

# The extent of participatory communication in the IDP (Integrated Development Plan) context of the Jouberton township of the Matlosana Local Municipality

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Masters* in *Communication Studies* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

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## **ABSTRACT**

Much is written on the importance of participatory communication and its role in uplifting indigent communities. As the closest government sphere to communities, local government is charged with directly improving the lives of the poor and is required by legislation to conduct Integrated Development Planning (IDP).

This requires that a municipal authority utilise participatory communication aspects such as dialogue, empowerment, and planning. These are most important pillars of community development.

However, many studies have warned that elements such as modernisation, dependency and bureaucracy need to be re-assessed and observed with caution since they have the potential to impede and limit the extent of participatory communication in community development.

These concepts serve as the basic points of departure and theoretical background underpinning this study, which is tasked with exploring the extent of participatory communication in the IDP context of Jouberton Township in the Matlosana LocalMunicipality.

In her public address on challenges facing North West Local municipalities (Including Matlosana Municipality) in January 2014, former premier, Thandi Modise, emphasised the need for municipalities to ensure that communities attend IDP meetings, approve earmarked IDP projects and be aware of how a municipality spends its budget earmarked for specific development projects.

It is evident from theory and higher echelon of government that participatory communication is seen as the most important pillar and the basis for the existence of a municipal government.

It is against this background, that this study was carried out under the assumption that the practice of participatory communication in contemporary local government only exists on paper; while in reality the public does not enjoy active participation in municipal IDP consultative frameworks. This is despite much discourse being available

in government and in academia around the importance and role of participatory communication in community development.

The study espoused a qualitative research approach to gather data and purposive sampling was used to select respondents linked to two IDP projects in Jouberton Township from the 2012/13 financial year.

Its purpose was to explore perceptions among Matlosana municipal representatives and community members in Jouberton Township on the extent of participatory communication in the IDP context. The empirical part of the study comprised of focus group and unstructured interviews, as well as participant observation.

By using a typology of participation by Anyaegbunam *et al* (2004), the study revealed that Jouberton communities are passive participators in municipal IDP consultative frameworks where they participate by just being informed about what is going to happen or has already happened and feedback is minimal.

This is opposed to a desired form of empowered participation which is highly recommended by scholars in development communication where stakeholders should be able to and are willing to participate in joint analysis, which leads to joint decision making about what should be achieved and how.

It has been discovered that there is a lack of active participation in community development in the IDP context of Matlosana Municipality and the study makes recommendations on how transformative elements of participation can be applied to improve current norms and standards in participatory communication.

### **Key Words**

Communication for social change, Development Communication, Government communication, Integrated Development Plan, Participatory Communication

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The field of communication for social change has gained momentum across the globe in the past two to three decades. International role-players such as the World Bank have had an impact on boosting interest and research in this field through the work of their Development Communication Divisions (Miller *et al.*, 2009). The approach to development communication shifted from the highly criticised “Modernisation” perspective to a more “people-oriented” ideology of participation. The modernisation paradigm was criticised for placing responsibility and blame on developing countries for under-development and being unable to reach their development goals (Mefalopulos, 2008).

Ascroft & Masilela (1994) argue in favour of a more participatory approach to development and development communication by stating that “if peasants do not control or share control of the process of their own development, there is no guarantee that it is their best interest that is being served”. This concept perceives the roles and responsibilities of development communication as a tool that impacts the lives of people whom development efforts are aimed to serve. Moreover, development communication is useful and essential as its purpose is to involve members of developing communities at all levels of a development project. Without taking this method sustainable development is not possible (Anyaeibunam *et al.*, 2004; Naidoo, 2010). The participatory approach to development communication is therefore currently being accepted as the normative approach to development communication.

Servaes (2002) defines development communication within the context of the participatory approach as “the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned”. Bafo (2006) adds to this line of argument by expressing that “participatory development communication translates into individuals being active in development programmes and processes; they contribute ideas, take initiatives and articulate their needs and their problems, while asserting their autonomy”.

Governments, especially those from developing nations, have an important contribution to the development of the country. One level of government that is particularly responsible for development efforts is the local government or municipalities. According to section 153 of the Constitution “a municipality must structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community and to promote the social and economic development of the community”(South Africa, 1996).

This view is reinforced by the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), by highlighting that “a municipality must undertake developmentally-oriented planning so as to ensure that it... gives effect to its developmental duties as required by section 153 of the Constitution; and participate in national and provincial development programmes” (South Africa, 2000).

Accordingly, all municipalities are required by the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) to develop an Integrated Development Programme (IDP) to address the specific development needs of the individuals living within these municipalities. The Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) provides municipalities with very specific guidelines of how IDPs should be developed and applied (South Africa, 2000). These guidelines are based on the principles of the participatory approach to development communication and support the notion put forward by the participatory approach that the beneficiaries of development programmes should participate in all phases of development.

The Act states that “a municipality must...encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including the preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan” (South Africa, 2000). The IDP should be developed in a manner that actively engages citizens and emphasises the importance of building capacity and allocating resources for community participation. Therefore, local government is tasked with correctly translating service delivery policies and models envisaged in the all relevant legislation.

A municipal government has “to play an important role to create structures to secure the development of communities and to make sure that communities participate in local government activities” (Leboea, 2003).

When taking account of communication for social change, the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), stipulates that each municipality has to “encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. These conditions include:

- (i) The preparation, implementation and review of its IDPs in terms of Chapter 5;
- (ii) The establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system in terms of Chapter 6;
- (iii) The monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance;
- (iv) The preparation of its budget; and strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipality services in terms of Chapter 8....” (South Africa, 2000).

The City of Matlosana is a local municipality in the Kenneth Kaunda (formerly Southern) District municipality in the North West Province of South Africa. It comprises the towns of Klerksdorp, Hartbeesfontein, Orkney and Stilfontein. Matlosana is located on the N12 highway, linking with Gauteng province in the East and Northern Cape in the South west. It has a population of more than four hundred thousand community members.

Matlosana has a history that dates before the gold rush of 1885 and has developed into a modern stable city. It boasts a vibrant economy pillared by a dynamic mining and agricultural industry which on record accounts for more than 25% of the North West Province’s GDP (South Africa, 2011). This study focuses on a township of Klerksdorp named Jouberton, specifically extension 24 of the township.

## **1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The 2012/2013 review of the Matlosana Local Municipality’s IDP document (2011-2015) acknowledges the essence of involving marginalised and previously disenfranchised communities in municipal development initiatives (South Africa, 2011). This argument supports the principles of the participatory approach to development communication, asserting that people should be in charge of their own development.

In reality, it would appear that although citizens are granted a certain level of participation at the planning phase of development projects, the work of assessing which projects the municipality will embark on in a financial year and how to monitor developments in these projects, lies solely with development managers. Thus, final decision-making on development projects is made *for* and not *with* the people.

Recently, some parts of the country have been inundated by service delivery protests, where residents angrily protested against poor access to a number of basic services, including proper supply of electricity and road infrastructure; proper water supply; housing and sanitation. One possible reason for this frustration with municipalities is that the IDPs of these municipalities do not address the specific development needs of the communities.

Williams (2006) in his critique of contemporary local government presents a strong link between lack of service delivery in local government and IDP, he argues that “it would seem that most community participation exercises in post-apartheid South Africa are largely spectator politics, where ordinary people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes, are often the objects of administrative manipulation and a miracle of reconciliation in the international arena of consensus politics whilst state functionaries of both the pre- and post-apartheid eras ensconce themselves as bureaucratic experts summoned to ‘ensure a better life for all’”.

It might as well be that Matlosana municipality relies on communication methods linked to the highly criticised “Modernisation paradigm”; these include Public Relations, Media Relations and Advertising. These methods are known to be driven by a strong reliance on media-centric theories that overemphasise media’s strong role of persuasion. This study explored the assumption that the public does not enjoy “participation” in decision-making processes at the different phases of IDP projects (when IDP projects are decided upon, planned and implemented); and communication managers in municipalities fail to apply grassroots participatory communication approaches within communities.

### **1.3. GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION**

To what extent does participatory communication occur between the stakeholders in the IDP context of the Matlosana Local Municipality, in Jouberton township?

#### **SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1.3.1. What, according to literature, are the principles of the participatory approach relevant to local government communication in South Africa?
- 1.3.2. What is the nature of communication applied Matlosana municipality within the IDP framework?
- 1.3.3. What are the perceptions regarding the nature of communication among stakeholders (the city council, the community, and ward councillors) in the Matlosana municipality and in the Jouberton township?

### **1.4. OBJECTIVES**

Having established the need to enquire the above general research question, this study is tasked with the following general research aim:

*To explore the extent to which participatory communication occurs amongst the stakeholders in the IDP context of the Matlosana Local Municipality, with specific focus on the Jouberton Township.*

This study specifically aims to:

- 1.4.1. Consult literature on the principles of the participatory approach relevant to local government communication in South Africa;
- 1.4.2. Analyse the nature of communication methods applied by Matlosana municipality communicates within the IDP framework, through participant observation; and unstructured interviews with the municipal IDP manager as well as the mayor; and
- 1.4.3. Explore the perceptions regarding the nature of communication among stakeholders (the city council, the community, and ward councillors) in the

Matlosana municipality and in the Jouberton township through interviews and focus groups.

## **1.5. POINTS OF DEPARTURE**

According to recent literature, development communication should take place within the theoretical framework of the participatory approach. This has been accepted as the normative approach to development communication (Diarra, 2006; Mefalopulos, 2008; Naidoo, 2010).

In developing countries such as South Africa, government and especially local government, has an important role to play in contributing towards development. For this reason, South African municipalities are required to develop an IDP for each municipality, which should reflect the developmental needs of people in each respective municipality.

The guidelines, as provided in legislation for developing IDPs, are in line with the basic principles of the participatory approach to development communication and state that communities should participate in all phases and aspects of the IDP process.

This however, should not be confused with political participation, as Williams (2006) warns that participatory communication in contemporary local government exists only in paper and is not practically implemented because communities attend IDP meetings to be mere passive ratifiers of projects that have been already decided upon by municipal bureaucrats.

It is argued that if the IDP process is not participatory in nature, chances are that it may not achieve its development goals as it will most likely not reflect the true needs of communities (Ascroft & Masilela, 1994; Boafo, 2006).

## **1.6. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following will serve as an overview of the literature that was consulted, as well as an exploratory start to the concepts underlying the study. The following databases have been consulted to support the study:

*Ferdinand Postma Library; Nexus; Emerald Online; Ebsco Host; Google Scholar; Pro-Quest; Sabinet; Science Direct*

A Nexus search has not indicated any similar studies. Much has been written on the subject of development communication, participation and IDP in municipal government however, there has not been a study similar to the current topic that specifically focuses on development communication and IDP within municipal government.

For example, Buys (2006), who examines the participation of a South African rural community in the global economy exclusively addresses the participation of a rural community in entrepreneurship and local economic development. The study explores the different local economic development projects undertaken by the Bakwena-ba-Mogopa, a South African rural community, and how their businesses survive from an economic perspective.

Furthermore, Mojapelo (2007), whose focus is on the effectiveness of IDP in accelerated service delivery, exclusively looks at the impact of the IDP process on service delivery to establish whether budget is aligned to the IDP. At the same time, the study also gives suggestions and recommendations on how the IDP could accelerate and improve service delivery.

Similarly, Mokone (2007), whose focus is on the effectiveness of IDP as a tool for promoting sustainable development, explores the broader functions of implementing IDP in municipal government to improve service delivery and the living standards of local communities.

Related studies have made a contribution to the body of knowledge to be utilised in this study. One example is Horak's study which explores "local government and crisis communication" (Horak, 2006).

Naidoo (2010), whose research focuses on the participatory development communication approach of Thusong service centres in Tshwane, has assisted the researcher to build a strong theoretical background for this study and to further extrapolate participatory methods. Furthermore, other studies such as Everatt *et al.* (2010); Scott (2005); Goonasekera (2009) will also supplement the researcher's attempts to build arguments and recommendations.

## **1.7. IMPORTANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

The importance of the study and its contributions lie in the exploration of the nature of participatory communication in local government, the assumptions and recommendations from that exploration that serve to improve participatory communication between local municipalities and their citizens.

## **1.8. RESEARCH METHOD**

A qualitative approach was used since the focus of the study is exploring and discovering underlying features of a phenomenon. Nieuwenhuis (2010a) notes that “qualitative research typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environment (in situ) and focusing on their meanings and interpretations”.

A qualitative approach was relevant because the study is not concerned with quantities of information acquired, but rather with descriptive explorations that comprise of different views and perspectives from different participants.

## **1.9. SAMPLING**

A purposive sampling method was used in this study. The researcher used his judgement in selecting a sample that is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic attributes of the population, with a specific purpose in mind (Maree & Pietersen, 2010).

Representatives of the City Council (Municipal mayor and manager responsible for municipal IDPs) as well as community members living within the Matlosana municipal area were selected to participate in this study.

The current communication approaches and strategies in two IDP projects set by the municipality’s IDP framework were investigated. Data collection included two focus groups from two communities and unstructured interviews conducted with the city council representatives.

Nieuwenhuis (2010b) notes that “the focus group interview strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of

responses, activating forgotten details of experiences and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information”. This enabled the researcher to draw concrete findings and conclusions that may as well be difficult to reject.

The two focus groups (with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 18 participants in each) were selected from community members that did not reside in the wards of the ward council members that had been interviewed. They were approached at random to enhance representation. At the point of saturation, each focus group comprised of 15 members; meaning that 30 community members participated in the study.

The following development projects in Matlosana Municipality’s IDP framework were explored in this study:

- The water supply to rural schools and clinics within Jouberton extension 24.
- The infrastructure for electricity supply to Jouberton extension 24: Phase2.

These projects were selected by the researcher because they constituted projects earmarked by the Municipality in the year 2012/13 financial year. The budget had allocated R2 million for each of the projects (Anon., 2012).

## **1.10. DATA COLLECTION**

The following qualitative data collection methods were used in the study:-

- Semi-structured interviews- this qualitative method enabled the researcher to generate first-hand views of key role-players involved.
- Focus groups- this data collection method focused on community members, and offered community members the opportunity to engage in discussion with the facilitator as well as each other.
- Participant Observation- through this method, the researcher was able to attend several Public Participation meetings with the municipality and was able to observe how stakeholders relate and also compile field notes.

### **1.11. DATA ANALYSIS**

In qualitative research, content analysis and thematic coding are data analysis methods ideal for exploring data collected through qualitative means. According to Nieuwenhuis (2010b), content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises message content. This approach enabled the researcher to fully understand the findings and make clear recommendations based on the true reflection of data collected.

Similarly, because “the tough intellectual work of analysis is generating categories and themes” (De Vos, 2005), the researcher generated these categories and themes by using a thematic coding method. This is “the process of reading carefully through your transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b).

### **1.12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Challenges or limitations that may affect the study include:

- **BIAS**

The researcher lives within the Matlosana Magisterial district; therefore, the researcher’s personal experiences could have influenced data collection and analysis. However, Nieuwenhuis (2010a) maintains that “qualitative studies accept researcher subjectivity as something that cannot be eliminated and see the researcher as the ‘research instrument’ in the data gathering process”.

- **ACCESS TO PARTICIPANTS**

Having to gather all respondents under one roof in order to consult focus group interviews was a limitation since they were not residing in one area. In order to overcome the challenge of accessing participants, the researcher organised meetings and planned a dates for the meetings and arranged light meals for respondents.

### 1.13. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will be conducted in two communities within the Matlosana City Council in the North-West Province.

### 1.14. PROPOSED LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters.

<b>Chapter 1</b>	This chapter provides an overview of the study, the problem statement, and the research objectives of the study.
<b>Chapter 2</b>	In this chapter, the relevant literature is discussed and the first research question is answered. It comprises an investigation into the most important premises of the participatory approach and how these premises relate to participatory development communication in municipal IDP projects
<b>Chapter 3</b>	This chapter discusses the research methods employed by this study. It explains the methods used to collect data from various sources, including focus groups, unstructured interviews and observation. Problems and obstacles that the study faced are also discussed.
<b>Chapter 4</b>	The results obtained from the data collected during the semi-structured interviews and focus groups are interpreted and discussed in this chapter.
<b>Chapter 5</b>	This last chapter draws conclusions based on the results found in Chapter 4. In addition, the general research question is answered and more conclusions are drawn. The chapter identifies the shortcomings of the study, as well as future areas of study which arise from the current study.

### 1.15 SUMMARY

This chapter gave an introduction to the main themes that will be discussed in this dissertation, namely development for social change, participatory development communication, as well as participation in local government. An explanation on business incubators as well as university incubators and their functions were

provided. A brief summary on how the research was conducted and the chapter layout of the dissertation was also provided.

The goal of this study is to explore to what extent participatory communication in the IDP context exists within the Jouberton Township and the Matlosana Local Municipality.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

*“Instead of the kingdom of abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and repression. The debt crisis, the Sahelian famine, increased poverty, malnutrition, and violence are the most pathetic signs of the failure of forty years of development”. – Escobar (1995)*

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Development Communication traces its origins to the early 1950s. This followed the massive destructions in the post-world war II era. In response international organisations and key international role players, including the United States of America and the League of Nations (later called United Nations), all sought to develop and reconstruct war-torn countries, mostly in Asia and Africa (Mefalopulos, 2008; Waisboard, 2003).

The aim was to use communication as a mechanism that would bring about social transformation and change to these countries, since they ‘inherited’ poor health systems, poverty, illiteracy and a lack of economic infrastructure. In order to overcome this, development communication or “the application of communication strategies and principles in the developing world” had to be established (Waisboard, 2003).

