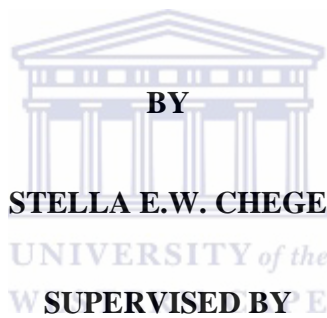


**ASSESSING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES: A CASE STUDY OF THE SPES
BONA HIGH SCHOOL DREAM2BE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

**MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTED TO THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT, FACULTY OF ARTS UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE M.A. DEGREE IN
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**



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JUNE, 2011

Declaration

I declare that “Assessing youth participation in decision-making processes in community development programmes: A case study of the Spes Bona High School Dream2Be peer education programme” is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and all the resources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged using full references.

Stella E. W. Chege

June 2011

Signed.....



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated *to everyone who completed my sentences.*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I thank God for blessing me with the gifts of life, the intellect, wisdom and courage throughout this journey. Second, I thank my mother whose continued sacrifice, prayers and support made it possible for me to pursue and complete a graduate degree. My sisters, I thank you for your continued support during this time and for being my role models. To my long list of friends, I can never repay you, but I am eternally grateful for the laughter, advice and support we shared even when the journey seemed endless! Lastly, I thank my academic supervisor, Dr. Mulugeta Fitamo Dinbabo for the continued advice and ability to guide me throughout this process. I am especially grateful to you for teaching me about the research processes and your ability to keep me on track in every step of the way.

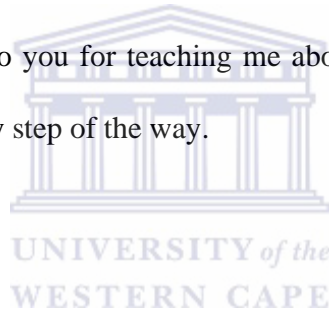


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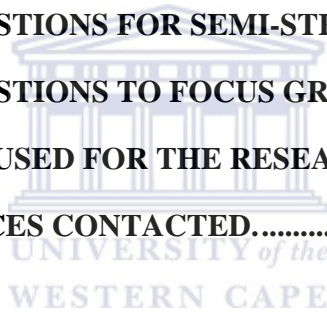
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Abstract

During this study, the challenges and best practices of youth participation in problem identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes were investigated and the effect of project outcomes on the youth and its implications for community development observed. The use of the qualitative research methodology to examine the extent to which the youth are involved in the decision-making processes was employed. In addition, a literature review that pertained to youth development and participatory community development was conducted. In particular, the participatory concept, and its relation to the inclusion of the youth at the decision-making table, was examined. By providing evidence from the empirical data, an argument is presented that there are internal rigidities that are a hindrance to the youth in expressing their voice in the decision-making platform. However, the conclusion can be drawn that in order to understand the process of participatory development, it is crucial for the youth, community development practitioners and other stakeholders to understand the socio-economic conditions surrounding the youth as these will ensure positive programme outcomes as well as subsequent sustainable youth development.

Keywords

Community, decision making, governance, Spes Bona, participation, partnership, policy, sustainability, transparency, youth.



LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
AYC	African Youth Charter
CBD	Central Business District
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CDC	Community Development Committee
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CoCT	City of Cape Town
DA	Democratic Alliance
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immune Virus
ICTs	Information Communication and Technologies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NYDPF	National Youth Development Policy Framework
NYP	National Youth Policy
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WCHD	Western Cape Health Department
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Youth in context

By adult society, the youth are often considered a nuisance in the community, often to be mentioned when they run into trouble, practice unsafe sexual behaviour (Eaton, Flisher & Aarø, 2003; Kirby, Laris & Rolleri, 2006; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001), fall pregnant (Kaufman, De Wet & Stadler, 2001; Mfono, 1998), join gangs (Spergel, 1990; Zhang, Welte & Wiczorek, 1999), abuse drugs and commit crime (Parry, Myers, Morojele, Flisher, Bhana, Donson & Plüddemann, 2004) and so forth. As a result, this group has been considered as a risk to society and often placed under the watchful eye of public policy, NGO programmes and government projects for the delinquent or problematic youth. In addition, strict decisions on what is right or wrong have always been handed down to them by government programmes as well as by adults and guardians. Empirical studies have also been based on the need for more programmes that seek to change the behavior of the youth from undesirable to desirable conduct (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, Phelps, Geostdottir, Naudeau, Jelicic et al., 2010). Negative stereotypes have been sustained by public policies that assume young people are unable or unwilling to contribute to the common good (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitez & Calvert, 2000)

Studies in sub-Saharan Africa show that unsafe sexual behaviour amongst young people is very common (Kirby et al., 2006; Mfono, 1998). For example, researchers observed that a large number of young females in countries such as Uganda and Nigeria have become pregnant during their teenage years and have undergone subsequent abortions (Mfono, 1998). Kaufman et al. (2001), in a similar study, noted that more than 30% of 19-year-olds have given birth at least once in South Africa. In addition, approximately 50% of young people have engaged in

unprotected sex by the age of 16 years, often putting themselves at risk of contracting Human Immune Virus (HIV) infection (Eaton et al., 2003). As a result, 18.9% of 17- to 20-year-old and 43.1% of 21- to 25-year-old South African youth are infected by the HIV virus (higher than other age groups), with the chance that these figures will increase by the year 2015 (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

Spergel (1990) contended that youth gangs and gang problems have been a long-standing problem in both developed and developing countries. In the United States, it was estimated that 5% of students in elementary school, 10% in high school, 20% in special school programmes and 35% of school-age dropouts between 16 and 19 years old were gang members (Spergel, 1990: 187). Similarly, studies in developing countries such as Sierra Leone, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have revealed that large numbers of young people under the age of 18 have been linked to gang-related activity, such as the drug trade, prostitution and control over local economic activities (Zhang et al., 1999). Parry et al. (2004) concurred with those who deem this group a future menace in their respective countries.

Zhang et al. (1999) noted that there is a direct relationship between youth gangs, drug use, and delinquency. Statistics in South Africa show that between January 1997 and December 2001, drug use amongst youth under the age of 20 years increased from 5.5% to 24.1% and from 7% to 22% in Cape Town and Durban, respectively, while in Gauteng, it increased from 9.9% to 23.4% (Parry et al., 2004: 434). The results of the current study affirmed that an increase in drug abuse subsequently increases the probability of young people engaging in excessive sexual behaviour, increases the number of school dropouts, and increases suicide rates, psychiatric behaviour, violence-related injuries, arrests for impaired driving, aggressive or violent behaviour, and so

forth amongst the youth (Zhang et al., 1999). Overall, these factors have adverse effects on the health of the youth and the economy of South Africa (Parry et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 1999).

Although this group creates a risk to society, as presented above, a growing body of literature (Boeck, 2009; Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003; Fleming & Hudson, 2009; Lerner 2004; Lerner et al., 2010; Zeldin, 2004) has described the youth as a group with the potential to make a positive contribution in community development. Boeck (2009: 89) depicted the youth as “social capital”, Flanagan and Van Horn (2003: 273) as “the logical next step in community development”, while Zeldin (2004: 75) considered the youth as “agents” in the development process.

Provided the youth are deemed as an asset and as partners in the development process, they can be accorded the opportunity to identify their needs and subsequently plan on how to solve these needs so as to improve their well-being and that of their communities. It also means that they can actively participate in the decision-making processes of development programmes in the community. However, their inclusion in the development process and their participation in the decision-making process of a programme cycle is wanting in both the literature and in practice.

It is against this background that this research was conducted, with the intention to empirically examine the level of youth involvement in the decision-making process of community development programmes in the selected case study area of the Spes Bona High School Dream2Bepeer education programme, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

1.2. Overview of the socio-economic landscape in South Africa

The re-orientation of South Africa's policies since 1994 has, over the years, brought about both positive and negative developmental changes in the country. Prinsloo (2003) stressed that, on the positive side, the black¹ majority has replaced the white minority on the political front, while, on the negative side, the government has found it increasingly difficult to provide for the needs of its people, despite its promises to provide for all at the advent of democracy in the country. This has further worsened due to the economic downturn of the country's economy following the global financial crisis, causing severe socio-economic consequences to the country (NYP, 2009: 276; CIA, 2010), with 72% of the youth living under conditions of poverty (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008: 232).

The South African population is predominantly young and is estimated at 40% of the total population (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008; Mathebula & Mahlangu, 2008; NYP, 2009). Despite a high percentage, the future of this group has been continually threatened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Kirby et al., 2006; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001), the adverse effects of alcohol, drug abuse and crime (Palmer 2004; Parry et al., 2004), rapid urbanisation and inadequate housing and education (Prinsloo, 2003; NYP, 2009). The impact of these factors presents challenges to the youth as they are yet to integrate and be absorbed into the socio-economic development of the country.

¹The South African Apartheid government categorised its population under four racial groups namely the Black, White, Coloured and Asian races. Blacks were generally those of African origin, the white were of European descent, the Indian of Asian descent while the Coloured were of mixed identity as a result of intermarriages of persons of white, black African, Malay, Indian or Khoisan descent. The study uses these categories not to imply the racial origin of people or derogatory connotation, as used during the Apartheid tenure, but rather to suggest their use in the everyday life of a South African, for example, the distinction between Black and Coloured peoples (Gibson & Gouws 1999).

Consequently, the government has acknowledged the plethora of these challenges that undermine socio-economic development, especially in communities. As stated in the Community Development Policy Framework, the government is committed to human development and self-reliance through an enabling socio-economic environment, and identifies the youth as one of its priority target groups towards community development (Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007: 18).

1.2.1. Community development in South Africa

Following the transition of South Africa into a democratic country in 1994, the government has endeavoured to improve the well-being of its citizens, following a people-centred approach as opposed to the separate development approach practiced during the Apartheid tenure (NYP 2009). According to Pieterse (2001: 75), people-centred or bottom-up development is geared towards the satisfaction of the people's or beneficiaries' needs, while advocating for active participation and involvement in their affairs and self-reliance in any given environment. Accordingly, the South African government has sought to co-ordinate community development through a diverse range of stakeholders, active in their own right, to reflect on practical situations and practical solutions and the experiences of the relevant beneficiaries (Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007).

In the context of South Africa, Swanepoel and De Beer (2006: 18) categorise community development stakeholders into four main groups. These are public sector stakeholders (national, provincial and local governments and parastatals), private stakeholders (industries, financial institutions and commerce associations), non-governmental or civil society associations (local government associations, development institutions, international, national and local development

organisations), and lastly, community based sector stakeholders (women's clubs, youth clubs, school committees, traditional leaders and structures). These are the primary stakeholders in community development (Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007). Thus, community development is considered as a collaborative development action plan, streamlined amongst an array of stakeholders with the aim of achieving sustainable development.

To reinforce this shared commitment, the national government of South Africa promotes a bottom- up development approach that primarily aims to bring beneficiaries to the forefront of any development initiative. As a result, the practice of community development often begins with a situation analysis, mainly conducted with the people and non- governmental organisations (NGOs), community development committee's (CDCs) or other civil organisations (Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007: 39-45). These organisations assist in implementing local government policies and legislations by conducting relevant community development programmes.

The local government policies and legislation are instrumental in making sure that community development is realistic and achievable, as detailed in the regulatory guidelines stipulated in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) document (Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007: 43). This government tier endeavours to make sure that people are at the centre of local-level development initiatives. Thus, it provides the physical infrastructure needed in the development processes of community leadership by councillors, technical support and community services (safety and cultural) through skilled officials, access to government services through community development workers, and mobilisation of finance for community initiatives

(Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007: 44; Davids, Theron, & Maphunye, 2005: 60). This institutional structure is further assisted by the provincial government.

Through the provincial government, community development is co-ordinated by the Office of the Premier, the Department of Local Government and the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) (Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007). Its main mandate is to advance plans of these departments and co-ordinate the implementation of the IDP plans (Community Development Policy Strategic Framework, 2007: 44). They thus promote development by designing and implementing provincial policies and legislation and applying the principles contained in national policy and legislation to the situation within their respective areas (Davids et al., 2005: 59). As relates to this study, the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED) and the Western Cape Department of Health (WCDH) have promoted the Life Skills and peer education programme as part of the education curriculum, health and community development in the Western Cape community high schools to involve the youth especially from communities with socio-economic problems in the development of their lives (Life Choices, 2006; WCED, 2010).

Lastly, the role of the national government in community development is mainly to develop a national policy framework and regulatory guidelines, as they pertain to the realities of the youth, to be implemented in community (Davids et al., 2005: 56). The South African National Youth Policy (2009-2014) seeks to empower the youth to realise their full potential as well as understand their roles and responsibilities in making a significant contribution to the development of a sustainable South Africa (NYP, 2009). Thus, this policy seeks a people-centred

approach to empower the youth in realising their full potential in making critical decisions and contributions in the problem identification and in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the processes of the project cycle, as stipulated in the community development policy, for the development of their lives and of a sustainable South Africa.

1.3. Problem statement and research question

Involving youth in decision making is a new field in the youth and community development discourse, as discussed by Winter (2003) and Zeldin (2004). However, two studies have revealed that involving the youth in such a process has positive effects and ensures high chances of sustaining programmes and youth development plans that embark on this route (United Nations, 2003; Zeldin et al., 2007). Development practitioners are thus challenged to find out what will lead to the voice of the youth being included in the decision-making process and what factors inhibit the voice of the youth from being part of such a process.

Therefore, this study sought to find out if the youth in the Spes Bona High School peer education programme were actively involved in the decision-making process of the project cycle. A review of the relevant literature indicated that empirical studies in this field are lacking. Hence, assessing youth involvement in the decision-making process of community development programmes is of critical importance and requires empirical testing through scientific research.

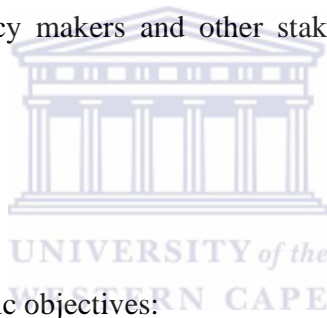
Thus, the main purpose of this research is to provide an answer the following general question:

To what extent are the youth involved in the decision-making processes in community development programmes and how does this involvement affect their needs and ownership of their development?

This question was grounded in the aim and objectives provided in the following section.

1.4. Aim of the study

The aim of the research was to assess the level of youth participation in the decision-making space of a project cycle, with specific reference to the Spes Bona High School Dream2Be peer education programme. Thus, an understanding of participatory development within the implementing NGO of this programme was also sought. Information was derived from the youth, project management and field staff who were active participants in the decision-making part of the programme. Information was also gathered from community members in an endeavour to provide recommendations to policy makers and other stakeholders with an interest in youth development.



1.4.1. Objectives of the study

The study had the following specific objectives:

1. To provide a solid theoretical and conceptual framework from which to launch the research study by analysing applicable youth and community development theories and concepts.
2. To outline a general overview of the community and explore the organisational structure of the NGO, that is, the dynamics of the selected organisation and activities of the peer education programme.
3. To assess the level/degree of participation of the youth in the decision-making process by identifying the perceptions of the youth and the programme staff as well studying youth

and community development policies and strategies.

4. To offer recommendations for future support of youth involvement in crucial decision making, in order to advance the participatory development approach amongst stakeholders that embark on the route of youth participation in community development.

1.5. Motivation for the study

The researcher's interest emanated from her dedication to working with the youth in the community. The researcher has been involved as a peer educator in peer education programmes whilst at the University of the Western Cape. Likewise, as part of the requirements in completing an Honours project in the Community Development in Theory and Practice Module, the researcher assessed the impact of peer education programmes on learners in a community high school. Ultimately, the researcher was interested in understanding what constitutes sustainable development, where the youth are involved in community development.

1.6. Basics concepts and terminology

In support of the study undertaken, the following key terms and concepts are highlighted.

Development: This term has undergone a series of definitions since the 1950s. Depending on the view of the society of the time, different scholars have provided an array of meanings (Chambers, 1997; Coetzee, 1986; Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006). In the 1950s, it was used to describe central planning on economic development (Graaff, 2004; Hoogvelt, 1982; Waisbord, 2001). However, since the 1980s, to date, the term has been used to depict a decentralised model of development that is inclusive of the poor

(Davids et al., 2009; Gajanayake & Gajanayake, 1993; Rahman, 1993). Despite the various views from different periods in time, the general consensus is that development denotes characteristics such as change, progress, growth and transformation. In fact, Chambers (1997), Masango (2002), and Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) emphasised that these aims are achieved when the people are given the power to fully participate in the decision-making process within development initiatives.

Participation: Oakley (1991) described participation as a way of harnessing the existing economic and social resources of people in order to achieve the objectives of development programmes. In addition, Chambers (1997) argued that it is a conscious effort which encourages people to take the lead in much of the agenda, to plan, gather, express and analyse information. In the same vein, Rahman (1993) asserted that active group participation evokes a sense of people-power and self- transformation. Overall, these authors agreed that it is a process through which people are given the power to be involved in identifying their needs, analysing these needs and making decisions, according to these needs, as a collective group.

Community: Ferinho (1980, cited in Abiche, 2004: 27) advanced the idea that a community is a specific system that arises when a human population settles in a given territory and shares common characteristics and interests and then builds mutual relationships for common benefits. Similarly, Dinbabo (2003) noted that a community refers to a group of people living together with a common attachment to a particular place. The Spes Bona High School peer education programme is used to represent a community in this study. It is assumed that the young people in this programme have

common characteristics, interests, aspirations and benefits that they derive from each other and develop.

Sustainability: This is a conscious commitment of a community to their well-being and the well-being of future generations. Scoones (2006), stressed that sustainability can only be achieved if the current generation is sensitised to the conservation of its natural resources and its economic and social resources in order to provide for present use and for the future. This relates to community participation as it capitalises on the capabilities and assets of people and organisations to become self-supporting, as emphasised by Warburton (1998). Moreover, it focuses on the impact of institutional policies and arrangements on people's lives and on dimensions of their well-being (Chambers & Conway 1991).

Youth: The United Nations (2010b) defines the world youth population as the age cohort 15-24 years, while the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006) defines them as every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years. In addition, the World Development Report (The World Bank, 2007) defines youth as 12-24 years old. Each country that adopts any of these definitions would do so according to its unique situation. Accordingly, for the purposes of this study, the youth will be defined as a group of people within the range of 14-35 years of age, as guided by the current National Youth Policy of South Africa 2009-2014 (NYP, 2009). Other words used to describe this group are young people or young adults. These words are used interchangeably within the study to avoid redundancy.

Peer education programmes: These are community development programmes whose sole target is to engage the youth in progressive and participatory change in their communities. Shiner (1999) asserted that peer education is the process whereby the youth share their experiences and learn from others like them. Consequently, the peer education programme chosen for this study is perceived as a community development initiative that works with the youth and for the youth.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs): These are any group of people who often work with and for people in indigent areas. According to Eade (2000: 9), NGOs are thus institutional structures in community that are sensitive to the needs of ordinary people. In terms of participation, they often seek a participatory form of development, particularly with the people at the forefront of any development initiative (Clark 1991). Life Choices is presented as an NGO used to advocate for grassroots action, with the aim of developing the youth. Furthermore, NGOs are likened to a democratic channel that empowers ordinary people as leaders to demand that a government be open and accountable and exercise a participatory approach in their development efforts (Clark 1991: 14).

