



# **Community members' perceptions of higher education institutions' community engagement projects: The case of the WIN platform of the North-West University**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The research study falls under an umbrella study of the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform which is led by the Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR) of the North-West University. In a five phased umbrella study, this study was part of phase two which focused on the perceptions of community members of Vaalharts on previous WIN platform projects. In the Kearney Context-Focus-Profile Model it is argued that the community's perceptions are vital to the development of an effective 'engagement'. The whole aim of the research was to ensure effective higher education institution-community engagement and it linked with the WIN platform's desire to achieve a participatory environment for community engagement.

The study was motivated by the need to establish community members' perceptions on the implementation of the WIN platform. There was a concern that the projects could have been experienced as top-down in nature. This would mean that the community's perceptions and views about their social issues were not taken into consideration when developing strategies for community engagement projects and so lacking collaboration and participation. It was largely the project team who decided on social issues (Well-being, Nutrition etc.) without fully consulting the community members of Vaalharts. In view of this a study to evaluate the community members' perceptions on the projects were viewed as necessary and important. This study attempted to contribute to this need.

The research study used an exploratory qualitative design, which relies on perceptions and thoughts of individuals, to fully understand community members of Vaalharts region as they shared their own personal experiences in WIN platform projects. The study was carried out at three locations: Sekhing, Pampierstad and Jan Kempdorp in the Vaalharts region. The literature study revealed principles for effective community engagement which were used to evaluate previous projects of the WIN platform, such as participation, collaboration, informing and consulting, human capital, empowerment, reciprocity, and mutuality. They were used as tools in the research study to evaluate and encourage effective community engagement in previous and future WIN platform projects.

The findings indicated that projects were implemented interactively and the participants were satisfied with how some of the projects were implemented. The participants

indicated that there was empowerment and encouragement of human capital. The community mentioned that they did not have the skills and knowledge. The findings also indicated that there were some challenges experienced relating to the projects. In some of the projects there was a lack of collaboration, reciprocity and mutuality, which influenced community participation and therefore the relevant needs of the community were not fully addressed. Feedback was that the projects do have a positive impact on the community but do not address the fundamental need for employment. The findings also indicated that the implementation of projects was successful in the community but can be improved with more interaction, monitoring and evaluation. Projects ensured participation but it can be improved with more applicable communication and ensuring there is clarity on the objectives of the projects. These findings can positively influence the future development of the WIN platform strategies for community engagement. These findings can also be used by other organisations that want to develop strategies for effective community engagement.

### **Keywords**

Higher education institutions, community engagement, community members' perceptions, WIN platform, North-West University.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Lebogang Prudence Sebeco, declare that this dissertation:

Community members' perceptions of higher education institutions' community engagement projects: The case of the WIN platform of the North-West University.

Is my own work, every text that is written is supported by a reference, and has not been submitted to any other university. This work is based on the research supported by the National Research Foundation.

Any opinion, finding and conclusion or recommendation expressed in this material is that of the author(s) and the NRF does not accept any liability in this regard.

L. P Sebeco.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AUTHeR – African Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research

HSRC – Human Sciences Research Council

NWU – North West University

PSPPD – Programme to Support Pro Poor Development

WIN – Wellbeing InNovation

# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

According to Bortolin (2011:49), community engagement of higher education institutions can be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s in the USA. It was established to address critical social issues experienced by communities on a daily basis, to increase interaction between higher education institutions and the community. Watson (2007) states that it is the same in the United Kingdom, as community engagement is emphasised as tool, to encourage higher education institutions to be active participants in their communities and to practice social responsibility. Ernest Boyer (as cited by Bortolin, 2011:49) and De Lange (2012:96) stipulate that community engagement in higher education institutions should be emphasised and that institutions should be engaged with communities to be able to identify and provide remedial solutions to social issues (e.g. poverty, unemployment, health-related issues and education, among others) that communities experience on a daily basis.

Community engagement projects are regarded as remedial solutions that will effectively attend to each one of these issues individually. This, in turn, also benefits higher education institutions by demonstrating their engagement with their communities (these institutions tend to be perceived as detached from their communities). Higher education community engagement projects provide a platform for these institutions to showcase dedication and commitment towards social responsibility (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2014). These community engagement initiatives also allow for the core functions of higher education institutions, such as teaching, training, research and innovation, to be advanced and improved (Jacob, Sutin, Weidman & Yeager, 2015). In an African context, community engagement at higher education institutions is mostly used as a tool to help address social issues such as poverty and health. These social issues are mostly caused by a lack of development.

The following section provides the background on the state of community engagement at higher education institutions; specifically at the Potchefstroom

Campus of one of South Africa's higher education institutions, the North-West University.

### 1.1.1 Community engagement in South African higher education institutions

Community engagement in the early 1900s was a relatively unknown concept in South African higher education institutions (Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna & Slamet, 2008:59). Generally, community engagement was associated with charity work or 'Cinderella missions'; it was an activity meant for the rich and detached from higher education institutions while teaching, learning and research were the core functions and focus of these institutions (Jonker, 2016:1).

After the apartheid regime, the call for change was emphasised in all departments and institutions in South Africa. In 1997, the Department of Higher Education encouraged higher education institutions to transform and adopt community engagement and incorporate it in their vision, mission and policies (Lazarus *et al*, 2008:59; Kagisano, 2010). Based on the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education of 1994 (hereafter referred to as the 'Education White Paper 3'), higher education institutions had three main functions and founding principles. Teaching and learning were the two functions for higher education institutions, and community engagement came third after the call for transformation. It was then added as one of the functions of higher education institutions (Kagisano, 2010). The aim of including community engagement as one of the functions of higher education institutions was to build communication (constant feedback), alliances and trust between higher education institutions and the community, and also to encourage these academic institutions to be active agents of social change within their communities to help eradicate poverty and address other social issues (Fountain, Patel & Buffin, 2007).

The reason was that certain South African communities during apartheid had lived under extreme conditions including, among others, poverty, and lack of opportunities to advance themselves; hence the call for higher education institutions to avail the large pool of skills and resources in their possession to help communities advance (Jacob *et al.*, 2015:3). Communities were only

acknowledged as platforms for conducting research, and in some extreme cases they were merely considered as laboratories (Jonker, 2016:1). Higher education institutions had relegated the status and needs of communities to a lower status because they could provide what was not available to communities (food, clothes, among others).

Every higher education institution, however, should be judged by its own efforts to include and implement community engagement (Jonker, 2016:1). The following section discusses community engagement at the NWU.

### 1.1.2 Community engagement at the North-West University (NWU)

Community engagement was included in the North-West University's vision and mission as encouraged by the 1997 Education White Paper 3. As a result, a policy document that speaks clearly to community engagement and its implementation was developed. The policy ensures that the NWU will follow the requirements of the national government policy framework (NWU, 2016). In addition to the policy, the NWU institutional office created an office and appointed a manager for community engagement in July 2007 to directly address any issues and queries relating to community engagement within the institution. Prior to the introduction of this office, there were no formal structures available to practically operationalise community engagement in line with the mission and vision of the NWU (Jonker, 2016:2).

This was an effort from the NWU to achieve the goal of implementing community engagement within the institution as articulated in its community engagement policy. The aim is that the institution develops new knowledge, a multidisciplinary approach, teaching and relevance, and combines theory and practice (NWU, 2016). Accordingly, universities engage in 'community engagement' to showcase themselves as engaged institutions that contribute to building and empowering the society (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2014:118; De Lange, 2012:101). To also ensure that the NWU engaged fully with the community, a Forum for Continuous Community Development (FCCD) was developed in 2011. The aim of this forum was to address past disadvantages and build new partnerships with communities, in order to further promote community engagement (Olowu, 2012:95).

To extend the efforts of the NWU in implementing community engagement, a platform was established within a research unit which spearheaded various community engagement projects. The following section presents a discussion of actual practical efforts that this platform initiated to improve social issues within communities.

### 1.1.3 Well-being INnovation (WIN) platform.

The WIN platform was established in 2011 by the Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR) in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU. Meaning the leadership of the platform was within the dean's office, but the management of the platform was through AUTHeR, this also includes the finance management of the platform. The WIN platform was established to improve rural health and well-being in the Vaalharts region. Even though the Vaalharts community is not in close proximity to the NWU, it was chosen because the WIN platform team realised that the nearby communities were already over utilised and in collaboration with the NWU in community engagement projects.

The WIN platform then decided to have a collaboration with the Phokwane municipality and water association in Vaalharts, as there was already a collaboration between the university and Phokwane municipality. Vaalharts falls under the Frances Baard District municipality, which is said to have the largest population in the province of the Northern Cape (Frances Baard, 2018). The district is divided into four local municipalities: Dikgatlong, Magareng, Phokwane, and Sol Plaatjie. The Vaalharts region falls under the local municipality of Phokwane. The Phokwane municipality's income depends largely on agriculture, community development projects and informal sectors, therefore, people in Vaalharts are mostly uneducated and have little access to better facilities to improve their lives; hence, they are dependent on community development projects (Frances Baard, 2018).

Based on the above, the WIN platform implemented 18 projects as tools to attend to well-being and rural health in marginalised communities and also to execute their strategy for community engagement. The project manager decided where the 18 projects were implemented. The 18 projects are divided

into three domains: 1) community engagement research, 2) service learning/work-integrated learning and 3) skills development projects. The abovementioned domains focused specifically on three aspects of well-being: 1) physical health (divided into sports and recreation); 2) socio-economic factors; and 3) psychosocial well-being. This includes local clinics and hospitals, as well as, food and nutrition security, which focuses on schools and community food security centres/nodes. For example, a group of honours students conducted a research study at *Huppelland*, a local crèche in Valspan, to promote the responsibility of the community towards their health and well-being (AUTHeR, 2017).

Strong intersectorial partnerships are of high value in effectively addressing such social issues. Hence, other schools from the NWU Faculties such as psychology, nursing, consumer sciences, biokinetics, recreation and sports sciences, and urban and regional planning are also involved. This multidisciplinary approach contributes to the development and enactment of different skills and knowledge which may help in developing strategies that address the community's experiences from all angles. Jacob *et al.* (2015:1) also emphasises sustainable networks and partnerships with the community on all levels, because collaboration and intersectorial relations/partnerships are crucial in effectively addressing social issues in communities. Just as intersectorial partnerships are important, coordination and management are crucial as well. The WIN platform has centralised coordination and management structures to facilitate access to the community for researchers who make sure the needs of the community are taken care of (AUTHeR, 2017).

The proposed study focuses on phase two of the WIN platform's overall project for better community engagement. Phase two is informed by phase one where a document analysis of the university-community engagement on the WIN platform was conducted. Phase two focuses on exploring community members' perceptions of higher education institutions' community engagement. Due to the growing tendency of organisations to employ community engagement projects as tools to address social issues in the community, collaboration and participation with the community is required (Mtawa, Fongwa & Wangenge-Ouma, 2016:126; Ramachandra & Mansor, 2014:589).

The projects that the WIN platform developed were considered to be top-down, because the community was excluded from the decision-making process of the developed projects. Because even though there was an invitation to the municipality to come and represent the community, most of the decisions were strongly made by the university, giving the municipality little or no opportunity to take part in the decision making process. Participation and full collaboration of community members was not a priority. The WIN platform utilised a one-sided implementation of the projects (AUTHeR, 2017). Effective community engagement encourages collaboration and participation because it allows for the values and daily experiences of the community to be known to higher education institutions and relevant projects are developed to address them (CHET, 2003:4; de Lange, 2012:96). A new participatory two-way strategy characterised by reciprocity, respect, trust, collaboration, and participation is now envisaged as a way forward for the WIN platform's future projects to effectively address social issues with the community. It is also at the core of the current NWU Community Engagement Policy (NWU, 2016). This strategy will ensure reciprocity and nurture partnerships.

The following section discusses the problem statement, which emphasises limitations in the WIN platform's strategies and implemented projects. The problem statement also highlights the significance of this study.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

According to Mtawa *et al.* (2016:126) and Jacob *et al.* (2015:1), community engagement is beneficial for both higher education institutions and the community. It improves teaching, learning and research in higher education institutions and it empowers the community (Tse, Palakiko, Daniggelis, & Makahi, 2015:142). Community engagement should create an open channel of communication between higher education institutions and the community, whereby the community is given an opportunity to voice their perceptions and daily experiences to higher education institutions with an expectation of solutions to their social issues (AUCEA, 2006: 2; NWU, 2016). The community's' collaboration and participation through the sharing of their perceptions and experiences are therefore crucial in developing community engagement projects that will help them.

The WIN platform identified that previous strategies used to facilitate community engagement for the WIN platform were top-down and traditional. The community's perceptions and views about their social issues were not taken into consideration when developing strategies for community engagement projects; they lacked collaboration and participation (AUTHeR, 2017). The research team decided on social issues (well-being, nutrition etc.) without consulting the community members of Vaalharts. The WIN platform team approached the community with already established and pre-conceived ideas and solutions on how to address social issues that they had identified in isolation from the community. They, thus, did not assess and develop solutions collaboratively with the communities.

In general, the problem this study addresses is that there is limited successful collaboration between communities and higher education institutions; a lack of understanding of the community's social issues and daily experiences, which results in a lack of understanding on what higher education institutions' community engagement should look like and how it is perceived by the community. Understanding community perceptions may contribute to an effective and efficient community engagement project. Olowu (2012:100) argues, that "...generating knowledge *'with'* communities rather than *'for'* communities contrasts sharply with traditional university attitudes that offer expertise rather than an appreciation for indigenous knowledge". Sometimes, higher education institutions engage in community engagement projects that are developed by and for scholars (research studies to contribute to the body of knowledge) and exclude community participation and do not fully address the social issues that the community is struggling with.

Therefore, understanding community members' perceptions increases collaboration through knowledge exchange between the community and the higher education institution, which increases knowledge on how the community thinks about higher education institution community engagement, how it is beneficial to them, and how this relationship can be improved. Thus, shifting innovation and the teaching process to generating knowledge with the community and not for the community may increase collaboration. Specifically, this study addresses the problem of a lack of understanding of community

members' perceptions on the engagements of the WIN platform of the North-West University in the Vaalharts area. This study will explore how the community understands higher education institutions' community interventions/projects. This may contribute to the development of new strategies that enhance collaboration and participation between the community and higher education institutions.

This study attempts to show that even though most universities have mission statements and objectives that are focused on alleviating pressing social issues in societies, the challenge they face is to develop effective ways in which they can implement it for the good of the public. In order to achieve this, they have to encourage participation and collaboration whilst improving their core functions as educational institutions. It is therefore crucial to ensure that higher education institutions' community engagement projects reflect an understanding of communities and opens a communication channel where the voice of the community is heard in terms of those potential community engagement projects that affect them (Maluleke, 2011:101). This study will therefore contribute to a focus on how engagement between the community of Vaalharts and the WIN platform of the NWU can be improved and thereby be relevant to society.

Against the provided background of the problem statement, general and specific research questions and research objectives are formulated to address the problem in the following section.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The main research question of this study is: What are the Vaalharts community members' perceptions of the community engagements in the NWU WIN platform projects?

The specific research questions are:

- What does literature state about community engagement of higher education institutions?

- What applicable methodology can be used to study the perceptions community members have on community engagement of higher education institutions?
- What, empirically, are the perceptions of Vaalhart's community members on the implementation and effect of the community engagement projects of the WIN platform?
- What interpretations can be drawn from the community's perceived trust, reciprocity, and mutuality in the previous higher education institution's community engagement projects carried out on the WIN platform?
- What conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from the study?

#### **1.4 Research objectives**

The main objective of this study reads as follows: "To explore the Vaalharts community members' perceptions of the community engagements of the NWU's WIN projects".

The specific research objectives are:

- To explore literature on community engagement of higher education institutions
- To identify methodology that can be used to study the perceptions community members have of higher education institutions' community engagement projects.
- To empirically explore perceptions of Vaalharts community members on the implementation and effect of community engagement projects of the WIN platform.
- To interpret how the community perceives trust, reciprocity, and mutuality in previous community engagement projects of the WIN platform.
- To provide conclusions and recommendations for the study.

## **1.5 Central theoretical statement**

This section discusses community engagement in higher education institutions, providing a discussion of different types of models of community engagement in higher education institutions and a theoretical lens for this study.

McIlrath, Lyons, and Munck, (2012) define community engagement as “the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities, for mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity”. Kearney (2015) describes community engagement as a participatory process that creates relationships and encourages mutual respect and reciprocity. The characteristics (reciprocity, trust, mutuality, transparency and respect) of community engagement Kearny names in the definition will be used as tools to evaluate and refer to community engagement throughout the study.

A discussion of community engagement in higher education institutions is provided below according to three models. In this study, a preference will be expressed for the infusion model.

### **1.5.1 Community engagement in higher education institutions**

Bender (2008:87), and Wade and Demb (2009:7) contributed to the understanding of community engagement in higher education institutions through three models that explain community engagement in relation to research and teaching and learning. Each model explains community engagement, as each touches on the responsibility between the higher education institutions and the communities within their reach. Emphasis on participation on the different levels of decision-making, policy and responsibility, is different in each model.

#### **1.5.1.1 The Silo model**

This model recognises teaching and learning, research, and community service as three distinct roles of higher education institutions. These roles are pursued separately from each other. Hence, community engagement is considered to be separate from the teaching and learning because it is considered to be

voluntary for academics. It is more of a service than an engagement (Bender, 2008:88).

Community engagement in this model comprises outreach programmes and volunteerism, which makes it traditional in nature. The model of ethnicity and health for community engagement, developed by Fountain, also contributes to how community engagement in higher education institutions should be approached (Fountain, *et al.* 2007:3). Fountain's model critiques the Silo model because of the lack of emphasis on participation, representativeness and empowerment for marginalised communities. Fourie (2006:10) also challenges the idea of community engagement being separated from other functions of the university. He states that there is a strong call for a more participatory approach from universities.

#### **1.5.1.2 The intersectional model**

This model states that higher education institutions have three, intersecting roles: teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. This model describes community engagement as inevitable activities of higher education institutions that occur among the three 'main roles'. It therefore, posits the idea that community engagement will take place, whether it is directly or indirectly (Bender, 2008:88). The proponents of the intersectional model does not assume that higher education institutions are not engaging with communities, but believes that higher education institutions are already engaging with communities by providing access to teaching and learning to the community.

Lazarus *et al.* (2008:60) postulate that many universities have mission statements for community engagement. This notwithstanding, they note these universities may not necessarily have policies and strategies to specifically operationalise these mission statements. Fourie (2006:7) argues that the existence of teaching, learning and research is not enough basis for an assumption that higher education institutions are interacting with the community. Fourie (2006:7) further continues to articulate that higher education institutions should not confuse '*striving for relevance*' as '*engagement*'.

Proponents of this model do not expect higher education institutions to change their community engagement programmes. To some extent this model reflects elements of community engagement; however, social responsibility to the community requires more than just a reflection. Recently, there has been a demand for new forms of community engagement because of the growing social issues in communities. This requires shifts in the roles and functions of the higher education institutions. The demand stems from an increase in the diversity of research activities; emphasis is placed more on interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, thereby dealing with social issues more collaboratively (Fourie, 2006:15). This ensures that the community's interests and needs are better considered (Bender, 2008:89).

The following model infuses teaching, learning, research, and community engagement. Therefore, it presents a better option for potentially addressing the social issues experienced by communities more effectively.

### **1.5.1.3 The infusion (cross-cutting) model**

According to Bender (2008:90) this model recognises teaching, learning, and research as roles of the higher education institution, but also recognises community engagement as an important aspect to the function of higher education institutions; hence, it is also referred to as a “community-engaged university”. Bender (2008:90) defines community engagement in this model as a “fundamental idea and perspective infused in and integrated within teaching and learning, and research”. There is a great deal of influence between the ‘traditional main roles’ of higher education institution (teaching and learning, and research) and community engagement. This is because community engagement (projects) improves social issues, and it also enhances the quality of teaching, learning, and research (Bender, 2008:90; Fountain *et al*, 2007:7). It is, therefore, encouraged that community engagement be included in all the functions, structures and policies of higher education institutions.

The infusion model is the best choice to describe community engagement in higher education institutions for this study, because it encourages collaboration between higher education institutions and the community. Not only does it encourage collaboration but it allows members to be active participants in

community engagement projects. It does, however not, address the power dynamics that exist within community engagement efforts at higher education institutions. Thus, the discussion below on power and participation is important.

### 1.5.2 Power & Participation

According to Foucault (1972), knowledge that is possessed by a group with little or no status compared to another is referred to as 'subjugated knowledge'. This is knowledge that is repressed, marginalised or knowledge of the local people (Williams & Nunns, 2016). This is how knowledge from the community is perceived; it is repressed, marginalised, and is not prioritised by the higher education institutions as, possibly, is the case of the WIN platform. Foucault (1972) further states that resources and skills available to higher education institutions legitimise power. This is because the more resources and skills available to a certain party, the more status they have. The status of the community compared to that of a higher education institution puts the community at the bottom of the power hierarchy, and also legitimises the power possessed by the higher education institution (Wolf, 2013; Williams & Nunns, 2016; Foucault, 1972). It is because of an already existing set of rules and systems (created by the status of one party) that emphasises domination, that there are rulers and the ruled, based on the possession of skills and resources (Foucault, 1972).

Foucault (1972) alludes to hierarchies, which are platforms where power manifests. Hierarchies distinguish between higher and lower, and dominant and subordinate, which reflect authority and power (Wolf, 2013). In ascribing to this view, one could argue that this may discourage a reciprocally beneficial-participatory relationship between the higher education institution and the community. This is because personnel/researchers from a higher education institution already hold certain positions of privilege or have certain statuses attached to them. This stems from the fact that they are in possession of a pool of resources and skills, which are mostly not available to the community (Wolf, 2013). Bender (2007) indicates that there is a power imbalance in higher education institutions' community engagement projects, because for most of the community engagement projects conducted, the approach is traditional in nature (see Silo model). This places the party with more resources and skills in

authority. The issue is that the community is not involved in the planning phase of most research studies, where social issues are identified and strategies are put in place to address the issues. The community is usually only involved in the implementation phase of the research (Maluleke, 2011:96).

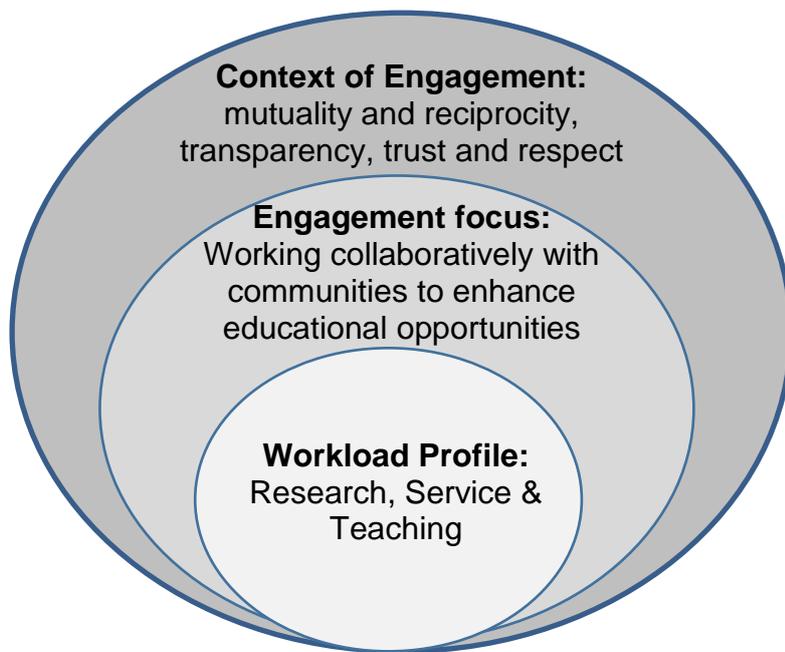
This places higher education institutions in a position of power, because it has resources and skills that can aid in addressing society's pressing issues. Power has the ability to create a platform where community engagement projects can be successful, but at the same time it has certain consequences. These include, for example, the fact that it can limit/control action or participation, which may deprive the community members involved of their agency and autonomy in the decision-making process (Foucault, 1972; Weiler, 2009). This is not the form that community engagement projects should take, since there should rather be equal power and participation between all the parties involved.

The *Context-Focus-Profile Model* of Kearney (2015) refutes the notion of a traditional approach, where there is one party in power. It does, however, emphasise a more engaged and participatory method for community engagement, because engagement between higher education institutions and the community should be transparent and reciprocal and mutual trust and respect should exist (Kearney, 2015). This model reflects characteristics of an 'engaged approach' where focus and authority is more on the people/communities and participation is prioritised. Jonker (2016:24) also emphasises participation because when the community is involved from the early stages of initiation, project planning and policy, collaboration increases.

### 1.5.3 Practical community engagement: Kearney's Context-Focus-Profile Model

This model reflects the characteristics of an 'engaged approach' where focus and authority is more on the people/communities (Kearney, 2015). The proposed study's objective is more in line with the engaged approach, because it explores the community's perceptions on a higher education institution's community engagement project, which is the WIN of the NWU.