Waisboard (2003) maintains that the field of development communication emanated from theories of development and social change that identified the main challenges of the post-war world in terms of lack of development or progress equivalent to the Western countries. The first phase of development communication was based on a ‘modernisation paradigm’.

Mefalopulos (2008) suggests that “by the end of the 1980s, it became evident that the promises of the modernisation paradigm had not materialised and that poor peoples’ conditions across the world had failed to improve significantly”. A people-oriented paradigm, known as “participation” or participatory development communication was established. This field of development communication has

gained significant appreciation across the globe over the past three decades, particularly with the paradigm shift from the highly criticised “modernisation” perspective to a more “people-oriented” ideology of participation. The modernisation paradigm was criticised for placing “full responsibility and blame on developing countries for their conditions of underdevelopment” (Mefalopulos, 2008).

A clearer, and much more involving paradigm was created to avoid this dependency syndrome, which is referred to as participation or participatory development communication.

This chapter looks at the theoretical background of participatory development communication. The objective of the chapter is to contextualise participatory communication at local government. An in-depth discussion of previous works and related studies is also taken into account.

## **2.2. DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

At the heart of development communication and/or communication for social change, there are paradigms or traditions that have, over the years, been debated in terms of their relevance in bettering the lives of indigent communities.

The following is a historical appraisal of theories that have emerged since the early 1950s. The theories have shaped development and placed communication at the centre of development initiatives. Shortly after World War II, American President Harry S. Truman paved the way towards international development paradigms by charging developed countries and multinational agencies, with the responsibility of bringing about “growth” and “development” for underdeveloped countries (Mefalopulos, 2008).

By asserting the need to “embark on bold new programmes for making the benefit of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas”, Truman, inspired the formation of “paradigms” or traditions. The paradigms or traditions were aimed at bringing about development in

the international spectrum, with a particular interest on improving the third-world countries (Mefalopulos, 2008).

These traditions have over the years evolved and been debated upon, including: modernisation, dependency, and participation. The following is a brief discussion on each tradition.

### **2.2.1. MODERNISATION**

The origin of the modernisation paradigm can be traced to the late 1940's after World War II. The modernisation paradigm has come to mean the process by which developing countries may attain the economic and political accomplishments of the West (Agunga, 1997). According to Mefalopulos (2008) the tradition envisioned development as a challenge to bring the "underdeveloped countries" out of their conditions of poverty by modernising them and by promoting economic growth spurred by free-market approaches.

In order to achieve this, diffusion [of information] and adoption of the values, principles and models that ensured the success of the way of life in wealthier countries was critical (Mefalopulos, 2008).

Naidoo (2010) maintains that after the United States of America became the dominant power following World War II, the modernisation theory bestowed on America a special feeling as 'donor', with the rest of the world as 'recipients'. Thus, in this period development connoted the existence of a power hierarchy where the wealthy countries were perceived as possessing the power and the poor countries as being weak.

The paradigm was critiqued and viewed by other scholars as an "attempt by the rich countries to maintain a dominant position through political and economic predefined models, often ignoring local knowledge, needs, and realities in the poorest countries" (Mefalopulos, 2008). In this paradigm, concepts such as participation, dialogue, and empowerment were based on the one-way symmetrical method of communication (diffusion of information) from "donor countries" to those at the receiving end of development intervention.

The problem here, as critiqued by Latin American school of thought, is that a condition was set for poorer countries to always rely on those from the west for bail-outs and developmental aid instead of being empowered to be self-reliant. The paradigm's reliance on diffusion of information assumed that socio-economic conditions of local countries were left out. This created a responsibility for poorer countries and another form of paradigm emerged called "dependency".

### **2.2.2. DEPENDENCY**

The Latin-American school of thought provided a strong critique of the modernisation paradigm and its methods. It suggested that the modernisation paradigm creates some form of 'dependency' for "third world countries" on those from the first world. This makes it difficult for development, social change, or even social transformation to take place (Ababio, 2004; Bofofo, 2006; Mefalopulos, 2008; Heleba, 2008; Rosener, 2008; Bogopane, 2012).

Servaes (2002), stipulates that "as a result of the general intellectual 'revolution' that took place in the mid-60s, this Euro- or ethnocentric perspective on development was challenged by Latin American social scientists ,and a theory dealing with dependency and underdevelopment was born".

He argues that the Latin-American scholars were primarily concerned with the effects of dependency in peripheral countries, but implicit in their analysis was the idea that development and underdevelopment must be understood in the context of the world system.

However as a result of the changing "global" world; as well as from the fact that both paradigms were closely linked to development models of the west and the hierarchy demarcation of the first, second and third world countries. Servaes (2002) denotes that developing countries faced multi-faceted challenges.

Apart from the obvious economic and financial crisis; one could also refer to social, ideological, moral, political, ethnic, ecological, as well as security crises. In other words, the previously held dependency perspective has become more difficult to support because of the growing interdependence of regions, nations and communities in the global world (Servaes, 2002).

### 2.2.3. PARTICIPATION

Participatory approaches in development communication can be found in the early 1970s. This was as a direct consequence of people in the developing communities beginning to question the hierarchical top-down approach of development that was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s (Smith, 2003). However, problems of underdevelopment in third world countries were believed to have been caused by lack of access to information. These “different theories and strategies shared the premise that problems of development were basically rooted in lack of knowledge, consequently, interventions needed to provide people with information to change behaviour”. (Waisbord, 2003; Mefalopulos, 2008). Hence the fundamental objective in this paradigm was to ensure that development should be catalysed by media-centric theories and strategies.

Mefalopulos (2008) explained that “Because of the overestimated belief that they were extremely powerful in persuading audiences to change attitudes and behaviours, mass media was at the centre of communication initiatives that relied heavily on the traditional vertical one-way model: Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR)”.

Waisbord (2003) adds that “The goal was, therefore, to instil modern values and information through the transfer of media technology and the adoption of innovations and culture originated in the developed world”.

Moemeka (1999) argues that since the inception of development communication in the 1950s, it has been mistakenly believed that development meant adopting western cultures.

He further points out that development has, in this way, been misinterpreted to mean that developing countries should transform their underdeveloped conditions to match the living standards of people in the Western world (Moemeka, 1999).

Other scholars also argue that the root cause of failures in development projects is the lack of effective communication, improper application of empirical research and the use of the top-down or linear communication approaches often applied by development managers (Sheperd, 1998; Servaes, 2003; Mefalopulos, 2008).

On the other hand, Von Lieres (2007) argues that “despite the paucity of opportunities for citizen participation, there is evidence of grass-roots initiatives creating new interfaces between marginalised people and institutions that affect their lives, particularly those of the state”.

This assertion acknowledges the work done by the health and land affairs departments for their ground-breaking work in involving the public in the core programmes that were people-centred (in the fight against HIV and AIDS and the promotion of the Comprehensive Rural Development Program, respectively).

Further, Ascrott & Masilela (1994) argue that “if peasants do not control or share control of the process of their own development, there is no guarantee that it is their best interest that is being served”.

This concept forecasts the roles and responsibilities of development communication as a tool that impacts the lives of people whom development efforts are aimed to serve.

Development communication is useful and essential since it has a purpose to involve members of developing communities at all levels of the development project. Without it, sustainable development is not possible (Smith, 2003; Ababio, 2004; Anyaegbunam et al, 2004; Heleba, 2008; Naidoo, 2010).

Developmental change cannot come about if the social, economic, political, psychological and cultural elements of a developing community are not addressed. Hence a socio-cultural and phenomenological traditions in a development communication perspective; cautions social change communicators to “have substantial and relevant knowledge of the socio-cultural contexts of the people and of their physical environment” (Moemeka, 1999).

Although Buys’ study looks at the participation of a South African rural community in the global economy, it makes a significant observation. The study finds that “nations must ensure that local companies are, to a larger extent, owned by the local people and managed by competent hands; ensure that profits are re-invested at home rather than expatriated” (Buys, 2006).

Despite the fact that this observation is made from a business administration perspective, the fundamental principle of active participation, involvement and empowerment of the local communities is emphasised to a large extent.

To reinforce recommendations made by Mojapelo (2007) it is essential, from a socio-cultural view to note that the aspect of interaction, which is rooted in participatory development communication should be applied.

Littlejohn & Foss (2005) denote that “interaction is the process and site in which meanings, roles, rules and cultural values are worked out”.

Mokone (2007) contends that because some rural communities have little or no knowledge of the successes made by municipalities with IDPs, public participation processes need to be intensified. On the other hand, Moemeka (1999) argues that if development “serves the cause of, for example, social justice, fair play and equality or equity, it could be considered relatively advantageous”.

Hence, development communication can be used to understand how social interaction can help identify development initiatives that have the potential to benefit the society as a whole. They are likely to receive little or no resistance from local communities (Moemeka, 1999; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; Mefalopulos, 2008).

#### **2.2.4. RESEARCH ON DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

Horak (2006) recommends that municipalities should have “more strategic interaction with key publics as a component of crisis communication”. If applied well, crises such as municipal service delivery protests may be alleviated. Although the study looks at municipalities from a business communication perspective, it advances development communication, in the socio-cultural tradition, as a mechanism that will bring mutual understanding in as far as advocating for interactions between municipal government and the local communities.

Horak (2006) recommends that “ward councillors be used as crisis communication tools” by municipalities; could prove to be more detrimental to the development communication practise than helpful. This is because councillors are elected

politicians who rely on political communication to ensure that the public accepts the political mandate of a municipal government.

Various participatory communication scholars make a clear-cut statement on the need for communication managers in “social change” institutions to generate expertise on grassroots participatory approaches. This is in order to bring about direct positive change in the lives they aim to improve (Moemeka, 1999; Ababio, 2004; Boafo, 2006; Mefalopoulos, 2008; Heleba, 2008; Rosener, 2008; Naidoo, 2010).

It is against this background that Horak (2006) suggests that if ward councillors are used to strategically engage with residents, a strong political bias would not be avoidable and decisions would be made *for* the public, not *with* them.

Boafo (2006) argues that there is a need for the creation of “a participatory communication environment that not only gives room for the expression of diverse ideas on societal developmental concerns, but also facilitates grassroots-level interaction”. Contextually, horizontal flow of interaction is needed. When dealing with communication at municipal level which involves residents, all-inclusive communication methods should be applied.

They should serve to empower and be more reliant on viewpoints expressed by local communities. Hence a “more strategic interaction with key publics as a component of crisis communication” (Horak, 2006), should be rooted in the grassroots participatory communication school of thought.

Since development is a complex process, communication managers should ensure that people who are going to form part of the vital link between residents and municipal governments should be individuals with expertise on participatory development communication, especially when it comes to implementation and planning of development projects.

These should be capable of strengthening the flow of public information and opportunities for public dialogue on development policies and programmes (Boafo, 2006). Naidoo (2010), on the other hand, focuses on the participatory development communication approach of Thusong service centres in Tshwane. The study provides a strong theoretical background for this research and helps to further

extrapolate participatory methods. According to Naidoo (2010), “participatory development communication - the process by which people become the leading actors in their own development enables them to become generators of their own development as opposed to being mere recipients of external development interventions”.

In essence, participatory communication managers should be strategically placed as a link between residents and municipal governments who are well conversant with issues of development communication that are rooted on Martin Buber’s *I-THOU* and *I-IT* relationships and Paulo Freire’s Freirean dialogues. Naidoo (2010) argues that the two central meta-theoretical traditions are pivotal in the endeavour to develop grassroots communities.

To contextualise this further, Diarra (2006) sets a precondition for development communication and states that “If participatory communication is to bring about lasting change, it must give a prominent place to local knowledge”.

Similarly, Smith (2007) specifies that government needs to recognise the necessity for ‘bridging dialogue’ in order to hear the ‘voices’ of the poor and the civil society sector in both policy making and ‘delivery’.

This helps to protect and expand the public spaces in which the poor can access power and mobilise as citizens; and create a more level-playing field in which citizens can play a meaningful role as partners in development. In the same light Naidoo (2010) advises that “It should be noted that it is necessary to reassess power relationships if a development communication initiative is to be successful”.

This view suggests that the public must be afforded the opportunity and power to determine and drive development projects in their surroundings. At municipal level, development managers need to seek, through consultations, clarity from local communities on what their needs are and what development projects need to be implemented, *when, where, and how*.

## **2.3. PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION VARIABLES**

Participatory communication is characterised by several variables aimed at addressing problems identified by modernisation paradigm critiques. These include dialogue and empowerment.

### **2.3.1. DIALOGUE**

Education philosopher Paulo Freire as cited by Bartlett (2005) defines dialogue as “the encounter between [humans], mediated by the world, in order to name the world”. In this context, Bartlett (2005) maintains that dialogue is presented as a dialectical process of moving from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, where human beings in their interactions teach one another, learn from each other and in the process, discover things that were unknown to all of them.

Dialogue can also find theoretical expression in development communication. Rogers and Hart (2001) as cited by Pojman (2006), describe development communication as “social change brought about by communication research, theory and technology to increase people’s social and material advances”.

Mefalopoulos (2008) argues that “approaches linked to the participatory model, acknowledge that there can be different constructions of the same reality”. This notion offers a less constrictive view than the definition presented by Rogers and Hart, which emphasises the use of technology in development communication.

Servaes (2002), on the other hand, defines development communication as “the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned. It is thus a social process”.

Servaes (2002) further argues that development communication is a constructively shared process of involvement, negotiations and robust engagements. Where in the end, consensus is reached and development takes place with everyone involved and informed of what is to transpire next.

Miller *et al.* (2009) characterise development communication as “the use of communication to promote social development [or] the practice of systematically

applying the processes, strategies, and principles of communication to bring about positive social change”.

This paves way for Naidoo’s (2010) contention that “the participatory development process distinguishes itself from one-way communication approaches that involve disseminating messages, transmitting information, or persuading people to change their behaviour”.

Since participatory communication is also characterised by extensive interpersonal communication and knowledge-sharing, participants should be viewed as equals in a development project. Therefore, participatory development communication is inherently 'transactional'. (Boafo, 2006; Buys, 2006; Horak, 2006; Mefalopulos, 2008; Mojapelo, 2007; Naidoo, 2010).

Tshabalala and Lombard (2009) argue that for meaningful participation to take place in a municipality, procedures for democratic decision-making should be created at the local sphere in order to enable the community to engage in and contribute towards decisions affecting them”.

Ababio (2004) upholds a notion that community participation legitimises a local authority by making it acceptable to the municipal community. He also believes that “for community participation to be possible, municipalities must develop and provide strategies that will continually engage residents who may be ratepayers, businesses and residents” (Ababio, 2004).

According to Tshabalala and Lombard (2009), elements that reflect community participation in local government should include “needs identification and prioritisation strategies to define and agree on a local vision; project design, integration with other programs and adoption of IDP”.

Here, it is suggested that the whole aim of community participation is to “re-direct municipalities away from the silo approach of only upgrading physical infrastructure to one that addresses community needs in an integrated manner”.

### **2.3.2. EMPOWERMENT**

Ababio (2004) further maintains that “no local authority can effectively make a meaningful and productive contribution to improve the standards of living of its community without the necessary support and commitment of its community”.

It is against this background that Tshabalala and Lombard (2009) stipulate that “community participation is a means of empowering people by creating the spaces for them to engage in developing their skills and abilities to negotiate their needs in the face of forces that often appear to obstruct and discourage them”.

Moreover, participation at local government level also seeks to ensure “community solidarity since the community feels involved in matters affecting and relevant to their welfare, thereby creating civic pride”.

However, it is impossible for community participation to take place if self-imposed bureaucracy is applied. Hence Ababio (2004) sustains that “regular consultation is imperative in ensuring that all the policies and developmental projects undertaken by local authorities are easily accepted by the community”.

Although meaningful community participation is indispensable for a viable local government, it can be a challenge for its consultative process to integrate decision-making since communities are not homogenous. As such, it is difficult for community members to reach agreements on aspects of needs and vision and ways to improve them (Tshabalala & Lombard, 2009; Ababio, 2004).

Therefore, power, control and empowerment are critical influential factors of community participation in the IDP process. Although local government should not be bureaucratic and should empower the local community members in IDP projects, there should also be limitations to the “power” afforded to communities in decision-making processes.

Clapper (1996) argues that “low levels of citizen participation are a reality and unless people have the necessary motivation and resources to use, participation will remain low”. Over and above all, communication methods used in participatory development communication should accommodate multiple opinions as ‘different constructions of the same reality’ in an attempt to detect issues that might hinder the development process.

Bafo (2006) maintains that “participatory development communication translates into individuals being active in development programs and processes; they contribute ideas, take initiative, articulate their needs and problems while asserting their autonomy”.

However, Clapper (1996) warns that most citizen participation activities do not necessarily lead to greater participation and therefore citizens must be mobilised into fully participating, especially in the decision-making municipal IDP processes. Mojapelo (2007) notes that public participation is “an act of taking or sharing information in the planning process, meaning that information shared will give all affected parties an opportunity to have a say or make decisions in the matter.”

Essentially, methods in participatory communication need to border around levels of participation and elements of communication that promote constructivism. Anyaegbunam et al (2004), describe these levels in a typology of participation in development initiatives:

- Passive participation- stakeholders participate by being informed about what is going to happen or has already happened, and feedback is minimal.
- Participation by consultation- stakeholders participate by providing feedback to questions posed by outside researchers or experts. However, this consultative process keeps all the decision-making power in the hands of external professionals.
- Functional participation- stakeholders take part in discussions and analysis of predetermined objectives set by the project. While this kind of participation does not usually result in dramatic changes on “what” objectives are to be achieved, it does provide valuable input into “how” to achieve them.
- Empowered participation- stakeholders are willing and able to be part of the process and participate in joint analysis, which leads to joint decision making about what should be achieved and how.

