

**WARD COMMITTEES AS MECHANISM FOR PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL: THE CASE
OF EMFULeni LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

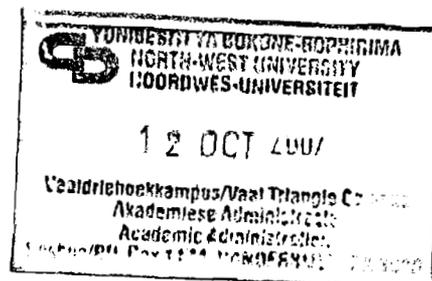
By

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I declare that this dissertation is my work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference.



MJP TSHABALALA

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ABSTRACT

Public participation in affairs of local government is the bedrock of participatory democracy in South Africa. The vehicle for driving it is the system of Ward Committees. Legislation that gives effect to its creation includes the Constitution, the Municipal Structures Act, and the Municipal Systems Act.

The role of local government is not only to provide services that promote sustainable living standards but, in doing so, to also ensure that the community of Emfuleni Local Municipality is involved in council strategies and activities that affect the lives of local communities. The objective of this study is therefore to assess the effectiveness by which Ward Committees become partners in the developmental role of Emfuleni Local Municipality. .

For the purpose of the study, the hypothesis was formulated that ward committees are a strategic structure for public participation on council projects; yet, their effective functioning at Emfuleni Local Municipality is flawed by lack of capacity and administrative support. To test the validity or otherwise of the hypothesis use was made of theoretical review of literature on public participation and ward committees. Further there was an empirical research method of open ended questionnaires that was used to test attitudes and perceptions of councillors, ward committees and the community of Emfuleni Local Municipality on the effectiveness of ward committees.

It was found, amongst others that:

- Ward committees as community structures are well known by the community of Emfuleni Local Municipality
- Majority of respondents were active in elections of ward committees
- There is community participation in community projects as a result of ward committee mobilization
- Ward committee members are popular with the community due to door to door feedback of council activities which they regular give;

- Council gives support to ward committees with some logistics. Committees however, are not empowered in access to council information and in-incentives such as out of pocket allowance.

The study ends with recommendations for management action by Council of Emfuleni Local Municipality.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

KEY WORDS: **Ward committees, public participation, democracy, integrated development and planning**

1.1 ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Public Participation has been defined in various ways by different people, and for a variety of reasons. For example participation has been used to build local capacity and self-reliance, but also to justify the extension of the power of the state. It has also been used for data collection and interactive analysis. According to the Department of Provincial and Local Government (2005:1) public participation is defined as an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision making. It is further defined as a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing an active part in the development and operation of service that affect their lives. Individuals by virtue of citizenship have the right to take part in the life of their community and become involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Definitions of participation are varied, a group of experts appointed by the United States of America defined participation as: “the creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community and the larger society to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development” (Midgely, 1986:24). Burkery (1996:56) defines public participation as participation by the people in the institutions and systems which govern their lives, as a basic human right, and is also essential for realignment of political power in favour of disadvantaged groups and for social and economic development.

Public participation is regarded as intrinsic to participatory democracy, developmental local government and good governance. Participation is defined as a process whereby stakeholders exercise influence over public policy decision, and share control over

resources and institutions that affect the lives of the communities by providing check on the resources and institutions that affect their lives (Burkery 1996:40). Public participation is aimed at promoting direct participation of ward committees in decision making and monitoring process at different levels through decentralized governance and other mechanism for direct connection between citizens and the government (Gaventa 2002:). Such direct participation in governance, it is argued, will strengthen the extent to which those who hold power at different levels are accountable to citizens, and will lead to better enforcement of penalties in case they are unable to do so.

The new system of local government was introduced through the *Municipal Systems Act No 32 of 2000*, and municipalities were correctly positioned as the sphere of government that is best placed to give practical meaning and substance to the basic political commitment, that the People Shall Govern. Minister for Provincial and Local Government Sidney Mufamadi said in his speech “...we said to our people, the local government, together with you, we shall bring democracy to where you live...” (Department of Provincial and Local Government 2005: 1).

The conceptualization of local government has been placed on a cutting edge of addressing basic national challenges as underdevelopment, unemployment, stagnation and poverty. According to the *Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 Section (74(a))*, newly created ward committees play a role in achieving the above through public participation. Being a representative structure of the community and citizens, ward committees need to inform the municipality about the aspirations, potentials and problems of the people. The structures should also form bridge by facilitating proper public participation to council and citizens they represent. Ward committees have an important role to play in actively taking part and determining core municipal process, namely, Integrated Development and Planning, municipal budgeting and municipal performance management process. Without ward committees, the system of democratic government and developmental local government can not be said to be rooted out among the people (National policy framework on public participation 2005:1).

The South African government is committed to form partnership which is genuinely empowering, and not token consultation or manipulation (Department of Provincial and Local Government 2005:10). This involves a range of activities including creating democratic representative structures (ward committees), assisting those structures to plan at a local level (community based planning), to implement and monitor those plans using a range of working group and community based organizations, supporting community based services, and to support the local structures through the cadre of community development workers. Public participation will improve the accountability of structures to each other and to the community they serve, as well as improving the linkages between provincial and national department to their clients, and so to service delivery and policy (Midgely 1986:8).

Ward committees engagements present as one way forward. One definition of ward community engagement used by government is that “it refers to the connections between governments, ward committees, citizens and communities on a range of policy, program and service issue. It encompasses a wide variety of government community interactions ranging from information sharing to community consultation and, in some instances, active participation in government decision making processes” (Queensland Department of Premier 2003: 4)

Roles and responsibility of ward committees are outlined as follows:

- Create formal unbiased communication channels and co-operative partnership between the municipality and the community within a ward.
- Ensure contact between the municipality and community through the use of, and payment for, services.
- Create harmonious relationships between residents of a ward, the ward councilor, geographic community and the municipality.
- Facilitate public participation in the process of development, review and implementation management of the integrated development and planning of the municipality.

- Act as advisory body on council policies and matters affecting communities in the ward.
- Serve as mobilizing agent for community action
- Receive any record complaints from the community within the ward and provide feed back on council's responses (Department of Provincial and Local Government 2005:38).

Emfuleni Ward Committees receive administrative support and logistical support from the Speaker's office. The services and facilities are invariably described as inadequate but given the limited resources and the "New" status of Ward Committee it may not be realistic to expect more, particularly from the budget allocated to ward committees. Emfuleni Local Municipality is concerned about complete lack of communication protocols between the ward committees and council (Department of Provincial and Local Government 2004/5:31).

Ward Committees are dependent on the ward councilor to be able to issue council agendas and conducting meetings and if the councilor who is the chairperson of the ward committee is not committed to his/her work the ward committee is bound to have retarded development that is the council wont know the needs of the community, therefore the council will not be able to allocate funds accordingly. Where key council decisions are centralized, for example in a mayoral executive committee, councilors who are not part of the committee typically feel marginalized from those full time councilors who sit in the inner circle of decision makers, in other words it is important for full time councilor to keep part-time councilors informed about the decisions taken in the mayoral committee especially if the decisions involves the community. Emfuleni councilors should not work in isolation but involve ward committees in decision making in order have to improved service delivery (Department of Provincial and Local Government 2006:66).

In general ward committees experience minimal feedback from council. Ward committees identified the lack of resources and incentives provided by the municipalities

as the main reasons for inefficiency. The sustainability of ward committees is closely linked to the provision of adequate financial, administrative resources and infrastructure (National Policy Framework for Public Participation 2005:7).

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

Ward committees are a strategic structure for public participation on council projects; yet, their effective functioning at Emfuleni Local Municipality is flawed by lack of capacity and administrative support.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For purpose of conducting research for the study, the following questions are posed:

- What is meant by Ward Committees and capacity building?
- What mechanisms and systems exist at Emfuleni Local Municipality in linking ward committees to public participation?
- What are the indicators of success or failure of ward committees at Emfuleni Local Municipality? and
- What recommendation can be offered to add value to capacity building of ward committees in Emfuleni Local Municipality?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study would attempt to realize the following objectives

- To give theoretical exposition of the concepts ward committees and capacity building.
- To describe an overview of the mechanisms and processes on ward committees and public participation at Emfuleni Local Municipality.
- To conduct research into the successes or failures of ward committees at Emfuleni Local Municipality

- To offer recommendation that may add value for management action on improving the functioning of ward committees.

1.5 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The study was undertaken through the usage of various techniques which are classified under qualitative research methods. The following methods were used in undertaking this study namely: Literature review and empirical survey

1.5.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review was used for the theoretical part of the study. Public libraries around Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging, the libraries of North West University were utilised to access the literature that is needed in the study. Government publications such as Acts, White Paper on ward committees, journals, books, reports and local newspapers and internet sources were considered in this regard. Preliminary study done at the above institutions shows that, indeed there were publications on the issue of public participation, and ward committees.

1.5.2 EMPIRICAL SURVEY

According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:44) in stratified sampling a population should preferably be divided into different, clearly recognizable subpopulation or strata. Basically sampling means abandoning certainty in favor of probability. Due to the fact that a large part of population has not been investigated, statement made about the community has been found to be true for the samples are of necessity probability statements (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:86)

A questionnaire is a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate to analysis (Babbie *et al* 2001: 646). Structured questionnaires were constructed with guidance by study leader.

A Semi structured questionnaire to determine the feelings and attitudes of the municipality ward committees and the community was created and distributed to Emfuleni Local Municipality and to the ward committees within Emfuleni area. The questionnaires were randomly distributed among the three categories, which are, politicians from the municipality (Speaker of Emfuleni), the manager in the speaker's office, 20 ward committee members from 20 different wards and ordinary members of the community. The objective was to get the general feeling of these three categories, on the success or failure of the functioning of ward committees at Emfuleni Local Municipality.

Another format that was applied is the face to face interview. This helped in reaching out to 20 members of the community who are not literate and those members of the community who had problems in understanding the questionnaires. Those who could not respond to questions in writing were interviewed face-to-face or via the telephone and their responses were compared statistically to those of respondents.

1.5.2.1 PARTICIPATION AND OBSERVATION

The researcher is the ward committee coordinator in charge of coordinating the functioning of ward committees at Emfuleni Local Municipality. The researcher has, over a period of four years, gained experience in ward committee matters such as election, training, and monitoring of ward committee affairs. This experience brought in first hand knowledge which will richly add to the survey.

1.6 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Orientation and problem statement

- Chapter 2: Theoretical overview of public participation and ward committees
- Chapter 3: Institutional roles of ward committees in Emfuleni Local Municipality.
- Chapter 4: Empirical study on functioning of ward committees in Emfuleni Local Municipality.
- Chapter 5: Findings, recommendation, conclusion.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The new system of local government as introduced in 2000, which was correctly positioned as a sphere of government best placed to give practical meaning and substance to the basic political commitment that people shall govern. It was said to people that through local government, together with the community, democracy will be brought to the people. Conceptualization of local government is placed in a cutting edge of addressing basic national challenges such as underdevelopment, unemployment, stagnation and poverty (Minister of Provincial and Local government, Mr M.S. Mafumadi).

The newly created sub-municipal Ward Committees play a critical role in achieving the above. Ward committees being a representative structure of the community and citizens, they need to inform the municipality about the aspirations, potentials and problems of the people. They should also form bridge by facilitating proper communication between the council and citizens they represent. Local government legislation provides for the establishment of ward committees that will serve as a cord which articulates our system of government to the mass base.

This chapter aims to provide importance of ward committees in public participation. In so doing public participation will be defined. Included in the chapter are different forms of participation, basic assumption underlying public participation and ward committees as communication channel.

