

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF
SERVICE DELIVERY IN MALUTI-A-PHOFUNG LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY**

by

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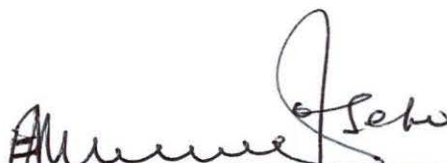
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DECLARATION

I declare that this mini-dissertation: **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN MALUTI-A-PHOFUNG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**, was not submitted at any other university and that it is my own work and that all the sources I have used and quoted from, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



EPHRAIM RAMATEDILE MOTSEKO

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Community Participation in the Improvement of Service Delivery in Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality

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1. INTRODUCTION

Service delivery has been a concern for communities in various municipalities before and after the 1994 election of the democratic government in South Africa. Initially, municipalities were divided along racial lines and services were based on such divisions, which led to blacks receiving poorer services than whites. The changing political, socio-economic status of the people and technology shall always present challenges for the government to respond appropriately to community needs.

Communities are no longer prepared to accept poor services and their participation on matters affecting their social lives is now important and no more negotiable. It is clear that service delivery does take place in various municipalities, but at the same time, there are still areas of dissatisfaction amongst communities that need to be addressed. The research will focus on the reasons that have led to this dissatisfaction and the focus will center on Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality.

1.1 Background and reason for the study

The new democratically elected government came into power in 1994 and inherited a number of different administrations that have been divided along racial lines. Municipal administration was centralized and a culture of service delivery in the municipalities that were predominantly black was poor (<http://www.gpg.gov.za>).

Many services, especially in black residential areas faced collapse, due to years of inefficient local government and unworkable policies. The high levels of non-payment of rent and service charges, which came as a result of earlier boycotts against illegitimate councils as part of the struggle against apartheid, have impacted on effective service delivery (<http://www.gpg.gov.za>).

The continuous unrest and the sporadic public violence that have been taking place in municipalities in different provinces are a cause for concern for the public in general and government. The government is continuously approving projects and makes available funds to implement projects but there is a tendency from government officials to refer to lack of funding when certain projects fail to take place.

Public violence takes place because the communities themselves do not understand how government, especially at local level that includes municipalities, operates and as a result, become impatient. It is therefore the duty of municipalities to involve communities when policies regarding service delivery are formulated and help the community to understand the process with the view to avoid unnecessary dissatisfactions.

The massive restructuring and amalgamations that have led to ineffective and inefficient municipal's administrative capabilities prompted the reasons for this study. This, coupled with severe capacity problems renders these municipalities vulnerable to maladministration. In South Africa, local government has been the key state agent mandated to effect service delivery in the areas of water, sanitation, electricity, and housing. The pursuit of the policy of privatization has seen municipalities on the look out for private partners in service delivery as an escapable option, Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No.117 of 1998). Government has committed itself to the responsibilities of seeing that these services are provided effectively and efficiently through local municipalities but the recent scuffle and public violence by disgruntled communities in different municipalities proof the opposite.

1.2 Problem statement

The lack of community participation in the Maluti-A-Phofung local municipality, leads to real needs of the community not being addressed and the subsequent lack of service delivery.

1.3 Hypothesis formulation

Community participation in the Maluti-A-Phofung local municipality will result in identification of the real needs of the community and enhancement of service delivery.

1.4 Objective of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the level of community participation in promoting quality service delivery in the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality. Furthermore, information will be sought regarding community involvement and participation in decision-making and policy formulation on matters affecting such communities as well as the community understanding of municipal operations.

Attempts will be made to investigate the roots and nature of the problems that led to ineffective and inefficient participation by the respective communities in promoting effective services delivery. The role of Municipal Service Partnerships, which include Municipal-Community Partnerships, would also be looked at with the view to understand their impact on service delivery at local government level and municipalities.

1.5 Methodology

A comprehensive literature study will be conducted, particularly with regard to community participation on service delivery. Interviews would be conducted with senior members of the community to identify problems linked to effective service delivery. Questionnaires would be circulated amongst community members of the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality in their respective communities.

1.6 Key terms and concepts

The following key terms are used in the research project:

Service Delivery; Community Participation; Community; Amalgamation; Privatization; Efficiency

1.7 Study Layout

Rubric 1

Rubric 1 deals with the background and reasons that led to this research project. It also highlights the hypothesis as well as the objectives that led to this research.

Rubric 2 and 3

Rubric 2 involves a detailed literature review in support of this research. It covers concepts such as community participation, integrated development plan, municipal service partnerships, and *BATHO PELE* principles. These concepts are fully discussed.

Rubric 4

Rubric 4 covers the research methodology which includes sample and sampling methods, data collection and data collection technique (The Delphi Technique), advantages and disadvantages of the technique, as well as research findings.

Rubric 5

Rubric 5 deals with the challenges facing local government in the post apartheid era.

Rubric 6

Rubric 6 covers participatory needs assessments.

Rubric 7

Rubric 7 deals with the conclusions and recommendations that could be an answer in an attempt to improve service delivery in the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality.

Community Participation

2.1 Introduction

Theorists and practitioners who profess support for democracy and development agree that participation by communities at various levels is essential to make democracy or democratic societies work, especially if the society in question is a developing one in the process of consolidating its democracy. Community participation is particularly important in the case of South Africa where prior to democratization, African, Coloured and Indian communities were excluded from participating in decision-making processes through various statutory mechanisms, such as the Group Areas Act 21 of 1950 and the Population Restriction Act, both of 1950.

Following the historic April 1994 elections, the Government of National Unity was formed and faced with the challenging tasks of redressing the past injustices by, amongst other measures, bringing previously excluded and marginalized groups into decision-making processes. Within the framework of co-operative government, the South African Government has successfully enacted an impressive basket of legislation on local government that requires community participation in municipal decision-making, planning, budgeting and finances. But a question still remains as to whether participation by communities in these processes does take place in the municipalities as envisaged, particularly in the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality.

Local government is expected to play a proactive role in the social, economic and material development of local communities. Thus, local government is an important sphere of government as it has the potential to transform communities for the better lives through the provision of effective service provision such as, water, sanitation, clinics, child care facilities, roads and transport.

2.2 Historical background

During the apartheid era, people organized themselves around particular issues such as the anti-pass campaign in the early 60s, the language boycotts of 1976, also known as the June 16, anti-repressive campaign, service delivery campaign and the rejection of local black authorities. These campaigns bear witness that people used to come together to address matters of common interest, (<http://www.ddp.org.za>).

The United Democratic Front (UDF), from its inception in 1983, developed a culture and tradition of community participation with the infusion of different organizations such as unions, religious based organizations, civic organizations, youth organizations and community based committees. Community participation can be defined as good governance with all its concomitant principles such as accountability, transparency, participation and openness, (<http://www.ddp.org.za>).

Community participation is a phenomenon determined by social, economic, environmental and political factors. The liberal culture of community participation was in essence a struggle against exclusion, poor service delivery, lack of access to resources and lack of proper accountability, (<http://www.ddp.org.za>).

2.3 Definition of community participation

The term community participation has over the years assumed different meanings and was subject to different interpretations within the South African socio-economic and political landscape. It is a term that is frequently used or misused to legitimize community and government.

Community participation is classified under four (4) categories in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), namely:

- Consumers and Service users: from the local government's perspective, it is important that municipalities are responsive to the needs of the local community, which in essence is the client.
- Voters: an interesting point highlighted by the Constitution is that when voter participation declines, democratic accountability is diluted.
- Partners in Resource Mobilization: this means local communities should be at the forefront of identifying opportunities, forming strategic partnerships to the benefit of the local people.
- Participating in the policy process: municipalities are required to develop mechanisms that will ensure community participation in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring as well as decision-making.

From the above factors highlighted in the Constitution, a definition of community participation could be referred to as “ the creation of opportunities and avenues for communities to express views and opinions in matters of governance, directly or indirectly, from the planning to the implementation and evaluation phase of a particular activity or project, thus resulting in the transfer of skills, knowledge(capacity building) and ownership of the process by the local community, (<http://www.ddp.org.za>).

2.4 Legislative framework, mechanisms, processes, and procedures for community participation

Since 1994 the government of South Africa has put in place policy and legislative framework that seek to promote participatory governance. The notion of community participation in all spheres of government is embedded in the Constitution in which equality, human dignity, freedom, environmental rights, rights to housing, health care, social security, water supply, and access to information is provided. It further states that:

- Section 151(1) (e) - obliges municipalities to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in local government.
- Section 152 - the objects of local government are to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government

- Section 195 (e) – in terms of the basic values and principles governing public administration, people's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making, (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>)

In the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No.117 of 1998) as amended, the following objectives of community participation are embedded in the following principles:

- to ensure political leaders remain accountable and work within their mandate;
- to allow citizens (as individuals or interest groups) to have continuous input into local politics;
- to allow service consumers to have input on the way services are rendered, and
- to afford organized civil organizations the opportunity to enter into partnerships and contracts with local government in order to mobilize additional resources, (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>)

Chapter 2 section 19 of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998, requires a municipality to strive to achieve the objectives set out in section 152 of the Constitution, namely to develop mechanisms to consult with community and community organizations in the performance of its functions and exercising its powers. The establishment of ward committees is further provided in the Municipal Structures Act with the objective of enhancing participatory democracy in the local government.

