GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION IN POLICY PROCESSES AND SERVICE DELIVERY: A CASE STUDY OF THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

BY

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WESTERN CAPE

A mini-Dissertation submitted to the School of Government, University of the Western Cape, in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Public Administration

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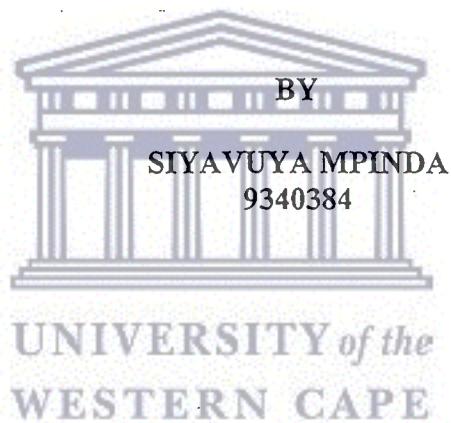
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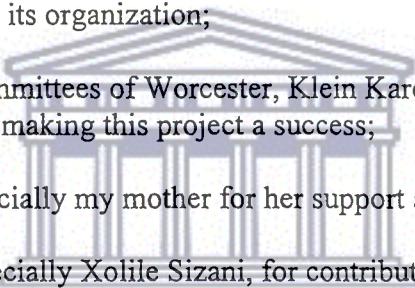
DECLARATION

I declare that this mini-dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Public Administration at the University of the Western Cape.

I declare that it has not been submitted for any other degree or at any other University, or institution of Higher Learning.

Siyavuya Mpinda
May 2000

Signed:

ABSTRACT

Grassroots participation in the domain of public policy is assuming global significance particularly in the fields of welfare and development. Revived by the United Nations' resolution in the 1970s, many governments both in developed and underdeveloped countries have endorsed the grassroots participation ideals as contained in the United Nations' policy statements and resolutions. Accordingly, many governments have declared their support for grassroots participation and in number of cases, grassroots participation has featured conspicuously in their national development plans.

A late arrival on the grassroots participation discourse, grassroots participation and civil society's involvement have also featured predominantly in the national development plans of the new South African government. The new democratically elected government pronounced in various policy documents and on public platforms, a commitment towards grassroots participation. Although many governments have employed the rhetoric of grassroots participation in their national development plans, there is however an accumulative literature which points to the fact that grassroots participation endeavors have often been undertaken in a top-down fashion, with marginalized groups of communities often excluded.

The central objective of this study has therefore been a critical evaluation of the manner in which the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services has implemented its grassroots approach in the context of policy formulation and implementation and service delivery. An evaluation of the Department's grassroots approach has been attempted by assessing the grassroots structures, which the Department has established as vehicles for grassroots participation in its policy processes and service delivery. To this end, of Fourteen District Committees established by the Department throughout the Western Cape province, four have been evaluated.

Through reviewing literature on grassroots participation, the project's findings highlighted a discrepancy between the Department's prevailing rhetoric of grassroots participation and the reality of the grassroots participation as operationalized through these committees. The findings indicated that the grassroots participation through these committees is far from the ideal of authentic grassroots participation as discussed in Chapter Two, as it is replete with elements of unrepresentativeness of the marginalized groups, co-option, political manipulation, centralized and top-down decision-making styles. The study also attempted to provide recommendations tailored to bring the Department's grassroots participatory process closer to the ideals of authentic grassroots participation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As South Africa's new democracy is steadily maturing and government and organizations of civil society attempt to keep pace with the challenges of democracy, questions are being asked about the nature and level of grassroots participation in designing public policies and their involvement in service delivery. Given the history of sustained high levels of popular participation in mass democratic struggles, in the post apartheid South Africa it is worth researching about whether the new South Africa's vision of transparent participatory democracy has any meaning especially for the grassroots people.

In this mini-dissertation authentic grassroots participation has been conceptualized in terms of the majority of the poor and disadvantaged groups of the community voluntarily involved in decision making processes of a given participatory program. Following from this, the key argument of this mini-dissertation is that grassroots participation is often abused and implemented by governments in general in a manner which does not conform to the ideals of genuine grassroots participation which the researcher has discussed in Chapter Two. Against this background, this mini-dissertation set out to analyze the issue of grassroots participation in the policy domain and service delivery within the context of welfare and social development. This it does by evaluating the manner in which the post apartheid South African state, in the form of the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services, has sought to operationalize the concept of grassroots participatory democracy in its welfare policies and service delivery.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Grassroots participation is assuming global significance in development studies and particularly in the field of welfare and social development. Popularized by the United Nations, many governments both in developed and underdeveloped countries have endorsed the grassroots participation ideals contained in the resolutions and policy statements of the United Nations. To this end, many governments have declared their support for grassroots participation and in number of cases, governments have provided finance, staff and technical support to the participatory initiatives (United Nations : 1975a). Although, many governments have employed the rhetoric of grassroots participation in their national development plans and other official documents, there is an accumulative literature dealt with in Chapter Two, which points to the fact that grassroots participation endeavors have often been undertaken in a top-down fashion. In spite of the rhetoric of most state supported programs, marginalized groups of the community have not been fully involved in decision-making and they did not have a final say over matters that affected their welfare.

A late arrival on the grassroots participation scene, the apartheid government of South Africa also made an official study of grassroots participation in community development as it was perceived and implemented internationally (De Beer & Swanepoel, 1998). The concept of grassroots participation in apartheid South Africa has also been implemented in a socio-political context characterized by highly centralized and bureaucratically administered participation. The participatory process under the Apartheid State has rightly been construed in the development and welfare circles as an empowerment to disempower, for it stifled grassroots initiative and self-reliance. While on the one hand, community participatory programs of the Apartheid government fell short of the ideals of authentic grassroots participation as advocated by the United Nations, on the other, they were manipulated to achieve ideological ends of apartheid.

With the ushering in of a new dispensation in 1994, a new philosophy of grassroots participation grounded on United Nations resolutions emerged. The new democratically elected government pronounced in various policy documents and on public platforms, a commitment towards grassroots participation in the macro and micro processes of governance. Baseline policy document such as the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) articulated clearly the role of civil society within the context of democratic and co-operative governance.

Nationally, many other follow up policy statements and documents subsequently confirmed the role of grassroots participatory governance. Against the background of the descriptive framework of the social welfare context as inherited from the past order, the White Paper on Social Welfare recognizes and acknowledges the role of civil society, both in its broader, as well as within its organizational, infrustructural, and resource base context (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997: 12). In its preamble (1997: 7) it confirms the active role of grassroots in development context and the challenges posed to the welfare system in devising appropriate and integrated strategies to address the alienation and economic and social marginalization of vast sectors of the population.

Reacting proactively to its legislative mandate, the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services, released a document in 1997, called the Framework for the Consultative Process to Ensure the Engagement of Civil Society. In its preamble the document highlighted its purpose to be the involvement of grassroots in the activities of the Department. Both at national and provincial levels, the legislative and policy framework promoting grassroots participation, all indicate some form of responsibility given to, or taken by communities for their own development, all aim at describing or defining people's participation in development. In practical terms however, there is rich evidence which attests to the fact that government's rhetoric of grassroots participation is far from the ideals of genuine grassroots

participation. If we trace the practices of grassroots participation, it becomes clear that, quite often, grassroots participation is operationalized in different forms by government, sometimes so broadly that its meaning becomes confused and contaminated.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The central objective of this study is a critical evaluation of the manner in which the Western Cape Provincial Social Services Department has implemented its grassroots method in the context of policy formulation and implementation and service delivery, namely through a District Model mechanism which it promotes at grassroots level. This model is in line with the RDP program because it promotes the concept of empowerment, which gives grassroots people control over their lives and increases their ability to mobilize sufficient development resources. This model therefore promotes grassroots, bottom-up policy formulation that is owned and driven by communities and their representative organizations.

An evaluation of the Department's grassroots approach will be attempted by surveying the grassroots structures which the Department has established as vehicles for grassroots participation in its policy processes and service delivery. Following its District Model, the Department has established 14 District Transformation Committees throughout the Western Cape Region. Five focal questions guided the researcher's evaluation of these committees:

1) How does the Department conceptualize grassroots participation in as far as these committees are concerned?

2) To what extent do these committees reflective of grassroots participation?

3) To what extent are these committees involved in policy processes and service delivery of the department?

4) To what extent do these committees develop their own plans of action or local programs?

5) Whose end is it that the grassroots participatory process serves?

It is the researcher's intention in this mini-dissertation to undertake the relevant review of international and national literature to delineate the various denotations of the concept of grassroots participation in welfare and development circles, so as to document its ideals which shall serve as a yardstick against which the operationalization of grassroots participation by the Department shall be measured.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

One way of evaluating the post apartheid South African state's commitment to grassroots participation as spelt out in the RDP and in its official documents, is to assess its implementation effort i.e. to evaluate the mechanisms it has established for grassroots participation. In Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services these structures have been called Local Transformation Committees (LTCs), District Transformation Committees (DTCs) and Ministerial Advisory Council (MAC). An evaluation of these structures is essential so as to ascertain as to whether the new government's commitment to grassroots participation is merely a rhetoric, as has been the case with other government's elsewhere as reported by the United Nations (1975a), or whether such commitment is indeed an earnest endeavor to realize the ideals of grassroots participation. On the other hand, such investigation would therefore give an indication of whether the fiercely fought democracy does have any meaning for the grassroots.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In assessing grassroots participation in the post-apartheid South Africa, the study makes a case study of the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services. In achieving this, the study undertakes an organizational analysis of the Department in which the transformation process undertook by the Department is journeyed. Having done so, this dissertation makes a critical

evaluation of the structures that the Department has put in place for grassroots participation in its policies and social programs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As the literature on grassroots participation suggests, even in the most democratic governments, there is little evidence to show that the state's grassroots initiatives have been effectively implemented to promote authentic grassroots participation. Admittedly, there are quite a number of government-sponsored participatory programs that have been implemented effectively with a high degree of grassroots participation. But, as the literature on the subject matter points out, a high degree of grassroots involvement in development programs does not necessarily mean that they have control and ownership over those programs. It is the effective devolution of power to local people that is at the heart of grassroots participation paradigm. And, it is this element that has been conspicuously absent from even the most carefully planned grassroots programs. In view of this, the new government's grassroots participatory programs should also be subjected to a thorough investigation with a view to unraveling the possible limitations in its operationalization of the concept and consequently to inform the necessary reorientation and realignment of its grassroots policies towards the ideals of authentic grassroots participation.

Equally, while grassroots participation seems to dominate the development plans of the new South African government, it will be naïve to assume that the relationship between the state and local-grassroots people will smoothly emerge and that political elites and bureaucrats will readily agree to the devolution of their authority to ordinary people. This is particularly because South Africa's new government is still working to a large extent with the same politicians and staff employed by the apartheid welfare sector authorities to whom the concept of grassroots participation is alien. It is the researcher's view that this study might one way or another help in exposing the obstacles

impeding the realization of the ideals of authentic grassroots participation under the current dispensation in South Africa. As Marion Kemp noted "we also need to determine whether communities are seen as recipients of social services or transformers of their situation" (1995: 14). The former approach militates, as Wisner (1998) notes, against group formations and self-organization processes which are sometimes the only means by which people, especially the poor can mobilize around their demands for equitable and appropriate social service delivery. As far as South Africa in general, and the Western Cape province, in particular, are concerned, little research has been carried out on the grassroots participatory processes which feature prominently in the government's development plans.