When conducting public participatory consultative sessions in the IDP, a municipality needs to apply the above theory which underpins participatory development communication, so as to achieve the mandate of accelerated service delivery to the marginalised societies (Naidoo, 2010; Smith, 2003; Mefalopulos, 2008, Tshabalala and Lombard, 2009; Ababio, 2004; Boafo, 2006; Rosener, 2008). Similarly, participatory communication from a constructivist perspective is a process characterised by expensive interpersonal communication and knowledge-sharing (Littlejohn and Foss, 2005).

Here, participants are viewed as equals in a development project and therefore, the methods used in this process should accommodate multiple opinions. Simultaneously socio-cultural elements are investigated in an attempt to detect issues that might hinder the development process and ensure that there is little or no resistance from local communities (Moemeka, 1999; Mefalopulos, 2008; Mojapelo, 2007; Naidoo, 2010).

### **2.3.3. Participation**

Williams (2006) provides a strong critique of “community participation” in local government from pre-to-post apartheid South Africa. He notes that “Informed discussions and rational debates on the merits and demerits of specific planning programmes are literally non-existent, even though ‘community participation’ features as a key component of planning programmes at the local government level”.

This is also the case observed by various scholars, in their assessments of participatory communication in local government (Smith, 2003; Ababio, 2004; Horak, 2006; Mokone, 2007; Mefalopulos, 2008; Rosener, 2008; Tshabalala and Lombard, 2009; Naidoo, 2010)

Williams (2006) also observes that, in most cases, development managers in municipal government seem to be “determined to impose their own truncated version and understanding of ‘community participation’ on particular communities”. Instead of affording the previously marginalised citizens an opportunity to guide the public participation processes through a more strategic and balanced participatory approach.

Notwithstanding that the positive contributions of the concept of diffusion are still useful in enhancing public participation in development initiatives. Print, broadcast, electronic media and 'traditional' media can help shift the focus of media's previously misconceived purpose of using persuasion as the main variable to influence behaviour and attitude of individuals in development initiatives (Mefalopoulos, 2008). Furthermore, Msibi & Penzhorn (2010) argue that that stem from participatory communication include:

- Power and control- within the framework of development, participation means strengthening the power of the deprived majority and more equitable sharing of both political and economic power.
- Liberation- as people achieve the ability to determine the course of their own lives, the confidence gained in the process is in itself liberating.
- Participation as a learning process- in participation, people are given the opportunity to set their own goals and make their own decisions, wakening people's latent abilities by offering them choices to enable them to fully develop their potential.
- Self-reliance and self-confidence- participation explicitly addresses the aim of developing esteem and self-confidence, providing a context for the recognition of people's knowledge and abilities and this sense of self-confidence is in itself empowering.
- Knowledge sharing- Through setting the stage for dialogue, participation and the use of indigenous knowledge modifies the position of knowledge systems and creation dominating academia, and knowledge generation, acquisition and sharing become reciprocal processes where people can learn more from each other.
- Honesty, trust and commitment- participation means listening to what others have to say, respecting the counterpart's attitude, and having mutual trust.

Various scholars (Mojapelo, 2007; Mefalopulos, 2008; Naidoo, 2010) also support this assertion and believe that the public will only enjoy participation if they are afforded the opportunity to actively participate without decisions on development projects being made for them.

#### **2.3.4. Dependency**

The IDP is meant to provide a demand-driven approach to delivery where citizens map out and prioritize their needs which should feed into local planning, budgeting and ensure a close match between supply and demand (Everatt *et al*, 2010).

In essence, the fundamental legal framework of municipal government is that they “must adopt inclusive approaches to fostering community participation, including strategies aimed at removing obstacles to, and actively encourage the participation of marginalised groups in local community initiatives” (Tapscott, 2007).

This, according to Cash & Swatuk (2010) can only be achieved through an Integrated Development Plan because it promotes an integrated, participatory approach where all sectors and affected individuals are legally consulted.

However, although the legal framework of government seeks to promote participatory governance, Tapscott (2007) maintains that “despite the best intentions of legislators and policymakers, it is evident that the majority of municipalities have thus far failed to give effect to the principles of Batho Pele and participatory democracy.

This is contextualised by Williams (2006) who stated that community participation is often managed by a host of consulting agencies on behalf of pre-designed, party-directed planning programmes and is quite clearly not fostered to empower local communities.

Over the years, public frustration with what are perceived to be meaningless exercises in participation through ward committees and public meetings has been steadily growing (Tapscott, 2007).

Leboea (2003) also notes that through the active participation of all stakeholders in the IDP process, decisions are made in a democratic and transparent manner. The community is involved and kept informed on developments.

There is a disconnect between what many officials want in terms of input to the IDP process as a local governance strategy, and what local citizens see as the point of participating, which is to ensure specific service delivery in their environment (Everatt *et al*, 2010).

Ababio (2009) also observes that “municipal councillors and officials cannot, on their own, ensure that effective services will be delivered. This is because it is the members of the community who are at the forefront of receiving municipal services, making them more aware of the impact of these services in their lives”.

After observing the complexities and the difficulties entailed in meeting the demands of the participatory processes experienced in the compilation of IDPs, Williams (2006) believes that this difficulty is attributed by various causes.

These include “a lack of experience with participation in municipal governance; the often complex technical issues involved in planning and municipal budgeting; a lack of resources at local level; a lack of capacity among elected officials and senior local council staff and sometimes the problematic relations between elected councillors and participatory structures in the former African townships”.

There can never be development in municipal government if there is little or no participation of locals in IDP projects.

Khan & Haupt (2006) in their study on the importance of community participation in infrastructure delivery, maintain that community participation: “must be acknowledged as a voluntary process that influences the direction and execution of community development projects in contrast to communities merely being told of or just receiving project benefits”.

Various scholars believe that ward committee systems are the fundamental components of ensuring that there is active participation by communities in municipal development projects, which are mandated by IDP processes (Leboea, 2003; Smith, 2007; Heleba, 2008).

Heleba (2008) argues that “ward committees are seen as a vehicle for deepening local democracy and an instrument for establishing a vibrant and involved citizenry”. Bogopane (2012) warns that “the utilisation of ward committees as an effective tool

for improving democratic participatory development process must not be compromised in any way”.

By stating that “participatory communication and development structures within the municipality are sensitive to the representation of the marginalised in the development process”; Msibi & Penzorn (2010) are maintaining that ward committee systems should categorise and incorporate all stakeholder groups in ensuring that there is wide participation across all facets of communities.

They further maintain that “ward committee and stakeholder forums that exist within the community are representative of groups that include the women’s associations, the youth, disabled persons, traditional leaders and many others”(Msibi & Penzorn, 2010).

In agreement, Bogopane (2012) maintains that “active participation of ordinary people in their own development, community social learning, and community empowerment all constitute the building-blocks of development”.

He further argues that “transparent deliberations result in a much wider range of possible judgements regarding desirable strategy options, as well as more effective means of bringing together a range of stakeholders in ways that are fair, transparent, and legitimate” (Bogopane, 2012).

Rosener (2008) suggests that there is a way in which citizen participation can be measured in this study. She proposes that evaluation research or a “scientific process which attempts to control as much as possible for the intrinsic subjectivity of the evaluative process” serves as a methodological process which can be used to measure the effectiveness of community participation.

Here, it is proposed that in order to evaluate citizen participation, it should firstly be determined “whether or not a participation program or activity is perceived as an end in itself (participation for participation’s sake), or as a means to an end (as contributing to the achievement of some goal), or a combination of both” (Rosener, 2008).

The suggestion gives out a detailed method of measuring this participation by establishing demographics, psychographics and socio-graphics of participation, the

number and frequency of their participation in community projects. Although Rosener's (2008) proposal attempts to answer an age old question of whether the effectiveness of community participation can be measured, its objectives and method of doing so are ambitious as it assumes that there is a one-size-fits-all approach towards measuring community participation.

Should, from a local government perspective, this method be applied, the time spent assessing how many people are attending IDP processes and how frequently they attend these processes would end up limiting the intentions of development communication "as an end in itself". This is because no real engagement and decision-making processes would take place.

Contextually, Von Lieres (2007) argues that "while there is much evidence in South Africa of discourses in participation and active citizenship that build on the traditions of a liberal democracy, there is also growing evidence of a widening gap between legal assurances of participation and the actual inclusion of poor citizens in democratic processes".

This means that the "effectiveness" of community participation, as suggested by Rosener (2008), is impossible to measure, especially given the political, social and economic influences that are unique from one community to another.

This notion, resembling the complexity of measuring effectiveness of participation can best be countered by Von Lieres (2007) stating that "In post-apartheid South Africa, rural citizens are bearers of rights which involve little, if any, meaningful inclusion in the local decision-making processes".

### **2.3.5. Power and control**

Leboea (2003) however agrees with some scholars such as Clapper (2000) and Ababio (2004) that there is less participation by communities in local government. He states that "satisfaction of community needs can hardly be accomplished at a satisfactory or tolerable level without the active involvement of the people in decision making at all levels in IDP processes".

Ababio (2004), on the other hand, attributes “lack of education and civic apathy, lack of public accountability, community disillusionment with local government, lack of ethical conduct and perceived corruption”; as some of the various reasons why the public does not fully participate in municipal processes, such as IDP.

Brynard (1996), however, believes that mere participation and involvement “cannot be considered a panacea for all the ills of society, it is simply a change in process”. He further argues that, “through this change in process however, participation advocates acclaim that changes will occur in the distribution of power in society, in the attitudes of citizens towards their government and in the type of policies produced by the government” (Brynard, 1996).

This view is also fully supported by Leboea (2003) who states that “development of any community is tantamount to active participation of the people”. While Clapper (1996) contends that in reality “government will favour citizen participation activities that do not disturb, but rather support government goals. Any participation that threatens to thwart government ideas and transfer authority to citizens is actively discouraged”.

Moreover, Ababio (2004) warns that “a shortcoming of community participation is that it can take the form of self-serving actions leading to clashes in the diversity of interests within the community”.

Clapper (1996) concurs with this fact, arguing that citizen participation has a disadvantage in that, from a government perspective, “citizens are expected to be docile and are regarded as mere ratifiers of government plans”.

As an intervention to these challenges, Leboea (2003) maintains that “participation and capacity building of the communities remain salient ingredients for the creation of a development-orientated society. People are capable of leading their own change processes. They can be the real actors and not merely the subjects of change”.

Therefore, it is in the best interest of ordinary citizenry that they:

- (1) Be included in equal and fair interpersonal engagements and their views be heard on how they believe their livelihoods can be improved;

(2) Be informed on just how the proposed development projects will make their lives better-

(3) Be involved in the development initiatives undertaken in their areas- job creation or local economic development.

Furthermore, civil society participation can also enhance understanding of the impact of policy, programmes and promotes the development of priorities.

It is through interaction with the public that a local authority can discover what citizens expect from their local government, areas where implementation of policy and programmes are inadequate thereby promote development of priorities.

All these aspects form part and parcel of development communication or what participatory communication seeks to address at a theoretical and practical level.

### **2.3.6. Modernisation**

The 2012/2013 review of the Matlosana Local Municipality's integrated development plan document (2011-2015) acknowledges the essence of involving marginalised and previously disenfranchised communities in municipal development initiatives.

It could be argued that by highlighting the unjust and intolerant practices of the former apartheid government, the IDP reflects the need for decision-making in local government to be a shared process that is characterised by involvement and not as a process made for the people.

When highlighting the objects of IDP in participatory development communication, Mojapelo (2007) maintains that "developmental local government will promote the active participation of local communities in decision-making through community participation in the budgeting process, assembling municipal development priorities through the IDP process and monitoring the municipalities".

This view reinforces the concept explored by Everatt *et al.* (2010) that participation is the cornerstone of sustainable development and that of the rights-based approach to development.

In order to ensure sustainability in IDP frameworks, Mokone (2007) argues that a municipality should ensure that its participatory processes include representatives from all sectors, stakeholders and experts concerned with the cross-cutting issues of poverty, gender equity, environment and Local Economic Development (LED).

In a democratic South Africa local government is charged with directly addressing developmental needs of local communities while maximising participation of all locals, especially the rural poor, on socio-economic and developmental issues within their municipal areas (Williams, 2006).

Local economic development, direct access to healthcare, free education and access to basic needs and services such as sanitation, electricity and shelter are some of the main tasks and issues that local government is charged with addressing as far as development is concerned (Leboea, 2003; Mokone, 2007)

However, Mojapelo (2007) also notes that there is a “huge potential for conflict among administration and community members”. The approach used in the many public participation frameworks “support the goals of local municipal management” as disadvantages of public participation in local government.

These, together with “non-conductive attitudes of local municipal managers to community participation” and “lack of government response” provides a broad assumption that municipal government are not capacitated to properly implement participatory development communication, which is strategically aligned to IDP frameworks in local government (Mojapelo, 2007).

On the other hand, Scott (2005) recommends that a municipal IDP has to apply the Multi-criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) approach which is about juxtaposing “together stakeholders who fall into three broad groups: the communities who live in the municipal area, municipal officials and the elected local politicians”.

The MCDA model however, places the responsibility of final decision-making on the shoulders of development managers at local government level.

Although citizens are granted a certain level of participation at the planning phase of development projects, the work of assessing which projects the municipality will embark on in a financial year and how to keep track of developments in these

projects lies solely on these development managers. Thus, the final decisions on development projects are made *for* and not *with* the people.

Williams (2006), on the other hand, argues that most community participation exercises in post-apartheid South Africa are largely spectator politics where ordinary people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes. They are often the objects of administrative manipulation and a miracle of reconciliation in the international arena of consensus politics whilst state functionaries of both the pre- and post-apartheid eras entrench themselves as bureaucratic experts summoned to 'ensure a better life for all'.

Issues of power and control, as highlighted by Naidoo (2010), become central arguments. Local communities are merely stakeholders that do not actively participate.

Their participation is merely 'passive'. Reflecting the type of participation where according to Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004), stakeholders participate by being informed about what is going to happen or has already happened and feedback is minimal. This whole process keeps all the decision-making power in the hands of development managers and the public is not empowered to make significant inputs.

According to Williams (2006), the very concept of community participation has been largely reduced to a cumbersome ritual, a necessary appendix required by the various laws and policies operating at local government level.

Therefore, it is essential to note, as it is believed by various scholars (Leboea, 2003; Ababio, 2004; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; Williams, 2006; Mokone, 2007; Mefalopulos, 2008), that in municipal governments, requirements for participatory development communication should focus on achieving the following:

- Participatory communication should be about changing behaviour and attitudes of individuals within communities and therefore transform local communities;
- If access to information on development projects in the IDP frameworks is granted to the rural communities, the process should empower the poor such

that they will be able to use the information to transform their own lives and thereby enhance their relationship with the municipality, and lastly;

- Socio-cultural elements of local communities should be “studied” by development managers in the municipal government to uncover underlying issues that may hinder the development process so as to resolve these.

### **2.3.7. Planning**

A developmental local government is one that commits itself 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.

A municipal government has “to play an important role to create structures to secure the development of communities and to make sure that communities participate in local government activities” (Leboea, 2003).

These views are also entrenched in the objectives set out in the Millennium Development Goals, policies and all legislative frameworks adopted by the democratic South African government in a post-apartheid era; the South African constitution and the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter stipulates that: “... no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people... The people shall govern!” (South Africa, 1996; Municipal Systems Act, 2000; Anon, 2011).

When looking at communication for social change, the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), stipulates that each municipality has to serve a purpose to “encourage and create conditions, for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. These affairs include:

- (i) The preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan in terms of Chapter 5;
- (ii) The establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system in terms of Chapter 6;

- (iii) The monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance;
- (iv) The preparation of its budget; and strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipality services in terms of Chapter 8....” (South Africa, 2000).

Leboea (2003) highlights a perspective that “the promotion of democratic and accountable government for local communities” is one of the fundamental objectives of a municipal government. In agreement Bogopane (2012) states that “local government plays a major role in providing basic services as a prerequisite for maintaining and enhancing a reasonable and acceptable standard of living”.

The Constitution defines the following as objectives of local government:

- To provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- To promote social and economic development;
- To promote a safe and healthy environment, and
- To encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of the local government (Constitution of the RSA, Act 108 of 1996).

Public and community involvement are key in setting a benchmark for a municipality to meet community needs. A municipality is also required by legislation to assess its performance and capacity (annually) in achieving the above objectives as stated in the Constitution.

This notion can further be deconstructed to imply that since a municipal government is “considered to be the closest level to the people, it is the level of government that is expected to develop and improve the well-being of previously disadvantaged communities” Leboea (2003).

## **2.4. PHENOMENOLOGY AND SOCIO-CULTURALISM**

The two meta-theoretical traditions provide the fundamental and dynamic views of looking at the theoretical structure of participatory perspectives in the domain of communication for social change. They set the basis for understanding the theoretical constructs of participation, the dynamics involved in the process and offer mechanisms on how to view participatory development communication in the context of local government. Because IDP is a process that relies on the involvement of various stakeholders (residents, ratepayers, businesses, NGO's and municipalities), there are conflicting issues that, to a large extent, affect its success, endorsement and ultimate execution.

Language, creation of meaning, cultural homogeneity or heterogeneity, empowerment and bureaucracy are issues that serve as a yardstick in determining if participation in IDP processes is successful and mutually beneficial.

According to Littlejohn & Foss (2005), the phenomenological tradition concentrates on the conscious experience of the person and assumes that people actively interpret their experience and come to understand the world through their personal experiences with it.