1.7. Research agenda

The chapter above introduced the progression of this study and provided a foundation for the study. It also presented the problem statement, research questions, aim, objectives and rationale of the study.

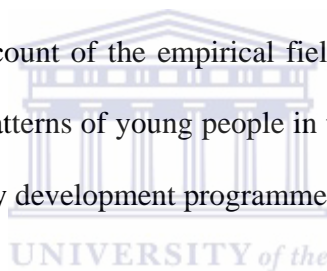
Chapter 2 contains the literature review on youth development, the community development theories that serve as a theoretical and conceptual framework for the research undertaken.

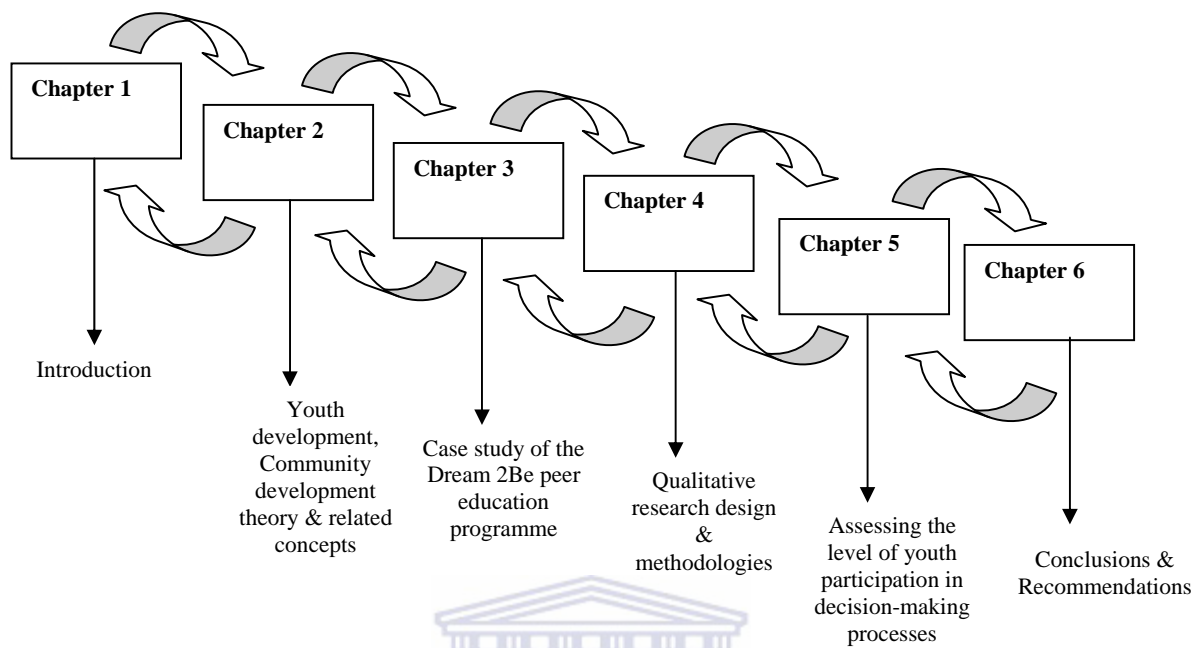
Chapter 3 provides background information of the Spes Bona High School peer education programme and assesses its organisational structure, its dynamics as well as the activities carried out in its operation.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design and qualitative methodology paradigms applied to the study, the ethical statement that guided the researcher in data collection as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed account of the empirical fieldwork undertaken and presents the analytical findings related to the patterns of young people in the decision-making platform in the Spes Bona High School community development programme.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and recommendations resulting from analysis of the empirical data collected from the Spes Bona High School peer education programme, and suggests best practices to youth development practitioners that aim to practice youth participation in decision making within community development programmes. Below is an illustration of the sequence of chapters, as followed in the study.





Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The participatory development paradigm is used as a theoretical framework for this study as it offers an inclusive or people-centred development process. As a result, its interpretation is offered as a process that offers young people the chance to be involved in development initiatives by making critical decisions that may shape and effect developmental change in their lives and their communities.

The purpose of this chapter is to place the study in the existing body of literature and provide the intellectual underpinning for the research inquiry undertaken.

Therefore, this chapter presents a) a detailed description of the classical development theories and the people-centred approaches; b) the youth participation discourse; c) the global, regional and national policies that advocate for the inclusion of the youth in community development; d) the situation of the youth in South Africa; and e) a summary of the chapter.

2.2. Literature review

2.2.1. Youth participation discourse

The term *youth participation*, also known as *youth development*, is derived from the ecology of human development that marks the shift in a person's biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics from being considered childlike or adolescent to what is considered adult-like (Lerner 2004). As Flanagan and Van Horn (2003) and Perkins (2009) observed, the discourse was embraced by 20th century psychologists who sought to unearth possible solutions

to deal with behavioural youth problems in society. An assumption was made that young people were characteristically trouble makers, who would ultimately change once they progressed in age. In defiance of this paradigm, several authors (Boeck 2009; Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003; Lerner 2004; Lerner et al., 2010) recommended a paradigm shift in the discourse, in an attempt to discredit this one-sided form of youth development, to a discourse that enables young people to take over the ownership of their development. This has since become an interdisciplinary field, with various subjective inferences (Lerner 2004). For the purposes of this study, the terms *youth participation* and *youth involvement* are applied and used interchangeably.

Youth participation, then, is described as an approach whose main focus is on the recognition of the youth as opportunities or resources rather than as developmental problems (Flanagan & Van Horn 2003; Lerner et al., 2010). In affirmation, Boeck (2009) and Lerner (2004) embraced this shift in theory as it sought to transfer attention from youth as troublemakers in society to developing their capacities and strengths, to learn, build partnerships and be able to involve themselves in their development and that of their communities.

Flanagan and Van Horn (2003) and Lerner (2004) contended that youth participation fosters the civic association necessary for social cohesion in community. For Lerner (2004), civic values of a society can be instilled in young people in programmes such as after-school programmes, peer-education programmes, and girl and boy scouting clubs. According to a youth development study, Flanagan and Van Horn (2003) found that the experiences of young people in an after-school programme campaigned for the common good and instilled values such as tolerance, compassion and the skills that epitomise a democratic and civil society, through active involvement in the programme's activities. In a similar empirical study, Eccles and Gootman

(2002, cited in Lerner, 2004), presented a list of five important features that emerged from a group in a youth development programme. According to Eccles and Grootman, such programmes brought about positive developmental assets amongst the youth, which they conceptualised as the 5 Cs (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring). For these authors, it was thus necessary to create spaces in which the practice of youth development could be initiated.

In advancing the study by Eccles and Grootman, Lerner (2004), deemed the 5 Cs to be social capital or valuable skills by which youth could enhance their capacity to thrive and become active members in their development as well as advocate for progressive change in their communities. The involvement of the youth to this end is considered particularly important to bring about grassroots development as well as to foster a responsible citizenry amongst young people within the community. In addition, such experiences provide the youth with the hands-on-experience that will develop the individual and can be adapted to develop the community as a whole.

In support of the notion of achievement of social capital, Flage et al. (2010), the World Youth Report (United Nations, 2003) and Zeldin (2004) noted that successful youth participation in community programmes requires substantial shifts in organisational policies and culture. Accordingly, these authors have asserted that change in organisational culture, particularly, relates to the change in reference to the youth from that of a problematic group to that of a culture that encourages the youth to participate in their own development. In an exploration of this assertion, Zeldin (2004) mapped out the developmental changes that occurred when young people and adults shared responsibilities that pertained to the daily operations of a youth

development programme. The data from this study showed that when young people were engaged in the decision-making process, this enhanced and secured their commitment to the development initiative they were involved in; which subsequently had an impact on their contribution to positive youth development. This meant that changes in organisational values would prepare young people to take on the challenges to their development, while organisations would distance themselves from treating this group as mere recipients of adult authority and supervision. However, Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) cautioned that changing participation patterns, especially amongst marginalised groups, such as the youth, takes time and can only be achieved through long-term commitment and ongoing communication amongst the relevant stakeholders (adults and young people).

Changes in an organisation's management imply that the youth are placed as partners in a development programme's operations (United Nations, 2003; Zeldin et al., 2007). Most importantly, these authors emphasised that the development of this kind of partnership brings about the synergy to facilitate the contribution from the youth necessary to improve their well-being and that of their communities. A study conducted by Zeldin et al. (2000), with an international sample of 19 youth and 29 adults from 15 organisations, revealed that youth-adult partnerships facilitated the young people to bring new and fresh ideas that brought about change within the organisation's procedure and responsibilities. This was evident in the support that most of the adults gave in confirming that young people brought about a sense of community and energy in the decision-making processes (Zeldin et al., 2000).

Although Zedin et al. proved that young people introduced "fresh ideas" to organisational governance, the World Youth Report (United Nations, 2003) argued that adults should maintain

the responsibility for maintaining these partnerships as they are best suited to wean and guide the youth into the operations of a programme cycle. In this case, adults are deemed more experienced in succeeding and failing in such processes, unlike young people, who are novices in decision-making operations.

In addition, Flanagan and Van Horn (2003), Lerner (2004) and Zeldin et al. (2007) agreed that such partnerships provide a mutual learning space, offer support that will empower the youth, instil a sense of ownership, and give them an opportunity to build their capacity to engage in youth development. In the case of Zeldin et al. (2000), the youth and adult partnerships of the youth groups they studied seemed to have a transactional relationship that contributed towards youth development whilst promoting youth integration, to engage in the operations of and responsibilities to the programme as well as the community.

Furthermore, the World Youth Report from the United Nations (2003) and Zeldin et al. (2007) confirmed that such partnerships allow youth inclusion, particularly in the decision-making processes of programme cycles. Such a platform accordingly provides young adults with a voice to articulate their concerns and exercise sound choices about these affairs. However, challenges exist to youth articulating their concerns, bearing in mind the traditional domination of project leaders or organisation leaders in the decision-making processes of programme cycles. Zeldin (2004) confirmed that the domination of adult leaders has direct implications for how both actors perceive the contexts in which they find themselves, as well as their interactions and opportunities. Nevertheless, Lerner et al. (2010) asserted that the youth involvement in the programmes' operation is determined within a context in which they are allowed to participate and offer opinions according to their understanding of their development.

The World Health Organisation (2001) and Zeldin et al. (2007) outlined the stages of a development initiative in which young people should be involved by fostering partnerships. These include the project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation stages. Likewise, a study conducted by Fleming and Hudson (2009) identified various areas in which young people can exercise their decision-making ability. These include research; however, these authors cautioned that the youth should not be included as mere data providers but as stakeholders in participatory research.

In corroboration of the above authors' assertions, the World Youth Report (United Nations, 2003) outlined several areas in which youth contribution has brought about community development in various parts of the world. These ranged from peer support, representation and advocacy, policy analysis and development, campaigning and lobbying, development and management of their own organisations, participation in and use of the media, and conference participation to youth councils and parliaments (United Nations, 2003: 280).

2.3. Youth in South Africa

The young people of South Africa are fondly remembered for their revolt in 1976 and other major uprisings against the Apartheid regime (Richter, 2005; NYP, 2009). During the Apartheid government's tenure, the development of young men and women as an important part of civic society was ignored (Moleke, 2006). However, given their active insurgence against the Apartheid government, the democratic government duly acknowledged the youth in the structural macro-economic policies of reconstruction and development (RDP) (NYP, 2004). These policies were consequently implemented and established through structures to promote,

ensure and strengthen an active youth group in civic life (Morrow, Pandy & Ritcher, 2005). However, Kekana (2003) suggested that the approach to youth development after 1994 was slow in mainstreaming and mobilising youth issues in the constitution and the RDP and, ultimately, in the country.

The current National Youth Policy of South Africa 2009-2014 defines the youth as the population segment that falls within the 13-45 age bracket (NYP 2009). This is estimated at approximately 40% of the country's total population (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008; Mathebula & Mahlangu, 2008; NYP, 2009).

Prinsloo (2003)² noted that the single most important factor that marginalises the youth in South Africa is poverty. Coupled with the fact that the cycle of poverty has negative effects, with multiple deprivations that relate to health, employment, education and so forth on community members, the youth are, according to Cornwall (2008), Makiwane and Kwizera (2008) and Prinsloo (2003), locked in these deprivations by the mere extension of their parents' experiences and backgrounds.

Further research has revealed that the socio-economic experiences of the youth are both diverse and paradoxical, as noted by Makiwane and Kwizera (2008), Prinsloo (2003) and Richter (2005).

²This study notes that there are limitations and outdated key indicators on the overall youth status in South Africa. This is attributed to the fact that youth demographics are adapted from the last South African census conducted in 2001. In addition to these adaptations, the study assumes that the general household poverty indicators as conducted in census 2001 automatically have an impact on the youth given the fact that a significant segment of the South African population is categorised as young people.

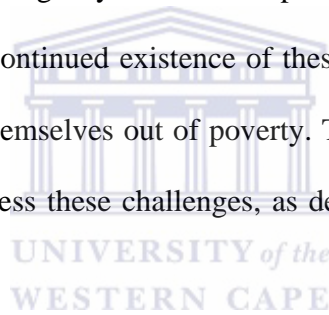
For example, Makiwane and Kwizera (2008) reported that while education, especially for South African youth and women, has expanded, unemployment has worsened in recent years. In addition, Prinsloo (2003) maintained that although there is a correlation between the level of education and employment, South African graduates since 1995 have experienced the largest growth in unemployment despite attaining a matriculation certificate and tertiary education. As a consequence, low self-esteem and negative self-concept formation amongst this group have led to youth alienation and estrangement from society as they fail to find a useful and purposeful role (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997, cited in Prinsloo, 2003). In these scenarios, it is evident that gender and race inequalities continue to hinder access to employment and educational opportunities amongst this group of people.

Moreover, in the process of moving from childhood to youth, an estimated 46% are believed to have improved their economic conditions, while 36.1% are reported to have their conditions remain the same, while 17.6% are reported to have their conditions worsened (Makiwane & Kwizera 2008).

Poor health structures and rising HIV/AIDS infection rates continue to compromise the mortality rates of this group (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008; Prinsloo, 2003). According to HIV/ AIDS and STI Strategic Plan 2007, there was a high prevalence of HIV and AIDS amongst youth, with 50% of new HIV infections in the 15-24 years cohort in 1991-2005. In the Western Cape Province, such statistics were estimated to affect approximately 36% percent of black youth, 48% of coloured youth, 1% of Indian or Asian youth and 14% of white youth (Mathebula & Mhlangu, 2008).

The African and coloured³ young people continue to migrate from rural into urban areas such as Gauteng and the Western Cape Province, in search of better opportunities (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008). As a result, the escalating growth of informal settlements and squatter camps, where young people are exposed and trapped in crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse and delinquency and where quality of life is very low because of the negative effects of unemployment and poverty, have resulted in anti-social behaviour (Prinsloo, 2003).

These experiences, coupled with the remnants of the Apartheid regime, continue to marginalise the present generation of the youth, thereby affecting their ability to live fulfilling lives, realise their potential, and participate meaningfully in the development of their personal, social, political and economic lives. Overall, the continued existence of these factors amongst the youth means that they are less likely to work themselves out of poverty. The post-Apartheid government has since 1994 had a mandate to address these challenges, as detailed in the South Africa national youth policy framework.



2.4. Youth-related policy frameworks

This section presents an overview of global, regional, national and local youth-related policies. These are described as mutually inclusive policies. On the international scene, the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) to the Year 2000 and Beyond (United Nations, 2006) and the World Development Report 2007 highlight new insights and perspectives that reinforce the developmental role of young people in the world. Following its guidelines and mandates, the African Union has adopted the African Youth Charter as a policy whose agenda is focused on the

³These two racial groups are considered historically disadvantaged individuals given their marginalisation in the previous Apartheid government.

development of the youth for socio-economic growth on the continent (African Union, 2006). Following these steps, the South African national government has adopted the National Youth Policy as a responsive institutional structure to address youth problems and encourage development unique to the country (NYP, 2009). Overall, these policies concur that young people are intrinsic to development and are thus considered decision makers in the global, regional, national, and community spheres.

2.4.1. The United Nations World Programme for Action for Youth (2000 and Beyond)

The World Programme Action for Youth (WPAY), (2000 and Beyond) is the current United Nations blueprint policy framework for international and national action that supports and fosters conditions to improve the well-being and livelihoods of the youth (United Nations, 2006). In particular, it focuses on strengthening national capacities to “increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to the youth for full, effective and constructive participation in society” (United Nations, 2006: 5). This policy defines *youth* as the group aged between 15 and 24 years.

According to United Nations General Assembly, 15th Session, agenda 106 of 1996, the WPAY identifies 15 key areas, grouped in three interlinked and dependent clusters for youth development (United Nations, 2006: 5). These clusters are a) ***Youth in the global economy***, which includes matters of hunger and poverty, education, employment, and globalisation; b) ***Youth and their well-being***, which encompasses areas of health, drug abuse, girls and young women, delinquency, conflict and HIV/AIDS; and c) ***Youth and civil society***, which relates to concerns of information and communication technologies (ICTs), environment, leisure, participation in decision making and inter-generational relations (United Nations, 2006).

The commitment to the above focus areas, as pointed out in the WPAY, is ultimately the responsibility of the national government, through the formulation and adoption of cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary youth policies to be supported by the WPAY and in co-operation with NGOs, youth organisations, youth-related departments, civil society, parents and the youth (United Nations, 2006). However, the prerequisite for achieving the goals of the three clusters of the WPAY is enabling the economic, social and political participation of youth in society (United Nations, 2006).

Investing in the youth by the international and national communities can also be viewed as a means to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (United Nations, 2010a). According to the United Nations (2010b), the youth represents 18% of the world's population, with 15% of these living in Africa. It is thus clear that the youth are affected by each of the goals and are thus responsible for their achievement. Therefore, the WPAY emphasises that the youth are the *makers* in society and are the resource that can lead to the development of the current and future generations (United Nations, 2006).

In complementing the WPAY and the MDGs, the African Youth Charter supports the calling of the youth, specifically in the development of the sub-Saharan region and, through its action plans, identifies obstacles and options to further youth development in the region.

2.4.2. The African Youth Charter

The authors of the African Youth Charter (AYC) believed that the youth are the most important resource in surmounting the socio-economic problems on the African continent, if they are given the opportunity (African Union, 2006). Accordingly, Article 11 of the AYC stipulates that “every

young person shall have the right to participate in development of all spheres of society” (African Union, 2006: 6).

To reinforce this, the Charter instructs all member states⁴to develop a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy, as noted in Article 12 (African Union, 2006: 7). This will be supported by the AU, as mentioned in Article 28 of the charter, by collaborating with governments and NGOs to identify best youth participation practices for implementation while simultaneously facilitating co-operation between youth organisations in order to develop regional youth solidarity (African Union, 2006: 19).

2.4.3. Youth-related policy frameworks in South Africa

As a member state of the United Nations and the AU, South Africa has adopted the guidelines of the WPAY and AYC in formulating youth policies that are pertinent to the youth in all aspects of the country’s socio-economic development.