METHODOLOGY

As noted earlier, the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services has instituted 14 District Committees across the Western Cape province, to serve as a mechanism for grassroots participation in its dealings. Owing to budgetary constraints it proved impossible for the researcher to include all District Committees in the study. Hence, the researcher surveyed four District Transformation Committees, which the researcher selected to provide a representative sample of district committees throughout the geographical boundary of the Western Cape province. In order to transcend the urban bias, both rural and urban-based committees were equally represented.

The evaluation of these committees as mechanisms for grassroots participation in the policy processes and service delivery of the Department was conducted through a qualitative research method. To this end, the researcher administered a questionnaire and conducted informal interviews. The qualitative questionnaire contained open-ended questions, which were carefully designed to solicit information on the following themes:

1) Inclusivity and representativity of the grassroots people in the committees

2) Control and Ownership of the participatory process by grassroots people

3) Authentic participation of committees in the policy domain and service delivery

4) Resourcefulness of the committees

5) Obstacles impeding mutual partnership between the Department and committees

It has been a researcher's view that this methodology would yield rich descriptive information about the nature of the participatory process of those committees. By such method, potential biases in the form of subjective interpretation by the researcher are eliminated because people's own written words are left to speak for themselves. The use of qualitative questionnaire has therefore been very important for this study, for it allows minimal interpretation and conceptualization, thus readers are able to draw their own conclusions without relying on the interpretation of the researcher, which often, may be subjective. Nevertheless, qualitative questionnaire is not immune to weaknesses. Quite often, qualitative questionnaire is limiting in the sense that respondent's response is limited within a scope of a question posed. In this way, more valuable data may be lost.

To complement the weaknesses of qualitative questionnaire, the researcher has also embarked on unstructured informal interviews. As a qualitative method for gathering data, informal interviews are prized for soliciting honest responses from the respondents. The informal environment posed by such a method yields to respondents forgetting that they are being used as research instruments by the researcher. In other qualitative methods of data collection respondents simply give answers for which they know the researcher is searching. Additionally, the strength of this method lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to understand the process by which respondents arrive at their particular opinions and, should any answers be unclear, the researcher is able to probe further by asking respondents to explain what they mean (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). According to Chaducich (1984) these

interviews employ a set of themes and topics in order to form questions in the course of conversation. Chaducich (1984) maintains that such methods give informants an opportunity to develop their answers outside a structural format. The emphasis is on the conversation, which is a means of establishing rapport and trust between researcher and participants.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, one of the fundamental limitations of this study is that policy-relevant research is not a neutral terrain of investigation. Furthermore, despite one's effort to remain objective one's selection and presentation of particular evidence might be perceived to be subjective. In spite of the minimal interpretation of findings, which the qualitative methodology requires, it would be misleading to suggest that such method lead to a situation where the research results write themselves. Quite often, researchers present and order the data according to what they think is important. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the use of a qualitative methodology, which allows for minimal interpretation of findings by the researcher, might have helped in minimizing such potential biases.

Additionally, given the magnitude of the Western Cape population and also the substantial number of the District Committees in the region it is acknowledged that the sample used could have been unrepresentative and this cautions the researcher to refrain from claiming generalizabilty of the findings. Given the diversity of the committees, and the large population, which they service, a need for a larger sample was indeed essential. As O'Sullivan and Russel demand, "the greater the accuracy desired, the larger the sample needs to be. The more confidence desired, the larger the sample needs to be. The more diversity among the members of the population, the larger the sample size needed. The larger the population, the larger the sample size" (1989 :124). In spite of these weaknesses, the findings of this research could not be dismissed entirely as they remain to a certain extent indicative of the state of play.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One opens with a contextualization of the study. It introduces the underlining problem, which gave impetus to the study. Having done so, Chapter One spells out its objectives and rational, its focus and the methodology the researcher has employed and lastly, its limitations.

Chapter Two, firstly, traces the historical evolution of the concept of grassroots participation. Secondly, it investigates the notion of grassroots participation by exploring the various strands in the debate about what constitutes grassroots participation in the arena of welfare and development. By so doing, the chapter set out to unravel the ideals of authentic grassroots participation that are later used as a benchmark against which the concept of grassroots participation as operationalized by the Provincial Department of the Western Cape is measured.

As the concept of grassroots participation has been remote in the public organizations under the apartheid reign, Chapter Three attempts to makes an organizational analysis of the Western Cape Department of Social Services with a view to finding out whether there Department has undergone an institutional change which is suited to the new philosophy of grassroots participation.

Chapter Four outlines the transformation initiatives that the Department has embarked upon in terms of implementing its grassroots participatory approach. Central in this chapter is the introduction of the structures that the Department has initiated as mechanisms for grassroots participation in its policy activities and service delivery.

Chapter Five sets out specifically to investigate the notion of grassroots participation as implemented by the Department. For this purpose, of fourteen District Committees that the Department has established in the Western Cape

region, four are surveyed. The findings and discussions are presented thereafter.

Chapter Six concludes the study by summarizing significant findings and presenting recommendations for the enhancement of grassroots participation in policy issues and service delivery in the context of welfare and development.

CHAPTER TWO

AN EXPLORATION OF THE NOTION OF GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In order to explore the concept of public participation in the social development and welfare sector it is necessary to examine the historical evolution of the concept. Nevertheless there is no clear-cut consensus as to the origins of the concept, a situation leading Sanders and Carve (1985); Navarro, (1986) and Morgan, (1993) to conclude that the origin of the concept is itself an area of research, which is still relatively neglected by the proponents of the concept. According to Morgan (1993) there is however a general agreement amongst scholars that both the theory and practice of public participation in development assumed fresh development after World War II, with the political emancipation of former European colonies and the birth of what was to be known as the Third World. Dubhashi (1987:21) suggests that the newly freed countries dedicated themselves to people-driven development, because they believed that political freedom would act as a basis for economic freedom. As Toye (1989:11) notes, the original theory of people-centered development that accompanied de-colonization rested on the idea that for Third World countries, development simply meant that they should acquire the characteristics of Western societies. As a result, development came to be equated with the growth of the economy. It was generally assumed that the benefit of economic growth would trickle down to the poor. With the passage of time, however, it was learnt that unqualified reliance on the market forces to allow the benefits of economic growth to trickle down to the poor was not effective where the underlying institutional context remained the same.

In mapping out the historical antecedents of public participation, Midgely (1986) gives credence to western ideologies and political theories, the Third World community development movement of the 1950s and 1960s and western social work and community radicalism. Each requires a brief discussion.

First in our discussion are the western ideologies and political theories. Of the various historical influences on the development of current grassroots participation principles, the debt to the legacy of western ideology would seem to be the most obvious. Inherent in this doctrine are three underlining tenets, which are: democracy, populism and anarchism, To this end, Midgely (1986:15) asserts that by arguing that ordinary citizens have a right to share in decision making, proponents of popular participation reveal the inspirations of democratic ideals. However as Schumpeter,(1942); Dahl, (1956); Lucas, (1976); and Pennock, (1979) point out, this inspiration is not based on classical notions of representative democracy but rather on a modern variation of liberal democratic theory known as grassroots participatory democracy. Indeed, many proponents of popular participation are sceptical of representative democracy, charging it as being vulnerable to minority control. They argue for developmental change in the way that policy is made and programmes are implemented and advocate the creation of small scale institutions for the realization of political aspirations in the village and urban life of the Third World.

Populism. The views of the proponents of popular participation are also infused with populist notions. There are many definitions of populism, but as Midgely (1986) observed, common to all of them is the championing of the causes of the masses and the rallying of their support. Populism has indeed been very instrumental in development studies also in the developing countries where political leaders, intellectuals and technocrats have embraced it. Midgely (1986) points out that the development plans of many Third World communities are strongly populist in character, placing emphasis on co-operative and communitarian forms of social and economic organization, stressing the values of self-help and self-sufficiency. The strong influence of

populism in development has taken prevalence in the socialist countries notable China, Cuba, and in such countries as Sri-Lanka and Tanzania. Inspired by populist persuasion, after the revolution of 1949, China for example, liquidated rich landowners and their land was redistributed to peasant cultivators with small holdings and to the landless, hence the people's commune came into being in 1958 as a measure to redress the stark inequalities perpetuated by the traditional feudal system. Central to the commune system was the provision of social services tailored to improve the lives of the landless masses. In the words of Hartimann and Midgely (1986: 39)

> the bare foot doctor who serves the basic health needs of the community, the school teacher who is maintained out of the commune's own resources, have helped to raise the standard of health and education to a level unknown to most developing countries. The way in which these services were provided was part of an emphasis on the decentralized planning involving maximum participation of all the people.

Anarchism has had an influence on community participation but Midgely (1986) observed that this influence has been more subtle than that of populism. Anarchism, is according to Midgely, noticeable in the work of those writers who have taken an anti-statist attitude arguing that the formal institutions of the modern state are inimical to the emergence of spontaneous forms of social and political organizations. Central to their work is the belief that authority in the organs of state is the primary source of oppression. To realize both freedom and welfare the state must be destroyed. Fundamental to anarchism are the principles of communalism, co-operation and mutualism. To this end many contemporary advocates of popular participation share the ideology of anarchism, that instinctive human capacity for communalism and participation will re-emerge when the corrupt influences of the state are removed (Midgely 1986). Put differently, proponents of anarchism argue for the re-organization of society into a voluntary federation of communes which is founded on egalitarian principles.

Second, in our discussion of the historical antecedents of public participation is the community development movement of the 1950's and 1960's. Like community participation, community development focussed on small communities seeking to establish democratic decision-making institutions at the local level. It attempted also to mobilize people to improve their social and economic circumstances through undertaking a variety of development projects. But as Midgely (1986) observes, there are striking differences between community development and community participation. According to Midgely (1986:17) community participation evolved partly in response to the criticism, which has been made of the community development movement. By reacting to its inadequacies, community participation has sought to formulate a more politicized and people-centered approach, which conceives of participation in a more dynamic way. Amongst the first proponents of community development were missionaries and colonial officials, indeed as Midgely (1986) pointed out, colonialism itself created the climate in which community development was to take shape. Echoing Midgely's notion Mayo goes on to say, "the dual mandate to civilize while exploiting, the use of forced labor under the pretext that it was an indigenous institution and the need to establish durable and responsible political structures, all facilitated the evolution of early forms of community development." (1975:17).

In spite of its detrimental effects on the socio-political and economic landscape of the colonized countries, colonization created conditions upon which community development thrived. In the 1940s Britain, for example, embarked on an aggressive campaign to make its protectorates and colonies self-sustainable. This saw a publication in 1944 by Britain of what came to be known as a Report on Mass Education in the colonies which was particularly important in terms of community development, for it placed emphasis on literacy training and advocated the promotion of agriculture, health and other social services through local self-help. The British government implemented many of the recommendations of the report and established community development programmes in many African countries. It also supported training and research in the field. Drawing extensively on the British literature and the

African experience, the United Nations and the American government contributed further to the refinement of community development ideas. Community development featured extensively on the UN documents, which were published in the 1950s and 1960s, and the organization actively encouraged the promotion of these activities. In spite of the rapid expansion of community development, disillusionment with its achievements was wide spread. This led Midgely to conclude that:

> Although community development may be regarded as an immediate precursor to the community participation movement, contemporary community participation advocates have been vociferous critics of community development, claiming that it failed because of its bureaucratic administration and super imposed direction. This not only stifled the inmate capacity of ordinary people to determine their own destiny but also perpetuated the structures of inequality and oppression both at the national and local levels. They argue that an alternative grassroots approach, which liberates the powerless and ensures their involvement in community life, is needed to promote genuine participatory process (Midgely 1986:19).