Kearney's context-focus-profile model (see Figure 1.1) illustrates that mutuality, reciprocity, transparency, trust, and respect are fundamental to the context of engagement. This is the essence of this proposed study. These are the characteristics that the WIN platform is aiming to reflect in future engagements with the community. This is because, when the context of engagement is encouraged and valued, the focus of engagement may be established. In the model, Kearney (2015:33) explains that engagement focus is "...working collaboratively with the community to enhance educational opportunities". This will only be reached when the context of engagement is understood, encouraged and valued. Thus, undertaking a study that focuses on perceptions of the community to develop better strategies, may yield better community engagement projects.



**Figure 1.1: Kearney's Model (Kearney, 2015:33)**

According to Kearney (2015), the community's perceptions are vital to the development of an effective 'engagement'. The idea of effective 'engagement' can be threatened by conflict. This is because higher education institutions' community engagements entail partnerships between two parties that do not have the same perspectives when it comes to problem solving since these parties may exhibit diverse cultural beliefs and social class (Curwood *et al.*, 2011). That is why it is important to understand how people perceive their social issues and how they think they should be addressed.

#### 1.5.4 Theoretical setting

Community participation is defined by Burns, Heywood, Taylor, Wilde & Wilson (2004:2) as people being involved in community projects that help find solutions to their everyday life social issues. Such participation is regarded as a basic right and is fundamental to democracy (see also Thomson *et al.*, 2008). Community participation can take place on different levels, such as needs assessment, where people voice their opinions and perceptions; planning where all are included as active stakeholders in the formulation of objectives or goals, and implementation where members actively participate in the execution of projects (Burns *et al.*, 2004:2). Jonker (2016:27-28) also stipulates that

participation is characterised by equal distribution of power; therefore, both the institution and the community should be equal partners in all the phases of the project. Unequal power relations, however, hinders participation, because institutions can occupy positions of power without being aware of it. Therefore, the theoretical point of departure of this study is in accordance to Bender's (2008) infusion (cross-cutting) model emphasising participation, collaboration, and equal distribution of power, resulting in a more engaged higher education institution. It is furthermore understood that the higher education institution's community engagement constitutes a power dynamic that must be addressed positively for the community.

To operationalise this theoretical position, Kearney's '*Context-Focus-Profile Model*' (2015) is the preferred model, because it places emphasis on a more engaged and participatory approach for higher education institution community engagement, proposing that engagement between higher education institutions and the community should be transparent, reciprocal and characterised by mutual trust and respect. This model provides the tools to balance power and participation within a community engagement project. This model can inform the research to reveal cases where authentic participation is quenched, as when higher education institutions come to the chosen community with preconceived ideas and methodology to conduct the study that does not reflect characteristics of a good relationship for community engagement (Williams & Nunns, 2016). The chosen theoretical approach will assist the WIN platform to develop better strategies that encourages participatory community engagement projects with the community that will help provide solutions to the community's' social issues.

The following section discusses the methodology that will guide the study to address the research question.

## **1.6 Methodological framework**

This section discusses the research methodology that will guide the research process and finally address the research question and the objectives of the study. The subsections are: The methodological approach, population and sampling, data collection instruments, and the strategy for data analysis.

### 1.6.1 Methodological approach

The research approach offers guidance for research action and helps to rationalise the use of time and reduces costs (Sarantakos, 2013:121). It further assists to introduce a systematic approach to the research operation, thereby guaranteeing that all aspects of the study are addressed and are executed in the right sequence. There are different types of research approaches with their own sampling procedures, data collection and analysis methods, which are used to approach social reality. Qualitative and quantitative research approaches are the two most commonly used approaches. According to Neuman (2007), quantitative research holds that there is a knowable reality that exists independent of the research process that can be observed. This is known as 'objectivism' which, according to Bryman (2016:29), maintains that individuals are external actors establishing observable social phenomena. The quantitative research design, as presented by Hancock *et al.* (2009), is characterised as a numerical and non-descriptive approach that applies statistics. It is an iterative process whereby evidence is evaluated and the results are presented in tables, statistics and/or graphs.

According to Denzin (2000:139-160), the qualitative research approach is characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspects of social life and its methods which (in general) generate text, rather than numbers, as data for analysis. Qualitative research tends to focus on how people can have different ways of looking at reality (Starman, 2013:30). On a practical level, Patton (2002) argues that qualitative research studies behaviour of individuals in natural settings or uses people's accounts/experiences/realities as data. It focuses on reports of experience; the description and interpretation of people's realities and might lead to the development of concepts or theories based on the collected data. Researchers using this sort of approach are looking to capture what participants express in their own words.

This proposed study follows a qualitative research approach, based on the objectives and research questions of the study, to explore the perceptions of the community members of the NWU community engagement and specifically the case of the WIN platform. This is done because a qualitative research design

presents rich data in which priority is given to the individual to give his/her own experience about the phenomena being studied.

### 1.6.2 Research Design

The proposed study is confined to a specific geographical area – the community of Vaalharts in the Northern Cape. That is the motivation for the study to adopt a ‘case study’ research method. Starman (2013:31) defines a case study design as “...a description and analysis of an individual matter and case, with the purpose to identify variables, structures, forms and orders of interaction between the participants in the situation in order to assess the performance of work or progress in development”.

A case study design is advisable to use when analysing a contemporary phenomenon relating to real-life experience/context (Yin, 1994:1, Baxter & Jack, 2008:545). There are, however, three factors to take into consideration when choosing a specific case-study design; these three factors are the research question, the control the researcher has over events, and the extent of the focus on contemporary rather than historical events (Yin, 1994:1). For the proposed study, the main research question influenced the choice of a single-case case study.

Both Zainal (2007) and Yin (2003:1,17) present various different types of case study designs, such as multiple-case, descriptive, explanatory, journalistic case study, and so forth. For the purpose of this study the single-case design will be followed. The single-case design is focused on the single occurrence of an event. It is also used to test the impact of an intervention programme on a certain case (Zainal, 2007, Silverman, 2013:416). The proposed study will follow a single-case design because of the goal to explore the perceptions the community has of the WIN platform projects. This is for the purpose of contributing to policy and strategies for effective and relevant community engagement projects.

The following section discusses the population and sampling method that will be used to guide the study to achieve the required data.

### 1.6.3 Population and sampling

In research the sampling process is crucial, as it attempts to achieve 'representativeness'. As mentioned, the proposed study will be conducted in Vaalharts in the Northern Cape, where the WIN platform projects were undertaken. The study will use a non-probability sampling method. Through non-probability sampling, the researcher does not randomly select participants. They assign priority to particular criteria (e.g. age, geographical context and participation experience) that will help achieve the desired sample (Battaglia, 2011:523). Criteria like gender-identity, race and nationality is not available as it was not given prioritised in the WIN platform projects. Therefore, the sample is not selected using random selection methods, where individuals are chosen randomly (disregarding criteria to yield relevant data) to ensure equal participation (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). The sample for this study is restricted to members and stakeholders of the community of Vaalharts Northern Cape who had previously participated in WIN projects.

The chosen sampling method was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting and identifying a group of people that will help generate relevant data for the research question (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). This means including in the sample mainly participants with knowledge and experience of the phenomena explored (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Snowball sampling was used; participants led the researcher to other participants they knew who were previously involved, and those who did not participate.

Data was collected through individual interviews and focus group discussions with a sample of 40 participants – 20 for the focus groups and 20 for the individual interviews. The interviews and focus group discussions were based on AUTHeR WIN platform projects from the NWU schools that were involved, such as Consumer Sciences, Psychology, Nursing, Biokinetics, Recreation and Sports Sciences, and Urban and Regional Planning. The sample, both for focus groups and individual interviews, was generated using snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. Participants recruited those they knew who participated in WIN projects (Dragan & Isaic-Maniu, 2013:163). With consent from the participants the WIN platform team had contact information of previous participants and, these participants led the researcher to other participants.

The section below discusses how data will be collected.

#### 1.6.4 Data collection instruments

Data was collected by means of two data-collecting instruments; focus groups and individual interviews. Twenty individual interviews were conducted. An open dialogue was initiated, although it was guided by a set of prepared questions. The prepared questions aimed to reveal participants' personal experiences relating to power, reciprocity, respect, trust (Kearney's model) and participation in the WIN platform's community engagement projects, their roles in the projects, and their general opinion of higher education institutions' community engagement projects. This relates to the central theoretical statement which presents these aspects as important for community engagement.

The prepared questions for both the individual interviews and focus groups overlapped. This makes the comparison of data from the focus groups and the individual interviews easy and it ensures that both the focus groups and individual interviews yield focused and relevant data.

The WIN platform was identified by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) as a Living Lab, a concept used for centres that integrate research and innovation processes with public and private partnerships (Schumacher, 2008). Firstly, data was collected by means of the Diagnostic Research Study of Living Labs in South Africa by the HSRC. The HSRC study focuses on changes the WIN platform has made in the community. A collaboration for data collection emerged because of similarities in research objectives. The HSRC allowed for two follow-up questions about 1) which factors in the community could hinder change, and 2) which skills the community already has to its disposal to ensure that these changes will occur. The researcher collected the data with the HSRC field workers. The information from this study was used in the interpretation of the information collected in this study. In this study, data was collected using focus group discussions and face-to-face, semi-structured individual interviews.

##### **1.6.4.1 Focus group discussions**

According to Jonker (2016:59), the objective of a focus group is to encourage participants to disclose their perceptions or experiences about a certain topic. A

focus group discussion is usually a small group (5-8 people) sharing their views and perceptions with help of a facilitator (Greeff, 2013). Four focus groups were conducted. Focus group discussions were guided by a prepared list of questions (on participation, previous experience, weaknesses and positives of previous WIN projects), to ensure that the discussion yields outcomes that address the research objectives.

#### **1.6.4.2 Interviews**

The individual interviews were semi-structured. Richards and Morse (as cited in Jonker, 2016:52) describes semi-structured interviews as a conversation with a purpose. A semi-structured interview is guided by a list of questions that the researcher has prepared beforehand to ensure that the researcher covers the research objectives and that the conversation will address the research question. Probing is then the best technique to use for a semi-structured interview. It assisted in letting the participant talk freely. However, this may result in the discussion moving away from the set topic and must be managed. The interviews were recorded and if they wish not to be recorded, notes were taken (Jonker, 2016:52-53). The individual interviews consisted of 20 participants between the ages of 18 and 60 (for no minors were allowed to participate). The individual interviews took place where it was convenient for the participants.

The following section discusses how the data will be analysed.

#### **1.6.5 Strategy for data analysis**

In this study, data was collected, recorded, transcribed and anonymised as agreed with the participants. After data collection, the generated data of the two data collection processes were subjected to coding. Coding is a basic operation in qualitative data analysis. It is one of the most central processes (Bryman, 2012:568). It is a technique developed to help organise data by summarising and categorising it, which helps the researcher make sense of the data. Coding involves assigning identification words to each coding category (Saldana, 2013; Bryman, 2012:568).

After the coding and categorising processes are done, themes were extracted from the codes, using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis organises qualitative data by clarifying, examining, and recording themes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79). Themes are produced through a thorough reading of the coded and categorised data. Themes which emerged as patterns were selected as they corresponded with the phenomenon under investigation, and they linked to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79; Bryman, 2012:579; Saldana, 2013). The qualitative analysis programme, Atlas.ti, was used to do the data analysis.

### **1.7 Ethical considerations**

Whenever research is done or conducted on people, the welfare of the participants should be taken into consideration. Ethics are known as rules or standards for governing the relationships between people for the benefit of all concerned. This is ensured through mutual respect for the needs and wants of all parties involved (Weijer, 1999: 275-280). The following are the ethical considerations that will be adhered to in this study:

- To avoid ethical issues/dilemmas or harm to the participants, ethical clearance was acquired from the NWU ethics committee. This ethics clearance was acquired from the Faculty of Arts, which this study falls under. This was also ensured that there are no negative implications that could harm the reputation of the NWU.
- Permission was acquired through an explanation of the aims, objectives of the study, and the process of interviews and focus groups. This was administered through a written Informed Consent Statement form, which they signed to grant consent, Verbal consent was given to illiterate participants.
- Participants were informed that, even with consent, participation in the research study is voluntary; if they wish to withdraw, they have the right to do so without it impacting negatively on future participation.
- The data that was acquired from the participants was processed in office 114 F13, after which the data was digitalised. Real names were omitted and

fictitious names or numbers allocated to or chosen by participants, and the hard copies were destroyed.

- The digitalised data was kept in a safe in building F13 and protected by a password. Only the researcher had access thereto.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

Possible limitations to the study are in the use of purposive sampling and the small sample size of only 40 people/participants. This presents a limitation in terms of generalising the results of the study to the research population. Because this is a case study, the results/findings cannot be generalised to other, similar research settings. It is also possible that the data can be positively skewed due to the assumption that only people with positive experiences of the WIN platform will be keen to participate. However, it can also be assumed that people with negative experiences of previous projects of the WIN platform will be inclined to participate because they will want to voice their opinions.

Another challenge could be finding people who had previously participated in the WIN platform projects. This could pose as a limitation because the projects have been ongoing since 2011, and other participants may have moved out of the Vaalharts area; thus, recruiting past participants in WIN platform projects could be a challenge in itself. Because people move and some might be reluctant to participate again, it is possible that respondents may only have participated in one or two of the projects, which means that the study will not be able to cover the majority of these projects.

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

As stated in the problem statement, the main concern of the WIN platform is that there is restricted participation and collaboration between the higher education institution and the community, as identified in the already developed strategies of the WIN platform. The concern is that the strategies were not developed 'with' the community but 'for' the community. Sometimes, higher education institutions engage in community engagement projects that are developed by and for scholars (research studies designed to contribute to the

body of knowledge), excluding community participation and never fully addressing the social issues that the community is struggling with.

This means that they were not developed together with the community to make sure that the impact of these projects was beneficial to the community. There was no full participation and collaboration with the community. Effective community engagement ensures that there is participation from both the community members and the higher education institutions and equal distribution of power. Kearney's *Context-Focus-Profile Model* (2015) is therefore significant for this study, because it places emphasis on a more engaged and participatory approach for higher education institution community engagement initiatives, proposing that engagement between higher education institutions and the community should be transparent, reciprocal and characterised by mutual trust and respect. This provides community members an opportunity to be active participants in the development of policy and strategies, which is why this study is so important.

The significance of the study resides in the emphasis on participation and equal distribution of power in community engagement projects to benefit both the community and the higher education institution. Jonker (2016:27-28) stipulates that participation is characterised by the equal distribution of power; therefore, both the institution and the community should be equal partners in all the phases of the project.

The study will serve as an example to other researchers and practitioners pursuing community engagement projects, and higher education institutions with community engagement initiatives included in their missions and visions. It will also contribute to the pool of literature on how to ensure that projects bring positive change to society or communities. The study also contributes to the literature on the Vaalharts area, which is under-researched. This study can contribute to expanding research done in the Vaalharts area.

## **1.10 Chapters**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the proposed study and provides an overarching idea of the study and an idea of how the study will be conducted, as well as the theoretical framework.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter presents the literature review for higher education institution community engagement initiatives. The literature will lay a theoretical foundation for the rest of the study.

## **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter explores the methodology that will be used to guide the study and ensure that the research question is addressed. This will be ensured by explaining the sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Empirical findings**

This chapter explores and discusses community members' perceptions on previous WIN platform strategies in view of the data analysis strategy.

## **Chapter 5: Interpretation**

This chapter elaborates on the perceptions of community members by interpreting the results.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations**

This chapter explores the conclusions from the empirical findings and recommendations for future WIN projects.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Community engagement in higher education is a relatively new field of academic research and practice. In the last decade, the higher education sector – nationally and internationally – has experienced a great deal of movement towards ‘engagement’. This is because of the growing need for engagement in higher education institutions as a platform to plough knowledge-related capacities back into their specific communities. First, this chapter presents an overview of literature on community engagement in general, and then on higher education community engagement more specifically. It presents approaches for community engagement; a background of community engagement in South African higher education institutions; community engagement in higher education institutions in South Africa as well as their policies and strategies for community engagement; and different themes/elements that can assist in evaluating the effectiveness of those policies and strategies for community engagement. The literature aided in answering the first research question (What does literature state about community members’ perceptions of higher education institutions’ community engagement projects?) and this literature review helped in the selection and interpretation of relevant information for the data analysis.

##### **2.1.1 Community engagement**

###### **2.1.1.1 Introduction**

The following section provides the analysis of relevant literature on the background of community engagement in relation to development theories, approaches for effective community engagement, and – with consideration of the abovementioned literature – a definition of community engagement is provided.

### 2.1.2 Background to community engagement

The past twenty years has seen a shift to increased engagement through development agendas between communities and different organisations. This is because of scholars and large organisations, such as the World Bank, engaging in the argument of prioritising the needs of communities and devoting more attention to incorporating their perceptions in the development process. According to Peet and Watts (1996: 20- 25), organisations did not always engage with communities, as 'normal' development was not always encouraging to people at the grassroots; it was not empowering the community. It was more positivistic in nature and top-down, with those at grassroots always excluded because expert knowledge and scientific reports were given priority when facilitating development. The challenges were, therefore, not in the overall objectives of development but in how development was facilitated, as it did not engage with those who were actually meant to benefit from the development.

In the 1970s, an attempt was made to include people at grassroots levels through the Women in Development (WID) initiatives – which involved the recipients of the intended change in the planning phases and decision-making processes (Moser, 1989). Developmental practices should engage the recipients, and not enhance the quality of the practices without reaching the people (Mayo & Craig, 1995). In contrast, Cornwall (2008: 271) argues that, when participation is absent, people are used as instruments to achieve a goal; their participation is merely a means to meeting the objectives of a project while they are excluded from the decision-making processes. According to Cornwall (2008: 271) this is known as functional participation.

Participation in development initiatives gained traction in the mid 1980s when it was incorporated in initiatives of sustainable development (Leal, 2007:539). The 1980s were known as the neo-liberal period, characterised by the rise of development trends such as sustainable development, community development, and participatory development, which were new ways of engaging with those on the ground (facing pervasive social problems such as poverty and inequality) (Leal, 2007:540). Participation was a new way of effectively addressing these social issues, as participation embraces bottom-up approaches that empower the community as opposed to top-down (Leal,

2007:540). The whole aim of participation was to emancipate participants, who were marginalised, to develop in the context of their circumstances (Rahman, 1999:13).

Leal (2007: 540) advocated this as true development, because the participants are the ones most closely influenced by the problems and they have the power to make decisions and partake in the change.

### **2.1.2.1 Development theories**

Theories of development provide a timeline of change in societies. According to Matunhu (2011:69-70), “development geared to the satisfaction of fundamental human needs cannot, by definition, be structured from the top downwards. Law or decree cannot impose it. It can only come directly from the actions, expectations and creative and critical awareness of the protagonists themselves. Instead of being the traditional objects of development, people must take a leading role in development”.

This section discusses development theories and their contributions to change through development. This section covers two macro theories (dependency and modernisation), for a broader understanding of development, and three micro theories/approaches (basic needs, sustainable development & human development) to facilitate an understanding of development at grassroots level (society/individuals).

### **2.1.2.2 Modernisation theory of development**

Modernisation theory is defined as a “process of social change whereby less developed societies acquire characteristics common to more developed societies” (Nhema & Zinyama, 2016:152). Sorensen (2001) refers to modernisation as a term that indicates a move from a traditional society to a modernised society. Modernisation is also defined by Tipps (1973,201) as “a multifaceted process involving change in all areas of human thought and activity”. The theory was developed in the 1950s with the intention of solving development problems in third-world countries (Bull & Boas, 2012:319). Modernisation theory states that traditional societies must emulate modern societies, specifically the Western societies, to progress. Proponents of

modernisation, such as Talcott Parsons, believed that models of development used in Western societies were critical to leading a society to self-sustenance (Sorensen, 2001).

This is because modern societies are considered to have better living standards and more financial freedom because of their economic, political and social systems. It is believed that, if the Third World or traditional societies could introduce “technology, agricultural production trade and industrialisation dependent on a mobile labour force, they will experience a strengthening in their economies” (Bonvillain, 2001:191). The aim of this theory was to bring progress by means of modernisation, industrialisation and economic growth; the proponents of modernisation believed that, through technology and capitalism, the Third World would progress. This is also reflected in the structural functionalist theory of Talcott Parsons, who focused on how societies evolve from traditional to modern. This takes place through social system adaptation as a response to change (Hout, 2016:30).

It follows that nations can be regarded as developed when they display certain characteristics. Coetzee *et al.* (2007:31) identify characteristics that indicate modernity:

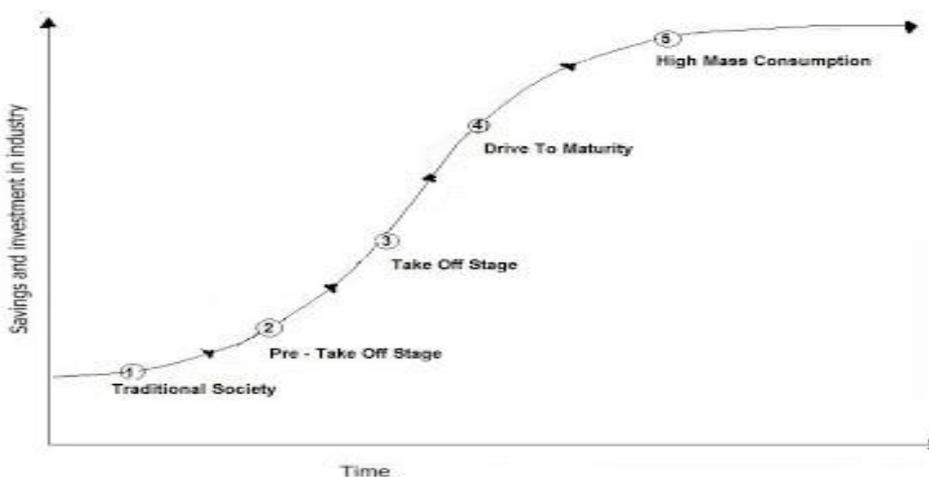
- Readiness to accommodate the process of transforming resulting in changes.
- Continuous broadening of life experiences and receptiveness to new knowledge.
- Continuous planning, calculability and readiness towards new experiences.
- Predictability of action and the ability to exercise effective control.
- High premium on technical skills and understanding of the principles of production.
- Changing attitudes to kinship, family roles, family size and the role of religion.
- Changing consumer behaviour and the acceptance of social stratification.

As Coetzee *et al.* (2007:31) identified indicators of modernity, Rostow identifies the stages of economic growth (from agriculture to mass consumption) which a nation has to traverse to reach modernity. Rostow was one of the proponents of modernisation and, like Talcott, advocated that a society go through stages in order to reach modernisation or a superior level of development.

Rostow's stages of growth (Mallick, 2005:6-8)

1. *Traditional society*: characterised by a stationary economy with people mainly focusing on agriculture. The society is hierarchal; there is low vertical and social mobility.
2. *Preconditions for take-off*: characterised by higher rate of investments initiating vigorous development due to industrialisation, which renders traditional ways redundant.
3. *Take-off*: a stage that lasts 2-3 decades, characterised by a self-sustained economy that requires no external inputs.
4. *Drive to maturity*: there is an increase in social and economic prosperity due to economic and technological progress and continual investments.
5. *The age of high mass consumption* is the final stage where most of the society is living in abundance and have a variety of choices.

The following graph depicts the different stages of economic growth.



**Figure 2.1: Rostow's stages of economic growth (Mallick, 2005:6)**

Bull and Boas (2012:320) indicates that modernisation was criticised for failing to reach the objective of pulling disadvantaged people out of poverty. It was criticised for trying to simplify the complex realities of people just to fit them into general development ideas. According to Mutunhu (2011:67), modernisation theory was criticised for excluding community members in initiatives/interventions that concerned their development. In addition, such interventions are imposed on the community and fail to recognise human agency and the fact that the community can be active role-players in their own development.

Modernisation characterised development in terms of economic growth; dependency theory, on the other hand, views development in terms of three macro-levels: core countries, semi-peripheral countries, and peripheral countries. The following subsection provides a discussion of how dependency between the three types of countries influence development.

### **2.1.2.3 Dependency theory of development**

Dependency theory came about in the 1950s due to dissatisfaction with the approach of modernisation to development. Thus it developed as a reaction to the conventional approaches of economic development (Mutunhu, 2011:68). Dependency theory is influenced by the ideas of Marxism and Neo-Marxism (Hout, 2016:32). Nhema and Zinyama (2016;154) considered this to be a direct challenge to modernisation theory. Dependency theory is defined as “a situation in which a certain number of countries have their economy conditioned by the development and expansion of another” (Nhema & Zinyama, 2016: 154). This theory emerged in the 1950s with the objectives of controlling the monetary exchange rate and policy for effective national development (Reyes, 2001: 4-5).