2.5. Principles underpinning participation

Communities have to take responsibility of improving their qualities of lives. The notion of community participation creates a major and fundamental problem to various municipalities. The idea of community participation arises from the classical theory of democracy, yet the structure of modern government is not that of pure and acceptable governance. The current scenario is that the needs of the community are cared for indirectly by the actions of elected representatives, and the policies they determine are to be implemented by bureaucrats acting in organizational structures that are the very antithesis of democracy, (Bekker, 1996:39-40).

In order to make participation a reality, the following must be the guiding principles:

- Inclusion – embracing all views and opinions in the process of community participation. It is important to identify and recognize existing social networks, structures, organizations, social clubs and institutions that can be used as a vehicle for communication.
- Building community participation – capacity building is the active empowerment of role players so that they clearly and fully understand the objective of public participation and may in turn take such actions in the manner that will achieve or lead to the delivery of services; solicit funding from external sources to train ward committees on their role in development; embark on consumer education on all aspects of local governance, including the functions and responsibilities of the municipality and different municipal structures
- Diversity – in a community participation process, it is important to understand the differences associated with race, gender, religion, ethnicity, language, age, and economic status. For example, Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality comprises of small towns and villages in which the management of diversity is of paramount importance because of diverse needs and demographics presented by the municipality. Ensuring that different interest groups including women, the disabled and youth groups are part of the governance structures.
- Transparency – it is important to promote openness, sincerity, and honesty among all the role players in a participatory process and engendering trust in the community by opening council meetings to the public and encourage attendance at all costs.
- Flexibility – flexibility refers to the ability to make room for change for the benefit of the participatory process. It is required in respect of timing and methodology. It is a principle that allows for adequate public involvement, realistic management of costs and better ability to manage the quality output.
- Trust, Commitment and Respect – trust is required in a public participatory process. It is referred to faith and confidence in the integrity, honesty, and ability of the process and those facilitating the process. It is important to have adequate

resources allocations before embarking in participatory process because it will undoubtedly be seen as a mere public relations exercise likely to diminish trust and respect of community one wants to involve.

- Integration – ensure participation processes are integrated into mainstream policies and services such as the Integrated Development Planning process and service planning, (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>).

2.6 Principles of participatory democracy

Section 16 of the Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act No.32 of 2000), set out two important principles for community participation:

- participatory governance should not permit interference with a municipal council's right to govern and to exercise the executive and legislative authority of the municipality. The municipal council, which is the product of representative democracy, not only has the sole legal mandate to govern, but also, and more important, the political legitimacy to do so.
- given the pre-eminence of the formal representative structures, participatory democracy is there to complement the politically legitimate and legally responsible structures. It means that any community participatory structure may add to the formal structures of government, and not to replace or substitute them. Where work committees are established, the principle of participatory democracy should apply except where the opposite prevails.

2.7 The relationship between democracy and community participation

Local government in the South African context, along with the national government, has in recent times been the topic of much debate as to how it needs to be changed in order to enhance democratic ideals. Democracy in the local government entails, inter alia, the following salient elements:

- basis for elected representation;
- the caring and working for the prosperity and development of all communities

- a universal right of appeal against administrative and government or political decision and actions that may not benefit the community's developmental process, and
- the acceptance that the welfare of the general public ought to enjoy precedence over the interests of any specific group or individuals, (Bekker, 1996:55).

2.7.1 The right to participate

For the municipal government to exist and function properly, the community must govern or at least be effectively active in government activities that are relevant to its needs. Without effective community participation, democratic government structures could be viewed as anti democratic. Vibrant democracy insists that community participation be positively encouraged by those in power with the view to remove and eradicate suspicions and elements of mistrust among members of the community. It would require that the right of every citizen to participate in governmental decisions, policies and actions that directly affect the same be legally protected, (Bekker, 1996:56)

2.7.2 The obligation to participate

Communities have a strong obligation to exercise rights of community participation. Thus reneging on the right to participate does not generally, subject the community to legal discipline, but give unscrupulous officials and municipal governments to act contrary to the public welfare and to their personal interests, (Bekker, 1996:56-57).

2.8 Basic assumptions underlying community participation

The basic assumptions underlying participation are as follows:

- participation is a fundamental right of all people;
- decision made by people on their own behalf will often be better than those made for them by other people, meaning that decisions should not be forced down to people;

- skills learned through participation could be extended to other aspects of participants' lives; and
- the experience of participation often leads to a general increase in personal confidence and development, (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>).

2.9 Development of a culture of participation

The provisions of the Municipal System Act, 2000 (Act No.32 of 2000), states that a municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must, for this purpose, encourage, and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. A municipality must contribute to building capacity of the local community thereby enabling it to participate in the affairs of the municipality and that councilors and officials must foster community participation as well as using its resources, and annually allocating funds in its budget appropriately for the purpose of implementing its community participatory strategies.

2.10 Benefits of community participation

The benefits of community participation include, but are not limited to, the followings:

- it helps to address the concerns of all interested and affected parties as well as individuals within the community;
- it encourages community focused service delivery;
- it develops a clear sense of direction for communities;
- it facilitates the utilization of a whole range of resources in the community;
- it identifies alternatives to be considered when addressing community issues;
- it improves municipal credibility with the community, thus reducing the levels of misconception/misinformation about municipal projects, and
- it creates a better understanding of municipal projects and the objectives thereof (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>)

2.11 Critical success factors for effective community participation in local governance

2.11.1 Political commitment to community participation

Political commitment to community participation is the cornerstone for effective community participation. All councilors including Mayors, Speakers, and members of the Mayoral Committees, members of the portfolio committees as well as Chairpersons of Ward Committees must be committed to ensuring effective community participation in local governance matters. Experience has shown that where these key people have taken the leadership in participation processes and supported the implementation of related activities, there has been greater and focused involvement of community members in governance matters. It is therefore crucial for municipalities to focus on ensuring effective governance at local level than on pushing political agendas. The municipality must plan and act in unison, (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>).

2.11.2 Community participation through ward committees

Municipalities are obliged to develop lasting and successful models by ensuring that participation takes place through established structures as they are institutionalized. Therefore, ward committees are a part of local government and an important way of achieving the aims of local governance and democracy. Its role is to facilitate participatory democracy; disseminate information; help rebuild partnerships for better service delivery, and to assist with problems experienced by people at ward level.

Ward committees are constituted as follows:

- are made up of representatives of a particular ward;
- are made up of community members who represent various interests within a ward;
- are chaired by the Ward Councillor;

- give community members the opportunity to express their ideas, needs and opinions on matters that affect their lives and to have them heard at municipal level through a ward councilor, and
- serve as advisory bodies created with the sphere of the community to assist the ward to carry its mandate in a democratic manner, (Ward Committee Resource Book, 2005:20).

The ward committee system is formulated to maximize community participation under the leadership of ward councillors. The ward-participatory system allows for the establishment of ward committees to facilitate participation amongst communities. It is critical for municipalities to formulate policies for the establishment of such ward committee participatory system for the municipality.

The purpose of ward committees is to assist the democratically elected representatives of wards (ward councillors) to carry out the mandate and to enhance effective community participation. It is important to note that a ward committee is not a structure with a mandate to govern outside the municipal system. Therefore, ward committee members are members of the community who know sectors of the community well, and are thus able to assist ward councillors around issues of governance, (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>).

2.11.3 Planning for community participation

Planning with representatives of communities should be aimed at ensuring that communities become part of further planning processes and the implementation of service delivery plans. It helps to remind communities of the development and service delivery priorities that they have identified during IPD processes. It further assists in planning for implementation of plans as well as identifying resources with the communities that can be used for implementation. Planning should focus, among others:

- programmes and projects for a specific period as per the approved IDP;

- resources required for implementing programmes or projects including confirmation of municipal resources and the identification of additional resources for completing such programmes or projects;
- the cost of implementing the projects;
- budgets allocated for implementing programmes or projects;
- funding sources such as payment for services;
- time allocation for implementation; and
- monitoring mechanisms. A monitoring committee may be established to represent the municipality, ward committees and other community groups, (<http://www.dplg.gov.za>).

2.12 Factors affecting participation

A wide range of cultural and socio-economic factors can determine how, why and in what role marginalized section of the society become involved in municipal participation. Municipalities seeking to develop sustainable participatory processes need to be aware of the factors which constrain and influence communities, and where possible employ mechanisms to alleviate blockages to participation. The following factors, as set out in Plummer (2000:33-37), should be taken into consideration:

2.12.1 Skills and knowledge

The existing knowledge base and skills found in communities are the determining factors in the form of participation that individuals and groups are able or willing to take on. At the outset, communities are generally not conversant with the various aspects of service delivery and have little understanding of participatory processes and government procedures.