Lastly, in our discussion is the contribution of western social work and community radicalism. In its traditional sense social work is viewed as being concerned with the problems of the needy communities and their families (Midgely, 1986). However in the late nineteenth century, social work discipline broadened its area of focus and started to organize and mobilize people to involve them in social services delivery. This paradigm shift marked the beginning of community work, which was later to be accepted as a theoretical base of social wok. In the 1960s, community work ideas were further developed by writers such as Morris (1964), Ecklein and Lauffer (1972) and Pertman and Gurin (1972) to incorporate notions of community participation in social planning and community organization procedures.

The development of western community work as one of the methods of social work was according to Midgely (1986) never fully adopted and instead a more

radical style of community work took root. This approach transformed conventional methods of community work. Instead of seeking to help deprived communities to improve their social and environmental circumstances, the new community work activists urged people to take a direct political action to demand changes and improvements. One notable architecture of community work radicalism was Alansky who in the 1930s and 1940s mobilized the local people in Chicago to use a variety of confrontational tactics when dealing with government organization (Midgely,1986). The British and United States governments also institutionalized Alansky's community action campaigns. To this end Loney (1983) observed that the war on poverty in the United States facilitated the institutionalization of radicalism in community work practice. Also there were similar developments in Britain in the late 1960s, when the Wilson government announced that it would establish community projects in particular deprived inner city areas as a part of its Urban Program. Although the initiatives were originally based on conventional community organization techniques, they were soon influenced by more radical community action approaches and also by Marxian ideas (Midgely, 1986: 20). Undeniably, at this stage community radicalism took an aggressive and integrated approach in conceptualizing the plight of destitute families and poor communities thereby viewing it as resulting from socio-economic and political conditions. As Loney (1983: 13) observed, this reflected the influence of an increasingly popular structural approach in community work which focussed on economic, social and political factors in seeking to account for deprivation rather than on individual, family or cultural factors.

While the three historical antecedents discussed above provided a source of inspiration for current community participation theory, its emergence as a coherent approach to social development is traced from the United Nations (UN) popular participation program. Surveying the influence of the UN in the emergence of popular participation Kemp (1994) observes that the emphasis on popular participation in the UN thinking was formalized with the publication of two major documents on the subject in the 1970s. The first, Popular Participation in Development, which was published in 1971, reviewed the

emergence of the idea with reference to community development in the Third World. The second, Popular Participation in Decision Making for Development which was published in 1975 offered a formal definition of the concept with reference to its implementation. The publication of this document was followed by the creation of a major research program into popular participation by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva.

Recognizing that the notion of popular participation was very broad, the United Nations convened a meeting of experts in 1978 to consider the specific issue of community level participation. (United Nations, 1981). Debate on the subject exploded onto the international health scene in September 1978 when delegations of the 134 governments and representatives from 67 United Nations organizations, specialized agencies and non-government organizations making up the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued the Alma Ata Declaration on primary health Care. This declaration heralded a shift in emphasis from the hospital-centered urban based, curative health service delivery system to a comprehensive, multi sectoral approach to health service delivery through decentralized health centers providing preventative, curative and rehabilitative services which would be accessible and affordable to its users.

Through the influence of the international agencies, the governments of many developing countries have acknowledged the need for greater emphasis on community based development strategies and some took steps to strengthen participatory elements in their social development programs. The most notable are the Philippines, India and Kenya. In the case of the Philippines, after the democratization process of 1985 there was a deliberate attempt to provide significant space and opportunity for civil society to become involved with government in addressing the acute development needs in the country. It was against this backdrop that a number of legislative enactments were promulgated to give practical expression to a constitutional commitment to the

promotion of a government/civil society partnership in pursuit of development. As Antonio (1990) observes, the Philippine government developed interfacing mechanisms that suited their particular needs, e.g. consultative mechanisms, institutionalized basis, in-house liaison offices to specifically liaise with civil society organizations. Likewise, the Indian experience is similar in this regard. Since the early 1980s the role of civil society organizations has always been recognized and encouraged by the Indian government. To this effect, Shah (1976) maintains that the Indian government's development plan subsequently made reference to the role of the voluntary sector and there was clear recognition that it was needed to complement government efforts in service delivery, especially to reach those who would have been otherwise excluded.

Lucas (1976) reports the Kenyan experience as somewhat different. This country enacted a number of laws during the 1980s to govern and regulate the work of civil society organizations, especially non-government organizations. The thrust of the Kenyan government's approach is that of seeking to harness the service delivery role of NGOs in particular, but within a highly circumscribed and over-regulated environment. An illustrative case in point is that observed by Lucas (1976) in which the government initiated legislation which sanctioned the compulsory registration of NGOs with Co-ordinating Board, an institution set up to monitor and control NGO activities. Another is the legislative instrument called the NGO's code of Conduct and also the establishment of a regulatory committee to monitor compliance.

ASPECTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY OF GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION

During its international heydays community participation in the development process in South Africa was not popular because of South Africa's apartheid doctrine. This was mainly because of skepticism and mistrust in government circles about its potential for political change. Community participation as it relates to the development process was very much part of the South African scene since the 1970s. In the South African setting grassroots participation was

popularized by the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). To this end, De Beer and Swanepoel contend that the BCM was perhaps the most important exponent of radical community involvement in development in South Africa. Their actions were very much tied to the struggle against apartheid (1998: 14). Steve Biko one of the leading pioneers of BCM was according to Stubbs (1998) involved in community development projects in King William's Town and also in some parts of the country, mobilizing communities to lobby the then government to adopt a people-centered approach in development. Unfortunately, the success stories of this campaign are not always available in a documented form.

A late arrival on the grassroots participation in development, in 1985 the apartheid South African government made an official study of grassroots participation in community development as it was perceived and implemented internationally. To this end, De Beer and Swanepoel (1998: 11) contend that the then Department of Cooperation and Development was primarily responsible for studying the concept of community development and establishing guidelines for its implementation as government policy. In the mid-1980s the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, the Department of Planning and Provincial Affairs, and the Chief Directorate Population Development gave some attention to it. After the abolition of administration boards in 1987 and transfer of many of their functions to the provinces, the four provinces became involved in the promotion of grassroots participation in development.

Community participation in the welfare and development circles in South was mal-implemented. It is noted that the concept of grassroots participation in South Africa has been operationalized in a socio-political context characterized by highly centralized and bureaucratically administered social development programs. Safe to say, the apartheid government's conception of grassroots participation did not conform to the ideals of authentic grassroots participation. The apartheid government had declared its support for authentic community

participation in its welfare programs, but generally, this support took place in a conceptual world only. In spite of the rhetoric of grassroots participation, poor communities were not fully involved in decision-making and they did not have final say over matters that affected their own welfare. State resource allocation to participatory projects has been inadequate and often the ideals of community participation have been lost in the administrative inefficiencies of the government administration. Bureaucratic indifference, procedural delays and many other administrative problems have effectively blocked the realization of authentic forms of community participation.

While on one hand community participatory programs of the Apartheid State defied the logic of authentic participation, on the other such programs were a well thought out strategy to achieve political ends. In the case of welfare, for example, certain government subsidized community organizations were widely manipulated by the state to inculcate its apartheid ideology. Against this backdrop, there is little evidence to conclude that the Apartheid State's support of community participation in the welfare sector was indeed tailored to effectively promote authentic participation. Suffice to say community participation as implemented by the Nationalists perpetuated a top-down approach, which stifled grassroots initiatives and self-reliance.

With the dawn of a new dispensation in 1994 in South Africa, came a new philosophy of grassroots participation in social development circles. Soon after assuming office, the newly appointed political party, the African National Congress released a draft welfare document, the National Welfare and Development Planning Framework (a precursor of the White Paper on Welfare and Development) which pledged itself to promote community participation in which all people affected by social problems or needs must have access to and be part of decision making structures which attempt to resolve these problems. Through a plethora of policies and legislative framework, the new government enhanced the concept of community participation in welfare and development thus, eradicating a highly centralized and top-down approach to development characterizing its predecessor. In an attempt to decentralize the planning and

implementation of social services, the new government established a Provincial Social Welfare and Development Department in each province. Such departments were constitutionally tasked to work in conjunction with communities in the prioritizing, planning, and implementation of a coordinated development strategy.

Reacting proactively to its constitutional mandate, the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services, released a document in 1997 called the Framework for the Consultative Process to Ensure the Engagement of Civil Society. In its preamble the document highlighted its purpose to be " to provide a general framework and rationale for the establishment of a governance mechanism that will facilitate and enhance partnership building and consultation between the Department and civil society in the development welfare sector, in accordance with White Paper for Social Welfare" (1997:2). This led to the Department establishing Local Transformation Committees (LTCs), District Transformation Committees (DTCs) and Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC). The establishment of these structures by the Western Cape Department of Social Services signaled a paradigm shift from bureaucratic driven process of service delivery towards a people-driven participatory process. However, it remained to be seen as to whether the new philosophy of participatory social development process as sponsored by new government's legislations and policies, was to live true to the ideals of authentic participation.

GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

In the literature about the historical evolution of public participation, authors have shied away from defining the concept public participation, instead they have chosen to use the concept interchangeably with popular, grassroots and community participation. Most often, in the literature on public participation 'public participation', 'popular participation' and 'grassroots participation' have all been taken to mean community participation, often giving an impression that the denotations of the former concepts are embedded in the

meaning of the latter. If this is the case, a key to unlock the meaning of the foregoing concepts therefore rests on the unpacking of the concept of community participation itself, which is also poorly defined in the development milieu to mean an all-inclusive concept. Since the central focus of this mini-thesis is fundamentally about participation of ordinary citizens in policy processes and service delivery of Social Services Department, a sound definition of 'community' as a concept is essential so as to uncover its misconceptions and fallacies.

Community participation is the most commonly used slogan in contemporary debates on the processes of governance. However, some authors have disappointingly attempted to make an artificial distinction between the concepts 'community participation' and that of ' popular participation' in particular. The latter according to Midgely (1986) is concerned with broad issues of social development and the creation of opportunities for the involvement of people in the political, economic and social life of a nation. The former connotes the direct involvement of ordinary people in local affairs.

Although some scholars may distinguish popular participation and community participation, this research paper entertains the two concepts as inter-linked for one obvious reason. The dichotomy drawn by Midgely (1986) assumes that community participation is grassroots participation, which is limited to a small locality. The definition makes no mention of access to political and economic power and therefore reduces any participation at this level as apolitical activity. Quite the contrary, community participation also occurs within the socio-political context and could therefore make a contribution in a broader context of social of social development. Enhancing this view, Heggenhougen (1984) reminds us about the experiences of village health promoters of Chimaltenango development program in which he argues that:

> Evidently, this notion [community participation as a political activity] becomes clear when one considers the price that village health promoters of the Chimaltenango development program in Guatemala

for example, had to pay for their efforts to promote community involvement in self-help activities in the early 1980s. In this particular case, eleven of the forty-nine village health workers in the program as well as a number of their family members were murdered. The reason being not because of their involvement in any revolutionary struggle, but due to the fact that they were beginning to effect real changes to their situations, were becoming more independent and self-reliant, thus seeming to threaten the existing power structure.