2.2 DEFINITION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public Participation is a means (for local authorities) of obtaining information about local conditions, needs, desires, and attitudes. This information may be important to achieve informed and implement decision in the policy management cycle (Brayson 1993:3)

According to Local Government Bulletin (2006:7) public participation is a principle that is accepted by all spheres of government in South Africa. Participation is important in making sure that government addresses the real needs of the community in the most appropriate way. Participation also helps in building an informed and responsible community with the sense of ownership of government development and projects. It allows municipalities to get buy in and to develop partnership with stakeholders

Public participation is a means of fostering equality. This is based on the democratic principle that all citizens should have an equal opportunity to exert influence through participation in the planning process of the local authority if they choose to do so (Atkinson 1992:7)

Public participation is defined in the Draft Policy Framework by Department of Provincial Local Government as "...an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision making". It further states that public participation is a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing active part in the development and operation of services that affects lives (DPLG, 2005:5)

2.3 DIFFERENT FORMS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There are varieties of legal requirements needed by local authorities to consult with the public, most of which are the responsibility for individual service areas. The questionnaire is designed to cover both statutory and voluntary consultation.

The quantitative survey questionnaire provided a list of nineteen different approaches to engage the public from traditional method such as public meetings and consultation documents, to the more innovative approaches like visioning exercises and interactive website. Authorities were asked a range of questions relating to each form of public participation.

According to Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London, (2002:10) for the purpose of analysis, different forms of participation have been divided into four categories:

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

2.3.1 Focus of participation

A firm belief by the local authority in the value of participation in the processes of planning is important but not enough. Participation should reflect careful attention to the design and facilitation of the process. An important facet to the processes is to determine the focus of participation, which refers to the question of who should participate in the planning processes.

It is argued that this is likely to depend on whether the planning process is focused on an institution, a programme or a community. If the focus is on an institution, then the participants are more likely to be insiders, with less involvement by outsiders. If the focus is on a programme then more public participation with less inside participation is likely. If the focus is on a community then extensive community participation is almost obvious

(Bryson 1993:3). In the latter focus of participation, the participation may be based on a geographic locality, a shared interest, or a service orientated basis (Boaden et al 1982:17). Participation may be the response to a threat, and thus relatively transient, or may develop by means of long standing membership of and relationship with local government authorities (Atkinson 1992:17). The most obvious participants in local government activities are ward communities, community, landowners, business people, employees, shoppers, and users of services provided by the local authority. In the South African context, civic associations are important participants because civics have been central actors in the establishment of a tradition of activism in civil society.

A major problem of the participation process in practice is getting the relevant people involved. Care must be taken to ensure that the communities who become involved are representative of the general public. The contradiction here is that participation in public management is essential to have, but difficult to generate. In practice it is often found that only a few interested but often unrepresentative groups of people are prepared to make the effort. Therefore in spite of the philosophical and practical arguments for community participation in public management, the participation exercise will operate only as well as those in the local authority will allow it to (McConnell 1981:121)

2.3.2 Strategies for community participation

There is a diverse range of community participation strategies. These strategies range widely in creativity, complexity and the type of technology used. There is no single recipe for selecting the right combination of strategies for a particular process and each strategy has advantage and shortcoming. Attaining affective, efficient and equitable community participation depends largely on choosing the appropriate combination of strategies to be used (Integrated Environmental Management Information Series, 2002:14; Theron, 2005b:123)

The various strategies for community participation can be classified into a variety of groups depending on one's interest, for example information sharing, consultation,

decision making and initiating action (Kok and Gelderbloem, 1994:65). In the paragraphs below, these four groups will be discussed.

2.3.2.1 Information sharing strategies

Information sharing strategies do not constitute community participation because they merely require the community to judge a finished or almost finished product. An example of this kind of strategy is information documentation. Examples of information sharing strategies include exhibitions, media coverage and audio and visual material (Kok and Gelderbloem, 1994:66). According to Taylor (1994:195), “project beneficiaries tend to be passive respondents”. Information sharing strategies are referred to as “participation as means to an end”, because participation is generally short term. Emphasis is placed on achieving the objective and not so much on the act of participation itself (Theron, 2005b:117). There is no channel provided for feedback (Arnstein, 1969:219). The primary concern is not about gaining long term social advantage and sustainable development, but rather what community participation contributes to the end product (Meyer and Theron, 2003:3)

2.3.2.2 Consultation strategies

An example of this kind of strategy is referenda, which are relatively expensive strategies and which allow democratic community participation, especially between elections. Other examples include questionnaires surveys as well as the depth and focus group interviews (Kok and Gelderbloem, 1994:69). The project beneficiaries need to respond to project management at various stages, which is why they should be more reactive in their action (Taylor, 1994: 195). There is no share in decision making by the community (Theron, 2005b: 115)

2.3.2.3 Decision making strategy

Examples of decision making strategies include public meetings and hearings. Decision making strategies very often involve a one way flow of information from the planners to the public. Another example is the Delphi strategy. This strategy entails no more than

three or four rounds of questionnaires that allows views to be expressed anonymously (Kok and Gelderbloem, 1994:195)

2.3.2.4 Initiating action strategy

Under this, one can include self-help manuals, for example those of housing standards or layouts. The workshop approach, which is also included in this strategy, allows residents to form groups in order to assess specific problems. Planning teams are established to deal with specific problems, and problems may include the responsibility for resolving upcoming conflicts (Kok and Gelderbloem, 1994: 74). Community participation is not just the means to achieve goals, but is seen as a right (Theron, 2005b:115).

Other strategies for community participation include participation for material incentives, functional participation and self mobilization. In the former strategy, people participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for material rewards. This help to reduce overall costs, and participants in return receive a resource (Raniga and Simpson, 2002:182). Theron (2005b:115) states that people have no stake in prolonging activities when incentives end. When people participate by joining groups to implement projects, usually after important decisions have been made; it is referred to as functional participation. Self mobilization is found where people participate by joining groups and by taking initiatives independently of any external organization (Regina and Simpson, 2002:182). The people themselves retain control over how resources are used. This bottom-up approach allows people to develop contacts with external institutions for resources and the technical advice they need (Theron, 2005b:115)

2.4 ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMUNITY

2.4.1 Representative and participatory democracy

There are two main forms of democracy:

- Representative democracy: where people elect representative to make decision on their behalf. Local government councilors are elected directly by residents to

represent their interest in local council. Councillors get mandate from the voters based on their election manifesto. This is a form of representative democracy.

- Participatory democracy: where people make all decision themselves. All the people affected participate in the decision making and there are no representatives who can decide on their behalf. This can work in small communities or organization where everyone can meet to discuss and decide an issue. An example of participatory democracy would be all parents of the school meeting to decide whether to change the school uniform.

Effective local democracy needs a combination of representative and participatory democracy. While elected councilors make the ultimate decision, residents should be consulted as much as possible.

Councilors receive a mandate from communities when they are elected to serve on the council. Local Government elections are held every five years, between elections, decisions taken by the council impact on the lives of local residents. Communities are continuously undergoing change. They are confronted by day to day problems. The nature and the cause of problems also change over a period of time (Local Government in South Africa 2005:29).

2.4.2 Why participate?

Dauids & Maphunye (2005:129) state that government practice does not solely involve decision-making. Public participation before and after decision-making is fundamental to improving the quality of decisions made and to improve compliance. Fundamental above all, it is important that authority is not only well-informed on technical issues before making decisions, but also on citizens' needs. With participation prior to decision-making, authorities can better reflect public opinion when making their decisions. After decision-making, the public can participate by controlling the means for enforcement and in the joint management of the decision. Without this participation, the decision will likely lead to failure.

2.4.3 How can one participate?

There are different forms and institutional mechanisms of participation. Each mechanism has its particular characteristics, its strengths and weaknesses. It is difficult to state whether certain forms of participation are better than others; in general, viability and efficiency of any form or mechanism depends on the political, social, economic and cultural context where it is developed. In the next sections, the different forms of participation are discussed.

2.4.3.1 Public hearing

A public hearing is a formal meeting between citizens and government authorities in order to discuss a particular subject, such as a bill, a municipal by-law or any other type of decision to be made by the government. These meetings are carried out during the decision-making process; in general public hearings occur at both the legislative and executive level (Emfuleni Local Municipality; Rules for Ward Committees 2003:41).

Public hearings have many advantages for both citizens and government authorities. Listed below are some examples:

For Citizens:

- The opportunity to share their opinion, criticize and influence public decisions
- The opportunity to learn other citizens' perspectives that take into account environmental, social and/or economic considerations.
- The freedom of speech and to be heard
- The opportunity to reach consensus

For Decision makers:

- The opportunity to communicate with a variety of social actors.
- The opportunity to strengthen the quality of their decisions by having them more clearly reflect the claims and aspirations of the addressees.
- The opportunity to access more information

- The opportunity to achieve and demonstrate more transparency in the decision-making process (Draft guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees 2003: 14).

2.4.3.2 Referendum as participation strategy

A referendum is a widespread kind of semi-direct form of democracy. Citizens vote in favour of or against a proposal to establish a new norm or to modify or revoke an existing one. This kind of public participation has a binding effect: government authorities must accept and implement citizens' decisions. It is important to distinguish this kind of participation from others that are not binding, such as public hearings.

Countries that use referendums establish the legal criteria, forms and topics that can be involved in this kind of participation on a case-by-case basis. There are several Central and Eastern European countries (e.g. Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) where public participation in environmental decision-making is based on the constitutional right to launch a referendum or legislative initiative. Local referendums on environmental issues have been held rather often in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (Burkery S, 1996:88).

2.4.3.3 Public Participation in Municipal Budgets (Presupuesto Participativo)

A participatory budget is a new and revolutionary public participation and public accountability instrument whereby people have the opportunity to participate in the elaboration and control of the State budget (thus far only used at the Municipal level). In a neutral space, authorities and the public meet to reach an agreement on how to transfer public priorities into public policy agendas. A participatory budget provides citizens with a mechanism for controlling or influencing the government's use of public resources.

In looking at the participatory budget experience in Porto Alegre, Brazil that started in 1989, it is possible to identify some common criteria needed in the implementation of this public participation tool:

- Citizen participation must be guaranteed, without needing to belong to any particular organization or association.
- The methodology must adapt to legal norms and social behaviors of each particular region. On the one hand, this implies the need for a legal body to establish who will be the political representatives at the consultation, when the meetings will take place, and the consultation process. On the other hand, however, the proceeding must be kept informal and flexible enough so that each community or region can adapt its own system that can also be modified over time.
- The participation process must be open and deal with broad-based issues, from the way the state spends financial resources to different forms of financing expenditures (such as through privatization or by accruing public debt).
- Public participation must also include management control and accountability.
- In principle, opinions given in the participatory budget process are not binding; however if the decision made by the state differs from the one stated by the public, grounds for the decision must be justified

2.4.3.4 Do we have to organize to participate?

The need to organize depends on the type of public participation. In the case of an individual proceeding, rather than an organization, previous preparation or training is obviously needed. Individual participation in public issues can occur when somebody files a petition against the state, proposes a project or questions decisions (Environmental Information 1997:9).

Conversely, collective participation requires a system, and a system implies a form of organization. In modern democracies, one of the forms of addressing participation is through associations created in order to pursue certain goals. Most people are familiar

with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These are non-governmental entities dealing with public interest issues.

2.4.3.5 Non governmental organizations: a new space for participation

According to Global Legislators Organization for Balanced Environment (1995:9) NGOs have emerged as valuable global players in defense of certain issues such as the environment, consumer rights and human rights. Their different types of activities have become valuable arenas for public participation. NGOs allow people to organize around fundamental issues, empower citizens and generate solidarity when facing government authorities. Historically this political role was reserved for businesses, churches and unions.

At present NGOs provide an outlet for those who "do not have voice"; in other words marginalized members of society who do not belong to powerful associations nor occupy high-ranking positions. Many people join NGOs to take action and organize around a common issue.