2.12.2 Employment

Employment status may also significantly influence the amount of time the marginalized and the poor are willing or able to spend participating in projects. People in low wages

categories and long working hours are less likely to be able and/or interested in giving time to participatory processes. Yet community members with regular jobs would be an important stabilizing factors in the community as access to money may provide opportunities for choices and they may be more willing to bring change.

2.12.3 Education and literacy

While education cannot be easily separated from related factors such as economic and social status, aspirations, attitudes and skills, it is notable that education and literacy levels are key factors affecting a community's willingness and ability to participate, and on the degree and form of participation adopted. As literacy improvements within a community are rarely contentious, literacy can be used as an entry point to communities and as a binding element for the development of collective action.

2.12.4 Cultural beliefs and practices

It is important to take into consideration the traditional, formal and informal systems of community decision-making instead of imposing approaches that will be in conflict with the community's existing practices which could lead to project activities being unsustainable. Whilst participation in service delivery can bring with it some form of social transformation, this cannot be achieved unless there is a better understanding of how communities work in the first instance and relate to the rest of the civil society.

2.12.5 Gender

Gender is also a significant factor influencing participation. Men and women will often have different views and perspectives on infrastructure problems and requirements and it is important that these differences are known and incorporated into project planning. For municipalities entering into partnerships with communities, understanding the complexities of gender-bias in household allocation, gender roles and relations and the potential impacts of empowering women through participatory process is essential. This

understanding can be applied by developing participatory approaches that take into account the practical and strategic needs of women. Participation by women in planning, design and implementation of infrastructure and facilities can contribute significantly to the empowerment of women and gender equality.

2.12.6 Social and political marginalization

Social inequalities have a negative impact on the willingness and ability of different groups to participate. The dynamics of groups within the community affect participation as powerful individuals may dominate, women, children and vulnerable groups may be marginalized. Economic and social influential groups are more likely to have experience or confidence to see themselves in the participatory role and this element of control or capture of participatory channels can act against the interests of more marginalized groups.

2.12.7 Community views of participation

Participation will also depend on political views and motivation. Communities may view participation infavourably owing to:

- political alignment;
- preconceptions of what participation means;
- the view that it is the Government's responsibility to provide services; and
- the inherent cost of participation

This could come as a results of lack of trust acquired through the accumulation of municipal promises which, due to lack of sufficient resources and commitment, were not fulfilled.

2.13 Integrated Development Plan

The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 creates a participatory democracy for the new local government dispensation based on a culture of representative government with a system of participatory government. The approach resulted in a bottom-up kind of a relation when needs of the community were to be assessed as well as realized. The tool used for this purpose is an integrated development plan. Before a municipality starts drafting an Integrated Development Planning, it must adopt a document that sets out the ground rules of the drafting, adoption and review of the strategic planning and budgeting instrument.

The community must be consulted on these ground rules before adoption. The community must become the focal point of the Integrated Development Planning and consultation process with the view to assess the community's needs and prioritization of such needs. Such process should be structured around the ward committee or sub-council systems established in the municipality, (<http://www.communitylawcentre.org.za>).

Local municipalities in South Africa use “integrated development planning” as a method to plan future municipal development in their areas. Apartheid planning has left cities and towns that:

- have racially divided business and residential areas;
- are badly planned to cater for the poor, with long traveling distances to work and poor access to business and other services;
- have great differences in level of services between rich and poor areas; and
- have sprawling informal settlements and spread out residential areas that make cheap service delivery difficult.

Rural areas were left underdeveloped and largely unserved. The new approach to local government has to be developmental in its approach and aim to overcome the poor planning of the past, (<http://www.etu.org.za>).

Integrated Development Planning is an approach to planning that involves the entire municipality and its community in finding the best solutions to achieve good long-term development. It aims to co-ordinate the work of local and other spheres of government in a coherent plan to improve the quality of life of all people living in an area. It sets a framework for how land should be used, what infrastructure and services are needed and how the environment should be protected, (<http://www.etu.org.za>)

2.14 Reasons to have integrated development plan

Reasons to have an Integrated Development Planning comprise of the following according to (<http://www.etu.org.za>);

- **Effective use of scarce resources**

It will help the local municipality focus on the most important needs of the local community taking into account the resources available at local level. The local municipality must find the most cost-effective ways of providing services and money that will be spent on the causes of problems in the local area. For example, a municipality may decide, on its disaster management plan, to allocate resources to building a canal that will prevent homes from being damaged during the flood season. This will reduce the financial burden placed on the municipality's emergency services.

- **It helps to speed up delivery**

It identifies the least serviced and most impoverished areas and points to where municipal funds should be spent. It makes implementation much easier since stakeholders would be part of the process

- **It helps to attract additional funds**

Government departments and private investors would be willing to invest where municipalities are having clear development plans.

- **Strengthens democracy**

Through the active and effective participation of all the stakeholders, decisions are made in a democratic and transparent manner.

- **It helps overcome the legacy of apartheid**

With the help of the Integrated Development Planning, municipal resources would be used to integrate rural and urban areas and extend services to the poor.

2.15 Focus of participation in the integrated development planning

A firm belief by the local municipality in the value of participation in the process of planning is important but not enough. Participation should reflect careful attention to the design and facilitation of the process. An important facet of the process is to determine the focus of participation, which refers to the question of who should participate in the planning process. It is argued that this is likely to depend on whether the planning process is focused on an institution, a programme or a community. If the focus is on the institution, then the participants are more likely to be insiders, with less involvement by outsiders. If the focus is on a programme then more community participation with less inside participation should be the core, and if the focus is on a community then extensive community participation is expected, (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>).

Community participation comes as a result of a geographical locality, or a shared interest or a service –oriented basis. Participation may be the response to a treat, and thus relatively transient. The most relevant participants in local government activities should be residents, landowners and users of services provided by the local authority, interest groups and business people operating in the area. In the South African context, civic associations also play an important role in promoting community participation during planning sessions, (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>)

A problem of the participation process in practice is getting the relevant people involved. Care must be taken to ensure that the people who become involved are representative of the general community. In practice it is often found that only a few interested, but often unrepresentative groups of people are prepared to make the effort. The fear is that in spite of the philosophical and practical arguments for community participation in local

government, the participation exercise will operate only as well as those in power will allow it to operate, (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>)

The sophistication of the approach to participation is important. It is argued that sophistication could come about through a number of techniques that strive to educate and solicit advice from those people who are most concerned with problems at local government level. One such technique is to allow the most concerned and committed people to participate in the planning process, while the value of uninformed and closed-minded people is regarded dubious. This would not be an attempt to sideline or exclude any person from participatory planning process as the process should be viewed as an opportunity for a universal participation, (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>).

2.16 Dilemmas of participation during the planning process

A number of dilemmas of participation, which originate from both the local authorities and the people, have been identified. Factors which lie at the basis of these dilemmas should be investigated. Although the notion of community participation has been proclaimed as a means of perfecting the democratic process and meeting the demands of open government, it is generally acceptable that not every citizen can participate in all public management of local government. The fact that technical competency is required in public management, makes it impossible to maximize both value preferences. Furthermore, the complexity of public management may serve as a barrier to effective community participation and may serve to discourage people from participating, (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>).

Participation can be limited to the mere sanctioning of plans and policies and to the acquisition of respectability by local authority in the community. The strategy indicates that citizens react to the proposals of local authorities more often than they propose their own concepts of future action. In the South African situation, negative factors like the erosion of the social fabric of society, economic decline and the rising tides of violence,

could impact adversely in the degree to which people feel obliged to participate in the public management of local government affairs, (Esterhuysen, 1992:22)

One other dilemma of full community participation can have the potential of slowing down the planning process and demoralizing creative public officials and may even prevent them from utilizing their expertise and experience in solving problems. Impatience with the supposedly slow planning process with full community participation may prompt local governments to ignore, even to circumvent, the consultation required by the notion of transparency in local government, (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>).

Unfulfilled expectations may be yet another dilemma of community participation. People will tend to be reluctant to participate in local government activities if they feel their participation will be of little or no effect. This attitude could be the result of people's past experience in which they participated but have not had any noticeable effect on the course of events. The reason for this behaviour could be that people, because of inadequate information, often ask for things that cannot possibly be provided, (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>).

2.17 Conclusion

Community participation at local government level can be a useful tool to ensure public trust and promote democracy. Participation on matters of local government has the potential to enhance the maintenance of accountability in local government and administration as well as to create a co-operative approach by the public towards public management, which in turn, will require a public participative approach by public managers to the execution of their duties and to the needs of the society. People should realize that as individuals or through interest groups, can participate in public matters that affect them with the view to changing policies regarding specific community issues.