This discourse should however, not be construed as an attack on the limitations of community participation to the smallest units of socio-spatial entities but rather as an acknowledgement that community participation is an important aspect of much broader socio-political and economic interventions The equivocation, which often arises when one grapples with the subject of community participation, is further perpetuated by the ambiguity of the concept "community" itself. The concept of community, which is fundamental in deciding who should participate, is poorly defined to connote different things in different contexts. Drawing closely from Midgely's (1986) contribution on the concept, most authorities, government's officials, scholars to mention but a few, do not seek to define the term formally and instead use it loosely to denote a social entity within a confined geographical boundary. However, the United Nations (1975) pointed out that the notion of locality in these descriptions is ambiguous in that, it can refer simultaneously to neighborhoods, villages, districts, towns and cities. It is more useful, the United Nations (1975) suggested, to conceive of community participation as taking place in small communities comprised of individuals at the lowest level of aggregation at which people organize for common effort. The notion of lowest level aggregation central in this definition focuses on the smallest units of socio-spatial organization often evoking the idea of the rural village. Indeed, such definition does not accommodate for urban communities.

Additionally, the definition of community in terms of geographic locality also poses some serious problems. This notion features prominently in Edwards &

Jones literature when they maintain that a community is a grouping of people who reside in a specific locality and who exercise some form of local autonomy in organizing their social life in such a way that they can, from that locality base satisfy the full range of their daily needs (1976:12). Consolidating Edward and Jone's (1976) claim, Zentner conceive of community as a group structure integrated around goals associated with the problems arising out of the collective occupation and utilization of habitational space. The community has certain measures of local autonomy and a degree of local responsibility (1964:420-423). Both definitions, which represent the general trend in defining community, are open to criticism. If geographic locality and a local autonomy are prerequisites of a community then a number of social structures uncritically conceived as communities are disqualified from being communities. One often hears about the concept of " the international community" which is normally used to refer to the coming together of any international states for a common cause, yet they Although there is no clear cut definition of the concept there has also been an attempt to relate the concept of community participation to notions of are not bound by any geographic locality nor posses any local autonomy. deprivation and disadvantage, a situation which compels Midgely (1986:25) to infer that "the proponents of community participation are clearly not concerned with affluent apartment dwellers or wealthy suburbanites with landowners or rich farmers or other rural elites. Once again the perception of community through the lenses of deprivation and marginalization is a distorted perception. Deprivation and marginalization are relative terms, which come in varying degrees. When surveying this notion Midgely (1986:25) asserts that "although many have pointed out that the concept refers to impoverished villages or urban neighborhoods, they fail to recognize that deprived communities are not homogeneous and that inequalities of one kind or another characterize most forms of social organizations. Deprived rural communities and urban squatter settlements comprise the poor, the very poor and not so poor who have different access to resources". In view of Midgely's contentions, it seems only logical that any form of community mobilization should wake up to the fact that marginalized and deprived communities are

also infested with elite groupings who predominate access to resources, power and decision making processes.

Quite often than not, it is this elite group which is at the forefront of community development projects designed to ameliorate the plight of the poorest of the poor. They are the ones who arguable articulate the needs of the community to the outsiders and their views are mistakenly taken to represent the views of the entire community. Ironically, the views of the poorest of the poor are often not heard and members of a powerful elitist group often surpass their participation in community initiatives. Suffice to say the poorest majority of the marginalized communities should be at the center stage in the endeavors tailored to foster community participation in decision-making processes. White (1982) dismissed this view, asserting that community participation does not involve the mobilization of a certain fraction of community members and exclude the other, rather the participation of the organized community at large. Conceptualized in this sense, White's notion of community is obviously flawed, for it conceptualizes community as a homogeneous group founded on harmonious principles, without power differentials and exploitative and conflictual tendencies. One cannot agree with White in this regard, because even a small homogeneous community is prone to individual differences, a recipe which is bound to see it disintegrating into conflict.

In spite of the attempts to operationalize the concept of community, one is left with no option than to conclude that there is no general agreement on the meaning of community. Fundamental to the meaning of the concept, but not in any way central is a geographic locality, local autonomy, shared needs and interests and deprivation and disadvantage. Indeed, a variety of meanings is attached to the concept, a situation which compels De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:19) to conclude that "all words are bound to make falsehoods if we start by insisting without investigation that some particular word has only one sense. We should always have in mind the probability of ambiguity and the flexible nature of our vocabulary which causes it."

In spite of its ambiguities, the researcher's analysis of the concept 'community' is particularly significant for the purpose of this mini-thesis, for it throws some light on the most often puzzling question - to whom does community or grassroots or popular participation refer? As it has been argued above that, if these concepts are used interchangeably as the literature suggests, a clue to the foregoing question therefore lies in the critical analysis of the term 'community'. Nevertheless, in the welfare and development landscape, there has been a tendency to use the term community uncritically to connote a homogeneous group with shared interest. As has been documented above, this assumption has been subject of fierce criticism. This assumption renders invisible the situation of the marginalized group whose distinct interest, perspectives, and position in society is largely ignored or subsumed under community within even the most participatory initiatives. Class, ethnicity, race, religious group, the poor and the rich may also become homogenized within the term community. While acknowledging the heterogeneity of the term 'community' however, in this mini-thesis the concept has been operationalized in terms of deprivation and disadvantage. Therefore when referring to popular participation, the researcher has in mind the majority of the poor with little access to resources and power within a given geographic locality. In its policy documents on grassroots participation, the Department of Social Services is also conceptualizing the notion of grassroots participation through the vista of deprivation and marginalization. The clarification of the concept 'community' in this chapter will therefore help the researcher in evaluating whether grassroots participation in the Western Cape Social Services Department is indeed crafted on the notions of deprivation and disadvantage, a key approach which maximizes the access of the poor to decision-making processes.

AUTHENTIC GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION: WHAT IS IT?

Since it has been already been stated that the focal point of this mini-dissertation is fundamentally about grassroots participation in the arena of welfare policy processes and service delivery. Therefore, it is essential to clarify the operationalization of this concept within the welfare and social

development discourse. This, the researcher is confident, will help to clarify questions, which include:

1) what constitutes authentic grassroots participation in a welfare and development sense?

2) who should be involved when one talks about grassroots participation?

3) why is the participatory process needed?

4) do people involved have control over the end product of their participation and over decision-making processes?

5) whose end is it that the participatory process serves?

A thorough analysis of these questions will therefore constitute an analytical framework within which grassroots participation as promoted by the Western Cape Social Services Department will be assessed.

Like the concept of community, one of the fundamental problems with the concept 'participation' is the absence of clarity and consensus as to what participation in the welfare and development paradigm exactly is and what it is meant to achieve. Wrestling with this concept many writers notably Midgely and Hartimann (1986), quote the 1989 United Nations Economic and Social Council's resolution on the concept. This resolution states that participation requires the voluntary and democratic involvement of people in (a) contributing to the development efforts, (b) sharing equitably in the benefits derived therefrom and (c) decision-making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies and planning, and implementing economic and social development programs. The central concept in this definition is involvement in all three aspects of the definition. In view of this definition, a question then becomes, is participation tantamount to involvement? Without any fear of contradiction these two are not inter-linked. This becomes apparent when one closely scrutinizes the three yardsticks as outlined above, used by UNESC in defining the concept. The first one agitates for people's involvement in contributing to the development effort. Implicit in this statement is that people's role in the development agenda is that of backstage contributors with someone else driving the process. This connotes a co-option of people to support or contribute to an action, which they have not initiated. What this

means therefore in the context of social development is that governments, development planners and aid agencies plan the action and manage development projects. Having done so, communities are mobilized to passively adopt their initiatives. This approach moves away from the benefits of a hand-on philosophy and fails to acknowledge the ability of communities to take control of their own development.

The second aspect of the definition, which conjures images of people's involvement in sharing equitably in the benefits derived from the development process, is rather obscure in meaning. Here too what development and hence the benefits of development means are not spelt out, instead governments and development planners are again given a leeway to attach meaning to this definition. This definition also ignores the existence of power structure within the communities, which in the end contributes to an inequitable sharing of the benefits derived from participatory development process. Additionally, this definition runs a risk of being subjected to different ideological manipulation. People of capitalist persuasion, for example, would argue that the benefits derived from development are best achieved in a free-market economy. Many believe also that market economy and economic growth are a necessary condition for employment creation and poverty reduction. This doctrine deeply entrenched during the decolonization process, wherein the Third World countries particularly in Africa were encouraged to adopt Structural Adjustment Policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in their developmental agenda, has had devastating results for many Third World countries as it was accompanied by rampant inequality and poverty. It now should be widely accepted that people whose lives are affected by the development process should play a key role not only in defining its character, but also in setting it in motion and guiding it.

Today, democracy is hardly ever mentioned without grassroots participation also cropping up. Nevertheless as the debate on popular participation ensues, authors become less inclined to distinguish the different forms of participation.

In an attempt to distinguish the various forms of participation, Midgely (1986) differentiates between authentic participation which concurs with the definition of the United Nations Economic and Social Council as alluded to above, and pseudo-participation which limits community involvement to implementation or ratification of decisions already taken by external bodies. Contributing to a thesis about various forms of participation, Boulle (1992) identifies the following categories:

Manipulation: In this instance participation is usually exercised by nominated bodies with functions and very little or no decision making power. It occurs when public involvement in decision making is rudimentary, qualified and designed by power-holders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants" (1992:16-17).

Consultation: Here participants are provided with a platform on which they are free to make representations and recommendations. However, those to whom they are making the representations and recommendations are under no obligation to ensure that what was recommended is enforced.

Co-optation: Participants are party to the decision-making process, but this very decision making process is constructed in such a way that whatever influence they have is limited and will not prevail if those in whose favor the decision making process has been structured, decide that the proposal will interfere with the status quo.

Participation: This implies equality in the decision making process. The participants are able to negotiate on equal terms and engage in consensual decision making.

Delegation: Here authority is provided to people or organizations to implement programmes or to formulate policy with or without the provision of a framework for operations.

The various forms of participation as distinguished by Boulle (1992) with the exception of partnership come close to Midgely's (1986) notion of pseudo-participation. Of greater significance is that, Midgely's (1986) and Boulle's (1992) contributions on the subject matter give one a conceptual analytical tool

in order for one to be mindful about the abuses and misconception of the concept. A close analysis of the conceptual framework within which they operationalized the concept led the researcher to identify three major themes. These are:

1) participation vs. instrumentalism
2) latent motives within the participatory framework
3) participation and relations of power

These three themes are perceived to be of great significance for the purpose of this mini-dissertation because:

1) they help clarify what constitutes the essence of participation
2) they sensitize one to issues of power dynamics within the community which impact negatively on the grassroots participatory mode.
3) they uncover the manipulative nature of the participatory process
4) they also serve to illuminate the differences amongst concepts that relate to participation, but are distinctly different from participation

Participation vs. Instrumentalism

In this sense, participation presents itself as an instrumental use of people to attain intentionally concealed aim. De Beer and Swanepoel conceive this form of participation as a means to mobilize the cheap labor of the poor. Participants therefore are excluded from decision-making processes. Theirs is to invest their labor in programs, which are externally designed. It is a typical example of a top-down, co-opted involvement of people, which leaves little room for their initiatives and empowerment. Burdge (1988:188) says, for instance, " many forced contributions or the well-known self help labor contributed to a project can hardly be labeled as participation." Effective participation assumes a situation where those involved as participants are afforded equal opportunity to the decision making process and where they have direct control and ownership of the process.

