With the dawn of a new political order from 1994, there were protracted processes that culminated in the enactment of the Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998 and the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000. This in essence appears to have given birth to a new system of local government in South Africa. The new system of local government ushered in by the December 2000 elections, places public participation as an important aspect in the programs and activities of municipalities.

According to Carrim (2001:26) a defining feature of the new system of local government is the space it offers to ordinary people to become actively involved in governance. In fact, the legal definition of a municipality is that it comprises not just the councilors and the administration, but the local community as well. Each of these inter-related components has certain specific rights and duties that are based on the Constitution of 1996 and set out mainly in the Municipal Systems Act (Carrim, 2001:26). Public participation is entrenched as a permanent statutory obligation and practice in the affairs of municipalities. In simple terms, to

uphold the constitution and the laws of the country, local government structures are expected to generate sustainable ways of interacting with the public and also allow space for public participation.

This chapter will outline the basic theoretical framework within which public participation in matters of local government has to take place. In order to adequately provide this public participation framework, the importance of public participation will be presented, theories on public participation will be clarified and the different forms of public participation will also be outlined.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

International experience has shown that citizen and community participation is an essential part of effective and accountable governance at local level. A great deal has been written about the legal and policy arrangements for citizens' participation in different countries around the world (DPLG, 2005b:10). According to van Rooyen (2003:1) the democratic system of governance in South Africa has brought about new emphasis of transparency in government activities, greater public accountability and the notion of respect for human rights. This approach significantly differs from the old-style paternalistic approach to managing development where community information and consultation was limited. Public participation is therefore seen as part of enhancing the constitutional democracy in South Africa. The importance of public participation in the affairs of municipalities can further be related to the character of the local sphere that is being envisaged.

The transitional period following the first democratic national elections of 1994, also gave rise to intense public debate on how to define and capacitate the roles and responsibilities of local authorities. In the White Paper on Local Government (SA, 1998:17) the notion of a developmental local government has been brought about as an appropriate definition of municipalities in a post-apartheid South

Africa. Developmental local government is defined as a local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways of meeting their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives (SA, 1998:17).

The definition of developmental local government as stated above reaffirms the importance of democracy, development and the participation of members of the public in the affairs of municipalities. It may be deduced from this that public participation should be seen as part of not only bringing about community development, but also democratizing such developments.

According to Mathur (1986:14) there is a growing awareness among many developing nations that their greatest resources in the development process are their own people. The people are increasingly informing development processes amongst others housing, health and education in that consumption of such services is dependent on demand. This means that those responsible for the various government delivery systems require the participation of ordinary people. In this manner this will address the problem of developmental decision-making being unable to accommodate local socio-cultural variations or to mobilize needed local resources (Mathur, 1986:14).

The agenda of democracy is reaffirmed by Smith and Vawda (2003:30) in their submission that democratizing development requires moving beyond representative democracy to a participatory democracy. The periodic participation of the people in elections is therefore inadequate to bring about the reconstruction and development of communities.

Masango (2002:54) submits that in order to ensure that the needs and aspirations of the people are taken into consideration during the policy-making and implementation processes there should be constant interaction between the governors and the governed. This would allow for the public policymakers and

implementers to be influenced by those whose lives would be affected by the decisions made. The decision-makers would also benefit in that their decisions would have been thoroughly canvassed through interaction with the people.

Sharma (1999:80) suggests that grassroots (local) participation in rural development and planning is important, as it serves as a means of obtaining information about local conditions, needs and attitudes. This assertion can also be applied in an urban setting. According to Sharma (1999:80) people are more likely to be committed to a development project or program if they are involved in its planning and preparation because they can identify with it and see it as their project. Contributions and assistance in the construction and maintenance of projects may be easier to obtain if people see them as something that they have helped to initiate. Participation of members of the public can play an important role in strengthening the management of developmental projects in communities.

According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:3) social development is facilitated if people participate fully in making decisions that affect their welfare and in implementing these decisions. The mobilization of people in this way not only fosters improvements in social conditions but strengthens human and community bonds. Therefore participation creates a sense of community which gives meaning to human existence and fosters social integration.

The Government of South Africa has identified the importance of promoting public participation and has made attempts to formalize in a programmatic manner the involvement of the public in governance matters. In 2001, the Izimbizo program was initiated to deepen the interaction between government and the masses (Mbeki, 2004:9). Public participation is therefore given the status of a high policy and governance priority. It would therefore be expected that the systems and processes at local government sphere would also give equal attention to their obligation of creating more opportunities for public participation. Having noted the logic and importance of public participation, it would be

important for the different theories and forms of participation to be explained so that the significance of this ideal is related to existing systems.

The systematic and sustainable participation of the people on matters affecting them becomes an important element of the democratization process (Smith & Vawda, 2003:30). Public participation is therefore regarded as an important element of building democracy in a developmental environment. In order to relate the importance of public participation it might be necessary to dedicate more focus on the notion of participation on its own away from public policy and regulation.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION THEORIES

Midgley *et al.* (1986:14) submit that it is often assumed that community participation is a new idea in development studies. However the current community participation concepts are based on a rich legacy of ideas and practical agendas which have helped to facilitate the formulation of present-day proposals for the involvement of local people in social development. The concept of citizen participation has a long lineage according to Cunningham and further assertion by Fishkin (quoted by Roberts, 2003:9). The first written record of direct citizen participation came from the Greek city-states and one of its earliest expressions was in the Ecclesia of Athens. The Ecclesia was an assembly open to all free, male citizens, 18 and older, for the purpose of debate, consensus seeking, and democratic decision making. Its policymaking power was checked by the council of 500 elected members who screened the agenda, and by a court, chosen by lot to rule on the constitutionality of the measures passed.

During the Middle Ages, after the decay and fragmentation of the Roman Empire, urban artisans formed associations to control public matters central to their work. They formed guilds, which were an oligarchy with some voting rituals and limited citizen involvement. Voluntary associations that provided charity, education, and

other services also had limited participation. Eventually, direct citizen participation began to reassert itself in the city-states of Renaissance Italy, the popular assemblies of the ninth century English township, and in some Swiss cantons and communes in the thirteenth century (Roberts, 2003:9).

The contemporary community participation theory and practices have been influenced by different historical theories and social-political eras amongst others the western ideologies and political theories, the Third World community development movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the western social work and community radicalism (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:14). The western democratic theory, amongst the various historical influences, has contributed immensely to the current political community participation principles. In terms of this theory, ordinary citizens have a right to share in public decision-making thereby revealing the inspiration of democratic ideals. However this notion is not based on the classical notions of representative democracy but rather on a modern variant of liberal democratic theory known as neighbourhood democracy.

According to Roberts (2003:9) there have been different forms of neighbourhood democracies. Like in New England, colonists also held town meetings, a latter-day successor to the Ecclesia, which enabled free, white, property-owning, adult male citizens to jointly hold certain public decision-making powers. Although dominated by elite citizens, town government was democratic in form and neighborhood-oriented in practice. Other influences came from the Native Americans, who made important decisions during full councils of warriors, from the Spanish settlers, who used an open council, and from Black Americans, who were accustomed to village assemblies. Proponents of neighbourhood democracy are skeptical of representative democracy and its possibility of providing meaningful opportunities for the involvement of the masses in the political affairs of developing countries. They instead advocate for the creation of small scale institutions for the realization of political aspirations in the villages and urban neighbourhoods of the Third World (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:15).

According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:15) community participation views are also infused with the populism notions that are characterized by the belief that the virtues resides in the simple people who are in the overwhelming majority and in their collective traditions. Central to the populism theory is the idea that ordinary people are badly done by. They are perceived to be victims of economic disruptions or thought to suffer from the arrogance of an inflexible bureaucracy or it may be believed that they are neglected by an indifferent establishment thus populist movements champion the cause of these masses and rally their support. Roberts (2003:13) suggests that direct citizen participation is a mechanism for those without power to challenge those who have it. It is a lever for making changes, whether it is to ensure material or psychic rewards. Its intent is to give those without power a platform and voice for change.

As in populism, the current community participation theory suggests that ordinary people have been exploited by politicians and bureaucrats and that they have been excluded not only from political affairs but from the development process in general (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:16). This assertion is further confirmed by Ploger (2001:226) in his submission that governance through inclusionary management represents the public good and a proper management of the distribution of welfare according to a collective welfare politics.

Anarchism has also had an influence on community participation but its influence has been more subtle than that of populism. Anarchist ideas take an anti-statist attitude arguing that the formal institutions of the modern state are inimical to the emergence of spontaneous forms of social and political organizations (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:16). Ploger (2001:238) suggests that public participation and collaboration are therefore part of a system of domination and subjectivisation, as it is an effect of particular forms of power and its articulation. Central to this theory is the belief that authority, and particularly the institutionalization of coercive authority in the organs of the state, is a primary source of oppression

and in order to realize both freedom and welfare, the state must be destroyed. Many contemporary advocates of community participation share an anarchist belief that instinctive human capacities for communalism and participation will re-emerge when the corrupting influence of the state is removed (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:16).

The community development movement of the 1950s and 1960s is another source of inspiration for contemporary community participation theory. Just like community participation, community development focuses on small communities seeking to establish democratic decision-making institutions at a local level. It also attempts to mobilize people to improve their social and economic circumstances. Amongst the first proponents of community development were the missionaries and colonial officials and it has been observed that colonialism in itself created the climate in which community development was to take shape. The dual mandate to civilize while exploiting, the use of forced labour under the pretext that it was an indigenous institution and the need to establish durable and responsible political structures all facilitated the evolution of early community development theory. Community participation theory evolved partly in response to the criticisms which have been made of community development. By reacting to its inadequacies, community participation advocates have sought to formulate a more politicized and people-centered approach which conceives of participation in a more dynamic way (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:17).

Although social work is primarily concerned with the problems of needy individuals and their families, it has also since its inception in the late nineteenth century, focused on communities seeking to organize and mobilize people to improve local amenities and social services. This approach transformed conventional methods of community work. Instead of seeking to help deprived communities to improve their social and environmental circumstances, the new community work activists urged that people take direct political action to demand changes and improvements. In terms of this theory, community work is infused

with a new dynamism which institutionalized radicalism as an essential ingredient of practice (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:20).

4. DIFFERENT FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

According to Mathur (1986:18), public participation takes different forms based on a number of factors including the intentions of the public policy-maker, the make up of the community targeted for participation, key interests at stake, level of influence that is created and the desired direction of the whole process. This suggests that the forms of public participation would therefore constitute a contested area even prior to the actual process of public participation. However, Midgley *et al.* (1986:25) suggest that the United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 1929(LVIII) should be used as a yardstick when dealing with public participation. The resolution states that participation requires the voluntary and democratic involvement of the people in (a) contributing to the development effort, (b) sharing equitably in the benefits derived there-from and (c) decision-making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies and planning and implementing economic and social development programs. These three elements assist in making a distinction between authentic participation, which involves all three criterion mentioned above and pseudo-participation which limit community involvement to implementation or ratification of decisions already taken by external bodies (Midgley *et al.*, 1986: 26).

It is the assertion of Pieterse (2002:7) that participation discourse is divided between two broad groups, namely those who see it as a useful process to legitimize state actions and therefore forging compliance and the more radical version that focuses on civil society empowerment and state democratization as the primary functions of participation. These would lead inevitably to different approaches to promoting and establishing participatory governance. Given the apparent complexity of public participation, it is worth investigating the vehicles used for public participation, the nature of such participation and the relationship

amongst the participants and the decision-makers as a way of giving a reflection on the different forms participation.

4.1. Modes of participation

It seems public participation has come to mean different things to different people. The modes of public participation are seemingly considered with the intention of relating the value derived from the process with the level of actual involvement of ordinary people in governance. Mathur (1986:19) identifies six modes of participation. Roberts (2003:17) provides further clarification on the classification of the modes of participation and suggests the following broad categories as well as its underlying intentions:

4.1.1 *Citizen as subject in an authority system*

The first mode involves only the educated and people with money in the community without the participation of the “grass roots” or the beneficiaries (Mathur, 1986:19). The assumption is that there is an authority (could be religious or political) that rules through a direct connection with the divine. The administrator serves as a link between the ruler and the ruled. His duty is to carry out the ruler’s bidding. The citizen’s duty is to obey both the ruler and his administrative voice. Roberts (2003:17) concludes that this model is the oldest.

4.1.2 *Citizen as voter in a representative system*

The second mode is one in which the people or beneficiaries are asked to legitimize or ratify projects identified as formulated by government (Mathur, 1986:19). This model calls for an expanded role for the citizen. It is centered on the electoral process that enables the citizen to vote for candidates who will represent him/her in the legislature. It also includes activities such as party involvement and political contributions, as well as other formal ‘constitutional’

obligations such as serving in the military and on juries. Administrators are directly accountable to the elected representatives. Their role is to be the implementer of legislative will as expressed through laws and mandates (Roberts, 2003:17).

4.1.3 *Citizen as client in an administrative state*

In this mode of participation, the people are consulted about the project but they do not actually participate in the planning and management of the project (Mathur, 1986:19). The administrative-state rests on the assumptions that administrators who staff public bureaus are professionals, selected and promoted competitively on the basis of competence and merit. They are experts at making rational and value-free decisions. The elected chief executive, who represents the interests of all the people, energizes and coordinates all parts of the political and bureaucratic system. According to Roberts (2003:17) citizens as clients are to respect and defer to the expertise and neutral competence of professional bureaucrats who are responsible to politicians for implementing policy, making rational decisions in the public interest, and ensuring equal and equitable processes and outcomes. Since citizens do not have the specialized skills, knowledge, or ability to be directly involved in government decision making, their role is to provide the required input and support to administrators so that programs and activities can be properly designed, implemented, and evaluated.

4.1.4 *Citizen as interest-group advocate in a pluralist system*

Roberts (2003:17) indicates that pluralism rests on the assumption that democracy is best achieved through collective action. Citizens are expected to promote their interests more effectively in groups rather than working as individuals. Multiple, diverse, and autonomous advocacy groups exist to represent the wide-ranging interests of society. For its part, government ensures competing interest groups multiple access points and means of participation in

the political process. Dispersed centers of power are arranged both vertically and horizontally enabling active and legitimate groups the opportunity to be heard at critical stages of the decision process. Bargaining, competition, compromise, and power sharing among power centers are necessary to get anything done. In this system of adversarial democracy, ambition counteracts ambition and absolute power is checked. Citizens are expected to be knowledgeable about their interests, support the creation and maintenance of interest groups to protect their interests, elect public officials who represent their interests, and rely on the courts to adjudicate disputes among competing interests. In the fourth mode, the people or the beneficiaries are represented in the highest policy-making body of the agency (Mathur, 1986:19).