Having considered the dilemmas associated with participatory public management, one can understand why public officials and local authorities have doubts about its

practicality. It is also evident that participatory planning is not always the most efficient way of making decisions as it makes the planning process longer, more expensive, cumbersome, and even more complex. Nevertheless, in spite of these dilemmas, the arguments for community participation far outweigh the risk of not considering it for effective local government management and pure democratic principle.

3. Municipal service partnerships

A municipality that wishes to provide services that are more than a basic level supported by grant finance from provincial and central government, will need to raise finance in the private sector capital market. This requires a high degree of competence and financial soundness. In addition to improving the way services are run, some municipalities are actively considering the sale and lease of assets that are unproductive under municipal management. For example, there may have been good historical reasons for the retaining of public sector development of an abattoir, airport or recreation facilities if they have not been financial liabilities for such municipalities (Jackson and Hlahla: 1999).

The description of the state of municipalities indicates many shortcomings in their capacity to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner, and therefore to raise money. Where capital investment is needed, private sector financiers will be looking for evidence of operations that demonstrate a commercial approach and a commitment to servicing debt. In these circumstances, both central government and the municipality will seek ways of involving the private sector in service provision, either to improve efficiency or to raise capital, or both (Jackson and Hlahla: 1999).

3.1 Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No 108 of 1996), states that municipalities have the responsibility to make sure that all citizens are provided with services to satisfy basic needs. Achieving the Reconstructions and Development Programme (RDP) objectives within a reasonable time frame requires municipalities to look into a number of alternative ways of providing such services. Partnerships between municipalities and the public sector, the private sector and community and non-governmental organizations are the key option that municipalities should consider in their efforts to rectify infrastructure defects and disparities.

After the national election of 1994 and the subsequent local elections that followed after, local governments were faced with the daunting challenges of addressing the injustices of the past created by the apartheid policies. The creation of urban and rural communities has made it difficult for local municipalities to understand and to cope with elements of diversity and the demographics presented in such municipalities.

Public management has traditionally meant that government and its agencies are the suppliers of a large number of goods and services in order to meet the demands of health, education, social care, water supply, waste disposal, provision of energy and infrastructure. These services proved to be too much for the government alone to handle and therefore, an alternative approach in addressing this matter is to opt for municipal service partnerships.

The growing popularity of municipal service partnerships is unlikely to be a passing fad. It is important that they are monitored and subjected to close scrutiny so that proper analysis can be made of their likely impact on the quality of service they provide as more of them could be seen because of persistent pressures on public budgets and the expectations of them to gain more profit than providing quality services. Municipal service partnerships should not be regarded as substitutes for strong and effective governance and decision making by government.

3.2 Definition of a municipal service partnership

“A municipal service partnership is an agreement between a municipality and a service provider”. A service provider may be another public authority such as a water board or a district council, a private company, a non-governmental organization or a community-based organization, (<http://www.etu.org.za>)

In terms of the agreement, a service provider undertakes to provide a particular municipal service on behalf of a municipality with specific timeframes, budget and targets. Services to be provided could be for the entire community or only a section thereof. One of a

municipality's most important tasks is to find out the needs of its community and how best to provide for such needs. Firstly, a municipality must determine what services it is providing, for whom and at what quality. Secondly, a municipality must determine what services need to be expanded or improved, and thirdly, the priorities for expanding or improving must be decided.

Once it has been established which services are to be provided, clear timeframes and targets must be developed and the best way to reach such goals. Resources such as financial, equipment, and skills could be decided to meet the required goals, (<http://www.etu.org.za>).

3.3 Types of municipal service partnerships for service delivery

Municipal service partnerships are categorized in the following manner, service contracts such as, a management contract, lease and concessions on the other hand, and public-private partnerships as well as public-public partnerships on the one hand. These are the tools municipalities should use for effective delivery of municipal services. A service contract is an agreement between a municipality and a service provider to provide a particular aspect of a municipal service on a short-term basis (a period of one to two years). In this scenario, the municipality provides the budget and monitors the performance of the service provider to ensure that the service provided is of good quality and within the allocated budget, (<http://www.etu.org.za>).

3.3.1 A Management contract

A management contract is an agreement between a municipality and a service provider in terms of which the service provider would be responsible for all aspects of a particular service. An example of a management contract is refuse removal where the service provider is responsible for managing the collection of refuse, while using the municipality's staff and equipment. The typical duration in this agreement is 5 years.

3.3.2 Lease

A lease is an agreement between the municipality and the service provider where the service provider is responsible for the overall management and delivery of a municipal service. The operating assets of the council are hired by the contractor to enable it to perform the service. The contractor may also be responsible for operating, repairs and maintenance cost for the service it provides and collection of tariffs. For example, electricity supply is the responsibility of ESCOM though it is a municipality's responsibility to do that. The typical duration in this agreement is 10 years.

3.3.3 Concessions

A concession is an agreement between a municipality and a service provider where the service provider is responsible for management, operation, repair and maintenance of a particular service. The service provider would be required to invest large sums of money to expand and improve the service. For example, the service provider may be required to build a new water supply for a particular area, and the contract is often between twenty and thirty years to allow the service provider ample time to recover the costs on its investment. At the end of the contract ownership is then transferred to the custody of the municipality. These concessions are called BOT's, that is, Build, Operate and Transfer. The typical duration in this agreement is 15+ years.

3.3.4 Service contract

A municipality pays a private firm a fee for providing specific operational services such as meter reading, billing and collection, and operational facilities. The typical duration in this agreement could a period between 1 to 3 years

3.3.5 Municipal debt issuance

The municipality issues bonds or borrows from lenders to raise capital directly from private investors for financing the capital costs of building or expanding infrastructure system. The municipality would maintain the total control of the project and bears all associated risks. The issuance process is usually facilitated by underwriting firms (public or private banks), and may also involve financial advisory service providers. The typical duration of debt is 5-20 years.

3.3.6 Corporatisation

A municipality forms a separate legal corporate entity to manage municipal service provision. However, the municipality would continue to own the enterprise, but operating with the freedom and flexibility generally associated with a private sector business. A Section 21 company is one of a variety of forms corporatisation can take. Corporatisation does not automatically make increased capital financing available for extending or improving service delivery (Hlahla:1999).

3.4 Implementation of municipal service partnerships

With the end of apartheid era, the South African Government began investigating a variety of innovative approaches to municipal service delivery that many other countries had refined and tested during the long period of South Africa's international isolation. Often grouped together under the heading of public-private partnerships (PPP's), also referred to as municipal service partnerships (MSP's) to include possibilities for public-public partnerships – these approaches include long-term concessions and lease contracts, management of service contracts, as well as outright sales of government assets, (Hlahla:1999).

In 1998, the government paved way for partnerships by creating the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit (MIIU), a non-profit company tasked with providing

technical assistance and grant funding for municipalities investigating innovative service delivery partnerships. The preparation for such partnerships is typically expensive and requires considerable technical expertise. Government has realized that, and established an entity to guide the process of preparing and negotiating concessions contracts and other forms of public-private partnerships at the municipal level across the country, (Hlahla:1999)

The Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit is responsible for providing resources to help municipalities to hire experts from the South African consulting and investment community to assist with feasibility studies, project packaging work and contract negotiations. Other functions include;

- the conceptualization and designing of public-private partnerships;
- selection, supervision and evaluation of local consultants tasked with preparing feasibility studies and bid document packaging;
- negotiating public-private partnership contracts; and
- giving guidance regarding the appropriate means and methods for interacting with national level stakeholders, such as labour unions and relevant government ministries, (Hlahla:1999).

Some local municipalities in South Africa has the responsibility to meet the demands for service delivery of municipal service to very large sectors of community who, for historical reasons, have been severely underserved or have never been served at all. Their ability to meet the demands for improved municipal services is hampered by their inability to raise the necessary investment capital and lack of management expertise, (Sinclair:1999)

When a municipality has decided to use or to provide a service through a Municipal Service Partnership, it must decide on an appropriate service provider, a provider that can meet municipality's delivery goals at an affordable price and by means of affirmative procurement procedure. The affirmative procurement procedure ensures that the municipality must, as far as possible, use the local residents and small local companies

which are owned and operated by previously disadvantaged individuals (<http://www.etu.org.za>).

3.5 Municipal service partnership planning and procurement

The process of planning and procurement helps a municipality to efficiently strategies its service delivery approaches to effectively perform its duties and obligations set out in various Municipal Acts.

3.5.1 Planning

The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 envisages that integrated development plans should serve as tools for local authorities, in consultation with stakeholders, to articulate local development goals, including service delivery goals. Once such goals have been identified, a municipality can proceed to determine how best such goals could be achieved. The municipal service partnership policy recommends that local authorities must carry out feasibility studies to determine the service delivery mechanism that best serves the needs and aspirations of the community. Such studies help to determine financial viability of a given mechanism. The policy, further suggests that local authorities may wish to seek assistance from the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit (Sinclair: 1999).