Wallerstein’s World System Theory suggests that there is core and peripheral countries. Dependency theory is a macro-theory with three levels: First World (core countries), semi-peripheral, and Third World (peripheral countries). Dependency theory argues that First World countries influence the development process of the Third World through the appropriation of surplus, which continues the cycle of underdevelopment (Uche, 1994:43). Peripheral countries will therefore always be dependent on core countries for financial means. The

intention of independency is that peripheral countries dissociate themselves from the world market and attempt to be self-reliant. Uche (1994:43) suggests that underdevelopment in third-world countries is caused by underlying forces of power; core countries have power over peripheral countries, even if the peripheral countries provide the raw materials and labour. Core countries depend on peripheral countries for raw materials (which accumulate wealth) and peripheral countries depend on core countries for wages (Inayat, Shahbaz, Afzal & Zafar, 2017:1). The following paragraphs further explain Wallerstein's division of core, semi-peripheral and peripheral.

### **Core countries**

These are countries such as the United States, Germany and Japan. They are characterised by advanced technologies and high levels of industrialisation. However, these countries are characterised by a lack of raw materials and high labour costs. Core countries play an important role in developing the world trade because they are considered to have more capital than many other countries; they are more technologically advanced and the people are considered to have better living standards and financial freedom (Inayat *et al.*, 2017:1).

### **Semi-periphery**

Arrighi (1985:246) argues that "Semi-periphery is a stable and permanent feature of the world system". These are countries such as South Africa, which is not considered underdeveloped but is also not as developed as core countries (Inayat *et al.*, 2017:1). A semi-peripheral country is considered to be in a transitional stage from pre-modern to modern; it is considered semi-peripheral due to its population size and the GNP per capita (Arrighi, 1985:246).

### **Periphery**

Inayat *et al.* (2017:1) indicate that some African countries and those in South America are peripheral countries, as they are characterised by a low income and are dependent on core countries for capital. They offer cheap wages and raw material. Frank (1967:28) maintains a similar argument and argues that underdevelopment in peripheral countries is due to unequal sharing of

resources with poorer countries exploited by providing raw material and labour to richer countries, which lead to the trade being dominated by one party.

In a similar vein, Ferraro (1996:1851) defines dependency theory as “a historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favours some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economies”. It is a situation where certain countries’ economies are determined by the progress of others (Ferraro, 1996:1851).

Dependency theory is considered a challenge to modernisation theory in that it refutes the argument of underdevelopment being the result of failure to adopt more modern ways of living. Dependency theory argues that the reason for underdevelopment is that peripheral countries are dependent on core countries for labour wages: the problem is the dependency of peripheral countries. The abovementioned macro-theories of development do not specifically focus on the needs at community level as micro-theories would, and are therefore not particularly meaningful as theoretical basis for this study. More relevant micro-theories of development are discussed next.

#### **2.1.2.4 Basic needs approach**

The basic needs approach to development came into being during the world depression (prior to World War II) when there was a decline in the world economy (Bowler, 1983:15). This awakened the need for an approach that focussed on addressing the basic needs of the community, not an approach focused solely on economic growth. The focus had to shift to the basic needs of people, such as nutrition, clothing and healthcare. The basic needs approach then took an interest in meeting the basic needs of poor people in the Third World. It was suggested that this had been overlooked by former development programmes (Bowler, 1983:ii). This approach is personal in nature, in that it aims to ensure the mental, physical, and social development of individuals (Streeten, 1979:136).

The basic needs model focuses on resources that are lacking in particular groups and focuses on providing those instead of holistically addressing poverty

(Streeten, 1979:136). Steward (1985:1) states that priority is given to meeting basic needs, such as food and water and sometimes education and health services, because the idea is that development should address deprivation (lack of basic needs) first. Bowler (1983:ii) suggest that this approach aims to combat poverty by meeting basic needs.

Because individuals are different, they also have different needs based on their environment and personal background (Jooste, 2014:30). Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Needs* attempts to classify needs in order of necessity.

**Table 2.1: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

Level	Needs
Level 1: Physiological / Basic need	Food; water; housing, air, clothing
Level 2: Safety needs	Personal security; financial security; health and wellbeing; safety net against accidents/illness and their adverse impacts; employment
Level 3: Love and belonging	Friendship; intimacy; family
Level 4: Esteem	Self-esteem; confidence; achievement; respect by others
Level 5: Self-actualisation	Expressing creativity; quest for spiritual enlightenment, pursuit of knowledge; the desire to give to society

(Source: Jooste, 2014:31)

Table 2.2 above explains individuals’ needs by referring to how individuals address their relevant needs. All these levels of the hierarchy will help to improve people’s standards of living, as the focus is on both social and economic needs (Jooste, 2014: 32). Bowler (1983:ii) suggests two ways of adopting the basic needs approach. The first is the technocratic approach, which is top-down and focusses only on meeting the needs of the people as quickly as possible.

The second approach is more sustainable, as it focuses on creating projects that are sustainable for the community to ensure that the community can continue to provide those needs in the future (Bowler, 1983:ii). This links to sustainable development, which encourages the current generation to meet

their own needs in such a way that the needs of future generations will also be met. The following section provides an in-depth discussion of sustainable development.

#### **2.1.2.5 Sustainable development**

The United Nations General Assembly (1987:43) defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Emas (2015:1) concurs that sustainable development promotes economic progress and development while encouraging environmental security. According to Strange and Bayley (2008:16), “unsustainable development has degraded and polluted the environment in such a way that it acts now as the major constraint followed by social inequity that limits implementation of perpetual growth”. Therefore, there ought to be a relationship between the environment and the development of a country/state.

##### **A. System approach to sustainability**

According to Hopkins, Bailly, Elmgren, Glegg, Sandberg & Strottrup (2012:39), a system approach is “a strategy for improving our understanding of how complex systems function”. This is because the system approach consists of five different contexts, which influence one another to bring about social/cultural, economic, environmental, technical and individual sustainability (Pappas, 2012:1). This approach aims to bring harmony to all five contexts, because the deterioration of one context affects the flourishing of another; for example, the depletion of natural resources affects economic growth which, in turn, influences the standard of living people are accustomed to (Pappas, 2012:2).

Because of different systems influencing each other, new ways of managing the natural resources available to a society, and new ways to encourage development that will address the needs of the people, are called for. These needs must be balanced with limited resources and contribute simultaneously to progress through development (Strange & Bayley, 2008:17), for example, food security through sustainable agriculture. Above are ways to encourage progress

in the community without depleting resources for future generations. The following theory of human development suggests that there are different ways to ensure progress and development by increasing choices and improving capabilities (Bhardwaj, Ansari & Rajput, 2012:303).

#### **2.1.2.6 Human development approach**

According to Bhardwaj, Ansari and Rajput (2012:303), human development is defined as “a process of enlarging people’s choices and improving human capabilities (the range of things that they can do or be in life) and freedoms so they can live a long and healthy life, access to education and a decent standard of living”. This approach encourages progress in physical, intellectual and social aspects. Bhardwaj *et al.* (2012:303) suggest six pillars for human development:

- 1. Equity: equal opportunities for all, focus is on equity for human development between men and women and various social groups.**
- 2. Sustainability: meeting the needs of today without compromising the ability of satisfying the same by future generations.**
- 3. Productivity: full participation of people in the process of income generation and gainful employment.**
- 4. Empowerment: freedom of people to influence, as the subjects of development, decisions that affect their lives. Everyone has the power to take any decision about his/her life.**
- 5. Cooperation: participation and belonging to communities and groups as a means of mutual cooperation and a source of social meaning.**
- 6. Security: exercise development opportunities freely and safely with confidence that they will not disappear suddenly in future.**

These pillars were selected because they represent what the human development approach aims to achieve/encourage, which is human advancement rather than monetary progression (Bhardwaj *et al.*, 2012:304).

The modernisation and dependency theories are both macro-theories that aim to address underdevelopment, modernisation through industrialisation, and dependency by focusing on the flow of development from core countries to

peripheral countries. In this study these theories present a background to the global evolution of development. However, the basic needs, sustainable development, and human development approaches are key theories for this study because they all focus on development at grassroots, which is the communities and individuals. This is important because the study aims to place people at the centre by understanding their perceptions of previous WIN platform projects.

The following section elaborates on this focus of the study by discussing the important connection between development and community engagement

### **2.1.2.7 Community engagement and development**

In the micro-theories of development, community engagement relates to development as these theories speak of helping people improve their capacity to help themselves (Soares & Quintella, 2008:107). This could imply either economic or social development with full, active participation of the community (Seers, 1969). The international definition of development, according to the United Nations Development Programme (as cited in Soares & Quintella, 2008:107), is “expanding the range of choices for population that allows development to become more democratic and participative, that is participation in decisions and enjoyment of human, economic and political liberties”.

South Africa has a history of inequality and discrimination due to our apartheid past. In the apartheid system, participation and engagement were limited as the majority of the population had no political rights until 1993-1994, so there was a general absence or lack of engagement (Williams, 2008:3-4). The frameworks that were used for planning treated people as objects instead of shapers of their own reality or capable of initiatives that would directly or indirectly affect their lives (Smit, 1989). Because of these circumstances, ordinary civilians began resisting the oppression of the apartheid system. Community-based organisations were the ones attempting to compensate for the oppression of civilians in a form of services and power relations (Learners manual, 2005). These kinds of movements were justified because human rights were the key focus. The apartheid system became part of the development debate because its policies and strategies failed to uphold the core values of development, such

as participation in decision-making, and democratic and participative values. This kind of system is an example of a top-down approach.

Addressing social issues in a community requires proper planning and execution (strategies and policies in this regard are explained in sections below). To understand a particular community and the social issues it faces before implementing possible solutions ensures that community members are recognised as active participants (de Beer, 2014; Bringle, 2014:19). Good solutions require a thorough understanding of the reasons behind the problems communities experience. The gist of this dissertation is that a community's perceptions of the projects undertaken by a WIN platform should be evaluated at grassroots level before the strategies intended to address the social issues are employed.

The following section provides the definition of community engagement and approaches that will ensure effective community engagement projects.

### 2.1.3 Approaches and practices of community engagement

The following is a discussion of community engagement models and approaches. These possible models and approaches can be used as guidelines for effective community engagement. The table below presents different models for engagement with the community. Not all models are relevant for effective university community engagement, but they provide an overview of different models for community engagement in general.

**Table 2.2: Overview of Hashagen’s community engagement models**

<b>Models of Community Engagement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Consultation / public participation models	Public organisations generally use this kind of models to elicit views and opinions from a wide range of community members on needs, issues or responses to proposals. Opinion polls, surveys, workshops, focus groups, open space events would be useful techniques.
Asset-based / social economy models	These models are used to recognise the value of the physical assets and human resources of a community and main objectives of these models to maximise the community control over and benefit from these assets. Community based housing association, community trust forestry are some examples of these models.
Community democracy models	These models help to extend local democracy into the community through developing an ‘informal’ tier of government. Community councils might work in this way.
Service development models	These models are used to provide direct responses to gaps in public service provision or to identify local needs.

(Source: Hashagen, 2002:7-8)

The table above is an introductory table that presents different (not all) types of models for community engagement. It gives an overview of the different types of community engagement models that exist. The aim of the table is to bring to light the variety of community engagement models that exist before addressing specific models that are relevant to this study. The model and framework that follow are relevant to this study, as they address mutuality, reciprocity and collaboration, elements of engaged research, and participatory methods in community engagement.

### **2.1.3.1 Stanton's (2008) Engaged Research model**

This model explores mutuality and reciprocity (Omerikwa, 2012:3). Stanton (2008) identified three dimensions of engagement as “the purpose of scholarship, the process of engagement and the outcomes of the processes”. Boyer (1996) defines scholarship of engagement as “connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers and to our cities”. The purpose of the scholarship dimension details the importance of knowledge development, civic responsibility and adoption of a participatory practice.

The process dimension examines the operationalisation of engaged research, and how mutuality is encouraged in different phases of the engagement process. While the outcome dimension focuses on the impact of a community engagement project on the community; for example, whether knowledge was exchanged and the welfare of the community improved (Stanton, 2008).

### **2.1.3.2 Participatory Poverty Assessment Framework**

This framework is used to include the views of the poverty-stricken in poverty analysis to assist in the development of strategies, which through public policy will reduce poverty. This framework implicitly encourages participatory methods aimed at eliciting community member's perceptions regarding their own wellbeing and poverty. The results are used to influence national policies/strategies for poverty reduction.

An assumption can be made that this framework is founded on principles of equal distribution of power, mutuality and reciprocity. It encourages effective participation that includes the views of community members to develop strategies and policy that will be relevant to the needs of both the higher education institution and community members.

Stanton's engaged approach and the participatory assessment framework are specifically useful in this study, as both focus on encouraging public participation, mutuality and reciprocity, equal distribution of power, and the value that is placed on the perceptions/reality of community members. This study explores the perceptions of community members on previous WIN

projects and thereby provide community members with the platform to express their preferences.

#### 2.1.4 Definition of community engagement

Before defining and conceptualising community engagement, the following table describes levels of community engagement of which some are discussed under the subsections below. The table also explains the purpose of each level of engagement.

**Table 2.3: Levels of community engagement**

<b>Levels of community engagement</b>	<b>Purposes</b>
Informing people	Providing information to people which eventually underpins every other level of engagement
Researching needs, priorities and attitudes	Using research methods and technique to understand needs and priorities
Consulting and learning	Seeking the views and opinions of individuals and groups to inform the decision-making process
Involving communities	Involving communities in decisions that affect their lives and the future of their neighbourhoods
Devolving decisions	Engaging communities is to provide information and resources while leaving them to make their own decisions
Supporting hands on community decision	Helping communities to develop their own plans and to put them into action with minimal 'professional' help

(Source: Kabir, 2006:5)

The table provides guidelines to effective engagement with the community. It shows different levels of engagement and the reasons they are necessary for effective community engagement. The principles of engagement encouraged by

the *'levels of engagement'* are woven into other sections to ensure that these levels of engagement are reflected when discussing strategies for effective community engagement.

#### **2.1.4.1 Conceptualising community engagement**

Community engagement is an overarching term for different approaches involving communities in activities of improving their lives (Attree, French, Milton, Povall, Whitehead & Popay, 2011: 251). Glandon, Piana, Alonge, Peters & Bennett (2017) further describe community engagement as “the meaningful, respectful and fit-for-purpose involvement of community members in one or more aspects of a project. This may include involvement during the identification of the study, to defining its purpose and design, to stages of implementation, interpretation and use of results”. According to Setswe and Witthuhn (2013) community engagement is founded on principles of equality and justice. Engagement should acknowledge that people experience barriers to accessing certain services, which are rooted in the lack of understanding of social and cultural experiences (Setswe & Witthuhn, 2013).

Theoretically, different community engagement approaches yield different outcomes. The assumption is that the more control community members are given in developing solutions to the problems they experience, the more likely the standard of their lives will improve (Attree, *et al*, 2011:251). If, for example, resources and surplus are passed from one community to another as often happens with charity work, community members are unable to autonomously improve their lives (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002: 506). Charity work is a low level of community engagement which is closely related to tokenism. This form of engagement is known for helping poor people and relieving suffering in marginalised communities. Benneworth (2015:130) postulates that charity work has its roots in religion, as most religions (such as Christianity) consider it a virtue to help those in need.

Countries that have suffered natural disasters or are extremely poor benefit from these sorts of activities that are facilitated by missionaries and churches (Patel, 2005). Charity work adopts a welfare system that ensures that communities are relieved from distress (Caprara, Mati, Obadare & Perold,

2012). The challenge with charity work as a solution to social issues is that the community becomes dependent on those providing help. It does not encourage active participation as most of the times the communities are vulnerable and take whatever is given to them passively without any questions (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002: 506).

This approach does not expand the range of choices available to the community to facilitate development; it provides them with the specific resources they need, but does not equip them with the skills and sustainable resources to maintain themselves. The Tamarack Institution defines community engagement as “having people working collaboratively, through action and learning, to realise and create a common future” and charity work does not reflect collaboration between the organisation and the community (Bernado, Butcher & Howard, 2012:188). The World Bank refers to community engagement as “the process by which citizen’s needs, concerns and values are incorporated into governmental decision-making; it is a two-way communication process with better overall goals of decision-making supported by the public” (World Bank, 2005; Stanton, 2008).

Omerikwa (2012:2) defines community engagement as “the collaboration between institutions and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity”. McGee (2009) and Shwartz (2010) further concur that community engagement refers more to public participation, which includes different ways that individuals engage in social activities with a capacity to take part in the decision-making process. Engagement allows institutions to plan better and encourages collaborative decision-making, which makes it easier for institutions to provide relevant quality service (Stanton, 2008; Schlake, 2015). Engagement should improve communication and collaboration within organisations. This aligns with the definition of Jacob *et al.* (2015:1) of community engagement as “sustainable networks, partnerships, communication media and activities between higher education institutions and communities at local, regional, national and international levels”.

This is a characteristic of transformation, because transformation entails a participatory approach to better address social issues in the community. Cristalli

and Dulmus (2012:195) stipulate that it refers to shared responsibility and advancing the community to have better chances/capacity to be active role-players in the change that is occurring within their community. Hlalele *et al.* (2015) explain that concepts such as “civic engagement, public engagement, consumer involvement and citizen participation” could also refer to ‘community engagement’. This is because engaging the community in decisions has always been an important part of the democratic process (Strom, 2011; McGee, 2009).

The Ceredigion County Council’s policy for community engagement (2012) is a practical example of how community engagement is applied in the community. The policy states that community engagement policies should be inclusive, giving every member of the community a chance to voice their perceptions by being involved in developing these policies (all stages, planning up to implementation). It also opens a channel of communication with the community which allows for feedback on the outcomes of every engagement. This council encourages collaborative participation to the greatest extent possible. The aim of the Ceredigion council is to ensure that their community engagement projects are effective and to receive constant feedback so that they can improve their strategies to assist the community in a way that would most benefit them (Ceredigion County Council, 2012: 6-8).

Schlake (2015) discusses nine principles of community engagement, namely:

- a. Defined purposes, goals and populations**
- b. Know the community**
- c. Go to the community**
- d. Look for collective self-determination**
- e. Community partnerships are critical**
- f. Respect community diversity**
- g. Mobilise community assets and develop capacity**
- h. Maintain flexibility**
- i. Commitment to collaboration**

These principles are more like guidelines for community engagement; they provide guidelines to operationalise effective community engagement/participation. They provide an idea of how to build relationships

and how to engage with the community to further encourage participation. For the purpose of this study, only four (c, d, e and i) of these principles will be discussed to clarify the concept of community engagement. The other principles do not align with what the project aims to address because the focus is on the principles for effective community engagement; not on diversity or the mobilisation of community assets. The four principles support the argument of the study that there should be collaboration, reciprocity and mutuality in community engagement projects.

**a. “Go to the community”**

This principle emphasises the importance of involving the community in each stage of the project, from the development to the implementation of the project. If people are not involved from the initial stages of the project it is very difficult to establish trust, and the vulnerability of community members are further exposed (Gilbert, Laedtke, Sharp, Woods & Raville, 2018:44). It also highlights the importance of including the key stakeholders or leaders of the community to understand their positions in the community, and to remove any barriers to participation and future engagement. Involving figures of authority (leaders of certain departments) in community projects will ensure that doors are always open for future participation (Schlake, 2015). According to Glandon, Paina, Olonge, Peters and Bennett (2017:1458) this also ensures that power issues are addressed, that everyone is involved from the start, and that there is equal distribution of power between the parties.

**b. “Look for collective self-determination”**

Schlake (2015) states that this is where equal power distribution occurs; where the community is given the platform to identify the challenges they face with their causes, and develop their solutions and action plans for tackling these issues. They are also involved in the implementation of the strategies they developed to address these issues (Glandon *et al.*, 2017:1458). This is important because if the community members feel that they are given a voice and the opportunity to be active participants in projects that affect their lives, they are more likely to participate in future projects.

### **c. “Community partnerships are critical”**

Schlake (2015) emphasises equal distribution of power, transparency and equal decision-making opportunities. This ensures that there is the exchange of knowledge and co-learning for both parties, which benefits everyone. It also requires reciprocity. Janke & Clayton (2011:3) define reciprocity as “the recognition, respect and valuing of the knowledge, perspective and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration”.

### **d. “Commitment to collaboration”**

Omerikwa (2012:2) defines community engagement as “the collaboration between institutions and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity”. Collaboration is important for long-term partnerships to sustain progress, because high levels of collaboration develop the ability to address difficult challenges that communities face (Schlake, 2015).

Four of the nine principles of community engagement of Schlake (2015), addresses objectives such as participation, collaboration, and power dynamics (decision-making process). Based on the presented literature, community engagement in this study is associated with collaboration, reciprocity, good mutual partnerships and equal distribution of power (especially from the initial stages of a project). This relates to the following section, as it provides an overall discussion of community engagement in South African higher education institutions.

## **2.2 Higher education and community engagement**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

The following section provides a discussion of community engagement in higher education institutions in South Africa. This discussion takes into consideration the background and recent approaches for institutions to engage with the community.

## 2.2.2 Higher education and community engagement in South Africa

South African higher education system is challenged to elevate the quality of teaching, learning and research to encourage better engagement with the community (Wilson, 2013:1-2). Due to the challenge, universities have become interested in partnerships with communities that contribute to knowledge transfer (Eckerle, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan & Farrar, 2011:15; Shannon & Wang, 2010:109). According to Penfold and Goodman (2011:i), the interaction between the community and the university can be called an engaged scholarship, civic engagement, or a socially responsive interaction. Community engagement, according to Penfold and Goodman (2011:ii), can be defined as “[i]nitiatives and processes through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community”.

These partnerships yield an academic environment that is rooted in the real life experience of communities, thereby producing programmes/policies that effectively address social issues faced by the community (Eckerle, *et al.*, 2011:15; Jischke, 2006). Community engagement is related to ‘community service learning’, which is defined as “an educational approach that integrates service learning with intentional learning activities” (Eckerle, *et al.*, 2011:15-16). The main objective of community service learning is to build partnerships between the community and higher education institutions to yield mutually beneficial outcomes. Community service learning also forms part of tools to promote collaboration and participation (Eckerle, *et al.*, 2011:15-16).

According to Rowe (2011), higher education institutions have for a long time been perceived as being detached from prevalent social issues in communities; their focus have been on academic functions and less on socio-economic development. Both Luvalo (2014:1206) and Kruss (2012:7) stipulate that the slow development rate in South Africa has created a need for the government to challenge higher education institutions to take part in upliftment. This is because these institutions have the capacity to produce skills and research that meet the needs of the economy. Boyer (1996) and Shannon & Wang (2010:108) concur that institutions should extend their teaching and learning as well as research activities to critically deal with pressing issues communities face. Although the

contribution of higher education institutions to society is mainly educational, researchers/academics are focussing more on the potential role they could play in contributing to development and adhering to their social responsibility to the community (Omerikwa, 2012:1-2). Recently, community engagement became part of the mission statements of higher education institutions, mostly labelled as outreach, community service, service learning or community service teaching (Hlalele *et al.*, 2015).

During apartheid, community engagement in South African higher education institutions was highly influenced by professionalism (Kagisano, 2010). This is because, before 1994, higher education institutions were structures that trained professionals such as social workers who would then engage with communities on a professional basis. In addition, volunteerism is the foundation of NGOs: charity organisations aimed to address the social issues faced by communities by providing administrative assistance, social services with social workers, and other professionals to serve as community leaders (Tannebaum & Reich, 2001).

Through these professionals, universities did play an indirect role in engagement with communities. However, due to the political situation at the time, community engagement did not attempt to encourage participation or mobilise the community. Instead, social workers were instrumental in providing basic needs to the marginalised communities (Damon, 2007). Maintaining the social, political and economic order of the apartheid system effectively blocked any possibilities of mobilising communities through equal power, active participation and collaboration (Luvalo, 2014: 1208).

After the apartheid system was abolished and a new democratic order instituted, development issues had to be addressed and academic involvement was seen as a tool that could assist in addressing these needs (Akhurst, Solomon, Mitchell & Van der Riet, 2016:137; Abrahams, 2003:ii). This was a challenge, because the country had a traumatic past and communities were very sensitive to anything that regarded issues of power (Erasmus, 2011:5). It therefore clear that prior to the call for transformation, higher education institutions were disengaged from the community and associated with the 'ivory tower' syndrome (Hall, 2010:3, Stockdill & Yu Danico, 2017:1). The transformation, therefore, made it relevant for educational institutions to become

involved in communities. Akhurst *et al.* (2016: 137) argues that community engagement has cost implications for universities, as more funding, resources and staff are required for community engagement to be integrated as a core function of a university. However, this does not necessarily have to be true, as these institutions have access to pools of resources and connections and different faculties that could in diverse ways contribute to effectively addressing the needs of the community.

The Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education of 1997 was published to encourage higher education institutions to be more committed to contributing to community development (Kruss, 2012:12; Kagisano, 2010; Akhurst *et al.*, 2016:137). They are tasked with ushering higher education institutions from a racialised past to a society driven by democracy and positive social relations. Higher education institutions in South Africa are therefore tasked with contributing towards economic transformation, producing a critical and vibrant society, and to eradicate social issues in the post-apartheid system (Luvalo, 2014:1206-1207). Higher education institutions are to demonstrate social responsibility according to the needs of the community and by availing resources to the community (Erasmus, 2005:3).

Higher education institutions in the apartheid regime were acting as “autonomous entities” with the focus on the main function of teaching (learning, training) and research, but are now also tasked with social issues that affect the community (Luvalo, 2014:1209). Kitching (2016:144) stipulates that, in response to the call for transformation of higher education, the “Joint Education Trust” launched an initiative in 1999 called the “Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships”. The aim was to assist education institutions to conceptualise and implement community engagement as one of the core functions of higher education institutions (Kitching, 2016:144; Mwaniki, 2010). Higher education institutions were tasked to create a platform for encouraging social and civic commitment (Erasmus, 2005:6). With the responsibility for being more engaged and available for societal benefit, higher education institutions should ensure that relevant and effective policies are developed to facilitate community engagement with higher education institutions. In the

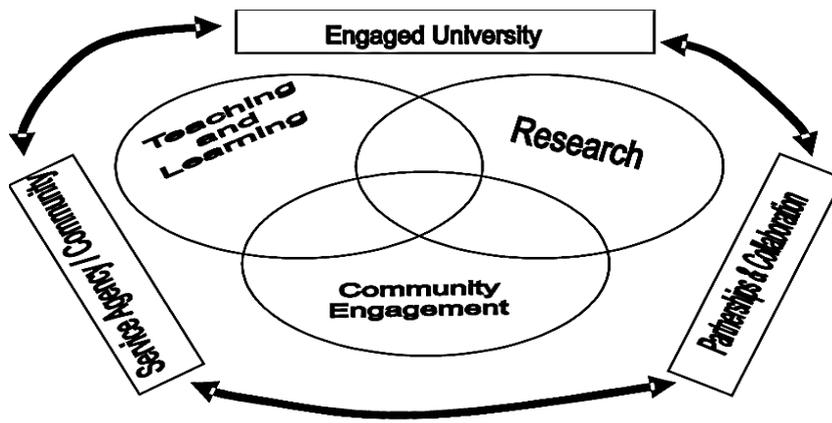
operationalisation of policies, community engagement should take place and the community's voice be nurtured.

### 2.2.2.1 Models for community engagement at higher education institutions

Bender (2008:87) presents three conceptual models that explain how South African higher education institutions perceive community engagement. All three conceptual models (silo, intersectional, and infusion, discussed in chapter 1) address the concept of community engagement. Each explains how the responsibility between higher education institutions and communities can be approached. The following figures illustrate higher education's functions, whether or not they include community engagement as one of the functions of a higher education institution. The silo model views community engagement as voluntary and separate from the core function of the university. The infusion model believes that community engagement influences the three main functions of the university and that they also influence community engagement. Lastly, the intersecting model believes that community engagement intersects with the three functions of research, teaching and learning, and that they influence one another.



**Figure 2.2; Silo Model (Bender, 2008:88)**



**Figure 2.3: Infusion Model (Bender, 2008:89)**



**Figure 2.4: Intersectional Model (Bender, 2008:90)**

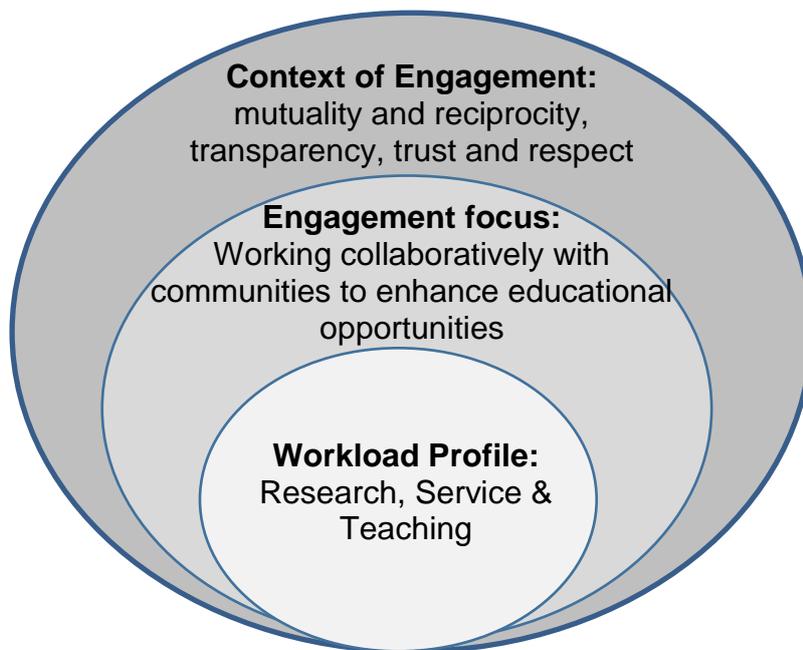
The abovementioned models present the relation between the higher education institutions and community engagement, and illustrate how they relate to one another. However, these models do not refer specifically to participation, collaboration and reciprocity. The following model focusses on participation, collaboration, reciprocity, and how to encourage these in the community.

**2.2.2.2 Context – Focus – Profile Model (Engaged approach)**

From a traditional perspective, community engagement in higher education institutions does not reflect collaboration, because the institutions merely identify social issues in communities and develop solutions. This approach puts authority in higher education institutions, where they choose the social issue of their choice and come up with ideas on how to tackle it (Kearney, 2015:32).

Kearney's (2015:33) *Context – Focus – Profile Model* refutes the notion of a traditional approach; rather, it emphasises a more engaged and participatory method for community engagement, because engagement between higher education institutions and the community should be transparent and reciprocal. Mutual trust and respect should also exist. This model reflects characteristics of an 'engaged approach' where there is more focus and authority on the people/communities (Kearney, 2015:33). The proposed objective of this study is more in line with the engaged approach, because it explores the community's perceptions of community engagement in this higher education institution with reference to the NWU's WIN. Kearney's *Context – Focus – Profile Model* (see figure 2.2) specifically indicates three levels of engagement. The first focuses on the 'workload profile' that consists of research, service and teaching. This level focuses more on the practicality of 'engagement'.

The second level focuses on the engagement, that is "working collaboratively with the community to enhance educational opportunities", which can be achieved when the context of engagement is understood, encouraged and valued. Hence the importance of undertaking a study that focusses on the perceptions of the community in order to develop better strategies that will pave the way for better community-engagement projects. The third level looks at the context of the engagement, which consists of mutuality, reciprocity, transparency, trust, and respect, which are fundamental to the context of engagement. This is because, when the context of engagement is encouraged and valued, the focus of engagement will fall into place.



**Figure 2.5: Kearney’s Context – Focus – Profile Model (Kearney, 2015:33).**

Kearney’s *Context – Focus – Profile Model* (2015:35) argues that the community’s perceptions are vital for the development of an effective ‘engagement’. This relates to the theme of exploring community members’ perceptions on previous WIN platform projects. The idea of effective ‘engagement’ can be subject to conflict. This is because community engagement in higher education institutions are partnerships between two parties (community and university) that do not have the same perspectives in terms of problem solving, and are usually characterised by diverse cultural beliefs and social class (Curwood *et al.*, 2011). That is why it is important to understand how people perceive their social issues and the way they should be addressed.

Higher education institutions have only been associated with teaching, learning and research, but this section clearly indicates that higher education institutions have other functions such as community engagement. Three models were discussed, explaining how the three core functions of a higher education institution function within the three models (silo, infusion and intersecting model). Kearney’s model was also discussed to provide a more engaged approach to the relationship between the community and higher education

institutions, because unlike Bender's model, Kearney discusses mutuality, collaboration and reciprocity in higher education institution community engagement. These models for higher education institution community engagement provide a theoretical background on how higher education institutions function, how they interact with communities, and how they should interact with the community to encourage participation.

The following section provides a discussion of different policies and strategies by South African higher education institutions to address issues in communities through '*community engagement*'. This section shows how different universities interact through their mission/vision and policy strategies concerning community engagement.

### 2.2.3 Higher education community engagement policies and strategies in South Africa

According to Bernado, Butcher and Howard (2012:187) and the Council of Higher Education (2006), community engagement extends the role of higher education institutions to more than just the traditional role of teaching and research. Penfold and Goodman (2011:6) note that a number of South African universities responded to the Department of Higher Education's call for transformation by compiling and publishing community engagement policies outlining their definitions of community engagement and their approaches to it (Penfold & Goodman, 2011:6).

The following discussion explores the community engagement policies of a few South African universities. The policies, missions, visions and strategies for community engagement of selected institutions are compared. This information was obtained from the policy documentation and other articles relevant to each institution's policy/mission/vision.

#### **2.2.3.1 Nelson Mandela University (NMU)**

The NMU describes community engagement as a "process of transferring, applying and shaping the university's knowledge and resources with those of the broader community (both internal and external)". The aim is to enrich scholarship, enhance the quality of teaching and learning, increase

development, and better promote social responsibility (Du Plooy, 2018). The idea of higher education institution community engagement in NMU is founded on ideas of reciprocity, mutuality and collaboration. These are core characteristics of Kearney's model for effective community engagement in higher education institutions.

### **2.2.3.2 North-West University (NWU)**

The NWU decided to introduce community engagement into their core functions in 2014 after an indaba held by management and key stakeholders (NWU Community Engagement Policy, 2016)

The NWU focusses on innovation and the pursuit of knowledge, with the view that the knowledge of the university is not the absolute truth and is open to the generation of new knowledge (NWU Community Engagement Policy, 2016). The university has also developed a *Success Model for 2025*. The model was developed to ensure that there is integration of teaching, learning and community engagement. To achieve this goal for 2025, the NWU uses the approach of sharing expertise with the community for better quality research/innovation and engagement. The sharing of expertise encourages reciprocity and community engagement.

The NWU policy statement states that "staff and students must engage with their respective communities when conducting activities related to research/innovation, teaching and learning, community service and outreach initiatives in an attempt to influence policy and address South Africa's developmental challenges and sustainability, thereby sharing its expertise" (NWU Community Engagement Policy, 2006).

### **2.2.3.3 Sol Plaatjie University**

The policies and structures of Sol Plaatjie University have been developed to address social issues that the community face in their everyday lives. The policies and structures are developed to enhance economic resilience and develop the community (Sol Plaatjie, 2018).

#### **2.2.3.4 University of Cape Town (UCT)**

Community engagement for UCT is best expressed in practice, teaching, and research (Hall, 2009:3). The university has developed platforms for debates about how engagement can be enhanced to better address obstacles in the community such as poverty and unemployment (Hall, 2009:3). The University of Cape Town follows a strategy of “social responsiveness” rather than community engagement. This is because it is committed to research, teaching, and availing opportunities for their students to be engaged in socially responsive learning. This was to ensure that social outreaches and projects done by the students benefit the community (University of Cape Town, 2018).

#### **2.2.3.5 University of Free State (UFS)**

Community engagement for UFS rests on service learning, engaged research, relationships with other stakeholders, and volunteerism. This institution uses students to be the workforce of their initiatives, so that the students can be empowered by the social realities and dynamics in the communities (University of Free State, 2016).

#### **2.2.3.6 University of Johannesburg (UJ)**

The UJ aims to have a closer contact with the community, by promoting “freedom, democracy, equality and human dignity”. This is achieved through mutually beneficial partnerships and relationships between the community, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders that can contribute resources and other skills to contribute to socio-economic development (University of Johannesburg, 2014).

As stated in their 2014 Community Engagement Report, UJ was still new to the effective implementation of community engagement. However, there have been efforts to establish partnerships that will benefit the community. Programmes such as Student Volunteer Champion, where students shared knowledge and skills with more than 50 communities, served to enhance local leadership traits. These students also helped in hospitals with service delivery (work force), so these programmes benefited the community holistically. UJ has established Nelson Mandela International Day, Arts for Aids International, Tutoring Project,

the UJ Women in CE Empowerment Programme (UJWiCEEP) and other initiatives/programmes to benefit the community. This institution uses organised outreaches and community-based research as a way of reaching and changing the community (University of Johannesburg, 2014).

#### **2.2.3.7 University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)**

According to Akhurst *et al.*, (2016:136), the UKZN responded to the call to establish community engagement in the university by developing meaningful models for student engagement in communities through community-based service learning (CBSL). The importance of service learning is to challenge perspectives and practices of university students to encourage transformation (Akhurst *et al.*, 2016:138; Felten & Clayton, 2011: 76).

CBSL is embedded into psychology modules from undergraduate to postgraduate level. This is because most of the psychology students are motivated to contribute to socially disadvantaged communities (Akhurst *et al.*, 2016:138). The university includes community-based service learning, because it potentially offers career opportunities in NGOs and other social enterprises (Akhurst *et al.*, 2016: 137).

#### **2.2.3.8 University of Limpopo (UL)**

The quality of community engagement in the UL goes along with the institutional mission of being a “world class university” that caters for both the needs of the community and the institution. The UL policy for community engagement encourages the institution to use the suggested three main functions of higher education institutions to make meaningful contributions to communities. The policy, therefore, promotes community engagement through research, teaching and learning. To operationalise teaching and learning locally, the UL has a *Centre for Rural Development* to contribute to socio-economic development (University of Limpopo, 2018).

#### **2.2.3.9 University of Pretoria (UP)**

The main strategic objective for the UP is to collaboratively enhance the exchange of knowledge, skills, and expertise. They aim to achieve this by

establishing partnerships with the community and other sectors to improve and empower the lives of community members by promoting new community engagement initiatives. The aim is that all forms of community engagement be integrated within the main functions of all higher education institutions, which is teaching, learning, and research (University of Pretoria, 2010).

#### **2.2.3.10 University of South Africa (UNISA)**

The policy of UNISA is founded on the idea that they want to become the leading African University that serves the community. Based on UNISA mission statement (2018), community engagement refers “to initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community to the mutual benefit of the community and the institution”. UNISA strives to build an environment that will allow community engagement to be operationalised (UNISA, 2018).

The university has over ten community engagement projects, like GirlPower, CSET, ICT, and others, where they provide skills and expertise to enable community members to get jobs, start their own businesses, and school kids to improve their marks. They also provide them with life skills workshops and mentoring. Some of the projects provide employment opportunities like the waste energy project in Lenasia, where they are building an energy plant. This kind of project can provide possible wealth and better access to electricity or energy (CSET community engagement brochure).

#### **2.2.3.11 University of Stellenbosch (US)**

In their published university community interaction policy, US defines community engagement as “the interaction between the university and communities in society. The term includes the more limited notion of service learning, while at the same time considering other service-orientated academic and non-academic community interactions. It also allows the university to give expression to alternative forms of social responsiveness” (Penfold & Goodman, 2011:6). The University’s decision to refer to community engagement as

“community interaction” is to highlight the reciprocal nature of their engagements with their communities (University of Stellenbosch, 2013).

#### **2.2.3.12 University of Venda (Univen)**

The programme for community engagement in Univen was developed in 2009, with the goal of ensuring that quality and mutual relationships exist between the institution and the community. The aim was to develop programmes that are both scholarship and community based. Community engagement in Univen is built on the following values (University Venda, 2017):

- Ubuntu
- People
- Collaboration
- Authenticity
- Trust and honesty
- Sharing/exchange
- Inclusion

#### **2.2.3.13 University of Western Cape (UWC)**

UWC has a community engagement unit that promotes teaching and learning to institutionalise community engagement. Therefore, partnerships (internal and external) are important for the achievement of institutional goals and strategic objectives.

#### **2.2.3.14 University of Witwatersrand (Wits)**

Wits aims to promote community engagement through outside learning and teaching activities, which aims to challenge active citizenship to develop the community and bring about institutional change. The idea is that the activities will stimulate collaboration in research activities that aim to address societal needs (University of Witwatersrand, 2018).

### **2.2.3.15 Walter Sisulu University (WSU)**

For WSU, the ultimate purpose of community engagement is to achieve community development. The WSU has adopted the infusion model (Bender, 2008), which encourages mutually beneficial relationships for both parties. Community members are encouraged to share their everyday social issues, so that the university provides resources and skills to combat these social issues while at the same time enhancing their main functions (teaching, learning and research). The infusion model for higher education community engagement encourages participation from both parties, and increases collaboration and the equal distribution of power (Walter Sisulu University, 2018).

Each university's mission and vision or community engagement strategy encourages participation, which leads to reciprocity, mutuality, trust, respect, and collaboration, and breaks down power dynamics that prevent these aspects from being operationalised (Kearney, 2015:33; Omerikwa, 2012:3; Cornwall, 2008:278). The following is a summative comparison of the policies of the different universities:

**Table 2.4: Core principles of community engagement**

<b>Higher education institution</b>	<b>Principles of development</b>
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	Enriching scholarship Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning Promoting social responsibility Development
North-West University	Sharing of expertise Sustainability Development
Sol Plaatjie University	Promoting economic resilience Development
University of Cape Town (UCT)	Social responsiveness
University of Free State (UFS)	Service learning Engaged research Encourages stakeholder relationships Volunteerism
University of Johannesburg (UJ)	Partnerships Equality and human dignity Mutuality Integration
University of Limpopo (UL)	Sharing of resources Engagement Application of expertise (teaching, learning and research)
University of Pretoria (UP)	Exchange of knowledge, skills and expertise Partnerships with community and other sectors Integration
University of South Africa (UNISA)	Sharing of Expertise Mutuality Application
University of Venda (Univen)	Ubuntu, people-centred Collaboration Authenticity Trust and honesty Sharing/exchange Inclusion

<b>Higher education institution</b>	<b>Principles of development</b>
University of Western Cape (UWC)	Internal and external partnerships
University of Witwatersrand (Wits)	Active citizenship Stimulate collaboration
Walter Sisulu University (WSU)	Participation Development Collaboration Mutuality Equal distribution of power Sharing of resources

The table above summarises the core principles of community engagement according to each university's policy statement and vision. This table brings to light how the universities have effective community engagement as core principles (Kearny's, 2015: 33; Omerikwa, 2012:3; Cornwall, 2008:278; Boyer, 1996).

Based on the comparison of different university engagement policies, visions, and missions, an assumption is proposed that sustainable development, mutuality, sharing of resources, exchange of knowledge and skills, and the equal distribution of power are the most common principles of engagement policies found at the different universities. All these prominent principles can facilitate partnerships between the university and the community. For example, mutuality – which later encourages reciprocity and the equal distribution of power– is a good principle when it comes to developing strategies and policies for effective community engagement. These principles, therefore, lay the foundation for universities to execute their responsibility for contributing to the wellbeing of communities.

The following section provides an in-depth discussion of the abovementioned principles and others that assist in evaluating policies and strategies for effective higher education community engagement.

#### 2.2.4 Principles for evaluation of engagement policies and strategies

The following section discusses principles for engagement between the community and higher education institutions. Mutual relationships, relationship

with the community, and contribution to a community's wellbeing, are principles discussed in this section. These are key elements to incorporate in policies and strategies for effective community engagement in higher education institutions (Kearny's, 2015:33; Omerikwa, 2012:3; Cornwall, 2008:278; Boyer, 1996; Kliewer *et al.*, 2010:256-259).

#### **2.2.4.1 Mutual relationships**

This subsection provides a discussion of how to build mutual relationships between the community and higher education institutions. Principles discussed as effective for building mutual relationships are collaboration, to inform and consult, and participation in the different levels (for example tokenism and authentic participation).

##### **a. Collaboration**

Collaboration is described as working together co-operatively (Rowe, 2011). It reflects the interdependence between two groups as a result of the trust and sharing that is involved in the process (Mirza *et al.*, 2012).

Collaboration is the core of effective community engagement, because it enhances the ethic of working together to achieve the task at hand (Hlalele *et al.*, 2015). This ensures that the needs of both teams are taken into consideration. According to Shannon and Wang (2010:109), collaboration implies a shared decision-making process because of the shared goals and identities, as both of the groups' interests are at stake. In turn, collaboration encourages community participation.

##### **b. Inform and Consult**

According to Mirza *et al.* (2012), when embarking on community engagement projects, the organisation (in this case the university) must establish a relationship with the community based on trust. Lack of trust between the higher education institution and the community can result in loss of time, resources and – most importantly – effectiveness. Informing and consulting with the community builds trust and leads to effective community engagement.

Consulting ensures that there is communication from the community to the university about their needs, concerns or decisions that helps the university to make informed decisions about community engagement projects aimed to address those needs and concerns (Rowe & Frewer, 2005: 255). Informing is a method that prevents certain challenges such as miscommunication between the university and the community (Strom, 2011). The higher education institution should inform the community about the strategies they are considering for addressing certain social issues; there should be consultation from the community regarding the strategies the higher education institution presents.

The following subsection provides a discussion on participation. The section provides a discussion on the background and contribution of participation in community engagement projects.

### **c. Participation**

According to Cass (2006:5), the first attempt at participatory engagement was in 1975 in Canada. The Berger Commission engaged with a group of North Americans who were involved in the decision-making process of the MacKenzie valley oil pipeline. The commission engaged with opinions and experiences on how the development of the pipeline may affect the local people. The peak of this participatory discourse was in the mid 1980s and it continued into the 1990s. The discourse included concepts such as sustainable development, basic needs, and so forth (Leal, 2007:539). The table below provides and explains different forms of participation.

**Table 2.5: Pretty's typology of participation**

Typology	Characteristics
Manipulative participation	Participation is simply a pretence, with 'people's' representatives on official boards, but who are un-elected and have no power
Passive participation	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. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals
Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information-gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views
Participation for material incentives	People participate by contributing resources, for example, labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Farmers may provide the fields and labour, but are involved in neither experimentation nor the process of learning. It is very common to see this 'so-called' participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end
Functional participation	Participation 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 may be interactive and involve shared decision-making, but tends to arise only after external agents have already made major decisions. At worst, local people may still only be co-opted to serve external goals
Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices

Typology	Characteristics
Self-mobilisation	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilisation can spread if government and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilisation may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power

(Source: Cornwall, 2008:272)

The above table distinguishes between different forms of participation. This is relevant because this section explains different forms of participation such as tokenism and authentic participation. It illustrates the different levels that the community should be active on in these different forms.

If the community is not involved from the first phase of the project, but is included at a later stage to reach certain objectives that requires community participation, it is not authentic participation. Interactive participation is what organisations should actually strive for, because “people participate in joint analysis, development plans” (Cornwall, 2008:272) and the process is interdisciplinary in nature. Cornwall (2008:276) further continues to advocate for a participatory engagement “in all stages of a given activity, from identification to decision-making, a deep participatory process engages participants”.

Williams (2008) defines community participation as “the direct involvement of ordinary people of planning, governance and overall development programs at the grassroots level”. Rahnema (1990:20) concurs that participation plays a role in development. It provides a different approach for development; a ‘bottom-up’ approach that places the communities (marginalised) on a different trajectory than where they are (Leal, 2007:540). Participatory approaches yield positive outcomes only when they are people-focused and when they encourage participation of the marginalised and subordinated (Leal, 2007:544). Community participation in the past was limited, as policies created little opportunity for community participation to flourish. This was a result of no political rights. This

meant that people had no platform to be active participants in the development of any policies/strategies aimed to better their lives (Williams, 2008).

Nelson & Wright (1995:4) defines participation as “co-determination and power sharing throughout the programme cycle”. Participation should aim to include external and internal agents that will work together collaboratively to bring about change. In addition, the World Bank (1994:6) adds that participation involves stakeholders who have equal power and authority over developmental practices. This is because the aim is to have participatory development that encourages ‘shared responsibility’ in the development process. This is done to avoid repeating the mistake of the 1980s, when policies for countries receiving aid were developed and implemented by those providing the aid, with exclusion of the recipients (Mohan *et al.*, 2000). This was because development involved power struggles and the powerful wanted to remain powerful. Participation calls for the equal sharing of power.

The principles of participation, justice and empowerment lay the foundation for effective community engagement projects (Omerikwa, 2012:3; Cornwall, 2008:278). Schwab & Syme (1997:2049) define community participation as “the involvement of people in designing and implementing research and interventions intended to benefit them”. Community participation goes beyond community members participating in research studies, but includes members being able to be part of the decision-making processes and also sharing responsibility with higher education institutions to develop solutions to their social issues. Collaboration and equal power are major issues in a development process that encourages participation.

An example is dam schemes in India. Government provided free dams to farmers, but managing the schemes proved to be problematic (Village AiD, 1996:7). This was because the government had developed the scheme on a top-down basis and it failed. This is then not authentic participation. The aim of participation in the development process is to prioritise the perceptions of the community about the specific phenomena and collaboratively, together, develop solutions and practices to address the issue.

Schwab & Syme (1997:2050) allude to the fact that interventions developed by means of community participation are more likely to succeed than those that are not. There are different types of participation, such as compliance, tokenism, and actual authentic participation that is characterised by collaborative decision-making. For the purpose of this chapter, tokenism and authentic participation is used to highlight different forms of participation. Tokenism is the least desirable and less effective, while authentic participation is desirable, effective, and is a tool for enhancing the quality of community engagement.