4.1.5 *Citizen as volunteer and co-producer in civil society*

In this mode, the people are consulted from the very start and they actively participate in the planning and management of projects (Mathur, 1986:19). This model focuses on civil society and makes the assumption that civil society "can constitute a site for democratization...it can be a place where people choose to live their public lives and solve their joint problems". According to Roberts (2003:18), civic engagement creates two roles for the citizen. The first is the role of volunteer in nonpaying activities to support improvements in neighborhoods and communities and civic life in general. For example, volunteers participate in conventional law enforcement through neighborhood watches and citizen patrols and in public education through the maintenance of school facilities, participation in cleanup campaigns, and as classroom aides and student tutors. The second is the role of co-producer. Citizens and administrators cooperate with each other through neighborhood associations, community organizations, and other client groups to redesign and deliver government services. Their mutual goal is to improve the quality and quantity of service outputs.

4.1.6 *Citizen as co-learner in a social learning process*

According to Roberts (2003:18) solutions to public dilemmas and problems have to be discovered through social learning. They are not 'givens.' Social learning occurs through collaborations among citizens, public officials, and employees who are required to make value judgments and tradeoffs among competing problem definitions and solutions in order to get anything done. It is nurtured through dialogue enabling participants to respect and listen to one another's opinions, and through deliberation enabling competing perspectives to be aired and considered before decisions are made. In their roles as stewards of the public trust, public executives and administrators serve as facilitators of the learning process. They also promote the restructuring of political institutions so that supportive political cultures can be built and sustained. They advocate learning in smaller, decentralized and flatter government units to encourage citizen and employee involvement and they develop new techniques to accommodate collaborative problem solving and decision-making in large groups. Ultimately, the goals of social learning are to develop citizen identity, increase civic virtue, build learning communities, and harness the energy and talents of all members of a democratic society. In this mode, the representatives of the people control the highest policy-making body of the agency or government (Mathur, 1986:19).

4.2 *Participation continuum*

Mathur (1986:39) concludes that each of the aforementioned public participation modes represents elements of the participation continuum which includes anti-participatory, manipulative, and incremental and the participatory characteristics.

4.2.1 *Anti-participatory mode*

According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:39) the anti-participatory mode is congruent with Marxian and elite theories which hold that the state is not interested in the poor and that it supports neither community participation nor social developments. Instead, the state acts on behalf of the ruling class, furthering their interest, the accumulation of wealth and the concentration of power. Some proponents of this theory suggest that the primary impediment to public participation is the capitalist system itself and that once a revolutionary transformation of society has taken place, mechanisms for full participation of the people and the realization of their aspirations will emerge. But it is certainly not universally accepted that authentic public participation can only occur in communist societies.

4.2.2 *Manipulation and indoctrination*

According to Boule (1987:4) manipulation in effect means non-participation. It occurs when public involvement in decision-making is rudimentary, qualified and designed by power-holders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants. The main institutions of manipulation are nominated bodies with limited functions and participation in them is invariably controversial. Midgley *et al.* (1986:40) confirm this assertion by indicating that in a manipulative mode of participation, the state supports community participation but does so for ulterior motives. Amongst these are the desire to use community participation for purposes of political and social control and recognition that community participation can reduce the costs of social development programs and facilitate implementation. This is therefore a process by which the state seeks to gain control over grass-roots movements and to manipulate them for its own ends.

According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:42) the state may also foster participatory activities as part of its efforts to extend social and political control over the

population. Since participatory rhetoric may encourage ordinary people to identify with national political ideologies, give legitimacy to ruling elites and help to integrate marginal communities into social and political system, community participation may well appeal to governments but once again party functionaries play a key role in implementing this approach. Boule (1987:4) provides several examples of manipulative 'participation' in South Africa's constitutional history, including the Native Representative Council between 1936 and 1949, dubbed the 'toy telephone' by the participants because there was never any response to the submission made through it, and the President's Council in the 1980s, at least as far as some recommendations on the constitution and group areas legislation are concerned. The Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) (2005a:2) concludes that manipulation is pretence to participation. For an example "people's" representatives on official boards but who are not elected and have no power, or where the community is selectively told about a project according to an existing agenda. The community's input in this instance is only used to further this existing agenda.

4.2.3 Incremental Mode

Midgley *et al.* (1986:43) indicate that incremental mode is characterized by official support for community participation ideas but also by a *laissez-faire* or ambivalent approach to implementation that fails to support local activities properly or to ensure that participatory institutions function effectively. According to the DPLG (2005a:3), people participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses.

This response to community participation is associated with pluralist societies with strong central governments. While these governments do not oppose community participation, they fail to provide the necessary backing to ensure its

realization. In this instance, political elites regard community participation as worthy but believe at the same time that the problems of Third World countries require concerted central government action which overrides local interests (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:43).

4.3. Participation categories

Participation categories reflect the extent to which genuine public participation is taking place. According to Khan and Haupt (2006:46) recently developed typologies of participation suggest that great care must be taken over both using and interpreting the term. It should always be qualified by reference to the type of participation, as most types will threaten rather than support the goals of sustainable development. The following are the categories of participation:

4.3.1. Information

In this category the community is told about the project – e.g. through meetings or leaflets. The community may be asked for inputs, but their opinion may not be taken into account (DPLG, 2005a:3).

4.3.2. Consultation

According to Boule (1987:4), consultation provides citizens and interest groups with a more substantial platform from which to make representations, but under conditions that exclude the power to ensure that their recommendations will actually be heeded. There is little scope for follow-through and no assurance of changing the status quo. The DPLG (2005a:3) submits that in consultation the community is given information about the project or issue and asked to comment – e.g. through meetings or survey – but their view may not be reflected in the final decision, or feedback given as to why not. External agents define problems

and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making.

4.3.3. Placation

The process may be designed to placate those involved and their followers without the state agency forfeiting its real decision-making power (Boulle, 1987:4). According to the DPLG (2005a:3) the community is asked for advice and token changes are made.

4.3.4. Co-optation

Co-optation is a more sophisticated form of consultation in that participants are party to actual decision-making processes and might have a marginal influence over policy, but the system's overall design ensures that the influence is limited. It is mostly employed by the dominating group by dividing and weakening the opposition forces. The decision-making processes might have a marginal influence over policy, but the system's overall design ensures that the influence is limited. It is employed by the dominant group to achieve the political co-optation of the opposition elites, thereby strengthening the dominant group and dividing and weakening the opposition forces (Boulle, 1987:4).

According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:41) the state's response to community participation is influenced by both elitist and corporatist theory which emphasize the capacity of the state to subvert and co-opt autonomous movements and to preserve its own power. Although genuine social benefits may accrue to the poor, they nevertheless remain dependent on the top-down transfer of resources and fail to realize their potential for autonomous co-operative action. Co-optation may occur because the state seeks to direct participatory aspirations through alternative mechanisms which it has established and which it regards as legitimate and satisfactory. Although the state does not oppose community

involvement, it seeks to neutralize spontaneous participatory activities hoping to channel them through established mechanisms. One mechanism of this kind which is often regarded as the primary institution for participation in totalitarian political systems, is the ruling political party itself. In many Third World countries, ruling elites cannot conceive of any form of popular participation outside the structures of the party apparatus.

4.3.5. *Partnership*

Boulle (1987:4) submits that in a partnership arrangement, citizens can negotiate and engage in consensual decision-making with traditional policy formulators. This involves a much higher degree of citizen power, best illustrated by referendum mechanism. In South Africa, in the education field, there are indications of the development of partnership for white parents, dictated partly by the state's financial problems. There is also a partnership arrangement with some professional associations. According to the DPLG (2005a:3), in a partnership arrangement, community has considerable influence on the public decision-making process but the government still takes responsibility for the decision. Participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to a project. Such involvement tends to arise only after external agents have already made major decisions. Participation may also be for material incentives where people participate by contributing resources, for example, labour in return for food, cash or other material incentives.

4.3.6. *Delegated power*

In this category, government ultimately runs the decision-making process and funds it, but communities are given some delegated powers to make decisions. People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or

strengthening of local institutions. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices (DPLG, 2005a:2). According to Boule (1987:4) the state may delegate public policy formulation to private or semi-private agencies, with or without providing a framework within which they must operate. The system has been applied to professional organizations in South Africa and in the labour relations arena.

4.3.7. Citizen control: Participatory mode

According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:43) in this mode the state approved fully of community participation and responds by creating mechanisms for the effective involvement of local communities in all aspects of development. Inspired by various social and political theories including populism, anarchism and pluralism, the participatory mode involves real devolution of power. In addition to creating genuine community level political institutions, the state sponsors participatory activities through the training and deployment of community workers and the provision of central, regional and local decisions through comprehensive national planning. Local decision-making bodies are given specific rights and functions as well as real control over budgets. Steps are taken to ensure that civil servants are sensitized to the needs of ordinary people and that public participation becomes institutionalized in the administrative procedures of government. According to the DPLG (2005a:2), people participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. An example of citizen control is self-government – the community makes the decisions.

The above categorization provides a fair sense of the relationship between the state and public participation, different participation categories and the underlying

objectives as determined by those designing participation processes. According to Boule (1987:5), whether participation is ritualistic or effective depends on the policy-making involved and the policy-maker. The most appropriate models for public participation in municipal affairs in South Africa would seemingly be the one that ensures adequate representation as well as sustained participation by communities in decision-making and implementation in developmental processes. It appears it would not be advisable to engage in public participation processes that are merely done to comply with the rule. The authorities are therefore obliged to ensure that public participation processes and systems enhance the community development and empowerment, create space for local decision-making and further provide for collective benefits from the process thereby increasing the level of public confidence in the governance system.

4.4. Public participation mechanisms

Governments at different spheres have seemingly generated many mechanisms to ensure involvement of the people. Authorities appear to be recognizing the benefits of engaging the public and it seems as if they are increasingly trying to involve people in local decisions and developing service delivery. The following are some of the mechanisms for public participation:

4.4.1. Publications

This includes promotional material, strategy documents and information brochures about services (Ditsobotla, 2004a: 18). These published materials may describe the process, define the problem, issue or situation, suggest options or request direct feedback from readers on their views.

4.4.2. Toll-free phone line

Smith (2003:40) submits that toll-free phone lines provide an impersonal opportunity for the public to give feedback, provide ideas or identify issues. The phone can be answered by a staff member who discusses the issue directly with the caller, or by a taped message and opportunity to record comments.

4.4.3. Interviews

Individual discussions with the public or representatives of interest groups may allow participants to cover a wider range of information than is solicited on a questionnaire, and thus perhaps to identify new issues or concerns not previously considered (Smith, 2003:41).

4.4.4. Citizens' juries/task force

A citizens' jury is a group of citizens (chosen to be a fair representation of the local population) brought together to consider a particular issue set by the local authority. Citizens' juries receive evidence from expert witnesses and cross-questioning can occur. The process may last up to four days, at the end of which a report is drawn up setting out the views of the jury, including any different opinion. Juries' views are intended to inform councillors' decision-making (Birch, 2002:67). According to Smith (2003:41), groups are selected to represent a cross-section of interests, and may be asked to prioritize, review, make recommendations, develop alternatives, evaluate, assist, etc.

4.4.5. Visioning exercises/open house

Birch (2002:67) indicates that a range of methods (including focus groups) may be used within the visioning exercise, the purpose of which is to establish the "vision" participants have of the future and the kind of future they would like to

create. Visioning may be used to inform broad strategy for a locality, or may have a more specific focus. According to Smith (2003:40), at these sessions information is usually communicated about a project or proposal through a series of displays. Staff members are present to answer questions and provide clarification. Visitors are asked to register their views before leaving. Information handouts can be available.

4.4.6. Issue forums

Groups of eight or ten people are structured to represent a cross-section of the stakeholders affected by an issue. A moderator leads a discussion of the facts, exploring participants' feelings, values, interests, concerns, etc. (Smith, 2003:41). These are also ongoing bodies with regular meetings, but focusing on particular issues (e.g. community safety or health promotion). Again, they may have a set membership or operate on an open basis, and are often able to make recommendations to relevant council committees or to share in public decision-making processes (Birch, 2002:67).

4.4.7. Shared interest forum/ target briefings

These are designed to reach specific audiences who may benefit from private and individually tailored presentations. Audiences for targeted briefings could include ministers, municipal officials, media or specific interest groups (Smith, 2003:41). According to Birch (2002:67) these are similar to issue forums but concentrate upon the needs of a particular citizen group (e.g. young people or minority ethnic groups). Again, they may have a set membership or operate on an open basis, and are often able to make recommendations to relevant council committee or share in decision-making processes.

4.4.8. User management of services/ ward committee

According to Carrim (2001:26) ward committees are established in order to enhance participatory democracy. In this way residents can provide feedback to the municipality on the quality and level of services offered to them. Birch (2002:67) concludes that this mechanism represents the most radical form of public participation in that the citizens are given direct control over the management of local services and resources. Examples of user management include community-based housing organizations (or tenant management co-operatives) and community-run nurseries, youth clubs and community centres. Such initiatives usually operate through an executive committee, elected by the wider group of users.

4.4.9. Public hearings

According to Smith (2003:41) a public hearing is a forum at which stakeholders can make formal statements about the issue at hand. Oral statements are often accompanied by written briefs. A panel representing the sponsoring agency may ask questions to the presenter and it generally submits a final report with findings and recommendations. These are a traditional method of seeking public views on particular issues or facilitating debate on broad options for a specific service, policy or neighbourhood. They may be initiated by the local authorities (or a particular department) or be convened in response to citizen or community concerns. We are referring here to once-off public meetings, rather than ongoing forums (Birch, 2002:67).

4.4.10. Public meeting

According to Williams (2005:10) the most exciting and exemplary mechanism of public participation is the community outreach program. The political leadership

of government convenes meetings in each area simply to listen to the people record comments, criticism, praise, concern and opinions of residents and develop responses.

