



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

**ASSESSING THE STATE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE: THE
CASE OF BEAUFORT WEST MUNICIPALITY (2016 – 2019)**

**Mini Thesis submitted to the School of Government, Faculty of Economic and Management
Sciences at the University of the Western Cape in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
master's Degree of Public Administration**

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DECLARATION

I, Siphon Phendu, hereby declare that this work contained in this mini thesis entitled: *‘Assessing the state of public participation in the Western Cape: The case of Beaufort West Municipality’* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged as full references.

Full Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals for their consistent support and encouragement in the course of conducting this research study. I must, in particular, extend my genuine appreciation to my beautiful wife, Bolekwa Nkombi-Phendu, my children Aluve, Aluta and Ahlume for their unwavering support and understanding when I decided to adopt the library as my second home. They understood and deeply appreciated the value and importance of the sacrifices I was making towards the completion of this study.

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DEDICATION

This Mini Thesis is dedicated to my comrade and friend, the late Luyanda Maxwell Mbele. Through your resilience, courage and commitment to community development, you have left a legacy that will benefit and be treasured by the next generation of young leaders and community activists.

ABSTRACT

It is often argued that public participation is the cornerstone of constitutional democracy especially in countries such as South Africa with the history of segregation which was characterised by the exclusion of the majority of citizens from the decision-making processes of the state based on race, class and gender. As such, following the introduction of the various pieces of legislation in 1994, the dominant narrative was that the progressive laws that were passed would serve as a ‘panacea’ to the challenges of participatory governance in South Africa. It was inconceivable that 25 years into democracy, South Africa would still be grappling with the concept of public participation and the extent to which citizens could influence, direct and own decisions made by and with government especially at a local level.

This study assessed the state of public participation in the Western Cape focusing on Beaufort Municipality in the Central Karoo District. It argued that public participation is a prerequisite for democratic governance and that the state could be deemed illegitimate if it does not prioritize the involvement of communities in its affairs. In this context, a particular focus was placed on the effectiveness of the ward committee system (as state sponsored mechanisms of public participation) in enhancing participatory democracy in Beaufort West Municipality. It refuted assumptions on the institutional arrangements made in the legislative framework governing public participation and ward committees – identifying and outlining some of the unanticipated consequences of these pieces of legislation.

The study used qualitative research methods to collect data. Primary and secondary data was gathered to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with specific reference on the effectiveness of the ward committee system and the role of legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of various stakeholders involved in public participation. The primary data was gathered through structured interviews and questionnaires while the secondary data was collected the analysis of the literature on public participation and ward committees including municipal reports, guidelines on public participation, legislation and policy frameworks.

The research found that it is precisely the state sanctioned ward committee system that has contributed to the collapse of public participation in South Africa. The ward committee system was identified as a ‘poisoned chalice’ - so compromised that it has become an instrument to legitimise predetermined decisions of the politically connected elite, a rubber

stamp platform to comply with the policy and legislative framework. To address this problem, the study recommended a number of measures and interventions that could be introduced which entails the reconfiguration and overhaul of the legislative framework governing public participation and ward committees including the review of the role of politicians in public participation, training and capacity building, allocation of dedicated budget for public participation etc.

KEY WORDS: Public participation, participatory democracy, governance, ward-based governance, active citizenship, Beaufort West Municipality

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
CDWs	Community Development Workers
CS	Community Survey
DMA	District Management Area
DORA	Division of Revenue Act
DPLG	Department of Local and Provincial Government
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
MSA	Municipal Structures Act
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PMS	Performance Management System
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This study assesses the state of public participation in the Western Cape in the context of municipalities post 2016 Local Government elections. It examines the effectiveness of the ward committee system as a primary mechanism for public participation in municipalities and the extent to which these structures facilitate meaningful involvement of communities in the affairs of local government. The study takes place at a time when the national Department of Cooperative Governance (CoGTA) and provincial CoGTAs are conducting public consultations on the review of legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation and ward committees. The legislative review process will be concluded before the end of 2019 and the proposed amendments thereof to take effect after the 2021 local government elections.

In this context, the study will critically discuss the current legislative framework highlighting gaps and weaknesses and how these have undermined and compromised public participation in the municipal space. To this end, the roles, powers and functions of ward committees will be assessed to determine their functionality and whether there is still need for their continued existence. The study will focus on Beaufort West Municipality's public participation and ward committee processes and procedures specifically focusing on the following aspects:

- Administrative capacity and the location of public participation and ward committees' function in the municipal organogram.
- Budget and resources for public participation and ward committees.
- The impact of coalition arrangements (and its dynamics) as well as local politics (inter and intra party political contradictions) on public participation.
- The status of ward committees: its functionality, challenges and opportunities.

1.2. BACKGROUND

Since the demise of the apartheid system in 1994, the new democratic state put in place systems and mechanisms to improve and institutionalize democratic participatory system in South Africa. Prior to the advent of democracy, decision making was confined to some sections of society without active and meaningful involvement of the majority of citizens leading to "skewed delivery of services and biased system of governing" (Tau 2013: 153). As such, the pre-1994 public participation and policy

making processes were a “closed affair” with little, if any, community involvement (Legislative Sector 2013: 12). According to Fourie (2001: 217) “true democracy” is possible and can only work if there is an attempt to promote citizen participation in governance and that understanding is created between citizens, government and administration. For the purposes of this study, participatory governance will be used interchangeable with public participation or community participation.

Participatory governance is defined as a process where citizens are given an opportunity to express their views and have a voice in decision making, either directly or through legitimate, intermediate institutions that represent their views (Mofolo, 2013: 232). Creighton (2005: 17) postulates that “at its most basic level”, public participation means that those who have authority and are entrusted to make decisions that affect people’s lives need to consult and have a dialogue with them before making those decisions.

In the South African context, concerted efforts were made to institutionalize democratic participatory system through the introduction of legal and policy framework that sought to regulate the establishment of structures and systems aimed at deepening and enhancing community involvement in the affairs of local government. In terms of section 152 (1) (e) of the constitution (108 of 1996) one of the main object of Local Government is to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the affairs of Local Government. To give practical expression and meaning to the constitutional provision on public participation, government passed other pieces of legislation, including the White Paper on Local Government (1998), Local Government Municipal Structures Act (1998) as well as Local Government Municipal Systems Act. The Municipal Structures Act (section 73) makes provision for the establishment of ward committees as formal structures and mechanisms for effective community participation in the matters of local government.

According to Babio (2004: 275) the primary purpose of the ward committee system is to serve as a communication channel between the community and the municipal council, state regulated spaces aimed at enhancing meaningful community involvement in governance. The Municipal Systems Act, on the other hand, encourages municipalities to establish process, mechanisms and procedures for meaningful community involvement in municipal processes, including among others, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Municipal Performance Management Systems (PMS).

However, despite the creation of these state- led formal processes and spaces of public engagement, public participation has increasingly become a contested terrain in South Africa. In most instances, the constitutional and legislative requirements for public participation have not yielded the

anticipated outcomes as municipalities established participatory mechanisms for mere compliance with the regulatory framework.

Assessing the levels of effectiveness in the municipal IDP processes, Mautjana and Mokone (2014: 54) posit that “genuine public participation is about the ability to influence decisions.” In most instances, however, these processes are carried out for “malicious compliance” (Mautjana and Mokone, 2014). Therefore, extensive and meaningful participation in municipal decision-making processes is an exception and the discourse on public participation is “a puff to inflate legitimacy” (Mautjana and Mokone, 2014). In this context, the need for public participation often gets hijacked and is used by authorities to rubber stamp and legitimize decisions that have been taken elsewhere discarding genuine community proposals and views in the process (Ibid). According to Koelble (2012:138) most municipalities are simply not utilizing the structures and systems that have been prescribed by legislation to promote public participation. Koelble (2012: 138 – 140) therefore concludes that public participation relies entirely on society itself and its ability to confront the challenge brought about by participatory democracy and this is “something that no amount of legislating will achieve.

Mufamadi (2002) contends that the inclusion of the public voice into the decision-making processes of government is non-negotiable. To that end, “Government does not only view community participation as an end in itself. Rather the purpose of participation is the very essence of a people-centred approach to development. In this context, communities should not be viewed as passive participants but as active agents of change and development. Participation processes should develop people to become more resourceful themselves in as much as it should be aimed at ensuring that service and infrastructure delivery is enhanced through community participation” (Community/Ward-Based Planning Workshop, 29 October 2002)

Echoing Mufamadi’s sentiment, Draai et al (2009: 118) contends that the current situation at the local sphere of government in South Africa requires urgent and drastic changes to enable municipalities and ward committees to produce the desired benefits envisaged by the promulgation of the progressive developmental local government legislation. The Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2007: 7) developed by the then Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) states that “since the promulgation of the Municipal Systems Act, it is evident that the community consultation and involvement process is still in its infancy and that municipalities are often not fulfilling their legislative obligations”. It was envisaged that the Policy Framework,

which was to be embraced and adopted by municipalities throughout the country, would “assist municipalities with the practical implementation of a well-planned, resourced and structured participation program, so that communities can actively contribute to the decision-making processes within the council and become agents of change” (Ibid).

Ten years later (2017), the Department of Corporative Governance (formerly DPLG - hereinafter referred to as DCoG) has embarked on processes aimed at strengthening the current regulatory and statutory framework governing ward committees. The Department of Corporative Governance Concept Paper on the review of legislative framework for ward committees and public participation (GCoG, 2017: 3) concludes that despite all the “ingredients that have been assembled for effective, responsive and participatory local government, many would argue that government still has to invest more towards promoting participatory governance and in particular towards functional ward committee system” (DCoG 2017: 3). There are, however, striking similarities in respect of the intent and objectives (including wording) of these policy and legislative processes. For example, the Concept Paper on the legislative review process suggest that one of the aims is to “assist municipalities with the practical implementation of a well-planned, resourced and structured participation programme, so that communities can actively contribute in the decision-making process within the council and to become agents of change and development” (Ibid).

The overall purpose and objectives of the legislative review, according to the Concept Paper is to assess the following:

- Legislative & policy amendments e.g. should ward committee and public participation be located in the speaker’s office?
- Institutional arrangements for coordination of ward committees e.g. the integration of ward committees with other spheres of government.
- Establishment of ward committees e.g. is the criteria and procedure for the election of ward committees producing the intended benefits – should the IEC be involved in ward committee elections to ensure fairness and credibility of the process?
- Powers and functions of ward committees – should ward committees be formally introduced into IDP Representative Forums?
- Enhancing community participation through alternative platforms.
- Institutionalizing public participation in municipal governance

Regarding the latter, the Concept Paper (2017: 10) proposes that the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs “must publish regulations in terms of section 22 of the Municipal Structures Act specifying the coordination of public participation”, and this may include the following:

- Coordination should take place from the Speaker’s office, but the work and activities of ward committees should be an integral part of administrative functionaries.
- Establishment of the component with required capacity and resources mandated to undertake the public participation process.
- The formal integration of Community Based Planning in core municipal processes.
- Public participation to form part of all managers reporting directly to the municipal manager.
- The appointment of a section 57 manager to be responsible for community participation matters.
- The development of a municipal community and stakeholder engagement policy and plans.
- Institutionalisation of community complaints processes through the establishment of advisory committees on complaints and petitions as provided in the Municipal Systems Act.

By introducing the legislative review process, Department of Corporative Governance will solicit views and inputs from all South Africans through public consultation workshops in provinces until 2019. It is envisaged that the legislative review process will enhance democratic participatory governance at local government level with the view to strengthening the interface between communities and municipalities.

In light of the above, this study will assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with Beaufort West Municipality as a case in study. In so doing, it will critically examine the factors that have contributed to weak and flawed public participation processes in the municipality, with specific reference to the effectiveness of the ward committee system in enhancing participatory democracy.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The advent of democracy in 1994 resulted in the introduction of legislative frameworks aimed at monitoring, guiding and promoting the institutionalization of public participation in the affairs of local government. More importantly, the new ward committee system was introduced as a formal platform to deepen participatory democracy in governance. Although these state - controlled spaces of participation are not the only mechanisms for public participation, they provide a structured model

for public consultation and participation. Their main function is to enhance constructive interaction between the municipality and the local community (Maphazi et al, 2013: 62).

However, despite all the efforts made, persistent challenges remain. Over the past ten years, for example, municipalities have used ward committees as ‘Alpha and Omega’ of public participation ignoring other procedures, processes and mechanisms of community participation as prescribed in chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000, section 21). One of the realities and challenges of the ward committee system in South Africa is unintended consequences of the policy framework governing ward committees. Ward committees have become so politicised thus reducing them into spaces for local inter and intra party political bickering. Modise (2017: 6) concurs and further posits that while recognizing the critical role of ward committees in public participation, in many instances they only exist “for the individual and the political party’s group interest, and not for public interest (tyranny of the majority or totalitarian group)”.

Consequently, ward committees have failed to fulfil their envisaged role as “community voices” and conduits for effective community involvement and this is further strengthened by the perception that ward councillors manipulate the system to ensure that their preferred candidates are elected. As such, ward committees are often labelled as mere “extensions of political party structures” that do not represent the interests of sectors within their respective communities (Kabane, 2014: 10). The reality is that those who have close proximity to ward councillors would have better prospects of serving on ward committees than those who are not. In a related observation, Piper & Von Lieres (2008: 14) allude to the fact that ward committees have become “sites for partisan contests by political elites” hence people who are not aligned to dominant party or intra-party network are marginalised and left out of ward committees.

The Speaker of council is the custodian of ward committees and this has contributed immensely to the challenges highlighted above (National Framework on Public Participation, 2007: 72). In practical terms he/she exercises political oversight, implementation and accountability over ward committees resulting in the creation of political - administrative dichotomy which may undermine functionality of ward committees. In most instances, the Speakers are also the ward councillors, a phenomenon often leading to the blurring of lines between coordination of policy implementation, political oversight and accountability. In this regard, Kabane (2014:11) observes that undue political interference in ward committees must be addressed and one option that has been proposed is to legislate that councillors can no longer be the chairpersons of ward committees.

Therefore, the popular view among public participation scholars and academics is the need to change the status quo and “this would require amendment of section 73 (2) of the Municipal Structures Act (Portfolio Committee on Provincial and Local Government, 2003). To date, however, there have been no serious moves to bring about this change” (Kabane, 2014). Advancing a similar perspective, Sekgala (2016: 11) observes that “whereas well-intended, the provisions for the establishment of ward committees have not addressed the practical implications of community participation in municipal decision-making processes”. Reaffirming the challenges outlined above, the Department of Corporative Governance (DCoG) has, in collaboration with provinces and municipalities, started with consultation and public participation process for the review of the current legislation on public participation and ward committees. The legislative review, whose outcome will inform the establishment and operations of the 5th generation ward committees (2021 -2026), is expected to be concluded before the end of December 2019.

1.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Description of study

Beaufort West Municipality is a category B municipality in the heart of the Central Karoo District, situated along the N1 highway to Johannesburg, approximately 415 Km from Cape Town. Like most rural municipalities elsewhere in South Africa, Beaufort West is a ‘Back to Basics’ municipality receiving hands -on technical support from National and Western Cape Governments. Launched in September 2014, the objective of the program is to facilitate the provision of technical and professional support to poor and “low capacity” municipalities (mostly rural) in order to help them to fulfil their legislative mandates in respect of addressing service delivery backlogs (Concept Paper on the “Back to Basics”, 2014: 5). The 5 pillars of the “Back to Basics” program are the following:

- Public Participation: “Putting people first”;
- Delivering basic services;
- Good governance;
- Sound financial management; and
- Building capabilities.

While the focus is on the state of public participation in the Western Cape, the five pillars of the “Back to Basics” program speak directly to the issues of participatory governance as provided for in the constitution (section 152) as well as other legislative and policy frameworks governing public participation. To this end, the researcher acknowledges that various scholars have investigated this phenomenon but have not sufficiently probed the role of the ward committee system in enhancing public participation from a legislative and policy perspective. Previous studies on public participation have tended to tiptoe around the same problem without thoroughly investigating the weaknesses and contradictions in the legislative framework which had shaped the state of public participation, especially in the case of Beaufort West Municipality in the Western Cape. In conducting this study, the researcher will thoroughly examine the effectiveness of the ward committee system in promoting public participation in the Western Cape, including the legislative and policy framework governing public participation and ward committees.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In assessing the state of public participation in the Western Cape, the study will critically discuss the role of legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of various stakeholders involved in public participation through the following questions:

1. To what extent does local party politics influence public participation processes in local government in the Western Cape?
 - In particular, what is the role of Ward Councillors and the Speaker in facilitating participatory democracy especially in the context South Africa’s highly politicised and dynamic local government sphere?
2. What is the impact of ward committees in enhancing public participation in local government?
 - As the primary mechanisms to promote public participation, have ward committees fulfilled their legislative and policy mandate?
 - Are the decisions on service delivery taken during ward committee meetings being implemented by the municipality?

- Do you think Proportional Representation Councillors should have a role to play in ward committees? If yes, what do you think should be their role?
3. What are the institutional arrangements for public participation in local government?
 - Is there a proper infrastructure (capacity and resources) that will enable effective public participation processes in local government?
 4. To what extent will the current review of public participation and ward committee legislative framework change the status quo of public participation in the Western Cape?

1.6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with specific reference to the ward committee system, the role of the legislative and policy framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of the various stakeholders involved in public participation. To deepen participatory democracy in South Africa, various state-led policy interventions have been made since 1994 throughout the three spheres of government. However, according to some scholars and academics, these state regulated spaces of public participation have not achieved the envisaged outcomes due to weak political oversight and accountability leading to failure in implementation and manipulation of public participation processes for political gain.

The following are the specific objectives of the study:

- To Assess the effectiveness of the ward committee system in strengthening public participation;
- To analyse and identify gaps and weaknesses in the current legislative and policy framework governing public participation;
- To evaluate and critically examine the role of politics (and politicians) in facilitating public participation in municipalities;
- To acquire empirical evidence and make recommendations on possible policy and legislative amendments to the newly established Western Cape Provincial Public Participation and Ward Committee Legislative Review Project Steering Committee.

1.7. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for the study is informed by the constitutional requirement for the state to create conducive environment for citizens to actively participate, influence and control decision making processes in government. The rationale for the study is to assess challenges of participatory democracy in the Western with specific focus on Beaufort West Municipality. In so doing, it will examine the influence and impact of coalition politics in public participation within the context of the current legislative and policy framework. Thus, the question becomes critically important: to what extent has the new phenomenon of hung municipal councils, which has led to the formation of ‘fragile’ coalition governments, affected governance and public participation in Western Cape municipalities? The researcher firmly believes that this is an area of study that has not been given any serious priority, prompting further questions about de-politicization of public participation through legislative reforms. Furthermore, the study will also probe and seek to understand the logic behind assigning the public participation function/portfolio to political principals in the first place, as opposed to the Municipal Manager who is the Administrative Head and Accounting Officer of the Municipality.

The findings of this research could enrich the discussions and influence decisions regarding the legislative review process that is currently underway. It could also assist those municipalities, like Beaufort West, who are governed through coalition arrangements on how to navigate through this complex space and improve public participation.

1.8. PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Tsheola et al (2014: 394) contend that public participation in South Africa is contextual and in a state of flux as it depends upon personalities, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values. According to Williams (2008:3) the fact that the majority of the population did not have political rights until 1994 demonstrates the complete absence of participation of any sort because the method of government was highly centralized, deeply authoritarian and secretive. There was, however, as Hamann (2003: 1) points out, a rich tradition of civic activism characterised by many vocal NGOs and civic associations - a tradition that was supported by government and ANC policy, as indicated in the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). Consequently, public participation in South Africa has been plagued by the legacy of apartheid, which exacerbates challenges that are common today (Hamann, 2003: 21).

Following the 1994 democratic breakthrough the introduction of new public policies and “constitutional entrenchment” of public participation marked a departure from the authoritarianism of the past, thus demonstrating the commitment to facilitate and listen to popular expressions on governance, albeit strictly within the ambit of state hegemony (Booyesen, 2009: 2).

Despite the numerous pieces of legislation that were passed post 1994 to institutionalize public participation in governance, Williams (2008: 2) observes that community participation efforts in the post-apartheid South Africa are largely spectator politics, where ordinary people have become endorsees of pre-designed planning programs. In the main, he argued, communities have become objects of administrative manipulation and a miracle of reconciliation in the international arena of consensus politics, while state functionaries of both the pre- and post-apartheid era ensconce themselves as bureaucratic experts summonsed to “ensure a better life for all” (Williams, 2008). This view is also articulated by Masango (2002: 54) when he postulates that the involvement of local citizens in policy making and implementation is severely lacking and is mainly limited to compliance, hence Nyalunga (2006: 044-045) advocates for the optimal use of ward committees in enhancing public participation at a local government level. Nyalunga (2006: 044), however, cautions that ward committees “can only become effective vehicles for engaging communities in municipal decision making when complimented by other pragmatic mechanisms of participation”.