This perspective assumes that communities can only know about the fruits of a municipal project if they actively participate in its IDP process in a quest to gain experience in it.

Although phenomenological tradition varies in three sub-branches, namely, classical phenomenology, phenomenology of perception, and hermeneutic phenomenology; its basic philosophy is that "the process of interpretation is the most central phenomenological thought" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005).

On the other hand, the socio-cultural tradition juxtaposes behaviour, cognition and biological aspects of a collective, which are central to the creation and interpretation or reality.

Littlejohn & Foss (2005), state that the tradition "focuses on patterns of interaction between people, instead of individual characteristics or mental models". It assumes

that “interaction is the process and site in which, meanings, roles, rules, and cultural values are worked out” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005).

Hilliard (1996) understands contemporary local government, as an institution which, “with all its intricacies, devolves democracy to the lowest level in governmental hierarchy”. When it comes to execution of this democracy, Thompson (2007) argues that “the success of public participation much depends on the actual basis for the participatory process in question”.

From a socio-cultural viewpoint, the process must be engaging and the participants must strive for consensus in order for this success to be seen. However, phenomenologists would argue that the individual interpretation of the participatory process is essential in ensuring that they, individually buy-in to the process’s vision because if they don’t, there is no way the process can succeed.

Phenomenological and socio-cultural traditions are complementary in nature when exploring public participation at municipal IDP level; both traditions can make strides in accommodating perceptions of various stakeholders involved.

In Thompson’s (2007) analysis of a public participatory process on environmental policies, it is assumed that there are four determining factors that serve as “useful pointers to the ways in which groups interact within formally invited spaces”. In them, the elements of empowerment versus control and bureaucracy are assessed and scrutinised:-

- How do civil society groupings, in particular the poor and excluded, become meaningfully involved in government institutional spaces?
- On what *basis* do people enter this sphere, and what is the nature of their representation?
- *Why* are they invited to participate?
- What does it take for these groups (especially those usually excluded) to have any *influence* over actual decision-making?

Through this analysis Thompson (2007) argues that these four dilemmas of participation vividly highlight both the dangers and the potential for the public participatory processes, in terms of the stress which each dilemma brings to bear on the normative and prescriptive elements, embedded in the notion of participatory governance.

However, Williams (2006) argues that indeed, community participation is often managed by a host of consulting agencies on behalf of pre-designed, party-directed planning programmes and is quite clearly not fostered to empower local communities. Williams (2006) further contends that participatory modes of governance and decision-making are profoundly influenced, if not shaped, by the contradictions, tensions, conflicts and struggles straddling not merely the political relations of power but also the economic and ideological apparatus at local level.

## **2.5. SUMMARY**

The above discussion of theories, review of literature, meta-theory and extensive research on the field of development communication, charted the way forward for an investigation into the role of community participation in IDP processes of municipalities. We are now going to discuss the methodology appropriate for this study on the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS

*“Social inquiry is a distinctive praxis, a kind of activity (like teaching) that in the doing, transforms the very theory and aims that guide it”.- Schwandt (2000)*

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, research methods for this study are discussed. Literature is consulted and motivations for the use of a specific research paradigm are given. The chapter goes on to explain the reasons and motivation behind the methodology used, as well as the way in which the study was conducted. It also incorporates data analysis methods that were used.

The research design is based on the use of qualitative methodologies, which relate to the general research aim of the study. In other words, to explore the extent to which participatory communication occurs between the stakeholders in the IDP-context of the Matlosana Local Municipality.

Huberman & Miles (2002) contend that when qualitative researchers “spend more pages explaining why they will not deploy particular methods rather than on describing their own conceptual and analytic moves, they leave behind too few footprints to allow others to judge the utility of the work, and profit from it”.

Against this background, this chapter concentrates on qualitative research, with the objective of exploring and detailing the interpretivist paradigm of the methodology in line with the study’s objectives and goals.

Schwandt (2000) denotes that according to the “interpretivist point of view, what distinguishes human (social) action from the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful”. This means that meaning from human action is a central variable that can enable us to make sense of the general construct of life and how things around us are structured.

Contextually, just because a group of community members welcome a mayor’s call to gather at an IDP meeting, does not mean that they welcome the municipality’s

imposition of IDP projects that will be presented to them. On the other hand, just because a group of disgruntled community members burn clinics and community halls during violent service delivery protests does not mean that they do not need these services anymore. Hence Schwandt (2000) argues that “to understand a particular social action (such as friendship, voting, marrying, teaching), the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action”.

Although research methods and concepts were outlined in chapter 1, this chapter discusses them in more detail in order to explicate the research intentions. The research methods used in the study include focus groups, in-depth interviews and participant observation.

### **3.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

According to Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) qualitative research methodology is a mode of inquiry “that is reflective and process driven, ultimately producing culturally situated and theory-enmeshed knowledge through an on-going interplay between theory and methods and researcher and researched”.

Nieuwenhuis (2010a) notes that “qualitative research typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environments (in situ) and focusing on their meanings and interpretations”.

Qualitative research is an intellectual, creative and rigorous craft that the practitioners not only learn but develop. It produces both exploratory and highly descriptive knowledge while de-emphasising the solely casual models and explanations that have historically dominated the research process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

In qualitative research, the enquirer often makes knowledge claims based on constructivist perspectives on an advocacy or participatory perspective or both as the case may arise (Mojapelo, 2007). When identifying aspects that single out qualitative research as a unique mode of enquiry, Denzin & Lincoln (2000) argue that qualitative research deploys “a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand”.

On the other hand, Nieuwenhuis (2010a) argues that people often describe qualitative research as research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. It focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences. Qualitative researchers fundamentally seek to preserve and analyse the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transactions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The motivation for the use of a qualitative approach in this study resides in its research focus, which is to investigate social interactions and explore what meaning research subjects ascribe to their level of participation in the IDP projects.

Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006), refer to the paradigm that states that “social meaning is created during interaction” as the hermeneutic traditions or interpretive perspective. In this tradition, qualitative methods such as purposive sampling, focus groups and interviews depend on social interaction, since they are “interpretive, experience based, situational, and personalistic” (Stake, 2010).

Stake (2010) also argues that applying techniques from the interpretive perspective can be faulty in their failure to extensively interpret data and that “our views are sometimes faulty because they are too simplistic”. However, he contends that qualitative data analysis methods such as triangulation can be applied “in order to increase confidence that we have correctly interpreted how things work” (Stake, 2010).

The presence of the researcher in the research process is central to qualitative research methodology. This level of participation by the researcher in the research process is supported by Lindlof & Taylor (2002) when describing characteristics of a qualitative researcher. They suggest that qualitative researchers “must learn when to watch, when to listen, when to go with the action, when to reflect, when to intervene tactically (and tactfully)”.

When contextualising the misconceptions adopted by modern-day scholars in their practice to conduct qualitative research, Huberman & Miles (2002) present a contending argument. They argue that “despite the increase in the sheer number

and widening range of qualitative research studies, there has been no parallel proliferation of studies of the actual process of doing qualitative research since we noted the lack of attention to it in 1984”.

This argument is based on the basis that when research studies are conducted, researchers often tend to commit the mistake of ambiguously describing and defining qualitative research methodology against what it is not.

Since this study is mainly concerned with investigating the extent to which participatory communication occurs between the stakeholders in the IDP-context of the Matlosana Local Municipality, raw data, that is people’s perceptions, understanding and meaning created by stakeholders from interpersonal communication need to be collected, studied and analysed. Data collection methods chosen for this study will now be discussed.

### **3.3. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

“Data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment”, Merriam (2009) writes that “they can be concrete and measurable, as in class attendance, or invisible and difficult to measure, as in feelings”. Data collection methods chosen for this study will now be discussed.

#### **3.3.1. SAMPLING**

When contrasting the purpose of sampling in both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, Kumar (2011) states that “in qualitative research, a number of considerations may influence the selection of a sample such as: the case in accessing the potential respondents; your judgment that the person has extensive knowledge about an episode, an event or situation of interest to you”. This means that in qualitative research paradigm, it is the prerogative of the researcher to select respondents, based on their relationship with a case under investigation.

Purposive sampling is a qualitative sampling method where the researcher purposefully selects a sample of the group that will participate in the study, after s/he has observed them and discovered that they are best suited to provide data that will be relevant to the study. Maree & Pietersen (2010) argue that a purposive sampling

method is a process where the researcher applies judgement in selecting a sample that is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic attributes of the population with a specific purpose in mind.

When describing the essence of purposive sampling, Strydom & Delpont (2005) advise that “the researcher must first think critically about the parameters of the population and then choose the sample case accordingly. Clear identification and formulation of criteria for the selection of respondents is therefore of cardinal importance”. Thus, when respondents are selected, the researcher scrutinises their attributes (in terms of demographics) and assesses if they are the appropriate participants for the investigation.

Since this study is based in two specific geographical areas, where municipal IDP projects are based, a sample that is relevant should be from those areas and ordinary community members should be provided with a platform to express their views. This approach is essential because in a qualitative research model, the researcher does not remain remote or detached from events.

A sample of the respondents under study was selected from a community of Extension 24 in Jouberton Location. This location is under the jurisdiction of Matlosana Local Municipality. The respondents were aged between 18 and 60, most of whom were unemployed. The area under study consists of a population of about 300 households and 30 of whom were purposefully selected to participate in the study.

The researcher also observed that respondents were not conversant with English as a medium of communication and therefore there was a need to translate and explain questions into their home language.

In this study, the researcher targeted two groups of participants, based on their level of involvement in the two IDP projects (for water and electricity) worth R2 million rand each.

On the one hand, interviews with the Municipal mayor, Mr Michael Kgaoue, as well as the Director for Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Control, Ms Mary Ramorola, who is also in charge of the municipal IDP frameworks, were conducted. Their role in participatory government is clearly defined and empowered in terms of legislation

[Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000)] as well as policy (the Municipality's 2012/13 IDP Document).

On the other hand, a sample of thirty community members was selected from beneficiaries earmarked to benefit from the Municipality's IDP projects in the 2012/13 financial year. They were broken down into two focus groups, where interviews were conducted in their language of choice. The interviews were recorded after obtaining consent from the participants.

As discussed in chapter 1, the study's main aim was to explore the extent to which participatory communication occurs between the stakeholders in the IDP-context of the Matlosana Local Municipality. In so doing, typical case sampling was applied, which according to Merriam (2009) was "selected because it reflects the average person, situation or instance of the phenomenon of interest".

According to theory of sampling, the researcher has to critically consider the parameters of the population under study, which are essential to their behaviour and participation in the research.

The theoretical background of the study, as well as the problem statement in both chapters 1 and 2, clearly charges the research to scrutinise the extent of participatory communication in local government, which has the responsibility of improving the lives of the underprivileged and marginalised communities.

Respondents chosen are well placed and better suited to participate in the study because it is their role or involvement that the researcher wishes to investigate.

### **3.3.2. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

Nieuwenhuis (2010a) defines observation as a "systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them". Similarly, according to Angrosino & Rosenberg (2011) it is "the fundamental base of all research methods in the social and behavioural sciences... and the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise". This is to say observation plays a pivotal role in interpreting human behaviour as well as in creating meaning or providing explanations behind human interaction or reaction to

external stimuli (Henning, 2004; Gorman & Clayton, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2010a; Angrosino & Rosenburg, 2011).

It is against this background that, in 2012, the researcher attended four IDP Public Participatory framework meetings between Matlosana Municipality and communities in Jouberton Township. The researcher was able to record field notes of the meetings and therefore was able to “blend” in the setting without being noticed by any participants. This aided the researcher to observe the meeting role-players, in their natural setting, without their knowledge that they are under study.

From an ethical perspective, it can be argued that during participant observation, the researcher needs to obtain consent from respondents under study. However, the legitimacy of data collected from participant observation can be questioned because often when individuals are aware that their activities will form part of some research, they tend to want to “control” their behaviour since they know that they are being watched. In this way, the essence and objective of generating “the truth” as raw as it is from a participatory communication perspective, can be defeated.

This is characterised more clearly by Li (2008), who posits that “nevertheless, researchers with an advocacy and emancipatory paradigm, especially those who aim to experience and represent social lives of the disadvantaged people, continue to challenge ethical restrictions on covert research methods”.

To generate raw data from participant observation for the purpose of this research, the researcher had “blend” in the surroundings of research subjects unbeknown to them.

Nieuwenhuis (2010a) also supports this perspective by indicating that “as a qualitative data gathering technique, observation is used to enable the researcher to gain deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being observed”.

Furthermore, gestures made by respondents were observed and the researcher was able to see meaning derived by respondents through their behaviour and predispositions. This also helped to enhance the research process because the researcher was able to observe various factors such as who the participants were; how the interactions came about, how participants claimed attention and what issues were regarded as significant.

### 3.3.3. FOCUS GROUPS

Nieuwenhuis (2010b) notes that “the focus group interview strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information”. This enables the researcher to draw concrete findings and conclusions that may well be difficult to reject.

Merriam (2009) posits that a focus group is “an interview on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge about the topic”. When exploring the extent of community participation in two IDP projects located at specific geographical areas, only community members in those areas have the “know-how” or “insight” regarding their level of participation.

The process enabled the researcher to closely interact with the respondents and obtain first hand rich information regarding the phenomenon under the study. The focus group interviews were conducted on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2014. Two focus group interviews were conducted, each with about fifteen community members from Jouberton extension 24. The researcher led the discussions and also acted as a moderator. The researcher was able to record about 12 hours’ worth of raw data during these focus group interviews.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) share the researcher’s sentiments that focus group interviews are used to enhance the participation of respondents because “in a group context, the members are stimulated by the ideas and expressions made by each other”.

Through what the authors refer to as “complementary interactions”; the researcher was able to achieve a “chaining” or “cascading” effect. This is where “members broadly agreed on an expressed view and added their own observations and subtle shades of interpretation to the view” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The use of language was significant because of demographics of the respondents. The fact that they were not comfortable using English as a medium of

communication compelled the researcher to conduct focus group interviews in their home language.

Be that as it may, in order to avoid misinterpretation, the researcher attempted to get as close as possible to the original sentiments shared by the respondents during data analysis. This was achieved through the use of descriptive analysis rather than direct translation of words.

### **3.3.4. INTERVIEWS**

An interview is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study (DeMarrais, 2004; Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research most common forms of interviews include: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured or semi-standardised interviews were conducted, where the researcher was able to informally interact with respondents in order to get their “emerging worldview and new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009).

Hopf (2004) maintains that this type of interview protocol is conducted on the basis of a number of less rigidly pre-formulated questions or guidelines. Here, researchers are able to “orient themselves according to an interview guide, but one that gives plenty of freedom of movement in the formulation of questions, follow-ups strategies and sequencing”.

This type of interview protocol can also be contrasted from structured interviews which are relatively strictly regulated as to their question guidelines and the sequencing of questions.

Two interviews were conducted with the Municipal Mayor (each approximately fifty-five minute long interviews) and the Municipal Director for Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Control (forty-five minute long interview) in January 2014 and August 2014. The director is also in-charge of the municipality’s IDP framework.

Both interviews were conducted in English and the researcher did not have a problem with transcribing and reducing the rich collected data into decoded information without losing the intended meaning.

The same set of questions used in focus groups were utilised with the intention to track and assess similarities and/or differences between theory and practice of participatory development communication in local government.

### **3.3.5. QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

In qualitative research, content analysis and thematic coding are data analysis methods relevant in exploring data collected through qualitative means. According to Neuenhuis (2010b), content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises message content.

Data collected from semi-structured interviews and focus groups was recorded and transcribed. A process of data reduction ensued, where message content was summarised. This approach enabled the researcher to fully understand the findings and make clear recommendations based on a true reflection of data collected.

According to Dey (1993) data analysis is a “process of resolving data into its constituent components to reveal its characteristic elements and structure”. Through Dey’s (1993) detailed discussion of qualitative data analysis, it can be defined as a process of deconstructing data (through various data reduction techniques such as thematic coding) from human behaviour, describing all of its components such as context, events, processes, and intentions. Or actions; and classifying them with the intention of connecting them to reality for the purpose of drawing accounts as to why things happen in reality.

In short, qualitative data analysis is about “bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data” (De Vos, 2005), with the intention or of assisting a qualitative inquiry to produce findings.

Data collection methods and techniques in qualitative inquiry include interviews, observation, focus groups, and others. On the other hand, Chenail (2012) provides a “systematic” definition of qualitative data analysis by stating that it is a form of

knowledge management which serves to manage “analytical processes to transform data into information and information into knowledge and knowledge into wisdom”.

In their discussion on common threads among the techniques of data analysis, Hardy and Bryman (2004) present a definitional construct of data analysis, its intentions, aims and objectives. Just like in the human brain, data analysis is a process where we “categorise, classify, monitor frequency and intensity, note repetition, stability, change, and the amount of change, along a variety of dimensions”.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002) the whole process borders around data management, data reduction and conceptual development. Both scholars comprehend Dey’s (1993) discussion on what constitutes qualitative data analysis by indicating that “without tools for categorising, sorting, and retrieving data, the job of finding one’s way around these materials would be a forbidding prospect” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Techniques such as coding and categorising are some of the most effective methods of managing and reducing qualitative data with the intention of producing knowledge and wisdom.

In terms of De Vos’s (2005) step-by-step approach, qualitative data analysis begins even before the researcher begins collecting data. This view is reinforced by Lindlof & Taylor (2002) who indicated that “informal data analysis starts at the very moment that field notes, interviews, transcription or document notes are created... this kind of reading can help the researcher review aspects of certain cases, think about strategic changes in the project, jump-start the coding process, and gain a sense of how different narratives of the research corpus are taking shape”.