2.5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN CONTEXT

Local government is regarded as the level of government 'closest to the people', the core of all legislation that has been put in place is to find ways that ensures that, citizens give input to the decisions that affect them at all level (Ward Committee Resource Book 2005:10).

International experience has shown that citizen and community participation is an essential part of effective and accountable governance at local level. A great deal has been written about the legal and policy arrangements for citizens' participation in different countries around the world. International experience has shown that one way of achieving successful and lasting models to ensure that citizen participation takes place is through establishing structured and institutionalized framework for participatory governance. Structured and institutionalized models of participation generally work when

citizens see them as legitimate and credible, where there is political commitment to their implementation and they have legal status.

Structures and institutional models of participation will not work when:

- They try to co-opt independent and legitimate voices within civil society
- There is no definite political commitment to the model
- The system exists in principle (that is, it sounds good on paper) but when it comes to carrying it out, the necessary resources are not available.

In discussion about South Africa local government, there are work principles for participation in the calls for:

- Bringing citizens more effectively on board when it comes to local governance and development
- Making government more responsive to the peoples needs and aspirations
- Empowering citizens to fulfill their potential partnerns with government
- Deepening democracy beyond dimension into a more participatory system

2.5.1 Public participation in local government

The Constitution of South Africa (1996) and legislation such as chapter 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (2000) and Chapter 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (1998) provide a powerful legal framework for participatory local democracy and ward committees in particular. Ward committees were included in the legislations as a way of providing an opportunity for communities to be heard at the local government level in a structured and institutionalized way. Ward committees are the structures that make it possible to narrow the gap between local municipality and communities, since ward committees have the knowledge and understanding of the citizens and communities the represent.

In 2004 a survey by the Australia-South Africa Local Governance Partnership suggested a few simple pre-conditions for the ward committee system to be successful. These include the need:

- For the process of participation to be meaningful and to be seen as meaningful
- For both parties- the municipality and the public to listen to each other rather than just talk to each other
- To make it clear at the outset that makes the final decision, for example, if the views of the community are different to that of council, whose view will prevail?
- For resources to support the process in all examples of good practice, public participation is funded. In some cases public participation is the object of a special programme, such as the renowned participatory budget process in Porto Alegre, Brazil, which involves thousands of community members each year supported by a team of municipal employees dedicated to facilitating the process
- To ensure that information relevant to the participative process is conveyed in a manner that is relevant and understandable to the communities involved, which may require the use of local languages
- To understand the distinction between:

Providing information

Consultation

Participation

And being clear which is being used in particular circumstances

Community problem solving is central to the idea of citizen participation. The traditional form of representative democracy works well at the state and provincial levels, but it has not been enough for the local level of government and administration. Communities have to take responsibility for themselves that includes individual citizens, business and ward committees which have to find ways to assist them in improving the quality of life of their communities.

In reality the notion community participation creates a major and fundamental anomaly. The idea of community participation arises from classical theory of democracy, yet the

structure of modern government is not that of pure democracy, but that of a republic. Community interests are to be cared for indirectly by the actions of elected representative and the policies determined are to be implemented by bureaucrats acting in organizations that are very antithesis of democracy. In reality, the anomaly of citizen participation is that democratic expectations have been imposed on governmental structures that were never designed to function democratically. The conflict between the structures of government are community participation concerns and fundamental problems of implementing community participation (Bekker ,1996 :55)

According to Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2005:113) putting public participation as concept and strategy into context calls for definition, or as stated in the Manila Declaration for a re-clarification of the term. As with other key concepts in the “development growth industry”, public participation as a concept defines attempts to package it in single statement. This in itself is positive. Definition should not serve as blueprints but should be dealt with as part of a social learning process, more so those which relate to grass roots interaction.

Public participation is an elusive concept which acts as an umbrella term for a new style of development planning intervention. It is impossible to suggest a development strategy or intervention which is not in some way “participatory”, but this does not mean that development strategists, policy makers or the public agree on what public participation is and how it should be implemented (World Bank 1996a; IAP2 2000; Johnson 2003).

Emfuleni Local Municipality operates within an international environment through for example the Municipal International Relations and must as a result adhere to international norms and standards. It is therefore within this context that Emfuleni must take into consideration the emerging international trends. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has developed the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which must also be taken into consideration when dealing with the delivery of service to the people or their cap agitation thereof (Sedibeng Status Quo Report 2004).

The National and Provincial government recognize the need to support municipalities to deliver their constitutional mandate of service delivery taking cognizance of extreme capacity constraints of Emfuleni Local Municipality (United Nations Development Programme).

2.5.2 Basic assumptions underlying public participation

Public participation has been defined in various ways by different people, and for a variety of reasons. For example participation has been used to build local capacity and self-reliance, but also to justify the extension of the power of the state. It has also been used for data collection and interactive analysis. There is a need to promote public participation.

Research for DPLG has shown that public participation is promoted for four main reasons. Firstly, public participation is encouraged because it is a legal requirement to consult. Secondly, it could be promoted in order to make development plans and service more relevant to local needs and conditions. Thirdly, participation may be encouraged in order to hand over responsibility to services and promote community action. Lastly, public participation could be encouraged to empower local communities to have control over their own lives and livelihoods.

Basic assumptions underlying public participation include:

- Public participation is designed to promote the values of good governance and human rights;
- Public participation is acknowledged as fundamental right of all people to participate in the governance system;
- Public participation is designed to narrow the social distance between the electorate and elected institutions;
- Public participation requires recognizing the intrinsic value of all people, investing in their ability to contribute to governance processes;

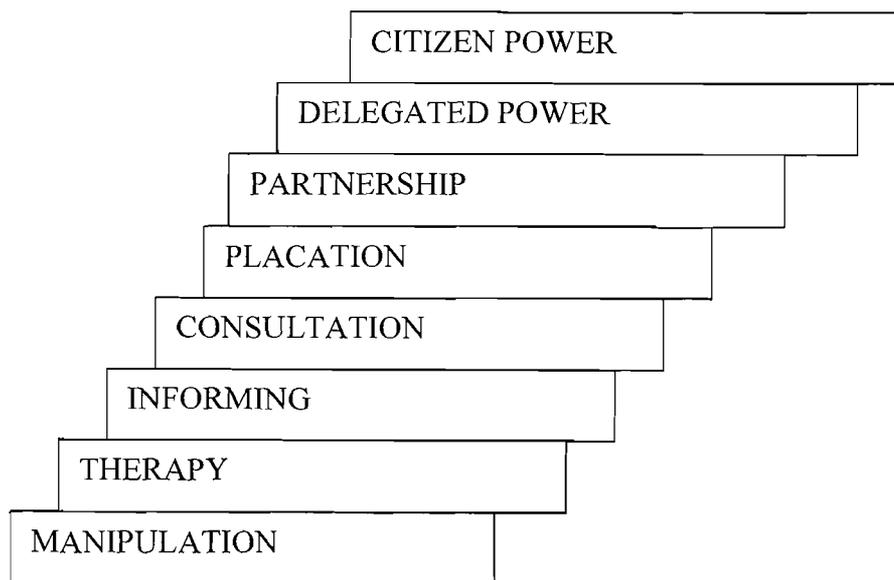
- People can participate as individuals, interest groups or communities more generally (UNISA Press on line journals 2003:3).

In South Africa in the context of public participation community is defined as a ward, with elected ward committees. Hence ward committees play a central role in linking up elected institutions with the people, and other forums of communication reinforce these linkages with communities like the izimbizo, roadshows, the makgotla and so forth.

2.5.3 Levels of public participation

Public participation means different things to different people. One common method of categorizing participation is that Arnstein (1969), as shown in figure 2.1 and Box 1. The degree of involvement ranges from manipulation to citizen control.

Figure 2.1 Ladder of participation



Source: Arnstein 1969:2

Ladder of participation

Citizen power- people participate by taking initiatives independently of external institution for resource and technical advice they need, but retain control over how

resources are used. An example of citizen control is self government- community makes the decision.

Delegated power- in this regard government ultimately runs the decision-making process and funds it, but communities are given some delegated powers to make decisions. People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. As groups take over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.

Partnership- an example is joint projects- community has considerable influence on the decision making processes but the government still takes responsibility for the decision. Participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement tends to arise only after external agents have already made major decisions, participation may also be for material incentives where people participate by contributing resources, for example, labour in return for food, cash or other material incentives.

Placation- the community is asked for advice and token changes are made

Consultation- community is given information about the project or issue and asked to comment- e.g. through meetings or survey- but their view may not be reflected in the final decision, or feedback given as to why not. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision making.

Informing- community is told about the project- e.g. through meetings or leaflets; community may be asked, but their opinion may not be taken into account.

Therapy- people participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses.

Manipulation- participation is simply a pretence, e.g. with "people's" representatives on official boards but who are not elected and have no power, or where community is selectively told about a project according to an existing agenda. The community's input is only used to further this existing agenda (Arnstein 1969:2) National Policy Framework on Public Participation.

2.5.4 Principles of community participation

Federation of European Green Parties (1995: 12) works according to this principle:

- a) the legitimacy of community participation in the making of law and policy should be established as an underpinning principle of all actions of government;
- b) all individuals and community groups should be given opportunity to participate in decision which affect them;
- c) the contribution of diverse groups provides a valuable addition to available information;
- d) the needs of future generation should be recognized in contemporary decision making;
- e) the decision should be made at the most appropriate level; in some cases this will include groupings not currently given decision making status, such as neighborhood;
- f) Every effort should be made to give marginalized group opportunities to be effectively involved in decision making. This will entail longer time lines and the introduction and strengthening of community development practices. Outreach beyond written submission and public forum techniques will be required;
- g) Community participation in decision making should be an ongoing process, rather than one of event which leaves communities out of reviews and change to policies;

- h) Policies, strategies and frameworks should be developed which enable civic infrastructure to facilitate community participation in the business of government;
- i) Involvement in community consultations should be recognized as work. Support should be provided to community organization to participate in consultative processes;
- j) The ability of community groups and individuals to gain access to information which will empower them to participate effectively is crucial to meaningful participation; and
- k) Governments, of all three spheres should produce the following guidelines to ensure that the community representatives whom they consult on a day to day basis reflected accurately the views of the constituencies.

Section 16, of the Systems Act sets out two important principles for community participation:

Participatory governance should not permit interference with a municipal council's right to govern and to exercise the executive and legislative authority of the municipality. The municipal council, which is the product of representative democracy, not only has the sole legal mandate to govern but also, and more importantly, the political legitimacy to do so.

Given the pre eminence of the formal representative structure, participatory democracy is there to 'complement' the politically legitimate and legally responsible structures. This means that any community participatory structure may merely add to the formal structures of government, and not replace or substitute them. While every council must comply with the broad principle of participatory democracy, councils have the discretion to decide whether or not they want to establish ward committees. Where ward committees are established, the principles of participatory democracy also apply to this system.

2.6 WARD COMMITTEES AS COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

The primary function of ward committee is to be a formal communication channel between the community and the council. In terms of Section 74(a) of the Structures Act, a ward committee may make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward to the councilor or through that councilor to the council. Furthermore, a ward committee would be a proper channel through which communities can lodge their complaints. It would also be a forum for communication between the ward councilor and the ward community about municipal issues and development and service options.

A ward committee should, in a broad sense, be a communication channel for the entire ward community. The ward committee cannot merely reflect and replicate the existing configuration of the elected council. That would amount to double representation. Nor should it function as a communication channel for the winning party only. The councilor and his or her supporting political structure already perform this function.

A ward committee should also not provide a forum for the losing candidate to fight the municipal elections all over again.