The mockery of ward committees, which have become lame duck institutions, is that while their existence is appreciated, they are there “for the individual and the political party’s group interest, and not for public interest (tyranny of the majority or totalitarian group)” Modise, 2017: 6). According to Tshoose (2015: 18) the role of such participation mechanisms in strengthening participatory democracy cannot be trivialised but given the external influences and different interests vested in them, “they are mostly geared towards seeking communities’ inputs into already formulated policy responses” (). Notably, as Mapuva (2010: 31) points out, there is an attempt to portray citizens as ignorant and therefore not worth consulting except to rubber-stamp the decisions of the bureaucratic elites. Mohan (2002), cited in Molosi and Dipholo (2016: 48) blames this on dominant forces within society who manipulate public participation processes to maintain and perpetuate the status quo in order to advance and retain their interest and privileges and subsequently influence the discourse.

Consistent with the theoretical observations made above, Arnstein (1969: 216) formulates a typology which identifies a ‘ladder’ of citizen participation comprising of the following eight rungs:

- 1) Manipulation – this is an ‘illusionary’ form of participation used as a public relations exercises aimed to prove” that “grassroots people” are involved in the program even though this may not have been discussed with them in the first place
- 2) Therapy: the “real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to “educate” or “cure” the participants”. in this case, the rules of engagement are predetermined.
- 3) Informing: information is ‘dumped’ and often a highly technical language is used which limits the participation of ordinary citizens.
- 4) Consultation: while the ‘have nots’ are afforded the opportunity to participate, it does not mean that their views would be taken into account when decisions are made. This is a typical ‘window dressing’ type of participation where people are primarily perceived as statistical abstractions, and participation is measured by how many come to meetings, take brochures home or answer a questionnaire. What citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have “participated in participation.”
- 5) Placation: this is an extreme version of tokenism where structures are created and the ‘have nots’ are allowed to make input but the power to decide resides with the ‘powerholders’.
- 6) Partnership: this rug represents a situation where citizens have an opportunity to engage and negotiate in ‘trade -offs’ with traditional ‘powerholders.
- 7) Delegated power
- 8) Citizens control: the “have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power.

1.9. PRELIMINARY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Brynard and Hanekom (1997: 25-27) define research methodology as a strategy used in a research to collect data, analyse and interpret it. Research methodologies, according to Williams (2004: 258) are used “to retrieve reliable information about specific issues in society”. In the case of this research study, a qualitative research methodology will be used to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape – using Beaufort West Municipality as a case study. According to Grobbelaar (1994: 85) qualitative research seeks understand the people and the phenomenon being researched in terms of the definition of the world in which they live and their perception of their context.

This study will adopt a case study design using a qualitative research approach to collect data. To this end, primary and secondary data collection methods will be used focusing on techniques such as questionnaires and structured interviews with the participants such as ward councillors, Speaker of

the Municipality, who is the custodian of ward committees, the Mayor, the Municipal Manager as well as ward committee members.

Due to the empirical evidence resulting from the experience and observations of the researcher, questionnaires and interviews will be conducted with the Beaufort West Community Development Workers (CDWs) as well as officials responsible for public participation and ward committees.

To compliment the primary data, the researcher will use documented information in the form of quarterly ward committee reports, district reports on ward committee functionality as well as minutes of ward committee meetings. In terms of sampling, Babbie (2005:104) identifies a sample as what or who is being studied. In this instance, the sample will be selected in consultation with the officials in the area under study. The study area for this research is Beaufort West Municipality. What informed the selection of the municipality was the fact that Beaufort West Municipality has faced many challenges in respect of ward committee functionality which ultimately undermined efforts to enhance public participation in the municipality.

1.10. DELIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The study will focus on the period between September 2016 to 2019 and will not use any municipal data or information that existed prior to the inauguration of the current term of office ending in 2021. This is due to the fact that since the introduction of the new system of Local Government in 2001, the 4th Council term represented sharp contradictions insofar as the facilitation of public participation processes is concerned in Beaufort West.

Due to the researchers' experience and the fragile political landscape, which has seen numerous changes of political leadership within the Beaufort West Municipality, the research study will include engagements with Ward Councillors of all the seven wards of the Municipality through structured interviews. Through the office of the Municipal Manager, request will be specifically made that Ward Councillors, ward committee members and municipal officials responsible for public participations be granted permission to participate in the structured interviews.

Once again, and informed by the issues highlighted above, the study will focus strictly on conducting interviews with the current political and administrative leadership - as from the date a formal letter granting permission to conduct the research has been received from the Municipal Manager. To this end, irrespective of any political and administrative changes that may occur during the course of the research study, the focus will be on the participants that were selected for the interviews during the data collection period (September – October 2019).

1.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bricki and Green (2018:5) states that any researcher – whatever the objectives of the research study being undertaken- has a responsibility to their research participants but also to their “colleagues and the people to whom you will present your research findings”. As such, to ensure that this research study is ethically sound and above board, every effort will be made to safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all actual and potential research participants. The researcher is fully aware that regardless of methodology, there are always ethical considerations for all proposals.

The ethics statement is critically important, especially taking into account that the researcher is currently working in the Western Cape Department of Local Government as a Deputy Director responsible for ward committees and has over the years supported the Municipality under study with the implementation of support programmes to enhance ward committee functionality. As such, all reasonable steps and precautions will be taken to ensure that there is no subjective bias in the process of conducting this research study. To this end, the researcher will use key elements of the principles of the Nuremberg Code of Ethics and these will be observed at all times during the course of this research study:

- Ensure quality and integrity of the research: no predetermined assumptions will be made regarding the challenges and state of public participation within the Beaufort West Municipality. However, the delimitation of study will outline certain issues and factors that will be taken into account during the data collection for the research.
- The researcher will seek written consent from all stakeholders involved including the Director: Public Participation (Western Cape Department of Local Government), the Municipal Manager of Beaufort West Municipality, Ward Councillors from all seven wards of the Municipal Council, ward committee members and officials responsible for public participation and ward committees.
- The researcher will respect and preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the research respondents.
- The respondents will participate in the study voluntarily and can withdraw from the study without any negative implications or ramifications.
- Any potential harm to the participants will be avoided.

To avoid any potential conflict of interest, whether perceived or not, the researcher will first will seek permission from his supervisor before embarking on the research study. To this end, a signed formal

letter from the Director: Public Participation granting permission and outlining the purpose of the research study will be forwarded to the Municipal Manager for approval.

1.12. CHAPTER DESIGN

Chapters in this research study will be structured chronologically and logically in the following mann

Chapter 1: Introduction and general orientation

This chapter provides the general orientation to the study outlining the purpose and objectives thereof.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and legislative framework

This chapter examines the theoretical framework and academic literature related to the study. It also focuses on the policy and legislative framework governing public participation in South Africa including the review of legislative framework currently underway in South Africa, providing insights and critical analysis on the prospects of success.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods, techniques and instruments that were used to collect data for the study which include questionnaires, structured interviews with the selected sample. It details procedures for data analysis, strategies to enhance study reliability and validity as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Research findings and analysis

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

The chapter will present recommendations based on the findings of the study and summarise the overall outcome of the research.

1.13. SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the scope of study including the objectives, the rationale as well as the research instruments to be used in obtaining the relevant data that would assist in responding to the research question. The chapter also highlighted the chapter design for the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter highlighted the various processes that the researcher will embark upon in fulfilling the objectives of the research study. This entailed outlining the objectives of the study, research problem and questions, methodology that will be used to collect data, reliability and validity of the findings as well as ethical considerations. The main objective of the study was to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with specific reference to the effectiveness of the ward committee system and the role of legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of various stakeholders involved in public participation. In this chapter, emphasis is placed on the public participation literature including the legislative and regulatory framework that has been introduced to promote and facilitate public participation in the affairs of government and more particularly Local Government which is at the coalface of service delivery. This literature review entails, among others, a detailed analysis and assessment of the mechanisms that the various pieces of legislation have introduced to enhance public participation. The chapter will therefore critically evaluate the various scholarly debates, perspectives and narratives that have been advanced over the last decade or so linking them to the research questions of the study.

Furthermore, this review will examine the ward committee system and the extent to which local party-political dynamics influence processes of public participation considering the emergence of the new phenomenon in the Western Cape where a significant number of rural and mostly poor municipalities are governed by coalition governments. In this context, the chapter will identify weaknesses and gaps in the current legislative framework governing public participation and determine whether it should be reviewed or amended to address this dilemma as well as impediments and challenges facing public participation. In the final analysis, it is envisaged that once these risks have been eliminated/mitigated public participation will be institutionalised and thus become more meaningful. The existing literature on public participation and South African local democracy is extremely rich, inspiring and very diverse (Bénil-Gbaffou, 2008: i).

The interest in the field intensified after the dawn of democracy in 1994 where the government put in place a solid foundation for public participation which was strengthened by a strong constitutional and legislative framework. However, a closer interrogation of how this commitment expresses itself in practice in terms of the participatory institutions and mechanisms currently in place raises

pertinent questions about the necessity and need to review these ‘invented’ spaces of engagement considering that most of them have failed hence the decline of public participation (Béni-Gbaffou, 2008: ii; Booysen, 2009: 12; Currie, 2015: 3, Modise, 2017: 6). The decline in public participation can be attributed to a whole range of factors including the fact that governments have become less willing to involve communities in policy making procedures, preferring instead to keep citizens out of decision making processes – inviting them to participate merely as endorsees of pre-designed planning programs with the sole purpose of gaining access to resources (Williams, 2006: 197; Ile and Mapuva, 2010: 31; Bobbio, 2018: 2).

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Public participation has become a “slippery” buzzword in the post- apartheid South Africa especially in the discourse of development planning, local governance and service delivery (Buccus et al., 2007; Thompson, 2008; Tau, 2013; Tsheola et al., 2013). Mukwevho and Nkuna (2018: 188) contend that the concept of public participation has become fashionable and more politically correct especially “among the populist leaders within the maturing South African democracy”. This mantra and hype around public participation and the nature of scholarly debates on it has thus made the term more loose and elusive (Bobbio, 2018: 1). In other words, public participation may be understood and defined differently by different people in a variety of context and circumstances (Ababio, 2004: 273; Madumo, 2014: 132; Sebola (2017: 75).

Weale (1999: 84) believes that while public participation has become a popular concept in the public discourse since the 20th century, its meaning remains vague. As such, there seems to be a widespread consensus among public administration scholars and practitioners that public participation and administration is a contested and eclectic discipline (Maloka and Mashamaite, 2013: 197; Mubangizi and Dassah, 2014: 275; Madumo: 2014: 130). This is precisely because the concept of public participation has a variety of meanings. On one hand, it implies the relationship between local government and the community, while others describe it as the extent to which the community influences decisions that directly affect their lives (Bekker, 1996). Hence, to date, the term “Public Participation” is “yet to acquire a fixed or agreed definition” (Ndevu, 2011: 1249).

Mathebula (2016: 19) characterises the inability by scholars of public administration to find a “consensual definition” of public participation as akin to “jumping into the dispensation bandwagon” thus creating unnecessary confusion. Therefore, the mischievous use of the term, its understanding and application is misleading because it is “without a theoretical basis which have not particularly

been identified or simply ignored “, hence the creation of a “public administration scholastic misnomer” (Ibid). According to Munzedzi (2016: 285), this “misnomer” occurs because the concepts of public participation and community participation are “often used interchangeably even when they have got a different meaning”, and consequently “public administration scholars and practitioners refer to public participation when in actual fact they mean community participation”.

Defining public participation, Arnstein (1969: 216) posits that the concept entails the “distribution of power than enables the have-nots’ citizens presently excluded from the political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future. Public participation can also be described as a cornerstone of responsive and accountable governance which implies that the poor and marginalised communities ought to participate in determining how information is shared, budgets are allocated and more importantly influence those decisions (Arnstein, 1969: 216; Nzimakwe and Reddy, 2008:670; Booysen, 2009: 2; Ndevu, 2011: 1252). In a similar observation, the World Bank Learning Group defines public participation as a “process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them (World Bank: 2005).

From the South African perspective, Davids (2005:18) point out that public participation is required to satisfy two critical objectives, namely: “upholding the principles and systems of participatory democracy and ensuring the legitimacy of the state at local level through the public as voters being encouraged to participate in formal political processes, such as elections and referendums” and from a local government point of view public participation has to promote and facilitate the development of the public to alleviate poverty through the delivery of basic services and stimulation of local economic development. Public participation therefore can be described as a process in which people at grassroots level - whether individually or collectively – take part in an activity in order to influence decision making processes over development and governance issues that affect their lives (Masango, 2002; Nzimakwe, 2010; Molosi and Dipholo, 2016; Swanepoel and De Beer, 2016). The Draft National Framework for Public Participation (RSA, 2005) (cited in Mubangizi and Dassah, 2014: 279) characterises public participation as “an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision making in the delivery of basic services.

The history of public participation in South Africa, which is plagued by the legacy of apartheid, does not reflect any attempt or substantive evidence suggesting that the then apartheid government did anything to encourage and promote the institutionalization of public participation in its affairs (Hamann, 2003: 21; Williams, 2005: 20). Phooko (2017: 518) describes the history of South Africa

as “an unpleasant one” arguing that it was based on suppression of the opinions of the majority of citizens. This exclusion was strengthened by the race-based laws which effectively closed the space for any community involvement in matters of government. In this context, national government exercised control over local authorities on all issues relating to developmental initiatives and local communities had no voice in their local developmental agenda (Masiapato and Wotela, 2017: 103). As such, the apartheid state’s administrative decision making was hierarchical, highly centralised, secretive and authoritarian - preoccupied only with promoting and advancing the interests of the privileged sections of the South African population (Hamann, 2003: 23 and Williams, 2005:20). In this regard, most South Africans became “passive citizens in their own country” and could not critique the power of the illegitimate state nor participate in the formulation of development policy framework which resulted in the unequal distribution of resources as the state regarded them as mere “recipients of governance, rather than participants” (Masango, 2002: 52; Mathekga and Buccus, 2006: 11; Tau, 2013:154).

Compounding the problem was the fact that black people, who constitute the majority of the South African population, were forbidden from participating or influencing government decisions that affected their lives or even elect their own representatives (Masango, 2002: 52; Ababio, 2004: 276; Mbambo et al., 2016:298). Their demands to do so were often met with “draconian and repressive measures” that sought to marginalise and exclude them from influencing political processes in South Africa (Maphunye and Mafunisa, 2008: 464). To entrench the exclusion of the black majority from any form of participation, the apartheid bureaucratic elites deliberately implemented development projects to coerce and legitimise their own decisions through a top down approach (Siyongwana and Mayekiso, 2011: 13). However, the struggles of resistance against the exclusion of the majority from decision making were intensified by the anti-apartheid activists who demanded “people’s power” – a slogan which sought to emphasise the importance of “popular participation in governance” (Friedman, 2006:1). To that end, Ababio (2004: 276) observes that the only role that black people played in governance matters at a local government level was limited to mass boycott of service payments that were rendered by the apartheid government.

The demise of the apartheid government in 1994 signalled the beginning of the new dawn in South Africa which was characterised by the introduction of legislative and regulatory framework – a process that culminated in the decentralisation of local government as well as the establishment of institutions to enhance meaningful public participation in government processes (Mathekga and Buccus, 2006; Nyalunga, 2006; Booysen, 2009; Maphazi et al., 2013; Mubangizi and Dassah, 2014). Booysen (2009: 2) contends that this acknowledgment of the importance of public participation by

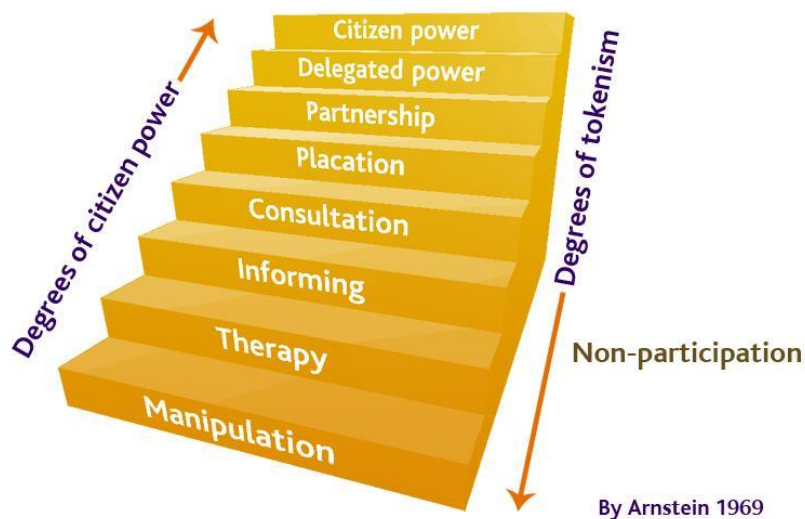
the new democratic government demonstrated a commitment to dismantle and undo the authoritarianism of the past insofar as the discourse of participatory democracy is concerned. In this context, public participation was considered as the cornerstone of democracy (Mafunisa and Xaba, 2008: 455; Nzimakwe, 2008: 44; Reddy and Sikhakane, 2008: 680; Matshabaphala, 2014: 1014; Vivier et.al, 2015: 82). Therefore, Mbeki (cited in Siyongwana and Mayekiso, 2011: 145) asserts that the democratic government has a moral and legislative obligation to promote and encourage communities to be actively involved in their own development “rather than being “docile recipients of government benevolent delivery”. In this regard, “people need to see government as a partner of their own development rather than a godfather that brings manna from heaven” (Ibid). To his credit and consistent with this commitment “Mr Mbeki, continued this tradition of participation through the work of the Presidential *imbizo* and a range of Presidential Consultative Forums” (Booyesen, 2009:13; Hartslief, 2009:329).

However, some scholars, including Kondlo (2010: 387) argue that “*izimbizo* in their current, state-centric format are not effective forums of public participation” and this is mainly because they raise the same issues every year without any attempt to resolve them. While recognizing that his government was characterised by a detailed commitment to put people first, Mbeki (cited in Nel and van Wyk, 2003: 50) notes and acknowledges “that public participation in policy making is not yet what it should be”. Fung and Wright (2001:18) therefore point out that active involvement of “grassroots operators” strengthens accountability and reduces the often lengthy “chain of agency that accompanies political parties and their bureaucratic apparatus”. In this context, the new democratic government appreciated that while public participation enhances democratic governance, it also restores trust and ensures legitimacy and credibility in the implementation of policies (van Empel, 2008: 549).

2.2. 1 Ladder of participation

According to Mautjana and Makombe (2014: 55), the conceptualisation of public participation can be explored and understood through eight levels of participation as identified by Arnstein in his “ladder of citizen participation” model. Arnstein’s “ladder of citizen participation” model was developed in order to facilitate a more enlightened and rational debate on the purpose, theory and practice of citizen participation (van Wyk, 1993: 206). In formulating this typology of participation, Arnstein (1969: 216) contends that participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy - a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone”.

However, public participation in governance has become a cumbersome process and a “site of conflict” (Ballard et al., 2007: 20, Madumo, 2014: 140) and this will be demonstrated below through Arnstein’s “Ladder of Participation”.



The eight rungs of the “ladder of citizen participation” as demonstrated above highlight the following levels of participation which are grouped into three categories ranging from manipulation to citizen control. The **first category** is non-participation which entails manipulation and therapy

Manipulation

At the manipulation level, citizens are “are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees” where communities are selectively informed to participate in programmes or projects to legitimise certain decisions as “endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes”.

Therapy

This level of participation entails the involvement of people in planning with the view to “educate or cure” participants. Communities participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened and their views are not being taken into consideration or listened to.

The **second category** is *tokenism* which includes *informing*, *consultation* and *placation*.

Informing

Communities are informed of the need to participate but there is no feedback as their voices or inputs are not taken into account when final decisions are made.

Consultation

At this level, communities are given information about projects or certain issues and are encouraged to express their views and make inputs, but their views and voices are not reflected in the final decision or feedback.

Placation

This involves selection of few individuals who have been handpicked to participate on certain committees and begin to have some degree of influence while the authorities reserve the right to accept or reject their input or advice.

The practical example of tokenism from a South African point of view, as Thornhill and Madumo (2011: 141) point out, Councillors may use ward committees only as tokens of compliance with the legislation.

The **third category** is a degree of citizen power which includes partnership, delegated power and citizen control.

Partnership

In partnership, the community “power is redistributed through negotiation between the citizens and the holders of power. The community has considerable influence in joint projects” (Mautjana and Makombe (2014: 56).

Delegated power

People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. In this case, communities achieve decision-making powers by holding the majority of seats on committees and have the influence over a particular decision or policy that has been formulated.

Citizen control

People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions for resources and technical advice they need but retain control over how resources are used. An example of citizen control is self-government – the community makes the decisions.

Appreciating Einstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation”, Greenberg and Mathoho (2010), Mautjana and Makombe (2014) conclude that South Africa’s approach to public participation currently hovers somewhere between tokenism and partnership.

2.3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

According to Mathekga and Buccus (2006:14), the purpose of the legislative framework on public participation is not only about service delivery but also to “rebuild local communities whose livelihood has been fundamentally damaged by the apartheid system”. The legislative framework is an ‘anti-thesis’ of the apartheid’s system of separate development and is aimed primarily at galvanising society towards the creation of a developmental state through integrated and sustainable development (Ababio, 2007: 615). In a similar illustration, Southall (cited in Nyalunga, 2006:44) describes the regulatory framework as an instrument to facilitate public consultation through various mechanisms and channels in the process of policy development and implementation.