3.5.2 Procurement

Procurement of a municipal service partnership service provider is a critical stage in the process of engaging in a municipal service partnership. The procurement must be fair and transparent, to ensure that the process is free from corruption and results in the choice of the best available service provider who will prove value-for-money for service consumers, and therefore, the policy allows for competitive procurement.

Municipal service partnership policy also calls for the framework of competitive procurement of a municipal service partnership to be embodied in national legislation and in regulations promulgated by the national Minister responsible for local government. The policy, further permits local authorities to establish their own competitive tendering requirements that are in line with the minimum requirements prescribed in the legislation and the regulations.

3.6 The role of community in municipal service partnerships

Building partnerships with civil society organizations can do much to extend and strengthen outreach and public education efforts, particularly where resources are limited and capacity is stretched. Civil society organizations with the appropriate focus and skills may offer important routes to otherwise untapped communities. Through their networks, they can play the role of messenger, mediator, information source and educator (de Villiers, 2001:148).

The community and community based organizations (CBOs) have important roles to play in the planning and implementation of municipal service partnerships. Some of these roles are:

- Assisting the municipality to accurately decide on which services are to be expanded and improved during the planning stages and insisting that council consults with the community during decision-making;
- the community should also work with NGOs, CBOs and political parties to develop proposals for council to consider;
- the community can also request the municipality to appoint a committee of community representatives to monitor processes as well as to advise the municipality on priorities for service extensions and improvement; and
- the community could be afforded the opportunity to evaluate the potential service providers as well as monitoring the performance of service providers (<http://www.etu.org.za>).

3.7 The service delivery principles of *BATHO PELE*

The following *BATHO PELE* principles should always be an anchor when service delivery is considered by municipalities. (White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1994)

3.7.1 Consulting users of services

The community should be consulted about the level and quality of the public service they should receive and, where possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered. Consultation gives the people the opportunity of influencing decisions about services, by providing objective evidence which will determine service delivery priorities. Consultation helps to foster a more participative and co-operative relationship between the service providers and service users. Particular effort must be made to include the views of those who have been previously disadvantaged due to geography, language barriers and those who have previously found it difficult to make their voices heard.

3.7.2 Setting service standards

The community should be informed about the level and quality of services they will receive so that the community is aware of what to expect, including information about the introduction of new services to those who have previously been denied access to them. This means service standards must be relevant and meaningful to the community. Service standards must cover the aspects of service which matters most to users. Standards must be precise and measurable, so that users can judge whether or not the services are what was promised.

3.7.3 Increasing access

Communities should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled. The **BATHO PELE** principles are aiming at addressing and rectifying the inequalities of distribution in existing services. It is therefore, important for the municipality to specify and set targets for progressively increasing access to services for those who have not previously received them. Access could be made easy for people living in remote and rural areas by providing mobile units for health purposes and other social security activities and redeploing facilities and resources closer to those on greatest need.

3.7.4 Ensuring courtesy

The provision of services does not only focusing on community projects, water and electricity supply, but the conduct of officials in their official capacity when helping community members coming for different services. An important thing to do is to promote within departments, customer-focus behaviour. This applies to staff who come into regular contact with public because they usually have an accurate appreciation of their needs and concern

3.7.5 Providing more and better information

It is important that people should not go by a rumor that something is going to happen in their respective communities but adequate and credible information should be available at all times. Information is one of the most powerful tools at people's disposal in exercising their right to good service. Information must be provided in a variety of media and languages to meet the different needs of different people.

3.7.6 Increasing openness and transparency

Openness and transparency are the pillars of a democratic government and fundamental to public service transformation process. In terms of public service delivery, their

importance lies in the need to build confidence and trust between the public sector and the public they serve. It is at this point that the community should know how the municipalities are run, how well they perform, the resources they consume and the people in charge of running such municipalities. This information can be made available through municipal budget speech where communities should be present and other informal gatherings such as open days where service delivery options would be discussed.

3.7.7 Remediating mistakes and failures

Remediating the mistakes of the past should be the cornerstone of building democracy and improving service delivery within the municipalities. Complaints by communities should not be seen as time-consuming irritation, but as an indication that people have not been treated properly and equally. Municipal staff should be encouraged to welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve services, and to report such complaints with the view that weaknesses can be identified and remedied.

3.7.8 Getting the best possible value for money

It is important that officials spent time with the members of the public explaining rules, procedure and departmental traditions with the view to make their work easy to understand and avoid time wasting. As for service delivery improvement programmes, municipalities must identify areas where efficiency savings could be sought, and the service delivery improvements which will result from achieving the savings, (<http://www.dpsa.gov.za>).

3.8 Community Participation in Urban Regeneration Partnerships

Following the *BATHO PELE* principles, partnerships with the wider community will seek to be established in which business and industry, non-governmental organizations and community based organizations, academic institutions and other bodies throughout the community can all play a part. For example, local businesses might assist in funding

the publication of service standards. Non-governmental organizations and community based organizations could help to spread information about what services are available and where to obtain them. Academic institutions may be willing to conduct comparative studies on international best practices in public service improvement (Tett,2005).

Community participation in urban and rural regeneration partnerships would make participation more efficient and effective in the sense that it would help to ensure that problems perceived as important by the community are addressed. The commitment to joined-up policy is the idea that service users should play a significant role in shaping the types of services available and the mode of delivery.

The notion of service users as partners has been used for a range of purposes as way of involving previously disadvantaged communities and groups in economic and social regeneration projects, (Tett, 2005:2). Members of the community would often come up with new and innovative ideas and methods for dealing with problems and their participation should ensure positive results. Furthermore, community participation ensures that pre-existing community groups, and their activities, are not ignored (Atkinson: 2000).

Partnerships have long been considered an important way of working in community development, education and other parts of the public and voluntary sectors. It is important for service providers to listen to members of the community with the view to change, where necessary, the manner in which services are provided and to ensure that services are responsive to community needs, (Tett, 2005:3).

Working in partnerships with members of the marginalized community groups highlights this issue of power as community representatives may become incorporated into structures that effectively silence their dissenting voices. Thus it is important to distinguish between involvement and empowerment and between strategic power and operational power. Municipalities should avoid a situation where some partners may have

the power to set agendas, and some only participate in the implementation of such agendas, (Tett, 2005:6).

3.9 The Role of Community Based Organizations

Community based organizations are widely seen as making significant contributions to the localities in which they operate. The involvement of community sector organizations in local governance networks is seen as helping to ensure that views of the community are represented in policy development. Social enterprises offer ways of involving excluded groups, should also include people in low income areas and people with disabilities when designing and delivering services. These community based organizations are the best placed to involve people who might otherwise prove hard to reach, (Luckin and Sharp, 2004).

Theories of local governance focus on how communal decisions are made. Writers in this field point out to a number of significant changes. Most important in the field of governance is a movement from local government as a provider of services to local government as a purchaser of services from others as well as local government movement towards decision-making through participation of a wider range of local stakeholders rather than exclusively through the preferences of elected politicians, (Luckin and Sharp, 2004).

These changes have implications for the role of community based organizations in which they may become providers of services and also be expected to participate in public decision-making forums. These roles could be mutually reinforcing in that, as a provider of local services, for example, doorstep recycling collections, a community based organization may be well informed about the needs of the local people and thus have specialized knowledge which can inform communal decision-making process, (Luckin and Sharp, 2004).

The shift from hierarchical state provision to a more differentiated governance model in which self-organizing networks of actors shape and deliver services, is seen as being more effective and responsive than purely representative government. Furthermore, the shift of governance has resulted in opportunities for dissenting voices to be heard in policy-making processes, (Luckin and Sharp, 2004).

4. Methodology for empirical research

One of the challenges facing communities in the 1990s was the need to improve participation skills in order to participate in the community decision-making. People are already participating in public decision-making in a variety of ways, from letter writing to voting. But more people want to be active in local decisions on an ongoing basis. This requires bringing techniques for participation into the community decision-making.

In this research, a Delphi technique which was developed in 1953 by the Rand Corporation with the intention to solicit expert opinion on a particular subject was used since it allowed for an independent and not a face-to-face participation in responding to the questions (<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu>). It has been used to change government from being a representative republic into a participatory democracy. The Delphi technique begins with the initial development of a questionnaire focusing on the identified problem. With this technique, selected community members would be identified and selected in terms of the place of residence since Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality covers the urban and rural areas (Kweit and Kweit: 1984 and <http://www.vlrc.org>).

4.1. Sample and sampling

This study uses a cluster sampling method. Cluster sampling divides the population into groups. The sampling frame is clustered according to members of the community which includes the youth, adults and senior members of the community as well as business people in the respective geographical areas.

4.2. Data collection

Interviews as well as open ended type questionnaire are used for this study as they give every community member the opportunity to give and motivate his or her opinion more freely.