With regard to composition of ward committees, Section 73(3) of the Municipal Structures Act merely states that the procedures for electing members must take into account the need for women to be equally represented in a ward committee and for a 'diversity of interests' in the ward to be represented. The philosophy behind this provision is that the interests that have not been accommodated through the formal political processes should be included in municipal governance. The reference to 'a diversity of interests' stress this point; it should be an inclusive processes.

2.6.1 Other functions of ward committees

Section 74(b) of the Structures Act provides that a council may delegate specific municipal duties and powers to a ward committee. It is difficult to conceive what executive functions a ward committee should be entrusted with. Once a ward committee

is given delegated powers, the issue of election procedures will become contested. Any election procedure, unless it is simply a replication of the councilor election process, will be inherently problematic and provide an insecure base from which to launch executive decision. It is therefore suggested that no executive functions be delegated to ward committees. Apart from its primary communication function, a ward committee could also be an important mobilizing agent for community action. The Masakhane campaign could, for example, be bolstered by the participation of such committees. They can also plan an important part in mobilizing partnership for the development of local projects. The ward committee cannot prescribe to the ward councilor how to vote in council meeting. However, it may well call on the ward councilor to resign and pass motions of no confidence in him or her, but it may not impede any of the activities of the councilor in the ward (Local Government Law Bulletin Vol. 3 No. 1 April 2001).

2.7 UNDERSTANDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people. Many basic services are delivered by local municipalities and local ward councilors are the politicians closest to the communities. Organizations that play an activist and/or developmental role should understand how local government works and how to influence it.

The South African government has clear policies that local municipalities and councilors should be sensitive to community views and responsive to the local problems. Partnership should be built between civil society and local government to address local issues. A number of laws outline participation processes that municipalities have to use to consult the community. This guide is part of the series that explains different aspects of local government and the mechanisms for participation and consultation that organization can access (Developmental Local Government 2006:1).

The guides of local government are:

- Understanding local government
- Ward committees

- Integrated development planning
- Municipal budgets and finance

Municipal service delivery

2.7.1 Developmental local government

The local government elections held on the 5 December 2000 were the first fully democratic local elections in South Africa. New municipal boundaries were drawn that included every part of the country and broke the old apartheid divisions.

The White Paper on Local Government states that local government must play a “developmental role”. The Constitution states that government must take reasonable steps, within available resources, to ensure that all South Africans have access to adequate housing, health care, education, food, water and social security.

Developmental local government means a local government committed to “work 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”. It should target especially those members and groups within the communities that are most often marginalized or excluded, such as women. Disabled people and very poor people (White Paper, 1998)

Municipalities face great challenges in promoting human rights and meeting human needs, addressing past backlogs and problems caused by apartheid planning, and planning for a sustainable future. Municipality can only meet this challenges by working together with local citizens, communities and business, and adopting a developmental approach.

2.7.2 Developmental local government and economic growth

Whatever a municipality does should be done to impact as much as possible on the social development of an area. In particular, municipalities must be serious about their responsibility to provide services that meet the basic needs of the poor in their communities in cost effective and affordable manner. This could be achieved in two ways:

Firstly municipalities should provide some relief for the poor. Government policy is to provide a free basic amount of services, particularly water and electricity to households that otherwise do not have access to these services. They can also promote social development through arts and culture, the provision of recreational and community facilities, and the delivery of social welfare services.

Secondly municipalities have great influence over local economic development and therefore need to work in partnership with local business to improve business to improve job creation and investment. It is not the role of local government to create jobs but it can take active steps to improve the conditions in the area for the creation of employment opportunities. When municipalities provide basic households infrastructure such as water and sewage, contracts should preferably be given to local small business that will employ local people. Other programmes that could be initiated to alleviate poverty and enhance job creation are for example, the provision of support services, such as training to small business or community development organization (Davids and Maphunye 2005:60).

2.7.3 Integrating and co-ordinating

In most local areas there are many different agencies that contribute towards the development of the area, such as national and provincial government departments, parastatals like Eskom and Spoornet, trade unions, community groups and private sector organization. Developmental local government must provide leadership to all those who have a role to play in achieving local prosperity. One of the most important methods for achieving greater co-ordination and integration is integrated development.

2.7.4 Democratizing development

Municipal council plays a central role in promoting local democracy. In addition to representing community interests within the council, councilors should make sure that citizens and community groups are involved in the designs and delivery of municipal programmes. Ward committees and community consultation are important ways of achieving greater involvement.

Municipalities can also do a lot to support individual and community initiatives, and direct them to benefit the area as a whole. The involvement of youth organization in this regard is particularly important

2.7.5 Leading and learning

Extremely rapid changes at the global, national and local levels are forcing local communities to rethink the way they are organized and governed. All over the world communities must find new ways to sustain their economies, build their societies, protect their environments, improve personal safety and eliminate poverty.

The leadership of a developmental municipality should stay on top of developments and change. They should be able to strategize, develop visions and policies and mobilize a range of resources to meet basic needs and achieve developmental goals in the area (Developmental Local Government 2006:3).

The White Paper also identifies three approaches that can assist municipalities to become more developmental:

- Integrated development planning, budgeting and performance monitoring
- Performance management
- Working with the public partners (Davids and Maphunye 2005:60)

2.7.6 Identification of interest groups

Interest groups that should be accommodated are those that are directly relevant to the core business of the municipality. In other words, they must relate to the municipality's key performance areas in that ward.

The interest groups and formations in civil society are varied and can be categorized as follows:

Service or municipal –directed groups

Some civil society organizations are formed with the specific goal of ensuring performance by a municipality in key performance area. Such organization includes community based organizations (CBOs) and ratepayers' associations. These structures will obviously be candidates for inclusion. However, where such structures have been political actors in the election campaign, they would already have representation in the council, and should be included.

For most initiatives local authorities tend to involve the whole population rather than targeting particular groups or neighborhoods, most of the initiatives often involve the whole community. In particular, complaints and suggestion schemes, other opinion polls, interactive websites and citizens' panels are most predominantly used to consult whole population (or representative samples) as opposed to being used to engage particular citizen groups or neighborhoods (Public participation in local government 2002:19).

Because the wide range of municipal function and powers, many interest groups could claim an interest in municipal matters. With a maximum of ten members of ward committee, one should select from a broad range of interest groups those who would most be relevant to the key performance areas of the municipality in a particular ward. Key performance areas in a ward are those identified through the integrated development planning (IDP) process.

In most wards, key performance areas relate the major services that must be delivered namely, water, electricity, sanitation, roads and storm water. Other social services that are important include health, safety and security. There is no list of key performance areas. Additional areas can be identified through the IDP process.

Some key performance areas could be linked to a particular ward. For example, where a large truck stop along a national road is situated in a particular ward, leading to high prevalence of HIV/Aids in that ward, the combating of Aids would be a key performance area for that ward. The same applies to economic development in wards where central business districts are located. The identified key performance areas of a particular ward should thus be used to identify interest groups.

2.7.7 Specialist groups

The second set of interest groups comprises organization that focus on a particular issue, which may or may not intersect with municipal activities. A council should thus identify those groups whose specific areas of interest relate directly to the ward's key performance area, community safety forums may be appropriate interest groups. Other interest groups may include business chambers, informal trader associations, and environmental groupings.

2.7.8 Involving communities in development

According to World Summit 2002 in order to embrace the mentality of cooperation and friendship this must be initiatives to form societies. There must be a commitment to fundamental transformation that brings about hope and security for all citizens, now and in the future. Citizens and groups within communities must be brought to the centre of partnership with government in order to find sustainable solutions to economic, social and material needs. This is the vision of the South African Government captured in the programme of transformation that is centered on developing a strong local government

sphere that is responsive, innovative and capable of coordinating service delivery and economic development.

This is the vision that embraces the principles of Agenda 21 adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio, 1992. South Africa was fortunate in the sense that it had the opportunity to reflect on the 1992 summit in preparing a new constitution following the first democratic elections held in 1994, following out the new constitution in a series of policies and legislation that are already in the process of implementing. Key amongst this is the White Paper on Local Government (1998), the Municipal Systems Act (2000), and the Municipal Structures Act (1998).

2.7.9 COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Access to information is critical in enabling all citizens, particularly the poor and marginalized, to use their rights and to entrench a people-centered, participatory democracy. The task of eradicating poverty and joblessness in our country requires the active participation of all people. Much as it is important for government to bring all its citizens on board in the transformation process, it is equally necessary that civil society plays an active role in the reconstruction and development of society.

National framework on public participation Gauteng (2006:10) the Gauteng government has embarked on a vigorous programme to communicate effectively with people about key priorities and challenges for the provincial government. The focus has also been on broadening people's access to information they can use improved access to information, they can use to improve access to service and to work together with government in bringing about change for the better in their own lives and in the province as a whole. Two way communication, interaction and dialogue have given ordinary Gauteng residents and sectors of civil society an opportunity to voice opinion

2.8 BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO ENGAGE WITH MUNICIPALITIES

The issue of the agency of poor people in particular, what contributes towards their attitude and opinion formation, and whether they can be motivated to engage with policy debates came up resoundingly in discussion forums with civil society stakeholders. Participants felt strongly that the satisfaction of basic needs has an impact on people's ability to engage with policy processes, and that those lacking in basic service delivery experience a sense of alienation from government.

In addition, several authors refer to basic resources and capacity required by participants to make full use of government participatory processes. Cornwall speaks of the need to assess what work is required with groups prior to their participation in a process, to ensure that they participate with greater equity (Cornwall 2004). This includes as a starting point capacity building to develop an understanding of the policy framework and process, and enhance technical and planning capacities (Logolink 2002).

It also extends to include improved advocacy skills to mobilize and organize outside of the policy arena to challenge any barriers to participation, as well as essential awareness-raising and conscientisation (Gaventa 2003; Kabeer 2005). The important role played by NGOs in providing support to participatory initiatives is acknowledged, including providing marginalized groups with access to information and material support, as well as establishing 'vertical lines' of communication, linking grassroots issues and structures with national processes (Stiefel and Wolfe 1994: 207).

Issues raised by civil society groups in their discussion forums support this thinking. The Community Based Organisation group noted particularly that CBOs tend to lack information on how to work with government and how to get involved in planning and policy-making, stating that they often just do not know whom they are supposed to speak to. For this group to engage, they felt that there is a need to identify the problems they face, noting that people tend to be intimidated by those who are educated, and need to be encouraged to participate.

2.9 CONCLUSION

It is clear that ward committees have great potential to bridge the growing divide between communities and municipalities, and facilitate greater community involvement in municipality planning. For these entities to fulfill this role will require a multi-faceted response addressing the shortcomings and recommendations outlined above. This will require more than the allocation of significant resources to fund interventions such as training, consultative processes and information dissemination, but also the development of appropriate internal systems and guidelines, and appropriate attitudes and responses from municipality councillors and officials.

Nonetheless, participation is essential to sustaining democracy and promoting good governance and administration. As a perception could arise that the public is interfering in the running of the country, governments often unsettled by, irritated with communities who persistently demand open and transparent governance. This perception should be addressed as quickly as possible to insure democratic principles are upheld at all times.

CHAPTER 3

INSTITUTIONAL ROLES OF WARD COMMITTEES AT EMFULENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Emfuleni Local Municipality is committed to a form of participation which is genuinely empowering, and not token consultation or manipulation. It involves a range of activities including creating democratic representative structures (ward committees), assisting those structures to plan at a local level (community based planning), to implement and monitor those plans using a range of working groups supporting community based services, and to support these local structures through the cadre of community development workers. Emfuleni also plans to improve the accountability of ward and municipal structures to each other and to the communities they serve, as well as improving the linkages with provincial and national departments to their clients, and so to service delivery.