2.3.1 Local Government Transition Act (Act 209 of 1993)

Central to the objective of building a people centred democratic governance was the introduction of the Local Government Transition Act (Act 209 of 1993) which “provided an overarching framework for the transformation of local government” in South Africa (Ibid). This legislation facilitated the introduction of the Local Government Municipal Demarcation Act which resulted in the reduction of municipalities from 843 to 284 units. The Local Government Transition Act culminated in the introduction of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA: 1996).

2.3.2 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which is the supreme law of the country, mandates municipalities to encourage the involvement of communities and “strive within its financial and administrative capacities to achieve its constitutional mandate” (Silima and Auriacombe, 2013: 45; Thebe, 2017: 124). The primary objective of Local Government, as stipulated in Chapter 7, section 152(1)(e) of the constitution, is to “to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government”. According to Mashamaite and Madzivhandila (2014: 226), the constitution seeks to create a robust and resilient local government system that will have the necessary capacity to deliver services in a sustainable manner, coordinate social and economic development of communities including the creation of a safe and healthy living environment.

Accordingly, the Constitution (RSA, 1996, section 152 (1)), outlines the objectives of Local Government as following:

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

Notably, the objectives of local government, as prescribed in the constitution, is to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities (Reddy and Sikhakane, 2008: 690; Heydenrych and Zaaiman (2013: 166). It forms the basis and foundation for participative local government making specific provisions for the creation of legislative structures that would facilitate the delivery of basic services through public participation (Munzhedzi and Phago, 2013: 40; Tsheola et al., 2014: 393). Through these legislative structures, the constitution seeks to promote a culture of participatory democracy governed by the principles of transparency, accountability, openness and responsiveness (Smit and Oosthuizen, 2011: 60; Sekgala, 2016: 6). To institutionalise public participation in the affairs of Local Government, the constitution (RSA, 1996, section 195) further stipulates that "people's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policymaking"

Modise (2017:6), however, expresses a concern about the lack of political will among the authorities and their lack of interest in enhancing public participation. In practice, the constitutional right for communities and community organisations to be involved in the matters of Local Government is often confronted with structural limitations of the bureaucratic institutions which are characterised by uneven relations of power which eventually "militate severely against such a constitutionally driven community participatory model of development planning at the grassroots level" (Williams, 2008: 5). The constitutional obligation to facilitate community involvement also finds concrete expression in Sections 59(1)(a), 72(1)(a) and 118(1)(a) of the Constitution where the national assembly, the National Council of Provinces and provincial legislative bodies are required to coordinate and promote meaningful public involvement in their "legislative decision-making processes" (Raboshakga, 2015: 4). Section 118 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA: 1996) places an obligation on provincial government to, among others:

- Facilitate public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the legislature and its committee;
- Conduct its business in an open manner, and hold its sittings and those of its committees, in public, but reasonable measures may be taken
- To regulate public access, including access of the media to legislature and its committees; and
- To provide for the searching of any person and, where appropriate, the refusal of entry to, or the removal of any person

Section 118 further states that ‘a provincial legislature may not exclude the public, including the media, from a sitting of a committee unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society’

Similarly, Section 59 (2) states that “The National Assembly may not exclude the public, including the media, from a sitting of a committee unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society”. Taking the above into account, Baatjies and de Visser (2007) refer to the landmark *Doctors for Life International v Speaker of the National Assembly* and *Matatiele Municipality v President of the Republic of South Africa* judgements which ventilated various issues regarding “legal nature and justiciability of the various provisions on community participation”. In these cases, the constitutional court developed a standard of “reasonableness” to determine whether the extent of public involvement is consistent with the provisions of the constitution. The standard of reasonableness was formulated to ascertain whether the national assembly and provincial legislatures had discharged their responsibility in fostering and encouraging public participation in their respective spaces. This standard also “extends to all organs of state exercising legislative actions, including municipal councils” (Baatjies and de Visser and 2007). The constitutional court’s reasonableness enquiry, according to Raboshakga (2015: 4), was not entirely convincing as it demonstrated that was arguably “working with a compliance- or process-oriented reasonableness enquiry”.

2.3.3 White Paper on Local Government (Notice No. 423 of 1998)

The White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998A) was the first legislative framework that sought to give structure to the notion of a developmental local government as provided for in the Constitution (Silima and Auriacombe, 2013: 45). In a foreword to the White Paper, the former Minister for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, Mr Mohammed Valli Moosa, described the White Paper as a legal instrument that “establishes the basis for a system of local

government which is centrally concerned with working with local and communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve the quality of their lives” (RSA, 1998). The White paper stipulates that municipalities should develop and adopt inclusive and integrated approaches which include a mix of appropriate strategies and mechanisms (including, but not limited to, participative planning) that do not only promote and strengthen community involvement but also address challenges and eliminate problems that hinder meaningful citizen participation in the government policy formulation processes (Tau, 2013: 158 – 159; Theron et. al, 2015: 79).

Furthermore, and quite critically is that the white paper outlines a broad policy framework for building a developmental local government whose central feature would be on participatory governance in planning through the Municipal Integrated Development Planning (IDP) (Bekker and Leilde: 2003; Tau:2013). It defines developmental local government as a: “local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs to improve the quality of their lives” (RSA, 1998: 17; Kabane, 2012:10; Maphazi et al., 2013:187; Mofolo, 2016: 234). The concept of the developmental local government, as elaborated in the White Paper (RSA, 1998), is about municipalities creating conducive conditions favourable to development including, but not limited to:

- Actively seeking to empower the most marginalised groups in the community and encouraging their participation;
- Empowering ward councillors as community leaders who should play a pivotal role in building a shared vision and mobilising community resources for development;
- Enhancing local democracy through raising awareness of human rights issues and promoting constitutional values and principles;
- Responsive problem-solving and a commitment to working in open partnerships with business, trade unions and community-based organisations.

The White Paper further prescribes that municipalities should promote public participation at four levels:

- As voters - to ensure maximum democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are empowered to promote;
- As citizens who express, via different stakeholder associations, their views before, during and after the policy development process in order to ensure that policies reflect community preferences as far as possible;

- As consumers and end-users, who expect value-for-money, affordable service and courteous and responsive service; and
- As organised partners involved in the mobilisation of resources for development via for-profit businesses, non-governmental organisations and community-based institutions.

2.3.4 The Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998)

Sekgala (2016: 1) posits that the Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998) gives effect to provision of the constitution regarding the involvement of communities in the affairs of municipalities. The Act defines the structures of local government and provides for the creation of the first mechanisms of participatory governance in local government through the establishment of ward committee system (Phago, 2008: 249; Heydenrych & Zaaïman, 2013: 167; Mashamaite and Madzivhandila, 2014: 226) which is the lifeblood and “the centrepiece of the current system of public participation” (Ramjee et al., 2011: 19). The ward committee system entails the establishment of statutory ward level structures that facilitate the involvement of communities in the affairs of the municipality whose activities and programs have to be reported on annually (Greenberg and Mathoho, 2010: 12; Mofolo, 2016: 235).

Part 4, section 72 of the Structures Act (RSA: 1998) makes provisions for the establishment of ward committees to enhance participatory governance in local government. It prescribes a process of ward committee establishment as follows:

- If a metro or local council decides to have ward committees, it must establish ward committee for each ward in the municipality. A ward committee consists of:
 1. The councillor representing that ward in the council, who must also be the chairperson of the committee; and
 2. Not more than 10 other persons.
- A metro or local council must make rules regulating the procedure to elect ward committee members taking into account the need:
 1. For women to be equitably represented in a ward committee;
 2. For a diversity of interests in the ward to be represented;
 3. The circumstances under which those members must vacate office; and
 4. The frequency of meetings of ward committees.
- A metro or local council may make administrative arrangements to enable ward committees to perform their functions and exercise their powers effectively.

Section 74 outlines the functions and powers of ward committees as follows:

- A ward committee may make recommendations on any matter affecting its ward to the ward councillor or through the ward councillor, to the metro or local council, the executive committee, the executive mayor or the relevant metropolitan subcouncil; and
- Has such duties and powers as the metro or local council may delegate to in terms of section 32.

2.3.5 The Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000)

The Municipal Systems Act provides for core principles, mechanisms and processes that are necessary to enable municipalities to facilitate and coordinate the social and economic upliftment of local communities (RSA: 2000: 3). Its primary aim is to put people first on the agenda of developmental local government encouraging municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance and create conditions that are conducive for the community and local stakeholders to participate in civic matters (Maphunye and Mafunisa, 2008: 462; Munzhedzi and Phago, 2013: 41; Tsheola et al., 2013: 19; Maphazi et al., 2013: 190; Theron et al., 2015: 78). In this regard, the Act serves as a legal instrument to guide municipalities in facilitating participation of communities as a means of “influencing, directing, controlling and owning their own local development spaces” (Theron et al., 2015: 78). More specifically, Sebola (2017: 27) correctly asserts that “the public participate so that they can own the policies that are formulated and adopted by government of the day”. It is therefore within this context that Chapter 2, section 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA: 2000), makes provision for the Municipal Council to:

- Encourage the involvement of the local community;
- Consult the community about the level, range and impact of municipal services provided by the municipality. Section 5 Act further prescribes that members of the local community have the right to:
 1. Contribute to the decision-making processes of the municipality;
 2. To be informed of the decisions of the Municipal Council affecting their rights, property and reasonable expectations; and
 3. To demand that proceedings of the Municipal Council be open to the public.

Furthermore, Chapter 4, Section 16 of the Act (RSA: 2000), a municipality must:

- Develop the culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must for this purpose encourage, and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality;
- The preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan;

- The establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system.
- The monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance;
- The preparation of its budget; and strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services;
- Contribute to building the capacity of the local community to enable it to participate in the affairs of the municipality. However, according to Section 21 – which is more specific- the municipality is mandated to:
 1. Communicate through the media to the local community in the local newspaper or newspapers in the area;
 2. By means of radio broadcast covering the area of the municipality; and
 3. That such communication must be in the official languages determined by the Council, having regard to language preferences and usage within its area.

2.3.6 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery - Batho Pele (People First) (Notice 1459 of 1997)

The White paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Notice 1459 of 1997), affectionately known as the Batho Pele White Paper, provides a legal framework through which basic public services are to be rendered and mandates the state to promote responsiveness to public needs in South Africa (Mashamaite, 2014: 233). Defining the concept of Batho Pele, Mulaudzi¹ and Ian Liebenberg (2013: 143) posit that Batho Pele is essentially about inculcating a culture of professionalism and accountability in delivering services that are aimed at improving the quality of life for communities and individuals. More importantly, Batho Pele is intended to facilitate a shift away from bureaucratic, inward-looking systems, processes and attitudes to an attitude that says, ‘the needs of the public come first’ (Ward Committee Resource Book, 2005b: 21). To achieve this, the White Paper prescribes that government should across all the three spheres facilitate public participation in the delivery of those services - increase transparency and accountability in the quality of services rendered to the citizens who should be treated as “customers”. (RSA,1997: Section 1.3.3; Masango, 2002: 57; Phago, 2008: 247 - 248; Napier, 2008: 170; Maphazi et al.: 2013:191). The paper therefore advocates for the institutionalisation of the following principles to enhance accountability and speed up service delivery in the whole of government (Phago, 2008: 247 – 248; Ndevu, 2011: 1251)

- *Consultation*: Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public service they receive and wherever possible should be given a choice about the services that are offered;

- *Service standards*: Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect;
- *Access*: All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled;
- *Courtesy*: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration;
- *Information*: Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services that they are entitled to receive;
- *Openness and transparency*: Citizens should be told how National and Provincial Departments are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge;
- *Redress*: If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation, a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response; and
- *Value for money*: Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.

2.3.7 Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2007)

The purpose of the Draft Policy Framework for Public Participation is to provide guidance to municipalities on the appropriate methods, mechanisms and approaches to enhancing public participation in communities. It is a policy framework for public participation in South Africa “building on the commitment of the democratic government to deepen democracy, which is embedded in the constitution of South Africa and above all in the concept of local government as comprising the municipality and the community” (Draft Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2007: 1). The framework commits government to establishing participatory mechanisms that are genuinely empowering, and not token consultation or manipulation. In this regard, it spells out a range of activities which include the establishment of ward committees and assisting with planning monitoring, implementation of projects at a local level and supporting local activities through a cadre of community development workers (Govender and Reddy, 2011: 62). The policy also sets out basic assumptions underlying public participation, namely:

- Public participation is designed to promote values of good governance and human rights;
- Public participation acknowledges a fundamental right of all people to participate in the governance system;
- Public participation is designed to narrow the social distance between the electorate and the elected institutions;

- Public participation requires recognising the intrinsic value of all people and investing in their ability to contribute to governance processes;
- People can participate in a number of ways, for example, as individuals, interest groups or communities;
- In South Africa, in the context of public participation, the community is defined as a ward, with elected ward committees
- Hence ward committees play a central role in linking elected institutions, the people, and other forums of communication such as the izimbizo, road shows and through the makgotla system reinforce these linkages with communities (Draft Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2007).

While recognizing the importance of these assumptions, the Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation introduces principles that should guide and promote public participation in South Africa. The principles of public participation as proposed in the Draft National Policy Framework (2007) are:

- Inclusivity - embracing all views and opinions in the process of community participation;
- Diversity - during a community participation process it is important to understand the differences associated with race, gender, religion, ethnicity, language, age, economic status and sexual orientation. These differences should be allowed to emerge and where appropriate, ways sought to develop a consensus. Planning processes must build on this diversity;
- Building community participation – capacity-building is the active empowerment of role players so that they clearly and fully understand the objective of public participation and may in turn take such actions or conduct themselves in ways that are calculated to achieve or lead to the delivery of the objectives;
- Transparency - promoting openness, sincerity and honesty among all the role players in a participation process;
- Flexibility - the ability to make room for change for the benefit of the participatory process. Flexibility is often required in respect of timing and methodology. If built into the participatory processes upfront, this principle allows for adequate public involvement, realistic management of costs and better ability to manage the quality of the output;
- Accessibility – at both mental and physical levels - collectively aimed at ensuring that participants in a public participation process fully and clearly understand the aim, objectives, issues and methodologies of the process, and are empowered to participate effectively. Accessibility ensures

not only that the role players can relate to the process and the issues at hand, but also that they are, at the practical level, able to make their input into the process;

- Accountability - the assumption by all the participants in a participatory process of full responsibility for their individual actions and conduct as well as a willingness and commitment to implement, abide by and communicate as necessary all measures and decisions in the course of the process;
- Trust, commitment and respect - trust is required in a public participatory process. Invariably, trust is used to refer to faith and confidence in the integrity, sincerity, honesty and ability of the process and those facilitating the process. To do public participation in a rush without adequate resource allocations will undoubtedly be seen as a public relations exercise likely to diminish the trust and respect of the community in whoever is conducting the process in the long term, to the detriment of any public participation processes; and
- Integration – that public participation processes are integrated into mainstream policies and services, such as the IDP process or service planning.

While section 37 of the Municipal Structures Act is silent on the role of the Speaker in public participation, and more specifically ward committees, the Draft Policy Framework for Public Participation proposes that the Speaker be “made responsible for the overall coordination and integration of the communication/participation process” and the reason advanced is that “as the chair of council, the Speaker is responsible for overseeing the functioning of the political arm of local government, and public participation is essentially connected to this function” (RSA, 2007: 72). The Speaker therefore is mandated through this policy to provide support and play and oversight role over ward committees and ensure that dedicated capacity is appointed for the management and coordination of the ward committee systems within the municipality. The delegated powers of the ward committee officials in the office of the Speaker are suggested as thus:

- The responsibility to coordinate the communication/participation functions of the municipality, especially the drafting of the annual public participation plan;
- To oversee the publicising of the Public Participation Principles;
- To oversee the drafting of a Citizen’s Participation Charter;
- The responsibility to meet regularly with the ward committees to ensure appropriate communication with the communities through the ward committee structure.
- The responsibility to ensure that representations made through the ward committees and ward councillors are channelled to the appropriate structures/functionaries for further attention/information;

- To provide the administrative support to ward committees as stipulated in Section 6.1.2;
- To maintain a register of stakeholders, otherwise known as the stakeholder register;
- To provide the administrative support to the IDP Forum noted in Section 7.1.2; and
- The responsibility to ensure that representations made by the IDP Forum, and other stakeholder groups, are channelled to the appropriate structures/functionaries for further attention.

2.4 THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL PARTY POLITICS ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There is clear evidence that not enough has been done to foster a culture of community involvement among communities and councillors as required by law (Carrim:2001), and this is exacerbated by the inability of communities to effectively use the various pieces of legislation to hold government accountable (Smith, 2010: 505). Draai and Taylor (2009: 118) concur but single out apathy in the local sphere of government as a matter of serious concern for most municipalities in South Africa. Despite the various attempts to address this problem the constitution, however, does not make any specific provisions for the successful and failure of public participation in development at a grassroots level (Williams: 2003: 9). To this end, municipalities meet the policy and legislative requirement for community participation in a nominal, compliance driven, ritualistic exercise (Carrim, 2001, Williams; 2006: 210).

The lack of recourse mechanisms to the general public, according to Smith (2010: 505), limits the impact of the state to increase public participation. However, Babbio (2018:2) holds the view that governments still prefer to keep citizens out of decision making processes and governance arrangements seldomly include citizens as such. Public participation has been used to portray citizens as ignorant and therefore not worth of consultation (Ile and Mapuva, 2010: 31). Even in cases where they participate (for example: Integrated Development Planning/IDP) there is always a general perception and a popular opinion that their voices are not taken seriously since they are ignorant on the subject matter (Ssekibuule, 2012: 114). Bénit-Gbaffou (2008: v) and Everatt et al. (2010: 273), on the other hand, characterise participation as a contested terrain because it can be easily captured by an elite and used for conservative purposes to entrench marginalization of the disadvantaged communities. The contest within the discipline of public participation has therefore degenerated into a site of conflict (Ballard et al., 2007: 20). This is more pronounced at a political level where the political elites consult people only on matters affecting the party arrogating to themselves the responsibility of interpreting the inputs from participatory processes before taking the policy recommendations (Ballard et al., 2007: 20; Ile and Mapuva, 2010: 31).

Ssekibuule (2012: 113) attributes lack of meaningful public participation (especially in the Integrated Development Plans) to government officials and politicians who often impose their views and decisions in community meetings to make their jobs easy and fast - to the extent that a municipal councillor and officials may even utilise a ward committee only as a token of compliance with the legislation rather than substance (Heydenrych, 2008: 703; Thornhill and Madumo, 2011: 141; Theron et al., 2015: 83). For example, the Beaufort West Municipality's Integrated Development Plan Draft 2nd Annual Review (2019/2020: 12) notes that "most of the public and ward committee meetings did not take place during October and November 2018 due to the fact that most of the scheduled IDP meetings with the public and ward committees were scheduled for more than once and still could not take place due to poor attendance".

2.4.1 Party politicisation of ward committees

2.4.1.1 Composition of ward committees

According to part 4, section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act (MSA, 1998), ward committees consist of the councillor representing that ward in the council, who must also be the chairperson of the committee. The Act states that not more than 10 other persons should be on the ward committee. Section 73 further states that a municipality may make rules regarding the establishment and composition of ward committees. To this end, the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operations of Ward Committees (RSA, 2009) prescribes that ward committees should be constituted as follows:

- Ward committee consists of the councillor representing that ward in the council who must also be the chairperson of the committee, and not more than ten other persons;
- The procedure (or policy) for electing members must take into account the need for women to be equitably presented in a ward committee and for a diversity of interests in the ward to be represented;
- A diversity of interests may be pursued by ensuring the inclusion of as many as possible of the following interest groups on a ward committee: youth; women; religious groupings; sports and culture; health and welfare etc;
- Unless a ward councillor, or municipality, wishes to appoint a secretary, the ward committee may appoint a secretary and assistant secretary from its membership to fulfil relevant duties of the ward committee;

- A ward councillor may delegate in writing the chairing of a meeting in his/her absence to a proportional representation councillor or any member of the ward committee;
- A ward committee may establish one or more sub-committees necessary for the performance of its functions and involve organisations more broadly;
- A ward committee must appoint the members of such a sub-committee, appoint a chairperson from among its members and determine the function of such a committee; and
- All stakeholders in the ward are encouraged to participate in sub-committees that are relevant to their fields of interest and to their day-to-day functioning as a sector.

2.4.1.2 The mandate, powers and functions of ward committees as primary mechanisms to strengthen public participation

Historically, the ward committees are supposed to be the key institutional mechanisms to support local government in achieving a people – centred, participatory and democratic local governance (Silima and Auriacombe, 2013: 49). In a more pragmatic way, ward committees serve as advisory bodies to councillors - a cord which articulates and represents the system of local government facilitating communication between municipalities and communities with the view to enhance participatory democracy at local level and influence decision-making processes. (Kabane, 2012: 10; Maphazi et al., 2013: 191; Vivier and Wentzel, 2013: 241; Sekgala, 2016: 1). According to the Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998), Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees (Notice 965, 2005: 8 - 9), Handbook for Ward Committees (2005: 6), Western Cape Provincial Framework: Proposed Guidelines for Municipalities in the Implementation of an Effective and Functional Ward Committee System (2012: 13) the following constitute the status, powers and functions of ward committees. A ward committee therefore:

- Is an advisory body;
- Is a representative structure;
- Is independent; and
- Must be impartial and perform its functions without fear, favour or prejudice.