Participation and relations of power

In the context of grassroots participation it is of pivotal significance to address uneven relations of power. Power dynamics must be understood as coming from forces within the community and those external to it. Rocheleau (et al.) crisply summarized this situation accordingly:

> There is no reason to assume that power does not influence even the most carefully designed participatory process. To promote social change through participatory development it is essential to understand better and to address the way that power is distributed and wielded, in local communities, in the internal operations of development agencies, in their relationships with each other, the state and the local community. (1995:20)

Within the context of the community, it is absolutely important for any participatory initiatives to identify the multiple actors both powerful and powerless, in the community with the view to maximizing the access of those who are powerless in any participatory undertaking. Based on their wealth and social status, local authorities, political leaders, business people and the educated are often given more than a lion's share access to local development initiatives, yet these groups may represent a very narrow range of developmental experience. In view of their indigenous experiences and wisdom, it is imperative that the aspirations, desires and needs of the marginalized groups in the community should dominate the developmental scene.

The relationship between outside development agents and the locals is also framed by measures of power. Outside development agents are constituted by governments, NGOs, government officials, international aid agencies to name but a few. Despite all intentions to the contrary, participation efforts by

external agencies are often undertaken in a top-down and centralized fashion. Because of the power that comes from the simple fact of having funds and expert knowledge external agencies can dictate the ends and means of participatory development. Rocheleau (et al.) capture this notion succinctly when they move thus:

"financial assistance made too easily available can crush local initiative and undermine existing initiatives, corrupt accountability, and ruin the viability of local organizations. The main enemy is the supporting institution with its keenness to assist, to provide funds, to solicit needs and convert them into projects. The outside organizations of all stripes need to be sensitive to the power that they wield and carefully apply both their resources and their own priorities (1995:21).

Participation as a means to achieve latent ends

Participants in the participatory process do not often value it for its own sake. It may often be corrupted by people in order for them to attain concealed ends. The ends of participation include those of outside agents (i.e. the state, NGOs, international aid agents) as well as those of the community members participating in the process. In the section dealing with historical aspects of community participation in South Africa, it has been documented for example, how the apartheid government used the participatory approach to achieve its political ends. Likewise, in his analysis of community participation in the education system of Tanzania, Hall (1986) observed how the Tanzanian government promoted the concept of community participation (whose manifest objectives were to develop literacy and numeracy, self-reliance, equality and the skills and values necessary for rural development) to achieve ulterior motives. To this end, Hall (1986) discovered that the school curriculum was suddenly dominated by sloganeering and sycophancy of the ruling elite, the aim being to entrench the power and privilege of the ruling elite.

This phenomenon is not only unique in the outside development agents, quite the contrary, within local communities there may be many distinct objectives for participation, including hopes for self-enrichment. In one specific case in Burkina Faso, Rocheleau et al. (1986 : 54) found that people allowed themselves to be mobilized by a land management project, calculating that it would be a way to get services that they really wanted. It becomes crucial therefore that any evaluative endeavors of a participatory process should strive to make such hidden ends explicit and not be blinded by the assumption that that all parties involved have no agenda or subscribe to a single goal. Also, when they find that participation is used in a manipulative way, the intended participants may withdraw or remain indifferent to the process. Care should therefore be exercised to guard against the elements of pseudo-participation infiltrating the participatory initiatives. Otherwise if left unthwarted such elements may ruin the whole participatory efforts. Nowhere else has this view been so apparent than in the Zambian experience.

In Zambia, Lungu (1987) observed that even decentralized structures, which are geared, to promote community participation can amount to pseudo-participation. In his discussion of the Zambian government's attempt to promote citizen participation in development administration through the creation of multi-purpose development committees, Lungu (1987) found that the poor are generally reluctant to participate in government initiated development committees as they are often implemented in a top-down fashion and do not cater for the needs of the poor. Established by statute, these development committees have direct representation on Ward Councils, the latter being local government bodies. In this way, it is assumed there is direct citizen participation in the local government councils. The problem faced by these development committees concerned poor motivation on the part of the citizenry. This was partly ascribed to their reluctance to participate in government sponsored programmes, as well as the failure of these committees

to reflect the priorities of the communities which were not group but rather individual based priorities such as "building brick houses, improving a family maize field or digging a pit latrine, rather than community projects like new inter-village roads, wells or building schools..." (Lungu: 1987:14).

This inability to reflect the concerns of the ordinary citizens, resulted from the fact that the initiators of the development policy did not consult with the citizenry for whom these structures were created. "The creation of these institutions though well intended, did not enlist the contributions of ordinary citizens... The movement has been promoted by members of intellectual, often academic, levels of society supported by international consultants and donor agencies"(Lungu, 1987:14). Although there was national support for and political commitment to the system, there was an inability to translate this political commitment to all levels in a practical manner. This coupled with the tendency of the village headmen who were invariably the chairpersons of these committees at village level, to decide on issues with their traditional advisers instead of through participatory decision making processes, resulting in sectional interests being satisfied at the expense of the collective. A final important impediment to the success of these committees as vehicles for citizen or community participation, was the lack of resources in the form of money and skills training available to them. This factor was of significance more in the rural, than the urban areas, which did not have much need of development committees because they were already researched by development and other agencies.

Four vital issues stand out in the Zambian experience. Firstly, decentralized and democratic structures which were instituted to foster grassroots participation were in themselves inadequate to attain the objectives for which they were created if they lacked grassroots ownership. This was a particularly significant point for facilitators of grassroots participation to bear in mind. Mobilizing grassroots to take ownership of participatory process from its very inception was therefore a key component of strategy to maximize grassroots

participation. Secondly, the Zambian initiative to promote citizen participation has emphasized institutional ·initiatives thereby living the potential of grassroots to take lead in the participatory process untapped. The movement, as Lungu (1987) has pointed out, has been left to intellectuals, international consultants and donor agencies to dictate its unfolding process. Quite frankly, the grassroots often do not have the necessary skills needed for development and therefore an outside assistance in terms of skills development and organizational training is needed.

Nevertheless, the indigenous wisdom and rich experiences of the grassroots should not be downplayed but rather enhanced and acknowledged in any development process. The tendency to view grassroots people as passive recipients of development should be eliminated, instead they should be involved as active stakeholders and equal partners with other renowned stakeholders. Thirdly, as Midgely (1986) and Boulle (1992) have earlier accentuated, the Zambian experience heightens the fact that even at grassroots level there is a clearly defined power structure in a form of local elites who have a strong voice in decision making. It is these elites who prioritize and articulate the needs of grassroots to aid agencies and most often their self-interest ends up being entertained as a collective need of the local people. In spite of its failure the Zambian development administration model should be credited for its attempt to mobilize grassroots participation. Its failure according to Lungu (1987) appears to be more a result of an over ambitious strategy, which did not sufficiently explore how it would and could be implemented.

Lungu (1987) therefore appeals that the Zambian community/citizen participation experiment, should not be viewed as a failure of the concept, but should rather act as an opportunity for further research so that the similar mistakes are not repeated in future endeavors of this nature. Lastly, but of great significance, what comes out from the Zambian experience is that grassroots participatory approach is doomed to fail when operationalized within a highly

centralized government structure. It requires a decentralized government structure, which devolves power to the local people. In the context of South Africa, where almost every government department has been highly centralized and removed from people on the ground, it means that for the grassroots participatory program to thrive, government structures should undergo a complete overhaul. In the following Chapter, the researcher shall attempt to investigate whether the Department of Social Services has undergone an organizational transformation which is central to the success of the grassroots participatory method.

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CHAPTER THREE

TRANSFORMATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Western Cape Department of Social Services finds itself in an invidious position in that it has already started with the organizational development strategies to transform its services, while no coherent provincial policy on structural transformation exists. It was only during the last quarter of 1997 that the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape approved an Affirmative Action policy and initiated discussions on the establishment of a transformation unit. These long over-due steps raise the question of whether there are traces of inertia in transforming the provincial public service because of political ideological differences between the Western Cape Province and the national government. Other indicators of transformation such as units aimed at promoting gender equality and people with disabilities are also glaringly absent in the Provincial Administration. The inertia to change may indicate resistance to change as a result of differences in political norms and values.

In order to gain an appropriate understanding of the soundness of the managerial status of the Department, it is necessary to provide a historical overview of the transformation process of the Department and its impact on the functioning of the Department in terms of grassroots participation. The White Paper for Social Welfare (South Africa, Department of Welfare, 1997:11) states that prior to the new political dispensation in 1994, welfare services were

rendered according to the race-based "own affairs" parliamentary tricameral system. Service rendering focused on tertiary-level services with a high emphasis on institutionalized services. The different Department's organizational structures were highly hierarchical with decision making vested in the organizations on a "need to know" basis. There was little regard for staff participation in the decision-making processes and even less for community participation. Access to welfare resources was unequal. Moreover, the distribution of resources was done in an unequal and biased manner to the advantage of only pockets of the South African population. There was little visible concerted effort to render services in a co-ordinated manner (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1995:33,55, 95-99).

With the political dispensation came a new national vision for welfare delivery. In the Western Cape Province, during 1994, the three previous administrations were amalgamated into one Department, called the Department of Social Services. As the House of Representatives was the largest of the three former administrations, staff from the two administrations were absorbed by this structure. Informal discussions by the researcher with staff from the other two administrations during this period revealed that staff found it difficult to adapt to the new and dominant culture of the former House of Representatives.

The influence of changes on the political level cannot be disregarded in an attempt to describe the psychological and organizational factors staff had to deal with at the time of the political changes. Until 1994 staff were functioning in an organizational milieu which was largely removed from the political sphere as the political portfolio for Welfare was situated at a national level. They now became much closer to the political processes as the Department was now accountable to a political representative on a provincial level. The political representative at that stage was a member of African the National Congress, which created more uncertainty amongst staff. It was clear that changes would be made, but there were no clear indications of what exactly these changes would entail. Elements of racism apartheid were a feature in

some of the new Departmental offices, notably Bellville, where staff from the former House Assembly refused to accept black staff members from the former of House of Assembly (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Department of Social Services, 1996:4-5).

The Provincial Member of the Executive Council for Health and Social Services, Mr Ebrahim Rasool, introduced in July 1994 his Strategic Management Team (SMT), an external task team mandated to map a strategy for democratic changes in the Department. Again, staff regarded the MEC as well as the SMT with suspicion and a trusting relationship between the management of the Department and the Minister's SMT was lacking for a long time. Only once the new top management of the Department was in place did the signs of trust and support begin to emerge.