3.2 ROLE OF WARD COMMITTEES IN ENHANCING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The South African Government has committed itself to instituting wide ranging participatory processes in the different spheres and institutions of governance in the country. The attempt to introduce participatory and direct democracy is evident, in addition to institution and process at national and provincial level, in planning process and policy formulation of local government structures. Municipal authorities, for example are legally committed to involving community organization in the formulation of budgets, planning and developmental priorities. The Constitution of South Africa (Act no 108 of 1996) mandates local government to provide a democratic and accountable local government and encourage the involvement of communities and community organization in the matters of local government. Measures were introduced to entrench community participation and also to transform local government functions emphasizing on

development rather than regulations as was under the previous dispensation. As a result developmental local government is defined as “local government committed to working with citizen and groups within the community to find suitable strategies to meet social, economic, and material needs and improve the quality of their lives” (Republic of South Africa, Section B)

Local government legislation made a provision for local authorities to establish a system of participatory democracy at the local level in the form of ward committees (Houston, et al 2001:206). These ward committees were introduced in municipalities as community structures to play a critical role in linking and informing municipalities about the needs, aspirations, potentials and problems of the communities. They were established to form the bridge between local municipalities and communities by facilitating proper communication. Through working directly with the municipality, ward committees serve as a cord which articulates the new system of local government to the majority of the people, more especially to previously disadvantaged communities. Ward committees have an important role to play in actively taking part and determining core municipal business such as integrated development planning, budgeting, municipal performance management process, without which democracy cannot be said, is rooted on among the people.

3.3 DEFINITION OF WARD COMMITTEE

Ward Committees are a vehicle for public participation which serves as a link between the councilor and the community (Ward Committee Resource Book 2005:20). In terms of the National Policy Framework on Public Participation (2005:8) Ward Committees are forums for deliberative democracy. Firstly ward committees are set up to promote self management, awareness building and ownership of local development and to enable faster access to information from government. Secondly ward committees collect information about the situation at the community level (Social Audit) as well as a closer monitoring and evaluation of service delivery.

Public participation is a means of fostering equality. This is based on the democratic principle that all citizens should have an equal opportunity to exert influence through participation in the planning process of the local authority if they choose to do so (Atkinson 1992:7)

Public participation is defined in the Draft Policy Framework by (Department of Provincial Local Government) as "...an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision making". It further states that public participation is a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing active part in the development and operation of services that affects lives (DPLG, 2005:5)

3.4 LOCALITY AND DESCRIPTION OF EMFULENI MUNICIPAL AREA

Emfuleni Local Municipality is one of the three local municipalities comprising the Sedibeng District Municipality. It is the western-most local municipality of the District, which covers the entire southern area of the Gauteng province extending along a 120 kilometers axis from east to west. It covers an area of 1 276 km².

The Vaal River forms the southern boundary of the Emfuleni Local Municipality and its strategic location affords in many opportunities for tourism and other forms of economic development. Emfuleni shares boundaries with Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State to the south, Midvaal Local Municipality to the east, the city of Johannesburg metropolitan area to the north and Westonaria and Potchefstroom (in North West Province) local municipalities to the west.

The municipality is strategically located and linked by well-maintained road and rail infrastructure. The N1 and R59 national routes link Johannesburg and Bloemfontein, Witwatersrand and East Rand. The rail service provides commuter, freight and long distance passenger services. Emfuleni local municipality has two main town centers, namely Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark within the area is Sasolburg which is only 10

kilometers to the south, across the provincial boundary. It forms the “heartland” of what was formally known as the Vaal Triangle, renowned for its contribution to the iron and steel industry in South Africa (Emfuleni Integrated Development and Planning 2006/2007:7).

The area also comprises a number of large residential areas, all of which require considerable investment infrastructure and environment upgrading. The Emfuleni Local Municipality is rich in history as it encapsulates the Anglo Boer War, heritage assets such as the Sharpeville monument and the liberation struggle epitomized by the signing of the Constitution in 1996 in Sharpeville (Emfuleni Integrated Development and Planning 2006/2007:7).

A responsive and people driven municipal agenda can only be realized through the active participation of local residents in the shaping of municipal programmes and projects. Therefore Emfuleni Local Municipality developed an effective community participation strategy to deepen local democracy.

The last ward committee elections in Emfuleni Local Municipality were from the 28th of May to the 27th of June 2006. There were hiccups here and there but all wards have elected members in their wards. There has been great improvement as compared to previous ward committees. Ward committees were nominated by the sectors within wards comprising 10 members, excluding the chairperson who is the ward councilor.

During the elections Emfuleni Ward Committee guidelines were strictly followed. The guidelines state clearly that elected members are eligible to be part of the ward committees. However forty-three (43) ward committees were established by Council Resolution:-m103, June 2001.

3.4.1 Experience in the last five years

Ward Committee Report, 2006, (ref 002) over the last few years indicate that Emfuleni Local Municipality experienced grassroots discontent around governance and service

delivery issues. In a number of instances, this developed into public demonstrations. President Mbeki observed at the ANC's National General Council in 2005 that: "Generally the protestors have taken to the streets to protest against what they see as a slow progress in addressing their socio-economic needs, such as housing and modern sanitation... Whether rightly or wrongly, the municipal demonstrations have been inspired by the grievance among some of our poorest communities that they have been excluded from access to a better life" (Emfuleni ward committee report, 2006:20).

The ward based system of getting views of different stakeholders in a community is only one channel for community participation. Imbizos and Integrated Development and Planning are also used in Emfuleni, not only to assess community views on municipal services, but also to obtain people's inputs into the budget and service delivery targets and priorities.

Emfuleni seems to be performing well in terms of public participation, ward committee establishment and institutional governance. There have been 95% to 100% ward committees established and all are through the National ward committee guidelines to share knowledge and learn from one another. Public participation in the affairs of the municipal government has also been achieved wherein municipalities have been able to include 50% of the stakeholders in participatory process.

However ward committees are not functioning in a uniform manner across the Gauteng province. Better resourcing and utilization of ward committees must become a key component of our programme in the next term. Also a concern has been the low level of voter turnout in the last municipal elections; the turnout in Gauteng was particularly low.

While municipalities have completed their delegates system, completed their terms of reference for political structures and office bearers, it is important to note that there are more communities reporting to the Mayor (Section 80 committees). The issue of the next term is to establish more section 79 committees, as these committees report to council and thus councils strengthen council oversight over the executive. The issues of

separation of powers at the local government level needs to be addressed and section 79 committees are one way of doing so.

3.4.2 Establishment of ward committees at Emfuleni Local Municipality

Consistent with the Batho Pele principles as entrenched in various Government Legislations, the Emfuleni Local Municipality diligently strove to bring government closer to the people as much as possible. Thus the establishment of ward committees became key deepening democracy, through having been mindful that it would not be an easy ride.

Forty three Ward Committees were established by Council Resolution: (item 103, June 2001). Indeed the process that gave rise to communities interfacing with government were on issues pertinent to their daily lives. Subsequent to the establishment of Ward Committees, members underwent an induction workshop regarding the role and function of the committees. However, it needs to be mentioned that the planned formal training did not materialize due to budgetary constraint.

3.4.3 Structure and purpose of the ward committee

The purposes of ward committee are:

- To get better participation from the community to inform council decisions
- To make sure that there is more effective communication between the council and the community
- To assist the ward councilor with consultation and report –back to the community.

3.4.3.1 Role of the councillor

A ward councilor is directly elected to represent and serve the people in a specific ward. The ward councilor should make sure that the interest of the people in the ward is represented as properly as possible. The ward councilor should be in touch with the issue

in the area, understand the key problems and monitor development and service delivery. In committees, caucus and council meetings, the ward councilor should act as a spokesperson for the people in the ward (Executive Mayor's foreword 2002:7)

The ward councilor is the direct link between the council and the voters. He/She makes sure that voters are consulted and kept informed about council decisions, development and budget plans that affect them. People can also bring their problems to the ward councilor and he/she should deal with these in an appropriate way, for example, by taking matters to the council officials.

3.4.3.2 Role of ward committees in Emfuleni

The main role of the ward committees is to make sure that voters are involved in and informed about council decisions that affect their lives. The ward committees should be set up in that it can reach most sectors and areas in the ward. The main tasks of ward committees are to communicate and consult with the community in respect of development and service plans. It has no formal powers however to force the council to do anything. The council should provide support, for example, providing publicity for meetings, giving financial support, to enable ward committees to do their work (Emfuleni Rules for ward committees, 2000:67).

3.4.3.3 Sectors within Emfuleni Local Municipality

The sectors are determined by the ward in which the municipality is situated and the role of interest groups in the municipality. At Emfuleni local municipality, sectors include the following:

- Religious groupings
- Women
- Community policing forum
- Health and welfare
- Disabled

- Civic and ratepayers association
- Business
- Education
- Youth sports recreation arts and culture
- Senior citizen

3.4.3.4. Role of ward committees in the Integrated Development and Planning.

The Ward Committee is where representative participation in the IDP process really takes place. These forums are the formal communication channel between the community and Council; representation on the forums must be as inclusive as possible. Ward committees at Emfuleni contribute significantly to the process of Integrated Development and Planning (IDP). Their main roles are to:

- Identify the critical issues facing its area;
- Provide a mechanism for discussion, negotiation and decision-making between the stakeholders, including municipal government;
- Form a structure that links between the IDP Representative Forum and the community of each area; and
- Monitor the performance of the planning and implementation process concerning its area.

3.5 DEVELOPMENT OF WARD COMMITTEE SYSTEM

A cardinal objective of the Department of Provincial and Local Government (dplg) and Germany Technical Cooperation is to enhance participatory democracy in South African municipalities. In 2001 South African municipalities adopted a structured form of participative democracy known as the ward committee system. The legal framework for this system consists of *Municipal Structure (Act 32 of 2000)*. Although certain types of municipalities may have ward committees, 2008 ward committees had become the most prevalent of structured community participation in local government. The dplg/GTZ

programme set out to review experience of ward committee functioning by capturing current practices but also by drawing in previous research material and other sources of information emanating from training and consulting work. The project brief was: to present a broad scan of issues relevant to effective functioning of ward committees and record instances where ward committees have effectively overcome obstacles and optimized the opportunity for effective community participation in municipal affairs (National Ward Committee Survey 2004/5:29).

In order to design an appropriate research instrument, the survey was preceded by a scan of main issues affecting ward committee functioning. This resulted in a Status Quo Report of October 2004 that forms separate but related product of this survey report. The main purpose of this research activity was to produce a ward committee resource book for use by ward committee members, ward councilors and municipal officials. However the findings of the survey also indicated the need for the report to be carefully considered by policy makers.

The survey approach is aimed to generate a broad spread of perceptions from municipalities on the functioning of their ward committees. This will be compared with more in-depth material already held by the service providers in order to outline the main lessons for the resource booklet. In terms of actual methodology, this survey report is based on a quantitative survey conducted in the last quarter of 2004. A questionnaire was sent via e-mail or faxed to municipalities listed on the dplg and SALGA database. Telephonic reminders to the municipalities followed to ensure the broadest possible response rate (Ward Committee Status Quo Report 2004:26).

Some problems were experienced with the contact details of the listed municipalities and further checks were necessary to ensure that all targeted municipalities received the questionnaire. Some municipalities indicated difficulty in getting the questionnaire to the appropriate stakeholders and some did not understand that a single questionnaire could be returned by any of the stakeholders' groupings. This created some problems in the number of responses from individual municipalities.

A number of laws make it compulsory for municipalities to consult or inform the community. Sometimes politicians and officials can see this as something they are forced to do rather than something that will benefit them. Some are also scared of facing the community because report back or consultation meetings can easily become forums for complaint and protest about problems, or against non delivery. It is not easy to face a hall full of angry people (Education and Training Unit, 2005:30)

According to *Delivery* (The Magazine for Local Government February/April 2006) the Systems Act requires municipalities to 'encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality'. Residents need to know what objectives and strategies are, how they can participate in the IDP and what it means, how to charge for the services and set property rates, why paying for services is in their best interests, how the budget affects them and what to do when something is wrong.