Several youth policy frameworks have been designed since 1994. These include the National Youth Commission (NYC), Act No. 19 of 1996; the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2000 and the National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYDPF) 2002-2007 (Moleke, 2006; NYP, 2002; NYP, 2009). During this time, the government sought to mainstream youth development in all government departments, based on policy reviews of the NYP 2000 and NYDPF 2002/7 and programmatic interventions implemented for young people between 1994 and 2007 (NYP, 2009). As a result of these reviews, the NYP 2009-2014 was formulated in consultation with

⁴As guided by the constitutive Act of the African Union (AU)

youth organisations at the national, provincial and local levels, government structures, religious formations, research institutions, the labour movement, civil society and the private sector (NYP, 2009).

2.4.3.1. The South Africa National Youth Policy 2009-2014.

This is the current national blueprint that serves as a planning tool to guide the South African government in its approach towards youth development. Its main focus is on the holistic development of the youth, not as passive recipients of government services but as agents of change (NYP, 2009).

It seeks to make youth development a reality by mainstreaming youth involvement through government departments, national youth development agencies, NGO's and private organisations (NYP 2009). Accordingly, the youth are treated not as a group defined by their poverty but as *makers* in both government and society. Thus, the policy has spelt out the rights and responsibilities of young people and created an environment where youth development is fully integrated into the national development agenda of South Africa.

Strategically, the policy proposes integrating interventions of programmes in education, economic participation, health and well-being, social cohesion and civic participation, national youth service, and youth work (NYP 2009). Through this, the national government anticipates that improvement in these sectors will encourage the youth's involvement in the overall decision-making processes in developmental initiatives that include programme design and policy and programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation (NYP 2009). In addition, it also recommends improving and accelerating the growth of youth development by ensuring that

they take ownership and are able to realise their full potential and understand their roles and responsibilities in making meaningful contributions to the development of the country (NYP 2009).

Further, the policy aims to increase the voice of the youth in the above processes by developing diverse groups such as vulnerable groups of young women, youth with disabilities, unemployed youth, school aged-out-of-school youth, youth in rural areas, and youth at risk (NYP 2009).

From the literature review, the conclusion can be made that youth development problems in the country are obviously persistent and multi-dimensional. This is despite the strong indication in literature and policy of the youth's value and ability to exercise their decision-making skills. It is for this reason that the development theories with particular reference to participatory development are presented in the next section as a theoretical stance, as it is assumed this will bring young people closer to participating in development and engage them in decision-making activities.

2.5. Conceptualisation of development

Development is described as a multi-dimensional and subjective concept that has undergone rigorous and contested debates in history. According to Chambers (2005), Cowen and Shenton (1996), and Pieterse (2001), the concept of *development* dates back to the post-World War II era of modern development thinking, with an economic bias. Since then, however, debates have been in pursuit of rapid change in order to yield development alternatives.

Several authors, such as Chambers (2005), Pieterse (2001) and Waisbord (2001), argued that development aims to bring about change for the good in the material, social, political

environmental, psychological and cultural lives of people. In addition, Coetzee, Graaff, Hendericks and Wood (2001) suggested that development carries with it implications of favourable change, moving from worse to better, evolving from simple to complex, while advancing away from the inferior. Similarly, Cypher and Dietz (1997: 27) defined the term *development* as an approach that “incorporates the diverse aspiration of the good life, in all its economic, social and political dimensions, that each society sets for itself”. Furthermore, Chambers (2005: 185) asserted that this entails knowing “about ourselves, how our ideas are formed, how we think, how we change and what we do and do not do”.

In general, the above definitions allude to the idea that development is a process of decision making, in which people have the ability to improve their current living conditions, as pertain to education, health, economic and other aspects, regardless of their age, gender and race. With specific reference to this study, this is interpreted to mean that young adults are entitled to and capable of improving their livelihoods without the biases identified earlier. Despite this assertion, development that involves young people, particularly in South Africa, in the decision-making processes, is still in its infancy. Many challenges continue to hinder the implementation and active participation of this group in development initiatives within the country.

The following section presents, first, the development theories that serve as the foundations for the theoretical underpinning for this study. Second, the participatory development theory is offered as a framework for bringing young people closer to the decision-making table.

2.5.1. Development theories

Different schools of thoughts exist concerning development discourse. In fact, Pieterse (2001) noted that this discourse has undergone a series of constructions and reconstructions over the past 50 years. The following section presents the classical theories, namely the modernisation and dependency development theories of the 1950s and 1960s. These are considered the fundamental theories in the development discourse and are presented as right-wing theories of development. At the height of their popularity, it was assumed that there was one linear method of development, evident in developed countries, and which undeveloped countries needed to replicate. This development pattern was centred on the growth of a country's economic sphere or gross domestic product (GDP).

Notwithstanding their legitimacy, as an antithesis, the alternative development theories or people-centred approaches in the 1980s contradicted these right-wing assumptions. These are presented in the second part of the section as left-wing theories of development, often held by undeveloped countries. They are rooted in self-reliance and the satisfaction of people's needs. This study thus adds to the advocacy for the utilisation of the newer development theories, given that they suggest the active involvement of key beneficiaries in the decision-making processes of development processes.

2.5.2. Classical development theories

2.5.2.1. Modernisation theory

Modernisation theory is classified as the first theory that explained the nature of poverty and subsequent need for a development culture in developing countries (Coetzee et al., 2001; Davids

et al., 2005). When it was first applied, in the 1950s, “developed” or First World countries took it upon themselves to guide those who were not “developed” (So, 1990). They did this by explicitly preaching the message of “do what we do and become like us” (Graaff, 2004; Waisbord, 2001).

Unequivocally, it was a self-styled theory by First World countries, whose central argument was rooted in the necessity to adopt modern ways of life. According to this rationale, First World countries argued that the reason why Third World countries did not experience economic growth was due to their obsession with their traditional values and norms that placed religion and family above efficiency and the market (Graaff, 2004; Smith, 1973). Thus, this meant that Third World countries were expected to change their rigid cultural, economic and political customs to experience economic and technical growth. Despite its popularity, this theory was criticised in the 1970s, as it failed to extend the general economic wealth accumulated to the majority of the people in any given developing country.

2.5.2.2. Dependency theory

The weaknesses of the modernisation theory led to the advancement of the dependency theory. Dependency theory sought to understand how development and underdevelopment occurred in the First World (core) and Third World (periphery) countries respectively.

Beginning in the 1960s, this theory’s rationale was informed by Marxist and critical theories that explained that the problems of the Third World were as a result of the general dynamics of capitalist development (Theron & Graaff 1987). One of its key protagonists, Andre Gunder Frank, implied that periphery countries were deliberately exploited for the economic benefit of

the core countries (Graaff, 2004). Frank argued that the prosperity of the core was thus a consequence of a calculated manoeuvre to keep the periphery continually underdeveloped, causing “stagnation and extreme pauperisation of the masses” (cited in Hoogvelt, 1982: 166). Therefore, the distinction between the core and periphery countries was caused by the unequal trading relationship between the two over time (Waisbord, 2001). A possible development solution offered to solve this predicament was a complete detachment of the periphery countries from the core countries (Graaff, 2004).

Dependency theory, however, lost its popularity because of its pessimistic nature as it offered no escape from the order whereby peripheral countries were placed economically dependent on the core countries within the world system (Hoogvelt, 1982). This theory was also flawed in that it failed to explain the sudden social and economic growth of certain peripheral countries in the 1970s (Graaff, 2004). This was particularly the case of the four East Asian “tigers” that included Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Admittedly, the modernisation and dependency schools of thought provide an insight into the foundations of the development discourse. However, they are both deficient, given their focus on economic prosperity while failing to provide an inclusive development process that adheres to the social and political needs of people. In their insufficiency, neither theory can be applied in the context of South Africa, specifically as they do not include the youth in decision-making processes in the community. Classical development theories thus fail to cover all aspects relating to community development for poor people or the previously marginalised youth.

Having explained the disenchantment with the modernisation and dependency theories, the next section will present a detailed overview of the alternative/ people-centred development theories, whose premises are grounded on the sustainable and participatory development of people.

2.5.3. Alternative approaches/People-centred development

Dinbabo (2003) and Pieterse (2001) both noted that dissatisfaction with the traditional development theories led to a re-examination of the purpose of development, with the aim of searching for alternative conceptual explanations. As a result, development practitioners realised that development could not only be brought about through macro-economic policies but that attention must also be paid to the micro issues that reflect a human orientation or a people-centred approach (Rahman, 1993; Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006).

The people-centred approach is synonymous with, amongst others, concepts such as participatory development (Oakley, 1991), decision making (Chambers, 1997), self-reliant development and human-scale development (Rahman, 1996), empowerment (Gajanayake & Gajanayake, 1993) and sustainability (Scoones 2006; Swanepoel & De Beer 2006) as an all-encompassing understanding of development that reflects human orientation.

In principle, Chambers (1997) asserted that development should be a process whereby the people are given the power to fully participate in decision-making processes, which influences their participation, capacity building and self-reliance. In addition, Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) suggested that this approach creates a mutual learning environment for the people and for development practitioners, such as the government, NGOs or CBOs, especially in the management of community projects.

Nevertheless, Swanepoel and De Beer (1998) warned that there is scanty research that relates to the people being involved in decision-making processes in development initiatives. However, they observed that numerous attempts have been made in which development practitioners have tried to include people in decision-making activities but have often failed. The results of this study indicate that the involvement of people in decision-making processes promotes genuine and sustainable development. In the same light, it is argued that youth participation in decision making is critical as it forms part of the sustainable development process. Thus, this observation underpins the current research to examine the level of decision making amongst a group of young people in a development programme within the context of their participatory development approach.

In understanding the human orientation process, Oakley (1991) stressed the need to be aware that the principles of any form of development practice are linked to the development analysis through which the practice is executed. Dennis, (1997, cited in Dinbabo, 2003) claimed that the human-development approach has major guiding principles in terms of undertaking community-based programmes at the grassroots level. These include the principles of equal partnership, inclusion, transparency, power sharing, responsibility and co-operation. A brief description of these terms is provided below.

Inclusion: All the people, or representatives of all the groups who will be affected by the results of a decision or a process, for example, a development project, should be included;

Equal partnership: Recognising that every person has skill, ability and initiative and has an equal right to participate in the process, regardless of their status;

Transparency: All participants must help to create a climate for conducive, open communication and sustaining dialogue;

Sharing power: Authority and power must be balanced evenly between all stakeholders to avoid the domination of one party;

Sharing responsibility: All stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions that are made, and each should have clear responsibilities within each process;

Co-operation: Sharing everybody's strength reduces everybody's weaknesses (Dennis, 1997, cited in Dinbabo, 2003).



In conclusion, the bottom line in the people-centred approach is that no meaningful change can take place without the involvement of the people in every step of any development intervention. Therefore, in this study, an assertion is made that youth development resonates with participatory development. This is attributed to the fact that both concepts support the inclusion of the local understanding of people in decision-making processes and that people have a wealth of knowledge about their problems and environment. Similarly, as pertains to the principles of participatory development, young people have the extensive knowledge that can be utilised to manage and solve their immediate concerns and that of their communities and can contribute towards youth development and, ultimately, to the community.

The participatory development approach offers a particularly suitable development platform for the youth because it accords the youth the opportunity to identify, manage and tackle their needs. Moreover, it is a platform on which they are treated as assets in the development process and thus entrusted to contribute towards the efficiency of a programme's operations. Throughout this process, they are also accorded the opportunity to contribute towards their well-being and that of their communities.

2.6. Participatory development and related concepts

Participatory development⁵ is a process through which people learn to take charge of their own lives by solving their own problems in their communities. Several authors (Chambers, 1997; Oakley, 1991; Rahman, 1993; Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006) defined the term as an approach that is respectful of the people's positions in society, their needs and interests. Similarly, it has been described as providing an enabling environment for the people to decide upon what and how to take action in what they believe is crucial to their development (Chambers, 1997). Moreover, it is characterised as an approach that seeks to empower people through the development of skills and abilities (Oakley et al., 1991; Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006).

Participatory development recognises the importance of the involvement by all stakeholders in the development of a community. As a result, it seeks to incorporate the government, NGOs, politicians and those previously ignored, such as the women, illiterate, young and old in this process. However, in recognising the inclusion process, Oakley (2001) contended that the

⁵ In this study, the concept of participatory development is used to depict the alternative or people-centred approaches to development.

greatest challenge in the practice of mobilising all stakeholders in a development effort is deciding *who* is supposed or expected to engage in such a process. Rahman (1993) and Oakley (1991) believed that participatory development should begin with the masses of the marginalised in the community.

Furthermore, Abbott (1995) accentuated that participatory development operates successfully within the specific environment where the government and other development practitioners are open to the involvement of the ordinary people in the decision-making process. To achieve maximum success, it is obviously necessary for ordinary people to believe they have the power to make decisions that will positively affect their lives. Overall, the concept of participatory development, according to Swanepoel and De Beer (2006), is a collective and participatory grassroots action in which ordinary people, including the youth, find ways of satisfying their felt needs.

For the purposes of this study, the participatory development model was adopted to serve as a theoretical framework. This is because it offers a platform in which ordinary youth can engage in the development process. For this reason, it is deemed instrumental in building their capacities to tackle this challenge. Moreover, it offers an attractive approach for them to take the initiative to identify their problems, formulate objectives to change these problems and manage their development in the long term. In addition, through this process, young people can also bring development practitioners to task on their responsibilities and operations. However, research experience shows that real participation is difficult to achieve. Despite this, the following section highlights the concepts of empowerment and sustainable development used to describe genuine participation for the purposes of this study.

2.6.1. Empowerment

This is a process that promotes self-reliance and sharing of power. According to Gajanayake and Gajanayake (1993), empowerment implies that people decide where they are now and where they want to go and, subsequently, develop and implement plans to reach their goals. Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) applied the term to the right and ability to make decisions, while Masango (2002) suggested that it is the power *to* and also power *from within* to effect change.

Chawla and Malone (2002, cited in Boeck, 2009) declared that empowerment requires the appropriation of power by young people beyond the obvious knowledge of their source of disempowerment from gaining opportunities, but rather power to engage in activities that change their situations. In the context of this study, it is thus presumed that when development initiatives are taking place, the distribution of power should be taken into account to include processes that lead the youth to feel empowered or perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy the decision-making space.

Coupled with the acknowledgement of the youth in decision-making processes, empowerment is also the transformation of rigid organisational structures and operations that act as barriers to change (Gajanayake & Gajanayake, 1993; Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006). Additionally, it is the adaptation and opening up of spaces where the youth can authentically contribute to the ongoing social, physical, economic and policy development (Boeck, 2009) while creating a platform to hold the government, NGO's and other observers accountable for sustainable development.

The above definitions have presented an array of meanings and uses of the term *empowerment*. However, the term generally means that the people have or are given the power to direct their

development according to their own terms. This implies that power emerges or comes from another person or organisation and further suggests that they are therefore people that can be empowered. In context of this study, this means that the youth have the power to make critical decisions affecting their well-being. They thus need to be made aware of their power so as to begin to participate in decision-making processes that affect their development.

At this stage, empowerment and participation are deemed as mutually inclusive concepts. This means that for young people to participate in any development effort, they need, first to be acknowledged as a group capable of grasping the nature of their problems, grappling with these and, subsequently, implementing solutions to solve these problems. Their involvement in activities that expose and alert them to their developmental challenges is essential. The role, therefore, of youth development organisations, with specific reference to the Life Choices NGO, is to act as guides or mentors to bring young people closer to making practical and critical solutions. It is the responsibility of development practitioners to expand the knowledge and skills that would assist them to become self-reliant in any development effort.

2.6.2. Sustainable development

In recent years, sustainable development has become a “buzzword” in the development discourse (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Chambers, 2005; Scoones, 2006; Warburton, 1998). During its initial years, it was popularised in support of developing rural livelihoods through the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1986 (Chambers 2005). The concept *sustainability*, or *sustainable development*, has since then been applied to the elimination of poverty, resources management and agriculture, while exploiting human, natural,

physical, social and financial capital as a way of improving livelihoods in both rural and urban areas (Chambers, 2005; Scoones, 2006).

Sustainable development is a people-centred approach, which aims at identifying interventions that capitalise on opportunities in the pursuit of people's well-being (Chambers 2005). In addition, Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) asserted that it is a process in which people need to take the initiative to maintain the long-term productivity of natural resources for their immediate use and for future generations. Thus, this approach stresses resilience and innovative survival strategies in conditions of relative powerlessness (Chambers, 2005; Chambers & Conway, 1991; Scoones, 2006).

Furthermore, Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) stressed that sustainable development is a mobilisation activity that activates the local community to take an interest in taking responsibility in managing their future through implemented development programmes. As a result, it is a method of self-reliance in which the people are encouraged against a form of dependency on external support or expertise. At this stage, community members need to be empowered and develop their capacity and abilities to take up the responsibility to initiate and maintain development activities, as recommended by Chambers and Conway (1991) and Kotze (1997). Such ownership requires adequate communication with all relevant stakeholders from the onset of the project to its completion, with the aim of promoting participation in and management and ownership of development initiatives (Chambers & Conway, 1991).

In sealing the theoretical underpinning of the study, sustainable development is advanced as a long-term enabling process in which young people are familiarised with available resources

(natural, physical, social and financial) and assets to be exploited for their developmental benefit. Ultimately, such a process encourages self-reliance and a continuous process where young people reshape their current living conditions. In this context, it is a means through which long-term participation, management and subsequent ownership of their development may be realised.

2.7. Participatory youth development

This is a development framework that presents the youth as makers in society by recognising their strengths and challenging them to engage in their own and the wider community's development (Boeck, 2009; Cornwall, 2010; Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003; Lerner, 2004; Perkins, 2009). Several authors refer to participatory development of the youth using terms such as *youth as social capital* (Boeck, 2009), *youth in civic development* (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003), *positive youth development* (Lerner, 2004) and *community youth development* (Perkins, 2009).

According to Boeck (2009), youth development is a paradigm that is applied in working with young people in ways that provide them with opportunities to widen their horizons beyond poverty and exclusion in society. In addition, Perkins (2009) proposed that it is a model that promotes the development of the young people's personal and social assets as a means of preventing risky behaviour and decreasing risky processes in their environment, while Boeck (2009) and Perkins (2009) asserted that it is a process that involves developing the youth as resources to be utilised in the community.

As resources or social capital, young people are deemed capable of making decisions for participation in community programmes and assuming responsibilities in such programmes (Perkins, 2009). As a result, such opportunities pave the way to giving the youth the voice to be

involved in every step of the programme's operation process, which includes the problem identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and developing of a sense of cohesion in the community (NYP, 2009).

Providing such opportunities for responsibility amongst the youth in community programmes also provides opportunities for skills building and mutual interaction between adults and youth (Cornwall, 2010). Boeck (2009) and Perkins (2009) also pointed out that such support is only possible by working *with* the youth and not *for* them. Perkins (2009) thus advocated enhancing the young people's capabilities to be prepared to undertake community development as partners.

As partners, both adults (NGOs CBOs, government, parents and so forth) and youth need to build positive relationships with each other to work collaboratively in the community (Perkins, 2009). Zeldin et al. (2000) described partnership opportunities as a mutual learning and teaching space, where each age group (youth and adults) sees itself as a resource for the other and offers what it, uniquely, can provide. Lerner (2004) believed this would result in a sustained development process, which would confirm that youth development is linked to the participatory development paradigm.