It appears that the continuum of participation, modes of participation, participation categories and mechanisms for public participation have a major impact in defining whether participation is real or ritualistic. The choice of the form of participation therefore gives indications on the commitment of the part of those who designed the process of public participation. According to Fransman (2005:2) there is an enormous task of bringing the people into meaningful decision-making processes.

5. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

According to Houston *et al.* (2001:216) the idea of civil society participation in developmental local government has supporters and detractors, as well as benefits and limitations. As part of providing more clarity on the notion of public participation, it is important to look at its advantages and disadvantages within the context of the theories and historical developments. Midgley *et al.* (1986:34) indicate that public participation is advocated not only because it facilitates social service delivery by lowering costs and smoothing implementation but because it fosters a sense of belonging and the integration of communities and this in turn helps local people to contribute positively to national developments. In terms of some of the theories of public participation, community workers are cast as the champions of the poor who apply their skills and knowledge to unite a demoralized populace and to forge them into a self-reliant and cohesive community which will engage the forces of oppression and secure justice and improvements in welfare for all.

Smith (2003:35) suggests that while it may seem easier to simply forge ahead and make decisions on their own, there are many reasons why governments and

other sponsors are making increased use of direct techniques for public participation. Public participation can help to enhance effectiveness in governance, ensure improved implementation of programs with more public consent and commitment. Public participation yields higher quality decisions, meets a growing public demand and desire to be involved in making decisions that will affect them, addresses the need for greater openness of decision processes, resolves conflicts, sets priorities, negotiate tradeoffs, seek consensus, enhance public knowledge, understanding and awareness. It creates opportunities for stakeholders to hear each other and better understand the range of views on an issue, meet legal and policy requirements, comply with international and national agreements as well as federal and provincial legislation and regulation. It is fundamental to democracy as it counters public mistrust of the system.

Public participation seems important for decision-making as it brings benefits for democracy in general. It uses the knowledge, skills and enthusiasm of the people to help make decisions and thus it recognizes that the people have a significant role to play. Public participation appears also as a moral duty on the part of governments since public authorities work for the public. For them to do that, they need to do things they way the public wants. In order to ensure that they know the public needs, they have to involve them in public decision-making.

Public participation may also be confronted by difficulties that are often a subject of intense criticism. The disadvantages and criticisms of the public participation theoretical ideals and practices require some analysis. Midgley *et al.* (1986:35) submit that there is nothing wrong with idealism but its notions regarding public participation are so infused with moral sentiments to an extent that conceptual clarity and rigour have been sacrificed. The concept of community participation has popularity without clarity and therefore is subject to growing faddishness and a lot of lip service. The concept of the small community as a cohesive and integrated entity fighting for justice against powerful external forces is inspired by

the romanticism of populist thought rather than a serious analysis of community life and its complex characteristics and dynamics.

Public participation theory fails to acknowledge that even deprived communities are differentiated in terms of status, income and power. Sections of these communities suffer from conflicts, rivalries and factionalism. A clearer understanding of these problems would allow a more realistic assessment of possibilities of real participation. While it is right that community participation should be concerned with issues of inequality, exploitation and oppression, a more refined analysis is needed. Similarly an uncritical attitude to public participation will fail to deal with problems of interpersonal relationships that arise in all communities (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:35).

It appears that there are difficulties in sustaining active public participation as there are certain instances where-in people are less interested in participating. According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:36), many public participation advocates employ a concept of community participation that equates people's involvement with a total and continuous commitment to activism and this is hardly feasible. Studies of participation in political elections in the industrial countries give little scope for believing that intense long term mass involvement is likely. Ordinary people have many other commitments and it is a myth that the poor have an excess of free time.

Khan and Haupt (2006:60) concur with the above submission in their suggestion that it cannot be assumed that people would always participate, even when they have the choice. In some situations, communities were limited to the extent that they wanted to be involved or have the capacity to be involved. Many people struggled on a daily basis to meet their most basic needs. This being water, food and electricity and thus expecting people under these circumstances to sit on committees and attend meetings to discuss improvements to their situations would be insensitive. People in affluent areas who received these services

certainly did not spend their time sitting on committees and attending meetings. These basic services were seen to be their right. It seems this fact is often overlooked by the proponents of public participation who often complain about the failure of participatory programs to secure indefinite and total involvement.

Midgley *et al.* (1986:37) indicate that there are critics of the public participation approach as a whole who believe that real improvements in welfare flow not from community mobilization but rather from wider social and economic changes in society. Their views are invariably phrased in ideological terms invoking the arguments of established political beliefs which are reminiscent of older debates between anarchists, communists, socialists and liberals. Those on the right applaud the idea of self-reliance and believe that the problems of mass poverty will not be eradicated through community activism but rather by the emergence of the values of individualism and competitive enterprise. On the other hand socialists argue the case for state intervention and centralized planning. Although they do not oppose the idea of public participation they are skeptical of the claim that significant improvements in levels of living can be achieved through local development programs.

Marxists argue that it is only possible to bring about real improvements in welfare for the masses through revolutionary transformation of society. Consequently they do not participate in the debate between the proponents of centralism and community participation claiming that a discussion of possible reforms within the prevailing mode of production is a meaningless exercise. They believe that attempts at community participation are invariably subverted and neutralized by the state in capitalist societies. Efforts by local people to organize themselves and to secure justice are perceived as a threat and are quickly suppressed. Sometimes this is done violently and brutally but often it is achieved through subtle manipulation. The encounters between local people and the state result in the co-optation and emasculation of community effort. It is axiomatic therefore

that they regard state sponsorship of community participation programs as a contradiction in terms (Midgley *et. al*, 1986:37).

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the theoretical background to the study of public participation as well as the importance, benefits and disadvantages of this ideal. It seems the theories surrounding public participation also inform the categories, modes of participation as well as the location of any form of participation on the participation continuum. However it appears that the different public participation categories have underlying objectives that define the structure of the process. According to Boule (1987:4), where public participation is manipulated by the state or hampered by the lack of information and informed debates, or further subject to ratification or overrule by the executive, it can fail to satisfy any of the democratic or educative objectives claimed for it. But where it is widely pursued under conditions of extensive informed discussions and debates, and relatively free from state manipulation, it can enhance democratic and responsive governance.

CHAPTER 3

STATUTORY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK GOVERNING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Public participation has become a permanent feature of most democratic societies, to an extent that it has been enacted in statutes. Most public participation initiatives are dictated by legislations, policies and regulations. The South African system of democratic governance puts public participation at the core of the work of governance. To this end the Constitution and other legislations passed since 1994 make public participation a legal obligation. This chapter will highlight some of the important legislations that have created an enabling environment for the involvement of members of the public in the affairs of government in general and municipalities in particular.

2. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA OF 1996

The preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, provides for public participation in that it commits to the laying of the foundation for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people. According to the ANC (1997:2) the transformation of government into a democratic, open and transparent institution that is based on the centrality of the people, presents some challenges. In order to establish how this “will of the people” is generated at municipal sphere, it is important to highlight some of the provisions in the Constitution that enable public participation.

The Constitution recognizes municipalities as distinct sphere closer to the people. In terms of section 152 (1) of the Constitution, the objects of local government have been identified as follows:

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

Public participation is further enhanced by section 160 (4) of the Constitution, in that it indicates inter-alia that no by-law may be passed by the Municipal Council unless the proposed by-law has been published for public comment.

In terms of section 160 (7) of the Constitution there is an obligation on the part of the Municipal Council to conduct their business in an open manner and that their sittings may be closed only when it is reasonable to do so having regard to the nature of the business being transacted. This seems to be intended to involve the public in the affairs of their municipalities. The municipal administration should therefore be geared towards the promotion of public participation especially on policy-making. The Constitution places an emphasis on the aspect of involving communities in decision-making in terms of section 152. It also suggests a need for *sound intergovernmental relations and co-operative governance* in local government.

Fransman (2005:7) submits that the kind of constitutional democracy existing in South Africa is both representative democracy as well as participatory. In the context of municipalities, representative democracy involves the election of

councilors by the citizens to act as their representatives in the decision-making structures and processes of the municipalities. These councilors are normally elected for a five year period. These elections are an important cornerstone of democracy. On the other hand, participatory democracy refers to the ongoing process of debate, dialogue and communication between the local government authority and the community and it is intended to correct or balance the negative effects of representative democracy.

However, community involvement and representation on relevant structures should be balanced by the need to manage the process effectively (Van Rooyen, 2003:130). The various legislations derive their existence from the Constitution and implied in most legislation is the need for the public to participate in the affairs of government, including municipalities. It is therefore expected that legislations governing municipalities would create that balance so that the constitutional requirement for municipalities, to promote the active involvement of the people, is realized.

3. WHITE PAPER ON PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY (1997)

The process of transformation of the public service requires that there should be development of mechanisms for public participation in order to create a better and alternative system to meet the new demands on the public service. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) prepared a policy document that became known as *Batho Pele* policy. The eight principles for transforming public service delivery- the *Batho Pele* principles have been identified to promote service to the community. The *Batho Pele* policy envisages an environment where the beneficiaries of such services are also actively participating and not as mere recipients. These principles are formulated in broad and simple terms in order to enable all spheres of government to apply them with ease (SA, 1997:6). The *Batho Pele* principles are outlined as follows within the context of public participation:

Consultation

Communities should be consulted about the level and quality of the public service they receive and wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.

Service standards

Communities should be briefed on the level and quality of services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.

Access

All members of the community must have equal access to the services to which they are entitled to.

Courtesy

Communities should be treated with courtesy and consideration.

Information

Communities should be given full, accurate information on the public services that they are entitled to receive.

Openness and transparency

Communities should be informed on how national, provincial and local government departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge of the function.

Redress

If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedial action taken and when complaints are made, communities should receive a sympathetic and positive response.

Value for money

Public service should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give communities the best possible value for money.

All of the above *Batho Pele* principles cannot escape the promotion of public participation as part of a new culture of a democratic and free society. Most importantly, the *Batho Pele* White Paper notes that the development of a service-oriented culture requires the active participation of the wider community. Municipalities need constant feedback from service-users if they are to improve their operations. Local partners can be mobilized in that way to assist in building a service culture (SA, 1998:35).

4. WHITE PAPER ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT (1998)

According to Fransman (2005:7) the White Paper on Local Government describes developmental local government 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”. Developmental local government therefore has two complementary thrusts: alleviation of poverty through service delivery and participatory democracy. The process of local government transformation in South Africa has been guided by the need to create democracy and to further democratize the development of communities. The whole process of local government democratization and transformation has since the local government negotiations recognized the significance of public participation.

The White Paper on Local Government (SA, 1998:20) identifies municipal councils as playing a central role in promoting local democracy. In addition to representing community interests within council, municipal councillors should promote the involvement of citizens and community groups in the design and

delivery of municipal programs. The building of local democracy requires that municipalities develop strategies and mechanisms to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups. The White Paper on Local Government, (SA, 1998:33) identifies the four levels at which municipalities require active participation by citizens. The four levels identified are the following:

- As voters- to ensure maximum democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are empowered to promote;
- As citizens who express, via different 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;
- As consumers and end-users, who expect value for money, affordable services and courteous and responsive service; and
- As organized partners involved in the mobilization of resources for development via businesses, non-governmental organizations and community-based institutions.

According to van Rooyen (2003:132), the White Paper on Local Government proposes active community participation in local government by defining the four levels through which citizens and community groups may participate and influence municipal functioning. On the first level voters have the opportunity to participate in a democratic process to elect candidates to represent them in local government affairs. Secondly, citizens should have the opportunity to express, through different stakeholder associations and groupings, their views before, during and after policy formulation processes to ensure that those policies address community needs. On the third level, consumers and end-users should be the recipients of quality services. On the fourth level, community members may participate in local government affairs as organized partners involved in the mobilization of resources for development via businesses, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

The public participation vision envisaged by the White Paper on Local Government (SA, 1998:17) has been carried through various legislations related to local government. In actual fact, the spirit of promoting public participation reflected in the White Paper on Local Government has served as a basis for various legislations governing local government.

5. MUNICIPAL STRUCTURES ACT, 117 OF 1998

The Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998, provides for the structures to be established in the new democratic local government dispensation. The participation of members of the public in the affairs of the municipality has been identified as an important pillar in the establishment and operation of different municipal structures. The legislative obligation for municipal councils includes the *promotion of community interests and community participation*. The municipal objectives reflected in terms of section 19 of the Municipal Structures Act dictates that a municipal council should annually review-

- The needs of the community;
- Its priorities to meet those needs;
- Its processes for involving the community;
- Its *organizational and delivery mechanisms for meeting the needs of the community*; and
- Its overall performance in achieving the objectives referred to.

The Municipal Structures Act in section 19(3) puts emphasis on public participation in that it is commanding municipal councils to develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organizations in performing its functions and exercising its powers.

The establishment of Ward Committees for certain types of municipalities is clearly outlined in terms of the Municipal Structures Act. Section 72(3) of the Municipal Structures Act provides the objectives of a ward committee as being to enhance participatory democracy in local government. Ward Committees should therefore be seen as one of the regulated mechanisms for public participation in municipal affairs.

The Municipal Structures Act defines the functions and powers of ward committees. Ward Committees may make recommendations on any matter affecting its ward-

- to the ward councilor; and
- through the ward councilor, to the metro or local council, the executive committee, the executive mayor or the relevant metropolitan sub-council.

In terms of section 32 of the Municipal Structures Act, the different municipal structures including executive committees, executive mayors, ward committees, other committees and municipal manager or any other official may be delegated some of the appropriate powers of the municipal council subject to the provisions of the applicable legislation. In essence ward committees as structures for public participation may be delegated certain functions that are inherently council responsibilities. The challenge seems to be for municipal councils to develop a system of delegation that provides for appropriate delegation of functions and responsibilities to ward committees and other structures for public participation.

6. MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS' ACT, 32 OF 2000

The Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000, provides for the systems to be established in the running of municipal affairs. The details regarding the obligation on municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance has been provided in terms of section 16(1). Such a provision seeks

to encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality.

Some of the key aspects of community participation in terms of Section 17 of the Municipal Systems Act include the mechanisms, processes and procedures for community participation. Provision is also made for community participation to be related to communication of information, public notices of meetings of the municipal council, admission of the public to meetings and communications to local community.