In terms of its functions and powers, a ward committee:

- May make recommendations on any matter affecting its ward to ward councillor; or through the ward councillor, to the metro or local council, the executive committee, the executive mayor or the relevant metropolitan sub-council;
- May have such duties and powers as may be delegated to it by the metro or local council in terms of Section 59 of the Municipal Systems Act;

- To serve as an official specialised participatory structure in the municipality;
- To create formal unbiased communication channels as well as co-operative partnerships between the community and the council;
- Advise and make recommendations to the ward councillor on matters and policy affecting the ward;
- Assist the ward councillor in identifying challenges and needs of residents;
- Disseminate information in the ward concerning municipal affairs such as the budget, integrated development planning, performance management system (PMS), service delivery options and municipal properties;
- Receive queries and complaints from residents concerning municipal service delivery, communicate it to council and provide feedback to the community on council's response;
- Ensure constructive and harmonious interaction between the municipality and community through the use and co-ordination of ward residents meetings and other community development forums;
- Interact with other forums and organisations on matters affecting the ward; and
- To serve as a mobilising agent for community action within the ward. This may be achieved as through the following processes and activities:
 1. Attending to all matters that affect and benefit the community;
 2. Acting in the best interest of the community;
 3. Ensure the active participation of the community in:
 - Service payment campaigns;
 - The integrated development planning process;
 - The municipality's budgetary process;
 - Decisions about the provision of municipal services;
 - Decisions about by-laws; and
 - Delimitate and chair zonal meeting.
- No executive powers should be delegated to ward committee members;
- A ward committee may express dissatisfaction in writing to the municipal council on the non-performance of a ward councillor;
- A ward committee may, subject to available capacity and resources, conduct an annual satisfaction survey in order to assist the committee in the execution of its functions and powers. The satisfaction

survey should be administered in the ward by ward committee members under the supervision of the ward councillor and with the administrative support of the municipality.

2.4.1.3 Challenges and party-political contradictions embedded in the ward committee system

Since the inception of the ward committee system in 2000 following the introduction of the new system of local government in 2001, ward committees have faced “teething challenges” and questions have been asked about the relevance and effectiveness of ward committees, whether they are useful instruments for community involvement in local government (Kabane, 2012: 11, Sekgala, 2016: 1; Diedericks and Seithloho, 2018: 2) especially taking into account that their performance has been relatively poor which has negatively impacted on the pursuance and realisation of the objectives (Sekgala, 2016: 2). Their poor performance, according to Raga and Taylor (2005: 251), Henna et al. (2013: 92) can be ascribed to the fact that the legislation and policy framework defines ward committees as “advisory bodies” or structures that can make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward, yet they do not have “sufficient delegated powers to influence the policy-making process in Local Government”. As such, the ward committees, in their present structure and form, have not proved to be functional and effective as expected nor have they assisted in enhancing public participation in governance as envisaged by legislation. Put bluntly, ward committees have failed to discharge their roles and responsibilities insofar as identifying and addressing community needs and aspirations is concerned (Mathekga, 2006: 94; Draai and Taylor, 2009: 118; Thornhill and Madumo, 2011: 134; Silima and Auriacombe, 2013: 43; Vivier et al., 2015: 83).

Various studies on public participation in local governance have confirmed that “local political dynamics impact on ward committees is undeniable” (Piper and Deacon, 2008: 76; Smith and de Visser, 2009: 56). These structures, according to Piper and Deacon (2008: 62, have tended to be “colonised” by factional agendas that erode their potential. As a result, ward committees have become “adjuncts to party structures” and “site of contestation between political factions instead of representing the interests and aspirations of communities” (Carrim: 2001). The factional turf war is compounded by the fact that communities themselves are fiercely contested, complex, with fluctuating leadership with different strata or factions often competing for hegemony (Ibid). According to Piper and Deacon (2008: 76) “factionalism or local political rivalries dominate the composition and operation of ward committees”. Esau (2009: 370), Greenberg and Mathoho (2010: 14) concur that ward committees are often side-tracked by divergent political opinions where party politics, understood as explicit interventions of political parties, tend to put off participation. Consequently, there is a widespread perception that ward committees have become partisan structures directly attached to political party structures that are hellbent on pursuing a particular

political mandate at the expense of the broader community (Smith and de Visser, 2009: 16; Greenberg and Mathoho, 2010: 14; Ramjee et al., 2011: 19; Ngcamu, 2014: 600; Sekgala, 2015: 7; Mbambo et al., 2016: 2016).

The phenomenon of party politicization of ward committees has manifested itself in various forms where political parties would even create subcommittees around the key functions that are performed by ward committees, e.g. housing, safety, jobs etc (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2012:5). Piper and Deacon (2008: 26) posit that there are at least three types of political competition or contestation which compromise the independence and partisan role of ward committees, namely: Inter-party competition, Intra-party competition, and Policy competition.

Smith and de Visser (2009: 16) defined the Piper and Deacon (2008) types of ward committee political competitions as follows:

- Inter-party competition: political parties campaign for the control of ward committees where each party would lobby its supporters and members so that the composition of ward committees is dominated by their supporters and sympathisers;
- Intra-party competition: ward committees have become so entrenched in factional squabbles within political parties where various factions within the party use ward committees as platforms to gain more political power;
- Policy competition: The role of ward committees and the activities they perform on a daily basis is defined by the political party and not the legislative framework. In the case of policy competition, for example, in a ward controlled by an opposition party, doubling up numbers (opposition dominated) ward committee might be a tactic to take over the functions of that ward committee (Piper and Deacon, 2008: 26). This persistent political “gatekeeping” is the major impediment to meaningful community involvement because “people who belong to the same political party as community representatives receive valuable information while other members of the community do not” (Ssekibuule, 2012: 114). So common and widespread is this problem in most municipalities that “there is a close relationship between the ward committees and the branch of political leadership. In some instances, the members of both structures are the same” (Masuku and Jili, 2019: 5). From the above, it could be deduced, according to Piper and Deacon (2008: 71-72), that the following are the main reasons ward committees are dysfunctional:
 - Ward committees are dependent on ward councillors to operate and function optimally;
 - The ward committee system requires significant municipal support to function effectively; and

- Ward committees are too politicised to offer an independent source of non-electoral accountability to parties.

Thornhill and Madumo (2011: 134) attribute the non-functionality of ward committees to the following factors:

- Ward committees' lack of credibility to influence decision-making;
- Ward committee members lack commitment in their endeavours. Some ward committee members perceive ward committees as a mere steppingstone towards realising their political ambitions;
- Power relations (i.e. political interference) undermine the role of ward committees – a ward councillor is a politically elected representative, and by default s/he is chairperson of a ward committee that has the potential of promoting partisan interests.

In a similar observation, Nzimakwe and Reddy (2008: 766 – 678); Kabane (2012: 11); Vivier et al. (2015: 83); Tshoose (2015:15); and Sekgala (2015:2) allude to a whole range of reasons that are to blame for the dysfunctionality of ward committees, which include:

- The ongoing tensions between ward councillors, ward committee members and Community Development Workers (CDWs);
- Lack of training and capacity building for ward councillors and ward committees;
- Lack of administrative support to ward committees by municipalities;
- Lack of resources and funding for ward committee activities and projects;
- Political interference and meddling in the affairs of ward committees by ward councillors and other politicians within the municipal space;
- limited community knowledge of ward committee functions and responsibilities;
- Lack of appropriate skills and limited decision-making power of ward committees and ward councillors; and
- Lack of real power and limited access to information by ward committees.

To depoliticize ward committees and mitigate some of the risks and challenges highlighted above (including the trust deficit between local politicians and communities) Thornhill and Madumo (2011:132) suggest that these state sanctioned platforms of public engagement “should not be made up of the members of one interest group or only a political party to which the Councillor may be affiliated”. The common trend in most municipalities is that the battle for the ‘soul’ of ward committees starts with the manipulation of the nomination process where political parties would nominate names of their preferred candidates who will represent their agendas and interests once they

get elected onto ward committees (Smith and de Visser, 2009: 17; Masuku and Jili, 2019: 5). Over and above this, the Ward Councillors' lack of corporation has been singled out as having a negative impact on the functioning of ward committees (Reddy and Sikhakane, 2008: 682) to the extent that "in their role as chairpersons of the committees they are able to manipulate deliberations and decisions to reflect the mandate of the political party they represent rather than the real needs and aspirations of the communities" (Kabane, 2012: 11).

There is a general acceptance that Ward Councillors can be liabilities insofar as functionality of ward committees are concerned, there is also a view that these structures cannot function effectively "without a Councillor who is competent, well organized and committed to the ward" (Piper and Deacon, 2008: 72). By virtue of his/her being the chairperson of the ward committee, the Ward Councillor determines meeting dates and frequency of such meetings, influences the agenda and what information to be shared with ward committee members" (Ibid). In most cases, ward committee members depend on Councillors for information which prevents them from discharging their functions and responsibilities independently as required by legislation. However, when ward committees come up with creative ideas that would assist them to improve their performance, Councillors would feel threatened and think that ward committees are pursuing an agenda to usurp their powers and ultimately replace them (Smith and de Visser, 2009: Mfene and Taylor, 2015: 25; Masuku and Jili, 2019: 5).

2.4.1.4 Interventions through legislative and policy framework

To address the above challenges, Shaidi et al. (2014: 105) urges government to reconsider its policies regulating service delivery and that process should start with public participation and consultation. To this end, submissions have been made as far back as 2003 including proposals that government should "legislate that Councillors can no longer be the chairpersons of ward committees" (Kabane, 2012:11). While acknowledging the need to review the role of Ward Councillors in ward committees, Powel (2012: 23) advocates for the "increase of the size of ward committees (from 10-30) including the review of funding model for ward committees". Diedericks and Seitlholo (2018: 12) take the matter further proposing that the "entire composition of ward committees should be reviewed in order to represent the broader community, which would allow the structure to also function independently". Thornhill and Madumo (2011:132) suggest that ward committees should be made up of interest groups and not a political party to which the Councillor is affiliated.

Nzimakwe and Reddy (2008: 677-768) advance an argument that ward committees do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities which implies that there is great need for them to attend

capacity building and training programs so that they can have influence in decision making processes within their respective municipalities. The problem currently in South Africa, according to Reddy and Sikhakane (2008:680) is that communities themselves are not educated or empowered to participate in the municipal affairs and the worst part is that government is obsessed with the number of people attending meetings without “reliable measurement of the impact that public participation has on local governance”.

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the purpose and aims of the research. It sought to ventilate various issues that have preoccupied public participation literature over the last decade focusing on ward committees as a primary mechanism for public participation in municipal governance. It demonstrated that while there is strong legislative and policy framework governing public participation and ward committees, the entire system is still faced with complex challenges that hinder meaningful community participation in the affairs of municipalities. More importantly, the chapter has unpacked literature to demonstrate that local party-political dynamics and factionalism (both inter and intra) is a major obstacle in the functioning of ward committees and hence public participation remains a liability in most municipalities. As such, the next chapter will outline the research methodology that was used in collecting data in order to respond to the research questions.

CHAPTER 3

RESEACH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter provided a comprehensive review of literature on public participation and the ward committee system since its inception in 2000. In this chapter, the researcher will outline the research methodology and design that was employed to collect data in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the research study. The main objective of the study was to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with specific reference to the effectiveness of the ward committee system and the role of legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of various stakeholders involved in public participation. The design and methodology sought to outline procedures, instruments and techniques that were used to select data sources, population and sampling method and procedures, data collection techniques, analysis and ethical considerations. The rationale for the selection of the design will also be presented taking into account the need to ensure that the data collected was reliable and that findings were valid and credible.

3.2 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher adopted a case study design using qualitative research methods to collect primary and secondary data. According to Hussey & Hussey (1997:1), the concept of research methodology has become very broad to the extent that there is currently no consensus opinion on its meaning. Zondi (2018: 499), for example, define research “as the collection of information or the process in which knowledge is acquired in either a scientific or non-scientific manner” while Kumar (2011) maintains that research is undertaken mainly to interrogate or seek to understand a way of thinking, critically evaluate various aspects in a profession, appreciate ,test, develop procedures and theories. Critically important is that research is often carried out to acquire new knowledge and contribute to a particular research field in order to provide answers to new questions (Tuckman, 1999: 1; Saunders et al.: 2003:3).

Research design is a “roadmap or blue print of the study” that outlines a theory and processes on how the enquiry should proceed (Mouton and Marais, 1993: 32; Schwandt, 2007:193). More specifically, it entails the use of various research instruments and techniques of data gathering, interpretation and analysis (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997:25; Morse, 2001:96). Contrary to the quantitative research

approach, which is more preoccupied with numbers, qualitative research allows for more flexibility than the quantitative research paradigm does (Shurink, 2009: 817). Research design outlines a strategy and processes that will be followed in conducting the study including the techniques that will be employed to collect data, instruments used to record the information and how the data will be analysed and interpreted. In a similar observation, Grinnell (1993:4) describes research as a “structured inquiry that utilises acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and creates new knowledge that is generally applicable”. As such, the research project can achieve its objectives and desired outcomes provided that it is “carried out according to a carefully laid-out research methodology. This suggests that the researcher has to figure procedures, tools and techniques, which he or she can use to collect evidence, to be able to evaluate the problem” (Babbie and Mouton, 2006:74).

3.2.1 Case study

According to Auriacombe and Mouton (2007: 445) a case study is “a form of a field research that investigates a specific phenomenon holistically and systematically, i.e. the focus is on the single (or few) case (s) in its entirety rather than on aspects or variables thereof”. A case study can also be defined as an investigation that is conducted in a certain location over a specific period (Bassey, 1999:58). It entails an exploration, a thorough and in-depth understanding or analysis of a “bounded system” (bounded by time and/or place) or a multiple or single case over a period of time” and helps to enhance the researchers’ understanding and knowledge of the situation, organizations, meaning and issue or social being researched (Patton: 1990; Merriam: 1998; Bassey: 1999; Fouche, 2005; Cresswell: 2007). Kumar (2011: 13) collaborates this view describing a case study as an in-depth understanding of a case or cases, process and unit of study but “cannot claim to make any generalisation to a population beyond cases similar to the one studied”. In this case, it is very important for researchers to note, as Yin (1994) advises, that a high-quality case study can help the audience of the research to get a clear grasp and better understanding of the what is being investigated. To this end, Schram (2006) identifies three types of case studies with different purposes and these are:

- The intrinsic case study: focuses solely on gaining better understanding of the particular case;
- The instrumental case study: provides insight into and elaborate on a theory;
- The collective case study: is instrumental in nature and is extended to a number of cases. It focuses on enhancing understanding of the general phenomenon or condition.

Considering the above, Stake (1995) warns researchers to consider at least three rules when selecting cases for a case study and these include, among others:

- Cases selected based on their relevance to the issue/phenomenon being studied;
- they should demonstrate good prospects for learning about the activity and situation related to the case or cases
- They should represent typical and atypical settings and should be diverse in nature;

Yin (1984), however, argues that “each case must be carefully selected so that it either predicts similar results (a literal replication) or) produces c contrary results but for predictable reasons (theoretical replication).”

3.2.1.1 *Study area*

The study will be undertaken in Beaufort West Municipality in the Western Cape. What informed the selection of the study area was the fact that the municipality, like many others in the Western Cape, experienced challenges regarding ward committee functionality which had a negative impact on the municipality’s public participation processes between 2016 and 2019. Strategically located along the N1 national road, which links Cape Town with the interior and northern parts of South Africa, Beaufort West Municipality was established in 1837 making it the oldest municipality in South Africa. It is one of the four local municipalities within the Central Karoo District Municipality with a population of 71 011 consisting of 7 municipal wards. Ward 4 is the largest ward while ward 1 is the smallest ward.

Municipal wards and areas

Ward	Areas	Political party	Gender	
			Male	Female
1	Murraysburg	Democratic Alliance	1	0
2	Nelspoort, Central Town, section of Hospital Hill, Part of Hillside	Democratic Alliance	1	0
3	Part of Rustdene, Essopville, Nieuveld Park	Democratic Alliance	0	1
4	Part of Mandlenkosi, Die Lande, Part of Hospital Hill	African National Congress	1	0
5	Paddavlei, Paradise Valley, Section of Mandlenkosi, Part of Rustdene, Newlands, Hooyvlakte	African National Congress	1	0
6	Part of Rustdene, Prince Valley	Democratic Alliance	0	1
7	Merweville, Part of Hillside,	Democratic Alliance	1	0

	Hillside 2, Toekomsrus, Barrake, Surrounding Farms in Area			
TOTAL			5	2

Table 1

Composition of Beaufort West Municipal Council

Political Party	Number of Councillors	Gender	
		Male	Female
African National Congress	6	4	2
Democratic Alliance	6	3	3
Karoo Democratic Force	1	1	0
Total	13	8	5

Table 2

Council Executive	Name of Councillor	Political Party
Executive Mayor	Councillor Noel Constable	Karoo Democratic Force
Deputy Mayor	Councillor Quinton Louw	African National Congress
Speaker	Councillor Michael Sinki Motsoane	African National Congress

Table 3

As illustrated in Table 1, the Beaufort West Municipal Council has thirteen seats, comprising of seven Ward Councillors and six Proportional Representation Councillors, i.e. one (Democratic Alliance), four (African National Congress) and one (Karoo Democratic Front). Following the 2016 Local Government elections the municipality had a hung council (6 African National Congress, 6 Democratic Alliance and 1 Karoo Democratic Front) resulting in the formation of a coalition between the Democratic Alliance and Karoo Democratic Front. However, this governing arrangement changed in 2018 when the Karoo Democratic Front decided to form a new coalition arrangement with the African National Congress. At the time of the study, the municipality was under the control of a coalition government between Karoo Democratic Front and the African National Congress.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

Patton (2005) defines qualitative as an in-depth and inform subjective experiences, and the aim is not to generalise the findings but to tap into people's personal experiences – the insider perspective. The study adopted a qualitative approach on the basis that it provides greater insight into the thinking and behaviour of participants in the case study (Babbie and Mouton: 2002: 280). According to Creswell (2014), the selection of the research approach is informed by the nature of the research problem or the issue being investigated as well as the audiences for the study. The selection of the methodology

is also based on the characteristics of the qualitative research as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) who define qualitative research as a socially constructed nature of reality, the “intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape the inquiry”.

The benefit of a qualitative research approach, according to Schurink (2009:817), is that it allows for greater flexibility in sampling and could be site specific such as the “study of a particular programme, process, organization, place, and region, or could be conducted in various sites”. There are, however, a whole range of qualitative research designs that researchers can utilize to facilitate better understanding of the issue/s being studied and these include: grounded theory, case study designs, naturalistic inquiry, institutional ethnography, ethnomethodology and participatory action research (Auriacombe and Mouton, 2009).

The fieldwork for this study was conducted over a period of two month (September – October 2019). Noteworthy in this context is the fact that the design and methodology was influenced by the research question and not by the choice or preference of the researcher (Marshall, 1996: 522). Qualitative research is therefore concerned with the participants’ perspective of their own experiences and their perception of a subject being studied, hence it aims for “information richness and understanding of social processes” - allowing the researcher to select specific individuals and participants who can provide relevant information and knowledge to the researcher (Marshall, 1996: 523; Draper, 2009: 28, Rubin and Babbie: 2016).

To ensure that the information gathered through the qualitative design is rich, the researcher collected data through questionnaires and structured interviews with the Speaker of Beaufort West Municipality, who is the custodian of ward committees, as well as the Municipal Manager, public participation officials, ward committee members, Ward Councillors as well as Community Development Workers. These are the individuals who have experience and extensive knowledge of and public participation and ward committee system in Beaufort West Municipality. As such, their being key informers/participants in the study did not only enrich the research project but it also provided new insights that enabled the researcher to come up with relevant findings and recommendations for the benefit of other municipalities in the Province as well as the discipline of public participation as a whole.

3.3. SAMPLING METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Taking into account that qualitative research is about richness of information, this study used a purposive sampling method as described by Mouton (1996) because it allows the researcher to identify specific individuals or groups that are knowledgeable and have vast experience of the subject being studied (Draper, 2009:28). The benefit of purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to select participants in a manner that will ensure that the sample is “relevant to understand the phenomenon being studied and answering the research question as truthfully as possible” (Schurink, 2009: 805). The researcher heeded Marshall (1996: 523) advice that randomly selecting a sample is likely to include participants who may not have sufficient knowledge of the subject being studied and that could compromise the reliability and validity of the data which is akin to “randomly asking a passer-by how to repair a broken down car, rather than asking a garage mechanic—the former might have a good stab, but asking the latter is likely to be more productive” (Ibid).