4.3. Data collection technique – the Delphi Technique

The questionnaire was distributed among members of the community in their respective locations. In assessing the community needs, the Delphi technique was used to determine and prioritize community problems, setting goals, designing needs assessment strategies; developing improved community services; evaluating alternative plans for community development, as well as aggregating judgments of special-interest or mutually hostile group (<http://web1.msue.msu.edu>).

4.4 Advantages of the technique

- It avoids excessive influence from one or more outspoken individuals
- It gives people the opportunity to stand by their decision and avoid instant group pressure.
- It overcomes the problem some individuals have of bringing up a point in meetings for fear of ridicule or loss of face, the fate, unfortunately, of some innovative ideas.
- It allows participants to remain anonymous
- It is inexpensive
- The participants remain free of social pressures, personality influence and individual dominance

In summarising these advantages one realises that each person in the Delphi group is free to comment as he or she wishes.

4.5 Disadvantages of this technique

- Judgements are those of a selected group of people and not always representative
- The technique allows for the tendency to eliminate extreme positions and forces a middle-of-the-road consensus
- It should not be viewed as a total solution to forecasting, and
- It requires skill in written communication

With the advantages and disadvantages presented in this methodology, it is therefore important to note that a single methodology of collecting data is not enough to ensure better results. Rather various methods of collecting data could prove valuable for research.

4.6 Research Findings

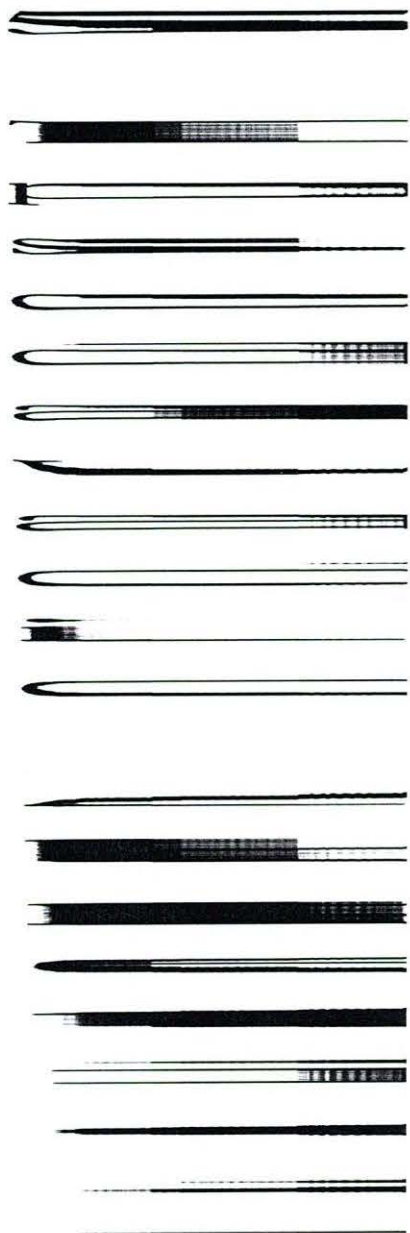
In this research, it has been discovered that even if there are policies regarding community involvement in municipal activities in the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality, there is still lack of collaboration between the respective communities and the municipality in terms of improving participation with such communities. The following potential impediments were identified:

- **Representation:** There is lack of enthusiasm on the part of the youth (in the rural areas) to participate in the events sanctioned by the municipality which come as a result of lack of support by the municipality's failure to establish youth structures that will address problems facing them. Academic departments are not represented in the municipal council and so, implementing policy decisions becomes problematic. In rural areas, tribally, geographically and politically disadvantaged communities are easily marginalised due to under-representation. The lower community levels are not well represented which could lead to sustainability problems if they are not participating in the municipal activities.
- **Literacy level:** People lack the necessary knowledge of understanding how the municipality is operating and therefore their participation is minimal and passive. This situation leads to a one-track mind decision-making approach which does not come as a result of community needs.
- **Ownership and commitment:** People have left their fate in the hands of the councillors and forgotten that their votes were not enough of a mandate for their

political representatives. Follow-ups are not made to ensure that promises made are fulfilled. New comers within community structures are always not welcomed by old party members and less community members became active in the activities of the municipality. Therefore, there is lack of commitment to ensure that municipal policies are implemented since peoples' positions are secured within party political structures.

- **Leadership skills:** Some participants expressed the need for the ward committee leadership to be more approachable and receptive. In some instances, such leadership is inactive for fear of being ridiculed for lack of leadership skills. Such poor quality services are no ore challenged as people have lost interest and focusing their energies on other things. Leadership roles are given to activist in the community, whether or not they possess such leadership skills and there is a belief that ordinary people, as opposed to professional counterparts, are not the right quality to lead in the community structures.
- **Communication:** Reports such as budgets are communicated in the language difficult to understand by the most affected and lack precision for the intended recipients. People in remote areas do not even have access to such communiqué. There are no information boxes where people can collect municipal news letters and other related material for them to read.
- **Capacity building and social capital:** Training is needed to empower communities in a slow developmental process. The municipality must invest a lot more time and energy with councillors to ensure full participation and engagement with the community. Engagement with and empowerment of the community necessitates the removal of the barriers that come between them and their representatives.
- **Vision, clarity and transparency:** Community participation requires a considerable amount of clarity and transparency. Problems experienced by the

community are that goals are not clearly understood; the role of the community in certain projects is not clear and that transparency is lacking. Clear directives and information assures transparency and more involvement from the community.



5. Challenges for local government in the post apartheid era

The very act of posing the question of how to socialise forms of participation presupposes, first, that there is a need to promote participation and, second, that there are some identifiable benefits to promoting participation. The need to promote participation can be traced to what can be referred to as problem of inaction, namely the oft demonstrated fact that, when it comes to problems facing the community, people's attitude typically outreach their actions. That is, many people support the idea of volunteerism as a way of tackling community problems than actually enter into services as volunteer, and there is lack of initiativeness. Born of this problem of inaction is the desire to bring people's action into line with their attitudes and thereby to promote involvement in those activities that reflect widely shared values of service to the community (Clary: 2002).

As for the benefits of participation, theoretical and empirical inquiries have identified benefits to the individuals who participate, to the recipients of the services that they provide, to the institutions in which participation occurs, and to the lager community. For example, most obvious are the benefits to the recipients, such as children who receive tutoring by volunteers, the elderly who receive meals delivered by volunteers. To the institution in which participation occurs, for example, to the community-based service organizations staffed by volunteers, to the political parties dependent on volunteer labour, and to the larger community whose burdens of providing services may be enlightened by volunteer service programs (Clary: 2002).

For those (in the community) who give their time and energy, whether as participants in service-learning programs, whether as volunteers with a community based volunteers' service organizations, or as members of an activist social movement, the benefits of participation may come in many forms. In the context of their service as volunteers, they may experience beneficial outcomes as diverse as affirmation of the values of

participation, boosts to self-esteem and the acquisition of new skills and competencies (Clary: 2002).

After the 1994 democratic elections, budget deficits were a major motive for local government reforms, regardless of whether they were imposed by national government or initiated by local authorities themselves. Municipalities often suffered from severe financial pressures due to rising demands for municipal services. However, local authorities have been receiving more favourable budgets but lack of financial management and the financial driver for managerial reforms has been weak for some municipalities.

Other external challenges that have emerged to drive for reforms at local level include the following:

- political pressure from unresolved wicked problems such as crime and vandalism, economic deprivation, the low quality of life of the elderly and the isolation of people from health and economic resources and facilities;
- the use of information and communication technology (e-government and e-democracy), both within local public agencies and also with regard to external stakeholders such as the community and local business, not only in relation to services planning and delivery but also in dealing with local public issues more generally;
- greater pressure from the media as local stakeholders develop more sophisticated approaches to publications and websites, and that there is a rapid proliferation of local press, radio and television channels;
- increasing globalization which makes local authorities an important economic player but which exposes them to a volatile global economy; and
- the development of a differentiated civil society with new information and communication needs and the desire to engage in debate on local quality of life issues.

Following the challenges presented above, this implies for municipalities:

- the need for more collaboration with other agencies in policy-making and implementation, involving private forms, the voluntary sector and higher levels of government such as one-stop-shop, public-private partnerships as well as consortia for service provision;
- a stronger engagement of all partners in issues of local strategy, planning and resource mobilization, as well as in service delivery, and in particular, striving to include priority target groups in the local community;
- more intensive and widely spread knowledge management, not only within local public agencies, but also in the networks of stakeholders within the local areas; and
- sustainability, taking into account the needs of future generations and the strategic knock-on effects of local decisions on other stakeholders and other areas (Bovaird and Loffler:2002).

In response to the country's legacy of discrimination, denied opportunities and retarded development, the newly elected democratic government launched the Reconstruction and Development Programme which is referred to as an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework. It seeks to mobilise the communities' resources towards the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), define the new developmental mandate for local government, namely that it should become a key catalyst for locally-led social economic development. Furthermore, municipalities face great challenges in promoting human rights and meeting human needs, addressing past backlogs and spatial distortions, and planning for a sustainable future.