Lerner et al. (2010) contended that a direct correlation exists between youth involvement in community development programmes and positive youth development. For these authors, youth development is represented as the development of assets known as the 5 Cs, namely competence, confidence, character, connection and caring (Lerner et. al. 2010: 18). However, Flanagan and Van Horn (2003: 273) argued that the development of such assets is an oversimplification of the relationship between youth development programmes and their role in community. Thus,

Flanagan and Van Horn affirmed that skills and competence development is not enough; instead, developing youth assets must also foster the youth's identification with the common good and with values such as tolerance, compassion and skills that contribute to a democratic and civil society (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003).

Overall, participatory youth development can be described as a favourable environment, in which the youth, NGOs, CBOs, government and other stakeholders instil trust, to build healthy partnerships, whilst cultivating youth responsiveness to their developmental affairs and that of their communities. Through such trusting partnerships, the youth are given the choice and power to offer insights, direction and effort towards their own development and that of their communities. In conclusion, this is a participatory development approach whose focus is geared towards alerting the youth on issues that concern them, and their peers, and solving these concerns with the aim of contributing towards sustainable participation and development.



2.7.1. Peer education

Given that the youth have been accorded the opportunity to self-develop and take responsibility for their future, as detailed in the theoretical framework, the concept of peer education as a community development programme that promotes the interest of youth in their socio-economic conditions and that of their communities has been employed in this study.

Peer education is a concept that is analysed as an approach, a communication channel, a methodology, a philosophy, or a strategy (United Nations, 1999). The term *peer* refers to one who is of equal standing with another, one belonging to the same societal group, especially based on age, grade or status, while *education* refers to the development, training, or persuasion of a

given person or thing, or the knowledge resulting from an educational process (Giuliano, 1994). Moreover, Shiner (1999) suggested that the term should be viewed as an umbrella term, covering a range of different approaches, based on the premise of sharing *our* experiences and learning from others like *us*. These definitions are thus used to characterise youth participation in this study.

On a global scale, peer education programmes⁶ have been centred on issues such as sexual health, drug and substance abuse education (United Nations, 1999; Shiner, 1999), peer tutoring in higher education, peer-based professional development (Giuliano, 1994; Kirby et al., 2006) and so forth. These programmes have, however, been championed in sub-Saharan Africa, as complementary or alternative interventions that advocate for positive youth development in their communities.

The Dream2Be peer education programme is a community development programme that seeks youth participation in development (Life Choices, 2010; Life Choices, 2006). As a youth programme, it is aimed at empowering youth to make informed and healthy decisions in their lives (Life Choices, 2006). Overall, through education, advocacy and the transfer of knowledge, this programme is based on the premise that *youth work* is working both *with* the youth and *for* the youth.

⁶ The peer education approach in sub-Saharan Africa has been popularised as a complementary method to the conventional Abstinence, Be Faithful and Condomise (ABC) method in the prevention of HIV/AIDS amongst the youth in the region.

2.8. Chapter summary

In this chapter, the socio-economic status of the youth in South Africa has been presented. The current situation, particularly in terms of impoverished conditions, with specific reference to the Athlone community youth, has been highlighted. Subsequently, the theories that form the theoretical foundation for development were detailed. In particular, the participatory development theory, and related concepts, has been advanced as the theoretical underpinning for the study, so as to analyse the socio-economic, political and historical aspects that hinder or facilitate the youth's participation in decision-making processes, in the case study of the Dream2Be peer education programme, discussed in the following chapter.



Chapter Three: A Case Study of The Spes Bona High School Dream2be Peer Education Programme

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the socio-economic profile and demographics of the Athlone community, Western Cape Province, South Africa. It also provides a detailed description of the Dream2Be peer education programme in the Spes Bona High School, located in Athlone, which was used as a unit of analysis for this study.

The purpose of the chapter is to provide the reader with a picture of the socio-economic profile and demographics of the Athlone community, covering selected characteristics, which when combined, have a negative impact on the socio-economic well-being of the youth in this community⁷. This section also substantiates the researcher's choice of this youth programme in order to ascertain or assess the principles of the participatory development paradigm.

This chapter presents the a) physical characteristics, b) social characteristics; and c) economic characteristics of the Athlone community; d) leadership structures; e) youth dynamics; f) development partners; g) Dream2Be peer education programme and its activities; h) Dream2Be peer education programme's vision, mission and goals; and i) concluding remarks.

⁷ Information on the Athlone community was obtained from the most recent available (2006) City of Cape Town (CoCT) statistics of the community. These should thus serve as approximations for the reader, given the progression of time to date. The next country census is to be conducted in 2011. More information was also acquired from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and casual conversations with Athlone community members, a desktop research as well as observations made in the community by the researcher. The Life Choices staff and youth provided information on the Dream2Be peer education programme, acquired through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Direct quotations or paraphrased statements are used to show the information acquired. Life Choices organisational reports, manuals and newsletters also served as information sources.

3.2. Social characteristics

3.2.1. Origin

According to the *Athlone News* (Stuart, 2010), Athlone was originally called West London. The area was later named 'Athlone' after the Earl of Athlone, Alexander Augustus Cambridge, Governor General of the Union of South Africa from 1924-1930 (Stuart, , 2010).

Under the Group Areas Act, during the Apartheid government, Athlone was a designated a "Coloured" residential area (Athlone Housing Estate). However, today the community is home to a diverse community of people: 95.15% Coloured, 2.94% Black, 0.74% Indian, and 0.17% White (CoCT 2006). The dominant languages spoken in the area are Afrikaans and English and, to a lesser extent, isiXhosa and other African languages (CoCT 2006).

3.2.2. Demographic characteristics

3.2.2.1. Population

The total population of Athlone is approximately 800,000 people (CoCT 2006). This community is 46% male and 54% female. Dinbabo (2003) suggested that a high percentage of women in society is an indication of the burden that this group carry in a community's economic sphere in combination with their existing reproductive roles. Given that the number of young women is higher than that of young men, as depicted in Table 1, this suggests that women in the Athlone community would be the largest contributors to the economic production of the community. This economic production role in combination with their reproductive role would thus cause a strain that would ultimately affect both their economic output as well as have the long-term implications on the maternal health of this community.

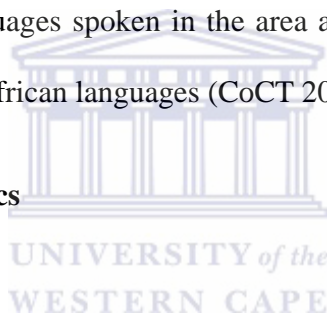


Table 1 also gives the age structure of this community. It shows that, in 2006, 9.69% of the population were 0-5 years old, 13.01% were 6-12 years of age, 9.92% were 13-17 years of age, 26.34% were 18-34 years old, and 25.64% were 35-54 years old. Further statistics revealed that 6.56% were 55- 64 years old, while 8.82% were 65 years and older (CoCT 2006).

According to Makiwane and Kweizera (2008), the 13-35 years age cohort is considered the demographic divide of any country or community. In addition, based on the definition of *youth* by the South African National Youth Policy (NYP, 2009), 15 is the formally permitted age to enter the labour market in the country. Thus, the Athlone community statistics suggest that the continued expansion of the 13-35 year age group was a determinant of the economic growth of this community. Furthermore, the figures suggest that this community was largely comprised of young people⁸ (26.34% percent), who were thus tasked with the economic production of this community.

Table 1: Age composition of the Athlone community in percentages

Age structure	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total population (%)
0-5	4.87	4.82	9.69
6-12	6.54	6.48	13.01
13-17	4.92	5.00	9.92
18-35	12.79	13.56	26.34
36-54	11.59	14.06	25.64
55-64	2.68	3.88	6.56
65 +	2.92	5.90	8.82
Total	46.30	53.70	100.00

Source: CoCT census (2006)

⁸ As defined by the National Youth Policy, the 18-34 years old cohort are considered young people.

Dinbabo (2003) noted that a high dependency ratio is typical of underprivileged communities. Thus, the age composition depicted above suggests that by 2018, a 25-year-old who is currently a member of the 18-35 years group will then be overburdened with the economic production of the community as a large number of the present 35-54 cohort will have retired, thus becoming dependants, or unable to produce economically.

3.2.3. Education

According to the Western Cape Education Department, the Athlone community has a total of 22 primary schools, 15 secondary schools, and 2 intermediate schools (WCED, 2010). Additionally, community members have access to the surrounding tertiary institutions that include the College of Cape Town, the Western Cape College of Nursing, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape (WCED, 2010). Residents also have access to the Athlone community library and other neighbouring community libraries.

Most of the primary and secondary schools are government-run. For community members, these institutions are characterised by having limited manpower, equipment and other infrastructure. This was corroborated by learners from the Spes Bona High School during a focus group discussion that further identified some problems that had adverse effects on the quality of teaching and learning in their school. These included lack of books, chalk, desks, proper learning classrooms, under-resourced libraries, lack of school fees and school uniforms, and unmotivated teachers and learners.

Makiwane and Kwizera (2008: 234) stated that about 38% of young South Africans drop out of schools because of financial difficulties. This percentage is reflected in the high drop-out rate

reported by the Spes Bona High School and to the abject poverty in which the Athlone residents live. Residents in the community are thus disheartened because of the high drop-out rate and the fact that young people are often, as a result, coerced into or join gangs and ultimately abuse drugs, given that they are idle and do not go to school anymore. These consequences reflect how poverty and lack of education have had a negative impact on the youth in this community in realising their full socio-economic potential.

3.2.4. Health

This community has four provincial health facilities. According to the WCHD (2010), these include the Nyanga Junction RHC, Manenburg; the Dr Abdurahman community health clinic, Athlone; the Vanguard community health clinic, Bonteheuwel; and the GF Jooste hospital. The community is also served by a host of privately owned specialised clinics that range from dentists, gynaecologists, physiotherapy, to radiology and so forth.

In a focus group discussion with the researcher, residents complained that they faced problems accessing these services. This was attributed to the fact that private doctors were expensive. Secondly, they highlighted that overcrowding, and a subsequent backlog in the care, treatment, therapy and distribution of medication in provincial health facilities, was appalling. Accordingly, these facilities were inadequate to serve the entire population in the Athlone community, given that respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS were rife in the community especially amongst the youth (Stuart, , 2010). Community members also complained of poor human relations between health facility staff (nurses) and patients. According to one respondent whose sentiments were echoed by other community residents: *“Nurses treat us like irresponsible children, shout at us and insult us [use vulgar language] when talking to us”*

Coupled with the fact that the impoverished community members had limited or no access to sanitation facilities or a water supply, and had respiratory diseases, these facilities seemed inadequate to accommodate the entire Athlone population.

3.3. Physical characteristics

3.3.1. Location

Athlone is a community on the Cape Flats⁹, in the Western Cape. It is located on the east side of the Cape Town city metropolis and is bordered by the N2 highway to the south, and by the M5 highway, Vanguard Drive and the Kromboom Road. It is served by the Klipfontein Main Road (*Cape Argus*, 2005). Athlone is well known for the Athlone Stadium and the coal-burning Athlone power station, demolished in 2010.

Athlone is sub-divided into different residential areas that include Alicedale, Belgravia Estate, Bokmakierie, Bonteheuwel, Bridgetown, Crawford, Garlandale, Gatesville, Gleemor, Hazendal, Kewton, Manenberg, Parktown, Rondebosch East, Rylands, Silvertown and Sunnyside (Allies, 2004; *Cape Argus*, 2005; CoCT, 2006).

This area has some attractive and well-maintained sections, such as Belgravia, Crawford, and Sunnyside, side by side with pockets of poverty and decay in township areas such as Bokmarkierie, Manenburg and Waterfront (Athlone Housing Estate). It also has a bustling central business district (CBD), which serves as a regional shopping centre for most of the Cape Flats, with businesses that range from retail shops to informal traders (Stuart, 2010).

⁹Also known as the *Flats*. This area was developed with sub-standard housing projects during the Apartheid government, in an effort to force the Coloured race out of areas designated as *White people's only* in Cape Town. Additionally, Black informal townships grew up in the area as a result of forced removals from the Cape Town central business district.

3.4. Economic activities

A look at this community reveals two forms of economic patterns: formal trading and informal trading. Formal trading businesses range from butcheries, restaurants, clothing, fresh produce markets, supermarkets, hardware shops, to private clinics and so forth. In the absence of employment opportunities, informal trading suffices. An observation made by the researcher revealed that the local community members were actively engaged in activities such as selling food, fruit, and sweets on sidewalks and street corners. In addition, several houses had been renovated to create businesses and entrepreneurial enterprises such as hair salons, barber shops, carpenters, bricklayers, and tailors. Residents, however, asserted that their participation in any of these entrepreneurial activities was the exception and not the norm and stressed that there was a high unemployment rate in the community.

According to one trader, the upgrade of malls such as the Vangate Mall in Vanguard Drive, as well as neighbourhood supermarkets, had in recent years made it impossible for informal traders or smaller shops to stay competitive. He described his predicament in a casual conversation with the researcher, saying, *“We corner shops suffer and we have to stay open till 11pm to make a living, ... not to mention that it is not safe at that time of the night”*.

Community members revealed that they also relied on government social grants, old age pensions, seasonal and casual employment opportunities, such as domestic work and bricklaying in and around the neighbouring communities, as a means of economic survival.

Moreover, residents expressed their improved economic conditions on *gooigooi* or *stovels*. According to Scheepers (2004), these organisations are informal community based saving clubs, formed on a voluntary basis, and based on a strong sense of trust amongst members, mutual friendship and responsibility. Members of such groups make regular contributions to a fund that

is rotationally distributed in part or whole to each contributor. They use these funds for burial expenses, personal use, groceries, investment purposes and other necessities. Such an organisation provides this community with the social network necessary to sustain members when they are experiencing setbacks in their lives.

3.5. Leadership structures

The community is governed by an elected councillor. Its jurisdiction falls under the Cape Town and Tygerberg municipality region. Politically, as in the rest of the Western Cape Province, the Athlone community is governed by Premier Helen Zille, leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA) political party. The African National Congress (ANC) also seems to have strong support amongst residents in this community.

Various civil leadership structures are active the community. These range from civic associations that advocate for the rights of residents in the community to organisations that work against crime, advocate for drug awareness and manage waste. Examples of such structures include the Gleemoor Civic Association, Athlone Crawford Civic Association (ACRRA) and Bridgetown Civic Association. A host of women's groups and informal trading initiative groups also focus on the economic growth of the Athlone community as a whole. Others organisations include religious Christian and Muslim organisations.

The leadership structures are not highlighted in this report to reinforce the political arrangements in the community, but they serve to highlight the local and civic organisations that strengthen the different development spheres of the community. In this regard, it was noted during data collection that there was a lack of youth development organisations. It was assumed that this lack served to intensify the poverty levels of the youth as well as limited their participation in their development and their subsequent contribution to the community.

3.6. Youth dynamics

The youth dynamics in this community were described as being plagued with social ills such as drug abuse, crime, gangsterism and violence (Stuart, 2010). Community residents attributed this to the community's poor socio-economic state, school dropouts and poor service delivery by the government. A resident captured their dire situation in the following statement: *“Gangs pay for the rent, school fees and food for poor families”*.

Additionally, given the high unemployment rate in the community, the youth are continually lured into committing desperate activities for survival. According to an interview with an official with the Athlone Community Policing Forum, *“Many of them [youth] are addicted to drugs and would do desperate things such as pick pocket [residents] to get money. Young girls even fall pregnant just to get government child support grants and maintenance money from their children's working fathers”*.

Community members expressed their concern over a range of social problems such as alcoholism and domestic violence. These, according to some residents, *“drove many youngsters to seek comfort in gangsterism ... because there were no role models at home”*.

Furthermore, people claimed that the profusion of taverns in the community aggravated crime and drug abuse amongst youth, which the Athlone Community Policing Forum confirmed.

However, there are also development initiatives that seek to improve the living conditions of the youth in this community. It emerged during a focus group discussion with the youth that after school, sporting activities were offered in various community sports grounds as a strategy to keep the youth far removed from the opportunities that gangs offered. This information was corroborated by the Gleemoor Civic Association spokesperson, who affirmed that *“the utilisation*

of the Athlone stadium had provided a venue for soccer matches as well as netball, softball and hockey for the youth”

These activities can thus be seen as a means to facilitate physical fitness and keep young people from crime and drugs, while also instilling the friendship and bonds necessary to build community development.

Second, there are community programmes, such as the ANC public works programmes, that are primarily aimed at delivering a million jobs over the next 5 years (Stuart, 2010). Third, several informal trading organisations have instituted business support programmes that appeal for a market to be built in the area for street traders in which the youth would be welcome participate economically (*Cape Argus*, 2005). Fourth, the Athlone Housing Forum intends to build houses on open land and rehabilitate the communities in impoverished communities by providing access to clean drinking water, proper sanitation, electricity and so forth. Such activities would pave the way to improving the living conditions of the youth in this community if these were in place. In line with the socio-economic development of the Athlone youth, the table below provides the general development partners in the community.

3.7. Development partners

Given the socio-economic profile of this community, Table 2 below presents the development partners involved in the development of this community.

Table 2: Development partners in the Athlone community

Name of organisation	Resource they offer	Type of interest/ concern
Belgravia Social Club	General assistance with social and old aged pensions Crafts, games and healthcare	Referrals and health care
Turning Point Pregnancy Resource Centre	Pregnant women, pregnancy tests, birth preparation, counselling, labour companions, referrals for adoptions, abuse, baby clothes, grief counselling, birth companion, sex education in schools	Health care
Cape Town City Mission	Help centre for sexually abused people, 24-hour help crisis line, pregnancy care, centre for abused and neglected 3-to18-year-old children, community feeding scheme, care centre for juvenile prisoners	Health care
City Mission	Counselling for abused women, marriage counselling and accommodation for abused women and children	Referrals
Carehaven Shelter	Domestic violence assistance, accommodation, therapy programme, individual counselling	Referrals, counselling
Place of Hope	For abused women and children	Referrals for women and children
Sarrtjie Baartman	Shelter for abused women and their children, legal assistance, job skills that include computer, catering and sewing projects	Referrals, skills development
Safeline	All case of abuse for children, adolescents and adults, court preparation, prevention and awareness, group therapy, profession training and lay help	Information centre & Health care
Erica Place	Sub-economic, single and double accommodation	Accommodation

Islamic Social Welfare Organisation	Marriage and social counselling, child abuse, auxiliary social worker, sewing, handcraft classes for the unemployed	Skills development and counselling
Foundation for Community Work	Family financial training, home-based training	Financial advice
Association for the Disabled	Social workers, occupational therapy, social groups, general aid for the disabled, social development services, fundraising for physical care, basic needs, paramedic services, education and learning needs, general rehabilitation, community support, job seekers information, re-able centre, protective work, self-help enterprises programme	Referrals, health care, skills development
Cape Child Health Association	Convalescent hospital for long-term care for children between 0-14 years old, TB, meningitis, and all injuries counselling	Health care
Muslim Assembly	Community, social and cultural welfare services, mostly marriage counselling, family care, drug rehabilitation, family planning	Counselling and health care
Dr. Abdurahman Community Health Care Centre	Primary health care	Health care and referrals
South African Tuberculosis Association (SANTA)	Counselling for TB patients and family	Health care and counselling
Hazendal Community Health Care	Mother and child care, immunisation, family and planning treatment for STD, HIV test and counselling	Health care, referrals, information centre

Source: Own Compilation.