In this study, an overall sample size of twenty-two participants was purposely selected with the assistance of public participation officials in the office of the Speaker. The interviews, which took place over a period of 2 months (i.e. September – October 2019) were conducted with seven Ward Councillors representing hundred percent (100%) of the wards in Beaufort West Municipality. Due to the high vacancy rate within ward committees in Beaufort West and the inactivity of certain ward committee members, seven ward committees representing hundred percent (100%) of wards were selected to participate in the study. The seven ward committees represented the different demographics, income levels, farms/rural and urban areas in the municipal area. Due to the persistent turnover of ward committee members across the wards, seven ward committee members were selected to participate. Their selection was due to their active involvement in ward committee activities and their in-depth understanding of the operations of ward committees. Four Community Development Workers (CDWs); two senior public participation officials in the office of the Speaker, the Municipal Manager as well as the Executive Mayor of the Municipality were also selected to participate in this study. The CDWs were selected because they attend and participate in ward committee meetings and activities as stipulated in the Beaufort West Ward Committee Policy.

These above sample was deemed appropriate and relevant for the study considering that all the participants have extensive knowledge and diverse views on the subject and provided valuable insights on the role of ward committees in enhancing public participation in Beaufort West Municipality. Furthermore, the data selection took into consideration issues of gender, age and demographics and language of the participants. Given the fact that access to participants living on

farms and vast distance is always a challenge, the researcher used telephonic interviews especially for ward committee members living in ward 1 (Murraysburg) and ward 2 (Nelspoort) of Beaufort West Municipality.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

To collect data for the study, the researcher used both primary and secondary data collection techniques. The primary data collection instruments that were used in this study are interviews and questionnaires. Babbie and Mouton (2003) define primary data as an information that is collected from scratch where the researcher would go out into the field and gather fresh data that is more reliable, truthful and unbiased and has not been published before. The advantage of primary data collection technique is that it generates information that has not been mediated, edited or altered by any human being and is more accurate and legitimate compared to secondary data.

On the contrary, secondary data entails a review and analysis of existing documents (published or not published) “which may shed light on the phenomenon that one is investigating” and this may include minutes of council meetings, agendas, reports, newspapers and any other document that may be relevant and useful to the study (Nieuwenhuis , 2007: 82). However, the disadvantage of secondary data is that it may include information that is old and no longer relevant, and this could distort the results of the research study. One of the major concerns and weaknesses of secondary data is that questions of bias, authenticity and copyright are often raised, hence the need to use it only to complement primary data collection techniques.

3.4.1 Structured interviews

For the purposes of this study, the researcher used structured interviews as one of the instruments to collect and gather primary data. Tuckman (1999: 247) states that interviews are the better choice in a qualitative research because participants are more comfortable “to talk than write” and, as such, interviews generate more information than other data collection methods. In this study, the interviews were conducted in English, but provision was made for those participants who preferred to be interviewed in Afrikaans or IsiXhosa. There were instances where participants requested to answer the questions in Afrikaans. This was granted. However, since the researcher is not competent in Afrikaans, participants were requested to write down their answers on a sheet that was provided. The interviews with participants were conducted on weekdays (mostly in the evenings) in participants’ homes and offices especially for those who have full time jobs. This was to ensure that participants

were free and comfortable to express themselves and share their views and experiences from the comfort of their own spaces without any distraction. Prior to the interviews, participants were taken through the whole process including the rationale and purpose of the study. As previously stated, participants signed a consent form agreeing to participate voluntarily and that they could withdraw at any given time.

The interviews, which lasted between 25 - 30 minutes, were recorded through handwritten notes. In cases where the participants preferred to answer the questions in Afrikaans, their answers were translated into English by the researchers' colleagues at the Western Cape Department of Local Government. Once translated, the transcripts were forwarded to the participants to review and verify for accuracy.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is one of the most popular and useful instruments of collecting data in a qualitative research. One of the most important advantages of using questionnaires in a qualitative research is that it is easy to administer especially if the targeted participants are literate (Kumar: 2011). Questionnaire allows participants more time to think about how they should go about answering questions. In other words, answers are well thought out. As previously stated, Community Development Workers (CDWs) were selected as participants in this study. Their selection was based on the fact that they have vast knowledge of the ward committee system and they also serve on ward committees on an ex-officio capacity as prescribed in the Beaufort West Ward Committee Policy. To this end, questionnaires (with closed and open-ended questions) were emailed to the selected Community Development Workers (CDWs) from ward 3, ward 4 and ward 7. The CDWs were given a week to populate and complete. The researcher physically collected all the completed questionnaires from the three CDW participants a week later.

3.4.3 Secondary data

To supplement interviews and questionnaires, the researcher critically reviewed and analysed official documents including policies, rules and guidelines on public participation and ward committees, reports and minutes of meetings as a secondary data collection technique. The following documents provide a detailed analysis on mechanisms and procedures to enhance public participation through

functional ward committees including support programs and proposed interventions to address challenges faced by ward committees:

- Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees' (Notice 965 of 2005);
- Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2007);
- National Framework: Criteria for Determining Out of Pocket Expenses for Ward Committee Members (2009);
- Western Cape Provincial Framework: Proposed Guidelines for Municipalities in the Implementation of an Effective and Functional Ward Committee System (2012);
- Western Cape Provincial Ward Committee Establishment Toolkit (2016);
- Beaufort West Public Participation Policy (2015);
- Beaufort West Ward Committee Policy (2016); Beaufort West “Back to Basics” program, otherwise known as “Integrated Recovery Plan (2015); and
- Beaufort West Quarterly Public Participation Report which outline the state of public participation in the municipality (2016 – 2019); and
- Beaufort West Ward Committee Operational Plans.

The review of the above documents provided the researcher with a broader understanding of the mechanisms used by the municipality to enhance public participation and more importantly the efforts being made to strengthen and institutionalise the ward committee system.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Babbie and Mouton (cited in Cloete, 2007: 513) define qualitative data analysis as an in-depth interrogation of the data that was collected using qualitative techniques “regardless of the paradigm used to govern the research”. In analysing the qualitative data, the researcher will apply both deductive and inductive research approaches following the framework model of analysis as described by Lacy and Luff (Cited in Cloete, 2007:514). The framework identified 5 key stages, i.e. data familiarization, identifying thematic framework, indexing/classification/coding, charting, mapping and interpreting. The data familiarization stage entails reading and making sense of the field notes, listening to the tape recordings and transcription of the qualitative data and memoing. Cloete (2007, 515) defines “memoing” as a process where the researcher would “write down theoretical notes on his or her reflections on the data and on different dimensions and deeper meanings of concepts” and it is advisable that this is done during the data collection phase.

Using memos and creating an understanding of the data early on during the field work gave the researcher an indication and a sense of the themes and common patterns that were emerging during the qualitative data analysis phase. Once identified, the common patterns and recurring themes were categorised thematically with the view to analyse and determine the extent to which they were responding to the objectives of the research study. The researcher also used a coding framework emanating from the emergent themes during the data familiarisation stage and this was done after the researcher had read the transcripts and made notes of the main ideas, and concepts that were common in the data.

3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

One of the common criticism that has been levelled against qualitative research is that it cannot guarantee objective truth and reality. Reliability is concerned with determining whether the same results and findings could be produced if the research was to be repeated (using the same data sources and techniques) while validity seeks to enquire about certain measures that the researcher employs to ensure that the conclusions and inferences drawn from the collected data are warranted (Merriam: 1998; Daytner: 2006; Leedy and Ormrod: 2010). Patton (2005) expresses a similar view stating that validity in a qualitative research focused on authenticity and trustworthiness of the techniques that were used to collect data and whether such instruments were relevant and appropriate for the study. In this regard, there is a consensus on the interrelatedness between reliability of data, validity of conclusions and ethical issues involved in the research study. The critical point is whether the collected data and the interpretation thereof accurately reflect the beliefs and perceptions of participants on the subject being investigated.

There are a whole range of strategies and safeguards that qualitative researchers can employ to ensure that research conclusions are valid and credible. In order to mitigate the risk of compromising the reliability and validity of the qualitative research study, (Draper, 2009: 28). Merriam (1998), Patton (2005) and Draper (2009) outline several strategies that qualitative researchers can use to enhance reliability and validity of qualitative research and these are:

- Data triangulation: Involves making use of different sources of information, data collection methods, investigators and theories to increase validity of the study. In this regard, Denzin (1989) identifies four types of triangulation, i.e. source triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation.

- Peer review/briefing: means that a qualitative researcher would request colleagues to scan some of the raw data to establish whether the findings are credible based on the data collected.
- Member checking and participant review: is used mainly for quality assurance purposes. In a qualitative research, member checking should ideally be done at the at the end of the research study (Lincoln and Guba (1985). It involves taking the data and preliminary findings of the research back to participants to verify whether the findings made is an accurate reflection of their opinions and experience (Creswell: 2013).
- Long term observation of the site and repeated observation of the same phenomenon. The importance of this strategy is that the interview can either confirm or contradict what the researcher has heard or read about in the documents (secondary data) relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

To ensure that the credibility of the study was upheld, and that data reliability was not compromised, the researcher made use of triangulation and ensured that multiple methods of data collection were used, i.e. interviews, questionnaires and secondary data. Furthermore, the researcher validated data throughout the collection period by sending it back to the participants to verify if it represented what they said. This included sending back transcripts and field notes to all participants to review and comment two days after the interview.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure that the reliability of data and validity of the research findings and conclusions was not compromised in any way, the researcher ensured that all ethical issues pertaining to the collection of data and how it was analysed and interpreted was above board and consistent with academic research code of conduct. The term ‘ethics’ is derived from the Greek word which refers to the “inner inclinations and morals” which constitute principles and norms for conduct that must be complied with in order to determine or distinguish what is right and wrong, honest and fair (Coetzee, 2003:114; Fouka and Mantzorou, 2011:4; Showkat, 2017: 13). As such, one of the most important ethical principles that has to be adhered to in any social sciences research study being undertaken is that the rationale behind selecting a certain sample frame and size and the participants’ roles and involvement must be clearly outlined and that participants must be assured that their involvement is voluntary and have a right of informed consent (Schrum: 1995; Foster: 1996; Babbie: 2001; Babbie and Mouton: 2005; Lutabingwa and Nethondze: 2006). In this context, the researcher had a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that participants were not harmed in any way and that he/she placed

the interests and wellbeing of the research participants above personal gain (Coetzee, 2003:16). This is collaborated by Schurink (2009:811) who states that research is “not a straightforward, unproblematic strategy whereby the researcher enters the field, collects the data and leaves the field unscathed”. There are a whole range of moral and ethical pitfalls and dilemmas that cannot be detected in advance but have the potential to completely impact or even compromise the nature and credibility of the research” (Ibid). To mitigate the risk of compromising the credibility of the study, the researcher must appreciate and recognise that the space within which research studies are carried out are shaped by ethical, practical and political considerations and allegiances (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, cited by Schurink 2009).

Before commencing with the research study, the researcher read and familiarised himself with the Research Ethics Policy of the University of the Western Cape and ensured that its provisions were strictly adhered to. In this regard, the researcher had to maintain the highest degree of integrity and ethical conduct over the duration of the study considering that the following constitute research misconduct and may compromise the credibility of the study (Penslar, 1995, cited in Coetzee, 2003:119)

- Fabrication and falsification of data (deception);
- Plagiarism, a form of theft which entails using another author’s work and presenting it as one’s own;
- Non-declaration of conflict of interest;
- Unethical and dishonest conduct including deliberate involvement of children and people who are mentally impaired in order to achieve personal interests;
- Any other issue that may be construed as academic fraud which could undermine the integrity of the research including intentionally violating research regulations and procedures.

To ensure that ethical standards and principles were adhered to, the study was designed in such a way that it complied with the major ethical guidelines /issues as suggested by Fouka and Mantzorou (2011):

- Informed consent of participants;
- Confidentiality and anonymity must be respected;
- Beneficence – do not harm participants in any way;
- Respect for privacy

To gain access to the participants the researcher wrote letters of consent and approval to the Municipal Manager of Beaufort West Municipality requesting him to grant the researcher permission to conduct the study. In the letter, the researcher highlighted the purpose of the study, when would it commence, what is the sample size as well as the role of the municipality.

Once the researcher obtained the written confirmation from the Municipal Manager to conduct research, formal letters were sent to all the selected participants informing them about the following:

- Goals, purpose, benefits and risks (if any) of their being participants in the study;
- Brief overview of the study and why it is important for the participants to take part;
- That the identity, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be protected;
- Participation is voluntary and that participants may withdraw at any given time without any negative implications or consequences for them;
- Responses will be used solely for the purposes of the research; and
- Participants may request regular updates on the progress of the study and that this will be honoured by the researcher.

Taking into account that the selected participants would have familiarised themselves with the purpose of the study, the researcher forwarded consent forms to all the selected participants to sign as confirmation of the following:

- That they have read and understood the purpose of the study as outlined in the information letters;
- That an attempt was made to answer and clarify all questions pertaining to the study in a language understood by the participant;
- That they were not coerced to participate in the study and that their participation is voluntary and may withdraw at any given time if they so wish;
- That confidentiality is guaranteed, and their identity will be protected.

3.8 SUMMARY

The chapter outlined the design and methodology that was used to conduct the research study. The design and methodology selected was qualitative research approach and, as such, the rationale behind the selection of qualitative research methods was thoroughly explained. This entailed procedures, techniques and instruments that were used to collect data and strategies to analyse and interpret it. Due to the nature of the study and the use of qualitative approach to collect data, the researcher

explained how strategies and safeguards such as triangulation were used to enhance trustworthiness of inferences, reliability and validity of data interpretation and findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter outlined the research methodology and the instruments that were used to collect data to achieve the objectives of the study. The main objective of the study was to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with specific reference to the effectiveness of the ward committee system and the role of the legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of various stakeholders involved in public participation. The chapter further highlighted the qualitative research techniques, strategies and safeguards that the researcher employed to ensure that the collected data was not compromised in anyway – that it was reliable and that the findings were valid. In the preceding chapter, a socio-economic landscape of the study case will be presented followed by an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data that was collected from 22 participants in Beaufort West Municipality. The data was collected through questionnaires and one-on-one interviews with closed and open-ended questions with ward committee members, ward councillors, municipal officials responsible for public participation, the Mayor of the Municipality, Municipal Manager as well as the Community Development Workers (CDWs). Through basic manual qualitative coding, data was organised into broader themes and categories which made it easy to analyse and interpret.

4.2 SOCIO ECONOMIC ANALYSIS: BEAUFORT WEST

According to Beaufort West Integrated Development Plan (2019/20), Beaufort West is the largest town in the Central Karoo District, located in the semi-desert area named “thirst land. It is situated along the N1 highway, approximately 470 kilometres North East of Cape Town. The town is also regarded as a gateway to other provinces considering that there is almost 240 and 205 kilometres to Hanover (Northern Cape) and Graaf Reinet (Eastern Cape), respectively.

Founded on the farm Hooyvlakte in 1818, Beaufort West is South Africa’s first and oldest municipality having been proclaimed as a municipality in February 1837. It was built and developed primarily as a service centre for rail and road transport and to a lesser degree for rural agriculture. The historical reason for the town’s existence is derived from the railways. As such, historical accounts of the town reveal that during the 1970’s and 80’s, 90% of the towns’ economically active people were employed by the railways. While both the rail transport and the agricultural sectors are

declining in terms of economic opportunities, the town has managed to maintain a minimal level of growth due to the high volume of passing road traffic.

4.2.1 Population

It is estimated that approximately 70% of the Central Karoo District population lives in Beaufort West. The 2011 census confirmed Beaufort West population to be around 49 586. Subsequently, the Community Survey (CS) conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2016, indicates that 69% of the population within the Central Karoo district resides in the Beaufort West municipal area. The increase in the number of people residing in the municipal area can be attributed to the merger of the administrative areas following the 2011 Local Government elections, i.e. the Beaufort West municipal area and the former District Management Area (DMA) and in-migration from other provinces. The population increased at an annual growth rate of 1.4% in the ten-year period between census 2001 and 2011. The municipality experienced a growth rate of 0.59% per annum between census 2011 and 2016.



Figure

4.1 Photograph of Beaufort West

4.2.1.1 Population by race

The Coloured community constitutes the majority of the population of Beaufort West at 75.1%, with Black Africans (Xhosa speaking) making up 17.7%. The White population constitutes 7.0% and

Indian/Asians 0.3% of the municipality. While there has been a decline in the white and Indian/Asian population in 2016, the Coloured and Black African population has seen an increase of 1.6% and 1.4% respectively since 2011.

According to Census 2011, the Afrikaans language is spoken by more than 40 000 people, i.e. almost 80% of the people living in the municipal area, with IsiXhosa spoken by approximately 5000 residents. In 2001, the number of Afrikaans speaking residents was 37 000 which is about 85% of the total population. The languages most spoken in the household are; Afrikaans (83.0%), IsiXhosa (13.1%) and English (1.9%). Afrikaans has remained the predominant language spoken in most households since census 2011.

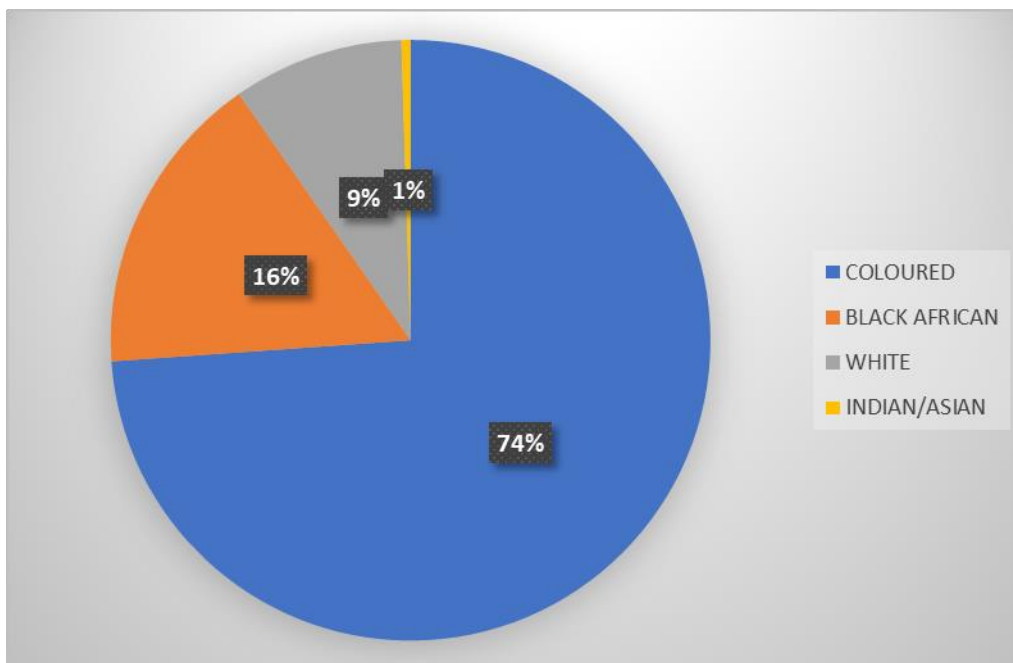


Figure 4.2: Population by race

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SAMPLED PARTICIPANTS

Distribution of age profiles of participants

18 - 25 (N=1)

25 - 34 (N=3)

35 - 44 (N=2)

44 – 59 (N=14)

Over 60 (N=2)

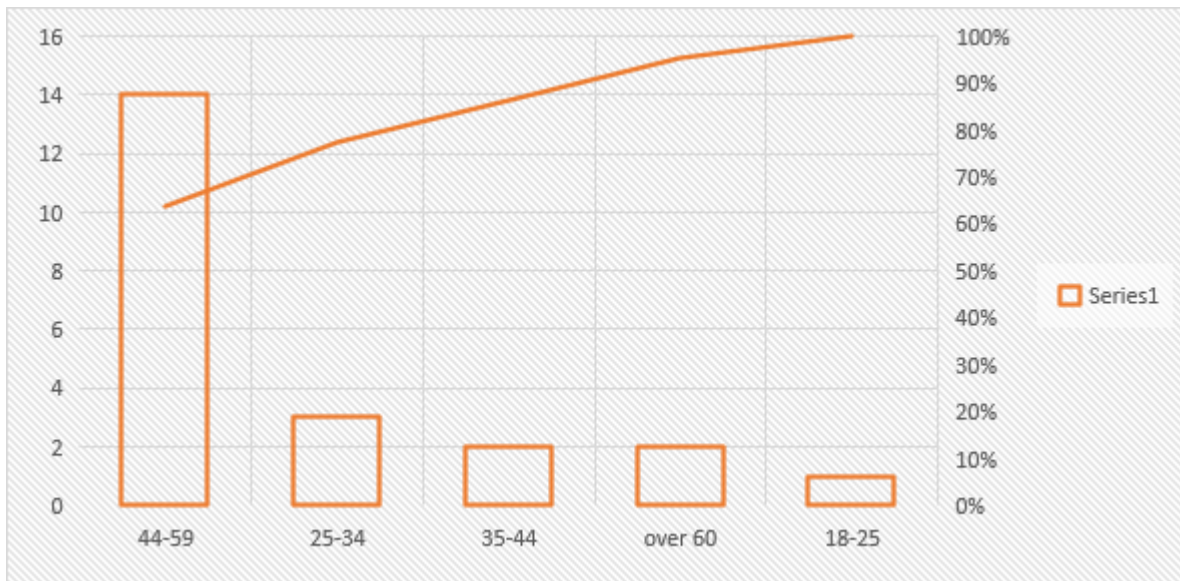


Figure 4.3: Distribution of age profiles of participants

Figure 4.3 above illustrates the age distribution of the participants. Based on this, it could be deduced that the highest distribution of participants was in the age group 44 and 59 (90%). In other words, the most active age of participants was those aged between 44 and 59 which means that they are the ones that influence the state of public participation in Beaufort West Municipality. Further interrogation of this phenomenon suggests that most participants in this age group (44 -59) were ward councillors constituting an overall 84% of the participants. Participants who fall between the youth age category of 25 and 34 years represented 13% of the participants. While the other age groups were fairly represented, it was rather interesting that the youth aged between 18 and 25 years constituted only 3% of the sampled participants, while those between the ages of 35 and 44 as well as over 60 represented 10%, respectively.