#### **a. Tokenism**

This is a form of participation with limited empowerment. Some organisations use the idea of participation to look legitimate, to receive funding and to prove that they give back to the community or take their social responsibility seriously (Richards, 1995; Mohan, 1999). According to Zimmer (1988:65), the term ‘token’ has been used “to refer to a group of people (usually minorities/marginalised) who are used to prove a point that those in power do not discriminate against such groups”.

Jonker (2016:26) further describes tokenism as participation for “symbolic appearance”. For example, higher education institutions can fall into the trap of tokenism, because community engagement is a platform to display their dedication and commitment towards social responsibility, and for making available resources to the community to alleviate social problems (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2014). So with tokenism, the people are not involved because they are not the priority, they are only involved for symbolic appearance. They are not given a chance to be active participants, which gives them little or no influence at project level.

#### **b. Authentic Participation**

Participation ranges from passive and superficial (tokenism) to a more desirable form of participation, which is authentic participation. Authentic participation is a tool for social change (Jonkers, 2016:25). Tufte & Mefalopulos (2009:46) stipulates that this form of participation maintains high levels of participation. This form of participation requires trust and constant contact between two

parties, because community engagement between higher education institutions and the community requires active participation in all stages of the project (Jonker, 2016:26). The following section discusses how relationships are maintained through reciprocity and mutuality.

#### **2.2.4.2 Relationship with community**

This subsection focuses on how to cultivate and maintain effective relationships with the community through reciprocity and mutuality.

##### **a. Reciprocity and Mutuality**

Participation produces mutuality and reciprocity; they arise because of the presence of participation. Kliwer, Sandmann, Kim & Omerikwa (2010:256) and Polanyi (1944:61) explain that mutuality and reciprocity are fundamental to community engagement partnerships; however, power dynamics also play a role in achieving these fundamental attributes. Petterson & Hem (2011:219) express that, “reciprocity concerns the acknowledgement of both parties’ interests as equal in principle”. Janke & Clayton (2011:3) further define reciprocity as “the recognition, respect and valuing of the knowledge, perspective and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration”. Mutuality is associated with commonality, and shared feelings and activities in a partnership (Alexander, 2013: 9-10; Muirhead & Woolcock, 2008).

Leal (2007:544) further states that power is always at the centre of participation, therefore power exists in community engagement projects. This is because the process of community engagement is a form of knowledge production, hence the importance of an open, participatory dialogue between higher education institutions and the community. Often higher education institutions “do” community engagement “to” the community, instead of doing community engagement with the community. One-sided power limits reciprocity in community engagement and in the development process (Kliwer *et al.*, 2010: 256; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002: 503-504).

It should be emphasised that higher education institutions should not function as absolute ‘knowledge creators’, but that they should partner with communities as they are also knowledge co-creators in community engagement initiatives

(Glass, 2001). Burnman (2016:2) emphasises an 'enabling knowledge', which refers to the "process of sharing, generating, transforming knowledge, while enabling knowledge (with a different emphasis) refers to the outcomes or impact of a kind of knowledge that is not simply abstract and theoretical but one that enables local change and transformation". This form of knowledge brings about change and solutions to the everyday issues of society (Burnman, 2016:2).

### **2.2.4.3 Contribution to the community's wellbeing**

This subsection provides ways that community engagement can contribute to the progression of the community by encouraging empowerment and awareness of the significance of human capital.

#### **a. Empowerment**

The general idea of empowerment can easily be confused for employment opportunities. This is because South Africa faces high levels of poverty, lack of skills, and a high population growth rate that causes unemployment (Mumba, 2016:1). Levi (2000:75) adds that a good job gives purpose and meaning, and provides social support and recognition. If community engagement projects do not clarify the intentions of the project by involving the community from the inception, the community will have expectations that may include that of employment.

Empowerment is a group-based participatory, developmental process through which marginalised or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, achieve important life goals, and reduce societal marginalisation (Naidoo & Wills, 2016: 167, 170). The goal of empowerment is to ensure that the community has opportunities for personal and social progress. Mirza *et al.*, (2012) explain that the empowerment of a community touches on many aspects, for example, giving them the responsibility for making the final decision about any endeavour that will affect their wellbeing.

Human capital is a term that associates people with value, and as such constitutes a form of empowerment that leads to effective and better community

engagement. The section below provides a discussion of human capital and how it can contribute to higher education institution community engagement.

### **b. Human Capital**

According to Garlick and Langworthy (2008), sustainable development brought by community engagement through higher education institutions advances human capital. Human capital is described as knowledge development, knowledge exchange, and skills (Strom, 2011). Human capital is built through relationships, partnerships, and other collaborative measures; therefore, higher education institutions play a role in enhancing human capital, as they have the capacity to provide skills and to develop knowledge (Garlick & Langworthy, 2008). It is through community engagement that the university is able to use their capacity to generate and apply their knowledge. Therefore, the role of higher education institutions in the advancement of human capital relates to teaching, learning and engagement (Strom, 2011).

Because engagement focuses more strongly on the connection to social and community responsibility, the wellbeing and advancement/development of the community are key factors, and change/development is a dire necessity in post-apartheid South Africa. Many South African citizens still struggle with basic needs that remain unfulfilled, such as education, health care, etc. (Kagisano, 2010). The country's constitution prioritises human rights such as equality, freedom of expression and association, health care and education. The current government has made it its mission to achieve a better life for all. One way that the government is attempting to achieve this change is through higher education institutions (Kagisano, 2010), which have pools of resources and public value.

### **2.3 Challenges of community engagement**

This section discusses the challenges faced by organisations/institutions when engaging with communities. Based on the Community Economic Development Action Research (2006:6) "the challenge is of course to set up a process that encourages both groups (community members and higher education institutions) to deepen their understanding of an issue and an opportunity to

share their knowledge, experience and opinions”. Another challenge is that of accountability and evaluation. It can easily happen that the community members do not receive feedback from the projects they have participated in. In addition, the effects of the projects are often not measured/evaluated (Naidoo & Wills, 2016:177).

The most common challenge faced by many institutions is reaching or engaging the whole community. It is difficult to decipher how to address individual needs (for example derived from individual questionnaires) and serve the overall good of the community (Kabir, 2006:9). The challenges arise from addressing various expectations and needs of the community – both realistic and unrealistic – because the feedback from engagements must advise policies and strategies of effective community engagement (Kabir, 2006:10; Kearney, 2015:26). The idea is to involve key stakeholders or people in municipalities or representatives as coordinators act as liaisons for the community so the community at large can be engaged. However, these stakeholders and representatives are commonly known to lose interest or be inefficient (Kabir, 2009:9). In view of these challenges, this study investigates the WIN platform’s community engagement strategies.

The following section is an evaluation of the NWU’s policy for community engagement in relation to the principles for effective community engagement as discussed in section 3.4 above.

#### **2.4 NWU community engagement evaluation**

According to Preece (2016:106), power and knowledge are associated with authority and circulated through agents of power (higher education institutions, in this case). The NWU is focused on innovation and the pursuit of knowledge with the view that the knowledge of the university is not the absolute truth and is open to the generation of new knowledge (NWU Community Engagement Policy, 2016). This is a strength in the policy, because in the process of community engagement, the community should have a voice and should feel like they can express themselves freely with no fear of the other party’s social status (Cornwall, 2008:278). Community members should be involved from inception to implementation of the study/project, which is authentic/active

participation, with community members actively participating and constant communication between the university and the community (Jonker, 2016:26).

The University's *Success Model for 2025* was developed to ensure the integration of teaching, learning and community engagement. To achieve the goals for 2025, the NWU uses the approach of sharing expertise with the community to achieve better quality research, innovation and engagement. This approach implies participation and encourages engagement (NWU Community Engagement Policy, 2016). The question is, does the university engage with the community to meet their goal for 2025? Engagement should be about mutuality and meeting the goals for both parties. This means an engaged university that addresses challenges the community are facing such as poverty, lack of skills, and unemployment, amongst many others.

Based on the principles discussed for effective community engagement, the university's policy for community engagement covers collaboration and participation, which are good for building a partnership between the two parties; however, what lacks is the principle of reciprocity. Because the policy does not state that there should be an 'exchange', but instead speaks of 'sharing expertise' with the community. That means the university will share their expertise with the community without implying equal distribution of power through the exchange of knowledge. In contrast, the WIN platform, which falls under the AUTHeR research unit, wants to achieve a participatory environment for community engagement (WIN platform, 2017).

In conclusion, higher education institution community engagement relies on different principles and strategies to be effective, such as participation, collaboration, informing and consulting, human capital, empowerment, reciprocity, and mutuality. These are principles that ensure effective community engagement and address the daily challenges and issues of communities. Because the WIN platform prioritises participation for community engagement, this will be the focus of the study.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Chapter 2 explored the concept of community engagement in higher education institutions against the background of macro and micro theories of development to provide insight into how community engagement has developed. The important link between development and community engagement was examined and used as a basis for discussing the link between community engagement and higher education. It was argued that this was the kind of relationship that should exist between the two parties, and university approaches, strategies and principles for effective community engagement were evaluated. Participation, collaboration, mutuality and reciprocity must be encouraged between the community and higher education institutions. These principles inform the next chapter by determining the most suitable methodological approach toward data collection, which aimed to explore community perceptions on the community engagements of the NWU's WIN projects, as also stated in the objective of this study. This chapter also provided literature/background to assist in reflecting on the analysed data.

The study used principles and strategies for effective community engagement (as discussed in section 3.4) as theoretical point of departure. These principles and strategies were used to investigate challenges the WIN platform faced, for instance the use of a top-down approach, lack of collaboration, and lack of participation in knowledge exchange because of power imbalances. Different participatory approaches were used as investigation tools to reveal the challenges faced by the WIN platform in the process of community engagement.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology and research design used to guide the data collection process. The key research question was: *What are the Vaalharts community members' perceptions of the community engagement in the NWU WIN platform projects?* The objective was to understand the community's perceptions on previous WIN platform projects. It is hoped that recommendations from this could be implemented in future WIN platform projects to ensure the projects are relevant to the community.

For this purpose, the researcher used a qualitative design to address the rationale of the study. With this qualitative design, the community was approached with an open mind.

#### 3.2 Qualitative research design

There are three commonly used research designs, namely: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. According to Hancock (2009), a quantitative research design is viewed as a numerical, non-descriptive methodology that employs statistics to address research objectives. Taking into account the characteristics of a quantitative research approach, this type of design is applicable to studies that use statistical tests (Couchman & Dawson, 1995:40). The mixed-methods approach is usually confused with the multi-methods approach, which is the simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative methods (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015:3). Mixed methods refers to the integration of qualitative and quantitative elements in a research study to yield desired results (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015:3). The integration of these two designs can occur at any stage of the research.

The aim of this study, however, was not to yield statistical results or integrated results to address the rationale of the study. The aim of this study was to understand the perceptions of the community of Vaalharts. Hence, the qualitative design was chosen. According to Lincoln (1992) and Krathwohl

(1998:230), qualitative research is naturalistic and allows for the lived experiences of people to be explored, and has as point of departure that there is no objective, single reality. It shows that there are multiple realities, as human behaviour is complex and there is no absolute truth. Stake (2010) similarly argues that the significance of qualitative research design is to explore and understand rather than to prove a hypothesis. Qualitative research, therefore, focusses on the reporting of experiences and the description and interpretation of reality that might lead to the development of concepts or theories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004). McDonald (2012:34) argues that a qualitative design would include methods and techniques such as documenting, analysing, observing and interpreting meanings and characteristics of human phenomena or social issues that are being studied. This is because it provides more insight and understanding in the unpacking of social phenomena (Silverman, 2000).

Qualitative designs aim to capture the lived experiences of people, preferably in their own words. This complements the research question that aims to capture the perceptions of the Vaalharts community members in the Northern Cape regarding their experiences in previous WIN Platform projects of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. This design is applicable to this study because of the relevant methods and instruments it offers for data collection and analysis. The following section provides a discussion of the method used for this study.

### **3.3 Research Method: Case Study**

Yin (2014:1) provides a definition of a case as “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context”. A case study, therefore, is the empirical investigation of cases by addressing questions of how and why in terms of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2002:14). According to Yin (1994:1), case study methods are advisable to use when a contemporary phenomenon relating to real life experience/context is analysed.

A case, according to Stake (1995:2), is a “specific, complex, functioning thing, an integrated system which has a boundary and working parts and is

purposive". Stake (2002:2) further describes a case study method as a system that has boundaries, and advises that it should rather be perceived as an object than a process. This is because it is more beneficial to study programmes and people because they are units with boundaries rather than events and processes, which are ongoing (Yazan, 2015:139). This is also because "if there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who could be interviewed or to observations that could be conducted, then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case" (Merriam, 1998:28).

There are four characteristics that describe case studies, namely: holistic, empirical, interpretive and emphatic (Yazan, 2015:139). Four of the characteristics complement this research study, namely, holistic, empirical, and interpretive and empathetic. Holistic focuses on the relationship between the phenomenon and context, empirical encourages the study to be informed by the field work (findings), interpretative "means that the researcher rests upon intuition", and lastly, empathetic focuses on the experiences of the participants in view of their surroundings (Yazan, 2015: 139). Like Stake, Merriam (1998:27) views a case as an integrated and bounded system. Merriam (1998:xiii) defines a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit". She further adds attributes that clarify the abovementioned definition. Firstly, it is particularistic, focussing on a programme or phenomenon; secondly, it is descriptive, producing data that is rich in content/description; and, lastly, it is heuristic, in that it provides the reader with a new insight concerning the phenomenon under investigation (Yazan, 2015:139).

The following table provides a summary of the case study method as per all three scholars referenced in this section.

**Table 3.1: Juxtaposition of three case-study approaches (Yazan, 2015:148)**

<b>Dimension of interest</b>	<b>Robert Yin's Case Study Research: Design and Methods</b>	<b>Robert Stake's The Art of Case Study Research</b>	<b>Sharan Merriam's Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education</b>
Epistemological Commitments	Positivism	Constructivism and existentialism (nondeterminism)	Constructivism
Definition of Case	Case is a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context.	Case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing," more specifically "an integrated system" which "has a boundary and working parts" and purposive (in social sciences and human services)	Case is "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (p. 27) and it can be a person, a program, a group, a specific policy and so on."
Definition of Case study	Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates the case or cases conforming to the abovementioned definition by addressing the "how" or "why" questions concerning the phenomenon of interest.	Qualitative case study is a study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (p xi).	Qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit (p xiii).

Dimension of interest	Robert Yin's Case Study Research: Design and Methods	Robert Stake's The Art of Case Study Research	Sharan Merriam's Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education
Defining characteristics		Holistic (considering the interrelationship between the phenomenon and its contexts); Empirical (basing the study on their observations in the field); Interpretive (resting upon their intuition and see research basically as a researcher-subject interaction); Emphatic (reflecting the vicarious experiences of the subjects in an emic perspective).	Particularistic (focusing on particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon); Descriptive (yielding a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study); Heuristic (illuminating the reader's understanding of phenomenon under study).

In the above table, Yin and Merriam's definitions of what a case study is, are aligned with what this study aims to achieve. This is because the definition already gives an idea of the type of case study design applicable. The case study method was best suited for this study, because the study explored perceptions of community members and this method provides more in-depth information on a situation (Rowley, 2002:16). The following brief section provides a discussion of the types of case study designs available and the one applicable for this study.

### 3.3.1 Case study designs

Yazan (2015:148) defines a case study design as “the logical sequence that connects empirical data to the study’s initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions”. There are different types of case study designs. Zainal (2007: 2-3) and Yin (2014:38) refer to two types of case study designs, namely, “single case design, and multiple-case designs”. Single-case design is employed “when there are no other cases available for replication”. This is because the results of this type of case study are not generalised, since such cases are very rare (Zainal, 2007:2). Multiple-case design is “adopted with real-life events that show numerous sources of evidence through replication rather than sampling logic”. This is done to ensure validity, as it is a form of triangulation (Zainal, 2007:2).

Zainal (2007) and Yin (2003:17) present other types of case study designs such as descriptive and explanatory. The descriptive case study design is used to “describe natural phenomenon that occurs within the data in question”. The data is therefore described as it occurs (Zainal, 2007:3). Explanatory case study design, on the other hand, focuses more on the researcher’s objective, so the phenomenon under examination is determined by the researcher (Zainal, 2007:3). There are still more types of case study designs, and the following table describes these and indicate where they are relevant.

**Table 3.2: Types of case studies (Willig, 2001:73)**

<b>Type of case study</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Person	The study of one single individual, generally using several different research methods.
Group	The study of a single distinctive set of people, such as a family or small group of friends.
Location	The study of a particular place, and the way that it is used or regarded by people.
Organisation	The study of a single organisation or company, and the way that people act within it.
Event	The study of a particular social or cultural event, and the interpretations of that event by those participating in it.

Taking into consideration the abovementioned types of case study methods, this study followed a single-case design. This design focusses on a single occurrence of an event. It is also used to evaluate the impact of an intervention programme in a certain case (Zainal, 2007, Silverman, 2013:416). The choice of a single-case design was influenced by the rationale of the study, which was not to provide generalisations but to explore a single event/occurrence.

The following section discusses the population and sampling method that was used to obtain data of the perceptions community members had of previous WIN platform projects.

### **3.4 Population and sampling**

The objective of the study was to understand the perceptions the Vaalharts community had of projects previously undertaken by the WIN platform. The population of this study was the community members of the Vaalharts region who had experienced the projects.

The study adopted purposive and snowball sampling as methods to generate participants. This is because the purposive sampling could select and identify people with knowledge and experience of the phenomena explored (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Purposive sampling was used to select members who had participated in the different WIN platform projects before, particularly those who had been field workers. Some coordinators were contacted two weeks before data collection to determine their availability. These field workers and coordinators were asked for referrals to other members who had participated in the projects that they knew of. This was done in preparation for the data collection that was conducted in June 2017 and July 2018. All participants agreed to take part in the study and consented to being recorded in both focus groups and individual interviews.

This data collected in June 2017 was done in collaboration with the Health Sciences Research Council (HSRC). This is because the WIN platform had been identified by the HSRC as a Living Lab, a concept used for centres that integrate research and innovation processes with public and private partnerships (Schumacher, 2008). Similarities in research objectives was the

main reason for the collaboration. The HSRC aimed to investigate the changes the WIN platform projects had made in the community, which was similar to the aims of this study, which was to establish the community's perceptions on the community engagement of the NWU's WIN projects. The HSRC data collection took place in June 2017 until the first week of July. The sample was 6 individual interviews and two focus-group discussions that consisted of 27 participants.

The data collection for this study took place in July 2018. The sample was planned to consist of 40 participants in total, to be equally divided between individual interviews (20) and focus groups (20). Although the sample size for the focus group was realised, only 13 participants were available for the individual interviews. The target was not met because there were more people who participated in one project (Community Health Care Workers) and the decision was taken to stop the individual interviews at 13 participants due to saturation.

The limited number of participants was also because the WIN projects had been going on since 2011. People had moved out of the area and were no longer available and others were occupied with work. Therefore, the individual interviews did not fully align with the goal to interview people who had participated in different WIN platform projects (from different disciplines like Consumer Sciences, Psychology, Nursing, Biokinetics, Recreation and Sports Sciences, and Urban and Regional Planning), as opposed to people who had all participated in the same project. So because the data for the individual interviews were attracting people who had participated in one project instead of a variety of projects, data saturation was avoided by cutting the interviews to 13 participants instead of 20. The minority of other individual interviews and focus-group discussions included participants from different projects such as Come Dine with Me, Community Healthcare Workers, Sustainable Diets, Programme to Support Pro Poor Development (PSPPD), Food Security, Consumer Rights, Recycling project, Sewing project, Home Based Care-Dr Muller, and Life Plan. Also included in the sample were coordinators and field workers.

The reason why 13 individual interviews were considered sufficient, was because the two data collection rounds covered most of the WIN platform

projects. The total sample of the two studies was 66 participants, which is a fair number for a qualitative study.

### **3.5 Data collection instruments**

Data was collected using two techniques: individual interviews and focus-group discussions. A semi-structured interview schedule (refer to Appendix c) was utilised, and the questions were open ended, allowing the participants to fully express themselves. The questions were not leading and phrases like “what do you think of” and “how you were...” provided participants with enough freedom to reflect and respond honestly. These types of questions ensure credibility of the findings because participants are not coerced into responding in a certain manner.

These two techniques were used in two rounds of data collection. The first round was a collaborative data-collection process with the HSRC. The second data-collection process was for the purpose of this study and aimed to capture aspects that had not been captured or thoroughly inspected by the HSRC study. This was done to bolster the validity of the data, as it was possible that the first round of data collection may raise questions that could be answered by the second round. Also, two rounds of data collection ensured better understanding of the perceptions of community members. Interviews in both rounds of data collection were conducted in Tswana, because most of the people in Vaalharts are Tswana-speaking, but some responded in English. Fortunately, the researcher’s mother tongue is Tswana and she is fluent in English.

#### **3.5.1 HSRC individual interviews (2017)**

The individual interviews were semi-structured, in that a questionnaire was used to guide the conversation. The participants were very open in the interview process and comfortable with the questions. The individual interviews took place at three locations: Sekhing (1 participant), Pampierstad (2 participants) and Jan Kempdorp (3 participants). The participants were mostly stakeholders in the community, in the municipality, and at the Department of Health and Social Development. There was a nutritionist, financial manager, social

entrepreneur, a municipal artisan, municipal Human Resources clerk, and a project manager in the Department of Social Development.

### 3.5.2 HSRC focus-group discussions

There were two focus-group discussions, with one group consisting of 16 participants and the other of 11 participants. The focus groups were in Ganspan and Jan Kempdorp. The focus group in Ganspan included participants from the Community Health Care Workers and Come Dine with Me projects. The participants were very informative and all group members were eager participants. This was because they clearly understood the objectives of the previous project they had participated in, based on their responses. The focus group in Jan Kempdorp had 11 participants who, initially, were slow to participate in the discussion, as it seemed that they did not fully understand the goals/objectives of the projects they participated in. The solution was to ask them questions individually. In the end, all contributed to the discussion.

### 3.5.3 Individual interviews (2018)

All individual interviews were undertaken at a convenient place for the participants. For example, most of the community healthcare worker's interviews were conducted at Jan Kempdorp's local clinic, their place of work, and other individual interviews were conducted in Sekhing's local crèche, because it was close to where the participants lived. Thus, there was no need to arrange transportation for the participants. The individual interviews were semi-structured. Richards and Morse (as cited in Jonker, 2016:52) describes semi-structured interviews as a conversation with a purpose. The interviews were guided by a list of questions prepared beforehand to ensure that research objectives were covered and that the conversation addressed the research question. Notes were taken and a digital recorder was used to capture the participant's full responses.

In both rounds of data collection, the participants were relaxed and talked freely. The challenge was that participants struggled to understand some of the questions. The questions were therefore simplified, or an example was given to improve the understanding of the questions. Because of the open-ended

questions, some participants had already provided answers to questions in the questionnaire. This was clearly noted in the data-capturing process. Probing was used where necessary to ensure that participants addressed the fullness of the questions.

#### 3.5.4 Focus-group discussions (2018)

Focus-group discussions took place at two different locations: Sekhing (village) and Jan Kempdorp. There were three focus groups in total. Two groups consisted of 8 members and one group of four members. One group in Jan Kempdorp consisted of members from the sewing project. The discussions took place at a participant's house. The other focus group consisted of people who participated in different projects, such as Community Health Care Workers, Sustainable Diets, PSPPD, Food security, Consumer rights, and Home-based care, Recycling, Life Plan and Come Dine with Me the discussion took place at the Jan Kempdorp local clinic. The last focus-group discussion took place at a local crèche in Sekhing. All three locations were convenient for all participants, because it was close to where they live. The discussions were guided by a set of open-ended questions and it allowed for participants to express themselves freely. The discussions were recorded and notes were taken.

In terms of participation, the group setting was both an advantage and a challenge. Some participants answered frequently, and when another participant had a turn to respond, they would indicate that the other participants had already answered. They were then asked to answer individually, even if someone had already given a similar response. The group setting provided a general perspective of how people perceived the WIN platform projects. There was also an activity at the end of group discussions where participants drew pictures depicting their perceptions of the project they had participated in. Two groups participated in this activity and one group declined, as they were older people and did not feel comfortable drawing, but they did manage to provide a general perspective of the project they participated in. This activity ensured credibility, because the members made their drawings independently, providing authentic symbols of how the projects had made them feel.

### 3.5.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is related to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:276-277). Credibility is “the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings” (Anney, 2014:276). Credibility is achieved through triangulation. Babbie & Mouton (2001:278) suggest that credibility and dependability cannot be demonstrated separately, because they cannot exist without each other. Dependability is important in a study because a researcher must always ensure that the study, if it were to be repeated, would produce the same results in the same context (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278).