This means Emfuleni Local Municipality needs a communication strategy that

- Builds bridges with local media
- Creates channels of communication
- Is cost-effective and easy to manage
- Supports public participation

Local authorities have long had statutory responsibilities to consult and involve the public in relation to certain issues, such as land use planning, through public meetings and consultation documents. Research commissioned by the Department in 1997 revealed that not only have local authorities been using such traditional methods, so called 'consumerist' approaches (service satisfactory surveys, complaints/suggestion schemes have also become well established in local government. Also, there were signs of local government looking to new and innovative ways involving the public. This research is intended further to gauge how best ward committees can improve public participation approaches (The Magazine for Local Government February/April 2006).

Public participation South Africa is building commitment of the democratic government to deepen democracy, which is embedded in the Constitution and above all in the concept of local government, as comprising the municipality and the community. The current government is committed to forming participation which is genuinely empowering, and not token consultation or manipulation. This involves a range of activities including creating democratic representative structures (ward committees), assisting those structures to plan at a local level (community based planning), to implement and monitor those plans using a range of working groups and Community Based Organizations, supporting community based services, and to support those local structures through a cadre of community development workers. There is also the need to improve the accountability of ward and municipal structures to each other and to the communities they serve, as well as improving the linkages between provincial and national departments to their clients, and so as to service delivery. Emfuleni communication needs to be improved and dedicated capacity is needed to deal with this function, especially in relation to the community to guard against silo-ism in departments. Emfuleni also needs to review to ensure complimentary and synergy rather than competition on public participation and consultation processes (Sedibeng IDP Report 2006/07).

3.6 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The ward councilor is a direct link between the local council and the public. It is his or her responsibility to make sure that people are consulted and kept informed about council decisions, development and budget plans and any council programmes that will affect them. For that matter ward committee play an important role in creating a democratic culture of local participation and accountability. Emfuleni local municipality introduced a system of ward committees to ensure sound and democratic governance, in other words, so that communities have a say in the running of their council and the development of their communities. In Emfuleni, the ward committee system is the responsibility of the Speaker because the primary role of ward committees is to facilitate and coordinate community participation in local government (Councillor KA Mogotsi, personal interview: March 2006)

Ward committee system at Emfuleni Local Municipality promote participatory democracy in the following ways

- There is ward committee for each ward
- Subcommittees with portfolios anchor the ward committee to each ward
- A forum in each zone brings all the ward committees in the area together
- A citywide forum involves stakeholders that are not ward based.
- Public involvement to get all residents and stakeholders involved in the running of the city

- Communications to bring about better understanding and interaction between the people of Emfuleni local municipality
- Development to create a vehicle for the development and to consult with the community on initiatives that result in development
- Capacity building to empower communities to become partners in developing Emfuleni local municipality (Y Chamda, personal interview April 2001).

3.7 MANAGING THE WARD COMMITTEE SYSTEM

Emfuleni council decided in 2001 to establish ward committees as the system to bring about participative government. It set guidelines for the ward committees that are applicable until the municipality's ward committee by-laws are passed. Satisfactory management of ward committees requires that specific objectives be set, namely:

- To meet statutory requirements on community participation as spelled out in the 1996 Constitution and the Municipal Systems Act no 32 of 2000
- To develop a culture of community participation through the creation of conditions for local communities to participate in the affairs of local government
- To build an open, transparent and accountable municipality
- To develop and implement mechanism , processes and procedures for community participation

- To assist disadvantaged groups to participate effectively in the systems of local government
- To provide clear, sufficient and timeous information concerning community participation to communities
- To communicate public notices of meetings of council to communities in a manner that promotes public participation
- To set up systems and mechanisms that will ensure compliance with regulations and guidelines that may be issued from National and Provincial Government
(Council resolution 2001:32)

3.7.1 Implication for Emfuleni Local Municipality

The effort to build the capacity of local communities to enable effective participation of ward committees can be achieved through:

- Mayoral road shows
- People's forum
- Petitions management systems
- Recording of all motions to council and provide relevant answers for each where a reply is required. Any member of council can view motions
- Setting up of ward committees
- Projects specific forums
- Councilor community support system based at Mayor's office and the Speaker's office
- Complaints and suggestion system (suggestion box and book recording)
- Accessible Municipal Code for by-laws. (Mayor Tsotetsi, Personal interview March 2001) these strategies for participation are explained in the next section.

3.7.1.1 Council meetings

The city manager must give notice of council meetings in a manner determined by the Council in terms of section 19 of the Municipal Systems Act. It is suggested that a notice

be published once a year in the local media, outlining the programme of meetings for the year. This can also cover Mayoral Committee meetings and Portfolio meetings.

It should also be understood that all Council agendas/minutes are public documents and should be available on request. But section 20 of the Municipal Structures Act make provision for Council to exclude the public and the media from a meeting when the nature of the report requires that to be done, but resolution will be made public. It should be noted that despite the transparent nature of Council meetings, the public and the media do not have any speaking and revoking rights

3.7.1.2 Peoples' forums/ mayor's road shows

The plans to hold meetings with communities in the region of Sedibeng where the Executive Mayor will, together with the members of the Mayoral committee, interact with communities and listens to their problems have begun. It should be strengthened and can be improved based on the relevant needs and timing.

The purpose will be to listen to views and problems raised by communities to the Executive Mayor in team. This process was started successfully where the team was introduced to the council employees (Mayor Tsotetsi, Personal interview: March 2001).

3.8 RESPONSIBILITIES OF WARD COMMITTEES AT EMFULENI

Ward committees are established in terms of Section 74 of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998, as well as the chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 which provides principles that firmly create circumstances conducive for participatory governance. For consistency, ward committee must fit into the formal structures of government and not to replace or substitute them.

Emfuleni sees ward committees as a vehicle for participation

- Ward committees serve as forums for grassroots participation in the affairs of local government;
- Provides communities the opportunity to be involved in the development processes of the integrated development planning in terms of Chapter 5 (MSA, 2000);
- Also provides the opportunity for participation in the budgetary processes;
- Further serves as a two way communication channel for both government communities on matters relating to governance and delivery of basic services;
- Sectoral participation must transcend narrow political , ethnic, racial and class affiliations, and reflect the demographics of the ward;
- To promote and encourage women to participate in the affairs of the community, a minimum of forty percent of ward committee members must be women;
- Lastly, the ward committees must be constituted of ten active sectoral structures (interest groups) in a ward. While this promotes organized democracy as opposed to individual democracy, it also ensures that members of Ward Committees represent broader community interests and not themselves (Emfuleni ward committee guidelines 2002:2).

3.8.1 Ward committees and Integrated Development and Planning budgetary processes

Both IDP and the budgetary processes are complimentary to each other, with the understanding that IDP in practice accede the budgetary processes; therefore it is incumbent on the ward committees to lay a foundation by:

- Identifying key impact areas for development priorities.
- Develop an awareness campaign programme for the development of ward
- Conduct a geographic assessment of the ward
- Conduct basic feasibility study of the ward with needs assessment as the goal

(Emfuleni Ward Committee guidelines 2002:6)

3.8.2 Ward committees, the office of the speaker and the office of the Mayor

Below is the list of clear division of responsibilities with regard to Emfuleni ward committees

(Emfuleni Ward Committee Guide Lines 2002: 18)

ASPECT	OFFICIALS
day to day functioning of ward committees	Ward councilor with the ward committee
Convening of ward committee meetings and public meetings	Office of the speaker assisted by ward committee coordinators
Service delivery in wards	Executive mayor and the mayoral committee
Problems, disputes and arbitration on matters in the ward committee	Ward arbitration committee
Dissolution of ward committees	Council

3.8.3 Promoting good governance

A Decade of Change states that the foundation for effective service delivery and creating a better life for all the communities rests with having a strong community centered development. The provincial government set good governance as one of its key priorities in 1999 and committed itself to:

- The transformation of local government
- The reorganization of the public service to meet more effectively the priorities of service delivery and to foster the ethic of Batho Pele
- Prudent and effective use of government resources
- Public accountability

Important progress has been made on all the fronts, with public service transformation, service delivery improvements, communication and public participation, sound intergovernmental relations and prudent management of public finances enjoying top priority (Emfuleni Council Resolution 2005:54)

3.8.4 Ward committee link to municipal functions

The following is a tabular description of roles played by ward committees in municipal functions:

IDP Review Process		IDP Representative Forum		Budget		Performance Management System	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
66%	14%	65%	11%	60%	12%	28%	19%

Emfuleni IDP Document 2006/07

Emfuleni ward committees have been involved in the IDP review, IDP representative forum and municipal budgeting process whereas only 28% make this claim in respect to performance management. No response ranged between 18%-22% for IDPs and budgets but went up to 53% for performance management.

The questions arises as to the overall honesty of municipal stakeholders in responding to such questions as more in depth insight generated by other interactions with ward committee's suggests minimal involvement in IDP's and budgeting and virtually no involvement with municipal performance management system. However to be fair, it must be noted that the question did not develop into quality or depth of ward committee involvement in these functions thus the answers may specifically be true. What clearly needs to be cautioned against is any misguided conclusions that about 65% of ward committees have been meaningfully involved in the IDP process.

Forums involvements are explained as follows:

- IDP Review and Representative Forum

- Information gathering involved ward committees
- Identified priorities/ reprioritize/ add new projects
- Serve on representative forum
- Assist representative forum to liaise with residents
- Oversee development projects emerging from IDP
- Attend public IDP meeting

Budget

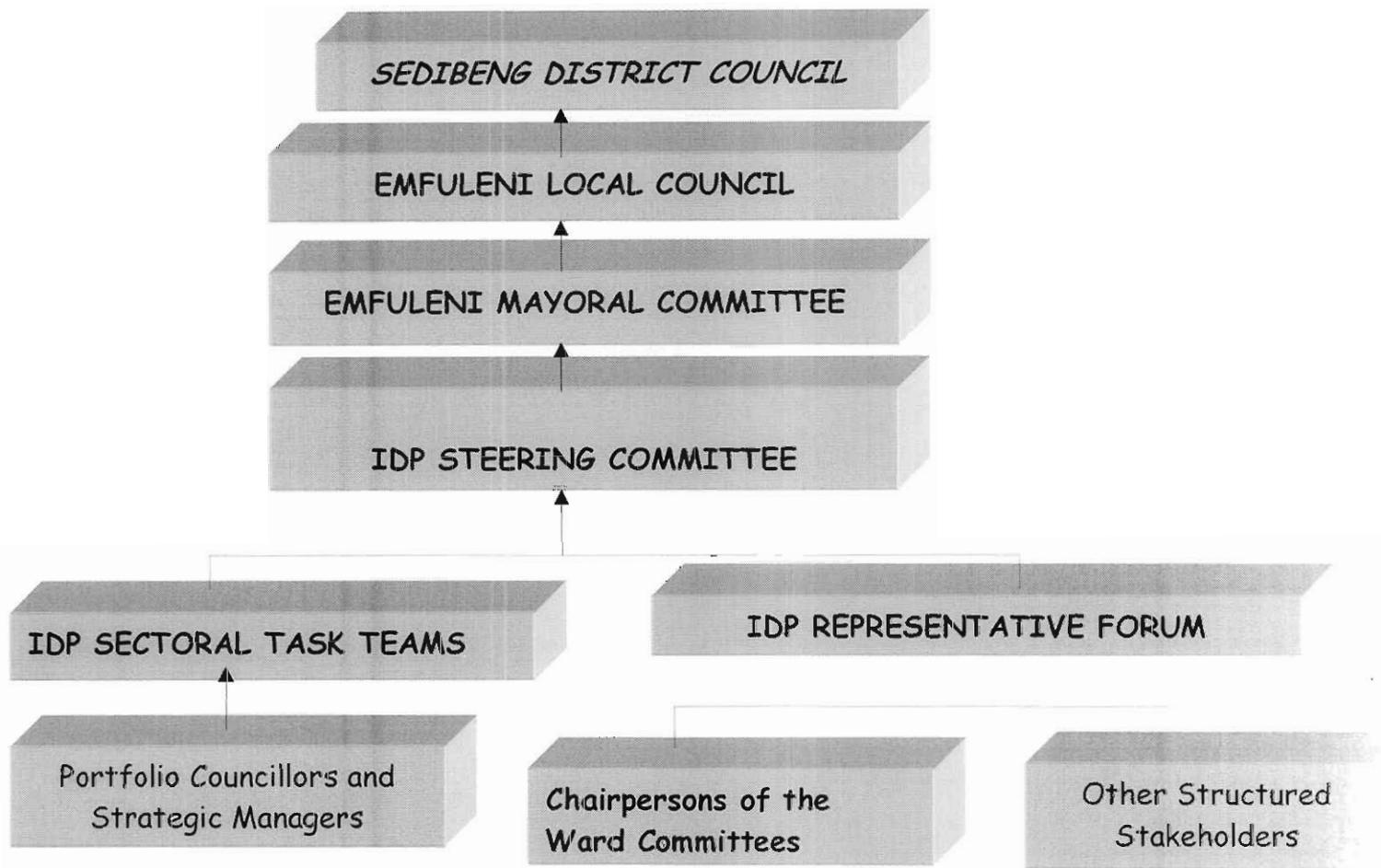
- Public hearing per ward
- Mayoral committee and finance committee outreach program
- Discussion with ward councilor
- Attend budget meetings as community members
- Attend community meetings and budget road shows
- Ward committees are first after council to discuss budget