The work done by the SMT signifies the first attempt to restructure the Department in a manner which is in line with the philosophy of grassroots participation and accepted managerial principles. During the latter half of 1994 and at the beginning of 1995 the SMT conducted a series of workshops with all stakeholders with a view to formulate a new vision for social service delivery in the Western Cape Province. A questionnaire covering themes such as expectations in terms of transformation, grassroots involvement in development work, staff establishment, subsidization, role of the state and national councils, and legislation was designed and distributed to the 14 service offices of the Department of Social Services, to all registered welfare organizations, as well as to non-governmental and community-based organizations (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Ministry of Health and Social Services,1995:36). These were once-off sessions and staff never heard from the SMT again until the time that the results of wide stakeholder consultation were written up in the "Transformation Plan for Social Service Delivery in the Western Cape Province" and submitted to a Welfare Summit during 1995, attended by over 300 delegates from the welfare fraternity, for ratification.

During this first phase of the transformation process the SMT acted as the external consultants to the Department, not at the request of the Department because of a willingly expressed need for transformation, but at the request of the MEC, in a sense imposing change on the Department. During June 1995, the leader of the SMT became the new Head of the Department of Social Services and as such underwent a role change from external consultant to a leader of the Department.

At the same time the new organizational structure of the Department was finally approved, expanding it from three to four directorates. Three of the director's posts were vacant during this period. The former external consultant, now Head of Department and her only manager, the director responsible for social security and an employee from the former race-based Cape Provincial Administration, initially did not enjoy a trusting relationship (Petersen, 1997). During the latter part of 1995 staff from this directorate were the subject of a forensic investigation by the forensic auditing firm, Ernest and Young, initiated by the MEC and supported by the new Head of Department. This investigation, which led to the prosecution of officials involved in fraudulent and other irregular activities as well as the accompanying media campaign, reinforced the political message to staff of the Department that their skills, ability and integrity were in doubt. Community support for the MEC`s actions created external pressure on staff and further impaired their already fragile professional images (The Argus, 1996:3).

Towards the latter half of 1995 the Ad Hoc Transformation Steering Committee was formed to unpack the Transformation Plan. The formation of this committee was an attempt to draw on welfare stakeholders and staff of the Department in order to give the transformation process impetus. It consisted of progressive lower-level worker representatives in the organization that already embraced the new vision and values of the Department, as well as academics and representatives from the formal welfare sector.

During November 1997 the Head of the Department expressed concern about the competence of the committee to guide the transformation process. The management of the Department was also not involved in its activities. The mandate of this committee was only partially fulfilled, its most significant contribution was the preparation of staff at district offices for provision of community participation through relevant structures.

Because of the top-management's unacceptance of this committee, it was disbanded during early 1996 and the responsibility to give further effect to the transformation of the Department of Social Services was handed back to the management of the Department. In the meantime three of the four director's posts were filled by February 1996. The Director: Developmental Social Welfare was first given the responsibility to spearhead the transformation of the Department in September 1996, but after a period of six months this function was finally entrusted to the Director: Social Development in March 1997. This Directorate focused its energies on the facilitation of the establishment of the District Transformation Committees and achieved this objective by November 1997. From the elected community representatives serving on each of the District Transformation Committees, two representatives were chosen to serve on a Ministerial Advisory Council.

After the Transformation Plan was published during 1995, the first significant document which addressed the transformation of the Department was the "Departmental Business Plan for the 1997/98 Financial Year" (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Department of Social Services, 1997(a)), which set out to achieve key delivery goals. There was once again a serious lack of communication around this document and many staff members of the Department viewed it with great suspicion.

Many of the objectives contained in the Business Plan, including but not limited to the establishment of grassroots structures which were to act as mechanisms for a grassroots participatory process, were achieved during 1997, which in turn contributed to realizing the broad transformation objectives

discussed in the Transformation Plan. It is the expressed opinion of the Head of the Department that it is only because of constant pressure from her side that these objectives were realized (Petersen, 1997). In her opinion top management did not "walk the vision". They became embroiled in the day-to-day management of their directorates and lacked the ability to be managers of renewed organizations. Hence, the opinion that staff of the Department have not embraced the vision. In terms of the corporate culture of the organization it appears that there is value incongruency between the Chief Executive Officer and top management of the organization.

Despite the objectives of the 1997/98 Business Plan being realized, no action plan for the co-ordinated implementation of the Transformation Plan nor for the implementation of the Business Plan has been designed to date. This creates the impression that transformation in the Department of Social Services is being implemented in a haphazard manner without any strategic plan.

During the 18-month period from the Transformation Plan to the time that the Social Development Directorate revived the Transformation process, no feedback was given to staff on ground level about the status of the process on transformation. As part of an attempt to offset the deficits of the Provincial budget for the 1997/98 financial year, the Department had to abolish 268 posts. It approved Voluntary Severance Packages for 327 staff members. Over a period of two years the department's staff establishment shrank from 1 799 to 1 542 members of staff, leaving staff despondent and demoralized (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Department of Social Services, 1997(b): 10).

During 1996 and the early part of 1997, management's attention was focused on having to deal with a range of obstructive factors:

1)   the appropriate placement of staff as part of a Provincial rightsizing exercise of its human resources. This led to 47

members of staff becoming redundant and having to be placed somewhere else in the organization.

2)   a forensic audit into the Department by an external auditing company, Ernst and Young, resulting, after a lengthy legal process, in the cancellation of a R270 million per annum contract for the bio-metric payment of social welfare pensions and grants;

3)   the termination of the contracts of 207 contract workers, which resulted in legal action being taken against the Department;

4)   declaring of moratoriums on the filling of vacancies in order to offset the Province's deficit;

5)   the challenges brought about by having to manage an insufficient mainframe system for the take-on of potential pension and grant beneficiaries; and

6)   management came under constant attack by politicians, other Departments, the public press, and beneficiaries of its services because of the major shortcomings in its customer relations.

The above conditions, in the words of the Head of the Department, "collectively blunted the openness for change" and marred management's ability to focus on change (Petersen, 1997).

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT

The organizational structure of the Department consists of a Chief Director as head of the Department and four Directors each heading a Directorate. The four Directorates are: Social Development, Social Security, Developmental Social Welfare, and Finance and Administration. It is a hierarchical structure according to the specific line functions of each of the Directorates. The Deprtment's organogram is appendixed in the last page of this Chapter.

According to the 1997 Business Plan of the Department of the Social Services (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Department of Social

Services, 1997 (a): 4, 6, 52, and 75) the Directorate: Social Development is responsible for the facilitation of community development, social marketing and information, research and population development. The Directorate: Social Security is responsible for managing the social pensions and grants being paid out and is responsible for approximately 87% of the Departmental budget. The Directorate: Developmental Social Welfare takes responsibility for all the aspects related to traditional welfare such as streetchildren, child and family care, aged care, disabled care and substance abuse. The Directorate: Finance and Administration takes responsibility for the payment of transfer payments to organizations rendering social services on behalf of the state, the budget and related financial functions, provisioning and procurement of goods and services.

The human resource allocation to the Department as a whole has undergone considerable changes during the past two years. As part of the Provincial Administration's savings drive the Department's staff establishment has been rightsized on two separate occasions. The total staff establishment has shrunk from 1 799 to 1 542. As a result of numerous moratoriums on the filling of vacancies and the effects of the Voluntary Severance Package, there are 249 vacant posts in the Department (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Department of Social Services, 1997 (b): 5). This represents 16% of the total staff establishment.

BUDGET ALLOCATION OF THE DEPARTMENT

The Department manages the third largest departmental budget in the Province, which amounted to R2, 998 billion for the 1998/99 financial year. The budget per program can be broken down as follows:

TABLE 2:   **BREAKDOWN OF DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET BY PROGRAMME**

PROGRAMME	BUDGET ALLOCATION
PROGRAMME 1 : ADMINISTRATION	R27 184 000
PROGRAMME 2 : SOCIAL SERCURITY	R1 969 821 000
PROGRAMME 3 : SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	R212 696 000
PROGRAMME 4 : SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES	R75 739 000
PROGRAMME 5 : SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	R12 960 000
TOTAL	**R2 998 000**

Source: Provincial Administration of the Western Cape: Financial Report 1998/99

THE SICA PROCESS

In the first quarter of 1997 the Provincial Cabinet, in a measure to further control the declining financial position of the Province, employed external financial experts to assist in a further rationalization process in the Administration. This Process, called SICA (Special Investigation: Cabinet Assignment), involved an organizational diagnosis of the Department. Its conclusions were revealing in terms of the afore-mentioned historical perspective on the Department, for they unraveled factors that were to impede on grassroots participation (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, SICA, 1997: 3-4).

According to written feedback to the Head of the Department in September 1997 by SICA, staff at district level felt that departmental plans were not realistic. Management was perceived to lack innovation and acceptance of employee creativity. Management styles were apparently ineffective and leadership lacked the ability to inspire. There was an expressed need for intersectoral collaboration in the Department. Workers registered dissatisfaction with the apparent inflexibility of lines of authority. Communication appeared to be ineffective, as staff did not always understand management's expectations and work priorities. Workers also felt that they did not possess the necessary information and resources to do their work properly. Opportunities for career development were perceived to be absent. Staff were demotivated and felt that management's recognition of performance left much to be desired.

During November 1997 a joint strategic planning session between the Department and SICA was held. It was attended by the middle and top management of the organization, which included the heads of offices of all the district offices in the Province. At the session a new vision was developed which differs from the national Department's vision. Until the time of the planning session the Department had acknowledged the national Department of Welfare's vision as its own.

The values to which the Department committed itself in the formulation of the Transformation Plan during 1995 were condensed during this last exercise. A week after the results of the planning session had been written up, they were communicated to all the offices with clear request to participate in deliberations regarding the further restructuring of the Department initiated by SICA.

During the strategic planning session the core business of the organization was deliberated at length. The outcome was that the emerging Directorate: Social Development which was mandated to promote grassroots participation was dealt a psychological blow when its raison d'etre was questioned and it was

decided that development is the responsibility of the RDP and not of a line function department. A great sense of insecurity and uncertainty about their future role and function is therefore prevalent in this Directorate, which has been expressed informally by members of this Directorate. This also gave an indication that grassroots participation was not the top priority of the Department.

Although a transformation Plan was developed, no action plan to its implementation phase has been developed. A holistic plan for the transformation of the Department is therefore absent. The momentum of the transformation process has therefore been lost. Given this, the Department's commitment to grassroots participation remains questionable.

With the amalgamation of three "own affairs" Administrations, three different organizational cultures emerged with the former House of Representative's culture being dominant. Shortly thereafter, as a result of the cultural adaptation required by the new social services paradigm, staff was expected to adjust their behaviors and values to be congruent with the values and behaviors of the new paradigm crafted on decentralization of services.

Communication between, firstly, the external consultants and the rest of the staff and, secondly, between the new top management of the Department and the rest of the staff during this period was insufficient. There is therefore a great possibility that there is a value incongruency between the top management and the rest of management cadre of the Department because they do not make information readily available to the lower levels of staff. This has been brought to the attention of the Head of Department.

The different processes impinging on the Department's functioning over the last two years have often left staff feeling insecure about their future in the organization. Official documents of the Department referred to despondency amongst staff due to increased workloads as a result of moratoriums on filling of vacancies. It should also be kept in mind that the moratoriums came in the

wake of a rightsizing exercise, which resulted in some staff becoming redundant and a considerable number of posts being abolished. This, in turn, resulted in the workload of most of the staff increasing across all levels.