4.4 GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE VIEWS OF SAMPLED PARTICIPANTS

4.4.1 Gender distribution of participants

Figure 4.4 below confirms that an overall 64% of participants were males while 36 % were females. It was also discovered that 84% of the 65% sampled male participants were councillors. 36% of the females who participated in the study comprised of ward committee members, councillors, community development workers and municipal officials.

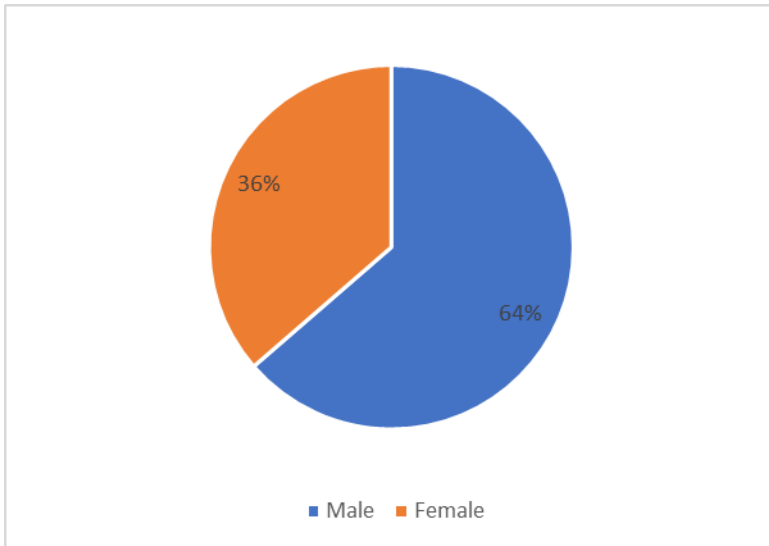


Figure 4.4: Gender distribution of participants

4.4.2 Spoken language

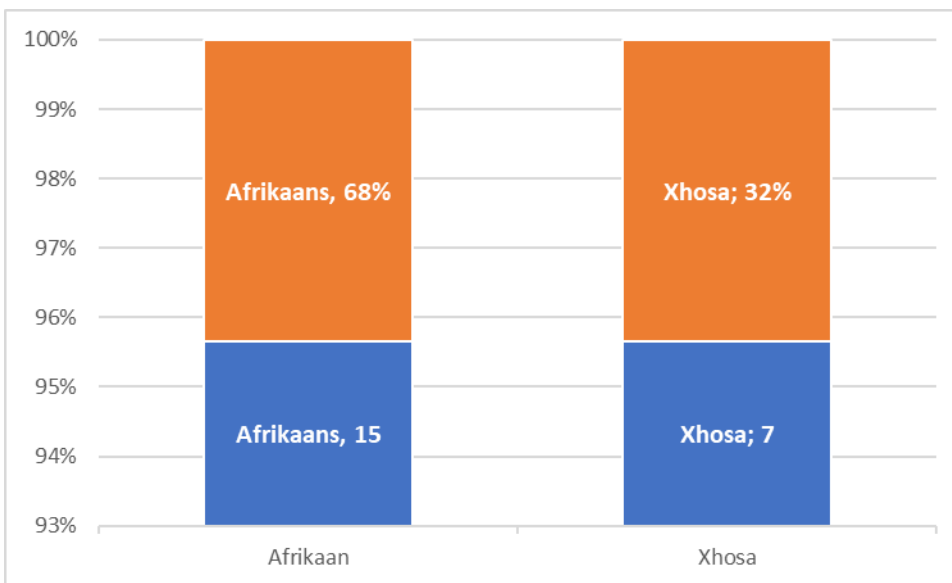


Figure 4.5: Home language of participants

Figure 4. above shows that the majority of participants (68%) were predominantly Afrikaans speaking while 32% spoke IsiXhosa. What was also discovered was that while the latter's home language is IsiXhosa, they are fluent and competent in Afrikaans hence it remains the most spoken language both at work and during ward committee meetings.

4.4.3 How long have you been elected/appointed in your current position as a ward committee member/ ward councillor?

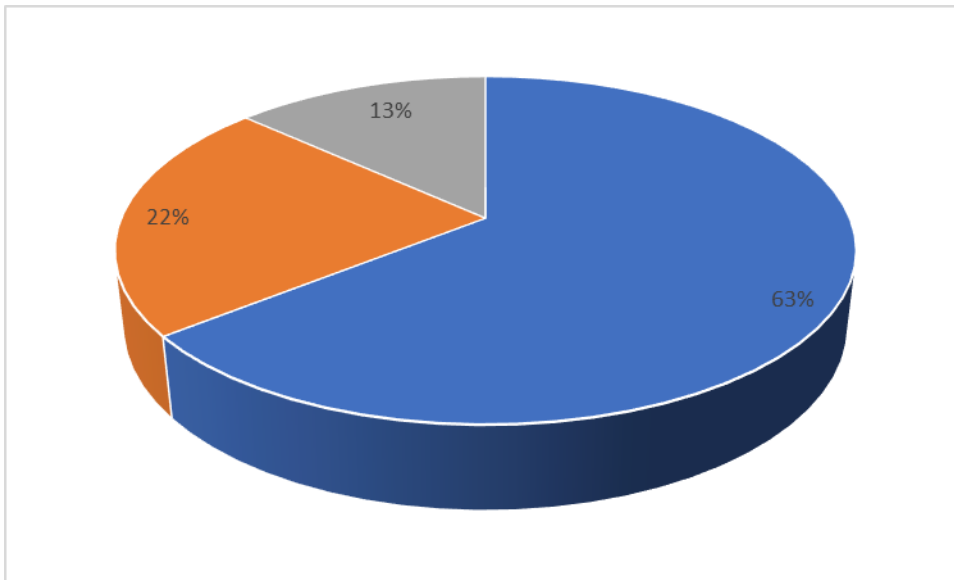


Figure 4.6: Years/period serving in a current position as a ward committee member/ward councillor

A significant number of participants (63%) were elected/appointed into their current positions after the 2016 the Local government elections (i.e. 1-5 years). This implies that the participants have acquired knowledge and grasp of public participation processes including the system of ward committees in Beaufort West Municipality. 22% of the participants have been actively involved in public participation and ward committees for more than ten years while a mere 13% have been in their current positions for more than five years. It should be noted therefore that the experience of 81% of the participants (ward councillors, ward committee members, the Mayor and the Municipal Manager) is linked to legislation in the sense that they are required to serve for a period of five years and their re-election/re-appointment is not always guaranteed, while 27% (CDWs and municipal officials) are permanent employees of government.

4.4.4 What is the most used mechanism to enhance public participation in your ward?

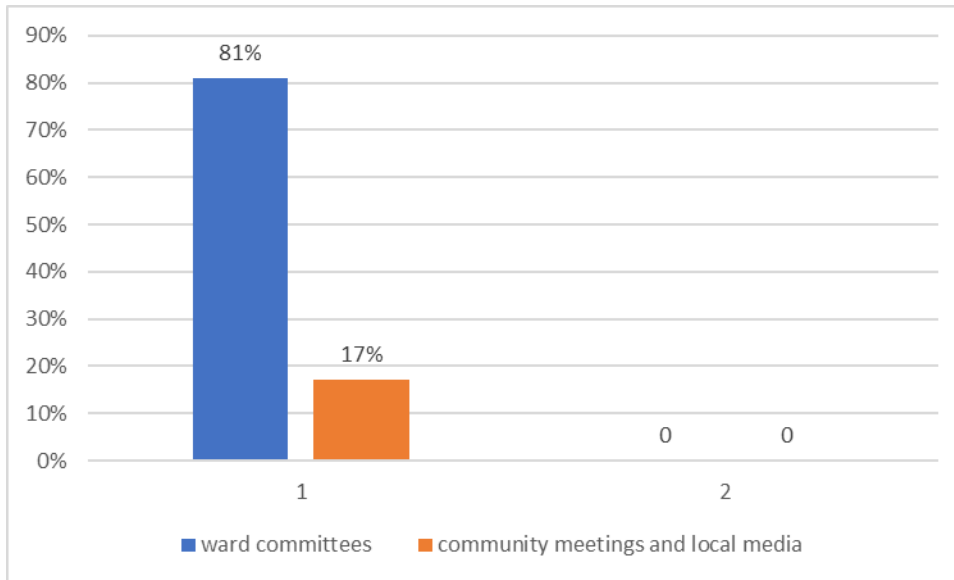


Figure 4.7: Most used mechanism to enhance public participation

Figure 4.7 above illustrate that the most popular mechanism that the municipality uses to promote and enhance public participation. Figure 4.7 reveals that an overwhelming majority of participants (81%) regard ward committees as the primary mechanism that is used by the municipality to enhance public participation, while a small number of participants (17%) believe that community meetings and local media are the most important platforms to promote public participation. The main reason that was advanced by the participants to substantiate the prominence of ward committees above other mechanisms of public participation was that ward committees have become the most convenient platforms used as a compliance driven exercise to legitimise municipal processes like the Integrated Development Plan and Budget.

Beside ward committees it was also revealed during the one-one-one interviews with the Mayor and municipal officials that the Mayor has decided to promote public participation through his quarterly public participation roadshows – a form of community feedback engagement whose primary focus is on service delivery.

4.4.5 What role do you as a ward committee member/ward councillor play in enhancing public participation and ward committee functionality in your ward?

Of the participants, an overall 81% considered themselves as public participation agents through their involvement in ward committees which are the primary mechanisms used by the municipality to strengthen public participation. 31% of these participants outlined their roles as that of providing support to the ward councillor with the view to facilitate the delivery of services in their communities. The participants described ward committees as advisory bodies whose primary objective is to identify community needs and make recommendations to the municipal council through their ward councillor on a wide range of issues including community projects to be implemented. As members of ward committees directly elected to serve as the mouthpiece of communities after the 2016 Local Government elections, the participants felt that they were not given enough space and opportunity to evaluate service delivery standards. It was interesting to note that participants emphasized the need for them to be allowed to attend council meetings and make inputs in order to influence council decisions. They raised a concern that despite consistently attending ward committee meetings over the last three years, the same cannot be said about council meetings. One participant specifically remarked: *“we want to be involved in council meetings as invitees and serve on certain committees, but we are only invited when there are programs, and this is done on the eleventh hour”*.

Meanwhile 36% of the participants were of the opinion that their role is to lead ward committees and provide guidance in the implementation of community development projects. Their role, as chairpersons of ward committees, is to ensure that meetings are held and that ward committee members are motivated and provided with the necessary resources to perform their duties diligently and effectively. Insofar as ward committee meetings are concerned, participants confirmed that these meetings are held monthly. To enhance public participation, 27% of the participants indicated that they use ward committees as a primary mechanism to strengthen public participation. As such, their role is to provide administrative support to ward committees to ensure that they function optimally. However, there is also a view within this group (18%) that if ward committees are to be fully functional, invitations should be extended to everyone in advance and not just a few days before the meeting for them to work efficiently and effectively.

4.4.6 In your opinion, what is the role, functions and powers of ward committees



Figure 4.8: Role, functions and powers of ward committees

Almost 100 % of the participants agreed that ward committees are independent advisory bodies, a link between the community and the municipality. They defined ward committees as state-created spaces of public engagements whose primary role is to strengthen the interface between the municipality and communities. According to the participants, ward committees are the formal channel of communication between local communities and the council. Therefore, as the eyes and ears of the community, ward committees make recommendations on service delivery issues to the municipal council via the ward councillor who serve as a representative of the community in the municipality. Interestingly, about 60 % of the participants pointed out that ward committees do not have any executive authority beyond making recommendations to council. As such, the decisions that they make are not binding on ward councillors and there's no recourse to hold them accountable.

About 40% of the participants dismissed the notion that ward committees do not have powers. They were convinced that ward committees have the legal mandate and power to lobby and influence the decisions of the municipality. To achieve this, they need to hold regular meetings with their respective blocks/sectors to understand issues raised by communities and refer those issues to council for intervention. According to the participants, the problem was that some ward committee members did not have any structures/sectors that they account to, they represented their own interests making it difficult for them to claim any legitimacy or be taken seriously by Council.

4.4.7 Does the municipality pay stipend for ward committees /Out of Pocket Expenses? If yes, what is your opinion on the payment of the stipend?

The overwhelming view among the participants (100%) was that the municipality is paying an amount of R500 as an “allowance” or the “out of pocket expenses” to refund ward committees for the expenses they may have incurred in the process of executing their duties as ward committee members. Participants revealed that the municipality receives an annual ward committee grant of R420 000 from the national Department of Cooperative Governance (R500 per ward committee member per month x 12 months). However, there were contradictory perspectives and views about the way in which the funding should be administered. Some participants (27%) felt that the Out of Pocket Expenses reimbursed to ward committees was not enough especially if one considered the amount of work that they do. They maintained that the vast geographical distance between the wards, particularly in the rural parts of the municipality, makes it very difficult for them to perform their duties as required by legislation.

On the other hand, 18% of the participants observed that they were not reimbursed timeously for the Out of Pocket expenses and this could be attributed to lack of administrative capacity. The late payment of stipends to ward committee members was also blamed for non-functionality of certain ward committees in Beaufort West. There was also a concern expressed by some participants (9%) that certain ward committee members attend meetings because they want to earn the stipend. The point was made by the participants that some members did not do any work in their respective sectors or consistencies. As one of the participants put it *“it is unfortunate that certain ward committee members think that by attending meetings and signing the attendance register is all that they need to do we ought to address this problem now”!*

It was also interesting to note that a relatively small group of participants (9%) expressed serious doubts about the relevance of the Out of Pocket expenses suggesting that it should be scrapped completely. The participants believed that the funding has not been used for its intended purpose, hence there was a need to develop clear guidelines and procedures to regulate the management of the Out of pocket expenses. Furthermore, the participants suggested that instead of paying the allowance, the funding should be used for other expenses. One of the participants was more direct and specific: *“The municipality must be responsible for transport of ward committee members. Stop the Out of Pocket Expenses for meetings. Instead, provide them with free access to the internet, libraries and vouchers for airtime”*. According to the participants, ward committee members regard the stipend as

a form of income hence the intense lobbying/contest for positions on ward committees during their establishment.

4.4.8 Do you feel that decisions on service delivery taken during ward committee meetings are being implemented by the municipality?

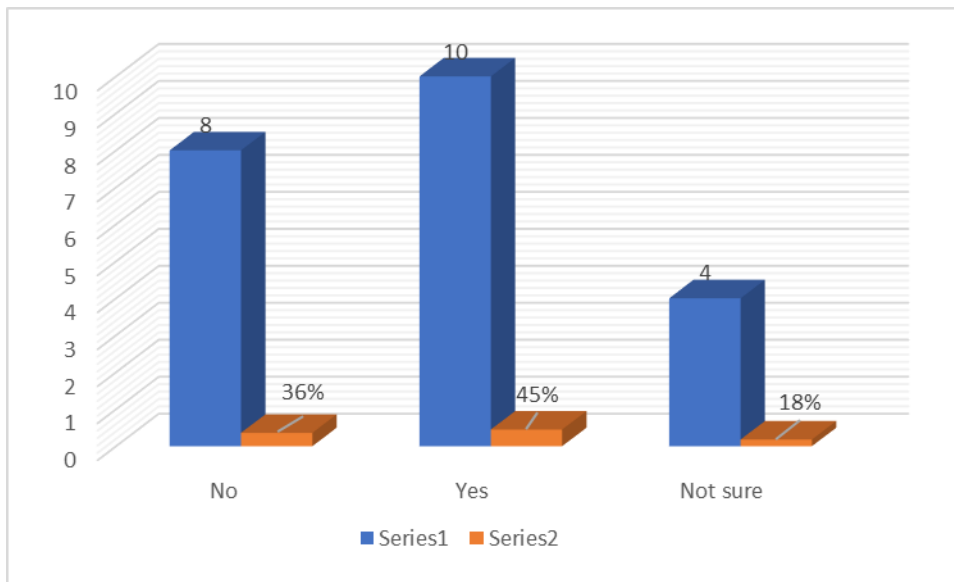


Figure 4.9: Are ward committee decisions implemented by the municipality?

It is evident from Figure 4.9 above that considerable number participants (45%) felt that the municipality has demonstrated commitment to implement the decisions taken during ward committee meetings. While acknowledging that there was no standard operating procedure or a clear process on how these issues should be addressed and responded to by the municipality, there was a consensus among the participants that the ward councillor is responsible for submitting the minutes of ward committee meetings to the Speaker who will table this before council for consideration. Follow up and feedback to ward committees on service delivery issues was done haphazardly depending on the commitment of the ward councillor. However, once the municipal council has adopted a resolution on ward committee reports, the Portfolio Committees or Mayoral committees would process such issues in terms of section 79 and section 80 of the Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998) and refer them to the various Departments for follow up and feedback to ward committees.

It could also be deduced from the above that 36% of the participants had a different view altogether. They maintained that the municipality did not have any mechanisms in place to follow up on issues raised during ward committee meetings. They indicated that issues affecting ward committees hardly

find expression on the council agenda and there appears to be no political will or ‘appetite’ to provide regular feedback to ward committees. According to the participants, this item is just noted in council meetings and little discussions take place. There were also several participants (18%) who were not sure about whether the municipality implements ward committee decisions.

4.4.9 Does the municipality provide administrative support to strengthen ward committee functionality?

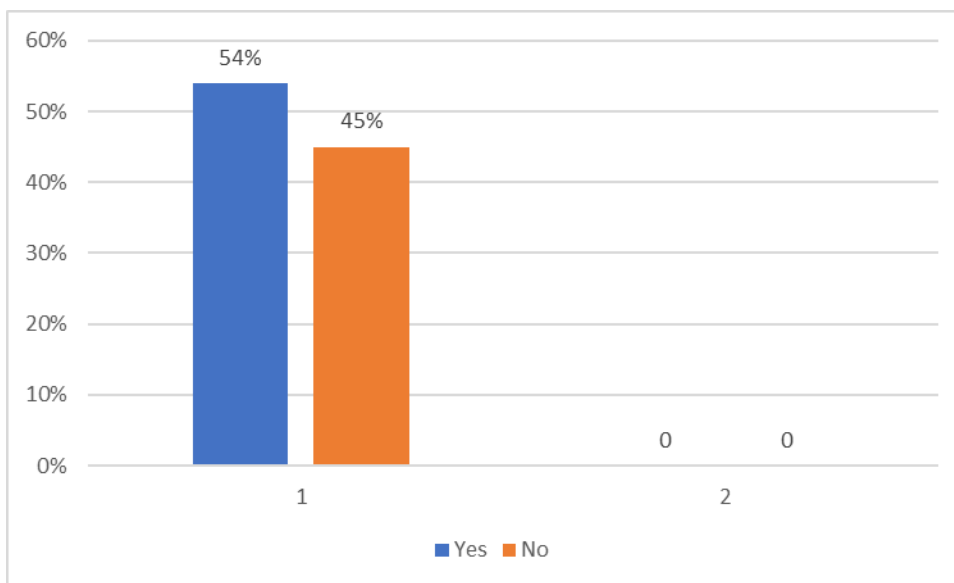


Figure 4.10: Administrative support by the municipality

It could be deduced from figure 4.10 above that 54% of the participants believed that the municipality is providing administrative support to ward committees. The participants indicated that municipality has appointed dedicated capacity for public participation in the office of the Speaker. However, they cautioned that having warm bodies in the office of the Speaker without a budget and resources to implement projects is an exercise in futility and does not assist in enhancing ward committee functionality in the municipality. While appreciating the importance of a ward committee policy (which was adopted in 2016) to regulate the operations of ward committees as well as the need for the development of the ward committee operational plans, the participants questioned how these interventions could be successfully implemented if there was no adequate budget or resources.

About 45% of the participants indicated that the municipality was not providing administrative support to ward committees. They advanced various reasons to substantiate this view, one of which had to do with access to venues to hold meetings, office space and equipment. Participants alleged

that the municipality was unable to assist them to arrange transport for meetings with their respective sectors or blocks (especially in rural areas) as a result they often did not have anything to report on during ward committee meetings. Participants were of the view that for ward committees to fulfil their functions in promoting public participation, members must be provided with relevant tools including access to free internet, airtime vouchers, printers and computers to type minutes for their block meetings.