It is the researcher’s view that in order to define qualitative data analysis, it has to first be described according to all aspects that it encapsulates, because it is a “systematic” and “complex” data-reduction process that has to be followed to the core (Dey, 1993; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Hardy & Bryman, 2004; De Vos, 2005; Chenail, 2012).

In the practical side of this study, the researcher followed a step-by-step process recommended by De Vos (2005) on data analysis and this is how the process was achieved:

- **Planning for recording data-** the researcher gathered all the tools and resources needed for data collection, including a tape recorder and note pads. Consent forms were crafted and permission from the municipality was sought.
- **Data collection and preliminary analysis-** through observation, the researcher was able to collect the first set of data by taking field notes in 2012 and a preliminary analysis was conducted. It was this very process that established the need for an inquiry into the extent of participatory communication in the IDP context of the Jouberton Township of the Matlosana Local Municipality.
- **Managing and organising data-** the researcher kept journals where field notes were written and data collected from IDP meetings arranged by the municipality with communities. The data was collected for about a week (during which the municipality held four IDP meetings, each lasting for four hours). Data was organised according to dates and time, as well as according to whether it was collected from interviews, focus groups, observation or documents.
- **Reading and writing memoranda (memos)-**The above step enabled the researcher to gather data and craft memos. This is essential because the process of data collection involves extensive writing and reading, as well as double-checking of any piece of raw data because it all should contribute to the deconstruction of meaning as well as the creation of usable information. These memos helped beef up themes that were generated from literature and enabled the researcher with findings, recommendations, and conclusion.
- **Testing emergent understandings-** after the data was transcribed, written and read, the researcher embarked on the process of testing views held by

involved stakeholders who included the community as well as representatives from the municipality. This process helped in crafting the themes and coding the data.

- **Generating categories, themes and patterns-** a set of seven themes were categorised, since they were identified from literature and data was analysed according to these pre-coded themes. They include: modernisation, dependency, dialogue, empowerment, community participation, planning, power and control.
- **Coding data-** the above step enabled the researcher to code the data/responses according to eminent themes and codes. Again, because not all views of each and every interviewee could be added in the analysis, a process of coding also involved data reduction, which is all about making a summative analysis of emerging views.
- **Searching for alternative explanations-** this process was critical in ensuring that the researcher explicitly understood the views held by respondents. This was crucial because after the data was coded and reduced, an extensive deconstruction of meaning as well as listening to the recorded interviews ensued with the purpose of generating of abstract and connotative meaning and understandings held by respondents.
- **Representing as well as visualisation-** a summative representation of the facts gathered from data analysis was written and is dealt with in chapter 4. In this process, the researcher was able to take decoded and crafted information from raw data and provide readable and understandable evidence to help with findings, recommendations and conclusions of the study.

As indicated above, two sets of focus group interviews (each comprising of 15 participants), as well as in-depth interviews with the municipal mayor and municipal I.D.P manager were conducted. The researcher also encountered the following challenges:

- **Language:** data from focus group interviews was collected through the use of the respondents' home language. This was a challenge because the researcher ran the risk of misinterpreting the reactions and expressions of respondents. Therefore, the researcher realised the need to conduct an interview in the home language of the respondents during the actual interview process and then translated into English. In order to deal with the language related problem, the researcher first used a journal to re-write the questions in a simplified form into Setswana. Therefore each set of answers had to be written and translated into the English language, before being coded according to the selected themes.
- **Observation:** it is the researcher's view that behaviour patterns of the research subjects changed dramatically from in 2012, when the researcher attended IDP meetings as a participant observer. During focus group and unstructured interviews, respondents were not behaving as they were in 2012, when they were not aware about the presence of the researcher. This was also because they were now aware that they are being recorded, and this to a certain extent influenced what they said, and did.

### 3.4. TRIANGULATION

Olsen (2004) defines triangulation as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints can be cast upon a topic.

The mixing of data types, known as data triangulation, is often thought to help in validating the claims that might arise from an initial pilot study. In this study, the researcher achieved triangulation by posing the same set of questions during in-depth as well as focus-group interviews.

The aim here was to use different data-collection methods without having bias or expecting predetermined reactions. In essence, through the collection of various forms of data (for instance documents, focus groups, interviews), the researcher has been able to triangulate the information collected and thus achieving in making the findings credible, valid and reliable.

Due to the observation that focus group interviewees seemed out of touch in terms of fully comprehending their role in public participation; the use of different data collection methods enabled the researcher to gather a stronger indication of reality than just the perceptions of a single stakeholder group.

Each data collection method (focus group and semi-structured interviews, documents, observation) independently brought out extensive data which the researcher was able to read, write, analyse, code, break into themes and test. In this way, the researcher could not rely on data gathered from one method and thus, had to compare and contrast views gathered from one method, against another. This whole process helped yield positive synergies or links between views gathered and derived from one data collection method with another.

### **3.5. RELIABILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Reliability means the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 2009). However, various scholars argue that in human and social sciences, reliability is a problem since human behaviour is never static.

Wolcott (2005) maintains that in order to achieve reliability in that technical sense, a researcher has to manipulate conditions so that replicability can be assessed. Ordinarily, fieldworkers do not try to influence the way things happen in the field, and given a different environment, they can never be sure that the same research will yield the same results.

However, Merriam (2009) argues that a more important question to answer in qualitative research is whether the results are consistent with the data collected. This is to say that rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes for outsiders to concur that given the data collected, the results are consistent and dependable.

Silverman (2010) on the other hand maintains that, “when people’s activities are tape-recorded and transcribed, the reliability of the interpretation of transcripts may be gravely weakened by a failure to transcribe apparently trivial, but often crucial pauses and overlaps”.

However, the respondents were interviewed in their own language which is well understood by the researcher. In cases where clarity was needed, follow-up questions were made and all issues were cleared. Furthermore, a copy/CD of recorded data could be availed on request.

By consulting literature and seeking rich theoretical background, collecting data through sampling, interviews, focus groups as well as participant observation, the researcher sought to ensure that findings (which will be discussed in the next chapter) are consistent and dependable.

According to Shenton (2004), triangulation can also be used “by researchers to promote confidence that they have accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny”. He further asserts that the use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews compensates for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits.

Although transferability means the ability to demonstrate results of one research and apply to a wider population, Shenton (2004) counters this widely accepted and seemingly quantitative research-centric notion. He argues that “since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations”.

However, to the contrary, other scholars such as Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998), as noted by Shenton (2004), suggest that although each case in qualitative inquiry may be unique, it is also an example within a broader group and as a result, the prospect of transferability should not be immediately rejected.

Similarly, we cannot rule out the possibility of applying transferability using findings of the current study against a different population or situation or even context. However, Shenton (2004) warns that this move should be pursued with caution since it appears to belittle the importance of the contextual factors which impinge on the case (Gomm *et al*, 2000).

### **3.6. SUMMARY**

To sum up, the use of qualitative research methods assisted the researcher in testing the reliability of data provided in chapter 2's - theoretical framework and literature review.

By using focus groups, interviews with relevant respondents, and participant observation, the researcher achieved triangulation in data collection. This ensured that the research accomplished dependability and consistency. A step-by-step approach to data analysis was applied and the actual process was deduced.

The above research method played an integral part in forming the structure of the following chapter, which deals with data analysis and reporting. The rationale in this chapter assisted the steps taken in chapter 4's practical approach to the research design.

From data collection methods such as focus groups, unstructured interviews as well as observations, themes were drawn out as sub-topics to form summative, useable and understandable information from the raw data gathered.

The above method serves as a guideline for the next chapter in that it provides parameters in which the data reporting and analysis is set out. Chapter 3 offers the rationale towards the mode or methods applied and its positives therefore, through a discussion of each theme in the next chapter, synthesis will be formed in the researcher's quest to link the theoretical underpinnings in chapter 2 as well as the practical elements of data reporting and analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

*Qualitative data analysis is a “messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process”.* – De Vos (2005)

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3, research design was discussed in detail, where its rationale and relevance to this study was outlined. In a nutshell, the previous chapter concentrated on the theoretical aspect of research collection and provided guidelines for data management, report and analysis. Literature was consulted on the practice of collecting data, methods used, as well as procedures to be followed in terms of analysing, reduction and reporting.

In chapter four, the practical approach to data reporting and analysis are dealt with. Since the study was tasked with investigating the extent of participatory communication in a specific municipal government, this part of the study was tasked with exploring the perceptions held on the nature of communication among stakeholders in Matlosana Municipality (community versus municipal official).

The primary focus and objectives of this research were dealt with in chapter 1 and 2; in as far as investigating the extent of participatory development communication in Municipal IDP projects is concerned. The following seven themes were produced in order to analyse and reduce voluminous data received from in-depth, focus group interviews and observations: dialogue, dependency, modernisation, empowerment, community participation, power and control, and planning.

These border around pertinent requirements for participatory development communication or pre-existing perceptions among respondents on what the practice is all about. The following is a discussion of a set of themes that were used to draw categories and patterns of analysis, as well as schemes of interpretations. It is essential to note that there is a strong link between question 4, 6 and 7. Here the researcher attempted to reflect a “transitional thread” from modernisation paradigm, to dependency, and then to a participatory paradigm by attempting to uncover all issues that relevant to the field, such as feedback, symmetrical or horizontal

communication, media platforms, dialogue, empowerment, participation, beurocracy, etc.

#### **Text Box: 4.1. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**The following questions were posed in unstructured, as well as focus group interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to investigate perceptions among community members and municipal officials regarding the nature of their communication interaction.**

##### **Question 1: Dialogue**

How does the Matlosana Municipality communicate with the community, and how does the community communicate with the municipality? What is the communication about?

##### **Question 2: Power and Control**

Who takes the lead in communication interactions, and do you feel that there is a balance in terms of who takes the lead?

##### **Question 3: Planning**

Where do you meet? How frequently do you meet and what topics are addressed?

##### **Question 4: Empowerment**

How is feedback handled for both the municipality and the community – in other words, how on-going and interactive are the dynamic is the communication?

##### **Question 5: Participation**

How involved is the municipality and the community in the two projects? When and at which stages do the role-players get involved in projects?

##### **Question 6: Dependency**

Who speaks on behalf of the community and the municipality?

##### **Question 7: Modernisation**

Which media are favoured by whom?

## 4.2. THEMES FOR DATA REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

### 4.2.1. DIALOGUE

Dialogue, as a theme, features strongly in the study because it sets the stage in which participatory communication occurs. Martin Buber's "*I-Thou*" and "*I-it*" theory depicts the importance of dialogue in determining how participants view each other's participation in their engagement (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; Naidoo, 2010).

Therefore, in participatory communication, or communication among two parties in general, dialogue cannot not be featured nor viewed in isolation because it is through dialogue an analysis of power relationships and the value of each other's participation in the entire process is made. Furthermore, when discussing dependency for example, or power and control, dialogue has to feature because participants have to speak among or about each other's participation in order to analyse how they perceive each other's level of participation, as well as their own .

Smith (2007) argues that government needs to recognise the necessity for 'bridging dialogue' in order to hear the 'voices' of the poor and the civil society sector in both policy making and 'delivery'. Here it is dictated that without dialogue, a municipal government will not know and understand the interests and needs of its citizens.

Dialogue was selected to explore the respondents' awareness of the platforms they use in their communication (with the municipality) or those that the municipality uses in its communication with them. This theme was key on the basis that it assists in contextualising that community participation, through dialogue, should include "needs identification and prioritisation strategies to define and agree on a local vision, project design; integration with other programs, and adoption of IDP" (Tshabalala & Lombard, 2009).

Dialogue, as a form of horizontal and reciprocal flow of information, requires that participants be equal partners and open up to each other. From the socio-cultural tradition (a meta-theoretical point of departure found to be applicable), dialogue as a means of community participation, enables all stakeholders, especially community members and municipal officials, to use their behaviour and patterns of interaction in the formation of interpretation or reality in which they live (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005).

Contextually, in order for the fruits of active community participation to be realised during municipal IDP frameworks, participants must behave in a manner that avoids conflict and have mutual trust and respect for each other in the interest of ensuring that their relationship yields success. This means that from a socio-cultural viewpoint, the process must be engaging and the participants must strive for consensus.

From both sets of focus group interviews, it was discovered that the municipality uses meetings as the main communication method to communicate with them. The researcher also observed that other respondents had no knowledge of any communication method or interaction going on between the community and the municipality.

This was observed when some respondents shook their heads as a symbol of disagreement. However, from literature it is stated that not only is community participation beneficial to communities, but it also helps to legitimise a local authority but only if municipalities “develop and provide strategies that will continually engage residents who may be ratepayers, businesses and residents” (Ababio, 2004).

Contextually, when quizzed about these “strategies” applied by the municipality, other respondents stressed the fact that the municipality also uses a loud-hailer (a portable loudspeaker with a built-in microphone and amplifier) as communication tool to inform them about meetings that are expected to be held.

However, they shared a view that it is an ineffective communication tool, as in most cases, they are unable to access messages meant for them.

For example, one of the respondents indicated that: “the municipality uses loud-hailers and this is inefficient because we sometimes see groups of people gathering without our knowledge”; Another respondent indicated that “sometimes you just hear that a loud- hailer called people to a meeting the previous week while I was not there because when the invitation was made, I was at work”.

It is clear from the information gathered that community members do not enjoy the current levels of dialogue and participation in meetings they hold with the municipality.

During one of the IDP meetings which the researcher attended as a participant observer, it was noted that IDP meetings tend to be clouded by other issues outside the scope of earmarked IDP projects and include issues such as refuse collection, title deeds inquiries, by-elections in various wards, queries regarding high electricity and rent tariffs, etc.

This observation links with those made in other themes such as planning, dependency and empowerment. The researcher was able to establish that the general lack of awareness of IDP meetings by citizens defeats the essence of participation; thus, if meetings are disrupted, participation is unable to take place. This again means that dialogue is required beyond the scope of IDP.

In other instances, some community members use IDP meetings to voice their frustrations and impose on municipal officials to respond to other pertinent issues affecting the community such as unemployment rates, previously proposed projects and those that were not delivered, as well as a host of other service delivery issues, including refuse collections, rent tariff hikes and others.

These issues end up clouding what was supposed to be a detailed discussion on planned IDP projects in the community into some kind of questions and answers meeting where general service delivery challenges affecting the community are raised.

From a socio-cultural point of view, this observation indicates that most community members have little knowledge of the successes made by the municipality with IDP, and as such, they are unable to utilise the interaction to work out meanings, roles, rules and cultural values (Mojapelo, 2007; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005).

In an attempt to go deeper into the “lack of awareness” by some respondents, a follow-up question was posed. One of the respondents stated that some of them spend most of their time at work, away from their homes and only visit during month-ends and Christmas vacations while others highlighted their lack of interest in municipal activities and interactions for both political and personal reasons).

Another respondent strongly maintained that:

*“these guys [municipal officials] when they have to discuss issues affecting our ward, they call meetings to discuss ideologies affecting a particular political party instead...these meetings are useless to me; these guys do not call Imbizos for the whole community anymore. So how can they cover issues affecting the whole community while in practice they only call party affiliates? How will I participate when I’m not affiliated to their political party?”*

The researcher also observed that there is a discourse-disconnect between the municipality and community members, because the unstructured interview respondents (municipal officials) believe that their communication efforts are efficient.

For example, the municipal mayor went great lengths to explain how they are able to use different media platforms with communities:

*“We have different methods we use to communicate with the communities, one is that we have a monthly newspaper in which we refer to past events, write notes on rent statements and if there is an issue, we write those notes to residents. We also use councillors who are supposed to have ward meetings every month. We also use star FM as an effective communication method and other local radio stations like, Motswedding FM and North West FM. We also hold sub-sectional meetings and use different political organisations during their gatherings, while traffic officers use loud-hailers to make announcements.”*

However, there seems to be a shared belief among all respondents in both unstructured and focus group interviews that feedback is minimal or at the worst, non-existent. For instance, while some respondents expressed that their lack of interest in municipal interaction was because of the fact that they do not enjoy feedback and instead, would rather sit at home and spend most of their time discussing various challenges faced by their community among themselves.

When asked how feedback is handled, if it is on-going, interactive or dynamic, all respondents in both sets of focus groups maintained that they do not receive any feedback at all from the municipality.

From this revelation, the researcher observed that if community members were afforded feedback, they would be able to foster community solidarity [and] feel involved in matters affecting and relevant to their welfare.

The respondents referred to feedback as an area in which the municipality can improve on. They stated that when raising issues with municipal officials, they are not given commitments of these being addressed while undertakings made are not reported in meetings that follow.

Similarly, interview respondents emphasised the need for the municipality to introduce an SMS service or telecommunication as a method of keeping the community informed of its plans on service delivery and municipal IDP projects.

Furthermore, focus group respondents stipulated that the municipality must use communication platforms like community media more effectively (i.e. Star FM and Lentswe newspaper).

They further emphasised that the municipality must hold meetings that are aimed at addressing the interests of all community members, irrespective of their political affiliation.

However it should also be cautioned that although the process, if achieved, will be in the best interest of local communities, it may be affected by challenges relating to the fact that community members are not homogenous. Moreover, from the modernisation perspective, the use of media was not always unbiased; often, information or message formulation was characterised by an unbalanced and linear form of communication or a hypodermic needle approach (Mefalopulos, 2008).

It would therefore be difficult for community members to reach agreements on aspects of needs and vision and ways to improve these (Tshabalala & Lombard, 2009). This observation borders on elements of power and control, which are discussed in detail as a separate but related theme.

Likewise, from a phenomenological point of view, it might as well be that aspects such as language, creation of meaning, cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity, empowerment and bureaucracy determine the success and/or a lack thereof, of community participation.