Triangulation is described by Babbie and Mouton (2001: 277) as “the best way to elicit various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study, through the collection of information about different events and relationships from different points of views”. Triangulation was applied in this study, as two data sets were collected for the same problem and with the same objective of exploring the perceptions of community members on higher education institution community engagement. This then produced a variety of perceptions from the participants on the same topic, which encouraged trustworthiness (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277). A digital voice recorder was used to keep record of the findings for referential adequacy.

Transferability refers to “the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277). There are different strategies that can be adopted to ensure transferability, namely thick descriptions and purposive sampling. In this study, the data was thoroughly described and purposive sampling was adopted to encourage transferability. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:277), this capitalises on the variety of data that can be acquired from different purposefully selected participants and places.

Confirmability is described by Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) as “the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus and not of the biases of the researcher”. This is done through a process called “confirmability audit trail”, which ensures that the findings that are produced, the conclusions, and how the

data is interpreted align with the perceptions of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). In this study, this trail was supported by the raw material, which included drawings, notes taken on the questionnaires and the digital recordings. This contributed to the confirmability and trustworthiness of the study and the findings were not due to the biases of the researcher. The findings were solely based on the perceptions of the participants.

### **3.6 Strategy for data analysis**

Yin (2003:141) suggests that data analysis entails “examining, categorising, tabulating, testing evidence to address the initial proposition”. This study used content analysis and thematic analysis to understand the perceptions of the participants to better address the research question and fulfil the research objectives. Content analysis is defined as “drawing inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of the messages conveyed in the data being analysed” (Berg, 1998: 224).

Content analysis is a technique that creates categories and extends to creating themes. This was done with the help of *Atlas.ti* software, a computer program designed primarily for qualitative data analysis. *Atlas.ti* enabled the identification and allocation of themes in the data transcripts. Thematic analysis is described as “a data analysis technique used in phenomenological inquiry that involves data from the interviews with respondents to discover themes of experiences as seen from the respondents’ perspectives” (Wilson, 1993: 342). In the thematic analysis, the experiences of the participants could be identified from the participant’s direct quotations.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are paramount when researching people. The study ensured that the following ethical considerations were followed to protect the participants.

- To avoid ethical issues/dilemmas or harm to the participants, ethical clearance was acquired from the NWU ethics committee. The study was approved and received the following ethical clearance number: **NWU-00433-18-A7**.

- Consent was obtained by explaining the aims/objectives of the study and the process of interviews and focus groups. Written consent was required for both individual interviews and focus groups. Although the consent form contained detailed information on the project, it was also explained to participants in Tswana, as not everyone understood the English.
- Participants were informed that, even with consent, participation in the research study was voluntary. It was made clear to them that they could withdraw from the study at any time if anything made them feel uncomfortable.
- The data obtained from the participants was kept in office 114 in building F13, and digitalised in *Atlas.ti* for content and thematic analysis. Real names were omitted and numbers allocated to participants.
- The semi-structured questionnaires were translated from English to Tswana, because the majority of participants were Tswana-speaking. This was to ensure that the participants felt respected and comfortable about taking part.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a discussion of the qualitative design and methodology that was used to conduct the empirical research. The design and methodology was applied in two rounds (June 2017 and July 2018) of data collection. The data was collected using focus-group discussions and individual interviews, employing semi-structured questionnaires to guide the conversations. This chapter presented a description of how the empirical research was conducted and thereby provided the foundation for the discussion of the empirical findings. The methodology of this study is applicable to similar studies that aim to understand perceptions of community members who participated in previous community engagement initiatives. This methodology makes possible the evaluation of community engagement projects.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology of this study. It explained the interview schedules for both individual and focus group discussions used in the research. For both the HSRC 2017 study and this 2018 study, semi-structured questionnaires were used for data collection in both the individual interviews and the focus-group discussions. The HSRC round of data collection resulted in a HSRC report and the report was thematically analysed for this study by using *Atlas.ti*, guided by the research question and objective and the theoretical discussion in chapter 2. The transcribed interviews and focus-group discussions from the second round of data collection in 2018 were coded and analysed according to the identified themes. Jonkers (2016:62) refers to coding as “the formal representation or concept-mapping of the analytical thinking of categories based on prior research and theoretical perspectives”. The aim was to empirically explore perceptions Vaalharts community members had of previous WIN platform projects.

The objective of the data collection was to understand the perceptions of community members of the Vaalharts region: Ganspan, Jan Kempdorp, Sekhing and Pampierstad. For this purpose, the chapter presents findings from individual interviews and focus-group discussions with the community of Vaalharts on their perceptions of previous WIN platform projects as researched in both the HSRC study and this one. This chapter is divided into different subsections: the findings from the analysis of the HSRC study is reported on first, followed by the findings of this study. This chapter therefore reports on the data received from 66 participants who had previously participated in WIN projects: 33 in the HSRC study and 33 in this study. The prominent themes of this study were collaboration, implementation, empowerment and participation. This helped to understand how the community perceived the WIN platform projects; whether they were positive or negative and why. This formed a basis from which to make recommendations for a better and more effective community engagement for the WIN platform.

## **4.2 HSRC data analysis**

The data-collection for this research was a collaborative effort of the HSRC and the WIN platform, due to similarities in research objectives. The HSRC was exploring living labs and evaluating the impact of these on the community. Coetzee, du Toit and Herselman (2012:2) define living labs as “a new approach to innovation and information and communication technology development”. Living labs are established to create a platform for the people that use it (community) to be active participants in the change brought about by the living labs (Coetzee, *et al.*, 2012:2). The main idea of the HSRC’s data collection was also to capture the perceptions of the community members who had previously participated in WIN platform projects.

### **4.2.1 Principles for effective community engagement**

This section provides a discussion of findings from the HSRC data collection of 33 participants regarding their perceptions of previous WIN platform projects. The themes used in this section focus on the community member’s perceptions in terms of principles of effective community engagement such as collaboration, participation, and empowerment. In this section, the discussion is based on the presence or absence of these principles in previous WIN platform projects and how relevant these projects were in addressing the struggles the community face.

#### **a. Collaboration**

This subsection indicates the presence or absence of collaboration with the WIN platform and amongst community members. Collaboration is discussed in terms of the absence or presence of communication and partnerships, as this indicates teamwork.

Collaboration is the core of effective community engagement because it enhances the ethic of working together to achieve the task at hand (Omerikwa, 2012:2). Collaboration was indicated through partnerships and effective relationships that were encouraged by the WIN platform projects. Participants indicated that the Community Healthcare Workers project helped them improve their working relationships with their clients, as it was indicated that the projects

*“...improved communication skills with patients during rounds in community health work and better relationships with clients” (Focus group 1, 2017).* Other participants indicated that *“...there was better communication between participants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders”,* and *“...there was support from stakeholders” (Focus group 1, 2017).* The stakeholders in this case were people from the municipality, and the WIN platform team were also identified as stakeholders. This suggests that there was collaboration, because they could openly communicate with each other, which also means that they worked together as a team.

Other participants indicated that the projects encouraged participation with others in their personal lives because the projects of Programme to Support Pro-Poor Development (PSPPD) and food security were able to *“...bring me into contact with other people who work in the same area, which encouraged participation in the workshop”* and it was also added that *“...I learnt how to work with the community” (Interviewee 1, 2017).* It was also stated that the project of Community Healthcare Workers encouraged the people in *“...working hand-in-hand with the community” (Interviewee 6, 2017).* These perceptions of the community indicated that, previously, there had been a lack of collaboration and the WIN platform projects improved on this. Despite the positive feedback on collaboration, some participants felt like there were also hindrances to effective collaboration.

As mentioned before, communication has an effect on collaboration. The participants advocated for collaboration within the community as they indicated that there should be *“...togetherness of women and children to open community groups” (Focus group 2, 2017).* Collaboration should also extend to various government departments as indicated by the participant from the Come Dine with Me and Sustainable Diets because the participant would like for the *“...Department of Health to be more involved” (Focus group 2, 2017)* and, because they lack money and resources, they also ask for *“...funding from the stakeholders and NGOs” (Focus group 2, 2017)* so that they can start *“...selling the Sesotho traditional food” (Focus group 2, 2017)* and *“...to have small backyard gardens” (Focus group 2, 2017).* The lack of communication between the

clinic and community healthcare workers suggests that they did not always work together effectively due to lack of communication and collaboration.

There was some positive feedback on collaboration. The projects brought the community together and taught them teamwork and interdependency. With that being said, the community still wanted more involvement and support from other structures in the community such as the Department of Health, NGOs, and more from the community members.

#### **b. Empowerment**

In this subsection empowerment is discussed in relation to benefits, skills or achievements the community gained from the WIN projects. This is because these actually indicate whether or not the projects empowered the community. Some participants mentioned that the community struggles with unemployment and they indicated that the projects should encourage “*job creation*” and that “*We want economic changes to benefit everyone*” (Focus group 1, 2017). This is because South Africa is faced with high levels of poverty, lack of skills, and a high population growth rate that causes unemployment.

Empowerment is a group-based participatory developmental process through which marginalised or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, achieve important life goals and reduce societal marginalisation (Naidoo & Wills, 2016: 167, 170). The projects did not seem to have helped with job creation or economic changes for the community, but the community was provided with skills and motivation to improve their personal lives. In essence this is what empowerment is. There was a large group of participants who indicated that the projects empowered them with skills: “*I have also acquired more information on dietary through the Salt Project; my self-esteem is boosted and assisted in being well-respected within the community*” (participant is motivational speaker) (Interviewee 2, 2017).

One aspect that was not covered in the literature of this study and, also was not a variable in any of the previous WIN platform projects, was age. The findings indicated that the project specifically the ‘Sustainable Diets’ project, positively influenced older people. This was because participants indicated that the

projects “...improved healthy lifestyle of the community, with regular exercise, like older people playing soccer” and “...older people are able to do day-to-day chores without assistance from anyone due to healthy eating schedules” (Focus group 2, 2017). This shows that participation in the projects had positive influences on older people and their lifestyles.

The community expected the youth to be empowered in all aspects of their lives by taking part in these projects. They indicated that they wanted “...to see the Sesotho tradition being embraced by the youth wearing their Sesotho clothes and dances” and “...higher number of youth with improved skills to equip them”. Young people in Vaalharts – like many others in the country – abuse alcohol and drugs. Participants indicated that their community needed projects that “...prohibits the use of alcohol and drugs” and “...control of late night taverns” (Focus group 2, 2017). The community “...needs more educated youth” which then suggests that there should be more training, workshops, and “...libraries in the community” to facilitate the desired education. Because the community believes that these projects can produce “...higher numbers of youth with improved skills to equip them” (Focus group 2, 2017).

Even though the WIN platform projects did not offer employment, participants mentioned that the projects encouraged independence, as they stated that “...We were able to venture and start a cooperative in poultry production, gained knowledge and skills to open youth cooperative” (Interviewee 3, 2017). This is known as human capital, which is described as “knowledge development, knowledge exchange and skills” (Strom, 2011). Human capital is built through relationships, partnerships and other collaborative measures; therefore, higher education institutions play a role in enhancing human capital, as they have the capacity to provide skills and develop knowledge (Garlick & Langworthy, 2008).

The projects seem to have contributed to skills development in the community, because one participant indicated that “I have improved sewing skills” (Focus group 1, 2017), and another participant listed the benefits/skills that the projects had added to her life: “I am very informed; I know more about personal discipline; I have learned or acquired hygiene principles; budgeting and the project has built self-esteem” (Interviewee 4, 2017). Another participant from the

recycling project was collecting plastic bottles and other recyclable products and indicated that *“I am able to budget the income from the recycled products and use it for household expenses”* (Focus group 2, 2017). The Sustainable Diets project also contributed to the well-being of the community because *“... it has increased activeness and reduced tiredness from participants above 50 years”*, and this because they adopted a healthier diet; another participant added that *“Healthy eating programmes decreased sickness”* (Focus group 2, 2017) and *“...people were able to take their medication regularly”* because of the Community Healthcare Workers project (Interviewee 6, 2017).

The projects have also added some practical skills to empower the community for employment and their personal lives. One participant felt *“...able to facilitate health work such as taking the BP (blood pressure) and door-to-door visitation to households who are taking treatment in the nearby clinics”* (Interviewee 6, 2017). Participants indicated that *“I gained knowledge in health issues/hygiene and how to be a principled healthcare worker”* (Focus group 1, 2017). The above findings of some of the community members indicate that the projects of the WIN platform empowered the community by providing in whatever lack or problem the community experienced. The absence of negative perceptions in this section leads to the conclusion that the WIN platform projects empowered some of the community members in ways that they desired. However, the following section on participation shines the light on the negative perceptions shared by some of the participants regarding what they expected and how the WIN platform failed to deliver.

### **c. Participation**

Community participation is defined as “the direct involvement of ordinary people in planning, governance and overall development programs at the grassroots level” (Williams, 2008). This was not the case with the WIN platform projects because the goals and key objectives of the projects were not clearly defined to the community at the initial stages. Community members’ lack of participation in the initial stages caused confusion over the main objectives of the WIN platform projects. The community expected jobs that would earn them monthly pay instead of projects to empower them with knowledge and skills because, as participants stated, they wanted *“job creation”* and *“economic changes to*

*benefit everyone*” (Focus group 1, 2017). The only reason community members participated in these projects in the first place, was because they expected employment, better working conditions, and community benefits. Because they had not been included from the very beginning of the community engagement projects, their expectations were unrealistic.

The community felt that the way the project had been implemented affected their willingness to participate; they were expecting their situations to be improved through resources and money, as they had indicated that they expected *“uniforms for the community healthcare workers”* and that the facilities they used were far away and in poor condition. This was perceived as problematic as they had expected *“better facilities to work in”* and *“community halls, to see more community involvement”* (Focus group 1, 2017).

The participants mentioned a few more difficulties that influenced their participation in the projects. The community of Vaalharts is very poor, and this was indicated as a reason for poor participation *“poverty hinders the project's success”* (Interviewee 4, 2017). Because some of them did not have the means to get to the facilities where these projects were hosted, they indicated that *“we expected transportation to the activities”* (Focus group 1, 2017). The location of the facilities the projects were hosted at also affected the participation of the community. Thus participation by community members was negatively affected by lack of transport, facilities that were used, and rewards. Overall, participants gained skills and knowledge from the specific projects they participated in.

Although participation was influenced by the factors mentioned above, those who did participate experienced improvement in their lives as they gained more skills and knowledge that encouraged them to take initiative in changing their own lives. The following subsection discusses the community’s perceptions of the implementation of the WIN platform project. The section provides a narrative of the way projects were implemented and how the implementation affected the success of the projects, either to the disadvantage or advantage of the community.

#### **d. Implementation**

This subsection discusses how community members perceived the way in which previous WIN platform projects had been implemented. Participants indicated that certain objectives had not been met due to the way the projects had been implemented. Participants indicated that “...*some objectives were not met due to lack of monitoring and evaluation*” (Interviewee 3, 2017) and that a project such as Come Dine with Me was “...*limited to only meet a certain number or people*” (Interviewee 5, 2017). However, this project had been presented specifically for the Setswana cultural group, which means that people had misunderstood the criteria for the Come Dine with Me project. Another concern about the project was that it only involved a limited number of youths. As mostly older people partook in the project, a limited number of young people could benefit from the skills taught.

Another implementation issue was the small number of community healthcare workers appointed for the Community Healthcare Workers project. One participant identified this as a limitation, as “... *community healthcare workers cannot reach other places due to the small number of them and the large number of community members*” (Interviewee 6, 2017). This was a challenge because the community expected that the Community Healthcare Workers project would “...*distribute medication for the community through their healthcare services*” which would “...*decrease queues and long waiting at the clinic*” (Focus group 1, 2017).

This indicates that there were hindrances with the implementation of the projects to meet certain objectives. Some indicated that the projects needed “... *proper monitoring*”, “...*to have more workshops*”, “...*stable budget*” and “...*have inspectors to do quality verifications*” (Focus group 2, 2017). They also indicated a few expectations of how future projects should be implemented, because they felt that the projects were used by the stakeholders for their own personal gain, which made them reluctant to participate. They indicated that there should be “...*no corruption*”, “...*nepotism should be prohibited*” and that “...*the community must be comfortable in working with them through this project, so that poor participation can decrease*” (Focus group 2, 2017). This indicates that the key objectives of the study were not clearly defined to the participants, because they could not outline how the projects were meant to benefit them as participants

and the community at large. Most participants believed that the projects would bring *“job creation”*; they were expecting *“to have secured jobs”* and have *“poverty alleviated”* (Focus group 1, 2017). What they expected from the WIN projects were *“to be provided with certificates than symbolic badges”*. Because badges cannot be used to apply for work, the badges were just to symbolise that they had been participants in the projects.

The community also expected to be provided with *“uniforms as healthcare workers”* and *“better facilities to work in”*, so they could be recognised for the function they were performing. This suggests that, for future implementation of these projects, the WIN platform must ensure secure job creation, accredited certificates of the skills and knowledge received, and resources. Because when this happens *“we will have a united and motivated community”* that *“will be able to help the community at large and sustain themselves”* (Focus group 1, 2017).

This section addressed collaboration, which focused on how the participants and WIN platform team worked together during the implementation of the different projects and how the participants longed for more collaboration with the structure and stakeholders within the community. The section on empowerment focused on how the participants were uplifted and positively influenced by the projects, which taught skills and knowledge they did not have before. The section on participation focused on how active the participants were in stages of the projects and the aspects that influenced participation; also, things to improve on for future participation. And lastly, the section on implementation focused on the negative and positive perceptions participants had on how the WIN platform projects were implemented. It covered the research objective of this study of exploring the perceptions of community members on the implementation and effect of community engagement projects. This section was also aligned with the title of the study, covering the perceptions of Vaalharts community members on the WIN platform projects.

### **4.3 Description of June 2018 data analysis**

This section provides a discussion of the information collected from 33 participants in this study regarding their perceptions on previous WIN platform projects. The themes that are used in this section focuses on the community

members' perceptions on principles of effective community engagement, such as collaboration, participation, and empowerment, as identified in the analysis and in view of the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2. In this section, the discussion is based on the presence or absence of these principles in previous WIN platform projects and how relevant these projects were in addressing the struggles the community faced. The discussion includes other factors that the community perceive to have an influence on previous WIN platform projects.

#### 4.3.1 Effects of the WIN platform projects

In this theme a discussion is provided of the effects that the WIN platform projects had on the community. To properly understand the project's effects on the participants, the participants were asked to provide their perceptions on how they had been empowered as a community and therefore, what benefits they received from the projects.

##### **a. Benefits**

Discussion of this sub-theme revealed that community members did benefit a lot from the projects. The projects were deemed beneficial to the community because participants indicated that *"It taught us good behaviour, respect, and how to work together as different age groups"* (Focus group 1, 2018), and another participant indicated that it *"...taught the youth how to communicate with older people"* (Focus group 1, 2018) and, similarly, another participant indicated that they *"...learned that I should know how to work together with younger people"*. This indicates that there was a communication bridge that was needed between the older and younger generation because another participant indicated that *"It taught me how to speak with people of different age groups"* (Focus group 3, 2018). The community also received some skills that are necessary for employment in the projects of Life Plan and Consumer Rights. For example, a participant shared that *"...we learned customer care, how to deal with complaints from people"* (Focus group 3, 2018) and also the participants learned *"doing SWOT analysis"* (Focus group 2, 2018).

The project has encouraged personal growth for the participants. Specifically, the project of sustainable diets helped the community with *"eating healthy"*, and the participants also indicated that they *"learned a lot of things because there*

were time where we just ate and was not aware of what we were eating, so we learned about measurement” (Focus group 2, 2018). This suggests that the community was struggling with dietary issues because it was indicated that “Taking part in the project has really helped me with weight loss, because I have learned from the projects that I have to limit my food consumption” (Interviewee 13, 2018) and another indicated that the project “...taught me how to eat properly, irrespective your budget, even if you do not have money for breakfast, you can find cheap substitutes for lunch and supper” (Interviewee 2, 2018). The Sustainable Diets project, therefore, managed to encourage communication etiquette among the participants. The abovementioned perceptions reflect empowerment, because they align with the goal of empowerment, which is to help marginalised or oppressed groups gain greater control over their lives and also to acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals. This is all to reduce marginalisation in societies.

The skills presented by the WIN platform projects aligned with the ideas of human capital. Human capital is described as knowledge development, knowledge exchange, and skills (Strom, 2011). Human capital is built through relationships, partnerships and other collaborative measures. This is reflected in the lives of community members of Vaalharts because participants shared that the projects taught them “how to pass down generational knowledge to them as they are younger” (Focus group 1, 2018). The project was able to create a platform for knowledge exchange, as one participant remarked: “The project reminded me of my culture and who I am, what my parents used to do” (Focus group 1, 2018) and also “made me to interact more with the community. I learned a lot of things that I was unaware of” (Focus group 1, 2018). This is because the project taught the participants to “learn to cook Setswana cultural foods” (Focus group 1, 2018) because the objective was to teach both young and old people about cultural foods. Human capital is a form of empowerment that leads to effective and better community engagement, which encourages the community to be active participants in their own lives. This is so that the benefits are not just once off, and the participants related to this as they shared that “they learned to do the gardens at home and benefit from the garden” (Interviewee 10, 2018).

The community indicated that they had benefitted by learning about customer care, gardening, how to do SWOT analyses, and communicate. These helped address some of their problems in their personal lives and also the projects taught them things they had never known. The participants emphasised the Come Dine With Me project as particularly beneficial to the community because the project focused on their culture and reminded them how important it was by embracing it through cooking traditional foods and displaying traditional foods.

#### **b. Community empowerment**

This sub-theme further explains how the community members and the community at large were empowered by the projects. In the discussions with the community members, the issue of unemployment and lack of skills and knowledge was prominent. This is because a participant indicated that *“It was nice, because I did not have much knowledge on the activities they taught us and I was excited because it was the first time working with the university”* (Interviewee 9, 2018). The projects seemed to have had a positive impact on the participants, as one participant shared that *“and I also like that they wanted to share knowledge with the community and did not keep everything to themselves”* (Focus group 2, 2018). This indicates that the WIN platform had the intention to empower the community with knowledge and skills. With this being said, the projects have actually encouraged community members to progress. The community members of Sekhing, were empowered and encouraged to be active partakers in the change brought by the WIN platform projects. As one participant remarked, *“the community needs to learn how to create their own employment”* (Interviewee 4, 2018).

The Come Dine with Me project that was run in the village of Sekhing encouraged the community members to create their own employment. One participant remarked that, *“After the project we then decided that we are going to ask the royal King to give a centre where we can practice cultural things”*, and others indicated that *“It taught me life skills and how to live this life. It also taught me how to deal with life issues and how to deal with anger issues. Because I was a person that was easily angered and I wanted to get physical, so now because of this project I can control my anger and I have self-esteem*

*now and can now see the changes in my life and how this has been relevant in my life” (Interviewee 5, 2018).*

The projects empowered the participants in that they started taking action and becoming active in their progress. Empowerment here was measured by the presence of what the participants had not possessed prior to the introduction of the projects, especially the Consumer Rights and Sewing Project. A participant shared that *“this project opened my mind to the fact that I have rights to return the product if it has passed the ‘best before date’ and actually take action against that” (Interviewee 12, 2018)* and another participant in the Consumer Rights Project shared that *“when I now go to the shop I know what and how to check food and I know how to budget” (Interviewee 11, 2018)*. This is considered as empowerment because the projects provided the participants with knowledge they valued and also skills that reduced societal marginalisation. Another project that reflected empowerment was the sewing projects, which shared more knowledge than just learning sewing and techniques.

The Sewing Project taught the participants business skills and provided them with additional booklets to take home, as one participant shared that *“...when we were attending the workshops they would give us book and information, so when I got home I would sit and read the books again and actually apply the knowledge in solving my own problems” (Interviewee 12, 2018)*. The participants expressed the importance of all the projects as a tool to empower the society. A participant shared that *“...It would help, because people are struggling with self-esteem, so when such projects come it gives them hope and excitement that at least they are also remembered” (Interviewee 2, 2018)*. So, participants pointed out how these projects play an important role in empowering the people, as a participant indicated that *“...these projects uplift them and shows them that they are also important and should not give up just because they are in rural areas. So these projects helped them to progress themselves” (Interviewee 2, 2018)*. The projects were a source of empowerment that equipped them and this shows that the participants experienced the WIN platform projects/interventions as relevant to their lives.

The projects empowered the participants to a point where they were able to think and wanted to start their own projects to further the initiative started by the WIN platform. A participant shared an idea of how they could also contribute to making the lives of the community easy, as they indicated that *“for me the idea of sewing and braiding is so that I can help a lot of people, because people are struggling in our community. I want to make their lives easier, if they need their clothes to be sewed, they do not need to catch a taxi, and they can just bring it to me”* (Focus group 1, 2018), and, similar to the abovementioned, participants indicated that *“we have only one assistant nurse, and when she is sick or at training, they have to do everything themselves and that takes time. So we came in and helped in that area, so that everything goes quicker”* (Interviewee 8, 2018). These projects have empowered the community to move out of marginalisation by providing knowledge they had not possessed before. This is the goal of empowerment and the projects were also a platform for human capital, which is to encourage knowledge development, knowledge exchange, and skills.