Section 17(1) of the Municipal Systems Act provides the mechanisms, processes and procedures for community participation. Accordingly, community participation in the affairs of the municipality must take place through:

- political structures for participation in terms of the Municipal Structures Act;
- the mechanisms, processes and procedures for participation in municipal governance established in terms of the Municipal Systems Act;
- other appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established by the municipality;
- councilors; and
- generally applying the provisions for participation as provided for in the Act.

The Municipal Systems Act dedicates chapter 4 to community participation in local government. It states that local government should develop a culture of community participation and municipal governance that complements formal representative government and should encourage and create conditions for local communities to participate in the affairs of the municipality in *inter alia*:

- the preparation and implementation and review of its integrated development plan;
- the establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system;
- the preparation of its budget; and
- strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services.

The Municipal Systems Act specifies that in each municipality mechanisms, procedures and processes for community participation should be put in place. Stipulations pertain to persons who are unable to submit their comments concerning any local government-related issue because of their disability or disadvantaged disposition or if they are unable to write are made in the Act. It is also stated in section 22 that the Minister responsible for local government may regulate or issue guidelines pertaining to community participation in municipal affairs.

7. REGULATORY GUIDELINES ON WARD COMMITTEES (2005)

The Minister for Provincial and Local Government has published the regulatory guidelines for the establishment and operation of municipal ward committees as directed through the provisions of Section 22 of the Municipal Systems Act. The purpose of the regulations is to provide a uniform and simplified guideline to ward committees, ward councilors and municipalities in general on the establishment and operation of ward committees (SA, 2005:4).

According to section 4 (1) of the regulatory guidelines (SA, 2005:5), the object of a ward committee is reaffirmed as enhancing participatory democracy in local government. The guidelines define a ward committee as:

- an advisory body;
- a representative structure;
- independent; and

- being impartial and performing its functions without fear, favour or prejudice.

Regarding some of the powers that may be delegated to ward committees, the guidelines direct that no executive powers should be delegated to ward committees. The guidelines list the following as some of the functions and powers that may be delegated to ward committees by municipalities:

- to serve as an official specialized participatory structure in the municipality;
- to create formal unbiased communication channels as well as co-operative partnerships between the community and the council; and
- to serve as a mobilizing agent for community action within the ward

In terms of section 9 of the guidelines (SA, 2005:10), two main models for ward committee election have been identified, namely geographic and sectoral. The geographical model is mostly appropriate for wards that are vast and are composed of more than one residential area. This model seeks to ensure that the different residential sections of the ward are represented in the ward committee. The sectoral model is aimed at providing adequate representation of the key interest groups and stakeholders in the ward committee. It is mostly recommended for wards with few residential areas and where there is a presence of active organized formations.

The guidelines further provide for other operational matters including capacity building and training, composition of ward committees, election criteria, code of conduct, ward committee meetings and other administrative procedures.

8. GUIDE PACK ON INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLANS (IDP) PARTICIPATION

In local government one of the current debates center on the integrated development planning process and the associated stakeholder consultation process that should form an integral part of the structuring of the plans (van Rooyen, 2003:130). According to Mashinini (2008:96) the necessity for local government planning emanates from the fact that it has the potential to promote advocacy, participatory planning as well as mobilization and utilization of local resources. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders and role players at the local level increases the opportunities for the acceptance, support and increased legitimacy of the plans and their sustainability. These are some of the basis for the guidelines on public participation in the processes of the Integrated Development Plans (IDP).

The Department of Provincial and Local Government has developed a Guide Pack on the IDP processes. The IDP Guide Packs was developed with the intention of providing guidance on the process including to enable different stakeholders to know and understand their roles and thereby increase their participation (DPLG, 2001: 3).

The Guide Pack identifies the following benefits for communities engaged in the IDP process (DPLG, 2001:6):

- Gives them an opportunity to inform the council what their development needs are;
- Gives them an opportunity to determine the municipality's development direction;
- Provides a mechanism through which to communicate with their councilors and the governing body; and

- Provides a mechanism through which they can measure the performance of the councilors and the municipality as a whole.

In the Guide Pack some policy principles on community participation are presented. The IDP Guide Pack refers to the emphasis placed on public participation by the White Paper on Local Government (1998). According to the IDP Guide Pack the primary objective of community participation is the promotion of local democracy. Van Rooyen (2003:131) suggests that Municipal Managers, specifically, are required in terms of the Integrated Development Planning Guidelines to be instrumental in structuring different community participation forums to facilitate a process of consultation for integrated development planning. Local government is not only expected to find its own way in structuring stakeholder participation but it is expected to actively encourage and promote participation, especially in the case of marginalized groups and women (White Paper on Local Government, 1998, sec. 3.3) and (Municipal Systems Act, 2000, sec. 17).

9. CONCLUSION

Public participation is a legislative obligation of municipalities. The current legislative regime appears to have created an enabling environment for the promotion of the participation of communities in the affairs of their municipalities. The legislations enacted related to the local government sphere has consistently and progressively taken the ideals of participatory democracy forward.

Public participation seems to have become a permanent feature of the democratic South Africa. Over and above the representative democracy, the new political system also demands a participatory democracy. The Constitution and subsequently, all other pieces of legislations on the local government sphere require municipalities to create a culture of public participation. Municipalities have been provided with a legal framework within which they can develop their

own policies and rules to promote the involvement of the public in their own affairs.

The promotion of public participation as a principle complements the spirit of services to the people, which is encapsulated in the Batho Pele Policy. The intentions to bring services to the people in a developmental manner requires their own participation to influence the service to be rendered as well as input on the way such services are provided. In simple terms, there cannot be Batho Pele without public participation. The ideals of democracy and freedom would be incomplete without the promotion of participation of the people on matters affecting them. Based on the fact that there is enabling legal and philosophical framework in place to guide the promotion of public participation, the next chapter would investigate the application of this framework and introduce the empirical study.

CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRUCTURES IN THE DITSOBOTLA MUNICIPALITY: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a reflection on the nature of the areas that are part of the Ditsobotla Municipality will be provided. The existing strategy and plan on public participation will be analysed. The structures and other mechanisms for public participation will also be evaluated. The operational systems of the municipality as well as the capacity building programs will also be scrutinized. The research design and methodology used in this study will also be introduced.

2. THE DITSOBOTLA MUNICIPALITY

The Ditsobotla Local Municipality is situated in the Central Region of the North West Province. It is approximately 230 km from Johannesburg and on the main route to the capital of the North West Province, Mafikeng. It is 1, 459m above sea level and generally a flat area with mild to hot conditions in summer and cold in winter. Its surface area is approximately 6500 square kilometres, with a population of 147 000 people (North West, 2005:4). The area has been divided into three major settlement clusters, Lichtenburg- Bakerville- Boikhutso in the centre, Coligny- Tlhabologang-Biesisvlei in the south and Itsoseng- Bodibe- Meetmekaar in the north.

According to the Ditsobotla Gazette (2005:5) the Lichtenburg –Boikhutso region consists of Lichtenburg, Boikhutso, Blydeville and Shukran which were all designated residential areas for different racial groups. Boikhutso is a township

for Africans, Blydeville for coloureds and Shukran for the Indians. Other areas include Grasfontein, Bakerville, Welverdiend and Carlsonia, all of which are renowned for diamond discovery and diggings since 1927. Manana village is also part of this municipal region. The other area is Ga-Motlala under the traditional authority of Kgosi Serobatse of Bafokeng. This cluster of residential areas has a population of about 30 000 people.

In the southern region, there is the town of Coligny named after General De-Coligny with its three residential areas for Black people. The region further includes Biesisvlei with its settlement for Blacks- Itekeng previously known as Kolong. Most of the areas of this municipal region are commercial farming areas, which have serious implications on the effective implementation of municipal systems of governance. The cluster has a population of about 13 000 people in Coligny- Tlhabologang and approximately 44 000 inhabitants in the rural/ commercial farmlands (North West, 2005:4).

Lastly the northern region of the Municipality is made up of Itsoseng township, Bodibe village under Kgosi Matlaba of Barolong Boo Rapulane, Matile village under Kgosi Mosiane of Banogeng tribal authority as well as the different villages situated on the different portions of the trust land De Hoop. Such villages include Sheila, Verdwaal, Springbokpan and Meetmekaar. The region was part of the former Bophuthatswana until 1994. This represent the biggest settlement with over 60 000 inhabitants (North West, 2005:4).

According to Bogatsu (2002:2) the Ditsobotla Municipality was established in 2000 following the amalgamation of the Greater Lichtenburg Transitional Local Council (TLC), Coligny Transitional Local Council, Biesisvlei Transitional Representative Council (TRC) and the rural areas previously administered by the Central District Council. Bogatsu (2002:2) submits that the name Ditsobotla was adopted as the official name of the Municipality in 2001 and is the Setswana expression of the "place of pouring friendly rains". The use of the name dates

back to the South African Anglo-Boer war during which the Africans involved in the war had to develop an appropriate term to describe the nature of the soil and the pattern of rainfall.

Ditsobotla Gazette (2005:5) indicates that the Ditsobotla Municipality has a rich history that covers major historical events amongst others the living together of the Batswana and the Khoisan, the arrival of Mzilikazi and his Matebele warriors as well as the Trek Boere in the 1800 leading to the South African Anglo-Boer War. The administrative seat of the Municipality is Lichtenburg. Lichtenburg as an urban centre was established in 1873 by Commandant H.A Greeff. The history of the town is on the other hand related to the life of General De la Rey, who apart from being the town's representative in the House of Assembly, also was the Assistant Commandant General of the Boer forces and became a Senator in the Union of South Africa.

The Ditsobotla Local Municipality was established in 2000 as a collective executive with a ward participatory system. The new system of local government puts the Ditsobotla municipality in the spotlight in that it is confronted with the challenge of promoting public participation in its area of jurisdiction. At the beginning of 2001, the Ditsobotla Municipality began a process of establishing ward committees as part of the structures for public participation. The establishment of ward committees in Ditsobotla was followed by community protests over service delivery. This reflects a disturbing character of a municipality under attack from its own residents through public demonstrations most of which turnout to be violent. According to annual report of the Speaker of the Ditsobotla (2002:12), the challenge of public participation manifested itself through the public demonstrations that went to an extent of incidents of arson and malicious damage to property and intimidation. These developments might be indicative of the need to evaluate the existing systems and mechanisms for public participation in the affairs of the Ditsobotla Municipality.

The Municipality appears to have inherited the systems that do not have obligations to ensure public participation. One of the administrative regions was part of the former Bophuthatswana where participatory democracy was rigidly controlled and reserved for loyalists to the ruling elite. On the other hand, the other regions were part of racially designed local government system that did not provide equal participation for all the residents. It therefore remains a challenge for the Ditsobotla Municipality to emerge from such an unpleasant history to bring about real and sustainable public participation in the affairs of local government.

3. STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DITSOBOTLA

The different legislations provide for a broad framework within which public participation processes have to take place. The White Paper on Local Government (SA, 1998:33) directs municipalities to develop mechanisms to ensure citizen participation in public policy initiation and formulation, monitoring and evaluation of decision-making and implementation. The Ditsobotla Municipality has accordingly developed a public participation strategy document, Ditsobotla Community/ Public Participation Strategy. The strategy serves as a base document for all municipal activities related to public participation. The public participation strategy appears to represent a clear intention on the part of the Municipal Council to provide for appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality.

According to the ANC (1997:2) the nature of government presents challenges for people-centred, people-driven and mass participation approaches. This includes the challenge of ensuring that government itself is transformed into an open and transparent institution. This objective is difficult and valuable in its own right, but it is the only way to ensure that the people are able to understand and interact effectively with Government. This seems to imply that the nature of the

challenges for each structure and institution of government would have to be properly understood whenever strategies are designed.

In developing its strategy, the Ditsobotla Municipality seems to have taken into account, its own challenges. According to Section 2 of the public participation strategy (Ditsobotla, 2004a:2) the following are the key community participation challenges in the Ditsobotla Municipality:

- apathy and limited participation;
- limited financial and logistical resources for providing support to public participation initiatives;
- providing technical support to structures responsible for the facilitation of community participation; and
- lack of consistent mechanisms promotion of the involvement of communities in the daily running of the Municipality.

There seems to be different objectives for promoting public participation. It further appears that different role-players have different aims for community participation. According to Mathur (1986:19) public planners and ordinary people have their own reasons regarding the objectives of public participation. The planners identify the key objective of public participation as the release of untapped human resources to help development whereas for the people, the aim would relate more with increased access to public services and control over delivery mechanisms. Public participation should therefore be aimed at benefiting the participants. In the case of the Ditsobotla Municipality, the important aims of public participation as reflected in the strategy include the following:

- to increase people's understanding of municipal development and service delivery processes, policy and related matters;
- to enable communities to relate and identify with municipal strategic vision and future plans;

- to enable Council through its elected representatives, to listen to needs and views of communities;
- to assist in the promotion and defense of Council reputation; and
- to complement and enhance internal communication efforts.

It appears that the objectives of the Ditsobotla Community/ Public Participation Strategy strategy are largely information dissemination and defending the integrity of the Municipality rather than allowing for open- engagement and influence by the community. It can further be noted that the objectives do not regard continuous participation and community beneficiation in public participation as critical. According to Midgley *et al.* (1986:26), community participation requires that the community should have an effective role in choosing developmental programs, contribute in the implementation of the decisions and should derive benefits from these programs. It would be critical for a municipality to be more explicit on the objectives from the community benefit perspective. Communities would be more interested in participating in the affairs of the municipality if they can see benefits of their involvement. An impression should not be created that the aim is merely to strengthen a municipality and its internal institutions.

The strategy further proceeds to identify community sectors that are potential stakeholders in municipal affairs to be targeted for public participation. The list of potential stakeholders includes organized business, ward residents, rates and tax- payers' associations, non-governmental organizations, traditional authorities, civil society formations, the media, government sector departments and the District Municipality. Unfortunately the strategy failed to make a distinction between government as well as government-supported institutions as service delivery units and the actual community as beneficiaries of such services and whose input is being sought. This might create uncertainties on the effectiveness of public participation as well as suspicions of government manipulation. According to Boule (1987:4), where public participation is pursued relatively free

from state manipulation, it can enhance democratic and responsive government. It might be important for a municipality to make a clear distinction between those role players whose input is required and those who are state-related entities. Different status should therefore be accorded for each. This will ease tensions and reduce fears of possible state manipulation.