In conclusion the department has had to grapple with the difficult task of transforming its institutions inherited from apartheid into instruments of change. Too absorbed by its transformative demands the Department has spent little time let alone capacity to monitor and support civil society organizations. The department has been trying to establish its position in the new political arena and as often much time has been wasted on turf protection and office politics. However the period starting from 1997 signaled the beginning of a process of a renewed commitment by the Department towards a philosophy of grassroots participation. This is dealt with in the following Chapter.
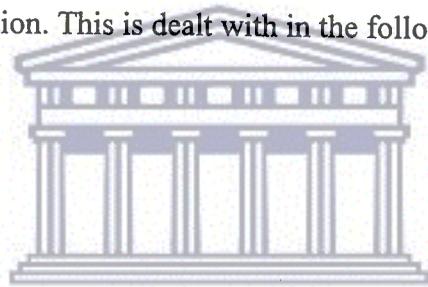
ORGANOGRAMME OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
1 X Chief Director
1 x Administrative Assistance
1 x Secretary

DIRECTORATE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
1 x Director
(58 Staff Members)

- DEP DIR Capacity Building
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
- DEP DIR Research + Info
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR

DIRECTORATE DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE
1 x Director
(833 Staff Members)

- DEP DIR Specialised Services
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
- DEP DIR Child and Family Care
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
- DEP DIR Institutional Care
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
- DEP DIR Specialised Care
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR

DIRECTORATE SOCIAL SECURITY
1 x Director
(306 Staff Members)

- DEP DIR Policy and Planning
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
- DEP DIR Monitoring and Evaluation
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR

DIRECTORATE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
1 x Director
(336 Staff Members)

- DEP DIR Provisioning and Administration
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
- DEP DIR Budget and Finance
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR
- DEP DIR Subsidies
  - ASSIST DIR
  - ASSIST DIR

DEP DIR = DEPUTY DIRECTOR

ASSIST DIR = ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

CHAPTER 4

MOBILIZING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION :
THE DEPARTMENT `s RESPONSE

In the preceding chapter the transformation process undergone by the Department was presented. It was noted that due to the manner in which change was introduced into the Department, resistance to and ill feelings about change especially from the previous race-based House of Assembly prevailed. This was anticipated to have a negative spin-off on the concept of grassroots participation as the former staff of House of Assembly was orientated to a centralized, top-down service delivery.

In spite of all these crippling factors, the Strategic Management Team (SMT) of the Social Services Provincial Administration of Western Cape embarked on a consultative process regarding the revision of the transformation of the Department. In the quest for participatory governance, a need for local structures which were as close to the communities as possible were identified to facilitate public involvement in the policy formulation and service rendering of the Department. In 1997 the Department took an initiative of introducing the concept of grassroots participation in matters ranging from policy formulation to service delivery.

As will be noted later in Chapter Five, the operationalization of grassroots participation in the Department was and is still continuing to be prone to ideological and political manipulation. This is evidenced from the fact that a provincial Minister seems to be the one who dictates the direction that the

process of grassroots participation should take. This therefore raises serious concerns about the credibility of partnership between State and civil society.

MOBILISING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

After returning from its own Goudini Conference and the 1995 national Bloemfontein Conference (both conferences were organized to brainstorm organizational development strategies of the Department), the Department of Social Services in the Western Cape embarked on an aggressive policy and strategy development initiative with a clear focus of radically transforming the traditional relationship between civil society and the organized Welfare Sector, both public and private in the province (Damonse: 1998). This process entailed mainly the setting up of a civil society mechanism at local, district and provincial levels. The key objective being the creation of an intra-institutional partnership working towards the transformation and reconstruction of welfare service rendering in the province. The rationale was the establishment of a governance mechanism that would facilitate and enhance partnership building and consultation between the Department of Social Services and civil society in the developmental welfare sector, in accordance with the White Paper on Social Welfare.

## LOCAL TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEES (LTCs)

At a local level the process involved the establishment of Local Transformation Committees (LTCs). According to the Directorate of Social Services, at this level the stakeholder profile participating in the initiatives reflects different organized civil society structures such as Community Based Organizations (CBOs), civics, women's groupings, the organized welfare and developmental sector, both formal and non-formal.

In the urban areas, LTCs have been formed mainly around the demarcated boundaries of the different RDP fora. The rationale being mainly to avoid

duplication of structures at this level. The LTCs have therefore been perceived as the social welfare structures of the community level RDP forum. In the event of an absence of a community level RDP forum, the members of the LTC have been constituted from the body of community level stakeholders operative in the social development field.

These stakeholder representatives have been drawn from:

1) community development/Welfare fora
2) Community RDP Fora
3) Civic organizations
4) Women's organizations
5) NGOs
6) Religious organizations
7) Youth structures
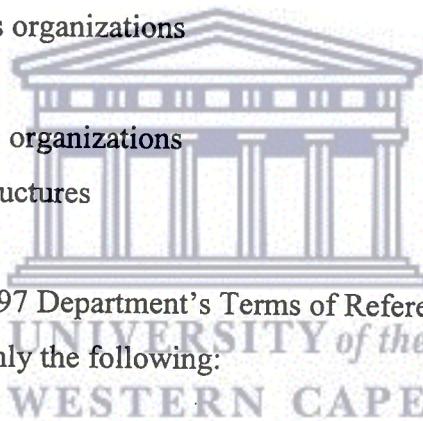
As set out in the 1997 Department's Terms of Reference, the primary functions of the LTC are mainly the following:

1. Participation in the identification and prioritization of community needs at local levels.

2. Participation in the collection of data to support needs assessment.

3. Making input in the design of policy and the planning of services at community levels.

4. Monitor and evaluate service delivery.

5. Organize and facilitate meetings of the LTC or other community meetings.

6. Plan and co-ordinate community education and awareness projects.

7. Promote the image of the district office and the Department at local level.

DISTRICT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEES (DTCs)

All LTCs in the geographic area are covered by a particular district office and constitute themselves at district level into a structure known as the District Transformation Committee (DTC). Currently, the Western Cape region has fourteen DTCs. The members of the DTC are constituted from the two delegates nominated at the local community level. The DTC engages the district office head and management at district level regarding issues of transformation and reconstruction of social service rendering in the district. The district office provides the secretarial services to the DTC. At LTC level, particular officer is assigned to render an administrative support service to the LTC. The reason for this type of linkage to officialdom is to sustain and maximize the advisory and consultative role of the structure. It is not envisioned that civil society members become volunteer workers performing the functions of officials. The DTC performs mainly a function of consolidating and co-ordinating the interventions of LTCs, but from a district perspective. The functions at this level include mainly:

1) Making an input in the design of policy and setting framework for service rendering at both community and district level;

2) Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on service delivery on a continuous basis at the scheduled meetings with the district office manager;

3) Organizing and facilitating meetings of DTC;

4) Assisting with planning and co-ordination of community education and awareness projects;

5) Encouraging and monitoring inter-departmental co-operation and consultation to ensure effective service delivery;

6) Ensuring that a positive image of the department is fostered through excellence in services rendered by the department;

7) Ensuring that the Office Head forges strong and co-operative relations with the DTC and civil society at large.

THE MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The third tier of this consultative system involves a platform where two delegates from each DTC meet in a structure known as the Ministerial Advisory Council (MAC). This council has been founded on the principles, which inter alia are to influence developmental welfare policy formulation and implementation by promoting representiveness, inclusiveness and participation of stakeholders at provincial, district and local levels. Of importance is the fact that this is the level where the civil society representatives engage the top management of the Department and Minister responsible for the welfare function in the province. The main functions at this level include:

1) Identifying, promoting, monitoring and evaluating policy and related issues for the improvement of services rendering.

2) Advising on the restructuring, integration processes and budgetary priorities that facilitate developmental social services and the quality of life in the Western Cape.

3) Advising the Minister on policy and its budgetary implications, legislation, human resource requirements and organizational capacity building for service delivery.

4) Developing, monitoring and reporting on the MAC management plan.

5) Encouraging interdepartmental and intersectoral co-operation and collaboration in the social welfare sector.

6) Developing a holistic program that will address the fragmentation of social service delivery.

7) Contribute towards the overall monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the Department and other welfare service organizations.

8) Advocating for a reorientation of the welfare budget towards a more developmental model.

9) Informing and advising the Minister regarding welfare issues and recommending appropriate action

Undoubtedly, the abovementioned structures have departed from the traditional welfarist model of service delivery, which has been patronizing and demeaning to its beneficiaries, towards a more developmental, inclusive, transparent and effective one. From the face value, the establishment of these structures symbolizes the Department's embracement of the ideals of grassroots participation. In order to document this notion explicitly, a thorough scrutiny of one of the Directorates of the Social Services Department – namely the Social Development Directorate was conducted.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

The Directorate of Social Development (DSD) is a new Directorate established within the Department of Social Services to promote social development. In its Framework for Social Development Report (1997) the directorate is espousing to promote a paradigm shift in the department as encompassed in the Reconstruction and development (RDP), away from the technically driven processes, to a people-driven participatory process through which the members of the society can increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources, and produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life.

DSD thus came about in 1995, after a process of lengthy negotiations and consultation with many stakeholders and communities. Concomitant with its philosophy of promoting a participatory process, the directorate's roles and functions have been formulated by the organs of the civil society. To this end, according to the 1997 report of the Directorate of Social Development, the

directorate has held meetings with 40 stakeholders and got written inputs from about 80 role players. In the words of its former Assistant Director, Mr. Ralph Damonse " these organizations together with civics, people from the RDP forums and workers clearly saw themselves as partners with the DSD because its initiatives are seen as credible, participative and rational in terms of the development objectives and challenges in the Western Cape."

To achieve its mission of promoting partnership and linkages among different role players the Directorate has two subdirectorates: The Sub Directorate of Research and Information and the Sub Directorate of Social Development Initiation. These two most important directorates are central to the pursuit of the District model, which strives to make social services accessible by collaborating with local authority structures and other intersectoral service providers.

Forging new links with organizations that have traditionally worked with communities outside government has been identified as a critical role that would bring the Directorate into mainstream development processes. In keeping with this notion, the Directorate has decentralized and redeployed its staff to the districts so that they could be as close to the grassroots as possible.

It is not an exaggeration to infer that the structures set by the department are indeed fundamental in transforming and restructuring the department to reflect a participatory, accountable and people-driven institution. Because of their closeness to the people on the ground, the LTCs are the vehicles through which the voices of the marginalized, the poor and the underclass can be nobly represented. Such structures must be complimented for demolishing the stumbling blocks, which have seen the civil society struggling to make their voices heard in the corridors of political and bureaucratic power. These initiatives could also be viewed as facilitating the ordinary people to participate meaningfully in policy design issues and programs affecting their lives.

Also, the manner in which these consultative mechanisms are designed (i.e. local people forming part of the committees) lives much to be desired. For an example, the issue regarding which local level institution arrangement represents the real voice of civil society especially when it comes to negotiations regarding the distribution of the welfare resource base remains unclear. This also represent a paradigm shift from the traditional welfare which marginalized the potentials of the local communities to address their problems, towards a developmental one in which the civil society itself plays a vibrant and leading role in confronting its problems.