4.4.10 To what extent does local party politics influence public participation processes in local government in Beaufort West Municipality?

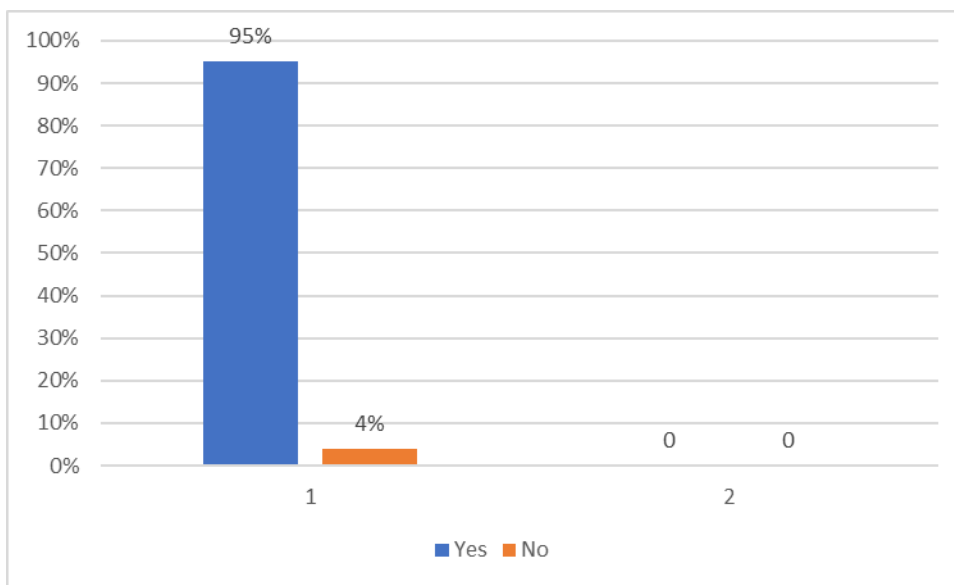


Figure 4.11: Influence of party politics in ward committee functionality

According to figure 4.11 an overwhelming majority of participants (95%) were of the view that party politics is largely to blame for lack of public participation and non-functionality of ward committees in Beaufort West. According to the participants, this phenomenon has manifested itself in various forms over the last three years. For example, there was a view that ward committees were elected based on the needs and interests of a specific political party and did not represent the interests of communities. One of the participants took it further alleging that “*most ward committees are used to endorse decisions made elsewhere and not from the residents*”. A similar remark was made by another participant that “*ward committee elections are often fraught with controversy. Councillors choose their favourites and allow ward committees to become a mere extension of their own political party structures, sparking a fierce contest for the positions*”

So politicised are ward committees that some participants even alleged that there were certain ward committees that consist of family members of ward councillors. This created unnecessary tension and

conflict making it very difficult for ward committees to function optimally as required. The participants also made suggestions that could possibly assist in de-politicising ward committees proposing that the nomination and election procedures should be reviewed. According to the participants, this could entail preventing politicians from facilitating the establishment of ward committees because it is at this stage that undue political influence in terms of the election processes is more pronounced. There was a new reality where in some instances certain ward councillors would be afraid to call community meetings because the community is aggrieved about lack of service delivery. The undue political interference in the work of ward committees was, according to the participants, the '*elephant in the room*' that very few people were willing to confront, and this was frustrating for them. As one participant put it: "*we try to get issues discussed in council with no support even with IDPs*".

Almost 80% of the participants were of the view that the political battle for the control of the municipality, which culminated in the formation of a coalition government, has led to the instability which has had negative implications for ward committees. They pointed out that due to the nature of their work in communities, ward committees have become easy targets of manipulation hence they end up being caught in party political turf wars between members of the council and administration. It was also alleged that some ward committee members who belong to the same party with the councillor would often have access to first - hand information on key ward projects and even be furnished with agendas well in advance to prepare for meetings while the rest would be ignored. The participants also revealed that some ward committee members are the members and chairpersons or secretaries of the Branch Executive Committees (BECs) of political parties and their 'deployment' as ward committee members was aimed at grooming them using ward committee structure as a stepping stone to become Ward councillors in the future. Another view was that ward committee members who belong to opposition parties had political ambitions too and their agenda was to contest the 2021 local government elections and wrestle control of the ward from the 'opposition'. They alleged these ward committee members would mobilise and even collude with certain sections of the community to undermine the ward councillors and question their legitimacy even during the community meetings.

There was a strong view expressed about the role of ward councillors as chairpersons of ward committees. Participants felt that this is a legislative loophole that will have to be reviewed considering that ward councillors determine the agenda and narrative around ward committees. They lamented the fact that meeting venues were sometimes made inaccessible deliberately in order to 'side-line' those ward committee members who are perceived as 'problematic'. According to the

participants, this creates a situation where ward committees have been reduced into ‘lame duck’ structures only to rubber-stamp pre-determined decisions.

There was a small number of participants (4%) who felt that party politics was not a factor in ward committee functionality in the municipality. Their reason was that if there was political maturity on the part of the chairperson, ward committees would operate effectively. This is certainly the case in their respective wards. They stated that their ward committee was working together as a collective with no political bias against members who belong to a party that is in opposition to the one that the chairperson is a member of. It was therefore the contention of the participants that their political allegiances had nothing to do with their roles and responsibilities as ward committee members as they were elected to serve the entire community without fear or favour.

4.4.11 Do you think Proportional Representation Councillors should have a role to play in ward committees? If yes, what do you think should be their role?

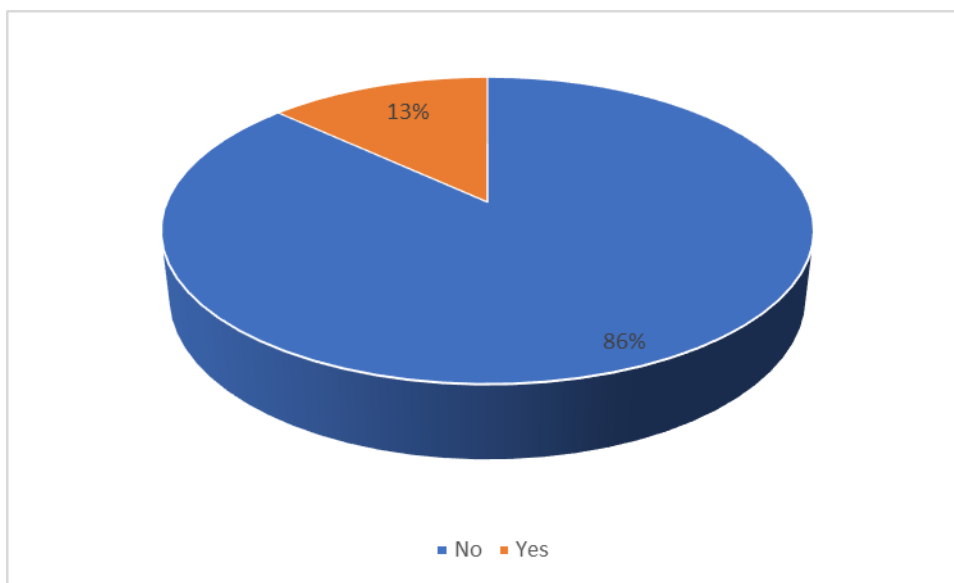


Figure 4.12: Role of Proportional Representation councillors in ward committees

Figure 4.12 illustrate the views of participants insofar as the involvement of Proportional Representation Councillors (PRs) is concerned. A high number of participants 86% were vehemently opposed to the involvement of PR councillors in ward committees. They argued that their direct participation would heighten political tensions within ward committees and will undermine the efforts that are currently being made to de-politicise ward committees in the municipality. The participants observed that because PR councillors were elected on the basis of party lists, chances

were that they would be more loyal to their political principals than communities. Taking this into account, the participants argued that PR councillors should not be allowed to attend, let alone participate in discussions during ward committee meetings.

There was, however, a small number of participants (13%) who believed that PR councillors can make a valuable contribution in supporting ward committees to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. According to the participants, the role of PR councillors would be to provide support and compliment the work of ward committees. They maintained that the Speaker must, in consultation with the Chief Whips of the various political parties represented in council, determine some criteria to facilitate the deployment of PR councillors to the wards that are struggling to promote and enhance public participation. One participant further suggested: “as I said, let PR councillors of other parties be involved to make sure that the ruling party would listen to ward committee issues”. This observation appears to imply that PR councillors could play an oversight role to ensure that ward councillors are held accountable for the operations and functionality of ward committees

4.4.12 Did you attend any training and capacity building programme arranged by the municipality over the last three years?

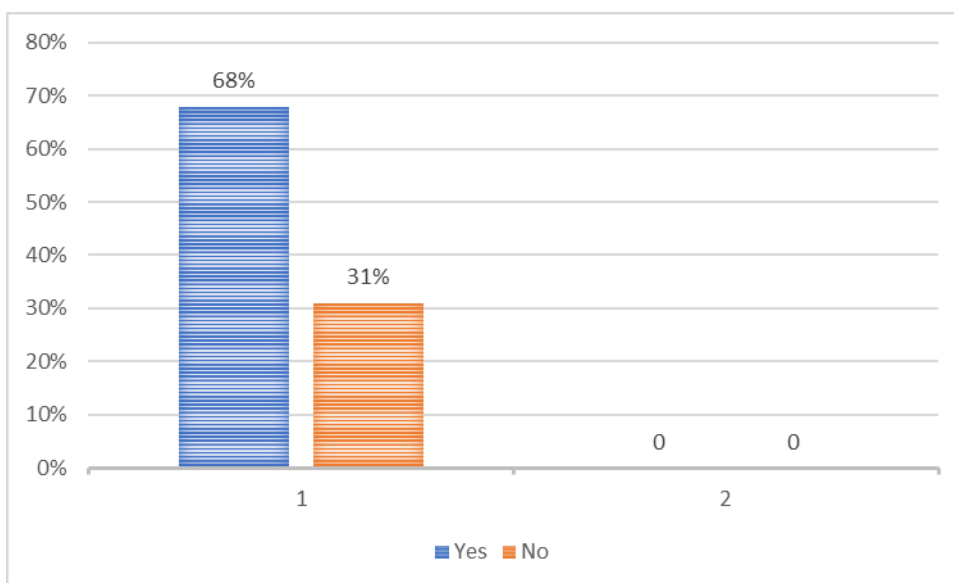


Figure 4.13: training and capacity programmes arranged by the municipality

As illustrated in figure 4.13 demonstrates a relatively higher number of participants (68%) indicated that they attended training and capacity building programmes on public participation and ward committees which were arranged by the municipality over the last three years. This included the ward committee induction training, ward committee summits as well as workshops on the development of ward committee policies as well as the ward committee operational plans. The aim of the workshops,

according to the participants, was to empower ward committees with knowledge about public participation, hone their skills so that they were able to perform their duties diligently and effectively. As much as they appreciated these opportunities, there were concerns about lack of support when it comes to the attendance of these training initiatives. For example, one participant noted with concern that the “*ward committees with Councillor must report back to the community but no funds are available to hire halls or travel to Merweville. ward committee members struggle to attend these training programmes because there is always an issue with money for transport*”.

It was interesting to note that 31% of the participants said that they did not attend any municipal training and capacity building programme over the last three years. There were no specific reasons provided except in cases where transport was alleged to have been an issue. This effectively meant that these ward committee members did not even participate in the induction program and therefore could not be expected to be productive in terms of conducting meaningful public participation programmes in their respective wards.

4.4.13 What do you think should be done to strengthen ward committee functionality in Beaufort West?

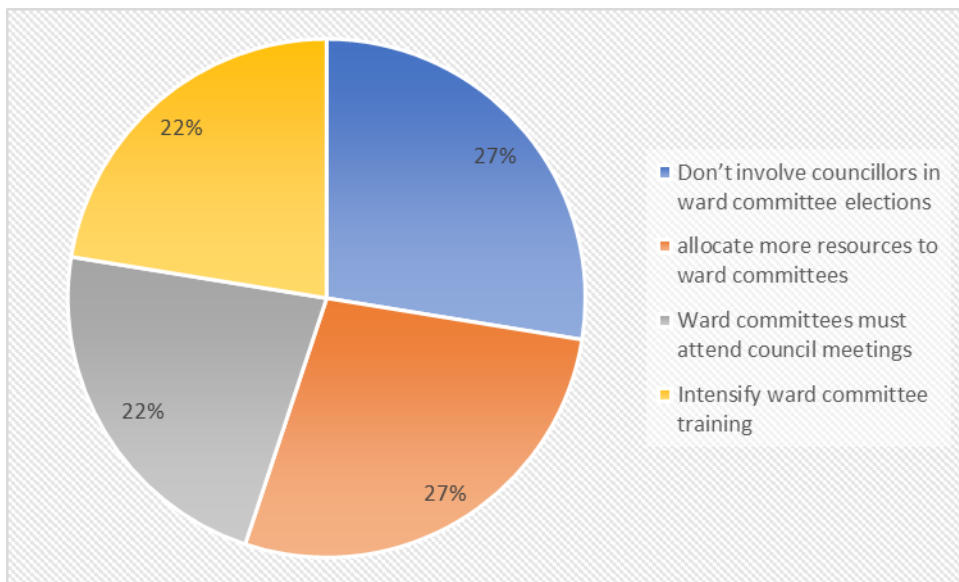


Figure 4.14: What is to be done to strengthen ward committee functionality

Figure 4.14 shows the views of participants on what could be done to improve ward committee functionality in Beaufort West. There were mixed feelings among participants on the possible remedies that could be employed to increase the effectiveness of ward committees. 27% of the

participants attributed non-functionality of these structures to the active involvement of councillors in the establishment and election of ward committees. They cited numerous instances where the process of ward committee establishment (starting from the nomination of candidates) was manipulated to determine a particular outcome that would suit the interests of certain councillors and their respective political parties. The participants were therefore of the opinion that councillors should not be allowed to participate in the establishment of ward committees, the process should be run and overseen by the administration.

An equal number of participants (27%) were of the view that ward committees were not adequately resourced to carry out their duties in a manner that would improve the lives of communities they serve. They specifically mentioned issues of access to venues to hold their block meetings, lack of access to equipment like computers, internet etc. Lack of resources has allegedly hampered the participant's ability to hold feedback meetings with their blocks/constituencies. According to the participants, the rural towns of Murraysburg, Nelspoort and Merweville were the hardest hit because of the vast distances between the different areas of the same wards - which is compounded by lack of transport. Participants therefore suggested that if the municipality was serious about public participation, they must allocate more resources to ward committees and make sure that each ward committee had its own budget.

About 22% of the participants noted with concern that public participation seldomly found expression in council meeting. This item is usually proposed for 'noting' in council meetings and hardly any meaningful deliberations take place. To this end, the participants felt that ward committees should be a standing item on the agenda of council meetings and that necessary logistical arrangements should be made to ensure that ward committees attend these meetings with the view to influence decision making processes. In this regard, one of the participants observed: *"It's delusional to think that ward committees can meaningfully participate in the affairs of the municipality if they do not understand how council functions, the legal framework that informs some of its decisions and operations. How can they influence decision making processes if they don't know these basic things?"*

Another 22% of the participants identified training and capacity building of ward committees as one of the areas that the municipality needs to prioritize and focus its energies and resources on. They pointed out some ward committee members do not know their roles and responsibilities to the extent that they perceived their role as being the 'watchdog' of councillors. Equally, there was also a view that some ward councillors do not seem to appreciate and understand their own legislated mandatory

role as chairpersons of ward committees. The participants felt that there was a misconception, which could be attributed to lack of continuous training, that ward committees are beholden to ward councillors and that they serve at their behest.

4.4.14 Are there any other issues you may want to raise about public participation and ward committees in general which are not addressed by the questionnaire?

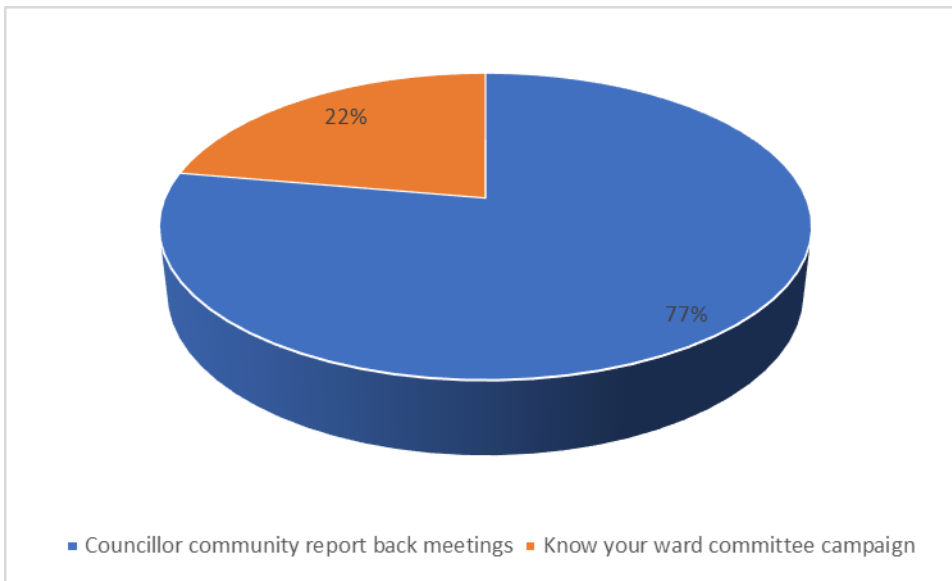


Figure 4.15

Figure 4.15 above sought to solicit the general views of participants on public participation and ward committees. To this end, 77% of the participants believed that the councillor community report back meetings are the most important mechanisms and platforms that could be used to enhance public participation in their respective wards. Demonstrating the importance of community meetings, the participants referred to the success of the mayoral public participation roadshows which are held across the seven wards on a quarterly basis.

A small number of participants (22%) were of the view that the municipality should develop and rollout an annual community campaign to raise awareness on the role and responsibilities of ward committees in public participation. The participants were convinced that most residents do not even know who their representatives are, and this hampers their meaningful involvement in the affairs of the municipality.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented and discussed the data that was gathered in the field. It revealed a whole range of challenges and contradictions embedded in the ward committee system. While there were various perspectives by the sampled participants advanced on a number of pertinent questions in respect of the research problem, the main theme is that there is general frustration and apathy around public participation and the whole system of ward committees. The general perception is that municipality needs to strengthen its legislative prerogative to ensure that public participation is taken beyond ward committees. Based on this analysis, the researcher will in the preceding chapter tease out some of the key issues emanating from the analysis and propose possible solutions and remedies thereof.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters analysed and interpreted the data that was collected during the field work which confirmed findings from the literature review that the ward committee system is the primary mechanism that is used by municipalities to promote and facilitate public participation. This is consistent with the main objective of the study which was to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with specific reference on the effectiveness of the ward committee system and the role of legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of various stakeholders involved in public participation. However, as indicated in the previous chapter, the majority of participants took a dim view of the processes and procedures that regulate the establishment and operations of the ward committee system. To this end, this chapter will discuss and present the research findings derived from the interviews and questionnaires in relation to the objectives of the study on the state of public participation in the Western Cape. Informed by the findings of the study, the researcher will propose recommendations and draw conclusions in a more integrated manner to address some of the issues, themes and challenges that have been identified. To strengthen public participation and increase the efficacy of the ward committee systems, recommendations will be made on the need to re-configure the legislative and regulatory framework governing these processes including among others: establishment and election of ward committees, composition and term of office, functions and powers, capacity building and funding of ward committees as well as the institutional arrangements of public participation in municipalities.

5.2. FINDINGS BASED ON STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

As stated in chapter one, the main objective of the study was to assess the state of public participation in the Western Cape with specific reference to the effectiveness of the ward committee system and the role of legislative and regulatory framework governing public participation, the institutional architecture and the roles of various stakeholders involved in public participation. The following were the specific objectives of the study:

- To Assess the impact or influence of local politics on public participation

- To analyse and identify gaps and weaknesses in the current legislative and policy framework governing public participation;
- To evaluate and critically examine the role of politics (and politicians) in facilitating public participation in municipalities;
- To assess procedures and mechanism for public participation with specific reference to powers, functions and roles of ward committees in public participation; and
- To acquire empirical evidence and make recommendations on possible policy and legislative amendments to the newly established Western Cape Provincial Public Participation and Ward Committee Legislative Review Project Steering Committee

In order to achieve the above research objectives, questionnaires and interviews were conducted, followed by data analysis and interpretation which produced the following research findings.

5.2.1 Demographic Profile of Participants

The majority of the sampled participants were predominantly Afrikaans speaking (68%) males (64%) aged between 44 and 59 years of age (90%). A high proportion of the males interviewed (65%) were councillors while the females and the youth constituted only 36% and 13% of the sampled participants, respectively. A significant number of participants (63%) were relatively experienced in public participation considering that there were elected/appointed into their current positions after the 2016 Local Government elections.