According to the strategy, the municipality will on an annual basis, place advertisements on local newspapers, libraries and other community centres calling for interests-groupings/professional bodies, organizations and or individuals to register as stakeholders in the municipal stakeholders' database. It appears the Ditsobotla Municipality is facing a challenge of developing an appropriate and acceptable working definition of stakeholders in community participation. It might be that either the municipality has not clearly defined who should be regarded as a stakeholder in public participation or the definition is not adequate and therefore some sectors feel excluded. In a situation where some sectors feel excluded, there are strong possibilities of instability. The annual report of the Speaker of Ditsobotla (2002:12) confirms the fact that there is some form of instability and continuing power struggle waged by individuals in the name of the representing the community. The individuals in question demand to be recognized as the leaders and representatives of the communities.

Seemingly, claiming to be a representative of the communities in Ditsobotla provides some benefits and control to an extent that anybody would prefer to be regarded as such. For an example, in different parts of Ditsobotla, there has been a mushrooming of different pressure groups and concerned groups. The municipal strategy lacks therefore in reasserting councilors as elected public representatives and therefore the only legitimate democratic representative of communities. It is worth noting, however that the municipal strategy might have to seek guidance from the available legislations and regulations on the matter of determining key stakeholders and role players in public participation.

The transformation of the public service continues to be an important process. In line with the constitutional principles, the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service (SA, 1997:4) calls on all national and provincial as well as local government departments to make service delivery a priority. The *Batho Pele* vision is equally important for municipalities as is in inculcating a new democratic culture. It seems, the municipal strategy on public participation is an element of transforming the municipality as an organ of the state but also to enhance service delivery. The Ditsobotla Municipal public participation strategy has therefore been premised on the *Batho Pele* values. In recognition of the close relationship between the transformation of the public services and the actual participation of the people, the Ditsobotla municipality has adopted the following key principles to drive its public participation work:

- transparent and accountable governance and administrative processes;
- honest, consistency and openness in community participation processes;
- clear, simple and user-friendly communication approaches;
- high quality community participation methods; and
- cost effective community participation strategies.

The strategy proceeds to spell out the critical developmental and policy participatory processes in the Municipality. This includes the Integrated Development Planning (IDP), Municipal Performance Management, Budget process as well as policies and by-laws. For each process, the strategy has identified the critical role to be played by structures for public participation as well as the implications. The other operational and procedural matters regarding public participation have also been identified. Such matters are related to stakeholders' empowerment, development of an annual community participation program, logistical arrangements for community meetings, communications channels and communications systems. The Municipality has identified the Speaker as an appropriate institution to be delegated the responsibility of ensuring the implementation and period review of the strategy (Ditsobotla,

2004a:20). The Speaker, Mayor and Council Whips have been constituted into an Oversight Committee over public participation and the implementation of the strategy.

4. STRUCTURES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE DITSOBOTLA MUNICIPALITY

The Ditsobotla Municipality was established as a ward participatory system and in terms of section 72(3) of the Municipal Structures Act the object of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. The Ditsobotla Municipality has established Ward Committees in all its 19 wards. Ward Committees are made up of the Ward Councillor for that ward and other ten members elected from amongst the people residing in the ward. The Municipality has developed a procedure for the elections of ward committee. A combination of geographic and sector models of electing ward committees was adopted (Ditsobotla, 2002:6). The term of office of members of ward committees in the Municipality runs concurrently with that of the councillors. This means that a member of the ward committee will remain in office for as long as the specific ward councillor for that area remains in office. According to Dube (2005:1) there is an average of 4 females and 6 males per ward committee in Ditsobotla. This indicates the fact that the majority of women are still not involved in the structures for public participation in the Municipality.

The Municipality as part of its administrative obligations to support ward committees provides a sitting stipend for members of the ward committees. During the 2004/05 financial-year, the Municipality had set aside an amount in the region of R 400 000,00 for reimbursing ward committee members as well as for overall ward committee administration. According to the Speaker of the Central District Municipality (Lethoko, 2005:3) the Ditsobotla Municipality had budgeted R 220 000, 00 for the ward committees in the municipal financial year

2005/06 and this represents a serious decline in resource allocation for structures designed to enhance public participation when compared to the previous year. The Ditsobotla Municipality further provides logistical support to ward committee. The Office of the Speaker is responsible for arranging venues, sending notices and other logistics for all ward committee and community meetings convened.

The Ditsobotla Municipality has developed a ward committee annual operational plan which outlines the key activities to be undertaken by ward committees during each month, targeted programs as well as the frequency of reporting. The operation plan is detailed on some of the activities that are a product of the public participation strategy. Ward committee and community meetings are the critical elements of the plan. It is through this process that issues affecting different ward and communities can be forwarded to the municipal council. Most of the ward committees meet regularly on a monthly basis. Regular community meetings are preceded by ward committee sittings. Issues generated through this process are submitted to the municipality. The standing procedure in the Municipality indicates that submissions and recommendations made by ward committees in Ditsobotla are processed through the Office of the Speaker (Ditsobotla, 2002:6).

The Ward Committee is expected in terms of the provisions of Section 74 of the Municipal Structures Act to make recommendations on any matter affecting its ward to the ward councillor or through the ward councillor to council and the executive committee. In order to allow for receipt of recommendations and other matters affecting the ward, ward committee records are forwarded to the Office of the Speaker on a monthly basis. Issues identified in the records are then posted to different Council Committees (Dube, 2005:2). It is expected that the Council Committees would then process such issues for the meetings of the Municipal Council. This procedure might not be enough to ensure that council and its committees is influenced by the views of communities generated through the ward committee. It is possible for either the Office of the Speaker, councillors and

municipal officials to ignore recommendations from the wards especially on those issues that they do not like or matters that make them uncomfortable. The Speaker's Annual report for 2001 confirms the fact that a majority of council agenda items are largely orientated to internal administration and less on direct community issues (Ditsobotla, 2002:7).

According to Section 22 {1(b)} of the Municipal Structures Act, Ward Councillors are elected to directly represent the wards. The leadership role that ward councillors have to play as representatives of the views of members of the ward is further reaffirmed by the fact that they are chairpersons of their respective ward committees. It appears however, that most ward councillors in Ditsobotla, fail to represent the recommendations and matters affecting their wards up to the level of the municipal council. It might be that the mandate of their political parties takes precedence over the ward community mandate and hence they are not seen advocating the views of their ward committees and community.

The Mayor of Ditsobotla Municipality had committed the municipality to develop a system through which issues generated through ward committees and community meetings will more easily find their way to the local municipal council sittings (Bogatsu, 2002:16). The success of public participation will seemingly be measured by the extent to which communities identifying themselves with issues discussed by the municipal council. The municipal council will therefore be expected not only to develop resolutions on internal administrative matters but should also directly respond to issues from ward committees and the community.

5. OTHER MECHANISMS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DITSOBOTLA

Municipalities are expected to provide for other mechanisms for public participation over and above ward committees. Such mechanisms would greatly determine the relationship between the elected public representatives and the

ordinary people. According to Jack and Cherry (2003:12) the real challenge in trying to recapture the culture of democratic participation in which it is not only about holding public officials and political office bearers accountable, but also to ensure that people do not relate to government simply as a delivery mechanism. This would involve strong democracy in which the state relates in a positive way to a strong civil society and the citizens are able to relate with government as active participants rather than as passive recipients of policy.

The Ditsobotla Municipality has in addition to ward committees, established through the Office of the Speaker the Religious Ministers' Forum. The forum acts as a link between the Municipality and religious formations in the area. It also provides a valuable input on the moral regeneration program. The Office of the Speaker is also responsible for co-ordinating the different community volunteer and outreach programs. These programs include the Letsema (community volunteering) Campaigns and the Mayor meets the people programs. During the beginning of 2002, the Municipality organized Letsema campaigns in Itsoseng and Boikhutso (Bogatsu, 2002:15). Public amenities were cleaned through voluntary community involvement. In actual fact, following these campaigns improved infrastructure was put in place. The building of a new structure for the Itsoseng clinic in Zone 1 is an example of the positive impact of the Letsema. It appears however, that these campaigns albeit good, have not formally been built into the overall municipal system for involvement of the community.

The Municipal Systems Act directs municipalities in Section 17 (2) to develop mechanisms and procedures for receipt, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints lodged by members of the community. This is seen as another element of the public participation process. On a regular basis, petitions, memoranda of demands and complaints are received and it is expected of the Ditsobotla Municipality to have systems in place to manage these processes. The Municipality had an unpleasant experience of public demonstrations in its areas of Tlhabologang and Itsoseng since 2001. During most of these

demonstrations, a memorandum of demands was handed over to the Municipality.

Dube (2005:5) indicates that as part of the process of processing the memorandum received from the community, the Municipality convenes meetings with the drafters of the memorandum. Other activities to be carried out as part of processing the memorandum are not spelt out. Seemingly the Municipality does not have a systematic procedure, mechanisms and processes to manage petitions. This might also be the case with complaints lodged with the Municipality.

The Municipality in terms of its public participation strategy has identified the budget and the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) as some of the processes on which the public would have to participate. Dube (2005:3) indicates the extent to which the Municipality value the input of communities on the budget and the IDP. The Mayor and the municipal senior managers, on an annual basis, would develop a budget-hearing program. It is through this program that the Mayor would join the other councillors in their community meetings to present the draft budget and receive inputs from the community.

According to the operational plan for ward committees, this consultation takes place towards the end of the municipal financial year. The time decided for this outreach might be too close to the expected budget adoption council meetings and therefore there might not be adequate time to incorporate some of the inputs into the final budget.

There are many organizations in the Ditsobotla Municipality, who have an interest in the affairs of the Municipality. The Municipal Council through the Office of the Mayor convenes an annual end of the year function to present a report about major and significant developments for that specific year. Similarly, at the

beginning of the year, the Mayor would invite different organizations and prominent people in the municipality to the Official Opening of Council.

According to Bogatsu (2002:4) the opening of council is an occasion at which a reflection is made on the developmental challenges facing the municipal communities as well as presenting the developmental vision for the year. It seems however, that the feedback and input by the participants at such events is limited more so that these events are not directly related to any prior substantive engagement that would have taken place. The Municipality might have to improve on the actual community participation at these outreach activities.

6. DELEGATION OF POWERS AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The delegation of powers to the different structures and institutions of the Municipality is an important process that has been provided for in the applicable municipal legislations. The Municipality Structures Act in section 32 (1) indicates that, “a municipal council must develop a system of delegation that will maximise administrative and operational efficiency and provide for adequate checks and balances.” In accordance with that system of delegation, the municipal council may delegate to its different institutions including ward committees.

The Ditsobotla Municipality has developed a delegation system to regulate its own procedures and processes for exercising powers, functions and responsibilities. In developing the delegation system, the Municipality took into account the provision of the relevant legislations. According to the system of delegation of powers of the Municipality (Ditsobotla, 2004b:2) the objectives of delegation in the Ditsobotla Municipality are:

- To ensure maximum administrative and operational efficiency;
- To provide for adequate checks and balances;

- To delegate decision-making to the most effective level within the institution;
- To involve employees in management decisions as far as practical possible;
- To promote a sense of collective responsibility for performance;
- To assign clear duties for the management and co-ordination of administrative units, systems and mechanisms; and
- To define in precise terms the duties and responsibilities of each political structure and political office-bearer.

It can be noted from these objectives that no mention is made of any matter related to community participation. All the areas of delegation would seemingly therefore not explicitly incorporate the involvement of the community in the affairs of the municipality. Dube (2005:4) confirms the fact that there are no powers and functions formally delegated to ward committee or any structure for public participation in the Ditsobotla Municipality. The functions and duties of ward committees in the Municipality do not go beyond the broad provisions of Section 74 of the Municipal Structures Act that indicates the duties as making recommendations on matters affecting the ward to the ward councillor or through the ward councillor to the local council.

According to section 5 of the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees (SA, 2005:5) municipalities may delegate the following duties and powers to ward committees:

- to serve as an official specialised participatory structure in the municipality;
- to create formal unbiased communication channels as well as co-operative partnerships between the community and the council; and
- to serve as a mobilising agent for community action within the ward.

It seems unfortunate that the Ditsobotla Municipality has not delegated any duty or power to its ward committee. It might be that the Municipality still has to locate the role of ward committees within its overall governance system. It is also possible that there is still a lack of clarity on how ward committees would exercise the delegated powers and functions. In order to deal with the uncertainty on the extent to which ward committee can be delegated, the guidelines specifically direct that executive powers should not be delegated to members of the ward committee. The Ditsobotla Municipality might have to reconcile its delegation system with the guidelines for ward committees produced by the Department of Provincial and Local Government.

The building of capacity of the local community to enable it to participate in the affairs of a municipality is an important legislative requirement. It is further expected that capacity-building programs would also be designed for councillors and the municipal staff to foster community participation in terms of the Municipal Systems Act (32/2000). The Ditsobotla Municipality has identified community empowerment strategies for the different sectors involved in its affairs. The Municipality has provided accredited training to all members of the ward committees. Most of these training programs are done in conjunction with the Provincial Department of Developmental Local Government and Housing (Lethoko, 2005:3). It appears that even though there are programs to capacitate ward committees on public participation, other stakeholders and role players in community participation are still left behind.

7. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research is a broad concept but there is no consensus view on its definition (Hussey & Hussey, 1997:1). For Saunders *et al.* (2003:3) research is: "...something that people undertake in order to find out new things in a systematic way, thereby increasing their knowledge..."

Hussey and Hussey (1997:1) synthesise several definitions, offering the areas of agreement being that:

- Research is a process of enquiry and investigation
- Research is systematic and methodical
- Research increases knowledge.

In the light of these issues, research is the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions; and must have practical consequences, in that either the research must contain the potential for action to be taken based on the data, or illustrate the potential consequences of the research to the organisation, be it business, academic or public institution.

7.1 Design of the Study

The study conducted is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. It employs a descriptive survey research and document review. Hussey and Hussey (1997:64) assert that a descriptive survey is concerned with identifying and counting frequency of a specific population, either at one point in time or at various times for comparison.