For a participatory communication to succeed, authorities need to ensure that in their dialogue with citizens, their messages are understood (language used and creation of meaning are key); they understand socio-graphics and demographics of citizens (to understand cultural reservations of citizens); and, relinquish their control and afford communities certain powers to exercise their voice (mitigation and alleviation of bureaucracy).

However, it was the researcher's observation that community members reflect a "united front" and have put their cultural differences aside in their quest for local authorities to come down to their level and adopt alternative methods of feedback.

By acceding to the fact that feedback is not as much as it should be, the researcher also observed that unstructured interview respondents also feel like addressing the bureaucracy versus empowerment challenge as a remedy to create a mutually beneficial form of relationship with community members.

On the other hand, unstructured interview respondents also displayed an acute understanding of the importance of dialogue, as a form participatory communication with community members. They mentioned that the municipality should use different political formations as well as representative forums to reach out to the community.

This ideology is however rooted in Horak's (2006) recommendation for ward councillors and politicians to be used as "crisis communication tools" to foster an understanding with community. However, it should be noted that if participatory communication embeds its roots in political spaces, it may be more detrimental than helpful since a balance between power and control would not be struck, given the sharp disparity on the interests of political mandates over public interests (Williams, 2006).

#### **4.2.2. DEPENDENCY**

Dependency, as one of the themes, was used to pose a question regarding who speaks or represents the municipality as well as community members in their interactions. Power relationships are also crucial when analysing dependency. In theory, dependency extends to massive underdevelopment and impoverishment.

This view is also expressed by Escobar (1995), when detailing some of the failures of the dominant modernisation paradigm. Likewise, Mojapelo (2007) holds a view that there is a “huge potential for conflict among administration and community members”. This notion suggests that the approach used in the many public participation frameworks supports the goals of local municipal management and has disadvantages of public participation in local government.

It is against this background that this theme was used to ascertain the level of dependency or independence of the respondents during their interactive meetings. Dependency, as a perception held by stakeholders in municipal IDP frameworks, seeks to answer questions such as how civil society groupings, in particular the poor and excluded, become meaningfully involved in government institutional spaces; as well as on what basis people enter this sphere, and what the nature of their representation is (Leboea, 2003; Williams, 2006; Mojapelo, 2007).

Moreover, Von Lieres (2007) argues that “there is also growing evidence of a widening gap between legal assurances of participation and the actual inclusion of poor citizens in democratic processes”.

Here, power relationships are assessed and scrutinised in the interest of gaining an understanding as to what roles are assumed by whom and what perceptions stakeholders have regarding the kind of influence they have. However, Williams (2006) warns that the very concept of community participation has been largely reduced to a cumbersome ritual, a necessary appendix required by the various laws and policies operating at the local government level.

This is to say, contemporary local government only identifies community participation in paper, while in reality, development managers choose to associate with a participatory process that only supports government’s ambitions.

This theme is in what the researcher regards as “binary-opposition”, with themes such as community participation, dialogue, and planning. This is because the researcher strongly believes that this is when community participation and empowerment fail and dialogue does not materialise, the essence of participatory development is defeated and a sense of dependency among local citizens is inevitably created.

This is to say that although they are binned together, when all other themes end, the other begins and vice versa. When quizzed about who speaks on behalf of the municipality, it emerged uncontested that the executive mayor is the “first citizen” and therefore is the main spokesperson or representative of the municipality.

Furthermore, both the Mayor and the Director for strategic planning monitoring and control pointed out that ward councillors are bestowed with the responsibility of representing community members and their interests. It is against this background that the researcher observed that a “voice” of the community is a politically elected individual.

In addition, Clapper (1996) warns that there can never be balanced forms of engagement since “government will favour citizen participation activities that do not disturb, but rather support, government goals. Any participation that threatens to thwart government ideas and transfer authority to citizens is actively discouraged”. In this way, a dependency syndrome is transferred to citizens, thereby reducing them to mere ratifiers of government plans.

On the other hand, most respondents in focus group interviews held a view that individual community members represent themselves during meetings (where some of them are afforded a chance to raise their concerns, views and objections); while just a few felt that they have no representation, but they all recognise that a ward councillor represents the municipality during their meetings.

From a typology of participation, as according to Anyaegbunam *et al* (2004), the researcher was able to detect that community members do participate in IDP consultative frameworks, but their participation is passive, where stakeholders are informed about what is going to happen or has taken place, and feedback is minimal.

The researcher also observed that most people attending public meetings held by the municipality are senior members of society who are mostly uneducated. They therefore use the platform to inquire about their own service delivery related issues and not dwell much on IDP frameworks.

With more literate people and the youth not willing to take part in these meetings, the essence of participatory communication in municipal IDP frameworks is defeated because what is left are “warm bodies” who are unable to challenge municipal

representatives on specific approaches to IDP who simply complete attendance registers that do not say much about how the community actually took part in their own development.

Municipal representatives then use the opportunity to explain to them what the meeting is all about and when plans are revealed regarding what is going to happen in terms of IDP projects in the area. There is not much participation because community members act as recipients of information.

When asked who takes the lead in the communication process, all focus group respondents unanimously maintained that a municipal representative (mayor or councillor- depending on the type of meeting) take the lead in all interactions; this was echoed by unstructured interview respondents who stipulated that they do take the lead in the communication process, which according to them, is justified since they are bestowed with the authority to facilitate all communication efforts with a specific goal in mind.

Unstructured interview respondents also indicated that they have a central role to play in all communication interactions with the community, given their legislative mandate to distribute funds and plan according to laws that govern municipal government.

On the other hand, focus group respondents gave the impression that although they play a role during meetings by being afforded an opportunity to express their views in their deliberations, they all held a dim view about their issues being noted and addressed in follow-up meetings.

It was also the researcher's observation that there is a communication gap between both the municipal representatives who, on the one hand, argue that their communication efforts are aimed at obtaining a mandate from community members; while on the other hand, community members argue that municipal representatives take control of all their communication platforms and interactions.

From a phenomenological perspective, the researcher observed that some community members view their participation in IDP consultative meetings as being determined by what a municipal representative intends discussing with them. This

causes them to be dependent on communication efforts of the local government authority.

However, Baofo (2006) advises that if participatory development communication is applied, individuals would be active in development programs and processes; and they would contribute ideas, take initiative and articulate their needs and their problems, while asserting their autonomy.

From a socio-cultural tradition, bureaucracy is one of the building blocks towards an inevitable formation of dependency. This is corroborated by Thompson (2007), who indicated that “the success of public participation much depends on the actual basis for the participatory process in question”.

Here, like in other themes, power relationships become crucial and the need for empowering local citizens to become more independent is emphasised. In contemporary local government, it has also been noted that in most cases, development managers in municipal government seem to be “determined to impose their own truncated version and understanding of ‘community participation’ on particular communities” (Williams, 2006). In this regard, the researcher observed that dependency is a problem that is caused by the absence of dialogue and participation, and to a certain extent, lack of proper planning of participatory communication during IDP consultative frameworks.

#### **4.2.3. MODERNISATION**

Modernisation, as a theme, was employed to specifically focus on which media platforms are favoured by whom. Modernisation is rooted in the rhetoric tradition, which puts emphasis on the strength of persuasive messages produced by a municipality (ward councillors, or political leaders) and broadcast through various media platforms (technological determinism) to change public perception on an issue or crisis.

It can be argued, however, that media can also be used according to the participatory paradigm, but since media usage differs across traditions, the researcher found a strong link between reality and what theory depicts to be usage of media from the modernisation era.

Ward councillors, who are politically elected individuals, are bound to use persuasion as a means of ensuring that communities accept a political directive held by a municipal authority. In this way, media platforms, such as advertisements on radio or newspapers, municipal newsletters and public campaigns can be applied to produce persuasive messages that are based on ensuring that communities support the views held by a municipal authority.

Through the use of technological determinism theory, public perception can be manipulated and influenced to rally behind municipal interests and in that sphere, the essence of participatory communication would be defeated.

From focus group interviews, it was unanimously pointed out that the municipality should use community media (both print and broadcast) as well as meetings as platforms to engage communities on issues relating to IDP. Respondents were also high spirited when advocating for telecommunication and the use of SMS service in fostering communication between the community and the municipality.

On the other hand, the interview respondents referred to community radio as the most effective platform when reaching out to the community. They said they also prefer using loud-hailers and pamphlets as “effective” communication tools when interacting with communities.

The researcher also observed that although municipal representatives believe that loud-hailers are effective communication tools, community members, as well as focus-group respondents revealed a strong opposition to the use of loud hailers and cited their frustration in that regard.

Mojapelo’s (2007) study, which is focused on the capacity of municipal government to effect change on local communities, recommends that municipal governments “should build capacity and develop skills in the local community”. This perspective is also held by Bogopane (2012), who believes that “transparent deliberations result in a much wider range of possible judgements regarding desirable strategy options, as well as more effective means of bringing together a range of stakeholders in ways that are fair, transparent, and legitimate”.

Likewise, Mokone (2007) argues that a “municipality should ensure that its participatory processes include representatives from all sectors, stakeholders and

experts concerned with the cross-cutting issues of poverty, gender equity, environment and Local Economic Development (LED)”.

Although it is imperative for a local municipal authority to utilise the various communication efforts in an attempt to keep communities informed, grass-roots communication approach instead of persuasive communication, is key.

In this instance, rhetoric should not be used to ensure that local citizens are forced to accept the hegemonic status quo of development, as proposed by municipal leaders. This will inevitably diminish the true essence of participatory development communication in local government, simply because local citizens are not fully aware of the role in public participation frameworks.

From a verbatim excerpt of the interview with one municipal representative, it came out quite strongly that the municipal representatives concede that their communication efforts with communities should seek to promote accountability and ensure that objectives of IDP consultative frameworks are achieved.

*“I would say we are exploring all, I think, but radio makes it easier, I think because as you listen to engagements, people are able to, without being identified, voice out their complaints or even say ‘I’m anonymous and this is my problem...’. So I think radio is the best”.* Ramorola (2013)

However, it should be noted that power relationships as well as control should be scrutinised because if IDP is to be used to improve service delivery and the living standards of local communities, development managers at local government level should cautiously use multimedia platforms and channels to promote interpersonal interactions in their development projects so that rural communities can actively participate in decision-making processes and all aspects of a development project.

Focus group respondents also reflected that current communication media and channels applied by the municipality are ineffective, while some expressed that their role in IDP consultative meetings should be clearly redefined.

The researcher also observed that unstructured interview respondents are open to explore alternative means of ensuring that IDP consultative processes are not hindered by those not understanding purposes of IDP, in the interest of promoting

accelerated service delivery to indigent communities. This also correlates with what some scholars refer to as the need to empower local citizens in order to realise the gains of active citizen participation in municipal IDP frameworks (Leboea, 2003; Mojapelo, 2007; Mokone, 2007).

#### **4.2.4. EMPOWERMENT**

Empowerment as a theme was selected to assess the level of understanding that respondents have regarding their role in the whole communication process on IDP projects. This was to explore their level of participation and to gauge the degree of power, control and dependency.

Ascrott & Masilela's (1994) assert that "if peasants do not control or share control of the process of their own development, there is no guarantee that it is their best interest that is being served". This means that all communication efforts of a municipal authority should serve to empower local citizens.

Similarly, Buys (2006), whose study looks at the participation of a South African rural community in the global economy, recommends that "nations must ensure that local companies are, to a larger extent, owned by the local people and managed by competent hands; ensure that profits are re-invested at home rather than expatriated".

In the context of local government, the gains of participatory development would be immensely achieved if that local citizens benefit from participating in all levels of IDP, including local economic empowerment as well as skills transfer,

From Mokone's (2007) view, public participation processes need to be improved because some rural communities have little or no knowledge of the successes made by municipalities with IDPs. It can be seen that empowering the nation with information and skills transfer can go a long way.

Furthermore, empowerment extends to what Moemeka (1999) argues to be the positive rewards of development. In Moemeka's (1999) study, it is maintained that that if development "serves the cause of, for example, social justice, fair play and

equality or equity, it could be considered relatively advantageous". Without empowering local citizens, these advantages would not be gained.

Various scholars agree that it is also of paramount importance for a municipal authority to ensure that their communication efforts actively engage and involve communities at all levels of development projects and without this action, sustainable development will not be possible (Smith, 2003; Ababio, 2004; Anyaegbunam *et al*, 2004; Heleba, 2008; Naidoo, 2010).

Some focus group respondents confirmed they do not see any role that they play in the whole communication process. It also emerged strongly that in meetings, a municipal representative takes the lead in the whole process and usually speaks on behalf of the municipality and that not everyone gets the opportunity to express themselves. Others were of the view that meetings take very long and often at times, important issues are not thoroughly discussed.

Others also hinted that at times, meetings get out of control and are interrupted by political issues and irrelevant discussions around whom (between local business people, youth or people from other wards) should be allocated tenders and employment opportunities.

Diarra (2006) suggests that participatory development communication should give prominence to local knowledge, if its objectives are to bring lasting change; it is imperative for a municipal authority to empower local citizens with information and decision-making capacity in choosing development projects.

This can be achieved through the appointment of an advocacy or interest group, whose responsibility would be to train communities on participatory communication and help them in understanding of legislation and the powers afforded to a municipal authority in overseeing IDP implementation. The advocacy group would also be charged with representing the views and aspirations of the community as well as to liaise with municipal representatives and/or councillors on the immediate needs of the community.

Through empowered participation, as proposed by Anyaegbunam *et al*. (2004), all stakeholders have the opportunity to be part of the process and participate in joint analysis, which leads to joint decision making about what should be achieved and

how this can be achieved. This therefore, will enhance participation to become an expressive interpersonal communication and knowledge-sharing process (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005).

The researcher also observed that some respondents do not participate in the entire communication process due to professional, political and personal reasons. This leaves a vacuum in the sense that not all community members gain or benefit from IDP consultative frameworks because some are unable to attend meetings and therefore their views are not expressed and addressed.

As confirmed by various other scholars, the researcher also observed that there is community disillusionment with local government due to a lack of active participation in municipal IDP framework (Williams, 2006; Thompson, 2007; Mefalopulos, 2008).

On the other hand, municipal representatives also indicated the need to raise civic awareness of the importance of attending IDP consultative frameworks. This, they say, is crucial because the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000) requires that a municipal authority provides a democratic and accountable government for local communities and promotes social and economic development for those in need.

In addition, they emphasised their role as central in ensuring that they share relevant information regarding feasible plans entailed in a specific project with the community. They maintained that this role is dominant and allows the community to be aware of up-coming projects which in turn creates transparency, knowledge-sharing and empowerment.

However focus group interviewees indicated that the information they receive on upcoming IDP projects is not empowering because they are not granted the platform to use it to identify how they can benefit from the projects.

The researcher also observed that communities are unable to play a large role in the conceptualisation and formats of IDP projects because they are passive participants in the development process and therefore are not empowered to take charge and actively participate in addressing their underdevelopment.

This discourse disconnect also revealed a strong link between themes such as empowerment, dependency, dialogue and community participation. The researcher

also noted from focus groups interviewees feel disempowered by the local authority as ideas and approaches to development projects are largely imposed on them, thereby rendering them mere recipients of social change. One respondent mentioned that although municipal officials “take minutes during meetings, they do not seem to be taking [their] grievances seriously”.

This, again, means that there is a sharp disconnect between the municipal authority and communities because on the one hand, unstructured interviewees think that their approach in directing and taking charge of IDP-related public engagements is in the best interest of the community, while focus group respondents feel that this action marginalises community members even more.

#### **4.2.5. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Community Participation as a theme was utilised to pose various questions, such as; how involved is the community in the two projects? When do role-players get involved? At which stage of the project?

This was to understand the level of participation of the community in the specific IDP projects. It should be noted from the onset that the mere participation and involvement of local communities in municipal IDP frameworks “cannot be considered a panacea for all the ills of society, it is simply a change in process” Brynard (1996). This means that beyond participation, planning and horizontal flow of dialogue should be introduced and power relationships need to be reassessed to accommodate indigent communities.

This means that “development of any community is tantamount to active participation of the people” Leboea (2003). In consultation with municipal officials as well as community members, it has been observed that there are contradictions on broad issues that border around participation in IDP consultative frameworks, including dialogue, modernisation, and dependency.

Likewise, Leboea (2003) suggests that local authorities have “to play an important role in creating structures to secure the development of communities and to make sure that communities participate in local government activities”.

During field observation, the researcher studied the environment and also observed how these meetings are facilitated, ranging from how communities participate and how they view their participation, as well as the platform “created” and/or utilised by officials for public engagement.

Scholars agree that community participation is the most crucial ingredient in ensuring that objectives of IDP consultative frameworks are realised and achieved. However, Brynard’s (1996) critique of contemporary local government notes that community participation on its own cannot yield positive social change unless there is power distribution in society which can influence the attitudes of local citizenry as far as active involvement is concerned.

From focus group interviews, it emerged strongly that the community was made aware of the projects since they were discussed during IDP meetings; however, the community was not involved in any phase of the projects, apart from being told that there are development projects in the pipeline that are aimed at improving their lives.

On the other hand, unstructured interviewees maintained that the municipality was involved throughout the process and meetings were held with the communities, as well as at council level where resolutions were passed.

One of the key observations made by the researcher is that the young and middle aged population of the community hardly ever attend IDP meetings.

The researcher discovered that a majority of people attending IDP meetings are mostly unemployed and this prompted an investigation on whether the young and middle-aged are aware of these meetings.

During focus group interviews, the researcher posed a question regarding a lack of participation by some community members, who indicated they do not see any direct impact of IDP meetings on their lives. Most respondents could not differentiate between a general ward meeting and an IDP consultative framework.