Performance management

- Ward committee monitor performance of ward councilor in a specific areas
- Engage in performance review of IDP
- Raise concerns regarding off-schedule capital projects and service delivery requests
- Ward committees included in KPIs
- Through the IDP review
- Provide written comments on the level of proposed service delivery

The largest percentiles generally endorsed the view of active engagement and involvement in key roles and functions of the municipality (apart from performance management) National Ward Committee Survey 2004/5:43)

Role players in the IDP



Source, IDP Document 2006/07

3.9 CONCLUSION

Establishment of ward committees differs from province to province and municipality to municipality. One of the key guiding factors are legislations that are the fact that the current municipal regime only came into being in 2000 with Municipal Systems Act. Councils elected in December 2000 were thus eligible to have ward committees. Strictly speaking, the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 contains most of the pertinent provisions relating to ward committees however the establishment of municipal types that included the ward committee options only happened after December 2002. Ward Committees were shown to play various constructive, participatory roles and serve as effective link

between council and the community. The next chapter involves the empirical research on the role and effectiveness of ward committees at Emfuleni Local Municipality.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to report the findings of the empirical research that was conducted at Emfuleni Local Municipality. Information was gathered from ten municipal officials involved with community issues; an interview with thirty community members and, as ward committee co-ordinator, observation inferences as participant observer. The purpose of the empirical research was to determine the effectiveness of ward committees as vehicle for promoting public participation at Emfuleni Local Municipality.

The chapter begins with an exposition of research concepts. The following are explained: compilation of data plan, variables, sampling, and the tools of interviews and questionnaire. These are followed by questions posed to respondents and analysis of responses. .

4.2 COMPILING DATAPLAN

Empirical research works by the process of introduction. Introduction is a formulation of general theories from specific observation, as opposed to deduction, which is the derivation of a new logical truth from existing facts. As an example of induction, if you observed 500 tomatoes and found in each case that the tomato was red, you might induce that all tomatoes are red. As an example of deduction say you know as facts that (1) all stars contain hydrogen, and (2) the sun is the star then you can deduce the new fact that (3) the sun contains hydrogen. Note that the results of deduction are true (if the existing facts used are true) while the results of induction are not necessarily true (some tomatoes are green) (Goddard and Melville, 2001:32).

4.2.1 Variables

In an experimental method the researcher chooses and manipulates the research. The variable that is manipulated is known as the independent variable. The effects of this manipulation on other variables (the dependent variable) are measured. According to Bless (2000:26) suppose the problem has been formulated in a way that relates two or more variables it may be relevant to ask that question as: which are these variables and how are they related? Do they all have the same importance? Do they all vary at the same time: in some cases the researcher might expect a casual relationship to exist between variables, where a variation in one results in a variation in the other?

While the researcher observes units of analysis in the process of research, it is relationship among characteristics of units that are of primary interest. Characteristics of units that vary, taking on different values, categories, or attributes for different observations, are called variables. Variables may vary over cases, over time, or over both cases and time. For example, among individuals, any set of characteristics that may differ from different people, such as age (range of years) is a variable (Singleton, 1993:72).

4.2.2 Sampling

Sampling involves the introduction of the concept of a population and a sample, and discuss the 'why' and 'how' of taking scientifically useful samples. Bless (2000:86) pointed out that although a subset of the population, the sample must have properties which make it respective of the whole. To follow up the example of the students, selecting a sample of very dull, brilliant or mature students would be wrong because they would not represent the whole of the students' body. Thus one of the major issues in sampling is to determine samples that best represent a population so as to allow for accurate generalization of results. Such a group is called a representative sample.

4.3 DATA FROM SAMPLE POPULATION

Observational methods of data collection are suitable for investigating phenomena that can be observed directly by the researcher. However, not all phenomena are accessible to the investigator's direct observation; very often, therefore, the researcher must collect data by asking people who have experienced certain phenomena to describe these phenomena. The researcher approaches a sample of individuals presumed to have undergone certain experience and interviews them concerning this experience. The obtained experience constitutes the data on which the research hypothesis is examined. Three major survey research methods are used to elicit information from respondents: the mail questionnaire, the personal interview and the telephone survey (Nachmias et al, 1992:215)

- Mail questionnaire is an important survey method for indirect conditions and for a number of research purposes, an impersonal method of data collection can be useful
- Personal interview is a face to face interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research hypothesis. The questions, their wording, and their sequence define the structure of the interview.
- Telephone interview, also called a telephone survey, can be characterized as a semi personal method of collecting information. Not too long ago, telephone surveys were viewed with skepticism and outright distrust. Some texts explicitly warned their research to avoid them. The primary reason for the reluctance to use telephone interviewing was the high likelihood of a serious sampling bias. When a substantial proportion had no access to telephones, the sample tend to over represent those who were relatively well off and could afford a telephone. More recently, however, telephone survey has gained acceptance as a legitimate method of data collection in the social sciences.

4.3.1 Interviews

According to Peil (1995:87) interviews carry the work forward, covering collecting the data and preparing it for analysis. The first stage, getting the necessary permission, is usually done while the schedule is being prepared; pretesting and carrying out a survey both require interviewing. Few researchers can draw on a group of trained interviewers, so this skill must usually be taught to those who will do the work. As the schedule comes in, they are edited and coded; this transforms individual answers into categories, which are usually numbered so the data can be handled by a computer.

Carrying out a survey requires more preparation than just selecting a sample and working out an interview schedule. Permission must be obtained, influential members of the community contacted, copies of the schedule reproduced, if necessary accommodation and transport must be organized, interviewers hired and trained. These preparations often take longer than the time spent in the field.

An interview is a one-on-one verbal interaction between the researcher and a respondent (Bless, 2001:49). An interview should have a plan. The researcher must not direct the respondent's answers through his/her tone of voice or the way he/she phrases a question, e.g. 'you agree with us that this is right, don't you?'

One area where researchers would need to use interviews rather than questionnaires would be in getting information from the people who cannot read. Other advantages of an interview over a questionnaire are that the researcher can ask the respondent to clarify unclear answers and can follow up on interesting answers. Some advantages of a questionnaire over an interview are that the respondents can answer the questionnaires at times that are suitable to them, and the respondents may not be as inhibited in answering sensitive questions. However, a questionnaire is the only practical approach.

4.3.2 Questionnaires

The foundation of all questionnaires is the question. The question must translate the research objectives into specific questions; answers to questions will provide the data for hypothesis testing. Frankort (1992:239) further explains that the question must also motivate the respondent to provide the information being sought. The major considerations involved in formulating questions are their content, structure, format, and sequence.

A questionnaire is a printed list of questions that respondents are asked to answer. These instruments are commonly used and commonly abused. It is easy to compile a questionnaire; it is not easy to compile an effective one. Effectiveness requires planning before hand to ensure that the data can be objectively analyzed afterwards. Open (or unstructured) questions can be in preliminary survey or to get the feel for the subject. Here respondents answer questions in their own words. Closed (or structured) questions are used in large-scale data collection. Here respondents choose from a collection of alternatives (e.g. true/false) or assign a numerical score or ranking. Closed question often use a four point scale, for example (Bless 2000:47).

Q1. Bart Simpson is a good role model

Strongly agree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

A four scale forces a decision, while the five point scale provides the possibility of a neutral answer.

A good questionnaire:

- Is complete
- Is short
- Ask only relevant questions
- Gives clear instructions
- Starts with general questions
- Has objective questions

- Has appropriate questions
- Puts sensitive questions at the end
- Uses mostly closed questions

4.3.3 Question explained

Once the researcher has defined the objectives and has ascertained that no existing methods can be used, he or she may begin the task of writing the questions. It is best to write the items objectively and to consider the way the results are analyzed once the data has been collected. It is essential to provide clarity to what the researcher wants to achieve by posing the type of questions listed below (Silverman, 1993:175) into Questions that solicit the opinion of participants on issues related to ward committees as an agent of change toward improving public participation at Emfuleni Local Municipality.

4.4 RESEARCH METHOD DEFINED

There are different types of research. Distinctions are drawn between quantitative and qualitative research, applied and basic research, and exploratory, descriptive, correlation and explanatory research. Emphasis is based on the relationship between the research problem and the type of research selected to investigate it. The characteristics of the problem, the initial level of knowledge, the properties of the variables, as well as the purpose of the investigation all influence the type of research to be used (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:37)

According to Bless & Higson-Smith (2000:37) there are various ways of classifying research studies. One of the most important focuses on the methodology used. Quantitative research relies on measurement to compare and analyse different variables. In contrast, qualitative research uses qualifying words or descriptions to record aspects of the world.

4.4.1 The rationale for choosing the qualitative and quantitative methods

Qualitative research methodology relies upon measurement and uses various scales. Numbers form a coding by system by which different cases and different variables may be compared. Systematic changes in “scores” are interpreted or given meaning in terms of the actual world that they represent. Numbers have the advantage of being exact. Three means exactly the same thing to every human being who knows the concept, and will mean exactly the same in different social, cultural and linguistic contexts. Another important advantage of numbers is that they can be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The skilled social researcher carefully chooses the most appropriate approach to a particular problem. In nearly all cases the line between qualitative and quantitative methods is somewhat blurred. In fact a comprehensive study will use both methods and thus cannot strictly be called either qualitative or quantitative (Denzin and Lincoln’s 1994).

4.4.2 Reliability and validity

According to Royce, et al (1993:114) level of measurement provides a framework for interpreting the categories of a variable. It tells us what sort of interference we can make about cases assigned to different categories. Are they merely different? Can we say that one is greater or lesser than the other? But what about the adequacy of the set of categories as a whole and of the operationalization procedure for assigning cases to categories? In other words, how does one evaluate the goodness of specific operational definitions?