7.1.1. *Quantitative Research Methodology*

Leedy (1993:142) describes qualitative methodology as a warm approach to the central problem of research, whereas quantitative methodology is referred to as 'cold' or 'impersonal'. The quantitative methodology tends to be objective by nature because the researcher is not personally involved in the research. A typical example is an experiment in a laboratory where all factors are contained and the outcome of the study is important irrespective of circumstantial conditions.

Quantitative methodology controls natural phenomena and uses statistical analysis to constructs and tests hypothesis against facts. The null hypothesis is the most tested.

7.1.2. *Qualitative Research Methodology*

Hussey and Hussey (1997:12) see qualitative research as an 'approach, which is more subjective in nature and involves examining and reflecting perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities'. In Leedy's (1993:140) opinion, qualitative methodology should have the following characteristics:

- Consider words as the elements of data,
- Be primarily an inductive approach to data analysis, and
- Result in theory development as an outcome of data analysis
- Be an alternative to the experimental method.

Leedy (1993:140) further argued that this methodology has been in existence since research existed but never encouraged, as it was never accepted in serious graduate research.

7.2 Sampling

According to Matshe (2005:120) the purpose of sampling is to obtain data about the population, since a sample is only a portion of the entire population. This enables one to study a portion rather than the entire population. Sampling therefore saves time, money and many other unnecessary efforts. A random sample of 25 participants (ward committee members and councillors) out of 30 from the Ditsobotla Municipality was drawn.

Random sampling involves the process of randomisation, which entails the selecting from a whole population in such a way that the characteristics of each

of the units of the sample approximate the characteristics of the total population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:643). The choice of the sampling method made was on the basis that biasness might occur if the researcher uses cynical criteria to select the sample. Thus, random sampling was adopted.

7.3 Data Collection Technique

There are different types of research methods, which can be used to collect data. The research methods used on research studies to name a few, includes among others, case study, survey, action research, experimental studies and participative enquiry. The choice on the research methods largely depends on the nature of the problem to be studied. In this study, the methods below were adopted in the process of data collection.

7.3.1. *The questionnaire*

Hussey and Hussey (1997:161) define a questionnaire as a carefully structured list of questions selected after considerable testing with a view to eliciting reliable responses from a chosen target. A total of twenty-five questionnaires, consisting of three categories to gather information on the (1) profile of the respondent, (2) approaches to public participation and (3) functionality of ward committees with 33 questions, were distributed to the participants. Of these 25 questionnaires, 20 were returned, thus resulting in an 80% return rate (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Questionnaires sent out and the returns

Questionnaires sent out	Questionnaires returned	Response rate
25	20	80%

7.3.2. Document review

Researchers supplement interviewing, questionnaires and participant observations by reviewing documented information. In addition, the documented information could be in a form of reports, meeting minutes, logs, policy statements and useful in developing an understanding of the setting or group studied (Neuman, 1997:68). In this study, official documents such as reports, meeting minutes, logs, policy statements and legislation were used. Document review was chosen as a secondary data collection instrument to supplement questionnaires, as an attempt to ensure triangulation.

7.4 Triangulation

According to Leedy (1993:140) the type of data dictates the research methodology to use. If the data is verbal, then qualitative methodology will be applied and if data is numerical, this suggests the use of quantitative methodology. Triangulation combines the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Babbie and Mouton (2001:643) assert that triangulation is a valuable research strategy because “each research method has particular strengths and weaknesses”. In this study, methodological triangulation was used. Methodological triangulation involves qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in a research study.

7.5 Reliability and Validity

Hussey and Hussey (1997:78) define reliability as being able to obtain the same results if the research were to be repeated by any researcher. Saunders *et al.* (2003: 309) approach the term slightly differently, suggesting the reliability is concerned with the consistency of the responses to the questions by

respondents. In ensuring the reliability, the questionnaire was piloted in one ward and later refined for the use of the final sample.

7.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done by means of a personal computer using a MoonStats statistical package. The computer statistical analysis looked at the trends found and differences between the wards and the participants (ward committee members and councillors). The data is presented in frequency tables with appropriate statistical analysis in Chapter 5 of the mini-dissertation.

8. CONCLUSION

This chapter highlighted the situation under which the Ditsobotla Municipality operates. The existing public participation strategies and different reports were analysed. Scientific background on research design and methodology was also presented including the theory that guides sampling. The participants used in this study were randomly selected – each element had an equal probability of being selected, irrespective of biographical details. Thus, the respondent group may be considered as being fairly representative of ward committee members and councillors of the Ditsobotla Municipality. Neuman (1997:208) holds that random samples are most likely to yield a sample that truly represents the population. In the next chapter, the findings, recommendations and conclusions of the study will be presented.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Atlee (2002:1) the involvement of communities in the affairs of municipalities has become a prerequisite for effective operation of this local sphere of government. Communities have been placed as an important defining feature of municipalities in the new democratic dispensation in South Africa. In actual fact, public participation in a democratic society is both vital and problematic. Sometimes extensive public input is sought in numerous forums only to have all their input ignored (Atlee, 2002: 2).

In order to regulate the involvement of communities in the life of municipalities, various legislations and regulations have been enacted to provide the legal framework within which public participation may take place. It was therefore necessary to conduct a scientific test of the existing views on public participation amongst the key role-players and stakeholders in the Ditsobotla Municipality. In this chapter, an overview of the research, analysis of data, summary of the important findings and recommendations will be provided.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The problem to be investigated in this study was the promotion of public participation in local government within the Ditsobotla Municipality. The objectives were to explain the phenomenon “public participation” within the context of the new system of local government in South Africa, to analyze relevant legislations and other sources regarding this phenomenon and further to

analyze existing mechanisms and systems that are in place in the Ditsobotla Municipality and lastly to recommend practical and sustainable mechanisms that can be used to enhance participation by the public in the Ditsobotla municipal area.

Chapter one of the mini-dissertation provided an orientation and conceptual framework of the study.

In this chapter an introductory overview and background to the investigation was presented.

Chapter two focused on literature review about what entails the theoretical background to the study of public participation. This chapter has provided the theoretical background to the study of public participation as well as the importance, benefits and disadvantages of this ideal. It seems the theories surrounding public participation also inform the categories, modes of participation as well as the location of any form of participation on the participation continuum. However it appears that the different public participation categories have underlying objectives that define the structure of the process.

Chapter three provided a description of the regulatory, legislative and policy framework for public participation. Public participation is a legislative obligation of municipalities. The current legislative regime appears to have created an enabling environment for the promotion of the participation of communities in the affairs of their municipalities. The legislations enacted related to local government sphere has consistently and progressively taken the ideals of participatory democracy forward. Municipalities have been provided with a legal framework within which they can develop their own policies and rules to promote the involvement of the public in their own affairs.

Chapter four generated an explanation of the existing mechanisms and systems that are in place in the Ditsobotla Municipality as well as a detailed account of the research design used in the study including the research methodology employed. This chapter has highlighted the situation under which the Ditsobotla Municipality operates. The existing public participation strategies and different reports were analysed. Scientific background on research design and methodology was also presented including the theory guiding sampling.

Chapter five tabled the analysis and interpretation of empirical data collected. In this chapter, an empirical analysis was conducted. Most of the empirical results are supported by the literature study presented in preceding chapters. The findings are presented in two ways, based on literature review and research tool.

3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

A random sample of 20 participants took part in the study. A questionnaire was used as a major tool for data gathering from the participants, i.e. councillors and ward committee members. Councillors and ward committee members were specifically chosen based on their core duties as office-bearers in the Municipality and the regular interaction with the community. Questions were structured based on their experience as office-bearers and basic functions as outlined by the legislation that included structured and semi-structured questions. Literature study was also utilized to support the empirical research and to check compliance of the Ditsobotla Municipality to existing theories, legislations and regulations regarding public participation.

The Moonstats program was utilized to process data derived from the questionnaire. The data was more focussed on the views of the councillors and ward committee members with specific reference to public participation. Frequency tables were generated to provide an analysis of the views of the

participants. The program was further used to create cross-tabulation from the frequency tables.

3.1. Analysis of Frequency Tables

Table 5.1. : Is the respondent a public office-bearer or a ward committee member?

Value	N	%	Cum. %
1	10	50.00	50.00
2	10	50.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

Table 5.1 showed the distribution of ward committees against councillors. There was a fair 50/50 balanced ratio of councillors as against ward committees of the study participants.

Table 5.2. : How long have you been elected/ appointed?

Value	N	%	Cum. %
2	2	10.00	10.00
4	18	90.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

Table 5.2 illustrates the period within which the participants were appointed/elected. A significant number of participants (90%) were appointed/elected since 2001, while only 10% did not have such an in-depth experience as they were elected at later stages. This suggests that the former might have gained enough knowledge on municipal related issues with the development of time.

Table 5.3. : What is the most important purpose of public participation initiatives in your ward?

Value	N	%	Cum. %
1	1	5.00	5.00
2	5	25.00	30.00
3	6	30.00	60.00
4	8	40.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

Table 5.3 reflected the views of the participants on the important purpose of public participation initiatives. A significant majority (70%) regarded community consultation and development as most important purpose of public participation initiatives in their wards. Only 30% believed in bringing information to the community and meeting statutory requirements as an important purpose of public participation.

Figure 5.1 What is the mechanism mostly used for public participation in your ward?



Figure 5.1 shows the opinions of the participants regarding the approaches mostly used for public participation. Community meetings seem to be the sole tool used to interact with the community. Almost 95% of participants alleged that community meetings are the primary tool for people involvement.

Figure 5.2 What is the public participation mechanism that has never been used and is important for your ward?

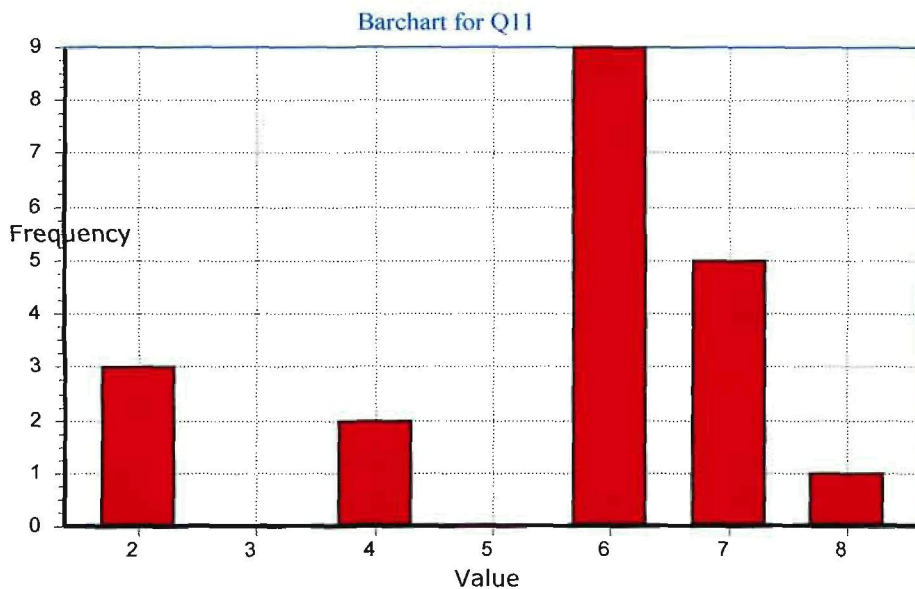


Figure 5.2 reflects on the important approach to public participation that has never been used. Majority of the respondents (70%) regarded ward forum and outreach programs as important to be put in use. Few respondents (25%) viewed conventional communications medium as important (newsletters, interactive websites and complaints/suggestion boxes). It was very much interesting to note that none of the respondents regarded petitions, marches, demonstrations and referenda as an important approach to public participation.

Figure 5.3 What is the main benefit that public participation has brought to your ward?

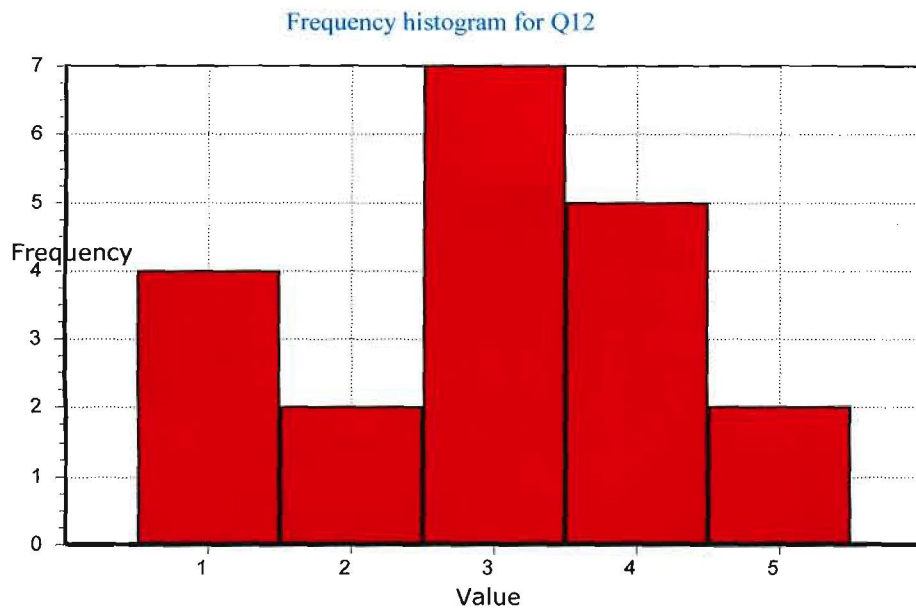


Figure 5.3 illustrated the main benefit that public participation has brought. There existed mixed feelings about the main benefit that public participation had brought into the respondents' wards. According to Figure 5.3, 35% viewed community development, 25% in favour of increased participation of interest groups, 20% was in favour of improved municipal services and 10% mentioned better decision-making and policy development. Interestingly, a very small number (10%) felt they saw no objective benefit.

Figure 5.4 What is the main challenge that public participation has created in your ward?