This was confirmed when some respondents indicated that “people who attend these meetings are either those seeking basic services, such as RDP houses, or those having queries regarding electricity disconnections, levies or those seeking rent subsidies”.

Impressions gained from these discussions yielded a strong belief among young people that home-owners, in this case, the parents, are the people who should attend meetings with municipal representatives.

Furthermore, through participant observation, it was discovered that some meetings end up being disrupted by allegations of corruption and demands related to “abandoned” projects from the previous financial year (RDP houses, toilets, roads, jobs)

The researcher noted that due to the general lack of awareness and inability to differentiate between types of municipal public engagements, some IDP meetings are mistook to be party political in nature and this creates an urge among community members to disrupt IDP meetings, rebuke municipal officials and use hostility to demand answers on past failed projects and alleged corruption scandals in the municipality.

Some IDP meetings fail to continue and municipal officials then opt to take deliberations regarding earmarked projects to the municipal council meetings where members of the public are allowed to attend but are denied the platform to participate or engage in any form of discussion.

The researcher also observed that municipal representatives assume the role of being a “donor”, while the community becomes recipients of services offered by local authorities (Mefalopoulos, 2008; Naidoo, 2010). Moreover, disruptions that often take place during meetings are as a result of stakeholders existing in silos where the “us and them” type of a relationship is inherently created between municipal officials and communities.

It also came to light that the community was afforded the opportunity to attend the council deliberations even though they do not have a role to play. They also put forward that communities are informed of IDP projects in their areas and some are even recruited to work in them.

This assertion carries an age old critique of the modernisation theories from a Latin American school of thought, that recipients of social change initiatives are given the burden of resolving their own social challenges and are therefore “docile” in the process of development since they do not possess the know-how and financial

resources to address their predicaments and change the status quo (Mefalopulos, 2008).

When it comes to feedback, respondents indicated that there is a need to improve the current status quo where there is generally no feedback granted to communities on previous issues raised with authorities. For example, when the mayor was asked what improvements should be made in their communication process, this is what he had to say:

*“We want to introduce a communication bus, one that will go to communities on a daily basis where officials should interview people and seek their problems; we also want to improve the distribution of our municipality’s monthly newspaper so that it can be distributed to every house. Radio is also important, where we can have phone-in programs where municipal officials can discuss issues experienced by the community and solve them directly”.*  
(Kgaoue, 2014)

It is not all doom and gloom though as the researcher observed that municipal representatives, to a large extent, agree with views expressed by communities that current municipal communication efforts are incapable of ensuring that there is active participation of local citizens in IDP consultative frameworks. The researcher also noted that there are sharp disagreements and mistrust between municipal representatives and communities during IDP meetings, where the public tends to believe that municipal representatives present IDP projects as a means of enriching their colleagues and friends.

Esau (2007) asserts that there are particular challenges to bringing marginalised rural populations into mainstream development planning and practice, not the least of which is the level of sophistication needed to understand local issues in relation to policy making and planning processes, basic rights and existing legislation.

Through this assertion, the researcher was able to scrutinise the fact that there was no synergy in the nature of the relationship between municipal representatives and community members on a suitable approach towards IDP consultative frameworks, which have an overarching mandate to improve local livelihoods.

The researcher was able to link Esau's (2007) assertion with observations made in this study over cross-cutting issues, such as frictions and disruptions of IDP meetings by disgruntled community members, lack of awareness by residents to differentiate between political and IDP meetings, as well as sharp disparities and opposing views held by all respondents regarding "efficient" communication methods that must be prioritised. This came to sight during one of the IDP meetings where the researcher was a participant observer.

One of the community members posed hard-hitting questions to municipal representatives that relating to how the youth in their "community were going to benefit from job creation, but instead the municipal councillors manipulated the process and people from other municipal wards were employed to come and benefit from the electricity installation project".

Miscommunication or lack of proper engagement thereof, is what some scholars (Mojapelo, 2007; Mefalopulos, 2008; Everatt *et al*, 2010; Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010) regard as a recipe for disaster impeding participatory development communication. The researcher also noted that there isn't any unifying "voice" that serves as an objective and independent information bridge for the "gap" that leaves stakeholders at odds and are filled with, sometimes grapevine or wrong perceptions regarding motives of the municipal government.

It is against this background that Leboea (2003) advises that "participation and capacity building of the communities remain salient ingredients for the creation of a development-orientated society. People are capable of leading their own change processes. They can be the real actors and not merely the subjects of change".

#### **4.2.6. PLANNING**

Planning as a theme was selected with the aim to ascertain steps and plans taken in facilitating the communication process between the community and Matlosana municipality.

This theme overlaps with others, in that it also looks at the awareness of respondents on the logistical arrangements in their whole communication interaction. This theme also seeks to understand perceptions among respondents regarding their awareness of topics discussed during their whole communication interaction,

which media is used and which is favoured by whom, as well as the language used in those interactions.

These elements are essential in determining preparations, or lack thereof, taken into account, as well as the purpose behind a municipal authority's communication efforts before, during and after their IDP consultative frameworks.

Planning is central to participatory communication, which, according to theory, is about having "substantial and relevant knowledge of the socio-cultural contexts of the people and of their physical environment" (Moemeka, 1999). In the context of local government, if a community living in a desolated under-developed area without electricity, or schools, or shopping complexes in their midst, they may prioritise access to health-care facilities and clean water as the first "must-have" amenities on their wish lists.

Through balanced interfaces with communities, a local authority can uncover what they expect from their local government, and areas where implementation of policy and programs are inadequate can be identified. Here a municipal authority can plan ahead as to what is it that a community requires and what action is required to address it.

Thus, without involving community members, this crucial information would not be available and the purpose of participatory development would be defeated. Planning entails probing community needs and organising all communication efforts in order to ensure that participatory democracy does take place.

When asked about the involvement of community members in the specified IDP projects, municipal representatives indicated that they involved communities by holding meetings with them, as well as by informing them about the projects. The purposes of holding meetings, they said, were to brief communities on IDP projects and ensure that there was transparency.

Unstructured interview respondents also mentioned that various media platforms, including radio (SABC's Tswana-oriented Motsweding FM, and community radio station-Star FM), community newspaper (Lentswe) and vehicles with loud-hailers for the purpose of holding meetings with communities. Municipal representatives were

also not satisfied with current “inefficient” communication efforts which need to be maximised.

This was observed when the municipal mayor affirmed that “there hasn’t been proper feedback to our communities; in fact we should work hard in ensuring that every department should provide proof of feedback they have given to the communities. We should have a register system to record these complaints and responded to all of them”.

From this view, it was not necessary to probe further if there were improvements perceived by municipal representatives regarding current communication efforts as the mayor also agreed that there is a need to maximise communication efforts in order to strengthen interfaces with communities.

By posing questions on topics that define IDP communication, the researcher opted to understand the respondents’ level of awareness of issues that are prioritised in meetings or during their communication process.

Unstructured interview respondents mentioned that during IDP meetings, the municipality specifically addresses earmarked projects, where communities are informed about what is going to happen. An observation was made that an agenda is set out by municipal representatives on what should be discussed, when and how.

On the other hand, focus group respondents pointed to loud-hailers as the only methods used by the municipality to call meetings, which they said were ineffective. They further maintained that in meetings, general service delivery topics end up being discussed, without sufficient focus on IDP projects in the pipeline.

On this note, the researcher was able to explore that communities are not granted much “participation” in determining how communication interaction transpires and they hold a perception that the municipality is marginalising them even more through their one-sided form of participation. Others, however appreciated that the municipality uses Tswana language as a means of communicating with them through loud-hailers which is the predominant language spoken by residents in Matlosana.

From participant observation, it was discovered that people do not heed to the municipality’s call to meetings, which leads to only a few of them attending. The

researcher also discovered that most people are confused and unable to differentiate between the types of public meetings held by municipal representatives and those held by the political party representatives.

For example, a municipal mayor, by virtue of being a councillor in the municipality can call a meeting to address members of his political party in his constituency; or a ward councillor, who is bestowed with the responsibility of being a public “voice” has the freedom to call meetings to address members of his/her political party. In this instance, people not affiliated to the political party are secluded and lose interest in attending these meetings.

Some respondents reflected this inability in differentiating between municipal representatives’ double-caps as the source of their frustration regarding what they say are “useless” meetings held by the municipality.

This becomes a challenge for planning as well as participation because if IDP meetings are disrupted on the basis of misunderstandings and participatory communication is defeated and as such, objectives set out by authorities in implementing IDP projects are hindered. Mubangizi & Gray (2010) warn that “a high degree of political awareness is required for participation in joint planning [IDP] processes; thus, communities with low literacy levels are doubly disadvantaged”.

Focus group respondents mentioned that the municipality does alert communities about projects that are on its IDP wish-list, such as water provision, electricity, housing, and refurbishment of public infrastructure, including clinics, schools, and recreational facilities such as sports fields and halls.

However, they also indicated that after the municipality informs them on what it plans to do, they are not included any stages of development. They also mentioned that even at council deliberations where IDP projects are endorsed, they are only allowed to sit at public galleries but they do not take part in these deliberations. From this view, the researcher observed that communities are only involved when information regarding upcoming IDP projects is relayed to them and not during the decision-making process.

On the issue of language, there was a general consensus among all respondents that Tswana discourse is always applied, especially in meetings and there are no

communication barriers during engagements because of the fact that the population within Matlosana Municipality is predominantly Tswana-speaking.

However, community members failed to reflect an understanding of the role which they play in communication relating to IDP frameworks. This was in contrast to the perceptions held by municipal representatives who see themselves as having an autonomous role in local government communication spaces since they are mandated by local government legislations, policies and programmes.

#### **4.2.7. POWER AND CONTROL**

Power and Control, as a theme, was utilised to get an understanding of the respondents' perceptions regarding the whole flow of communication; whether they perceive it to be horizontal, linear, one-way or two-way symmetrical or balanced.

The theme also co-exists with that of community participation and empowerment because it also seeks to ascertain the extent to which respondents perceive their level of participation and what role they think they play in the process of message-exchange and if their communication is participatory. Power, control and citizen participation are related in that they explore how power relations in development spaces affect the success or failure in IDP frameworks.

Esau (2008) illustrates that "citizen participation can result in increased watchfulness over government activities and consequently, enhance relations of trust... [And] citizens, through actively engaging with the state on their needs and satisfaction of these needs, enhance state's responsiveness".

These variables or themes are intertwined in that they reflect a strong and balanced power relationship between state and citizenry, who must remain intra and interdependent in the interest of achieving a common purpose linked to the success of IDP frameworks.

It came out strongly from all focus group and unstructured interview respondents that a municipal representative always takes the lead in all communication interactions. This, they said, is achieved by driving an agenda that is drafted from the onset.

When asked about the issue of balance, unstructured interview respondents maintained that for the purpose of accelerating service delivery in the required space

of time, there is no balance in communication, since the municipality bares the responsibility of spearheading all communication efforts with communities.

On the other hand, focus group respondents also maintained that there are no balances in the process of communication as the meetings at times tend to be controlled and issues that are not on the agenda are not discussed.

One of the respondents mentioned that “if anyone brings out a concern or seeks clarity regarding the project’s specific details, like how many people from our ward are going to be employed and what was the criterion used to appoint contractors, we are asked to put it in writing and promised a response which we never get”.

Another respondent used hand gestures (by throwing hands in the air) and expressed dissatisfaction in the manner that ward councillors hold their meetings. This reaction gave the researcher the impression that the respondent felt quite strongly about playing a certain role in the communication interaction with municipal representatives in the interest of safeguarding community needs.

Here, the researcher observed that communities are partial participants in the communication processes and are not granted the strength for the equitable sharing of both political and economic power.

This goes against some of the factors, as suggested by Msibi & Penzhorn (2010) that necessitate transformative community participation which include knowledge sharing which recognises the need to set the stage for dialogue in order for participation and the use of indigenous knowledge to modify the position of knowledge systems.

In this way, the creation of dominating academia, as well as knowledge generation, acquisition and sharing, become reciprocal processes where people can learn more from each other.

However, since local government is charged with addressing various community needs ranging from infrastructure development such as housing and water to economic development in the main employment creation” (Tshabalala & Lombard, 2009).It is necessary for a certain enforcement of central authority in the spirit of

making progress and adopting an IDP processes that will transform the lives of the locals in a just and equitable and transparent manner.

Coincidentally, this view was raised by one of the municipal representatives, who in the main, raised frustrations regarding some encounters where community members hindered the processes of carrying out IDP meetings. She indicated that these disruptions end up defeating their interest of facilitating interactions with the community and taking that feedback to a municipal council which has the power to give IDP projects a final stamp of approval.

From the literature, it is clear that the state needs to hear the 'voices' of the poor and the civil society sector in both policy making and 'delivery'; protect and expand the public spaces in which the poor can access power and mobilise as citizens; and create a more level-playing field in which citizens can play a meaningful role as partners in development" (Smith, 2007).

The researcher also observed that instead of realising their responsibility of illuminating the previously marginalised citizenry about on their role in IDP deliberations through sharing of information and power relations, municipal representatives justified control over communication efforts by indicating that it is in the interests of "accelerating much needed services to indigent communities".

This observation qualified what is said in theory that contemporary development communication has led to the marginalised community members becoming mere ratifiers of imposed development and social change by those at the helm of a municipal authority (Williams, 2006, Thompson, 2007).

### **4.3. SUMMARY**

In this chapter 3, the rationale for conducting data analysis and reporting was laid as the foundation from this chapter. From the raw data collected, and guidelines from chapter 3, the researcher was able to report on the findings and synthesise the link between empirical research and reduced data. Insight has been gained regarding perceptions held by communities, as well as municipal administrative and political leaders regarding their individual role, and vice-versa in the entire participatory communication process.

The researcher used detailed accounts of respondents and reduced the data without losing the primary meaning intended during focus group and unstructured interviews. This enabled the researcher to accurately demonstrate a summative representation of empirical research and thereby link it to theory, in the interest of yielding a synthesis from a combination of the two processes.

The seven themes of dialogue, community participation, modernisation, planning, power and control, empowerment, and dependency were also used in this part of the study. These themes were instrumental in analysing and reporting on data that was collected. They were also used to form a synthesis or connection with theoretical requirement for participatory communication.

Participant observation also helped to enhance the research process for the purpose of triangulation and making the findings reliable. From what has been generated, the researcher will now be able to provide findings and recommendations in the following chapter. A summative conclusion to the study will also be drawn.

Furthermore, observations made by the researcher during some IDP meetings correlate with William's (2010) critique of contemporary community participation in a post-apartheid era. He states that in most cases, development managers in municipal government seem to be "determined to impose their own truncated version and understanding of 'community participation' on particular communities", instead of affording the previously marginalised citizens an opportunity to guide public participation processes, through a more strategic and balanced participatory approach.

## CHAPTER 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter 1, the main objective of this study was set out, which is “to explore the extent to which participatory communication occurs between stakeholders in the IDP context of Matlosana Municipality, with specific focus on Jouberton Township”.

This charged the study to probe literature related to the principles of participatory approach which underpin local government communication in South Africa; the nature of current procedural communication within Matlosana Municipality’s IDP framework; and, perceptions among stakeholders (municipal representatives and community members) regarding the nature of communication within the Municipality’s IDP frameworks.

In chapter 2, literature referred to the main essence of the study, which is the value of participatory development communication in municipal IDP frameworks. The chapter looked at the extent of participatory development communication in local government and seven themes, namely: modernisation, community participation, dependency, dialogue, and empowerment, planning, power and control. These sub-branches were fused with meta-theory and were used as themes for chapter 4.

Chapter 3 elucidated the qualitative methodology or research design used in the study, and provided theoretical guidelines for data collection and analysis. Through these guidelines, the researcher was able to gather valuable data by conducting focus group and unstructured interviews, and attend various IDP consultative meetings as a participant observer.

In this chapter, the reader gained valuable insight on how the data was collected and the essence of triangulation as a mechanism of ensuring that the findings of the researcher are reliable and dependable.

In chapter 4, the elements underpinning participatory development communication were changed into themes that were used to offer the reader descriptive and reduced data to be utilised by the researcher when making recommendations from

the generated assumptions. Data analysis and reporting in this chapter comprised of empirical data collected from qualitative research methods discussed in chapter 3.

In this chapter, the researcher first answered the specific research questions that were posed in Chapter 1 and then the general research question, the same questions that paved way for the study to be undertaken in the first place.

Objectives discussed in chapter 1, were also looked at in order to validate if the research answered those questions. Additionally, a conclusion and further research opportunities and enhancement for the study are offered to give the reader insight regarding elements that can be taken further but were not explored in detail in the study.

## **5.2. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **5.2.1. PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF IDP CONSULTATIVE FRAMEWORKS**

#### **5.2.1.1. What, according to literature, are the principles of the participatory approach relevant to local government communication in South Africa? *The first specific research question in Chapter 1, section 1.3.***

To answer this question, the researcher had: *to consult literature on the principles of the participatory approach relevant to local government communication in South Africa*

#### **5.2.1.2. ANSWERING THE FIRST SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTION**

The question was answered in chapter 2, during a literature study on the history, value and dynamics surrounding participatory development communication in the context of local government's IDP consultative frameworks. From literature, a rich

history of participatory communication can be traced from the early 1970's, after the dominant paradigm of modernisation was not yielding the anticipated results.

This view expressively put by Escobar (1995) who laments that “instead of the kingdom of abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and repression”.