For any concept a large number of operational definition are possible, and that creative insight, good judgement, and relevant theory aid in the development of operational definitions. Admittedly these aids are rather subjective in nature; however, once an

operational definition is selected, there are more objective ways to evaluate its quality (Royce et al, (1993:115). Social scientists use the terms “reliability” and “validity” to describe issues involved in evaluating the quality of operational definitions.

Royce et al, (1993:115) further state that reliability is concerned with questions of stability and consistency. Is the operational definition measuring “something” consistently and dependably, whatever that “something) may be? Do repeated applications of the operational definition under similar conditions yield consistent result? If the operational definition is formed from a set of responses or items (e.g. a test score), are the component responses or items consistent with each other? An example of a high reliable measuring instrument is a steel measure. With such an instrument, a piece of wood 20 inches long will be found to measure, with negligible variation, 20 inches every time a measurement is taken. A cloth tape measure would be somewhat less reliable in that it may vary with humidity and temperature, and in that we can expect some variation in measurements depending on how loosely or tightly the tape is stretched.

Measurement validity refers to the extent of matching, congruence, or “goodness of fit” between an operational definition and the concept it is purported to measure. Does this operational definition truly reflect what the concept means? Are you measuring what you intend to measure with this operational definition? If so, you have a valid measure. An example of a valid measure is amniocentesis, a technique for determining various genetic characteristics of an unborn child, including sex. It is a valid measure of biological sex because it can determine with virtually perfect accuracy whether the unborn will be a boy or a girl. At one time, a number of invalid “means” of the unborn sex existed in the form of folk wisdoms. One belief, for example, involves tying a string to the pregnant woman’s wedding band and holding it suspended over her abdomen. If the band swings in a circle, the baby will be a girl; if, however the band swings back and forth, the child will be a boy (Royce et al, 1993:115).

A highly unreliable measure cannot be valid; how can you get at whatever you want to measure if your results fluctuate wildly? But every reliable measure still may not be

valid; that is, you could be measuring very reliably (consistently) something other than what you intended to measure. To take a facetious example, suppose we decide to measure the “intelligence” of students by standing them on a bathroom scale and reading the number of the dial (Davids, 1971:14). Such an operational definition would be highly reliable as repeated scale readings would yield consistent results. However, this obviously would not be a valid measure of an individual’s “intelligence”.

4.5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Two sets of interviews were conducted, namely, with councillors and officials, and with members of the community. The objective of questions asked was to test the hypothesis for study that is, determining the effectiveness of ward committees as liaison in council policy-making and implementation

Councillors’ responses

Question 1: Respondents were asked if the community of Emfuleni Local Municipality understand community participation.

Similar answers and motivations were raised by different ward councillors who are daily faced with challenges of community participation, 100% of Councillors interviewed feel the community understands participation as they engage the community from time to time in participation, e.g. IDP consultative meeting. The speaker’s office with the help of ward councillors reaches out to the community through ward committees, and the community is kept informed with the developments of the municipality by holding Imbizos, public meetings and Mayoral roving meetings where the Mayor visits different ward.

Question 2: In what ways would you say that Emfuleni Local Municipality encourages community participation?

Response

From time to time the councilors hold public meetings, and the mayor calls IDP stakeholder meetings. It is evident that Emfuleni Local Municipality is doing its best as far as community participation is concerned, according to different responses.

Question 3: in your opinion do you think ward committees and different stakeholders have access to information?

Response

The response differed, one of the reason was Emfuleni website is not fully operational and 60% of councilors and 70% of officials felt the community have access to information because they are free to attend special council sitting and ordinary sitting. Emfuleni believes in an open door policy, when ever there are clarity seeking questions the Speaker's offices is always open to the public. The Speaker's office also refers the community to different department depending on their needs.

Question 4: what can the current leadership do to ensure that the trust between them and the community members and ward committee is enhanced?

Response

80% of councilors advised that the community must be kept informed with current information at all times, the leadership must create an environment that is friendly based on action and not lip service. The feeling was that communication and consultation is key to all. 70% of officials called for frequency of meetings and use of local language at meetings.

Question 5: what support has ward committees received from ELM to help promote public participation?

Response

The councilors maintain that ward committees receive training and from time to time they are invited to council sitting to keep them informed. Ward committees do not only receive regular training but they also receive administration support via the office of the speaker as well as logistical support.

Question 6: in your own view have ward committees been an asset or liability to ELM in community development?

Response

The councilors emphasize the effectiveness of ward committees in promoting community participation. They see ward committees as an asset where community go when they seek information. Ward committee are a forum used to disseminate information to the community.

4.5.1 Responses from the community

Question 1: do you know if ward committees were ever elected in your ward?

Response

90% of community members interviewed stated awareness of ward committee in their ward. 10% were not sure. Reasons cited for awareness were the wide publicity used by Emfuleni Local Municipality to elect ward committees, and especially that ward committee members tend to conduct house-to-house meetings in wards; the community is aware of this structure, 95% community members indicated that they were part of the election process.

Question 2: are you aware of roles and responsibilities of ward committees in your ward?
If so mention few.

40% managed to mention that ward committees are an advisory committee to the councilor and deals with governance and other issues that are of paramount importance to community. 75% knew that ward committees help the councilor in informing Council of

needs and in giving feedback on Council meetings. 60% mentioned that ward committee members are instrumental in mobilising community members for project work.

Question 3: how many ward committees and public meetings have you had since the beginning of the year

Response

Numbers differ from one ward to the other; mainly it depends on the dynamics of the ward. Some wards have no serious issues that compel them to hold regular meetings. According to ELM ward committee guidelines there should be a minimum of four meetings per annum.

Question 4: in your own opinion do you think people gain something from public meeting if so motivate your answer?

Response

Public meetings are a platform where the community gets to raise questions and where they get clarity. Information is not only kept by councilors and the officials, it also reaches the community accordingly depending on the issues raised.

Question 5: ward committees are also a vehicle for public participation, are they effective in your ward? Motivate.

Response

Ward committee members are sector representatives, information received from the ward councilor do not only end with the ward committee but it also reaches sectors the members represent.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In the chapter there was explanation of concepts used in conducting research. This was necessary as the analysis gave direction to the tools used for the empirical survey. A principal research method used was the open-ended questionnaire. Questions were posed

to officials and for community members. The purpose was to determine how effective Ward Committees are in promoting public participation at Emfuleni Local Municipality. In the next chapter, recommendations and conclusions for the study will be outlined.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter there is an outline of the extent to which objectives for the study have been realized. There is also a comment on the test of the hypothesis. Finally, the study ends with a set of recommendations for management action by the Council of Emfuleni.

5.2 REALISATION OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The first objective of this study was to give a theoretical exposition of the concepts ward committees and public participation. In that regard chapter two of study provided literature review on the concept public participation as a basic function of ward committees. The definition, kinds and dynamics of public participation in local government were given specific attention. The approach was comparative in that samples were drawn from international best practices from, example, Australia and Brazil. It was stressed that public participation is basic in helping democracy to flourish and South Africa cannot do without promoting it.

The second objective was to describe an overview of the mechanism and processes on the functioning of ward committees for public participation at Emfuleni Local Municipality. In chapter three was an outline of legislation that formed the basis of ward committee creation. These include the Constitution, the Municipal Structures Act, and the Municipal Systems Act which makes public participation in affairs of local government mandatory. The chapter also dealt with the composition, elections and functions of ward committees. For that matter, attention focused on the Office of the Speaker of ELM as the engine room for driving the tasks of ward committees.

Thirdly, the study is aimed to research into the success or failures of ward committees at Emfuleni Local Municipality. Testing this objective was by means of empirical survey

with the use of questionnaires. There was an overwhelming response on the positive impact of ward committees on community mobilization for projects and on feedback...

The fourth objective of this study is to offer recommendation that may add value for the management action on improving the functions of ward committees. These are accordingly outlined below and conclude analysis of the study.

5.3 TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS

A cardinal objective of the study was to test the hypothesis as set out in chapter one namely: Ward Committees are a strategic structure on council projects and yet, their effective functioning is flawed by a lack of capacity and administrative support.

Literature review in chapters two and three was used to explore the usefulness of ward committees in public participation. More significantly, use was made of open-ended questionnaire in empirical survey to test the validity of the claim. Results of the empirical survey were:

- Ward Committees as community structures are well known by the community of Emfuleni;
- Majority of respondents were active in elections of ward committees,
- There is active community participation in community projects as a result of ward committee mobilization;
- Ward committee members are popular with the community due to door-to door feedback of council activities which they regularly give;
- Council gives support to ward committees with some logistics. Committees are however not empowered in access to council information and in out of pocket allowance. To that extent, the hypothesis has been validated.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Flowing from the research findings above, the following recommendations are offered for management action by Council of Emfuleni Local Municipality:

- The research has established Ward Committees as strategic structure in whipping public participation for Council policy implementation; committees must be considered by councils as legitimate partners on council issues;.
- In case of Emfuleni Local Municipality, it can be said that there are ward committee members who are dedicated to doing the best that they could in promoting public participation. Ward councilors need to encourage Council on intensifying holding briefings on current issues with ward committees..
- Ward committee work is not remunerated by statute. ELM could however develop an out-of-pocket allowance to help offset traveling allowances of wad committee members attending meetings. An annual event of award to best ward committee of ELM could be a further incentive.
- Mayor roadshows should occasionally include addressing community members on good work being done by ward committees.
- The ELM website need be updated so that the public and stakeholders can be informed and involved in development of the council. It would be prudent for Council to include computer training
- Community should be encouraged to attend public meetings and take part in Integrated Development and Planning consultative meetings To that effect, Council needs to stimulate ward committee training programmes on the IDP, budget and the art of holding meetings.
- There should be regular communication based on action and not on lip service, this will ensure that there is trust between the leadership and the community members.

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ANNEXTURE A

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

**Topic: Ward committees as an effective tool for public participation at
Emfuleni Local Municipality**

Researcher: Moji Tshabalala

Institution: North West University (Vaal Triangle Campus).

Instructions:

Please do not write your name down.

Answer the question frankly; and mark with an X where applicable.

Section A: profile of respondent

1. Gender:

Male _____ Female _____

2. Age range _____

18 to 24 years _____

25 to 31 years _____

32 to 37 _____

38 to 44 _____

45 to 52 _____

53 to 58 _____

59 to 65 _____

66 and above _____

3. You are employed to work for _____ (Name of service/
information provider).

4. You are working as a _____
5. For how long have you been working here? _____
6. What is your highest level of education?
- _____ Matric
- _____ Tertiary (university, technikon or college):
- _____ Adult basic education
- _____ Other
- _____ If so, please mention below
- _____

Section B: Information provided on ward committees and their involvement in public participation

The researcher is conducting a study on the role and effectiveness of Ward Committees in stimulating public participation at Emfuleni Local Municipality. Your candid answer to the questions below will be appreciated. The purpose is purely academic.

1. Yes or No

In your own opinion do you think the community of Emfuleni Local Municipality understands community participation?

--

2. Yes or No kindly motivate your answer

In what ways would you say that Emfuleni Local Municipality encourages community participation?

3. Yes or No

In your opinion do you think Ward committees and different stakeholders have access to information?

--

4. What can the current leadership do to ensure that the trust between them and the community members and ward committees is enhanced?

5. What support has Ward Committee members received from ELM to help promote public participation?

6. In your own view have Ward Committees been an asset or liability to ELM in community development? Kindly motivate your answer.

Section C

Questions for the community

1. Do you know if ward committees were ever elected in your ward?

Yes or no

--

2. Are you aware of roles and responsibilities of ward committees in your ward? If so mention few.

3. How many ward committees and public meeting have you had since the beginning of the year?

Yes or No

4. In your opinion do you think people gain something from public meeting if so motivate your answer?

5. Ward committees are also vehicle for public participation, are they effective in your ward? Motivate your answer?

Thank you for your participation!