The table above shows a list of existing development partners in the Athlone community. The majority of these organisations focus on the general social and health issues of the population in the community. With reference to the field study, there is evidently a lack of youth development partners in the community to complement the efforts of these development partners. This gap

thus further reinforces the impoverished nature of the youth in this community and serves as a setback for youth participation, especially in involving them in activities that require that they make decisions in a programme's operations and responsibilities. However, these organisations provide the community residents, particularly the youth, with a platform to further enhance community development partnerships.

3.8. Community assets

This community has an array of assets that can be used to attempt to enhance the socio-economic development of its residents. They specifically provide the youth with assets that can enhance their chances of participating in their own as well as in the overall development of the community. However, a focus group discussion with the youth of this programme proved almost barren as the youth did not easily identify these assets amongst them. Notwithstanding this, the researcher probed community residents and youth to determine community assets. In addition, the researcher made *in situ* observations and conducted a desktop research of the assets in the community. These are illustrated in Figure 1 and are grouped according to natural, social, physical, human and financial assets.

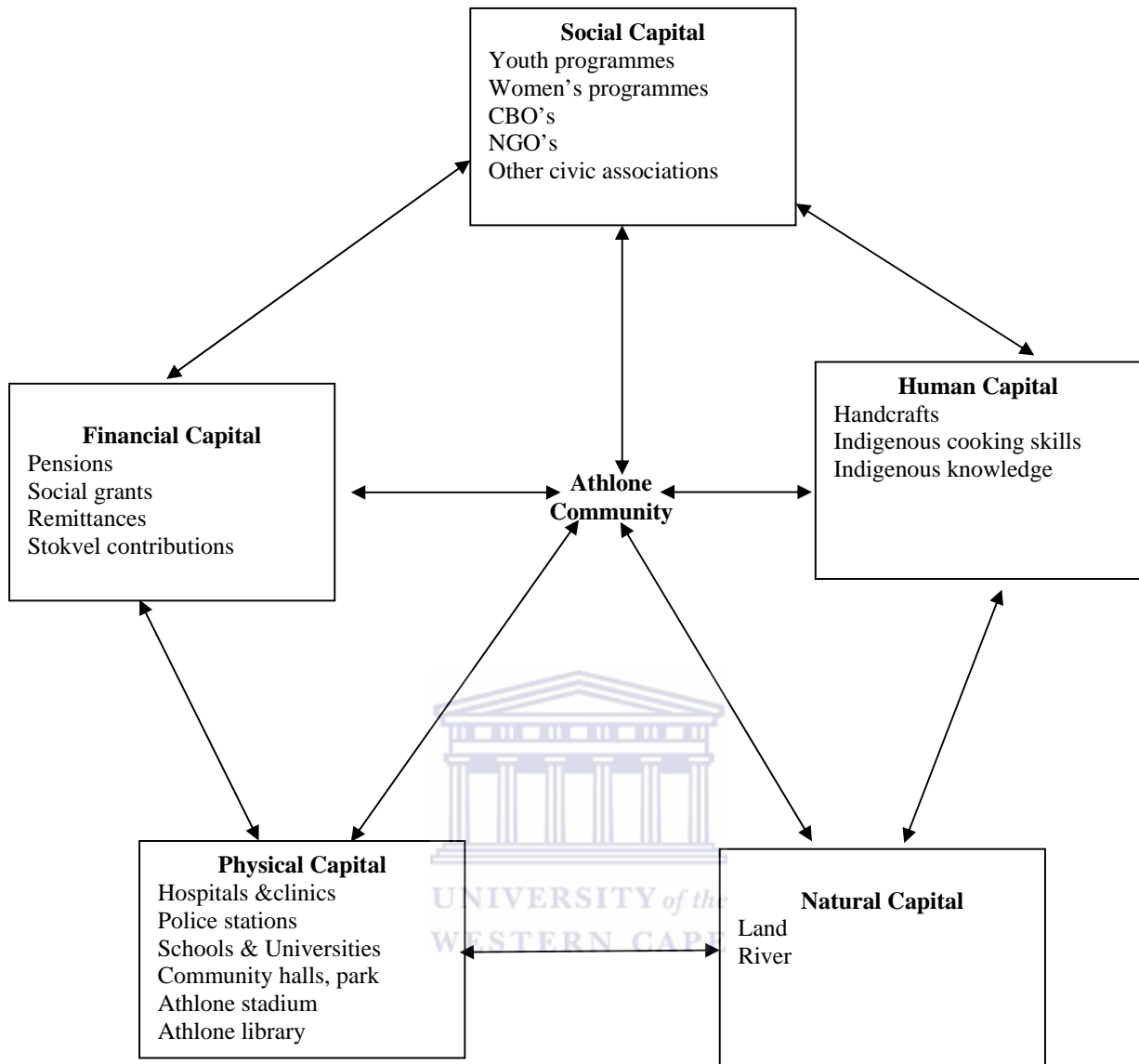


Figure 1: An assessment of the assets in the Athlone community.

Source: Own compilation.

3.7.1. The Life Choices NGO

Considering the assets identified in the Athlone community, the youth are presented with vital resources which, when utilised, can develop the youth and increase their viability in grassroots action. The Life Choices NGO seeks to make the youth aware of these assets in their community as well their potential to capitalise on these assets by building their capacity through education and social organisation (Life Choices, 2010).

Life Choices is a community development initiative, run by the Salesians of Don Bosco, that seeks to empower the youth by building on their potential and advocating for their involvement in grassroots development. The Salesians of Don Bosco is a religious congregation of priests and brothers of the Roman Catholic Church (Life Choices, 2010; Life Choices, 2006). This organisation works in the field of education and training for impoverished children and youth in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces (Life Choices, 2006). Its existence in the Western Cape spans a period of 7 years, working together with the Western Cape Departments of Health and Education (Life Choices, 2010). As part of its methodology, it uses the peer education model as one of its community development strategies to access the youth by advocating for young people's participation in their own development (Life Choices, 2010). Currently, Life Choices runs a peer education programme in community schools, known as the Dream2Be peer education programme.

3.7.2. The Dream 2Be peer education programme

The Dream2Be peer education programme is a pilot 2-year programme implemented in high schools in the Cape Flats region of the Western Cape Province (Life Choices, 2010). Its mandate is set at reaching a diverse group of youth. Thus, the school system presents a suitable platform to access a varied group of youth that includes peers from other schools and outside school (Life Choices, 2010).

The Dream2Be peer education is offered to young people as a holistic community development programme (Life Choices, 2010). Accordingly, the organisation runs simultaneously with other projects that include the parents' workshop, educators' workshop, life skills workshops, voluntary testing and counselling drives and career guidance workshops (Life Choices, 2010). These are run simultaneously and complement the Dream2Be peer education programme, with the aim of creating a responsive environment to build capacities in the youth's that are applicable to their needs and that of their communities (Life Choices, 2010).

3.7.3. Life Choices vision, and Dream2Be objectives

The Life Choices vision, through the Dream2Be peer education programme, is to build the youth's capacity to be involved in their development. Its core vision is thus *To see a South Africa with empowered and passionate youth, equipped to make informed and healthy life choices.*

This vision is supported by the following long-term goals, as illustrated in Figure 2.

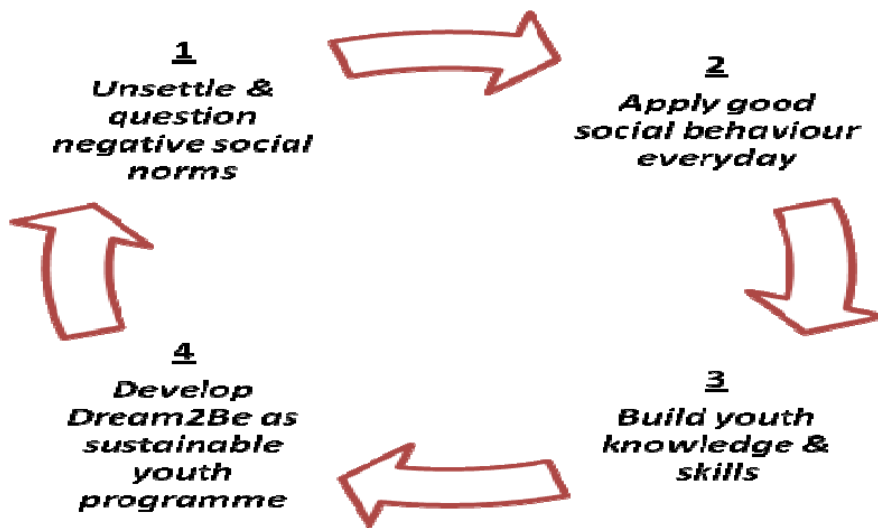


Figure 2: The Dream2Be long-term goals

Source: Life Choices Manual, 2010.

The diagram above illustrates the Dream2Be peer education programme long term goals to work with the youth. Its mandate is hoped to be achieved simultaneously and is thus mutually inclusive as depicted above. These long-term objectives can only be achieved through the following short-term objectives.

The Dream2Be short-term objectives

The short-term objectives are represented in support of the Life Choices vision and long-term goals of the Dream2BE peer education programme, with the aim of sustaining this youth programme (Life Choices, 2010).

These include

- **Involve** the school management in the buy-in of the programme;

- **Select and retain** an adequate number of young people in the programme;
- **Train** an adequate number of older peers in the school;
- Encourage each older peer to **reach** every young peer in the school;
- Reach youth through **positive youth messages**;
- Make youth **accountable**;
- **Train** field staff and youth;
- Acquire **feedback** from the youth;
- Develop **supportive and supervisory structures**; and
- Develop a **monitoring and evaluation** system.

3.8. Youth activities

Time to Play is a set of youth development activities in the Dream2Be peer education programme. In order to attract more youth, the Life Choices NGO has devised a creative way of involving young people in their own development through interactive and fun game sessions. This is an opportunity for the Dreamers to perform activities to score points with the aim of making a difference in their lives as well as their peers' lives (Life Choices, 2010: 9). These activities include the following:-

- a) **Play for All:** The young people choose if they want to partake in all the activities;
- b) **Check it Out!:** The youth showcase their talents and skills through dance, song, plays, poetry or inviting guest speakers to tackle topics of concern to them and their communities, such as crime, HIV, teen pregnancy, respect, relationships and so forth.

This is a platform that unsettles yet creates awareness on issues that affect them and their peers.

- c) **Google it:** This involves using the Google search engine to read about and increase their general knowledge and resources available to them and their peers. In addition, when a peer is in need, it is the job of the peer to refer them to an appropriate referral service. Twice a term, the young people go out to different social community resources and organisations to find out all they can about the services they offer to the community.
- d) **Heart2Heart:** This is a confidential and nurturing conversation between peers. The youth are not experts but are rather tasked with creating awareness on topical issues and make referrals in special circumstances, such as depression, likely suicide and abuse, amongst others.
- e) **Play in Focus:** The youth are given the opportunity to master one of the three game sessions available. These are the Talk5, Chat Room and Shake It Up!, which are discussed below:
- i. **Talk5:** This is a discussion forum whose sole purpose is to *Play in Focus*. This is meant to address five topics youth face today, which include drugs, crime, sex, teen-pregnancy and education. It is intended that the older peers will develop a strong bond and cultivate a trusting relationship with their younger peers and serve as a support and mentoring system.

- ii. **Chat Rooms:** These sessions allow the young people to debate and to chat with their peers on important topics that concern them, such as those suggested in the Talk5.
- iii. **Shake It Up!:** These are social awareness campaigns in which the youth identify needs that are of concern in their own communities. *Awareness* activities purposefully sensitise their communities on issues that affect young people while *Advocacy* activities seek to champion change and improve one aspect of community. That is, young people endeavour to *give back* to their communities and thus see through projects from conception to completion.

3.8.1. Life Choices governance structure

In the last 20 years, the term *governance* has been popularised in the public policy discourse and social science research. According to Olowu (2002, cited in Hendrickse, 2008: 78), governance implies “to steer, direct or guide” as a generic term that is applied to any human organisation such as an NGO. Zeldin (2004) commented that the way in which an organisation is steered may hinder or facilitate the realisation of youth development practices in the long term, and this notion supports the premise of this study. Below is a description of the governance structure of the Life Choices NGO that administers the peer education programme amongst the youth in the Spes Bona High School.

In order to achieve its vision, goals and objectives, this programme is managed by one director and one senior manager who are supported by two junior co-ordinators in supervising the daily activities of this programme (Life Choices, 2010). According to the senior manager of Life

Choices, this team often consult with their target school management team by planning and implementing activities that link with the youth activities and can be accommodated within the school's academic year (Life Choices, 2010). The director and senior manager are assisted by field staff.

The field staff consist of members aged between 19 and 25 years. The Life Choices management has strategically chosen young adults from the communities in the Cape Flats to work with the youth in schools as they feel that they have empathy with their younger peers in schools (Life Choices, 2010). According to the Life Choices facilitator, the field staff are, therefore, tasked with the responsibility of networking within schools and also the initial recruiting and retaining of high school youth in the Dream2Be peer education programme (Life Choices, 2010)

The field staff receive intensive on-going training throughout the academic year, as reported by the Life Choices facilitator (Life Choices, 2010). The initial training takes place before they are assigned to their respective schools. During this time, they learn the Dream2Be methodology, staff code of conduct, facilitation skills, Dream2Be core messages and values, basic health information related to HIV/AIDS, drugs, teen pregnancy and related issues, recognition and referral skills, and monitoring and evaluation (Life Choices, 2010).

The beneficiaries of this programme are the young people in high schools within the Life Choices programme. They are young people that fall into the 15- to 18-years-old bracket. Older peers within the programme are tasked with mentoring their younger peers, who are usually between the ages of 13 and 15 years, in the same school (Life Choices, 2010).

As primary beneficiaries of this programme, the older youth have the following four key roles, as detailed in the *Life Choice Manual* (Life Choices, 2010):

- i. A positive role model;
- ii. A “freak” or one that seeks to unsettle yet conscientise their peers on their own perceptions and thought processes that may have a negative impact in their lives;
- iii. A “looker” or one who gets to know their peers with whom they interact so they may recognise when they need someone to talk or when they are in need of a community referral;
- iv. A “politician” to advocate for resources and services they and their peers need in their community as well raise awareness around important issues affecting young people’s lives.

3.9. Chapter summary

In this chapter, a conclusion is drawn that the delineated conditions of impoverishment have negative effects on the development of the capacities and abilities of young people to participate in their socio-economic development. The Dream2Be peer education programme in the Spes Bona High school is thus presented as youth development programme that seeks to build their capacities and give them the chance to participate in their own development and that of their communities.

As relates to the aim of this study, this is understood as a programme that seeks to build the confidence and skills of young people to take control of decision making from the hands of the adults, as is proposed in participatory development theories. *Time to Play* is described as a set of activities within the Life Choices programme that seeks to have the youth making critical

decisions towards their development as well as the programme's operation. Subsequently, the programme and its activities serve as an instrument of analysis for this study, to ascertain the extent to which the youth are involved in decision-making processes.

The following chapter outlines the research design and the methodology used for the study to examine the level of youth participation in decision-making processes within the peer education programmes' operations.



Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the route by which the study was conducted. The theory and rationale behind the chosen qualitative research methodology, the study stages, sample population, data collection tools and the data gathering procedure are described.

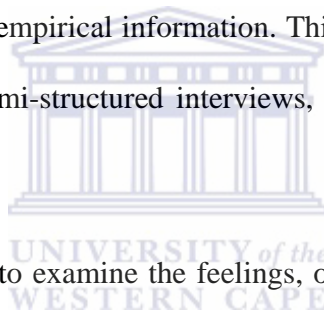
The purpose of this chapter is to present a detailed description of research methodologies used for this study. These were chosen as a means to empirically investigate the level of decision making amongst a group of young people in the Dream2Be peer education programme.

The chapter therefore is divided as follows: a) the theory of a research design; b) the social science methodologies; c) the qualitative methodology applied to the study; d) the focus areas of data collection; e) the time and setting of the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews; f) the issues of ethical considerations and the limitations of the study; and g) the chapter conclusion.

4.2. Research design

A research design is a plan or blueprint of how a researcher intends to conduct his or her research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It is also a route that keeps the researcher on target on what he or she is expected to learn from the research enquiry, as noted by Rubin and Rubin (1995). A research design follows a set of guidelines and instructions in the hope of addressing the research problem in the most economical way (Mouton, 1996, cited in Schurink, 1998). Thus, in an empirical enquiry, the researcher selects and designs a particular research method and identifies the participants, while paying attention to considerations of reliability and validity.

The social sciences are dominated by two broad methodological paradigms: the quantitative and the qualitative methods. Babbie and Mouton (2001) described the quantitative paradigm as one obsessed with numbers and *yes* or *no* questions on a related theme. Leedy (1980) maintained that the intent of this method is to establish, confirm or validate relationships and to develop generalisations that contribute to a specific theory. These authors agreed that the quantitative method can be used to make generalised assumptions from results collected and that the findings are often applicable to a general population. On the other hand, the qualitative methodology is used to assess an insider's perspective on a particular social phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton 2001). While the quantitative method has its merits in social research, this study employed the qualitative methodology to gather empirical information. This included the literature review, the qualitative tools which include semi-structured interviews, as well as focus group discussions and participant observation.



The qualitative method is applied to examine the feelings, opinions and perspective, on events, of an insider who has experienced or observed a particular social phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin 1995). This, in addition, implies a concern with an experience as it is lived, felt or undergone, as described by Sherman and Webb (1988). This suggests that a researcher should then attempt to understand an experience as closely as possible to the way its participants feel or live it. Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton (2001) and Rubin and Rubin (1995) asserted that this method of research enables a researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of a research topic. In addition, as pointed out by Stern et al., (2004) and Casley and Kumar (1988), qualitative methods encourage more discussion and involvement by the respondents, who may be individuals, focus groups, or village committees. Babbie and Mouton (2001) observed that this

approach is conducted in the natural setting of the social actors, which reinforces its empirical value.

Given that the aim of this study was to assess the level of articulation of the voice of the youth in the decision-making space of a programme cycle, this approach was deemed the most suitable as it would give the interviewees a chance to express their perceptions in their natural setting. This also assisted the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the youths' level of decision making in community development programmes.

The qualitative method provided a platform for the informants to explain their ideas in their own words and describe why things were the way they were in the decision-making space. It was also envisaged that this paradigm would provide information that would unpack the relationships that exist between the youth and adults as well as the dynamics of the organisation that may promote or hinder the voice of the youth. Further, this method would elicit complex responses from the different participants, given their different levels of expertise, duties and responsibilities within the programme

4.2.1. Focus areas of data collection

With the objective of providing an answer to the problem statement and research question, the collection of field data focused on the following six major themes: (1) outlining the general overview of the Athlone community; (2) exploring the organisational structure and youth activities of the Life Choices peer education programme; (3) assessing the level of youth participation in the decision-making process; (4) identifying the perceptions of the programme management and field staff on the level of the voice of the youth within the the Spes Bona High

School Dream2Be peer education programme; (5) ascertaining the perceptions of the WCED and WCDH policies on the level of youth participation in decision-making processes; and (6) distinguishing the institutional aspects such as transparency, rules, regulations and procedures to include youth in the identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

4.2.2. Tools of data collection

A brief discussion of the methods employed to collect the necessary data is presented below. These include the literature review, semi-structured interviews, FDGs and observation tools were applied. The researcher also used secondary documents that provided information about the study, which included the Life Choices' manuals, reports on annual organisational meetings, and e-newsletters on youth activities within the programme.