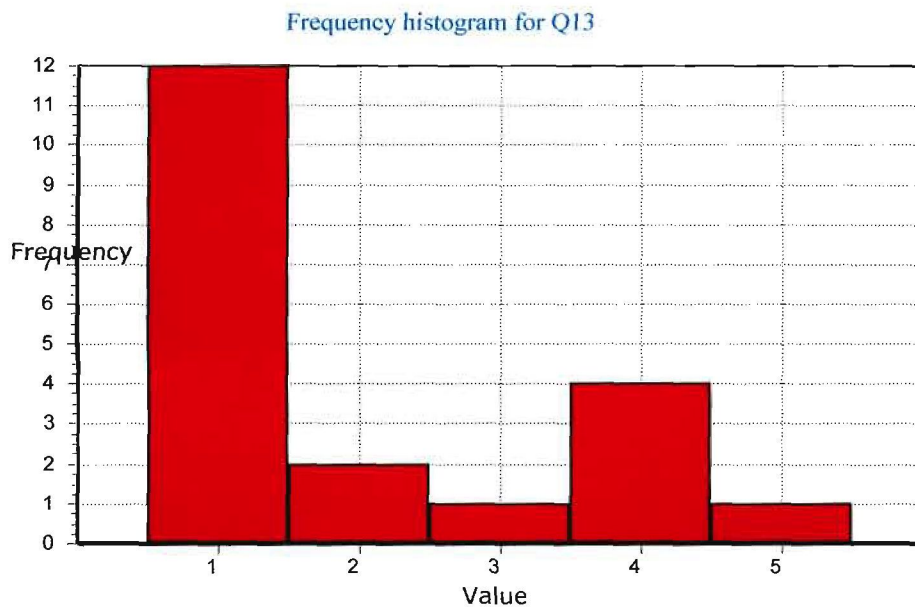


Figure 5.4 identifies the main challenge that has been created by public participation. Challenges that public participation has brought vary from one ward to another. A significant number of participants (60%) regarded the creation of expectations that the Municipality cannot meet as a major challenge brought about by public participation. About 20% identified increased negative attitudes and disregard for councillors as another challenge while 10% identified promotion of more disagreements and conflict amongst different sections of the ward. A very small number (5%) were experiencing slow down ward development.

Figure 5.5 How do you describe the impact of the promotion of public participation on the work of your municipality?

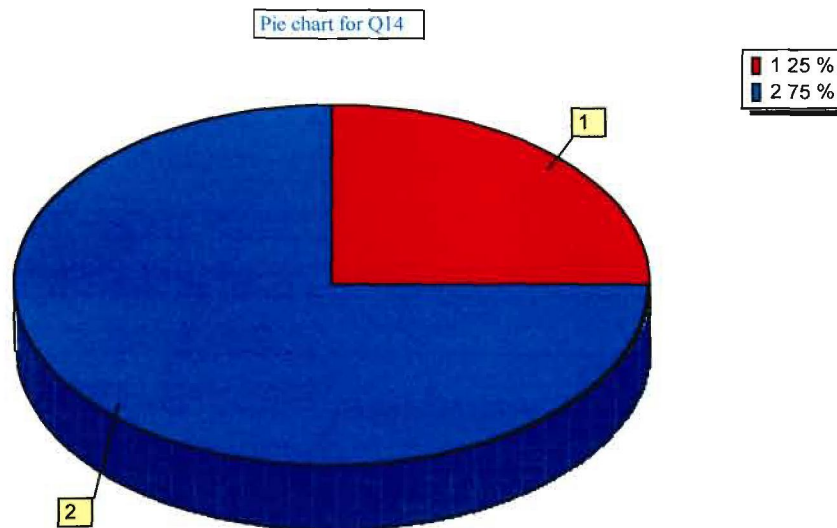


Figure 5.5 reflects on the description of the impact of the promotion of public participation on the work of the Municipality. An overwhelming majority (75%) described this impact as being more positive whereas the remaining 25% saw it as negative.

Figure 5.6 Are you aware of any capacity building and training program for public participation in the Municipality?

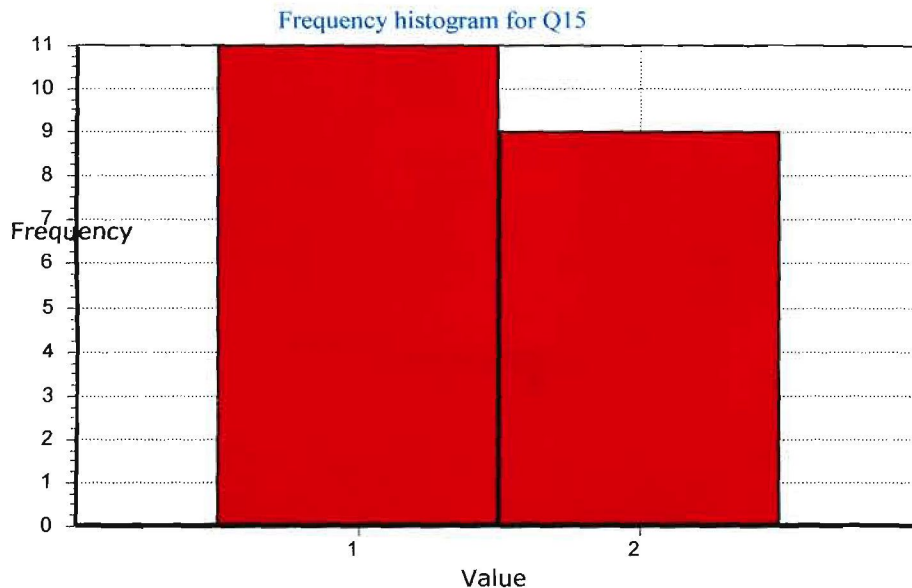


Figure 5.6 illustrates the level of awareness on capacity building and training program for public participation in the Municipality. Whereas the strategy for public participation of the Ditsobotla Municipality has identified community empowerment strategies for the different sectors involved in its affairs, the majority of the participants (55%) indicated that they are not aware of capacity building and training programs in the Municipality. It appears that even though there are programs to capacitate ward committees on public participation, other stakeholders and role players in community participation are still left behind. Only 45% of participants benefited from these programmes.

Table 5.4. : Which project implemented in the last financial year involved your ward committee?

Value	N	%	Cum. %
1	3	15.00	15.00
2	2	10.00	25.00
3	4	20.00	45.00
4	2	10.00	55.00
6	1	5.00	60.00
7	8	40.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

Table 5.10 illustrated projects implemented with the involvement of the ward committees and other structures for public participation. Infrastructure development appears to differ greatly from one ward to another. A large portion (40%) of the respondents indicated that their ward committees were never involved in projects implemented in their wards. According to Table 5.10, 30% of the main projects implemented in wards were focussed on water and sanitation, roads and other infrastructure. Also, 15% focused on electricity and health, environment, other projects respectively.

Figure 5.7 Is the system of governance in Ditsobotla accessible to the public to make their inputs?

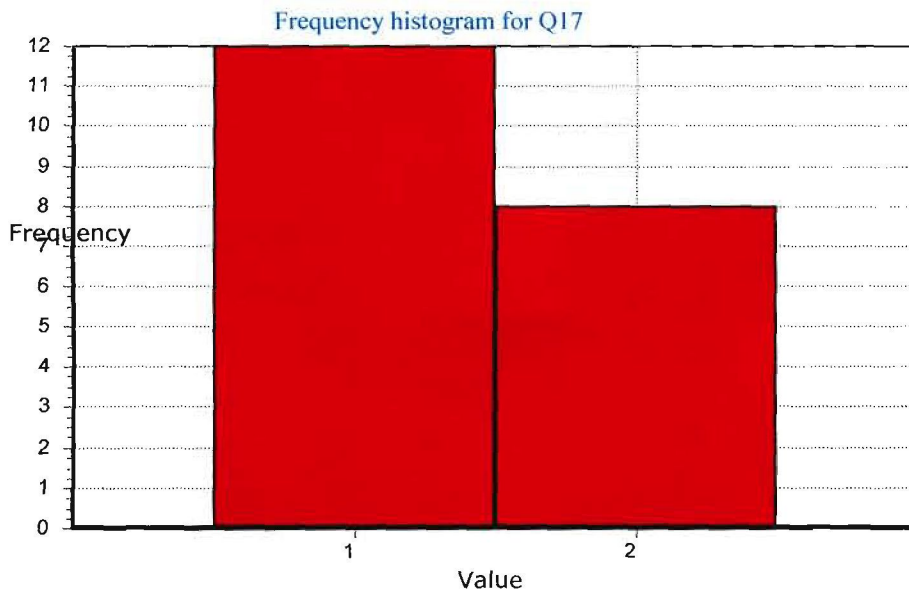


Figure 5.7 indicates the views of the participants on the accessibility of the governance systems to make their inputs. A significant number of respondents (60%) believed that the systems of governance is not accessible to the public to make their inputs. Only a comparative 40% maintained that the municipal system was accessible for public inputs.

Figure 5.8 Do you get a sense that there are efforts being made by the Municipality to promote public participation?

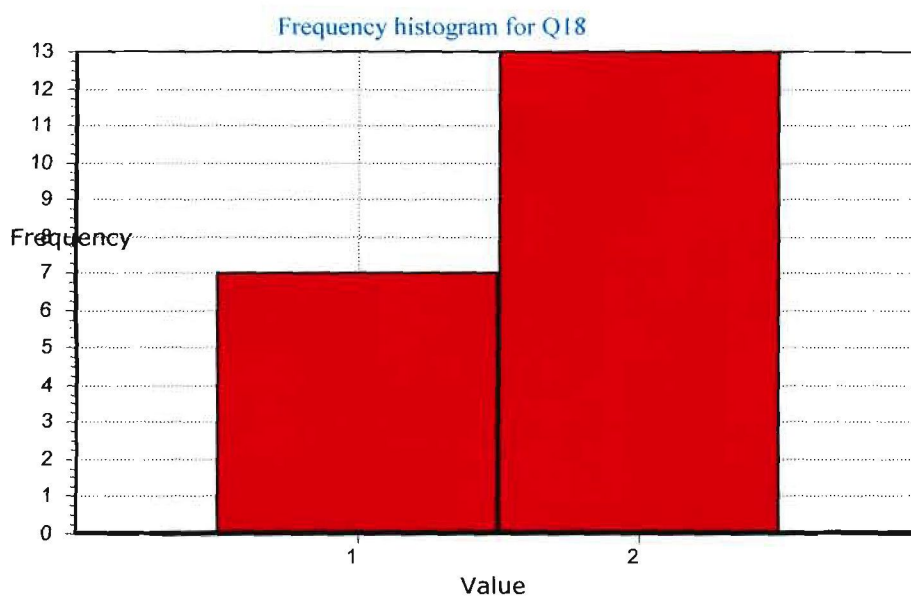


Figure 5.8 illustrates the opinions of the participants on the efforts being made by the Municipality to promote public participation. Of the respondents, 65% were of the opinion that there were efforts being made to promote public participation. 35% of participants expressed dissatisfaction on the municipal efforts regarding public participation.

Figure 5.9 How would you rate the performance of your municipality in promoting public participation?

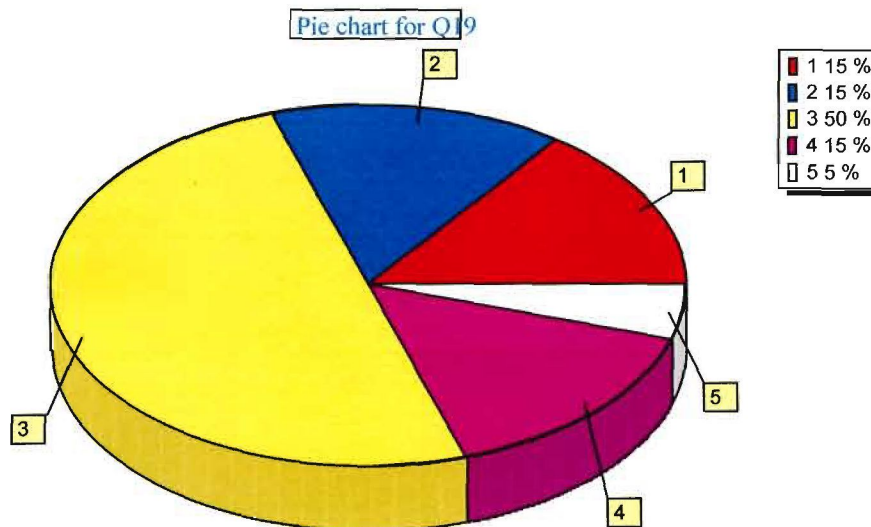


Figure 5.9 provides information on the rating of the performance of the Ditsobotla Municipality on promoting public participation. Of the respondents, 30% were satisfied with performance of the municipality in promoting public participation while 70% were not in favour of the performance on public participation.

Figure 5.10 Do you believe that a ward committee may be delegated certain powers by the municipal council?

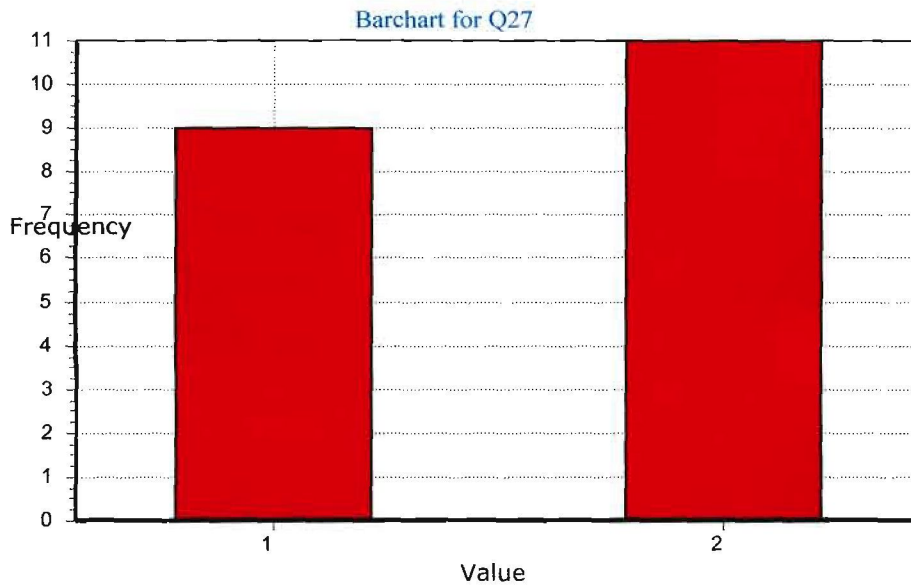


Figure 5.10 illustrates the views of the participants on whether ward committees may be delegated any powers. Of the participants, 55% liked to see certain powers being delegated to ward committees while the remaining 45% were not in favour.