At local government level, the way forward should be conceptualised as being the pursuit of developmental local government which is committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet social, economic and

material needs of the community and improving the quality of lives. Municipalities are required to take the leadership role, involving and empowering the communities in the development process, in order to build social capital and generate a sense of common purpose in finding local solutions for sustainability. Local municipalities, therefore, have a crucial role to play as policy makers and as institutions of local democracy and are being urged to become more strategic, visionary and ultimately influential in the way they operate.

The principle of the devolution of power to the community, and by implication to the elected community representatives, is a key feature of the National Government's policy, which reinforces popular participation in local affairs and development. The Reconstruction and Development Programme, which provides a broad statement of developmental objectives, urges that development is not about the delivery of goods and services to a passive community. It is about active involvement and empowerment. In further supporting these principles, the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No.32 of 2000), places particular emphasis on community involvement in local government decisions, such that local authorities are now obliged to establish mechanisms to enable communities to participate in the affairs of a municipality.

Local government's status and its potential development role have been enhanced through a commitment to the principle that local government is not merely the lowest tier of government, occupying a subordinate position, but rather it is a distinctive sphere of government, occupying a unique and important position within South African society. It is an integral component of the democratic state. Mechanism to gather community input should be viewed from a benefit-cost perspective. If participation becomes too costly or benefits are seen to be minimal, from the position of the community or the bureaucrat, meaningful community participation will break down. Therefore, a way must be found to minimise the cost of participation in terms of time and effort the community and government officials, as well as to limit rancour that may result from unrequited expectations. At the same time, benefits must be maximised. The benefits that the community should receive include more satisfactory government policies, and the

benefits for bureaucracy include a more trusting and committees community (Kweit and Kweit: 1984).

Methods frequently used to determine community problems and priorities are public meetings and surveys. The advantage of both these methods is that they can be inclusive. All individuals and groups theoretically have the opportunity to provide input. On the contrary, these processes often do not work as they are designed to. Public meetings are often plagued by poor attendance. They may become a forum for a few dissidents who do not represent the community. Surveys may be more useful in determining what the cross-section of the public wants, but they may also be costly. Furthermore, members of the community may lack clearly developed opinions, responses may not be well thought out and may not reflect the true feelings of a community (Kweit and Kweit: 1984).

Community organizations such as advisory boards and committees have been seen as an effective way of restructuring community input. Such structures are more likely to be integrated easily into the routine of the bureaucratic agencies. Members of such organizations can also develop expertise in the subject and commitment to the participation process, increasing the quality of communication between the technocrats and the community. Problems may be encountered where the time and effort required by such boards could not be conducive for proper community participation management as well as the tendency for the boards to be dominated by those of higher socio-economic status within the community (Kweit and Kweit: 1984)

6. Participatory Needs Assessment: Role of municipalities

The renewed commitment to put communities at the heart of regeneration means that there is now a recognised need to experiment with new methods of involvement. It is also clear that manipulative and tokenistic approaches to participation must be rejected in favour of a move towards partnership and effective citizen power. The objective of this approach is to help municipal officials to move away from just taking information from people, but giving them the opportunities for empowerment. It is therefore necessary to

find out what is needed in the community and how these needs can be best met. It would be a fallacy for municipal officials to think that they know best what the needs of the community are without having taken a thorough consultation with members of such community (Rifkin and Pridmore, 2001:105 and Arnstein:1969).

Individuals and local communities must be involved in all stages of urban and rural policy process, starting from problem definition, agenda setting, goal setting, policy succession and policy rumination, (Atkinson and Cope, 1997:216). In so doing, the authors have advanced the benefits of involving local people in the initial stage of any project, along with the idea that research methods introduced as part of the development process should have local participants as key elements. Stakeholders should play a key role in evaluation, not just as passive contributors of information but also actively taking part in the planning, collection and analysing of information.

The direct involvement of local people in community research aimed at developing the standard of living, offers the potential to shift the balance of control from professionals and service deliverers to the local community. It does so by moving local people to the centre of decision-making and giving them the opportunity to contribute knowledge of local needs to research and planning, while also understanding and acting on issues which concern their lives, (Centre for participation, 2001).

Community participation in the various stages of the research process can facilitate individual self-development and collective education, thus fostering an environment in which the control of knowledge is dispersed from professionals to local communities, (Schuftan, 1996:262).

Rifkin and Pridmore (2001:105-123), have provided the following important tools for the community needs assessment process:

6.1 Reviewing existing support

The first step is to find out if participatory approaches are likely to succeed in certain municipal projects. The following are important indicators:

- The political stability, and
- What can the municipality do to develop peoples' skills in facilitating groups, in taking leadership roles and helping groups within the community to make informed decisions?

A municipality can conduct a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to help it consider its situation in a more organised manner. This can help the municipality to identify elements that can break or make community participation in the planning process.

6.2 Assessing available resources

It is important for the municipality to consider what resources are needed and how shortfalls could be overcome. The most important resources include:

- People: such people would include professionals, community members and representatives from the municipality.
- Time: it would be important to keep to timeframes since this needs analysis process involves consultation with the community, processing of information gathered and the implementation of the envisaged municipal programme.
- Space: space would include community halls, municipal offices as well as institutions of higher learning where professionals and academics are involved.

6.3 Preparing the assessment team

The assessment team would include, depending on the type of project to be carried out, key people from various professions and trades within the community. The team would prepare itself for the following:

- To generate the information needed to identify the priority needs from the point of view of the community members and to develop a plan of action to meet these needs, and
- To create opportunities for community members, particularly the poor and people with disabilities, to gain skills and experience to make choices and act on plans about the future.

Municipal officials and councillors need to develop the attitudes, skills and confidence to work with the community and with each other in a participatory manner.

6.4 Deciding on the information needed

To help a municipality to decide on what information is needed and to avoid collecting more information than necessary, the diagram provided below could be of great assistance. It is called the information pyramid consisting of building blocks that helps in deciding what sort of information is needed to understand the situation of people living in a particular location. The pyramid has three important features:

- it is based on the needs identified by the community,
- it is build on information generated from documents, from dialogue between professionals and community members, and from observations, and
- it reflects the situation at a given point in time and recognises that communities are rapidly changing.



(Rifkin and Pridmore: 2001:109)

The bottom level of the pyramid describes the community. For example, its composition as to the number of people, age, sex, and the ethnic group, community organization and structures include local organizations, non-governmental organizations and community capacity which involves working together to carry out community projects.

The second level of the pyramid describes the things that influence the community sense of well-being. The physical environment would include the location, climate, housing and transportation, the social environment would include the level of education and the existing welfare support, and the economic environment would include the source of income level of income, access to food and housing as well as employment. This information is important to identify possibilities of improvement and what could be the barriers for such improvement.

The third level of the pyramid describes information on the existence, coverage, accessibility and acceptability of social services. This includes information on health services, environmental services such as water and waste disposal, education and support for the socially disadvantaged people including the disabled.

The top level of the pyramid describes information in national, regional and local social policies for improving the situation of the people who are poor and disadvantaged. Information on policy will tell whether the political leadership is committed to improving the lives of the poor. With strong government support at both national and local levels, improvements for these people can proceed more rapidly and without major political barriers.

6.5 Deciding on how to get information

Information could be gathered through the use of key informants and these are people within the community who, because of their position within the community they are holding certain key positions formally and informally. These are people who are having information about community problems. Furthermore, in choosing key informants, it is important that people who are members of the marginalised groups in the community are identified, that is, women, the youth and people with disabilities. They may not have wide views but important ones.

6.6 Collecting and analysing information

Specific techniques should be identified in respect of the task to be carried out which best will assist in collecting information. Information could be collected through interviews and ward committee meetings where the community should be well represented. The population demographics could also assist in that people would be consulted across the spectrum. Information should be analysed and compared in terms of what has been obtained during interviews and information reviewed from documents and from observations.

6.7 Reviewing the information with all needs assessment participants

At this level people who have been involved in the needs assessment process would be asked what priority they would give to each of the problems identified from interpreting

the information. One example of such an exercise would be to write each problem on a card and ask each participant to sort the cards into the order of priority that they attach to the problems.

6.8 Providing practical information

The community must be provided with timely information about hearings and other opportunities to engage with municipal policies. They should also have ready access to the necessary documentation because effective engagement is impossible without advance copies of draft policies and relevant information. The purpose of such information is to give the public the tools with which to participate, and therefore, appropriate language, clarity and relevance is essential (de Villiers, 2001:144)

6.9 Public education and outreach programmes

Public education needs to be combined with effective outreach programmes. The poor, the marginalised and those who living in remote rural areas cannot be expected to travel long distances at great costs in order to exercise their rights. Outreach is a mechanism to involve communities that would not ordinarily engage with the political process and is a vital part of the process of involving all citizens in the new democracy (de Villiers, 2001:144).