Literature review: The purpose of the literature review was to position the research problem in the existing body of literature on the research topic, as discussed in Chapters One and Two. It is at this stage that the researcher is able to single out the basic concepts and terminology around the chosen topic. Ultimately, this section helped the researcher to avoid duplicating empirical research by rather embarking on an intellectual endeavour that advances the current available knowledge, as discussed by Mouton (2001) and Yin (2003). Moreover, this ensured that an appropriate theoretical framework had been chosen for analysis in the study and provided a guide in developing preliminary concepts before data collection.

Having adhered to the university's regulations, obtained ethical clearances and gained access to the relevant participants relevant to this study, the following data collection tools were applied to gather data.

Semi-structured interviews: Semi-structured interviews serve as a form of interview guide, as noted by Flick (1998). As a result, they allow the interviewer to lead the process by guiding the interviewees through relevant questions. In addition, these questions are guided by the research objectives and literature review. Only four management staff were available from the organisation, that is, two junior programme managers, one senior programme manager and one programme director. These participants were chosen as they constitute the management personnel who run the operations and responsibilities of the programme. Seven field staff and seven young people were also interviewed as these provided a manageable and an adequate number of participants to sufficiently gather information for analysis.

The management of the organisation was a vital tool in obtaining the names of and access to the relevant participants, given that they would be privy to such information.

Focus group discussions (FDGs): These are a form of evaluation in which groups of people are gathered together to discuss potential changes and/or shared impressions about a specific subject (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Hardon and Boonmongkon (2001) noted that the purpose of such discussions is to gain insights on the views, feelings, beliefs and experiences of the discussants on the subject matter. They assisted the researcher to ensure consistency and in gathering additional information, not previously mentioned during the semi-structured interviews, as explained by Willis (2005).

These discussions were used in this study to complement the semi-structured interviews. Three FDGs, with seven people in each, were conducted: the field staff group, the youth group from the Spes Bona High School, and the Athlone community members group. The rationale behind the choice of the number for these groups was that it provided a manageable yet sufficient number of people from whom to gather adequate information. In addition, the choice of these groups assisted in understanding the perceptions of the programme staff and youth on the level of participation of young adults in the decision-making space.

Accordingly, the researcher applied listening and probing skills in these sessions to ascertain meanings, similar themes and related concepts. According to Willis (2005), such skills can be used to maintain the control of the interview, thus avoiding irrelevant and non-productive information. Further, these techniques assisted in obtaining details of a wide range of opinions and experiences of the participants, which is essential in qualitative research in the opinion of Babbie and Mouton (2001) and Rubin and Rubin (1995).

Observation: According to Whyte (1984), participant observation is a method that enables the researcher to place individuals in a group context and gain a realistic picture of the dynamics of individual and group behaviour. Thus, the researcher chose this method to record the socio-economic conditions under which the selected youth group lived. In so doing, the researcher was able to note and record the community's impoverished conditions as well as the community's assets. This method assisted in evaluating whether the young adults were aware of the social capital available in their communities as their knowledge and utilisation of these would build their capacity and need to participate in their development.

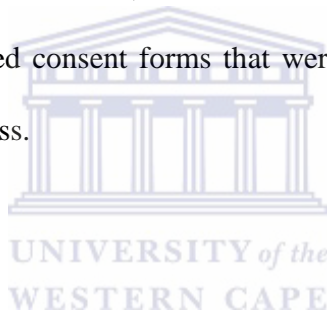
Because of the correlation between the youths' awareness of their social capital assets and their decision-making abilities, it is possible to assess whether there is a need for a stronger youth voice in the decision-making platform, which would eventually indicate the programme's sustainability in the long run. This method was also used to assess whether the organisation's intended programme activities were actually implemented whilst including and seeking to retain the youth in the decision-making space.

Additionally, the dynamics of the organisational behaviour were examined and the satisfaction, participation and psychological effects of the youth and adults sharing the decision-making platform were assessed. This, according to Swanepoel and De Beer (2006), may influence the overall development efforts and affect the sustainability or environment in which they are set. This also enables the researcher to periodically observe the non-verbal behaviour of participants, in line with the research objectives, during FDGs and semi-structured interviews, that might otherwise be taken for granted.

Designing semi-structured interview/FDGs questions: The research question was used as a guide in order to develop a set of questions for the informants of the study. This was done once the research proposal was completed. This took a period of 1 month, given that the researcher had to ascertain that all the questions matched the research interest as well as related themes, as had emanated from the literature consulted on the topic. Equally important was that the researcher's academic supervisor during this time guided the researcher in formulating these questions so as to avoid any obscurity during the data collection phase.

Gaining access and selection of informants: The researcher began by contacting the Life Choices NGO that facilitates and implements peer education programmes in the Cape Flats community high schools. A letter of research interest was subsequently sent to this organisation by the researcher to obtain their consent and access to a specific implemented peer education programme in a community high school. Life Choices was also asked to assist in the selection of the key informants, given that they would be privy to organisational information and subsequently would know the specific people involved in the decision-making process of the Dream2Be peer education programme.

Before commencing with the data collection, the researcher also explained to the interviewees the purpose of the study and issued consent forms that were signed by the participants before beginning the data collection process.



4.2.3. The case study

Yin (2003) explained that the choice of a case study is to advance knowledge and understanding of a given topic as well as complement the literature review.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) asserted that case studies are vital tools in scientific enquiry, given that they provide much information on the context within which they are set. In addition, Yin (2003) noted that the start of a case study, the first step is to identify, select and screen potential candidates to be studied. The researcher chose the Dream2Be peer education programme in Spes Bona High School as the case study as it consisted of the young people, a relevant variable of interest to the study, which would provide the data to be collected.

The selection of a case study was, as is discussed by Babbie and Mouton (2001), based on the diversity of variables that can be analysed to provide valid and reliable results. Thus, the Dream2Be peer education programme allowed the researcher to delve into the different perspectives of the youth and adults engaged in the decision-making process as well as to unearth the social, political and economic perspectives in the organisation and policy that have an influence on the voice of the youth in the decision-making sphere.

4.2.4. The research procedure

The research proceeded in the systematic order shown below:

- Literature review
- Examination of the profile of the case study area
- Preparation of field work instruments
- Identification and initial contact with NGO and participants relevant to the research
- Conduction of short semi-structured interviews with the programme beneficiaries, field staff and NGO management
- Observation of participants
- Conduction of focus group discussions with the above participants
- Data processing that involved grouping raw data into themes
- Data analysis and presentation in the form of text, tables and drawings.

4.2.5. Data analysis and presentation

Data analysis in the social sciences can be presented either in the interpretive or positivist approach.

The postivist approach presents data by classifying and categorising simple relationships from the social world (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In contrast, the interpretive approach is focused on finding out what events mean and how people adapt and how they view what has happened to them and around them (Rubin & Rubin 1995). Stivers (2000) added that this method basically entails interpretation or a sense-making exercise, in which the researcher views a series of events or situations and puts a frame of reference around them. The latter approach was chosen as this study was not aimed at measuring different variables but rather at exploring the values expressed by the participants, as pertain to the study.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) further reiterated that the interpretive approach is one that seeks to go beyond the normal “question and answers dialogue” by seeking a realistic description of the situation. Thus, the researcher’s task is to learn the values, views and beliefs of the participants involved in decision making.

Once data collection was completed, the researcher coded and edited raw data and grouped it into related themes. These themes were related to the research questions, as guided by the focus areas of data collection. In addition, the analysis and data presentation was done using direct quotations and tables. The relationships between the data collected and related themes were used as guiding principles to arrive at conclusions and recommendations as a result of the findings of the study.

4.2.6. Ethics statement

This study was conducted after the research proposal was approved by the Institute of Social Development and the University of the Western Cape Senate. Permission to conduct the research

was requested from the target school administration, youth population of the chosen peer education programme in the community high school, the NGO management that implements these programmes and community members. The researcher took the responsibility to ensure that all information gathered was treated sensitively and confidentially. Finally, the research findings were submitted to all relevant bodies.

4.3. Limitations of the study

Limitations were noted concerning out-dated key indicators on the status of the youth in South Africa. This was a result of the fact that youth demographics were drawn from South African census conducted in 2001. These were adopted as it was assumed that the general household poverty indicators, as indicated in 2001, had had a direct impact on young people, given that a significant number of people who are as old as 35 are categorised as young people in South African.

Despite this drawback, the researcher believes that this study will provide a foundation for further researcher into the status of young people in the Western Cape. As the primary focus of this study is on grassroots development, it may provide policy makers with a platform to formulate provincial policies in terms of youth development and their role in the community.

3.4. Chapter summary

In this chapter, the choice of method and plan of how the study was conducted were discussed. The qualitative methodology research design and methods were chosen as appropriate because

they would assist in ascertaining in-depth perceptions and feelings of the programme's participants on the level of youth participation in the decision-making process.

The methods used to collect data included the literature review, case study application, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Additionally, the interpretive approach, as opposed to the positivist approach, was used to enhance understanding of the data collected. Thereafter, the duration and number of sessions for interviews and FDGs were stated. The ethical considerations and limitations of the study were also noted and discussed.

In line with the methodology chosen, the next chapter presents a content analysis that interprets the empirical information for this study. In line with the aim of the study, the degree to which the youth were observed to be allowed to participate in the decision-making process is discussed. Based on the literature review and the theoretical framework, the researcher also examined whether the assertion of *youth involvement* in actual practice indeed alludes to the principles of an assertive group of young people in the decision-making space, a shared governance structure, mutual learning space, and subsequent long term sustainability.

Chapter Five: Assessing the Level of Participation of Youth in the Decision-Making Processes

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study, whose primary aim was to identify the level of decision making amongst youth in a community development programme.

Results are presented according to six themes, as highlighted in the focus areas of data collection, detailed in Chapter Four. The findings were interpreted by integrating the information gathered from the informants with analysis of literature review, as discussed in Chapter Two. Thus, this chapter is used essentially to unfold insights into the six themes/objectives proposed in the study and is aimed at describing *not only what happens but also how things happen* in the decision-making platform chosen for the case study.

The empirical findings are grouped according to the six themes: a) the Athlone community; b) The Life Choices governance structure and youth activities; c) the level of youth participation in decision-making processes; d) perceptions of the programme staff of youth in decision making; (e) government policies and youth participation in decision-making processes and; (f) institutional aspects such as transparency, rules, regulations and procedures.

5.2. The Athlone community

Cornwall (2008) was adamant that any study whose main focus is on youth development cannot be done in isolation of the households from which the youth originate; as the nature of a household has direct implications for a young person's life chances. Given this theoretical

assertion, and in an attempt to understand the relationship between the youth and their community, the youth and community residents were asked the following general question: *What social assets or opportunities exist in the Athlone community?* (See Annexure 1).

Using focus group discussions so as to elicit multiple responses, the Athlone residents typified the community as one with indigent living conditions that included high unemployment, poor housing and amenities, poor education, family disintegration, HIV and related diseases, crime, violence and drug abuse.

In support of Cornwall (2008), Makiwane and Kwizera (2008) noted that impoverished conditions such as those mentioned by community residents have a negative effect on a young person's life chances as these are extended by the mere existence of the parent-child relationship¹⁰. Taking this hypothesis into consideration, it appears that the impoverished conditions in the Athlone community presented an adverse environment to nurture and advance the young people's lives and that of their surroundings.

As in most impoverished communities, it was thus almost impossible for the community residents and youth to identify community assets in the midst of poverty, as was evident in their responses. However, after a series of thought-provoking discussions with the respondents, desktop research, and observations made by the researcher, the Athlone community presented an array of community assets. These were grouped according to the natural, social, physical, human and financial assets.

Chambers (2005) and Scoones (2006) identified community assets as capital assets, which, when exploited, can improve the livelihoods of community members. For example, the physical and

¹⁰Also known as intergenerational poverty (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008).

social assets provide the Athlone youth with enablers such as youth development programmes such as Life Choices, and other community organisations that have the potential to prepare and build young people's capacity to take control and manage their needs and wants. In addition, the physical, financial, natural and human capital assets provide a social structure for the young people to be integrated in the overall socio-economic development of their community in due time. These assets are thus advanced as plausible resources which when combined can improve the youths' life chances and can assist the young people in negotiating their way out of their perceived wants, deciding how to tackle these, and then participating in community change.

5.3. Governance structure and youth activities

5.3.1. The Life Choices governance structure.

Governance is an issue of concern amongst youth development practitioners as institutional arrangements can facilitate or hinder youth development practices (Flage et al., 2010; United Nations, 2003; Zeldin, 2004). As such, governance pre-conditions that facilitate youth development could ultimately enhance youth empowerment and critical thinking amongst the youth and ensure the sustainability of the programme in the long term (Campbell, 2004).

Using this theoretical background, the composition of the programme's governance structure was investigated as this would give an indication of youth inclusion and subsequent participation in the key decision-making opportunities within the programme.

In a semi-structured interview, the management of Life Choices was asked the following question (See Annexure 1, Section 2): *How are the representatives of this programme*

delegated? In response, the Director of Life Choices revealed that the Dream2Be programme governance structure of Life Choices was organised as depicted in Figure 3.



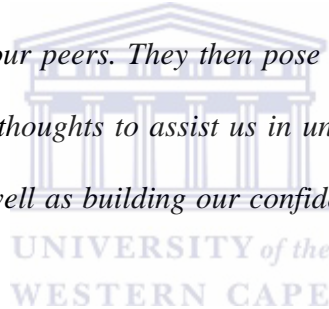
Figure 3: The Life Choices governance structure.

Source: Life Choices, 2010a.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the director established that this youth programme is administered, primarily, by a staff team of two management figures: the director and senior co-ordinator, who adhere to the administrative logistics of the programme. The junior co-ordinators are answerable to the senior co-ordinator and tasked with the supervision of the field staff by specifically assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities implemented amongst young people, as they relate to the objectives of the programme. The junior co-ordinators are assisted by field staff whose mandate is to implement the activities of this programme as well as network among and retain young people within the programme.

Furthermore, the role of the young people is to execute the planned activities, set according to the objectives of the programme, amongst their peers within the school community. During such a time, they are given an opportunity to decide and plan on how best to interest and recruit their peers as they execute these activities. According to one young beneficiary within the programme, whose sentiments were confirmed by others in a focus group discussion,

The field staff prepare us on how best to present an activity to our peers. They often do this after school hours in what is called the ready-set-goal session. During this session we will be presented with a specific topic to be discussed on a sheet of paper. The field staff then ask us if we understand the topic and how we would like to present it to our peers. They then pose several scenarios to us that assist us in generating our thoughts to assist us in understanding and coming up with ideas on the topic as well as building our confidence for presentation to our peers.



The detailed description in the statement above depicts the roles and responsibilities of the different tiers in the Dream2Be peer education programme. Overall, a top-down governance structure in which the problem identification, planning, and implementation were decided beforehand by the management is evident. The young people's role is primarily to explain the topics of discussion as detailed in the instructions handed to them. However, the assistance offered by the field staff to the young beneficiaries through verbal triggers to guide their understanding of the programme activities for presentation, allowed the youth to be somewhat involved in decision making. Zeldin (2004) referred to the inclusion of young people in minimal decision-making activities, such as evident above, as their inclusion in the *lower levels* of the

decision-making processes. According to Zeldin, this practice renders the youth incapable of participating rightfully in decisions that affect their well-being as they do not identify their immediate problems themselves but are offered *problems* that should seemingly affect them. In support of this assertion and the empirical data, it is suggested that such partial participation prevented the youth from taking the initiative to decide on their immediate problems and how best to handle these to advance their development.

In addition, Figure 5 portrays an organisational structure organised in a hierarchical manner. Such a composition depicts a chain of command that inevitably places the young people under the authority of the programme leaders. In confirmation of this impression, one young person expressed sentiments that were echoed by other beneficiaries during a focus group discussion: “*I feel like a guinea pig at times.... management always decides what we are going to do and how it is going to be done in everything ... in fact the message is always don't do this! Don't do the other!*” These sentiments denote feelings that suggest that the young people in the programme believed they were merely involved in the programme as showcases, probably to legitimise the presence of the NGO in the community. Thus, such assertions point out that the youth had no *real* opportunity to articulate their concerns or participate in the programme's operations. Furthermore, it can be deduced from the quoted statement that the young people felt they were withheld from the *higher levels* of the decision-making processes, which include the problem identification, programme initiation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

This evidence provides a strong argument for the urgent need for the youth to be included in the decision-making platform, particularly one that promotes shared governance amongst the youth and the programme leaders. In promoting such governance, Zeldin (2004) suggested that

programme leaders should act as mentors who guide young people in understanding, slowly guiding them into acquiring decision-making skills. In reference to a question on shared governance structure in a focus group discussion, the management of Life Choices responded by indicating that they had chosen to incorporate a youth advisory committee to become part of the programme management. This was a governance structure aimed at bringing the youth closer to the actual decision-making operations of the programme. The Director explained that this was a discussion forum in which two young people from the case study and other community high schools with an implemented Dream2Be peer education programme would, once every 3 months, meet with the management of the Life Choices organisation to discuss some of the challenges, opportunities and trends pertinent to the development of young people (Life Choices, 2010). The management believed that such a strategy would prepare young people to undertake key decisions that had an impact on their lives and in the general community. However, at the time of data collection, this youth committee was yet to be formed and implemented. It was thus not clear if, when and how the youth would be invited to participate at the decision-making table.

5.3.2. Youth activities.

Zeldin, Camino and Calvert (2007) and Zeldin (2004) agreed that youth participation in the decision-making sphere is logical if young people are actively involved in learning activities that prepare them for such responsibilities.

In order to understand the nature of the learning activities designed for the youth and to assess if these activities build the capacity of the youth to assume the roles and responsibilities of the decision-making table, the following general request was made (See Annexure 2, Section 2):

Describe your level of participation in the project activities. Bearing in mind that this request

was designed to elicit multiple responses, the researcher used three focus group discussions with seven members each to capture a variety of responses by the youth. These responses were integrated with the literature consulted on the topic, as discussed below.

According to information obtained from the Life Choices Manual (Life Choices, 2010) *Time to Play* is a set of pre-planned youth development activities. Like any game, these *game* sessions are interactive and thus serve to socialise and instil a competitive yet shared spirit or provide stimulation in a structured manner amongst young people. In the same vein, these *games* provide the properties of a shared responsibility in a context where peers take action with their fellow peers or on behalf of others in need. Accordingly, the Dream2Be youth in the Spes Bona High School indicated that they discussed and brought awareness for action on issues that concerned them and their current generation, such as education, family disintegration, physical abuse, drugs and alcohol abuse, sexual issues, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and so on. To this end, these *games* provided a learning platform, in a fun manner, to develop their thinking and engagement in youth and community development.