### **c. Expectations**

With all the skills, benefits and overall community empowerment received by the community, they still indicated certain expectations from the WIN platform. This subsection provides a discussion of the expected benefits and empowerment from the community.

The participants had their own expectations of how the projects should have benefitted them, even though they received the skills and knowledge that they had expressed as need. This came about when the participants were asked what could be improved in the WIN platform, a participant then shared that the projects should *“establish something in the community that will last for a long term, for example a centre that the community can get involved in projects that the community has and projects that comes from the university. The centre will assist in that the skills that people acquire from the projects, can be implemented and therefore be sustainable* (Interviewee 2, 2018)”. The idea of the centre was that the participants would run the centre and allow people from the community to come and acquire skills they received from the WIN platform projects, such as cooking, sewing, and the basic life skills from the life plan

projects. They also added that the centre would be open to anyone with skills they want to teach to the community, such as welding (*Focus group 1, 2018*).

This is because of the large number of unemployed youth and the participants indicated that *“the centre will also help in the area of transferring skills and knowledge between the community and university” (Focus group 1, 2018)*. Another expectation is that the community received the skills and knowledge but there is no advantage in that, because there is no proof of completion or participation in the project. One participant shared that *“...if the university can give more skills to the people especially the youth, and also accredited certificates” (Interviewee 8, 2018)* and similar to this they indicated that *“...if the university can provide a course, where they will get accredited certificates which will help them apply for post such as assistant nurses or auxiliary nursing, because they already have the basics” (Interviewee 10, 2018)*. This is because as the participants indicated *“...it helps, as it teaches a lot of things and also if I can get a certificate, it would serve as proof” (Interviewee 9, 2018)*.

This subsection indicated that the WIN platform and participants weren't quite in agreement in terms of the needs addressed and the tools used to address those needs. This is a reflection that the WIN platform did not fully engage the community with the idea of allowing them to identify their needs and share decision-making power. The WIN platform did not follow the principle of *“look for collective self-determination”*, where they could have encouraged equal power distribution, where the participants could be given the platform to identify the challenges they face and the root thereof, and develop their solutions and action plan on how to tackle these issues (Glandon *et al.*, 2017:1458).

#### 4.3.2 Implementation

This subsection discusses how the projects were implemented, including the challenges, the presence or absence of collaboration, and how the community expects projects to be implemented. This is important because the way projects are implemented can have an impact on future participation of the community. The discussion provides a reflection of the participants' positive and negative perceptions of the way the projects were implemented and managed.

### a. Positive perceptions

Positive perceptions are an indication that the WIN platform projects implemented the projects in ways that was satisfactory and relevant to the people and their environment. The perceptions are influenced by whether the participants felt respected personally or if the WIN platform respected their surroundings. The participants were asked to give their perceptions thereof, and a participant shared that *“yes the community was treated with respect, because when the projects began it was introduced at the royal council with the traditional leaders, it did not just come in without the consent of the leaders”* (Interviewee 2, 2018). This shows that the university followed a formal procedure relevant to the Sekhing community when implementing the project. This is because the ‘Come Dine with Me project was done in Sekhing which is a traditional village, is still under leadership of the royal council. So external parties must first ask for permission from the King before doing anything. The WIN platform team came a week prior to the project being implemented, to ask for permission. They were first directed to the hand of the King, which is the personal assistant at the royal council; later they were allowed to proceed to ask permission to use the facilities in the community.

From other projects, participants indicated that they had a chance to take part in the planning phase of the project, as a participant shared that *“yes I had a chance to give my ideas for the project”* (Interviewee 12, 2018) and similarly another indicated that *“...Yes. I would suggest ideas to them for when they come into the community, and they would listen”* (Interviewee 12, 2018) so the WIN platform allowed for participants to give their ideas regarding how the projects can be implemented. And if there was a problem in the projects, it was indicated that *“...if there was a problem they would send one of the assistants to come and check up on us”* (Interviewee 1, 2018). This was not a shared idea because other participants indicated that they were not involved in the planning of all the projects as indicated *“...I was involved in some projects but not on the other projects”* (Interviewee 13, 2018). Even though the projects were not inclusive, it was indicated that some effort was taken to rectify this: *“...it is not everyone who know, but they are slowly knowing with every project we do, because we were interviewing new people every time”* (Interviewee 1, 2018).

This subsection was to highlight the positive perceptions the participants had on the implementation of the WIN platform projects. The perceptions revealed that the projects took into consideration factors that were important to them and the WIN platform team did not impose their way of doing things and neglect them. Based on the perceptions of the participants presented in this subsection, it can be assumed that the WIN platform followed an engaged and participatory method for community engagement, because engagement between the participants and WIN platform team was transparent and reciprocal in nature. This section already gave a glimpse of the following section, of negative perceptions that the participants had on the implementation of WIN platform projects.

#### **b. Negative perceptions**

This section presents the negative perceptions that participants had of the implementation of WIN platform projects. The negative perceptions highlighted a lack of collaboration. While sharing their experiences, participants referred to themselves or the group of participants as 'us' and to the WIN platform team as either 'them' or the 'university'.

Some of the community members shared that the selection of participants was unfair: *"They must have a fair selection of participants"* (Interviewee 12, 2018) and the projects were only limited to a certain number of people *"...Because it was only a limited number of people who participated in the project"* (Interviewee 12, 2018). Some participants agreed that the same people should be used as the participant shared that *"...the projects should always choose the same loyal people, as we were loyal in the first project they should have chosen us for the second one as well. But they did not, so we felt like we were not good enough when they chose other people"* (Interviewee 3, 2018). Similar to this, it was indicated that *"...yes they should involve the same people, because when they do not choose us I started doubting myself thinking it is because I finished school in grade 8"* (Interviewee 3, 2018).

This clarified that people were affronted because of their level of education, it was indicated that *"sometimes they would treat us different because they would want people who did matric"* (Interviewee 3, 2018). This was also evident in the

communication channels, as it was indicated that *“No, because they only communicated with the nurses and told them they are going to need community healthcare workers and people who have matric”* (Interviewee 3, 2018). Similarly, participants indicated that *“...yes I was undermined by this white lady, who told us we do not understand, that hurt us because the whole project started with us. And she removed us from the project. And I did not like that because I have skills, I am a very good field worker I walk around the community developing people”* (Interviewee 3, 2018).

The community also seemed to have experienced general disrespect, as it was indicated that *“I remember some of the participants complaining that one of the students from the university was disrespectful towards them”* (Interviewee 3, 2018). In view of the abovementioned, the main problem for the participants was that the people who were recruiting people were not fair, because it was indicated that *“...because there was someone who was responsible for recruiting people, they only recruited people they know”* (Interviewee 5, 2018).

The participant also indicated that they did have a say in the types of projects that were implemented for the community (Interviewee 10, 2018). This is because members should be allowed to be part of the decision-making processes and also share responsibility with higher education institutions to develop solutions to their social issues. Participants felt that *“they introduced the project and what it is about, and how long the training will be. The approach was excellent actually. It made us feel like we are wanted and needed as community healthcare workers”* (Interviewee 8, 2018) but the problem remained that the community actually wanted to be part of the initial stages of the projects, as one participant mentioned, *“I think they should come to us and ask us which project we want, because we are the one who are staying here”* (Interviewee 8, 2018).

This is because, according to Schwab and Syme (1997:2050), interventions developed by community participation are more likely to succeed than those that are not. The projects were implemented in a way that excluded the community, because it was indicated that *“the project honestly came to the community up and running, there was no planning phase. We were just informed that there is a project that is coming and what it wanted to address”*

(Interviewee 2, 2018). Also, “...they came with the projects already developed, they just told us when they will be coming to the community. So we would only sit down with them and agree with the project and proceed”; “...no they came already with the projects planned to the community” (Interviewee 12, 2018).

This subsection indicated that no proper platform was created by the WIN platform team to encourage active or authentic participation. The implementation suggested tokenism, where the people are involved for symbolic appearance, meaning they were not given a chance to be active participants. Thus, at project level members have no or little influence. Because the participants said that the projects had come to the community planned and ready for implementation, the participants had little or no say at the inception of the project. They were not pleased with the fact that they had contributed nothing to the initial stages of the projects, because they felt like they were the ones who stay in the community, therefore they would better know their own struggles. The implementation of the projects rather reflects elements of a traditional perspective/approach, where there is little or no collaboration, because the one party solely identified the social issues within the community and develop solutions.

The following section discusses monitoring and evaluation. This discussion indicates that implementation was an issue, because from the beginning there was a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of the previous WIN platform projects.

### **c. Evaluation and monitoring**

From the discussion, it was expressed that the WIN platform projects lacked monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation were issues for the participants. This is because, due to lack of monitoring and evaluation, there were issues of conflict in the sewing project, it was indicated that “...there were some miscommunication due to money and then some people removed themselves from the project” (Focus group 3, 2018). The participants felt that, if the WIN platform team had been around more regularly, such issues would have been avoided (Focus group 3, 2018). They mentioned that the WIN platform team provided feedback and reports of the findings and conclusions of

previous projects to the participants (*Focus group 3, 2018*). A participant said that, *“on that one I do not know because information was not shared with us, so we do not know who got a job or how the project helped reduce unemployment”* (*Interviewee 3, 2018*), and this is because no feedback was shared with the community. This highlights the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation strategies by the WIN platform. It was also indicated by participants that, *“I would also like for it that the university does not take a long time without coming, it should come and evaluate and check if there is progress”* (*Interviewee 2, 2018*). This was because the participants were complaining that the WIN platform only comes for research and when they go there is no feedback from them.

The community indicated that the WIN platform did not keep in touch with them to check on the outputs of the projects. Participants indicated that *“I would say follow up, because every time the university comes to the community it comes with questions and there is no feedback to show that we are heard and also solutions”*. The same participant elaborated by saying that *“I would like for them not only to come for research but for them to leave something tangible behind that we can remember them with it”* (*Interviewee 7, 2018*). A participant was complaining that *“we last saw people from the university last year or the year before, so if they can come more often like twice a year then it would benefit us more”* (*Interviewee 8, 2018*). The community saw it as beneficial if the WIN platform team would have a representative in the community, as a participant shared that *“to have someone there who knows better, that can guide me through the process on what to do and what not to do”* (*Focus group 1, 2018*). This signifies that they want to have someone there available to assist them in their activities. For example, the case of community healthcare workers who were working with people every day, taking their blood pressure and checking their insulin levels.

A participant shared that *“...for example when we are busy with the activities, you guys can go with us, to monitor and evaluate us while we are busy. Because when you are lenient people tend to not take things serious and end not doing it well”* (*Interviewee 11, 2018*). The community further complained about the WIN platform not keeping to their schedule: *“I think it was on the third*

*or fourth day, when they were getting tired now because everything was going fast. They must learn to stick to their schedule, if they say five days for a workshop, it must be that full five days, they must not shorten the time because of other constraints because we need them” (Interviewee 8, 2018).*

This subsection indicated that there was a lack of monitoring and evaluation in the WIN platform projects. It suggests that there was a lack in effective communication channels between the participants and the WIN platform team. There was not a proper process of informing and consulting. Consulting that ensures communication from the community to the university about needs and concerns were lacking. The WIN platform team should have involved the community of the Vaalharts region more in the initial stages and avoided encouraging the stereotype that ‘the university is an ivory tower’. The stereotype suggests that the university knows better than the community, hence they are excluded from some stages of the project. The following sub-theme focuses specifically on collaboration in the previous WIN platform projects. This is to also understand how and why the implementation of the projects were not effective for the community.

#### **d. Collaboration**

In the following discussion, the participants were asked to give their perceptions of how they wanted their relationship with the WIN platform team to function; whether they wanted to create their own projects or have the WIN platform develop projects for them. The perceptions were then used to measure participants’ views on collaboration in community engagement projects.

A participant shared that *“I think the university should develop for the community or with the skills I have of sewing I can help the community with that but I do not have the equipment. So if the university can help with that” (Interviewee 13, 2018).* These perceptions suggest that the WIN platform team knows better and the community is, therefore, incapable of developing their own projects. This is supported by what a participant shared when interviewed: *“because the university knows what is important and needed in the community” (Interviewee 9, 2018).* These responses were not supportive of collaboration, and participants rather preferred the WIN platform to initiate the projects.

Some participants portrayed characteristics of active participation, because it was indicated that *“I think when the university comes to the community we can group ourselves and give them our ideas and maybe they will love them and they might create a project from them”* (Interviewee 7, 2018), and *“I think both the community and university should come with ideas, collaborate and take it from there”*. In these responses the goal is not for the WIN platform to do everything but for the community to work together with the WIN platform to bring change in their communities.

There was collaboration in some projects such as the Community Healthcare Workers. In this case the skills and knowledge they received from the project encouraged them to collaborate with one another and make the work for other community members at the clinic easier. Collaboration between the community and the university was reflected on a practical level. It was indicated that *“...the university could come and we do a walk around the community and do health awareness by taking BP and other health sciences. Because the community recognises us because of the students from the university”* (Interviewee 4, 2018).

This subsection indicated that there was a lack of collaboration in the WIN platform projects. This suggests that there was limited interdependence between WIN platform and the participants. Collaboration can ensure that both team's needs are taken into consideration (Schlake, 2015). Collaboration suggests a shared decision-making process; this is because of the shared goals, identities, as both of the groups' interests are at stake. In turn, collaboration encourages community participation.

The following section presents a discussion on participation, it covers factors that influenced participation in the projects. These are all factors that posed challenges to participants to fully engage in the projects.

#### 4.3.3 Participation

This subsection focuses on the overall participation of community members in previous WIN platform projects. The focus is on why people participated, how they were chosen to take part in the projects, certain constraints or

shortcomings that could have influenced their participation, and a consideration of communication as a possible influencer of participation in those projects.

#### **a. Communication**

The WIN platform team needed people to take part in their projects, so they had to appoint people to help them recruit participants. The participants were informed in different ways and also recruited in different ways, some participants shared that *“...we used to attend the meetings and then they asked us to group us by our age and they selected those who frequently went to the meetings”*, some indicated that *“...in the first place I was volunteering, then they wanted people to come and be participants”* (Interviewee 7, 2018).

The WIN platform team had strategies in place to recruit participants. The participants shared that *“we would spread the word around the community with the university and we would do door to door so the people knew”* (Interviewee 12, 2018). In projects such as Community Healthcare Workers the field workers were asked to be active recruiters, as indicated by a participant: *“...they can be informed through community healthcare workers as they are the foot soldiers of the community, and goes to different households every day. Even though they are not enough to reach the broader community”* (Interviewee 8, 2018). Although the WIN platform had these strategies in place, it seems that they were not reaching everyone.

When interviewed, a participant shared that *“...not a lot of people know about the WIN platform, because I also did not know up until I was invited”* (Interviewee 2, 2018). There was also a participant who was unsure of whether the community had been informed about these projects as it was indicated that *“no I do not think so, I don't know if they went to the community members”* (Interviewee 10, 2018). There was an indication that people only knew of specific projects and not of all, as indicated by a participant, *“...the only project that they were familiarised with was the one of sustainable diets, so they thought it is only one project but I later discovered that there are many project that the university is doing in the community”* (Interviewee 8, 2018). This could be a case of people not knowing about the projects or not having full details about the projects.

The WIN platform can also be at fault for not following proper channels of communication that are put in place for that specific community. It was indicated that *“I would not want to answer that because the community should be informed by the municipal community councillors. So I do not know if they knew of the projects or if they even participated”*. This was because, in some communities, *“in everything they do they must involve the community councillors, like they must be clear on their goals and why they are coming because that will cause friction with the councillors as they have their own people”* (Interviewee 12, 2018). This actually highlighted the importance of communication with stakeholders in the community, because they also have an impact on the community members' participation in the community. A participant suggested that there should be *“...more communication”* (Interviewee 10, 2018) between the community as a whole, including the stakeholders and the university.

Participation in the projects was not influenced by any communication issues, as a participant indicated that *“yes, I felt comfortable and part of the project and there were no miscommunications”* (Interviewee 2, 2018). Furthermore, a participant indicated that *“I was given a chance to give my views at the WIN project workshop on which projects can be beneficial to the community”* (Interviewee 2, 2018). Community members therefore value being given a chance to speak and to voice their opinions in projects. The challenge of communication was, therefore, between the WIN platform and the broader community, rather than within project activities.

Limited communication hinders participation (Rowe & Frewer, 2005: 255). This is because communication channels were not always followed properly. For instance, there was uncertainty as to whether the municipal stakeholders had been informed. If people do not receive communication about the projects and their goals properly, it may negatively influence their participation.

#### **b. Lack of means / constraints**

Certain constraints in the community can cause participants to be either reluctant or enthusiastic to take part in projects. Participants were asked to express constraints they faced in their communities. Age and educational level

were common constraints for participants. It was indicated that *“my problem is that some of us did not reach a certain educational level, so in the next project try to come with other ways to communicate the study to make it simple for us”* (Focus group 2, 2018). Most of the communities in Vaalharts are disadvantaged, causing a large number of people to be unemployed and without skills. The participants attested to this as they indicated that *“the challenge is that in this community we are disadvantaged”* and *“...another issue is that we live in the villages and things are not as easy as they are in the locations and cities”* (Focus group 1, 2018).

This suggests that the language used in the projects was difficult to comprehend for some of the participants. This was especially a challenge for older participants because they indicated that *“because I am old, it takes time for me to understand the questions”* (Focus group 3, 2018). Even though there were no physical activities, participants indicated something to take into consideration for the future in terms of older people: *“But I am old but if there is something simple I can do then I will participate”* (Focus group 2, 2018). Therefore, there should be activities that include older people, and the language used should accommodate older people and those who did not have the opportunity to further themselves academically.

### **c. Reason for participation**

People take part in projects for different reasons. From the discussion it was discovered that people took part in projects with hopes of getting employment or stipends for taking part in the study. It was shared by a participant that *“with me I expected that the projects would give us job opportunities, not a permanent job but something, if not I expected them to take people to workshops and training”* (Interviewee 7, 2018). People in disadvantaged communities struggle with job opportunities, as shared by a participant: *“the thing is that in our community we struggle with unemployment and poverty”* (Interviewee 12, 2018). Projects such as those introduced by the WIN platform to the community can bring hope for the community because they don't usually have such interactions.

When the WIN platform came to them, the community thought of all the things they did not have and saw the WIN platform as their light or opportunity to a

better life. A participant indicated that *“at some point these projects bring light to the rural areas”* (Interviewee 2, 2018). This was captured in what a participant indicated in the discussion, that *“...because there are not a lot of people that have the skills to teach our people, even children in school I do not think they get taught these things”* (Interviewee 3, 2018) and that such projects *“bring some sort of activity to the village because there are no jobs”* (Focus group 1, 2018). A participant shared that *“some of us did not even go to university, so when the university comes to us people who are at a low level, we appreciate and we get uplifted”* (Interviewee 3, 2018).

This shows that the community views the university as a good source because it has knowledge and skills that the community do not have, because it was mentioned that *“we need help from experts or those that have knowledge about such”* (Focus group 1, 2018). The community continues to have expectations and needs that they expect to be met by the university, because it was indicated that *“we also lack patience, we want immediate results, we do not want to think about the possibility of that goal being reached in 3 or more years”* (Focus group 3, 2018).

This subsection depicts the constraints in the community. Participants took part in the study with the hope of being employed or empowered because of the poverty and lack of employment that is prominent in the Vaalharts region/communities. This section differs from the subsection of constraints, where constraints can have a negative impact on participation. Here, constraints are viewed as potential motivators for participants to take part in community engagement projects.

#### **d. Future participation**

The community was still more than willing to participate in future projects of the WIN platform. The participants shared that:

- *“Yes, I would have interest, as long as I am alive”* (Focus group 1, 2018)
- *“I am everywhere, I go where the wind blows. I still have interest”* (Focus group 1, 2018).

- *“Yes, because I love changing people’s lives and making an impact in the community” (Focus group 3, 2018).*
- *“I would, because in these projects we learn things we are not aware of and things that we sometimes not take into consideration. I have learned a lot of things, from health care to financial education” (Focus group 3, 2018) and*
- *“Yes, because I believe with more experience you gain, is the more you can save other people’s lives” (Interviewee 8, 2018).*

These statements indicate that, in spite of the challenges the participants experienced, the projects were relevant in their lives. The projects brought hope, knowledge and skills they didn’t have before they encountered the projects, even though they did not receive job opportunities as they thought they would. The participants’ reasons for future participation were based on the fact that there is still more to learn and they are interested in learning new things.

#### 4.3.4 Mutuality and reciprocity

This subsection focuses on the presence and/or absence of mutuality and reciprocity in the projects. Janke & Clayton (2011:3) further define reciprocity as “the recognition, respect and valuing of the knowledge, perspective and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration”. Mutuality is associated with commonality, shared feelings and activities in a partnership (Alexander, 2013:9-10; Muirhead & Woolcock, 2008).

The community of the Vaalharts region struggle with unemployed, poverty and lack of skills and knowledge. According to one participant, the goals of the WIN projects *“... were relevant because I used to do the vital science back in 1999, I did doc support and also helped at the clinic when there was a lack of staff, so this was a refresher course for me” (Interviewee 8, 2018).* The goals of the WIN platform matched some participants’ personal goals or interests, as it was indicated that *“I am a person who loves to learn, this project even found me busy with an NPO. This is because I love working with the community and helping people” (Interviewee 2, 2018).* So the projects added more to what they already wanted to achieve, so there was mutuality in goals. This is what the Kearney’s Contextual Model advocates – mutuality and respect – which

encourages an 'engaged approach' where the focus and authority lie in the people/communities (Kearney, 2015:33).

It is important to have the goals of the WIN projects aligned with personal goals or to address the challenges the community is facing. The community of Vaalharts struggled with long queues at the clinic and that caused stampedes, and with the project of healthcare workers the long queues were reduced. It was said that *"they wanted to cut down on the long queues at the clinics and address those people that stay very far"* (Interviewee 8, 2018). Because mutuality is associated with commonality and shared feelings, it ensures that beneficial relationships last, because the effort comes from both parties: *"I think it is because they also want to learn more about culture, and it was so amazing because they came already dressed in traditional clothes"* (Interviewee 3, 2018). The community indicated in different ways the presence of mutuality based on their personal goals or interests. The perceptions were acquired from different projects such as Come Dine with Me and Community Healthcare Workers. The participants indicated:

- *"I enjoyed it because I have always wanted to be a nurse"* (Interviewee 4, 2018).
- *"I love cooking and was interested"* (Interviewee 5, 2018).
- *"It was very good, because sometimes if you do not do something practical and you just do theory, you seem to forget. So it was nice when she gave us a chance to take vitals and do practicals, for me it was like a refresher course"* (Interviewee 8, 2018).
- *"Yes, many people here at the clinic are struggling with hypertension caused by these spices and modern foods, so traditional foods are a good option"* (Interviewee 7, 2018) and
- *"We are very happy and wish that it would continue to teach us and our children to understand traditional ways of cooking. Because this young generation does not understand ancient cultural ways as we do"* (Focus group 1, 2018).

These are a few of the participants' perceptions that indicate mutuality based on their personal lives and influenced by the challenges that the community is facing. Reciprocity for the participants was indicated by being able to share that which was learned from the projects with other members of the community. It was also what the individual participants could give or take from the projects. A participant indicated that "*...the university came to help us with things we do not know so we also help them*" (Interviewee 5, 2018).

From the discussion it can be concluded that mutuality and reciprocity were present between the WIN platform team and the participants. This is because participants felt that they were teaching the WIN platform projects as much as they were being taught by the projects. This was particularly clear in the Come Dine with Me project. Mutuality was in points where the goals of the WIN platform overlapped with that of participants, where there was commonality between the two parties.

#### 4.3.5 Overall project satisfaction

This subsection discusses the overall satisfaction off the WIN platform projects based on the perceptions of the participants. The projects seemed to have had a generally positive effect on the participants' personal lives and the general community.