The modernisation paradigm was based on the assumption that developing countries need to use communication as a mechanism that would bring about social transformation and change, since they ‘inherited’ poor health systems, poverty, illiteracy and a lack of economic infrastructure (Waisboard, 2003). Moreover, various scholars (Waisboard, 2003; Williams, 2006; Mefalopoulos, 2008; Naidoo, 2010) reflect that by the end of the 1980's, it was evident that the promises of modernisation did not occur. Instead, an alternative paradigm of dependency was created.

This was as a result of developing nations heavily relying on western donor-nations for mitigation strategies and debt-relief for their development. Servaes (2002) expresses it quiet clearly that “as a result of the general intellectual ‘revolution’ that took place in the mid-60s, this Euro or ethnocentric perspective on development was challenged by Latin American social scientists, and a theory dealing with dependency and underdevelopment was born”.

In the 1970's, a much people-oriented paradigm known as participation was established. It focused on creating participatory spaces and joint decision-making for those at the receiving end of development initiatives. Smith (2003) argues that participatory communication came about as a direct consequence of people in the developing communities beginning to question the hierarchical top-down approach of development that was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s.

As explained in chapter 2, section 2.2.4, participatory development communication can be used as a strategic tool in local government towards averting potential crises, such service delivery unrests. It can also assist in the production of expertise on participatory approaches at grassroots' level in order to address local challenges.

Essential elements of participatory development communication such as, dialogue, empowerment, and participation, all contribute towards ensuring that objectives and mandates of a municipal government's IDP consultative frameworks are achieved.

In the context of municipal IDP consultative frameworks:

- Dialogue means the process in which a horizontal flow and exchange of messages takes place and there are channels that ensure the provision of feedback;
- Empowerment is the space in which communities are afforded essential information and the professional space to make decisions in the interest of improving their livelihoods; and,
- Participation is the process in which all stakeholders take part in identifying and carrying out development projects and benefit from the fruits they yield, including local economic empowerment.

Through participatory development communication, various scholars (Thompson, 2007; Von Lieres, 2007; Rosener, 2008; Heleba, 2008; Msibi & Penzorn, 2010; Bogopane, 2012) contend that municipalities and communities can enjoy far-reaching benefits such as:

- The creation of mutual trust and understanding of specific service delivery challenges;
- They can participate in implementing decisions, as far as development projects in their areas are concerned;
- A municipality's authority and direction can be welcomed by communities without objection as they will bestow municipal representatives with the responsibility of taking their interests at heart;
- Boosting self-reliance, esteem and confidence of marginalised communities in the interest of creating opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in prudent IDP decision-making processes.

In light of the above, the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) charges a municipal authority with the responsibility of ensuring that it gives effect to the provision of the constitution and: (i) give priority to the basic needs of the local community; (ii) promote the development of the local community; as well as, (iii) ensure that all members of the local community have access to the minimum level of basic municipal services. All these cannot be achieved without the application of elements underpinning participatory communication such as dialogue, empowerment, planning and participation.

### **5.2.1.3. CONCLUSION**

There is much discourse in literature on how participatory communication, if applied, can benefit a municipal authority. From legislation as well as in higher government echelons, the role and importance of participatory communication is recognised and it is seen as an important pillar in ensuring that the objectives of a municipal government are achieved.

Mubangizi & Gray (2010), in a paper on “putting the ‘public’ into public service delivery for social welfare in South Africa, firmly asserted that an overriding goal of policy change [in local government] has been participation. This notion is contextualised in line with the establishment of various policies and white papers adopted by parliament between 1994 and 1998.

These, including the White Paper on Local Government (South Africa, 1998); as well as the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000), provide expressive guidelines on how a municipal authority can use elements of participatory communication to achieve its goals and objects as set out in chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (106 of 1998).

Likewise, various scholars (Hilliard, 1996; Thompson, 2007; Von Lieres, 2007; Heleba, 2008; Ababio, 2009; Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010; Bogopane, 2012), who have observed the absence or lack of participation in local government, also provide recommendations on how a participatory communication approach can be used by a municipal authority to better service its communities.

## **5.2.2. DISCOURSE AND DISCONNECT AMONG MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES AND COMMUNITIES REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN THEIR COMMUNICATION**

### **5.2.2.1. What is the nature of current procedural communication in which the Matlosana municipality communicates within the context of IDP framework? *Second research question in Chapter 1, section 1.3.***

To answer this question, the researcher *analysed the nature of the current procedural communication in which the Matlosana municipality communicates within the IDP framework through participant observation and unstructured interviews with the municipal IDP manager as well as the mayor.*

### **5.2.2.2. ANSWERING THE SECOND SPECIFIC QUESTION**

Municipal representatives referred to various communication platforms used to communicate and invite local communities to IDP meetings (another communication platform) and also indicated different challenges and views, such as:

- Frustrations regarding the lack of understanding and participation in municipal IDP consultative frameworks;
- IDP meetings being disrupted, leading to lose of focus while being reduced to consultations sessions regarding general service delivery inquiries;
- The need to improve communication platforms and maximising attendance of IDP consultative frameworks by younger members of the community.

The representatives of the municipality believe that they have not yet reached an ideal environment where IDP consultative frameworks are serving their true essence in terms of chapter 7 of the constitution (1996): “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; as well as to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government”.

From the unstructured interviews conducted, one representative referred to the establishment of a mobile municipal communications bus, which will “make stops in all areas and interview community members to understand their problems”; while another maintained that maximum usage of a community radio station can help improve interactions between communities and municipal representatives.

From participant observation, it was also discovered that:

- Some meetings end up being disrupted by allegations of corruption and demands related to “abandoned” projects from the previous financial year (RDP houses, toilets, roads, jobs)
- IDP meetings tend to be clouded by other issues outside the scope of earmarked IDP projects such as refuse collection, title deeds inquiries, by-elections in various wards, queries regarding high electricity and rent tariffs, etc.,
- Meetings are mostly attended by the elderly, most of whom do not understand their role in IDP frameworks;
- Most people do not heed to the municipality’s call to meetings, resulting in low attendance.

These observations tally with sentiments shared by Williams (2006), who argues that in most cases, development managers in municipal government seem to be determined to impose their own truncated version and understanding of ‘community participation’ on particular communities instead of affording the previously marginalised citizens an opportunity to guide public participation processes through a more strategic and balanced participatory approach.

### **5.2.2.3. CONCLUSION**

Through the answers obtained from unstructured interviews as well as participant observation, the researcher is able to conclude that even municipal representatives can appreciate that “development of any community is tantamount to active participation of the people” (Leboea, 2003). They also understand that “satisfaction of community needs can hardly be accomplished at a satisfactory or tolerable level without the active involvement of the people in decision making at all levels in IDP processes” (Ababio, 2004).

The researcher was also able to observe that the nature of the current procedural communication in which the Matlosana municipality communicates within the IDP framework is clouded by political communication, where citizens are somewhat forced to accept a bureaucratic approach to participation in IDP consultative frameworks.

### **5.2.3. PERCEPTIONS HELD BY STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION**

#### **5.2.3.1. What are the perceptions regarding the nature of communication among stakeholders in Matlosana municipality and in the Jouberton Township? *Third specific question in Chapter 1, section 1.3.***

To answer this question, the researcher *explored perceptions regarding the nature of communication among stakeholders (the city council, the community, and ward councillors) in the Matlosana municipality and in the Jouberton Township through interviews and focus groups*

#### **5.2.3.2. ANSWERING THE THIRD SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTION**

Participation development communication in local government is a complicated process in that “the mere participation and involvement cannot be considered a panacea for all the ills of society; it is simply a change in process” (Brynard, 1996).

Community members and municipal representatives do not agree on which communication platforms are ideal and efficient in their interactions. This emanates from an artificial gap or a disconnect that exists among them regarding what communities require and what municipal officials think are the most basic needs of citizens.

Furthermore, they all agree that there is a need to improve feedback from the current broadly undesired status quo, where residents do not receive updates regarding issues affecting them, as far as IDP frameworks are concerned. There is a general feeling among residents of disempowerment and in the process, the silo-effect of the “us and them” is observed.

Furthermore, there is also a lack of understating of the purpose of municipal IDP consultative frameworks by community members who, in the process, tend to cloud IDP meetings with unrelated issues such as general service-delivery inquiries. Municipal representatives are often forced to heed to these inquiries otherwise they are accused of perceived corruption and incapacity to render basic services to the community.

However, municipal representatives also capitalise on the platform and relay information regarding upcoming IDP projects in an effort to mitigate the current service-delivery concerns raised by residents. It is from this process that the public does not enjoy full participation because they are unaware of their right to object or amend the IDP wish-list presented by municipal representatives.

#### **5.2.3.3. CONCLUSION**

Through the distribution of power and education to communities, a municipal authority can foster dialogue, empower citizens and maximise participation in the interest of ensuring that there are welcomed spaces for horizontal interaction and robust debates on specific IDP projects within the municipal area. This can also influence attitudes and behavioural predispositions of community members, enabling them to make informed decision during interactions with a transparent and accountable government.

The researcher is able to conclude that community members do not enjoy participation and there isn't a balanced flow of communication among stakeholders.

They also, to a certain extent, do not understand their role in IDP consultative frameworks and they merely participate passively and are not involved in the entire decision-making process relating to IDP projects. Moreover, ward councillors are seen by community members as mere political representatives of a municipal authority who make decisions *for* and not *with* them.

#### **5.2.4. PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE EXTENT OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION IN MUNICIPALITY**

##### **5.2.4.1. To what extent does participatory communication occur between the stakeholders in the IDP context of the Matlosana Local Municipality, in Jouberton Township?** *General research question in Chapter 1, section 1.3.*

To answer this question, the researcher's objective was to *explore the extent to which participatory communication occurs amongst the stakeholders in the IDP context of the Matlosana Local Municipality, with specific focus on the Jouberton Township.*

##### **5.2.4.2. ANSWERING THE GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION**

From observations made during unstructured and focus group interviews, it emerged that participatory communication exists only on paper and the reality is that communities feel that they are denied opportunities to actively participate in shaping their own development.

The municipality does make efforts to engage community members regarding IDP projects in the pipeline and role of community members is limited to that of passive participants. Residents do not have an active voice to serve their interests versus those of municipal representatives.

All respondents have reflected an interest in changing the current status quo regarding the nature of their communication and interaction. It has been agreed that feedback must be maximised and community media platforms such as Star FM and local newspaper, Lentswe, as well as a mobile communication bus should be utilised to strengthen communication among all stakeholders. It became evident from focus group interviews, community members desire “a participatory communication

environment that not only gives room for the expression of diverse ideas on societal developmental concerns, but also facilitates grassroots-level interaction” (Boafo, 2006).

Through their indication that: (i) there is no feedback, (ii) their communication efforts are inefficient, and, (iii) they have to enforce power to take charge of all communication interactions to provide direction, municipal representatives acceded that “Informed discussions and rational debates on the merits and demerits of specific planning programmes are literally non-existent, even though ‘community participation’ features are a key component of planning programmes at the local government level” (Williams, 2006).

Grassroots participatory development communication in local government is essential in developing local communities. Through understanding community needs in a particular hierarchy, not only will a municipal government be in a position to thoroughly address the appalling local socio-economic circumstances, but will also achieve its objective of planning in the interest of bringing about social change and promote a democratic form of governance.

#### **5.2.4.3. CONCLUSION**

Although legislation provides clear guidelines regarding the need for participation of citizens in local government, in practice, this role is misinterpreted. On the other hand, a municipal authority’s role regarding its powers and functions in the interests of serving the marginalised communities is clearly stipulated and municipal representatives end up regarding themselves as donors and not partners in development.

This vacuum or misinterpretation of legislation creates a perception among municipal representatives that their imposition of a one-sided approach towards integrated development planning is correct and protected by law.

Mefalopulos (2008) and Naidoo (2010) warn against this donor-effect when discussing how western countries saw themselves and their role in international development, following the realisation that modernisation approach to development did not really yield the positive results it had promised.

### **5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the above conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

- **THERE SHOULD BE AN ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVOCACY OR INTEREST GROUP**

The researcher believes that through the establishment of an advocacy group which functions like a ratepayers association, a general feeling of disempowerment by community members will be alleviated. This is because the advocacy group, which can take the form of a non-governmental organisation, will be mandated to serve as a vanguard and advocate of the largely illiterate and marginalised community members.

In this way, an independent voice which will objectively guard against political influence will represent the interest of community members and utilise various communication platforms to alleviate challenges faced such as a lack of proper feedback as well as inefficient and undesired communication methods applied by the municipality.

The scope and function of the advocacy group would include educating the community on their role in IDP consultative frameworks, serving as an information bridge and alleviating the “us-and-them” silo effect that currently exists.

By understanding local government programmes and purposes, the interest group can also use the various communication platforms to request feedback from the municipality regarding IDP projects and various issues around implementation for feedback to the community and vice versa.

It is also the researcher’s contention that the proposed establishment of an advocacy group should not mean that current ward committees and councillors are replaced. Instead, they should work together with these democratically elected structures as agents of the people and overseers of IDP consultative frameworks.

- **COMMUNITIES NEED TO BE EDUCATED ABOUT THEIR ROLE IN MUNICIPAL IDP FRAMEWORKS**

Since a municipality has to review its IDP's annually, there is little attention paid to educating communities on the importance of their role in IDP consultative frameworks. Moreover, it is the researcher's observation that the municipal representatives benefit from this general lack of awareness IDP frameworks by the communities through bureaucracy.

It is against this background that an educational program be adopted by Matlosana municipality to raise awareness of IDP frameworks among community members. This will be the first step towards unlocking power imbalances. Once communities are educated, they will be empowered, allowing for more realistic and robust debates regarding IDP projects.

- **DIALOGUE SHOULD BE MAXIMISED WITH THE PROVISION OF FEEDBACK**

Once the community is empowered, dialogue should be facilitated with emphasis on the provision of feedback. It is the researcher recommendation that the scope and functions of the Marketing and Communications units in the municipality be expanded to accommodate a Participatory Communication Rapid Response Team.

The role of this team would be to facilitate on-going dialogues with communities in all wards in all sections of the municipal area. These dialogues would be based on bridging the communication gaps between communities, where grassroots communication approaches would be utilised to foster robust interactions between the community and municipal authority. Here, participatory democracy would be achieved and planning would be critical in ensuring that communities are aware of these on-going dialogues.

Through collaboration with the community-based advocacy group, the Participatory Communication Rapid Response Team would be able to assist the municipality to achieve its objectives as set out in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)

#### **5.4. LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY**

There are several things that the researcher believes could have been done better to enhance this study, namely:

- Data could have been expanded to accommodate more views from community-based organisations as well as ward committee members.

The data collected in this study was based on views from community members and high ranking municipal representatives like Mayor Michael Kgaoue. Other important stakeholders like ward committee members were not consulted. These could have assisted the researcher to gain more insight into the procedural communication in the context of Matlosana municipal IDP frameworks and this could have made the findings of the study more credible as well as more dependable.

- Since participatory communication embeds its roots in international development, a comparative study of IDP frameworks in two or more countries could have been explored.

Development or participatory communication is essential in assisting developing nations eradicate the massive underdevelopment they are exposed to. A comparative study could have been undertaken where the extent of participatory communication in IDP frameworks of municipal governments in two or more countries could have been explored and the findings matched.

This would be for the purpose of assessing if indeed the challenges experienced by communities in country X, are similar as those found in country Y. This would help the researcher with determining whether mitigation strategies in country X can be used to address challenges faced in another country, thereby achieving transferability.

#### **5.5. CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided answers to the posed in chapter 1. The findings and conclusions to each of the question posed were given.

From the findings and conclusions, it is clear that the current form of participatory communication between the Matlosana municipality and residents of in Jouberton Township is ineffective and broadly undesired.

As Clapper (1996) puts it, “government will favour citizen participation activities that do not disturb, but rather support government goals. Any participation that threatens to thwart government ideas and transfer authority to citizens is actively discouraged”.

This was indeed observed that communities do not really enjoy participation and to a certain extent, municipal representatives do not provide platforms for the community to robustly engage and critique or re-shape their own development initiatives.

As indicated in chapter 2, participatory development communication in local government should also be about ensuring that community members are included in equal and fair interpersonal engagements and their views on how they believe their livelihoods can be improved are heard.

Over and above this, a municipal government, being the closest sphere of government to communities, should use IDP frameworks as a mechanism to promote local economic development, direct access to healthcare, free education and access to basic needs and services such as sanitation, electricity and shelter (Leboea, 2003; Mokone, 2007). These, however, cannot be achieved without active participation all communities in IDP consultative frameworks.

## **5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

The study can also be taken further to explore contributions of Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Research in building a dependable, accountable and actively participatory local government. Furthermore, it can also be used to explore the extent to which participatory communication occurs in the North West provincial government and a comparative study across rural municipalities in the province can emanate.

The scope of participatory communication in municipal IDP frameworks covers a wide range of issues, including public administration, strategic leadership and governance. Therefore, this study can be expanded to also explore the impact of a

municipality's strategic planning and governance in maximising the extent of participatory democracy in the context of the IDP framework.

Moreover, findings of the study can be used in action research, where another investigation would be undertaken to evaluate implementation strategies used to mitigate challenges identified by the by the current study. Its objective would be to solve immediate problems and led by municipal representatives and community members who will work together in joint decision-making.

A methodological approach to the study can be ontological in nature, where its impetus would be to explore what the current status quo is and what is becoming of it. A relationship between key variables in participatory communication can be viewed and assessed in the processes.

Simply put, by exploring variables such as dialogue, empowerment, modernisation, power and control, participation, planning, and dependency, the rationale would be to observe a change in the proportions of these variables against each other during the time in which the municipality and community are working together in implementing recommendations made by the current study.

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