Similarly, Winter (2003), Zeldin (2004), and Zeldin et al. (2007) confirmed that such learning experiences can enhance positive outcomes amongst young people. According to these authors, positive outcomes include identity development, group membership and responsibility, initiative, peer and adult relationships and skills development. The youth of this programme revealed a satisfactory consensus as members of their peer group and in the *games* they played. The following statements corroborate the impression that the youth felt satisfaction and that the games had positive effects on the group:

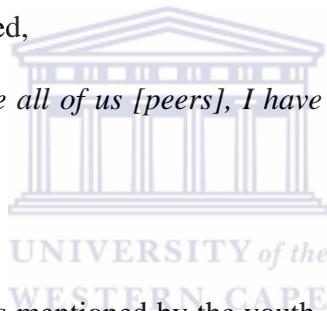
*I have developed more **self-confidence**; my body language is more presentable. I now have the ability to mingle with other people and I am not scared and can thus easily speak out on important issues alone or within a **team**.*

A second participant said,

*We confide in each other. This has assisted us to develop our **life skills** to deal with the issues we currently face. The team work has also brought us together because we never spoke to each other before joining this programme.*

A third participant further elaborated,

I am not shy anymore because like all of us [peers], I have to talk in front of so many people in a class or in assembly.



In relation to the positive outcomes mentioned by the youth, such as self-confidence, team work and life skills, Cornwall (2008) asserted that such positive outcomes, derived from socialising experiences are an avenue for young people to engage in activities that promote decision-making abilities and ownership in their lives and, subsequently, in their community. From the youths' statements, it was evident that they were willing to engage in development tasks if given an opportunity. At the time, this was facilitated by the common status and bond the youth shared, given their socio-economic socialisation. Over time, the exposure of the youth to similar activities will empower this group to engage in more complex responsibilities and roles in the home, school and general community, as noted by Flanagan and Van Horn (2003) and Zeldin et al. (2007).

Currently, the beneficiaries of the Life Choices programmes face challenges such as poverty, lack of knowledge about their social capitals¹¹, lack of self-confidence and poor organisational integration¹². These factors continue to inhibit their ability to confidently engage in their developmental activities. However, the *games* offered in this programme have begun to instil a sense of ownership and developed the young people's capacity to become more aware and assertive in finding solutions to the socio-economic problems in their surroundings, as these directly affect their well-being. From this, it is thus evident that these young people are capable and willing to take control of their well-being.

5.4. The level of youth participation in decision-making processes.

Maser (1997) claimed that development programmes focus on participation and, subsequently, seek to ensure the involvement of all participants in decision-making processes. A number of authors (Boeck, 2009; Cornwall, 2010; Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003; Lerner 2010) agreed that youth participation is the active engagement of young people in decision-making processes that includes the problem identification, programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a programme cycle.

¹¹ As discussed in 5.2.

¹²As discussed in 5.3.1.

Based on these definitions, young people of the Spes Bona High School peer education programme were asked the following guiding questions on their level of decision making (See Annexure 2, Section 2):

1. *What is your understanding of the term decision making? What levels of decision making are you involved in?*
2. *Have you been involved in the project's needs assessment?*
3. *Do you feel well informed of the meetings, activities and the plans of the peer education programme in your school?*
4. *Please describe your level of participation at the project activities and meetings.*

In order to gain responses from the youth on the questions above, a semi-structured interview checklist was used to ascertain if the young people were involved in any of the decision-making processes, which included the problem identification, programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the use of focus group discussion was employed to further the discussion of the youth's participation in decision-making processes.

To begin with, the evaluated checklist revealed that the participation of the youth in the programme's activities were not explicit. This was elaborated in the following statements:

I think sometimes we are part of decision making because we are the people at the grassroots level and in the schools. In the past, we decided about what worked and what did not in the implementation of certain programme activities. However, lately we have come to realise that there is a strong decision-making structure from above [management].

A second beneficiary supported his counterpart by remarking,

Initially, we used to develop game sessions according to what worked. That is, what we thought was fit for our own needs. However, nowadays, they [management] develop the session; we simply get the sessions on paper with instructions on how to go about the implementation of the session. We in turn practice the sessions as they are handed to us amongst ourselves [fellow youth]. We, however, discuss how we can substitute certain parts with another where possible. Basically those are the kinds of decision-making processes we are involved in.

According to the quotes above, the young people defined their level of participation, especially in the problem identification and implementation of the programme's activities. From this information, it was evident that youth had limited control of the decisions they could make in both these stages. As a result, it was evident that the key decision-making activities (problem identification, project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) were decided upon by the management of the Life Choices organisation.

Despite their limited access to the decision-making space, some young people revealed that they were often given the opportunity to be creative in executing the pre-set activities in order to captivate the interest of and retain their peers in the discussion forums. This was evident in the following assertion by one youth member in the group:

Once we read through the instructions of a planned session, the field staff encourage us to be creative and use our own words and ideas that would make it easier for us to present such a session to our peers... What we do is read through the instructions and let them guide us because we would like to make it fun and

appealing our peers. Because if we make it boring for ourselves, our peers will find it boring as well.

In analysis, this quote revealed the roles and responsibilities that the young people took. To this end, despite their affirmation of their creativity in the implementation of the activities, this form of participation was limited. In other words, it displayed their participation in the lower or minor levels of decision making, as their main role was in the execution of the *game* activities. Such procedures and practices further distanced the youth from fully assuming the roles and responsibilities that accompanied the governance structure of the programme.

Although admitting to having limited experiences in the decision-making platform, the young people in the programme acknowledged their participation in the decision-making platform within community projects beyond their immediate school environment. Consequently, they could recognise a specific problem in the larger community by identifying the problem and planning and executing plans to solve the identified need. To support this, participants described their involvement in a charity drive that mobilised the larger school community to donate toiletries to the Saartjie Baartman Centre¹³ for abused women and children. In doing this, they shared a sense of solidarity and increased their initiative *to give back*, a expressed sentiment echoed by most of the youth in their community.

During analysis of the above, it was evident that the young people in this programme were committed to community development. This was evident in their assertion that they wanted *to*

¹³This is a NGO that offers shelter and protection for abused women and children in the Athlone community and its environs.

give back to the community. This was indicative of their willingness and capability to make critical decisions that had an impact on their lives, despite their limited involvement in the overall decision-making platform of the programme's activities.

The perceptions of the programme staff was closely tied to the level of involvement of the youth in the decision-making process as their attitudes towards sharing a governance structure with young people would either facilitate or hinder the inclusion of young people in such a space.

5.5. Perceptions of programme staff on youth participation in decision-making processes.

Boeck (2009), Cornwall (2010) and Perkins (2009) contended that youth will only be able to undertake responsibility in a programme's operations if programme leaders facilitate a mutual partnership between the youth and leaders in such an endeavour. Such partnerships, according to Flage, Vettern, Schmidt and Eighmy (2010), form the necessary adhesive to contribute towards true community development as both groups would contribute towards the skills base, build knowledge as well as carry out tasks to reach common goals.

On the basis of these theoretical assumptions, the programme staff were asked a series of questions that sought to ascertain their perceptions of young people in the decision-making space (See Annexure 1, Section 4). In order to fully develop discussions on these questions, the researcher utilised focus groups discussion and semi-structured interviews as methods to ascertain responses.

A semi-structured interview with the management of the Life Choices NGO revealed that the involvement of young people in the programme's operation as well as the development of a mutual partnership amongst all the participants was in its infancy. Subsequently, programme

leaders said that “*we are currently experimenting on how best to involve young people in the decision-making space*”. Moreover, in focus group discussion, the Life Choices Director admitted that “*the challenges that had transpired during this phase had given the organisation a sufficient reason to seek change or restructure the governance structure to include young people in the decision-making platform*”. This suggested that the management of this organisation deemed the youth to have valuable experiences and solutions to undertake decisions that would be translated into the practice of youth development.

Following this acknowledgement, the Upliftment project was, according to the management, forwarded as one of the strategies that had been utilised to integrate youth participation practice and respond to the need for a mutual partnership between adults and the youth in the governance structure of this programme. They presented the overall programme, with the base from which to launch youth in decision-making practice, to be later translated into the overall operations and roles within the programme.

However, there was a lack of consensus amongst the field staff on their perceptions of the youth involvement in the decision-making processes. Some staff described the youth as “*energetic and committed*” to embark on responsibilities in decision making and their development if given the chance while the greater majority of them described youth as “*rowdy and uncontrollable*”. Illustratively, one participant exclaimed, “*If we [field staff] push, they [the youth] push back*”. Moreover, a focus group discussion proved almost futile as a group of field staff were hesitant in response to their perceptions of youths’ participation in the decision-making space. The apprehension shown and the statements detailed above indicated that the staff perceptions of the young people in the organisation’s governance structure were marked by doubt and scepticism.

Because of this, there were opposing opinions amongst the programme leaders and the field staff on their perceptions of young people in the decision-making space.

The difference in opinion amongst the management and field staff was thus used as a measurement to show the success or otherwise of efforts of integrating young people into the decision-making operations. However, it was doubtful that the efforts would be successful in such an endeavour, given the ambivalence in the testimonials of the field staff. However, this was a limited view to measure success in the inclusion of beneficiaries into the programme's roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, this negativity was counteracted by the positive messages by the young people who expressed their capabilities as well as their changing perceptions as a willing group to take on the tasks and responsibilities in the programme's operations.

In conclusion, a deficiency was observed in the type of support that the youth received from their mentors to bring about community development. Bearing in mind the beneficiaries' success in the Upliftment project, a demand was made for a more assertive culture change amongst the mentors, who would deem youth to be assets and not problems. This would strengthen collective knowledge and skills as well as contribute towards sustainable community development. Such change could thus only be facilitated by sound policies that would offer the legitimacy of such actions in community.

5.6. Government policies and youth in the decision-making processes

The World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and Beyond recognises that the youth aspire to fully participate in the decision-making processes within society (United Nations, 2006). Adopting this resolution, the South African government asserted that the youth are an integral contribution towards the growth and development of the country (NYP, 2009).

With these policy standpoints in mind, the following questions needed to be asked:

1. *What does the WCED, WCHD and SD postulate about youth development?*
2. *Does Life Choices interact with the WCED and WCHD or SD government departments?*
3. *Are there any project collaborations that exist with other NGO's, CBOs, government initiatives?*

The researcher also conducted a literature review of the WPAY, AU and South African national youth policies. This information was used to understand the nature and extent to which these policy frameworks guided the key role players to determine the basis of partnerships that strengthened the capacity of young people to engage in decision-making processes.

Following the transition of South Africa into a democracy in 1994, young people were advanced as an essential element towards the growth of the country. Accordingly, youth development and community development are mainstreamed in the three tiers of government. The role of the national government is to develop a policy and regulatory infrastructure to oversee the direction of community development in the country. The provincial government, on the other hand, is tasked with the adaptation of the national policy into a provincial policy as relates to the specific needs of a particular province. In support, the local government is tasked with bringing people,

specifically the youth, closer to development, as stipulated in its laws through civil society structures such as NGOs.

According to the National Youth Policy (2009-2014), youth development follows a cross-sectoral development approach within all government departments (NYP, 2009). This policy maintains that the youth of South Africa are critical decision makers in areas of problem identification, policy design, programme design and implementation and monitoring and evaluation of community programmes (NYP, 2009).

Accordingly, this affirmation in policy implies that the young people of South Africa are supported and are thus a policy priority. In addition, this policy proposes that the government should nurture and strengthen the practice of youth development in the community. Furthermore, it suggests a steadfast public awareness and culture to engage youth in the socio-economic development of the country as opposed to their exclusion, as was the case prior to 1994.

However, the national youth policy declaration is hampered by a lack of documented support through provincial and local government policies in the Western Cape Province. In a semi-structured interview the Life Choices Director, claimed that the WCED and WCHD have adopted peer education as a development channel to enhance youth development in the province. There were, therefore, minimum standards and guidelines that these two government departments set out for youth organisations, such as Life Choices, to comply with. However, according to the Director, this peer education model only *“acted as a guideline and not a policy because it had not been approved by the provincial government”* (Life Choices, 2010). The Director further explained that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) existed between these

departments and the NGO. However, in some of the NGO's activities, an unwritten MOU existed between the programme and the NGO (Life Choices, 2010).

Such ambivalences in the relationship between the government departments and the NGO in several activities indicated that there was a fragmented form of youth development evident in the administration of these two entities.

Second, there seemed to be a lack of political support in endorsing provincial and local policies that supported youth development and participation at the grassroots level. As a result, this gap may have hindered the effective implementation of the vision and mission of the national policy in engaging young people in developing themselves and their communities. Also, although the vision of the Dream2Be youth programme was noble, the development of the youth could not be fully exploited within the province as there were no explicit micro-level policies that guided or were responsive to, or could be applied to, the youth of the chosen case study as well as those in other parts of the Western Cape.

Such policy gaps suggest reinforcement of the stereotype that young people are unable or unwilling to participate in their affairs and that of their communities. As a result, this put the Life Choices NGO in a precarious position. That is, as a youth organisation, it had a mission to develop the youth, on the one hand, but had no lucid micro-level policy to support the youth in the community, on the other hand.

The lack of provincial and grassroots policy support, even though Life Choices is an active youth development organisation, can thus be seen as contradictory, although there should not have

been two opposing agendas. There was thus a need to align these two agendas in way that highlighted the needs of young people in the province.

Furthermore, the Life Choices Director mentioned that the organisation largely relied on donor funding for its operations and existence. The Director explained that donor funding often had an array of interests that may have excluded youth development. To this end, differing opinions about including young people in the decision-making space would automatically have had a negative effect on decisions concerning engaging youth in this space.

Despite these obstacles, the Life Choices NGO sought to legitimise its existence and engage the youth of the Spes Bona High School in grassroots development through a non-political route. In this regard, Zeldin et al. (2007) suggested that such organisations, whose interests are primarily inclined towards youth development and engage in youth interests, could serve as an avenue to mobilise relevant stakeholders for a prospective youth policy. Subsequently, in a focus group discussion, the management of the programme posited that their non-political presence in the community and in collaboration with other stakeholders would potentially create an enabling environment for provincial and local policies to prosper whilst embedding the voice of the youth in the decision-making operations. This, according to the Director was attributed to the strong buy-in into the programme by the beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders.

From the above, a conclusion can be drawn that there needs to be interplay between the national, provincial and local-level policies and the implementation of the NGO in the community. The various stakeholders could generate discussions which would develop explicit and comprehensive provincial and micro- level policies that would pay attention to the specific needs of the youth in the Western Cape. The successful development of these policies could

subsequently bring about partnerships with key role players. Ultimately, the quality of such an interaction would be vital to bring young people closer to active grassroots development and in making decisions that affected their well-being.

5.7. Institutional aspects of the programme cycle

According to Furubotn and Ritcher (1998), institutional arrangements play a critical role in determining the behaviour and efficiency of an organisation. As such, these arrangements, according to Mulgan (2002, cited in Dinbabo, 2005) provide the checks and balances, necessary for transparency, that are needed to control the actions of programme leaders.

Following these theoretical assertions, the following questions were asked (See Annexure 2, Section 6):

- 1. Does the peer education programme have rules of function? What types? Explain the rules of function.*
- 2. Do the youth have the means to counteract against poor performance and inappropriate behaviour of project coordinators?*

In order to aid responses, focus group discussions with all participants within the programme were held.

From the programme manuals, it was ascertained that the Dream2Be peer education programme is based on certain institutional aspects that provide the organisation with the structure to ensure its legitimacy. These included rules, accountability, responsibilities and transparency and are discussed below.

5.7.1. Rules

Dinbabo (2005) claimed that both informal and formal rules of behaviour are significant mechanisms to control and instil accountability amongst group members in development processes. These rules, according to Furubotn and Ritcher (1998), are set as limits needed to ensure that an organisation will function properly.

Based on these theoretical assertions, information gathered in focus group discussion with the participants of the study revealed that, generally, all participants were governed by a set of rules and procedures that ensured the functionality of the programme. These rules were usually formal or written and corresponded to each of the participant's roles and responsibilities. For example, the leadership structures were the main decision makers in the affairs of the programme. The field staff, on the other hand, assisted the leaders in the implementation of programme activities in the Spes Bona High School, while the beneficiaries of the programme participated in and oversaw the activities amongst their peers within the school environment.

Accordingly, these rules regulated the performance of each tier so as to avoid negligence and counteract poor performance of their responsibilities. Additionally, these rules showed how each of these roles functioned to complement another role and how a specific tier was governed. They also served as a method or system of organisational governance that created a framework for conducting *business* efficiently and effectively by co-ordinating the actions of all the participants.

Likewise, participants acknowledged that there was also a sense of there being unwritten rules in the programme. These, they mentioned, served as mechanisms to streamline power relations and were based on mutual respect and trust. Thus, they controlled the interaction between the

participants to avoid inappropriate behaviour amongst themselves. For instance, the youth, field workers and management clearly pointed that strict measures were in place to punish inappropriate sexual behaviour in the groups, given their close working relations. These moral rules were laid out to guide everyday social interactions amongst the participants.

Management of Life Choices and participants in the programme claimed that the unwritten rules had facilitated an environment conducive to captivating and retaining the interest of the youth and catering to the needs of young people, given the relaxed environment provided in which to learn. According to Cornwall (2008) and Furubotn and Ritcher (1998), such moral value systems instil the *buy-in* necessary to attract beneficiaries while maintaining a favourable environment for their participation. To this end, these rules seemed to have facilitated and prompted the management to acknowledge the need for the programme to create networks¹⁴ and partnerships¹⁵ that placed the youth in the decision-making space.

Overall, the written and unwritten rules and administrative steps provided the programme with measures of control and ensured functionality of the participants within the programme. Accordingly, each aspect of the programme contained structures of meaning, legitimacy and power that gave the programme a pillar to legitimise its existence as well as ensure its proper functioning. Not only do the informal rules support the formal rules of the programme, but they also contribute to a favourable environment that gives the beneficiaries the opportunity to be involved in the higher levels of decision making, as is evident in the Upliftment programme.

¹⁴ Youth Advisory committee

¹⁵ Saartjie Baartman Centre, Parents and other stakeholders.

5.7.2. Accountability/responsibilities

Accountability is the ability of beneficiaries to negotiate, influence, control and hold institutions responsible in activities that affect their lives (Narayan, 2002). In addition, the term embraces empowerment, whereby young people can demand that leaders are transparent and ensure that the different activities within the programme function properly (Hilhorst, 2003).

In assessing the accountability and responsibilities of the programme leaders, field staff and the beneficiaries, the latter group were asked about the accountability of the programme leaders in terms of the programme activities and how these affected their lives.

While acknowledging the theoretical assertions, information obtained in focus group discussions from the different tiers of the programme confirmed that all participants had a set of pre-determined yet complementary responsibilities. Accordingly, the programme leaders believed that they worked on behalf of and with the youth and felt they were responsible to them in all their activities. They were thus responsible for ensuring that the field staff and young people carried out specific assignments when ordered to do so. Most importantly, the young people were given a platform, though under supervision, to exercise and participate in the problem identification, planning and implementation of the social awareness and advocacy programmes, as evident in the Upliftment project.

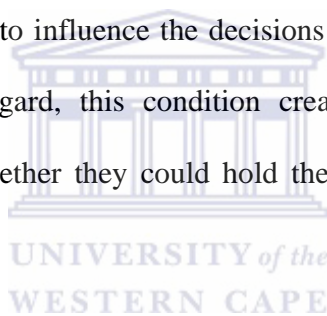
In addition, according to programme leaders, the youth were aware of the complementary programmes implemented alongside the Dream2Be peer education programme. These included the VCT centres¹⁶, parents' programme, career guidance counselling, coaching, and mentorship tutoring programmes. However, the youth asserted that despite their awareness of these

¹⁶HIV/AIDS Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centres.

programmes, they lacked the ability to contribute directly or influence the operations of these programmes. They thus felt that there was no mechanism in place to bring the leaders to account in terms of their responsibilities within these programmes.