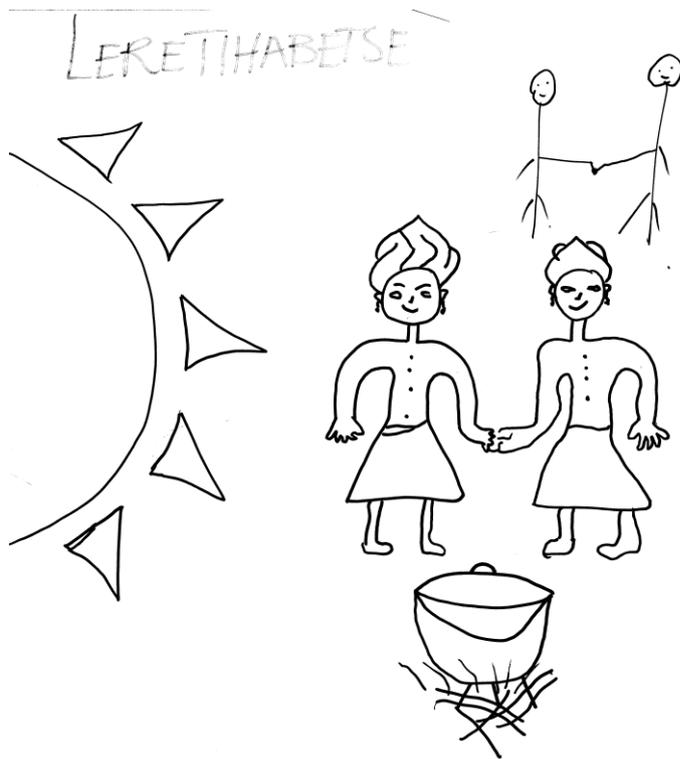
From the approach of the project, a participant indicated that "*...the university approached us nicely and included everyone, even older people like us*" (Focus group 1, 2018). The projects were inclusive of all ages, taking into consideration the implicit rules of respect for older people, and that certain communities are still traditional and follow rules according to the King. The university respected those rules: "*Yes, the community was treated with respect, because when the projects begun it was introduced at the royal council with the traditional leaders, it did not just come in without the consent of the leaders. And the community was so accommodative to the university*" (Interviewee 2, 2018). The community believed that the approach of the university was excellent because "*...my experience of everything that happened in the projects, there was collaboration and communication, because they would communicate with us a week before*

*and let us know that they are coming so that we can be prepared” (Focus group 2, 2018).*

The overall implementation of the project was a challenge because the participants were not included in the initial stages of the projects. This left some participants somewhat apathic: *“I was not involved, because the projects was already introduced, so I just aligned with it, I did what the researchers asked of me, I just basically carried the mandate of the project” (interviewee 2, 2018).* This indicates that the participants followed the instructions they received from the WIN platform team and had no contribution. This was a problem because the participants wanted to be involved. As they were the ones staying in the community, they felt that they had better knowledge of the type of projects they needed to address the challenges they faced as a community.

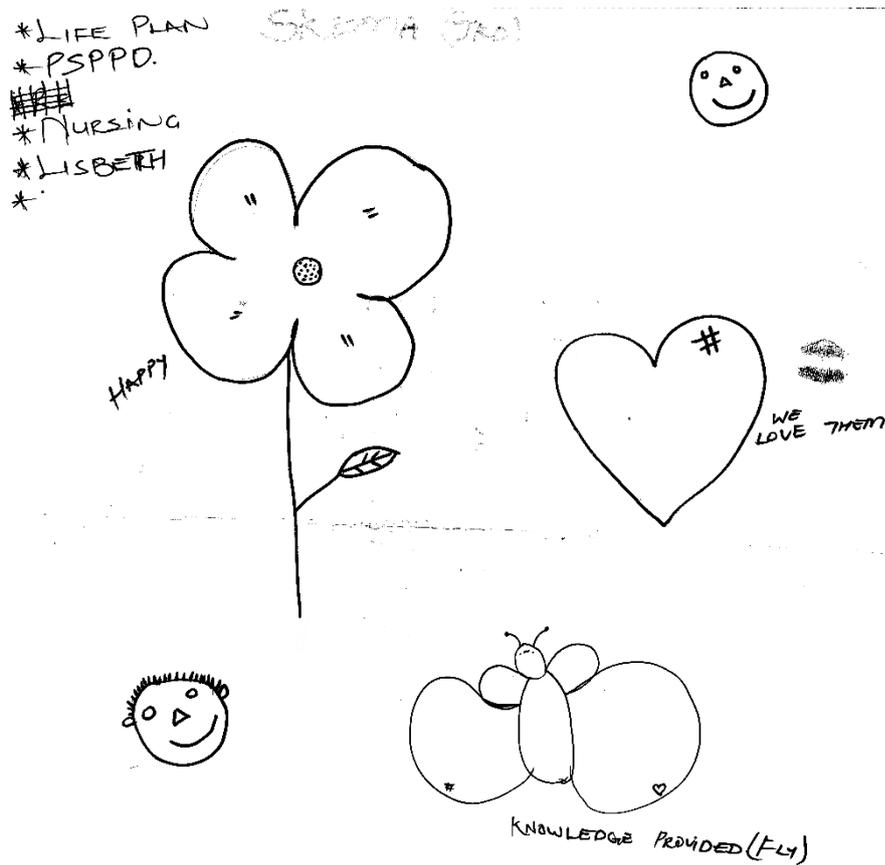
Even with the implementation of the failing according to what the participants had shared, the community still benefitted from the projects. They indicated on a personal level that *“it taught me life skills and how to live this life. It also taught me how to deal with life issues and how to deal with anger issues. Because I was a person that was easily angered and I wanted to get physical, so now because of this project I can control my anger and I have self-esteem now and can now see the changes in my life and how this has been relevant in my life” (interviewee 12, 2018).* The projects have really influenced many participants to start their own businesses and NPOs, and encouraged them to work on their personal well-being as individuals as discussed in the subsection on benefits.

The community also expressed their overall satisfaction at the projects through drawings. Two focus groups out of the three drew a picture depicting how the projects had impacted their lives. This activity was to allow participants to express that which was harder to verbalise through the drawings.



**Figure 4.1: Focus group 1 (2018)**

This drawing was done by the first focus group in Sekhing, which was involved in the Come Dine with Me project. The drawing was used to depict the participants' perceptions of the project they took part in. They drew two women holding hands and a pot on an open fire, which for them symbolises that the project encouraged team work in the community for women through cooking. The progress is depicted by the stick drawing of the two women becoming the full body drawings of them. The other drawing was the sun and a heading saying "lerethabetse", which means "it has shined for us", which could be interpreted to mean that, through the projects, the community has become better, as the project brought opportunities and direction to the community.



**Figure 4.2: Focus group 2**

This picture is from the second focus group which was involved in the Community Healthcare Workers project in Jan Kempdorp. They were involved in projects such as Life Plan, PSPPD and Home-based Care. The participants drew how the WIN platform projects made them feel. They drew a flower and a smiley face, which indicates happiness, so they were happy with the projects. They also drew a butterfly, which symbolises growth for them. They indicated that the projects gave them wings to fly because they provided them with knowledge they did not have before. The last indicator was the heart which symbolises the love they have for the WIN platform team. They indicated that they see them as family or their brothers and sisters.

This subsection indicated that even though the participants did not receive what they expected – as discussed in the subsection on expectation – they still were satisfied with the effort the WIN platform took in teaching them skills they did not possess before.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This section provided a narrative of the perceptions of the Vaalharts community on previous WIN platform projects. The views were gathered through individual interviews and focus group discussions. The produced themes were informed by the literature from Chapter 2, the themes were derived from the literature headings in Chapter 2, and the same chapter also informed the compilation of the interview schedule. The discussion was centred on four themes that correlate with the objectives in Chapter 1. The four themes were implementation, mutuality and reciprocity, effects of the WIN platform projects, and participation. When exploring all four themes, sub-themes emerged for three of the themes.

The effects of the WIN platform projects consisted of three sub-themes: benefits, community empowerment, and expectations. This section provided a discussion of benefits and community empowerment that were provided by the WIN platform. In contrast to that, the participants still had expectations, so even if the projects provided benefits, the participants had their own expectations. Implementation consisted of four sub-themes: positive and negative perceptions regarding the overall implementation of the WIN platform projects – this relates to its subsection of collaboration and evaluation and monitoring, which could have been a solution to most negative perceptions. This is summarised in Table 4.1. Lastly, participation was associated with four sub-themes, namely: future participation, reason for participation, constraints and communication. This section provided a discussion of the effect communication could have on participation: if well-managed, it could increase participation, and if not, participation could decline. This applies also to constraints: they could cause participants to be reluctant to take part in projects. Both ‘future participation’ and ‘reason for participation’ are influenced by constraints and communication.

**Table 4.1: Summary of findings**

Themes	HSRC study	2018 study	Conclusion
<b>1. Effects</b>			
a. Benefits		Different skills were learned.	Projects do have a positive impact on the community but do not address the fundamental need for employment.
b. Community empowerment	The project did not address unemployment but practical skills were learned.	People empowered to take responsibility for themselves.	
c. Expectations		WIN projects too short term and limited in scope.	
<b>3. Implementation</b>			
a. Positive perceptions	Scope of projects was too limited and expectation is that it must ensure employability.	Community respected and efforts to involve community.	Implementation of projects were successful in community but can be improved with more interaction, monitoring and evaluation.
b. Negative perceptions		Selection process not fully clear and participation too limited.	
c. Evaluation and monitoring	Some objectives were not met because of a lack of evaluation and monitoring.	Inadequate evaluation and monitoring reported.	
d. Collaboration	Collaboration and participation took place but it can still be improved.	Expertise of university is respected but more collaboration will be preferred.	
<b>4. Participation</b>			
a. Communication	Expectations about employment were not met and thereby initial perceptions were misplaced. Participation was	In projects communication was satisfactorily, but communication of WIN platform did not reach everyone	Projects ensured participation but it can be improved with more applicable communication and ensuring there is clarity on

Themes	HSRC study	2018 study	Conclusion
b. Lack of means / constraints	hindered by transport challenges.	Desperate needs lift expectations and educational levels require applicable communication.	the objectives of the projects.
c. Reason for participation		Overwhelming need for jobs and hope university can assist in this regard.	
d. Future participation		Willingness to participate in future.	
5. Mutuality and reciprocity		Positive interaction expressed with regard to the projects.	Projects were implemented interactively.
6. Overall project satisfaction		Involvement in initial planning requested but satisfaction with overall project expressed.	Projects satisfactorily implemented.

What was evident in this chapter was that even though the community did not receive job opportunities, centres and more workshops, they still were grateful for the knowledge and skills they received from the university. They are still enthusiastic for future projects and looking forward to taking part in them. The HSRC data did not cover the objective of mutuality, however it aligned with the objective on implementation and effects. This was compensated for in this study's data, which was collected separately from that of the HSRC. The analysis also covered the objective of the study. There are similarities in themes in both data collections namely; collaboration, implementation and participation.

The difference is 'empowerment', which is a theme in the HSRC data but a subtheme of 'community empowerment' in the 2018 data analysis. Another difference is the subtheme of evaluation and monitoring, which is found in the latter but not former data analysis. The chapter presented that all the other

aspects such as monitoring and evaluation, collaboration, mutuality and reciprocity, implementation, constraints, empowerment and community empowerment, have an influence on participation, community participation and future participation. This is because if all of the above mentioned are applied properly, they increase participation from the community and can address social issues faced by the community.

The study followed two models considered fundamental when exploring higher education institution community engagement, which are Kearney's Context-Focus-Profile model and Bender's Infusion Model. Kearney's Context-Focus-Profile Model argues that the community's perceptions are vital to the development of an effective '*engagement*' (2015:35). Bender's Infusion Model encourages collaboration between higher education institutions and the community. Not only does it encourage collaboration but it allows members to be active participants in community engagement projects (Bender, 2008:89). For the WIN platform to ensure that they follow both these models they have to align themselves with the feedback from the participants that they should improve participation with more applicable communication and ensuring there is clarity on the objectives of the projects. The WIN platform should improve the implementation of the projects through more interaction, monitoring and evaluation.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers a summary of the chapters, draws conclusion, discusses the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future WIN platform projects. The objective of this study was to explore the Vaalharts community members' perceptions of the community engagements of the NWU's WIN projects. This chapter describes how the study met the objective and briefly what the findings were. The chapter also concludes on the limitations this study experienced when addressing the objective offers recommendations for future WIN platform projects and similar research studies.

### **5.2 Chapter summary**

Chapter 1 established the foundation of the study by providing an orientation. It is supported by the central theoretical statement, which provides the theories that advised the selected methodology that guided the study and addressed the research questions and objectives. The chapter also looked at the ethical considerations and the anticipated limitations.

Chapter 2 explored the concept of community engagement in relation to higher education institutions. Macro- and micro-theories of development form the background to how community engagement has developed. The important link between development and community engagement is argued, and based on this link the chapter discussed the link between community engagement and higher education. This kind of relationship should exist between the two parties, and the approaches, strategies and principles for effective higher education institution-community engagement were evaluated accordingly. The chapter concluded that participation, collaboration, mutuality and reciprocity between the community and higher education institutions should be encouraged.

The principles described above informed the next chapter by determining the methodological approach. The empirical investigation aimed at exploring the community's perceptions on the community engagements of the NWU's WIN projects. The study used the principles and strategies for effective community engagement discussed in Chapter 2 as the theoretical point of departure. These

principles and strategies were used to investigate the challenges that the WIN platform faced, for instance the use of a top-down approach, lack of collaboration and a lack of participation in knowledge exchange because of power imbalances. Different participatory approaches were used as investigation tools to reveal the challenges the WIN platform faces in the process of community engagement.

Chapter 3 provided a discussion of the qualitative design and case study methodology that was used to conduct the empirical research. The design and methodology were applied in two rounds (June 2017 and July 2018) of data collection. The data were collected using focus group discussions and individual interviews with semi-structured questionnaires guiding the conversations. This chapter gave a description of how the empirical research was conducted and provided the foundation for the discussion of the empirical findings. It also provided the strategy for data analyses through content analysis and thematic analysis, and the matter of trustworthiness was also addressed. Ethical issues were also explained.

Chapter 4 provided the findings on the perceptions of the Vaalharts community on previous WIN platform projects. The views were gathered through individual interviews and focus group discussions. The discussion was centred on four themes that correlated with the objectives in Chapter 1. The four themes were; (1) effects of the WIN platform projects, which included benefits, community empowerment and expectations; (2) implementation, which included the subsections of positive and negative perceptions, evaluation and monitoring, and collaboration, (3) participation, which included the subsections communication, lack of means/constraints, reason for participation and future participation; and finally (4) mutuality and reciprocity. In the exploration of the four themes, subthemes emerged for three of the themes.

### **5.3 Conclusion of findings**

There has been a shift to more engagement between the community and different organisations through development agendas in the last twenty years. This is because of scholars and large organisations such as the World Bank engaging in the argument of prioritising the needs of the community and giving

more attention to their perceptions in the development process. The main concern of the WIN platform was that the strategies were not developed 'with' the community, but 'for' the community. Sometimes, higher education institutions engage in community engagement projects that are developed by and for scholars (research studies designed to contribute to the body of knowledge), excluding community participation and never fully addressing the social issues that the community is struggling with. The strategies of the WIN platform did not align with the principles of effective community engagement, which ensures participation from both the community members and the higher education institutions and equal distribution of power.

Kearney's *Context-Focus-Profile Model* (2015) was adopted because it places emphasis on a more engaged and participatory approach for higher education institution community engagement initiatives, proposing that engagement between higher education institutions and the community should be transparent, reciprocal and characterised by mutual trust and respect. This provides community members an opportunity to be active participants in the development of policy and strategies, which is why this study is so important. Jonker (2016:27-28) stipulates that participation is characterised by the equal distribution of power. Therefore, both the institution and the community should be equal partners in all the phases of the project. The emphasis should be on participation and equal distribution of power in community engagement projects to benefit both the community and the higher education institution. The study was conducted in such a way that power was on the participants' side and that their perceptions are prioritised. This is because the aim of the research was to ensure effective higher education institution-community engagement to achieve a participatory environment for community engagement (WIN platform, 2017).

The research design contributed to relevant and desired findings, since qualitative research design relies on perceptions and thoughts of individuals to fully understand the perceptions of the participants. The use of a case study method that addressed the questions of "how and why" concerning the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2002:14), enabled the researcher to analyse the real life experiences of the participants on previous WIN platform projects. The use of a case study method was justified by fact that the study

was holistic in that it focused on the relationship between the phenomenon and context, empirical in that the study was informed by the field work (findings), and empathetic because the study focused on the experiences of the participants in view of their surroundings (Yazan, 2015: 139).

The empirical findings revealed that projects were implemented interactively and the participants were satisfied with how some of the projects had been implemented. The participants indicated that there was empowerment, encouragement of human capital. The community did not have these skills and knowledge prior to the WIN platform projects. However, some findings indicated that some challenges were experienced relating to the projects. With some programmes there was a lack in collaboration, reciprocity and mutuality. This influenced community participation and resulted in failure to address the relevant needs of the community. The feedback was that the projects do have a positive impact on the community, but do not address the fundamental need for employment.

### **5.3.1. Conclusion on Study**

The projects were successful in the community, but can be improved with more interaction, monitoring and evaluation. Projects ensured participation, but it can be improved with more applicable communication and by ensuring that there is clarity on the objectives of the projects. The community were grateful for the knowledge and skills they received from the university. They are still enthusiastic for future projects and look forward to taking part.

The findings of this study were helpful in addressing the study's research objectives and sets an example to other researchers and practitioners pursuing community engagement projects and higher education institutions pursuing community engagement. The findings will guide the development of the WIN platform's future community engagement strategies. It also gives guidance on how to approach the community and how to effectively address the needs of the community without neglecting the responsibility of AUTHeR of producing quality research outputs. This study contributed to the pool of literature on how to ensure that projects bring positive change to societies or communities. The

study also contributed to the literature on the Vaalharts area, which is under-researched. This study expanded research done in the Vaalharts area.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

This study encountered different limitations. The first limitation of this study was the sample. The initial plan was to approach 40 participants in the 2018 study. However, the achieved sample was 33 people. This was a limitation because the aim of the study was to cover 40 participants from previous projects. Secondly, some of the previous participants of WIN platform projects had moved out of the Vaalharts area. Recruiting past participants was a challenge. People move, some were reluctant to participate again, some were tied up at work, some participants only participated in one or two of the projects, which meant that the study was not able to cover the majority of the projects. Therefore, since the research sample was not adequate, the results have limitations in as far as concluding on the WIN platform. Thirdly, the study could not cover all 18 projects conducted by the WIN platform from 2011. This is considered a limitation because the aim of the study was to cover all 18 projects. Fourthly, the study did not focus on the general perceptions of community members. It specifically looked at the community members who previously participated in the WIN platform projects. This is a limitation because the findings cannot be generalised to the broader higher education field, because the study addressed only one living lab (WIN platform) and the interviews took place in a specific place in one province.

#### **5.5 Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations derived from perceptions of the community members from the empirical findings.

##### **Implementation**

- The community members must be included from the inception of the projects. The project team should allow the community to contribute in all the project stages.

- Key stakeholders in the community, such as the community itself, municipality and traditional leaders should be informed of the goals, intentions and benefits of the projects presented by the WIN platform.
- The community members should be involved in the decision-making process, allowing for equal distribution of power.
- Proper monitoring and evaluation strategies should be put in place for when the project is being conducted and after the project is done.

### **Participation**

- Communication is key to encourage participation. There should be open communication channels between the community and the WIN platform team so that the needs of both parties are addressed.
- Applicable feedback should be provided to the community on all the projects in which they took part. This encourages communication between the community and the WIN platform.
- Communication is also important in recruiting community members in taking part in the projects. There should be different ways that are used to recruit people, for example posters, community meetings, loudhailers and also word of mouth.
- The research team should take into consideration the constraints experienced by the community that can possibly hinder the community members to fully take part in the projects.
- The benefits/rewards offered by the projects are also important in increasing participation, however that also can increase the number of people that wants to participate for the wrong reasons.

### **Mutuality and reciprocity**

- With regard to mutuality, the goals of the projects should align with the needs of the community.

- Mutuality encourages empowerment, because when the goals of the projects align with the needs of the community, the community members will experience that as empowerment.
- There should be a platform that allows for reciprocity, where both parties can exchange knowledge and learn from one another. There should not be one dominant party.

The objective of the study was to understand the perceptions of the Vaalharts community members who participated in previous WIN platform projects. Within the limitations of the study, this objective was realised. The study developed a good understanding of the perceptions of participants and formulated applicable and well-grounded recommendations for the WIN platform projects.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A – TURNITIN REPORT

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**APPENDIX B – CONSENT LETTER**

Consent Form

My name is Lebogang Prudence Sebeco from the NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY- Potchefstroom campus. I am a Masters student looking into community members’ perceptions on higher education institution community engagement – specifically the case of the Well-being INnovation platform (WIN platform) that was established in 2011 by the Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR), Faculty of Health Sciences, Potchefstroom campus, North-West University (NWU). Your participation is limited to sharing your experiences about your participation in the projects that you have been involved in. Your participation is, however, voluntary, the choice of whether you participate or not, is yours alone. If you decide not to take part, you will not be affected in any way or whatsoever. If you agree to participate, know that you may stop participating in the research at any time. If you do this, there will not be any penalties or prejudice against you.

Your identity will be kept safe, and you have the right to not use your real name, you can use numbers or a fake name. All the data will be kept in a safe locked office that no one has access to but me and it will be kept confidential. Ethical clearance has been acquired from the NWU for this study, to ensure that no harm is done to you. The NWU ethical clearance number is NWU-00433-18-A7.

You will not be taking part in any physical activities, no medical procedures will be performed to you. You will only be taking part in a dialogue with the researcher.

Do you agree to take part: YES/NO Signature: .....

Pseudonym:

## APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Focus group Questionnaire

*With the involvement that the university has already has shown in the community:*

**Will you please tell me how you experienced the university's involvement in this community?**

**Did you benefit in being part of the university's projects? Why?**

**Is it necessary for the university to be involved in the community?**

**Did the involvement of the university bring positive change to the community? If so, how?**

**If not, what must the university do more in the community to bring about positive change?**

**What must the university rather do less in the community so that its projects will be effective in bringing about positive change?**

**What must the university not do in the community?**

**Would you take part in future projects of the university? Why? What will be your preconditions?**

#### 1. Group activity

**Draw a picture that tells the story of the project in the community? The picture must represent how the project happened and what it did.**

**One or more members must then explain the picture to the other groups.**

### Individual Interviews schedule

#### Demographics

**1.1. Sex:**

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Other</b>
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**1.2. Age:**

**1.3. Level of education:**

<b>None</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary (excluding matric)</b>	<b>Matric</b>	<b>Technical training</b>	<b>College/Tertiary</b>
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**1.4. Area:**

Jan Kemp	Ganspan	Sekhing	Pampierstad	Hartswater
----------	---------	---------	-------------	------------

**Perceptions on WIN platform project involvement**

- 2.1. What do you think the WIN platform is?
- 2.2. Which project or projects were you involved in?
  - 2.2.1. How were you chosen to be a participant or how did you become a participant?
- 2.3. Did you have a chance to participate in the following:
  - 2.3.1. The planning of the project?
  - 2.3.2. The way the project was executed?
- 2.4. What did you do in the project?
- 2.5. What was your experience like being a participant in the project?
  - 2.5.1. Did you feel comfortable and respected when taking part in the project?
  - 2.5.2. Were you given a chance to give ideas of how the project could be beneficial to the community? If so, how?

**Perceptions on WIN platform project goal and its contribution**

- 3.1. What in your view was the main goal of the project you participated in?
- 3.2. Do you think that the goal of the project was achieved in the community? Why?
- 3.3. How relevant were the goals of the project in your personal life?
- 3.4. How are you going to apply what you benefitted from the project in your everyday life?
- 3.5. How relevant were the goals for the community?
- 3.6. What do you think could be done for the community to apply what they have benefitted from the projects?

**4. Perspectives on the WIN platform**

- 4.1. Why did you choose to participate in the project(s)?
- 4.2. Do you think other community members know about the WIN platform projects?
  - 4.2.1. If not, why don't they know?
  - 4.2.2. Do you think they ought to be informed?
- 4.3. Would you invite other members of the community to participate in the WIN projects? Why?
- 4.4. Will you participate in the WIN platform's projects in future? Why?
- 4.5. Do you think the projects can be improved?
  - 4.5.1. Why?
  - 4.5.2. How?

**5. WIN Project Formulation and Implementation**

- 5. According to you how were the projects conducted?
  - 5.1. Do you think the community was treated with respect?
  - 5.2. Do you think the projects were planned openly with the community?
  - 5.3. Do you think the projects were implemented openly with the community?
  - 5.4. How could the community contribute more to the project?

**HEI community involvement**

- 6. Why do you think the North-West University came to the community with these projects?**
- 7. What must universities do in communities?**
- 8. What can universities contribute to this community?**
- 9. How should they approach the community if they should contribute to communities?**
- 10. Do you think the community's participation will help them in achieving their goals with their projects?**
- 11.**

## APPENDIX D – DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING



Director: CME Terblanche - BA (Pol Sc), BA Hons (Eng), MA (Eng), TEFL  
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Baillie Park, 2531  
Tel 082 821 3083  
cumlaudelanguage@gmail.com

### DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Christina Maria Etrechia Terblanche, hereby declare that I edited the research study titled:

**Community members' perceptions of higher education institutions' community engagement projects: The case of the WIN platform of the North-West University**

For **Prudence Sebeco** for the purpose of submission as a postgraduate study for examination. Changes were indicated in track changes and implementation was left up to the author.

Regards,

CME Terblanche  
Cum Laude Language Practitioners (CC)  
SATI accr nr: 1001066  
Registered with PEG