5.2.2 Participatory Processes and Mechanisms used to Enhance Ward Based Democracy

The research findings reveal that ward committees are the most popular mechanisms used by the municipality to enhance community participation in the affairs of the municipality. There is overwhelming evidence that ward committees are the most preferred mechanism of public participation, not because of their efficacy, but because they are able to 'legitimize' certain key municipal processes like the Integrated Development Planning (IDP). The use of ward committees by Beaufort West Municipality is consistent with the provisions of chapter seven of the constitution (RSA:1996) as well as section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act (1998). However, the overwhelming view among the participants (81%) was that the municipality has failed to explore the various participatory processes and mechanisms outlined in the legislative framework beyond ward committees - as prescribed, for example, in chapter four of the Municipal Systems Act and these include *Radio Gamka* and the local newspaper, *Die Courier*. This is despite the fact that the majority

of ward committees were found to be non-functional which meant that they were unable to carry out their duties and ensure substantive community participation in decision making processes of the municipality. The over-reliance of municipalities on ward committees as a sole mechanism for public participation was characterised as token participation because it is aimed primarily at complying with policy and legislative prescripts. This finding resonates with the argument advanced by Mautjana and Makombe (2013) who posited that “community participation processes are conducted for compliance purposes only as they tend to degenerate into municipal talk-shops during which the communities are treated as passive participation”. Beside ward committees, it was also revealed during the one-one-one interviews with the Mayor and municipal officials that the Mayor has decided to promote public participation through his quarterly public participation roadshows – a form of community feedback engagement whose primary focus is on service delivery.

5.2.3 Powers and functions of ward committees

Section 72(3) stipulates that that the object of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. A ward committee is formal channel of communication between the community and the municipality. As such, all the participants agreed that ward committees are the mechanisms that were created to assist the local ward councillor to accelerate service delivery and ensure that communities are afforded the opportunity to influence and own municipal decision-making processes on governance. However, 60% of the participants were of the view that ward committees do not have any executive powers and their decisions are not binding on the ward councillor or the municipal council. They characterised ward committees as toothless platforms whose only function was to make recommendations to council. More importantly, the participants felt that there were no binding mechanisms to hold council and ward councillors accountable to the decisions made during ward committee meetings. This means that even though legislation created ward committees to influence municipal decisions, real power to implement decisions and formulate policies resides with council and not ward committees.

While recognizing that ward committees do not have executive authority, 45% of the participants were satisfied about the feedback from the municipality on issues raised during ward committee, while 36% agreed indicating that ward committees were toothless bodies who were beholden to ward councillors. They maintained that as advisory bodies, ward committees were held at ransom and could not function effectively without a ward councillor who is competent and politically matured.

5.2.4 Administrative support and funding for ward committees

According to section 73 (4) of the Municipal Structures Act, municipalities are required to make administrative arrangements to enable ward committees to perform their functions and exercise their powers effectively. While 54% of the participants appreciated the administrative support that the municipality was providing to ward committees, 45% felt that the municipality was not doing enough to support them to perform their duties. They bemoaned lack of access to resources which is compounded by long and vast distances between the towns. As such, it was found that the geographical size of municipal wards and the ward boundaries that cut across communities can undermine and compromise ward committee functionality. This has manifested itself in various ways in the context of Beaufort West Municipality. Interestingly in this regard was the finding on the administrative burden that the incorporation of the former District Management Areas (DMAs), i.e. Murraysburg, Merweville and Nelspoort, into Beaufort West Municipality has had on the municipality since the 2011 Local Government elections.

The District Management Areas (DMAs) were 'isolated' communities (typically located far away from the main towns) with low population density. The Central Karoo District Municipality was responsible for providing services in the District Management Areas of Murraysburg and Merweville. However, when the Demarcation Board (DB) incorporated these towns into Beaufort West Municipality, it seems as if the decision was taken without due regard for the implication it would have on public participation in general and ward committees in particular. For example, ward seven is split into two, i.e. Merweville and Hillside in Beaufort West. The former is about 150 Kilometers from Beaufort West.

The study revealed that when ward committees were elected in ward seven, these two communities which constitute the ward (Merweville and Hillside) were required to hold separate ward committee meetings on different days to elect at least five persons who would represent their respective communities on the ward committee. The challenge for this ward, according to the research findings, is that public participation meetings cannot be held with two communities together because of the travelling distance between the two areas. Even for its ward committee meetings to have a quorum, five ward committee members must travel approximately 300 kilometers to and from the meeting venue, hence it has become very difficult for them to meet monthly (as stipulated in the ward committee policy) given the lack of funds to pay for transport. The ward councillor and municipal officials live in Beaufort West which implies that they would need to drive the same distance a day to

provide services and administrative support to the five ward committee members based in Merweville.

Providing administrative support to ward one (Murraysburg) was also found to be challenge. This ward is situated approximately 160 kilometers from Beaufort West and, in fact, it is closer to Graaf Reinet (Eastern Cape) which is about 100 kilometers away hence most residents in Murraysburg do their shopping there. Due to lack of resources, officials are unable to consistently attend regular monthly ward committee meetings and provide adequate administrative support to ward committee members. The same problem of vast geographic distances is being experienced in ward two which is split between Nelspoort and Beaufort West. The travelling distance between the two communities is 60 kilometers which means that the officials and the ward councillor – who lives in Beaufort West – must travel 120 kilometers a day to and from Nelspoort to provide the necessary administrative support to ward committees.

Based on the above finding, the study also revealed that the geographical size of municipal wards hampers meaningful public participation and contradicts the delimitation criteria of municipal wards as set out in schedule 1(b) (c) of the Municipal Structures Act (1998). The Act enjoins the demarcation board after consulting the electoral commission to delimit a municipality into wards, each having approximately the same number of voters, taking into account the following criteria:

- (b) The need to avoid as far as possible the fragmentation of communities.
- (c) The object of a ward committee as set out in 72 (3) which is to enhance participatory democracy in local government.

From the above it could be deduced that the manner in which the Beaufort West ward boundaries had been delimited contradicts the objects of schedule 1(b) (c) of the Municipal Structures Act (1998). There is clear evidence that the size of the wards and the vast geographical distances has not only compromised public participation in these communities, it has also led to unnecessary fragmentation.

On the payment of the Out of Pocket Expenses for ward committees, participants differed sharply on how this fund should be managed. In this regard, 27% of participants felt that the R500,00 paid as a stipend was not enough considering the long distances that ward committee members have to travel to attend meetings, while 18% was concerned about the late payment of the stipend. Interesting, though, was the view expressed by 9% of the participants that the stipend should not be paid at all. Through the analysis of the secondary data for the study, it was found that the National Framework: *Guidelines for provinces and municipalities in the implementation of the ward funding model* (2009)

provides criteria for determining and calculating the Out of Pocket expenses for ward committee members. The framework proposes that the payment of the Out of Pocket expenses should be linked to the following functionality indicators: number of ward committee meetings held and the percentage attendance by members, number of community meetings organized by ward committee and percentage attendance of ward community; submission and tabling of ward committee reports and plans to the council; number of door-to-door campaigns conducted by ward committee members; number of complaints from the community registered and attended to and distributed publications over a period of time.

The above functionality indicators constitute the elements of an effective and functional ward committee. As such, the framework proposes an amount of R1000.00 as a baseline. In this regard, it implores municipalities to allocate budget for public participation including support for ward committees from the following sources:

- Their own revenue sources such as service charges, rates etc,
- A portion of their allocation of the Equitable Share; and
- The Municipal Systems Improvement Grant

In this case, the Beaufort West Municipality does not pay the Out of Pocket expenses from its own revenue sources, instead it uses the Division of Revenue Act (DORA) support grant for ward committee that it receives from the national Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) to pay the Out of Pocket expenses to ward committee members.

5.2.4 Training and capacity building for ward committees

The study revealed that 68% of the participants attended and participated in the various training and capacity building initiatives arranged by the municipality. However, there were concerns around issues of transport to the venues of training hence some of the ward committee members could not attend. In this regard section 6 of the *Guidelines for the establishment and operations of ward committees* (2005) makes the following provisions in terms of capacity building and training for ward committees:

- Ward committees should, with the assistance of the municipality, prepare an annual capacity building and training needs assessment for members of the committee;

- An annual capacity building and training programme should be developed for each member of the ward committee;
- An annual budget, taking into account any funds budgeted by the municipality, for the capacity building and training programme should be prepared according to the needs assessment;
- The following requirements may be included in the training and capacity building, i.e. generic training needs (leadership, interpersonal skills, monitoring and prioritization of needs), training needs on municipal processes (good governance, payment of services, council committees), and specialised training needs (report writing and minute taking, project management and policy development, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation).

In the context of this study, it was revealed that the training and capacity building workshops that the participants attended were predominantly on municipal processes and not much on generic training needs and specialised capacity building initiatives.

5.2.5 Repurposing ward committees for party political interests

The research findings reveal the uncomfortable reality of the capture of public participation (more especially ward committees) by political elites who are hellbent on repurposing these structures to advance their party-political interests. As stated in chapter four, 95% of the participants identified party political squabbles as the most serious challenge facing ward-based democracy in Beaufort West Municipality. Undue political interference in committees was attributed partly to the flawed and compromised ward committee establishment processes where the nomination processes to serve on ward committees are manipulated to produce a particular outcome in the interest of local party elites. The overwhelming view of the participants was that the election of ward committees was reduced into a rubber stamp affair already decided on by certain political elites and factions within the municipality. The finding is also consistent with the observation that Williams (2005a,2005b, 2005c; 2007,2009) made that “in post-apartheid South Africa, it is frequently the ‘voice’ of the elite that dominate the public participation exercises vis-à-vis development planning”. This created a situation where ward committees would end up consisting of family members and people whose agenda is to transform these structures into a platform to advance partisan interest of certain political factions at the expense of communities. This finding in particular collaborated the observations of many scholars (Piper and Deacon, 2008; Kabane, 2012; Masuku and Jili, 2019) which stated that ward

committees are partisan structures that serve as extensions of a local party branches which are ultimately used to entrench their hegemony in the community.

The findings also revealed the challenges associated with coalition governments and the extent to which these fragile governance arrangements affect public participation. The negative impact of coalition politics on public participation has been experienced in Beaufort West Municipality on many fronts. For example, the Speaker as the custodian of public participation and ward committees, would appoint his/her staff members as part of the council support. The staff members are also responsible for providing administrative support to ward committees. However, due to the fluid and unstable political landscape, the staff members would be required to leave office as and when their political principal is recalled or when there is change in political leadership of council because they do not form part of the administration. This was found to have been the case in Beaufort West Municipality.

In this context, the findings revealed that the municipality has had two Speakers since 2016. The former Speaker who took over after the 2016 Local Government elections had appointed two officials to assist with ward committee functionality. The two staff members were appointed in the office of the Speaker to assist in enhancing ward committee functionality. In this regard, it was found that while one of the officials was attending a week long NQF level eight accredited Integrated Community Development Programme (ICDP) in 2018, he learnt mid-way through the training course that political changes were taking place in the municipal council and that his boss, the Speaker, was removed. That was the end of his employment with the municipality which implied that the Department of Local Government, which usually arrange ward committee training for public participation officials, had to prioritize the training of the new officials that would have been appointed by the new Speaker.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings revealed the need to review and reconfigure the legislative and policy framework governing public participation and ward committees. The following are the proposed recommendations which, if approved by the administrative and political leadership of the municipality together with the necessary resources, would contribute to the resuscitation of participatory governance in the municipality thus strengthening the interface between the municipality and communities.

5.3.1 ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATIONS OF WARD COMMITTEES

5.3.1.1 Establishment and election of ward committees

Considering that the establishment of ward committees is not compulsory, it is recommended that specific reference is made in the legislation, specifically section 72 of the Municipal Structures Act, stating that a metro or local council must establish a ward committee for each ward in the municipality. Furthermore, Section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act enjoins municipal councils to establish procedures or guidelines regulating the election of ward committees. This provision empowers councils to adopt policies and guidelines outlining the election criteria and eligibility of community members to be elected onto ward committees. This is where the blurring of lines becomes evident and the political-administrative dichotomy more pronounced. The Speaker, as the custodian of ward committees and ward councillors, as chairpersons of ward committees, have always been actively involved in the election of ward committees leading to allegations of undue political interference in the establishment of these invited spaces of public engagement.

To ensure fairness and credibility of the ward committee election process, it is recommended that specific reference is inserted to ward committees in terms of section 73 (3) (a) indicating that a metro or local council must ensure that an independent body like the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), working in collaboration with the municipal administration, shall facilitate and coordinate the process of ward committee establishment, including conducting and overseeing the election of ward committees.

3.3.1.2 Composition of ward committees

According to section 73 (2) (a) of the Municipal Structures Act, ward committees are made up of the ward councillor, who is the chairperson of ward committees, and a maximum of 10 other members. Considering the geographical size of the wards in Beaufort West Municipality and the way the wards have been delimited, it is recommended that specific amendments are made to section 73 (2) (b) of the Municipal Structures Act to increase the composition of ward committees from the maximum of ten to fifteen people. Put differently, instead of prescribing that “A ward committee must consist of no more than ten other persons”, i.e. section 73 (2) (b) of the Municipal Structures Act should read: “A ward committee must consist of no less than fifteen other persons”. The material conditions in Beaufort West Municipality where lack of resources, transport costs to meetings and vast

geographical size of municipal wards, especially in the case of the former District Management Areas (DMAs) remain a major impediment to ward committee functionality.

5.3.1.3 Sector Representation

Section 73 (3) (a) (i) enjoins municipalities to “establish rules regulating the procedure to elect ward committee members, taking into account for women to be equitably represented in a ward committee” and also ensure that “diversity of interests in the ward are represented”, this remains elusive on many fronts. However, this is often not to be the case. It is therefore recommended that this section of the Act be amended to be more specific. As such, specific reference should be made to section 73 (3)(a) (i) of the Municipal Structures Act to specifically provide that the procedure to elect ward committees state that there must be a 50-50 gender balance in ward committees.

Insofar as the diversity of interests in ward committees is concerned, it is recommended that specific regulations are issued prescribing a ‘generational mix’ in the composition of ward committees. In this regard, such regulations should make provision for 50% representation of the youth in ward committees.

5.3.1.4 Term of office

Section 75 of the Municipal Structures Act provides that the term of office for ward committee members is determined by the municipal council. To this end, the Beaufort West council reviewed and adopted its ward committee policy in 2016. The policy prescribes that the term of office for ward committees shall be aligned to the five-year term of council. However, this has created challenges in terms of continuity and institutional knowledge as new ward committees are elected every five years. There are also cases where new ward committee members are co-opted into ward committees midway through the term because of vacancies. It is therefore recommended that specific reference is made to ward committees’ term of office in terms of section 75 of the Municipal Structures Act and indicate that “ward committee shall be in office for a term of no less than 10 years” and this is to ensure continuity and retaining of experience and institutional knowledge.

5.3.2 OPERATIONS AND FUNCTIONALITY OF WARD COMMITTEES

5.3.2.1 Advisory bodies or instruments of legislative convenience

To ensure that ward committees fulfil their legislative mandate of enhancing participatory democracy, it is recommended that a specific reference is made to ward committees in terms of section 55 (b) (n) of the Municipal Systems Act. This section specifically states that that “As head of administration the municipal manager of a municipality is, subject to the policy directions of the municipal council, responsible and accountable for “facilitating participation by the local community in the affairs of the municipality”. It is therefore recommended that the section be reviewed and amended as follows: “That the municipal manager is responsible for facilitating participation by local communities and community organizations in the affairs of local government and ensure that he/she reports to the municipal council on the status of ward committee functionality at least once a quarter”. Although their decisions are not binding, the Municipal Manager must ensure that ward councillors are held accountable to the community and ward committees by holding regular feedback meetings as prescribed in schedule one of the Municipal Systems Act.

5.3.2.2 Ward committee representation in council

To ensure that ward committees can influence municipal decisions, it is recommended that ward committees are included as a standing item on the agenda of the municipal council. Although council meetings are open to the public, it is recommended that a council resolution is taken to institutionalize ward committees in the affairs of council and that the Municipal Manager reports on their activities and challenges. This would imply that ward committees should be invited to send at least two representatives (which could be rotated on a quarterly basis) to attend council meetings and provide feedback to their respective ward committees at their next meetings.

5.3.2.3 Review regulations governing delimitation of wards

It is recommended that in order to increase community participation in the affairs of the municipality, the processes and procedures for the delimitation of ward boundaries are reviewed. The size of municipal wards and the vast geographical distance have been found to be one of the major challenges facing public participation in Beaufort West Municipality. As this was not the scope of the study, the researcher did not investigate whether communities were afforded an opportunity to

participate and influence decisions around the delimitation of their wards. It is therefore recommended that the municipality consults with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the Demarcation Board to review the ward boundaries to ensure that participatory democracy is promoted taking the account the need to guard against fragmenting the communities.

5.3.3. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

5.3.3.1 Budgeting for public participation and appointment of dedicated capacity

The study found that the municipality does not budget for public participation from its own revenue, it relies on the national grant which is meant primarily to pay the Out of Pocket Expenses for ward committees. It is therefore recommended that the municipality allocates budget from its own revenue sources to fund the public participation activities. It is also proposed that the municipality mobilize funds for the appointment of dedicated human resources capacity to be located in the office of Municipal Manager.

5.3.3.2. Review the criteria for the payment of the Out of Pocket Expenses

The guidelines on the payment of the payment of the Out of Pocket Expenses (2009) prescribe that a minimum amount of R1000.00 should be paid to ward committee members. While the municipality pays each ward committee member R500.00 a month to cover travelling costs and airtime, it is recommended that the amount be increased to R600.00 a month. This is informed by the high transport cost and the amount of work that ward committee have to do often under difficult circumstances. The issue of transport cost is not only affecting ward committee members. For example, the municipality would normally pay a return taxi fare of around R700.00 and R800.00 to transport one ward member from Merweville to Beaufort West, while it would cost the municipality up to R300.00 per ward committee members from Nelspoort to Beaufort West. It is therefore recommended that the equitable share allocation for ward committees (from which the Out of Pocket Expenses is paid) is made conditional to avoid situations where the funding is used for purposes other than those for which it was intended.

5.3.3.3 Review and increase community participation in the delimitation of ward boundaries

To enhance public participation in Beaufort West, it is recommended that the municipality deals with the issue of ward boundaries most of which have led to the fragmentation of communities especially in the case of Mweweveville, Nelspoort and Hillside. In this regard, it is recommended that the municipality should consult with the Demarcation Board and advocate for the review of ward boundaries. It is therefore recommended that the review process, if it is adopted by the municipal council, should be conducted in such a manner that it promotes and strengthens participatory governance within the municipality taking into account the size of the wards and the geographical distances between them.

5.3.4 CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING INITIATIVES

Building and strengthening the capacity of ward committees to deliver on their legislative mandate should be one of the top priorities of the municipality over the next financial year (2020/2021). Noting that most ward committee members do not understand their roles and responsibilities, it is recommended that a dedicated budget is set aside for the rollout of workshops and training initiatives that will empower ward committees with knowledge and skills to perform their duties efficiently. To this end, it is proposed that the municipality facilitates regular in-house capacity building programmes with the view to increase ward committee awareness and understanding of municipal functions, systems and procedures.

5.3.5 ENHANCING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY BEYOND WARD COMMITTEES

Instead of treating ward committees as the “panacea” that can singlehandedly enhance participatory democracy, it is recommended that the municipality explores and embraces other platforms and methods of public participation - not as a stand-alone mechanism - but to complement the work of ward committees. Several mechanisms, processes and procedures can be explored, and these include social media (Facebook and Twitter) to target specifically the youth as well as the strategic and optimal use of *radio Gamka and Die Courier*. It is further recommended that the municipality should start using the traditional methods of community mobilization using loudhailers to inform communities about the meetings, especially the mandatory ward councillor community report back meetings.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Participatory democracy seems to have hit the cul-de-sac and unless something dramatic is done, the marginalised and vulnerable communities will continue to disengage from government program and start questioning the legitimacy of the state. The study has found that using the ward committee system as a primary mechanism to enhance public participation in governance is not just working. Chapter one of this study sought to provide an outline of the objectives of the study, the research problem as well as key questions to be asked in order to respond to the research problem. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive analysis of the literature on public participation, examining the various scholarly perspectives on public participation that have been advanced over the years as well as the legislative framework governing public participation. In chapter 3, the researcher outlined the research instruments and techniques that were used to collect data to answer the research question. In this regard, a qualitative data collective method was used through structured interviewees and questionnaires. Chapter 4 was concerned with providing an in-depth analysis of the data that was collected during field work including the secondary data in the form of municipal policies and guidelines. The last chapter of the study highlighted a number of findings and further proposed recommendations. While every effort was made to adequately respond to the research question, what is clearer from the findings is that there is a need for further research on the role of the Demarcation Board especially with regards to the regulations governing delimitation of wards. The key question, as proven in the case of Beaufort West Municipality, is whether communities are sufficiently afforded an opportunity to participate meaningfully and influence because it tends to have far reaching consequences insofar as public participation is concerned.

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