In analysis of the above, the lack of accountability measures for the programme leaders to the youth indicated that there was a weak support structure for the youth and thus a weak linkage between the two groups.

Overall, the role of the management and field staff was to act as guides that supported the youth of this programme to engage in youth development activities. However, the lack of a clear accountability structure was thus a source of disempowerment for the beneficiaries of the programme as they were not able to influence the decisions and actions taken that had a direct impact in their lives. In this regard, this condition created an environment that fostered uncertainty in the youth as to whether they could hold the programme leaders to task in the responsibilities of the programme



5.7.3. Transparency

Transparency is the ability of individuals in a community to demand that development facilitators such as the government and NGOs are open and accountable and seek to include all previously marginalised groups in the decision-making platform of development efforts (Clark, 1991). In so doing, such organisations are understood to be structured groups of individuals who seek to achieve common goals, especially in the community (Furubotn & Ritcher, 1998).

For the purposes of this study, and taking into consideration the theoretical assertions above, the researcher conducted three focus group discussions amongst each of the tiers in the programme to ascertain the level of transparency between the leaders and the youth.

First, there seemed to be a general consensus amongst most young people that decision-making operations were controlled by the project leaders. In addition, where the reporting structure was concerned, youth participants revealed, in a focus group discussion, that there was a clear upward reporting structure to the management, while there was no obligation by this tier to report back to the youth. Such an affirmation by the young people implied that the management practiced a top-down reporting structure, a negative condition to incorporating the preferences of the programme's beneficiaries.

Accordingly, it seemed that, at this stage, power held by the programme leaders, in which they practiced a one-way reporting channel, had taken precedence, thereby making it difficult for the young people to bring the leadership group to account with regard to their responsibilities.

In conclusion, the lack of a clear reporting structure to the intended beneficiaries was thus a hindrance in building the capacity of the youth in evaluating their current conditions and deciding how they would like to improve their conditions. This type of participation, over time, could lead to the fragmented success of the Dream2Be peer education programme and may undermine the sustainability as well as disrupt the ownership of the development initiative by the young people. Ultimately, the end result of this programme could be a development objective that lacks a concise vision for youth development, keeping them ignorant of their potential worth for their own and the future survival of the community.

5.8. Concluding summary

In this chapter, six themes were presented that provided insights into the dynamics and level of participation amongst the youth in the decision-making platform of the Dream 2Be peer education programme.

Based upon the empirical findings, the conclusion can be drawn that social assets, such as youth development organisations, act as enablers to build the capacity of young people living in impoverished living conditions. Subsequently, such enablers will give the beneficiaries the power to negotiate their way out of such conditions. In support of these organisations, it is advanced that a shared governance structure between the programme leaders and youth would facilitate the inclusion of the latter group in the decision-making processes of Dream 2Be peer education programme, as this was lacking

In spite of this deficiency, the programme activities or *games* instill a sense of consciousness amongst the young people that made them become more aware of their socio-economic surroundings. The activities helped to instil a sense of ownership and develop the young people's capacity to become more aware and assertive in finding solutions to the socio-economic problems in their surroundings, as these directly affected their well-being. From this, it was evident that this young people were capable and willing to take control of their own well-being and, subsequently, that of their communities.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study and provides recommendations based on community development theories, the literature review on youth participation, and the findings of the research objectives of the study.

A summary of the key empirical findings from analysis of the empirical data is given, as well as conclusions and guiding suggestions on youth development, with specific reference to the themes identified in the study.

The chapter is divided according to a) discussion of main findings; b) lessons learnt; c) conclusions; d) recommendations; e) a conclusion to sum up the chapter; and f) areas of further research.

6.2. Summary of findings

This section provides a summary of the main empirical findings of the study. The main focus of the empirical research was to primarily *assess the extent to which youth were involved in the decision-making processes in community development programmes*. In effect, this investigation sought to *understand how inclusion of the youth in decision-making processes affected their needs and subsequent ownership of their development*.

On the basis of the research findings, it was evident that the Upliftment programmes had positive and powerful effects on youths' problem-solving abilities. This was complemented by the *games* they played, which increased their social awareness of their immediate surroundings and the developmental change needed. As a result, their involvement began to change the perceptions of

the programme staff and led them to question the overall governance structure that, up to the time of data collection, was yet to incorporate the youth group in problem-solving activities and responsibilities. Essentially, so as to effect sustainable development, it was decided that the development of the provincial and local-level policies would create a favourable environment to increase the voice of the youth in their development, as well as support their partnership in community development. In support of this summary, below are the specific conclusions that emerged according to each objective that formed this study.

1. *First*, it emerged from the study that the Spes Bona High School youth were marginalised from development, given the indigent conditions inherent in their communities. Accordingly, this realisation led to the assumption that young people were victims of disempowerment, with few or no opinions to offer in the development of their lives and that of their communities. To counteract this assumption, the objective of the Life Choices organisation is to build the capacity of the youth through motivation and positive youth development messages delivered through the Dream2Be peer education programme *games*.

Motivation can lead to empowerment. Hence, for the youth within the programme, the motivation and subsequent empowerment cultivated an interest that made them feel capable of thinking and enhancing their collective learning experiences. As highlighted by a large majority of the youth in this programme, collective learning and empowerment brought about change in their lives. Coupled with this, the social capital assets (natural, social, physical, human and financial) were identified as enablers that would ultimately facilitate their learning to change their current well-being and that of their community.

2. *Second*, concerning the governance structure of the Life Choices programme, it was evident that the existing arrangement did not align itself with youth development practices as it did not include young people at the decision-making table. It was obvious that the youth's omission from such crucial matters was the result of a lack of a practiced shared governance culture. In analysis, this was attributed to the different priorities of the programme in areas that were not pertinent to youth development, such as donor funding and the scepticism of the field staff and management about including young people at the decision-making table. The challenge therefore was to strike a balance between the beneficiaries and programme leaders so as to realign the programme with a mutual learning environment to introduce and support youth in the decision-making operations and responsibilities within the community context. Tied to this realignment, the learning activities provided a learning process for the young people that alerted their consciousness on social issues as well as instilled their awareness of their potential to initiate and manage positive changes for the benefit of themselves and others. As conscious young people, they realised that they were no longer helpless beings but were active beings who had the potential, will and ability to change their lives and those of their communities, as envisaged by the Upliftment projects, which offered specially designed youth activities. Principally, the activities facilitated a discovery process through which young people understood and felt part of their socio-economic reality and environment.
3. *Third*, it was apparent from the study results that the participation of young people in the programme's operations, which included the problem identification and programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, was limited. Notwithstanding this limitation, the youth had been engaged in the Upliftment projects that engaged them as

well as introduced them to the roles and responsibilities that were pertinent to the project's operations and responsibilities. As a result, this experience reinforced their connectedness as young people as well as increased their awareness and assertiveness in contributing towards their community development in the Saartjie Baartman project. They showed their potential and presented themselves as willing parties to be engaged in decision-making processes.

4. *Fourth*, it surfaced that the programme leaders and programme staff had differing opinions where the ability of young people in the programme operations and roles were concerned. Such differences only reinforced conventional assumptions amongst adult groups to suggest that young people were ignorant about how they could develop their lives. In addition, the apprehension felt by the field staff because of the differences in their perceptions of and opinions on including young people in the decision-making processes weakened the support that the programme leaders had accorded to organisational adaptability to include young people in the decision-making sphere. Overall, this lack of organisational adaptability did not facilitate a mutual learning environment between the youth and the programme leaders, in which both parties would foster differing yet complementary experiences at the decision-making table.
5. *Fifth*, given the absence of provincial and local youth development policies to guide the youth development in the Western Cape, the development of the young people in Athlone and the Western Cape Province was uncertain. This was despite the steadfast national policy that clearly maintained that that young people could and should play a role in their community as well as in their well-being. However, the shortcomings of these policies have not deterred the Life Choices organisation from planning a youth programme in the

Athlone community. This, according to the management, will be a platform to initiate sound research, with an understanding of the complexities of the province, so as to devise a policy that is relevant and adaptable to the youth in the region. Furthermore, this will ultimately provide a platform on which the youth can hold the provincial and local government accountable to develop the best youth development practices, primarily in decision making processes.

6. *Sixth*, the empirical evidence in the case study revealed that the programme has its own rules of function, characterised as both written and unwritten laws. The written laws give the organisation the formal orders that guide the responsibilities and roles of the participants involved in the programme. The unwritten rules, on the other hand, are based on mutual respect and trust. Overall, these rules are used to guide the smooth running of the organisation. In so doing, they form part of the control mechanisms that are in place to check and punish inappropriate behaviour and poor performance amongst participants.

In addition, information sharing and balanced communication form the basis of shared power and sound decision-making processes (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006). Empirical data showed that the programme leaders were not always open with to the youth and did not share information or communicate with the latter group in relation to the programme's key operations. Thus, the youth were not in a position to identify and analyse their problems or keep track of their progress for themselves. Balanced communication was lacking in aspects of the activities that related to decision-making operations and responsibilities.

6.3. Recommendations

The aim of this section is to offer recommendations and insights, based on the empirical findings of the study, that are practical and relevant to policy makers and other interest groups that endeavour to promote sustainable youth development. These are guided by the objectives highlighted in the study and the principles of community development and participatory youth development.

- *First*, in the context of a group of youth that is surrounded by an indigent environment, analysis of the study results confirm that there is a need to inform, educate and make young people aware of the social capital assets available in their community beyond their poverty. It is thus recommended that development organisation such as NGOs and other youth development organisations should be tasked with the responsibility of conscientising young people beyond their impoverished environment by focusing on positive assets that would enrich their opportunities for development.
- *Second*, in relation to the governance structure of Life Choices, it is recommended that the Life Choices NGO needs to adapt to the practices of a shared governance system. That is one that prioritises young people as the forerunners in decision making and assigns responsibilities to the youth to ensure their own well-being and that of their communities. Such a review of the organisation will facilitate a mutual learning environment for both the young people and adults so as to enrich their engagement in community development. Ultimately, such governance transformations will contribute to balance, instil a sense of ownership amongst the youth, and bring about sustainable development in the long run.

In relation to a shared governance system, it is recommended that the field staff and management should continue building the capacity of young people to develop planning and leadership skills. Thus far, the youth activities have been successful and revealed outcomes such as empowerment and ownership amongst the youth. Coupled with the Dream2Be activities, and the Upliftment projects, it is envisioned that this will develop a platform for a shared partnership with other community organisations and a more assertive youth in planning their well-being and that of their communities.

- *Third*, given the young people's assertion, during the programme, that they wanted to be involved in community development, it is recommended that they should be exposed to more engaging activities that require critical thinking and making decisions that have an impact in their lives and community. The advantage of this kind of exposure is that it allows young people to identify areas that require improvement through using their expertise whilst improving their development participation at the community level.

The exposure to youth development activities is thus proposed as a means of equipping young people in hard decision-making skills that include problem identification and programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- *Fourth*, it is posited that organisational adaptability and subsequent youth and adult partnership is the backbone of sustainable youth development. It is thus recommended that youth organisations should transform institutionally so as to accommodate young people in the decision-making space as well as facilitate a learning opportunity for both groups to further strengthen youth participation in this space. To ensure this, it is vital

that young people are aware of their need to begin to negotiate with authority and make decisions that affect them. Thus, the objective is to focus on practical ways in which the youth can engage in community development from their own perspectives. In effect, this type of involvement is seen to improve the quality of youth and community development in the long run.

- *Fifth*, it is envisioned that youth development stakeholders will take the lead to bring about a local-level development policy that adheres to the local conditions of the Athlone youth and the rest of the youth in the province. It is thus recommended that youth development practitioners should put pressure, through their youth development efforts, on the provincial government to draft youth policies that are adaptable to the communities in the province. Such institutional support would offer the legitimacy needed to strengthen the voice of the youth in their own and in community development.
- *Lastly*, given that social organisations instil elements of trust and norms amongst participants in co-ordinated community actions, a recommendation is made for the continued promotion of such values as these would ultimately build the capacity of the community as well as make it more adaptive to including youth in development processes. Such elements of trust and norms would also develop networks to facilitate a process whereby the youth, NGOs, government and other relevant stakeholders share common interests and needs that support youth in the decision-making space.

6.3. Concluding remarks

According to the empirical research undertaken, the conclusion can be drawn that participatory youth development, particularly the inclusion of young people in the decision-making space is essential in counteracting the isolation of young people in their development. Accordingly, including this group in these processes is seen as an opportunity to develop their thinking capacity to bring forth ideas, perceptions and knowledge that will facilitate their own and community well-being.

The ingredients that sustain youth participation in decision-making processes, as articulated by participants in this empirical study, include significant benefits for the youth. These include their serving as role models to their peers within the school environment, diagnosing problems, providing reality checks, through their eyes, in the Upliftment project, and learning *games*, thereby challenging traditional thinking that dismisses them as an insignificant group in society. These initial steps would increase the adaptability of an organisation and thus encourage the adults to invite into and retain young people in the decision-making process. Such practices would capture the attention of policy makers at the local level to develop policies that would support the voice of the youth in decision making. Such policies would reinforce the legitimacy of the project as well as offer chances for young people to tackle the responsibilities and roles at the decision-making table.

6.4. Areas for further research

In relation to the potential of youth as development partners, further research needs to be conducted, especially in areas where the youth are put in charge of planning operations and taking on responsibilities. More specifically, researchers need to investigate the challenges and opportunities that arise from an organisation's adaptability, or lack thereof, to include young people in the decision-making process as well as the experiences and lessons learnt from a mutual learning environment between young people and adults on this platform. It is envisioned that further research on such practices would offer balanced techniques to keep youth and adults on track in identifying their problems as well as seeking solutions to these problems, whilst reinforcing their role as partners in community development.



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ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Guiding questions for semi-structured interviews

(1) Number, types and origin of community development initiatives

- a) What types of community development projects initiatives by Life Choices exist in the Cape Flats area?
- b) When and how were they established?
- c) Do projects have participants from the community? If yes, how are they selected?
- d) What other formal and informal organisations operate in the area?
- e) Which of the formal and informal local organisations does Life Choices engage with in community development initiatives?
- f) Are there any social or cultural groups which may also have a potential for community development in the area?
- g) Do you know of any community assets? If so please name them.

(2) Organisational structure of the peer education programme

- a) How are the representatives of this programme delegated?
- b) Are they accountable?
- c) For what and to whom are they accountable?
- d) How are the responsibilities of each member delegated?
- e) Are there any other stakeholders/partnerships involved in this programme? What are their roles?

- f) Are there leading positions in the decision making processes of the peer education programme? Which ones?
- g) What responsibilities do they have?
- h) How are the facilitators recruited?
- i) Do they represent the youth community in the community?
- j) How do you judge the level of performance in initiation and implementing activities and meeting set objectives?
- k) Are the representative performances evaluated? By whom?



Annexure 2: Guiding questions to focus group discussions

(3) Involvement of youth in decision making process

- a) What is your understanding of the term *decision making*?
- b) Have you been involved in the project's needs assessment?
- c) How long have you been involved in this process?
- d) How did you become involved in this position?
- e) Do you feel well informed of the meetings, activities and the plans of Life Choices in your school?
- f) Please describe your level of participation at project activities and meetings
- g) Have you received training to participate in the project activities and meetings? What kind?
- h) What do you think was the initial reaction of the programme coordinators and facilitators to your involvement in the decision making space?
- i) Do you feel the programme coordinators and facilitators take your ideas and opinions seriously?
- j) What have you learnt from being in this process?
- k) What have you learnt from the programme coordinators and facilitators?
- l) Do you think the programme coordinators and facilitators have learnt anything from you?
If *yes* or *no*, provide reasons.
- m) Do you think this programme addresses your needs and attracts more youth to be involved in this programme?

- n) Do you feel your initial reaction towards the programme coordinators and facilitators on your involvement in this decision making space has changed over time? If *yes* or *no* provide reasons
- o) Do you feel that you have changed as a person as a result of being involved in this process? Give examples
- p) Do you feel fully involved in discussing and deciding the major directions of the programme's activities?
- q) What type of relationship exists amongst the Life Choices youth, co-ordinators and facilitators?
- r) Would you like to continue your involvement/responsibilities in this process? Why?

(4) Perception of the programme co-ordinators and facilitators

- a) What was your initial reaction of the youths' involvement in the decision-making space?
- b) Were you prepared for this kind on involvement of the youth? If *yes* or *no*, provide answers.
- c) Do you feel that the youth are capable of making useful opinions for decision making? If *yes* or *no*, provide reasons?
- d) Have you learnt anything from the youths' involvement/responsibilities in these positions? If *yes* or *no*, provide reasons.
- e) Do these new revelations have an impact on your initial opinions, attitudes and behaviour of youth in the decision making space? If *yes* or *no*, provide answers.
- f) How does the inclusion of the youth affect the running of the organisation? Give reasons in relation to relevance, quality and youth retention.

- g) What is the relationship between the programme co-ordinators, facilitators, youth and other stakeholders?
- h) What is the impact of this kind of partnership on policy?
- i) Do you think such partnerships are viable in community? If *yes* or *no*, provide answers.

(5) Perceptions of the WCED, WCDH and SD

- a) Does Life Choices interact with the WCED and WCHD or SD government departments?
- b) Does Life Choices negotiate or work in collaboration with the WCED, WCDH and SD to support similar projects in the area?
- c) Are there any project collaborations that exist with other NGO's, CBOs, government initiatives? If *yes*, give examples of such successful project.s
- d) How do these collaborations plan and conduct inter- project activities?
- e) How often do these collaborations plan and conduct regular meetings? Are they well attended?

(6) Institutional aspects such as transparency, rules, regulation and procedures to include youth participation

- a) Does the peer education programme have rules of function? What types?
- b) Explain the rules of function.
- c) Do the youth have the means to counteract against poor performance and inappropriate behaviour of project coordinators? Give example of action taken.
- d) Is Life Choices a suitable unit to act as a mediator between different developments actors? Why? By doing what? Are there other possible options of suitable units/groups? Who else has capacities to contribute and act?

- e) Does Life Choices have regular activity reporting procedures?
- f) Are the youth well informed of plans, meetings and activities towards the peer education programme?
- g) Please describe the youths' level of participation in such meetings.
- h) Are the youth recognised as change agents in the surrounding community?
- i) Are the youth able to negotiate with outside agencies/ government offices without support?
- j) What are the future plans?



Annexure 3: Timeframe used for the research processes

The empirical research will be completed in 26 weeks from the actual date of grounding. The different tasks will be performed as per the time mentioned in the schedule below:

List of activities	Duration
1. Preparation for the field work	2 weeks
2. Designing and pre-testing of research tools	2 weeks
3. Field work	4 weeks
4. Processing of data	4 Weeks
5. Analysis of data	4 Weeks
6. Report writing	5 Weeks
7. Finalisation of report	5 Weeks
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Total	26 weeks



Annexure 4: List of offices contacted.

Athlone Community Policing Forum

Athlone Housing Estate.