6.10 The role of language

It is clear that information and communications should be written in a way that can be understood by those who need to engage with it and use it. For example, Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality covers areas such as Harrismith with Afrikaans and Zulu as dominant languages, Kestell with Afrikaans and Sesotho as dominant languages, Qwaqwa and Phuthaditjhaba with Sesotho as the dominant language. Yet municipal policies and other related documents are written and expressed in a way that excludes rather than empowering and including those affected (de Villiers, 2001:145)

6.11 Using the media

Links should be built between the media and the municipality. Community radio, particularly, offers important opportunities to reach constituencies that may be unable to access or use national or provincial media. Material should be prepared in a way that is geared to the audiences it is intended to reach, with careful attention to language, comprehensibility and relevance.

Information should also be presented in a creative and interesting way since the audience is not necessarily automatically interested in what government has to say. Regular phone-in programmes linking representatives and officials with constituencies are valuable ways of hearing what people have to say and keeping them in touch with developments at a broader level (de Villiers, 2001:146)

6.12 Accessibility

Physical accessibility is very important. Where the municipal council could not be reached by public transport, arrangements should be made for members of the community who might not otherwise be able to attend council meetings. The municipal council should be accessible to people with disabilities so that no one is excluded. Council members should themselves be accessible as being able to discuss issues with the community representatives gives the public confidence in the democratic process and encourages the belief that their views can make a difference (de Villiers, 2001:147).

6.13 Participation and self-reliance

To state that consciousness and the constitution of meaning should form the basis of development thinking, and that they should therefore, be an integral part of development program, brings on the concept of participation and self-reliance. Real participation takes place when people are consciously involved in development. Participation and self-

reliance in the development context, implies and emphasise the necessity to involve those people who are the supposed beneficiaries of development.

Participation means a breaking down of monopoly of knowledge. The only way in which self-reliant endogenous development can be attained, is to work with the assumption that the beneficiaries of development will also have to be its contributors. The ultimate end of community participation and development is the well-being of the people and not their wealth and it is open for the whole range of human experience (Coetzee, *at al*, 2001:119-126).

Participation in development planning programmes is already taking place in South Africa. This is done through the direct involvement of communities in establishing Land Development Objectives in terms of the Development Facilitation Act, 1997 (Act No. 67 of 1997). A process whereby each local municipality determines what principles or objectives will guide development planning in the area. For example, community water supply and sanitation project such as Amanzi-Wethu in the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality have capacity building component, in that community members are employed in the installation and maintaining of supply dams. This should not be the only project active in the municipality, but more should be established (<http://www.un.org>).

Based on the premise that the public must have a say in the decisions and actions that affect their lives, one may consider certain criteria for public participation:

- public participation should encompass a sense that the public's contribution will influence the final outcome,
- the public participation process must communicate the interests of and meet the process needs of participants,
- the process must seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected. That is, consideration must be given to how unorganised communities or interests groups can be brought together,

- participants should be involved in defining the manner in which they wish to participate,
- participants should be provided with the information they need to make meaningful contributions, and
- participants need to be informed as to the manner in which submissions were accounted for and how they are reflected in the decision made.

Thus effective community participation depends on dedicated education, information and outreach strategies aimed at providing the knowledge and means to access what may otherwise appear to be a set of remote and incomprehensible institutions. The purpose of such strategies is to bring those who exist on the margins and periphery of society into the mainstream political process, creating a system of governance that is inclusive, responsive and transparent. The goal is to consolidate a form of democracy that engages with and recognises the interests of all. Thus community participation in South Africa may play a valuable role in the transformation of what is still a fundamental unequal society (de Villiers, 2001:97-98).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Involving local people has become a central theme of regeneration policy and practice. Community participation offers a chance to develop meaningful and effective involvement by moving local people to the centre of decision-making and allowing them to play an effective role on the initiatives and strategies which will impact on their lives. As it has been identified through the work in developing participatory mechanisms, there are numerous barriers that need to be overcome. These can be addressed with careful planning and the use of frameworks which encourage empowerment, foster inclusivity and ensuring feedback to the community. The right to participate should be the nucleus of municipal functions.

From the information gathered on the feedback received from participants, the following could be deduced regarding perceptions created with regard to participation, that:

- **Communities need powers of decision-making:** It is necessary to empower the community by devolving decision-making powers so it could take responsibility. Such devolving does not mean abdicating the responsibilities of the municipality, but recognising that effective participation can only be achieved by liberating the creative energy of the people. Furthermore, the community-based planning advocates a sum available to communities to take forward their plans, over which they can decide.
- **Community need to have legitimate authority:** For the community to have decision-making powers, effective use and role in ward committees is important. From the feedback received from the majority of the participants, effective use of ward committees is low and in some instances is non-existing which come as a result of meetings that are called during working days and people who have to commute long distances before reaching their homes and thus impacting negatively on participation.
- **Skills:** This is the ability to make meaningful contributions during ward committee deliberations. It has come to the fore that educated and professionals

have the tendency to shoot down wards and divert their attentions on other things instead of assisting where their technical, management, organizational and mobilising skills are needed.

- **Strong leadership:** Strong community leadership helps to maintain community interest and commitment. Leadership may come from many sources including individuals, churches, agencies, business, and community groups. All these structures need to be synchronised together to find a common ground and understanding. Coalition leadership needs to be legitimate, visible, competent, trustful, and have communicative, managerial, consultative and devolutionary skills.
- **Building community cohesion:** Community consistency is an important factor in the success of community participation. It is important that the process of working with the community strengthens community solidarity, to recognise and identify possible divisions within the community. When all the community structures are involved in the initial formation of a coalition, a vital sense of ownership in decision-making would be developed.
- **Transparency and accountability:** The *BATHO PELE* principles carry the notion that it is important to empower the community with access to relevant information, and the confidence to acquire information they need. This is important for members of the community to understand how the municipality is functioning. Long term vision is required from the onset as well as ways to make participation concept practical and operational and there should be clear goals and objectives. Clarity should be manifested by written agreements and mutual understanding between the municipality and the community structures.

7.1 Recommendations and strategic framework for municipality capacity building

7.1.1 Develop a sustainable municipal-community interface

Plummer (2000:8-9), indicates that effective community participation requires capacity to be built in those mechanisms such as wards, community based organizations and non-governmental organizations for carrying participation forward. Reference is made of all stakeholder involved in the establishment and improvement of participation of the youth, marginalised and the poor in the municipal service delivery and infrastructure. The capacity building required to develop a sustainable municipal-community interface may include among others:

- Strengthening the municipal interface.
- Strengthening the community capacity and the community interface.
- Developing partnerships with non-governmental organizations.

7.1.2 Develop a supportive organizational framework

The municipality must undergo significant internal changes in order to let participation in. In this case, municipal staff, structures, systems, attitudes and finances have to undergo a rigorous reviewing process to create an enabling environment that underpins participatory processes. The capacity building needed to create a supportive municipal framework includes:

- Developing staff capacity.
- Establishing effective internal municipal structures.
- Reforming effective internal municipal structures.
- Establishing financial stability.
- Creating attitudinal change.

7.2.3 Establish committed and skilled management and leadership

The development of committed and skilled management is the cornerstone for effective community participation within the municipality. Effective management and leadership will provide the driving force for change, the stimulus for the capacity building process and will support the implementation initiatives. Committed and skilled management means:

- Alleviating the management blockages affecting participation.
- Developing a management approach that responds to the redefined role of municipalities.

7.2.4 Develop appropriate and evolving forms of participation

It is important that the municipality develops greater knowledge and skills of the fundamental aspects of community participation so as to understand the nature of municipal-community partnerships and promote appropriate and meaningful participative environment. The strategic framework for capacity building includes:

- Understanding the objectives of participation.
- Understanding the needs of the poor.
- Alleviating factors that affect participation.
- Promote options for participation.
- Establishing evolving form of participation.

Participation is the fundamental key role of people in local democracy and governance. It is not only the community's rights, but their duty. Community participation builds a better democracy as communities get to choose their leaders as well as playing a significant role in community development in various ways, (Monyemangene, 1997:24).

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Appendix

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure community participation in the municipal activities.

Answer the following questions in your own words:

1. What do you understand about community participation in municipal activities?

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2. Does the municipality in your area have policies on community participation?

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3. Does your community have a ward committee?

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4. Do you play an active role in the ward committee? If yes, what role do you play?

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5. How often do you hold community meetings sanctioned by the municipality?

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6. Has your contributions in the ward committee in the last 5 years had any impact in the improvement of service delivery in your area? Please elaborate on your answer

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7. Have you been involved in projects initiated by the municipality in the last 5 years?

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8. Are services offered convenient for you? If no, please motivate

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9. Do you find services offered by your municipality valuable to you? Please motivate your answer

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10. Does the municipality keep you up to date about municipal activities? Please elaborate

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11. Is information about services available in all official languages?

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12. What can the municipality do to improve community participation?

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13. What can the municipality do to improve service delivery?

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