Figure 5.11 What is the main problem for the functionality of your ward committee?

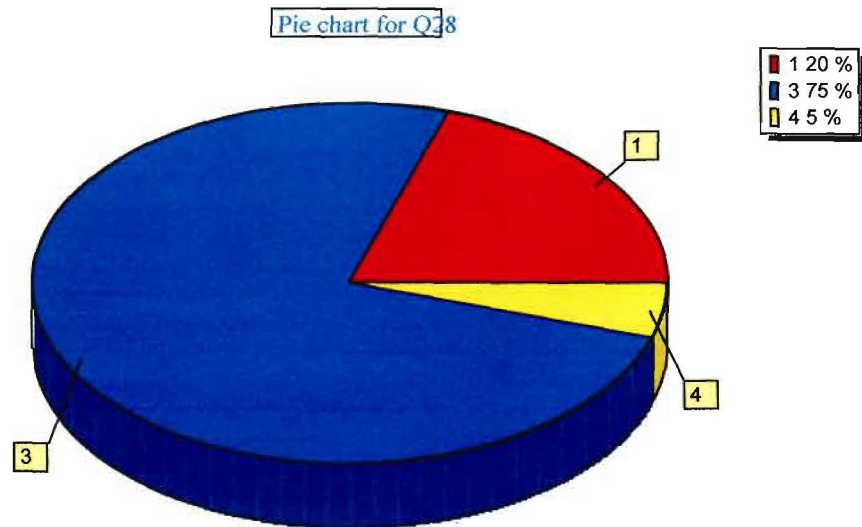


Figure 5.11 illustrates the main problem for the functionality of ward committees. According to the Speaker of the Central District Municipality (Lethoko, 2005: 3), the Ditsobotla Municipality had budgeted R 220 000, 00 for the ward committees in the municipal financial year 2005/06 and this represents a serious decline in resource allocation for structures designed to enhance public participation when compared to the previous year.

Of the respondents, 75% equally identified a lack of resources and administrative support by the Municipality while 20% had identified lack of councillor support and leadership and a small number, 5% had identified lack of municipal guidance and regulation as the main problems for the functionality of their ward committees.

Figure 5.12 Is your ward committee integrating its work with other governance participatory/ advisory structures? (CPFs, SGBs, hospital board & etc.)

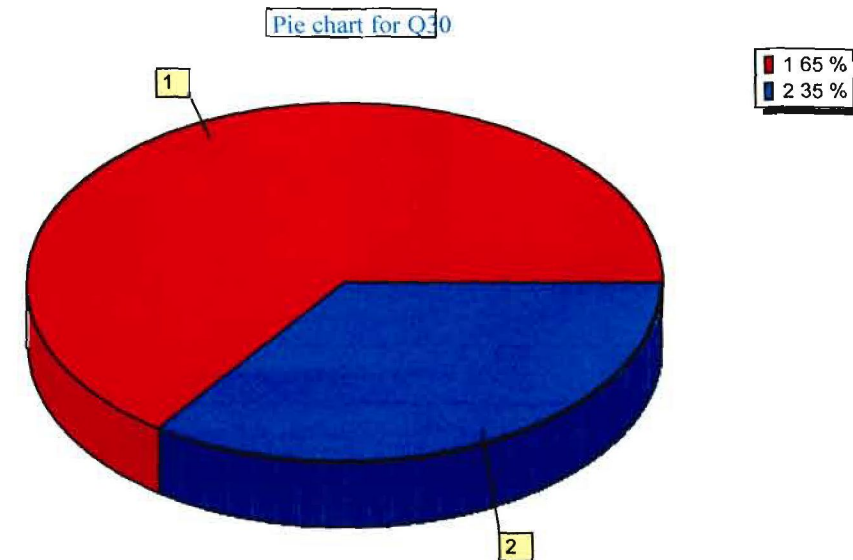


Figure 5.12 illustrates the integration of ward committee with other governance participatory/advisory structures. According to Table 5.16, 65% of the respondents reported that their ward committees were integrated into other governance structures and 35% indicated non-integration.

3.2 Analysis of Cross-Tabulation Tables

This section deals with a Pearson product-moment correlation showing the strength of the relationship between two continuous variables. It is suitable for use if it can be assumed that the variables are approximately normally distributed. The r -value indicates the strength of the correlation. An r of -1 is a perfect negative correlation, an r of 1 is a perfect positive correlation, and an r of 0 means there is no correlation. The p value indicates if the correlation is statistically significant. Given a large enough sample size (n), even a very weak correlation can be statistically significant, and given a small enough sample size even a very strong correlation may not be statistically significant.

The majority of the variables measured, in this study, are not statistically significantly correlated with the exception of Q18 and Q19; and Q20 and Q28. This research suggests that Q18 and Q19 are statistically significantly correlated at the 5% level ($r=-0.45$; $p=0.048$); and Q20 and Q28 are statistically significantly correlated at the 5% level ($r=-0.51$; $p=0.022$).

4. FINDINGS BASED ON LITERATURE REVIEW

- It has been discovered that the Ditsobotla Municipality has developed a public participation strategy document which seems to be in line with the Regulatory Guidelines on public participation.
- The study has revealed that key community participation challenges in the Ditsobotla Municipality include apathy and limited participation; limited financial and logistical resources for providing support to public participation initiatives; providing technical support to structures responsible for the facilitation of community participation; and lack of consistent mechanisms for promotion of the involvement of communities in the daily running of the municipality.
- In the case of the Ditsobotla Municipality, it has been discovered that the important objectives of public participation appear to be largely information-dissemination and defending the integrity of the Municipality rather than allowing for open- engagement and influence by the community.
- It has been discovered that in the Ditsobotla Municipality there is limited freedom of expression in public participation and hence the Municipality experiences regular public resistance, unrests and community confrontations.
- The study has revealed that the Ditsobotla Municipality is facing a challenge of developing an appropriate and acceptable working definition of stakeholders in community participation and in the process

some key stakeholders are left behind.

- It has been discovered through this study that Ditsobotla Municipality has established Ward Committees in all its 19 wards.
- Seemingly the Ditsobotla Municipality does not have a systematic procedure, mechanisms and processes in place to manage petitions and complaints lodged with the Municipality.
- The Ditsobotla Municipality has developed such a system to regulate its own procedures and processes for exercising powers, functions and responsibilities but unfortunately has not delegated any duty or power to structures for public participation.

5. FINDINGS BASED ON EMPIRICAL STUDY

- The respondents regarded community meetings, ward forums and outreach programs as the most effective tools for public participation.
- The majority (60%) of the respondents identified the creation of expectations that the Municipality cannot meet as a major challenge for public participation whilst the remaining 40% regarded increased negative attitudes and disregard for councillors as major challenges for public participation in the Ditsobotla Municipality.
- Most respondents were aware of the delegation system of the Ditsobotla Municipality and they are of the opinion that the Municipal Council may delegate certain powers to public participation structures.
- A significant number of respondents (75%) cited a lack of resources and administrative support by the Municipality as the main problem for the lack of effective functionality of ward committees and other structures for public participation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been noted through literature analysis that, despite the existence of legislative and regulatory guidelines, the Ditsobotla Municipality does not have adequate structures to promote the involvement of the public in its affairs. In instances where some work is being done to promote public participation, it is either not formalized into the municipal systems or is limited. These are important observations that would need the Ditsobotla Municipality to act upon. According to Williams (2005:4) “public participation is not a public relations exercise”. Public participation should therefore not be staged to give a picture of a government consulting with the people. The following are the key recommendations:

- The Ditsobotla Community/ Public Participation Strategy should be reviewed so that it is enriched to serve as an appropriate community participation framework.
- There should be a clear definition and determination of stakeholders and role-players in community participation for the Municipality.
- The municipal strategy should identify benefits for members of the community to be involved in municipal affairs.
- The Municipality should give more support to the structures for public participation if the culture of human rights and participatory democracy is to be built.
- The absence of other formalized platforms for the involvement of the community is quite regrettable and over and above the ward committees, the Municipality will have to formalize other systems and structures for community participation.
- A proper system of community participation should be designed that will also identify duties and functions that would be delegated to ward committees.
- There should be adequate procedures to deal with petitions and complaints.

7. CONCLUSION

The history of the Ditsobotla Municipality paints a picture of a municipal area that desperately requires fundamental transformation. This transformation will not only improve service delivery, but will bring the area on par with the rest of the country in living under systems of democracy and the rule of law. The promotion of public participation is an important ingredient for participatory democracy. As part of this study, it can be concluded that:

- The existing mechanisms and systems to promote public participation are inadequate and those that exist are not properly structured and utilized
- The efforts being made by the Ditsobotla Municipality to promote public participation are inadequate.

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**NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY:
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS**

**PROMOTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF DITSOBOTLA
MUNICIPALITY.**

**RESEARCHER: E.M.S MATSHE (M.A. in Public
Management & Governance)**

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL & GOVERNANCE STUDIES.

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: PROFILE OF RESPONDENT

1. Which area of the Ditsobotla Municipality?

ITSOENG- BODIBE-	1
LICHTENBURG- BOIKHUTSO	2
COLIGNY-ITEKENG	3

2. Is the respondent a public office bearer or a ward committee member?

Councillor	1
Ward Committee member	2

3. Is the respondent male or female?

Female	1
Male	2

START QUESTIONING HERE!

4. What is your age?

18 to 24 years	1
25 to 34 years	2
35 to 44 years	3
45 to 59 years	4
Over 60 years	5

5. Are you employed?

Yes	1
No	2

If YES please indicate your profession;

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.....

6. What is your home language?

English	1
Afrikaans	2
Setswana	3
Any other (specify)	4

7. What is your level of education?

Primary School (Grade 1 to standard 4)	1
Middle School (Standard 5 to 7)	2
High School (Standard 8 to 10)	3
Higher Education (Diploma/ degree)	4

8. How long have you been elected/ appointed?

Average	3
Bad	4
Very bad (requires immediate attention)	5

SECTION C: FUNCTIONALITY OF WARD COMMITTEES

20. How frequent are your ward committee meetings?

Weekly	1
Monthly	2
Once every two months	3
Quarterly	4
Irregular	5

21. Do you have a schedule of meetings for your ward committee?

No	1
Yes	2

22. Do members of the ward committee participate in developing the ward committee agenda?

No	1
Yes	2

23. Which system of elections did you follow for ward committee establishment?

Geographical model	1
Sectoral model	2

Combination of geographical & sectoral	3
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24. Do you have sub-committees established for your ward committee?

No	1
Yes	2

25. How frequent do you attend capacity building and training sessions for ward committees?

Every month	1
Quarterly	2
Once a year	3
Irregular	4
Never	5

26. Are you aware of the council delegation of powers and functions systems for the municipality?

No	1
Yes	2

27. Do you believe that ward committee may be delegated certain powers by the municipal council?

No	1
Yes	2

28. What is the main problem for the functionality of your ward committee?

Lack of Councillor support and leadership	1
Lack of time and poor commitment by members	2
Lack of resources and administrative support by the municipality	3
Lack of municipal guidance and regulations	4

29. Are recommendations of your ward committee included in council committees and council agenda?

No	1
Yes	2
Sometimes	3

30. Is your ward committee integrating its work with other governance participatory/ advisory structures? (CPF's, SGB's, hospital board & etc.)

Yes	1
No	2

31. When do you normally convene ward community meetings?

During the day (Monday- Thursday)	1
Evening (Monday – Thursday)	2
Fridays	3
Saturday afternoon	4
Sunday morning	5
Sunday afternoon	6

32. How often did you convene ward community meetings in the last financial year?

Every month	1
Quarterly	2
Once in six months	3
Once a year	4
Never	5

33. Are there other matters on public participation in your ward and municipality, which have not been addressed in this questionnaire that you wish to emphasise?

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.....

Thank you for your participation, we greatly value your contribution.

Less than a year	1
More than a year but less than three years	2
More than three years but less than four years	3
Since 2001	4

SECTION B: APPROACHES TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

9. What is the most important purpose of public participation initiatives in your ward?

To meet statutory requirements	1
To bring information to the community	2
To consult community	3
To develop community	4

10. What is the mechanism mostly used for public participation in your ward?

Community meetings & Izimbizo	1
Newsletters & interactive website	2
Petitions, marches and demonstrations	3
Complaints/ suggestions boxes	4
Referendum	5
Ward forum (all interest groups and organizations)	6
Others (specify)	7

11. What is the public participation mechanism that has never been used and is important for your ward?

Community meetings	1
Newsletters & interactive website	2

Petitions, marches and demonstrations	3
Complaints/ suggestions boxes	4
Referendum	5
Ward forum (all interest groups and organizations)	6
Outreach programs and Izimbizo	7
Others (specify)	8

12. What is the main benefit that public participation has brought to your ward?

Improved municipal services	1
Better decision-making and policy development	2
Community development and empowerment	3
Increased constructive participation of interest groups	4
No objective benefit	5
Others (specify)	6

13. What is the main challenge that public participation has created in your ward?

Creating expectations which the municipality cannot meet	1
Promote more disagreement and conflict amongst different sections of the ward	2
Slow down ward development and decision-making	3
Increased negative attitudes and disregard for (undermining) councillors	4
Others (specify)	5

14. How do you describe the impact of the promotion of public participation on the work of your municipality?

Negative	1
Positive	2

15. Are you aware of any capacity building and training program for public participation in the municipality?

No	1
Yes	2

16. Which project implemented in the last financial year involved your ward committee?

Electricity	1
Water and sanitation	2
Roads and other infrastructure	3
Health and Environment	4
Information technology	5
Others (specify)	6
None	7

17. Is the system of governance in Ditsobotla accessible to the public to make their inputs

No	1
Yes	2

18. Do you get a sense that there are efforts being made by the municipality to promote public participation?

No	1
Yes	2

19. How would you rate the performance of your municipality in promoting public participation?

Very good	1
Good	2

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If YES please indicate your profession;

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Once a year	4
Never	5

33. Are there other matters on public participation in your ward and municipality, which have not been addressed in this questionnaire that you wish to emphasise?

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Thank you for your participation, we greatly value your contribution.