In spite of the laborious work done by the department to ensure grassroots participation in policy designs and formulation, through putting in place local consultative mechanisms like LTCs and DTCs, it still remains unclear as to whether or not the grassroots exploit those opportunities to the fullest extent possible. Putting decentralized and democratic structures in place to facilitate grassroots participation in policy matters is one thing, but whether the grassroots do identify with those structures is quite the other. To this end, a thorough investigation looking at whether there is congruence between these two dichotomies is needed. This concern shall be addressed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

MOBILIZING GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION: COMMITTEES' RESPONSES

In the preceding chapter the Social Services Department's claim that it practically promotes popular participation and civil society's involvement in the context of policy formulation and service delivery, has been assessed. It has been documented therefore that to a particular extent the department's claim is arguably legitimate because it has put in place consultative mechanism that foster participatory, consultative and transparent policy formulation and service delivery. Because of their closeness to communities, democratic and consultative structures in the form of LTCs, DTCs and MAC, have been cited as central in terms of fostering public involvement in policy formulation and service delivery. Against this backdrop, it was noted with great concern that consultative structures by themselves do not necessarily translate into genuine and authentic grassroots participation. Moreover the researcher has only relied on the departmental documents to assess public participation in the Department. To enhance this study, it has therefore been necessary to also assess the prevailing rhetoric of popular participation in the Department against the reality on the ground. Through administering a questionnaire of a representative sample of a DTCs, views from the members of those grassroots structures regarding their involvement in policy formulation, implementation and service delivery in the Social Service Department were sought.

PERCEPTIONS OF GRASSROOTS COMMITTEES.

Before going on to document the perceptions of grassroots committees regarding their involvement in policy formulation, implementation and service delivery in the Social Services Department, it is worth mentioning that the research was conducted on four District Transformation Committees which were selected to provide a representative sample of district committees throughout the geographical boundary of the Western Cape province. In order to transcend the urban bias, both rural and urban-based committees were equally represented. As was noted in Chapter One, the use of the qualitative method of data collection (i.e. open ended questionnaire and unstructured informal interviews) was carefully designed to solicit information on the following themes: inclusiveness and representativeness of the grassroots people, control and ownership of the participatory process by the grassroots, authentic participation of grassroots in the policy domain and service delivery, resourcefulness of committees and obstacles impeding mutual partnership between the committees and Department. However, as the researcher pledged in Chapter One, the information yielded from those committees was left to speak for itself with minimal interpretation from the researcher, allowing the readers to draw their own conclusions. In the following page the perceptions of selected committees with regards to the nature of their participation are documented.

1. KLEIN KAROO DISTRICT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Inclusiveness and representativeness of the poor

In view of the above-stated theme, the Klein Karoo District Transformation Committees' responses attested to a limited representation of the grassroots people in the Committee. Although, to a question who does the committee represent? - the Klein Karoo Committee acknowledged the fact that the Committee is representative of the total community of Klein Karoo and Oudstoorn, nevertheless to the questions how were the members of the committee chosen and was there any criteria used to determine the eligibility of the appointees? - the responses of the committee highlighted a scenario whereby membership of the committee is determined by one's prior involvement in a community structure and one's good track record of community involvement and social development expertise.

Under this theme, it also came out that committee meetings are conducted in English and are only attended by committee members, giving an impression that the running of the committee is not transparent and democratic. On the contrary, the interface between the committee and the grassroots structures comes close to the ideals of representative democracy. To this end, the committee reported that the interplay between itself and its constituencies is such that it is the duty of the committee members to report to their respective constituencies and also to bring to the attention of the committee the concerns of their particular structures.

Issues of ownership and control

To the question who decides on the committee's functions, the responses of the committee revealed that the ultimate functioning of the committee depends largely on the needs of the community, which are articulated by those who represent the community in the committee and the Department. In view of this, it becomes clear then, that the influence of the grassroots in deciding the functions of the committee remains minimal and this function is centralized in the hands of the Department, and to a limited extent the committee does have its insignificant share of this function. The concentration of this function in the hands of the Department has also been elucidated by the committee's response to the question how were the functions of the committee decided? - to which it responded: "the Department documented the functions of the committee in its policy framework which the Committee did not play a role in formulating." (Klein Karoo District Committee, 1999)

The exploration of this theme also revealed that there was an element of consultation in the Department's approach underpinning the establishment of the committee. This was solicited through a question which investigated as to who was involved in the decision to form the committee and how did they go about forming it. To this end, structures like the civics, community-based organizations, youth groups, and churches were invited under the chairpersonship of the Department, the committee declared. It also emerged under this theme that even though the various stakeholders were consulted in a decision to form the committee, nevertheless their role was that of rubber stamping the decisions already taken at the high echelons of the Department.

Equal participation of committees in the policy domain and service delivery

In this theme questions assessing the awareness of the committee in as far as its relationship with the Department and its functions were designed. From those questions it came out that the committee was well aware of its functions and the nature of its relationship with the department is supposed to be. This claim is evidenced in the committee's response to the question why was the committee established, to which it responded: " to allow the community to become a co-partner with the department in terms of service delivery." (Klein Karoo District Committee, 1999)

Notwithstanding the committee's awareness of its role within the Department, nevertheless the committee's responses to the question whether it actually enacts its role revealed otherwise. Disappointingly, the committee has not yet been involved in policy formulation and implementation nor has the Department reacted upon any decisions or recommendations that the committee has taken. Astonishingly, the committee is of the view that the Department does not accord them a 'co-partner' status as enshrined in the terms of reference regarding the establishment of the committees. Even though the committee has put forward policy proposals, none of these have received the Department's attention. When asked as to what is keeping the committee from performing its functions as contemplated in the Department's terms of reference, the committee blamed a lack of political support pertaining to the grassroots participatory process and the lack of consensus as to the role of the committee within the Department's circles. The following committee's response to the question what is keeping the committee from performing the function of policy design and implementation and service delivery, suffice to justify this notion:

> "There is a lack of consensus within the political circles regarding the role of the committee in matters of planning and implementing policies.

The MEC for Welfare and Health is currently not supportive of the committee performing this role because he thinks this is a domain of the departmental officials" (Klein Karoo District Committee, 1999).

When asked as to what could be done to remedy this problem, the committee put forward insightful recommendations. Central to those recommendations were the views, which suggested that the committee's increased involvement could be attained through recognizing them as useful and capable partners of the Department and through sensitizing and orientating the Department's officials on grassroots issues.

Resourcefulness of the committees

Although the committee does have access to the infrastructure and resources of the Department, generally the responses of the committee revealed that in as far as their resourcefulness is concerned, it remained ill-equipped to carry out its functions. Akin to this, it emerged out of the committee's responses that its members had not yet received training pertaining to the tasks they were expected to perform. The following excerpts from the questionnaire centering on this theme, illustrate this claim:

Is the committee well equipped in carrying out its functions?

"The committee is not well equipped to execute its mandate because of a lot of limitations"

Have the committee members or the people involved in the committee's activities received any kind of training for the tasks they are expected to perform?

"such training programs are in the pipeline, so the Department tells us" (Klein Karoo District Committee, 1999)

Obstacles impeding mutual partnership between the department and committees

Concerning the obstacles impeding the mutual partnership between the Department and the committee, the committee blamed the inaccessibility of the Department's office and the attitudinal problems arising from the Department's staff members. The legacy of apartheid characterizing the policies and the service delivery of the Department's predecessor was held responsible for the current problems experienced by the committee. In spite all of this, the committee remained optimistic that the current obstacles facing them could be conquered through meaningful interconnectedness between itself and the Department.

2. WORCESTER DISTRICT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Inclusiveness and representativeness of the poor

Under this theme, the responses of the Worcester District Transformation Committee concurred with those of Klein Karoo. In keeping with this, membership of Worcester District Transformation Committee is derived from the local grassroots structures i.e. Local Transformation Committees, and RDP fora. In the opinions of the committee members, the committee is representative of the whole community of Worcester, Overberg, Caledon, Hermanus, and Swellendam. The committee also believes that the selection of committee members was democratic and open. From face value the committee's responses painted a picture that the process of selecting members to the committee was accommodative of the grassroots people as well.

Quite the contrary however, it also emerged from the committee's responses that membership of the committee was somewhat open to people with community development background and people with expertise in social development and welfare.

The following extract from the responses of the committee would serve to justify this notion:

> **Was there any criteria used to determine the eligibility of the appointees? If yes state the criteria used?**
>
> Yes, (1) the candidates had to have credibility in the communities, (2) they had to have proven leadership roles, and (3) a CV of each candidate was available at the time of election (Worcester District Committee, 1999)

Similar to the Klein Karoo committee, the reporting lines of the committee were somehow democratic because individual members were obliged by the constitution of the committee to report monthly to their respective constituencies and to represent their interests at the committee. With the Worcester committee as well, attendance to committee meetings remain an exclusive domain of the duly elected members and Department's officials. A democratic nature of the running of the committee as well as its lack of transparency in its meetings are illustrated lucidly by the following selection of the committee's responses:

> **How does the committee report to its governing body i.e. to those to whom it is accountable?**
>
> Through monthly meetings which update the constituencies on new developments.
>
> **Who can attend committee meetings?**
>
> The duly elected members of DTC and officials of the Department (Worcester District Committee, 1999).

Issues of ownership and control

Again, owing to the question who decides on the committee's functions, the committee responses highlighted that it did not have genuine ownership and

control over the running of the committee. It became clear from the committee responses that the locus of power informing the running of the committee is vested in the MEC and senior Department's officials. The centralization of power in the MEC and senior Department's officials was evidenced by the committee's response to the questions - who decides upon the committee's functions and how were the functions of the committee decided? To the former, the committee responded by saying "the MEC for Welfare and Health and senior Department's officials" and to the latter the committee response was:

"functions were decided upon at departmental level with little involvement of LTCs and DTCs" (Worcester District Committee, 1999)

It also came out from this theme that the Department's approach to grassroots participation was that of consultation wherein the various stakeholders were provided with a platform to make representations and recommendations. For an example, the committee testified that a series of meetings were held with various welfare associations and welfare fora and that the Department sold the concept of grassroots participation to them. Boulle (1992) earlier accentuated in Chapter Two that this form of participation does not oblige people to whom recommendations and representations are made, to ensure that what is recommended is enforced. Boulle's (1992) remarks evidently typify the Department's approach to grassroots participatory process. Although the Department provided a platform upon which many recommendations and presentations were made by the committee, nevertheless neither of these were implemented by the Department.

Equal participation of committees in the policy domain and service delivery

It also emerged from this theme that the committee was quite abreast as to its role within the Department. This came out clearly from the following extract:

> **What does the committee consider to be its major function?**
>
> 1) To receive reports from the various areas and to prioritize needs
>
> 2) To address the identified needs to relevant sub-departments
>
> 3) To bring matters to Ministerial Advisory Committee for attention of the minister
>
> 4) To disseminate information to LTCs
>
> 5) To devise a strategy to address issues identified (Worcester District Committee, 1999)

In spite of the committee's awareness of its role, the committee responses to the questions – has the committee been involved in policy design and implementation? and has the Department reacted upon any decisions or recommendations taken by the committee? - revealed that the committee has not yet 'walked the talk'. To both questions, the committee has not yet been involved in policy formulation and implementation nor has the Department taken them seriously in their policy proposals.

The responses of the committee also uncovered that there seems to be political squabbles as to the actual role of the committee within the Department and this according to the committee further slackens the process of involving them fully in the policy domain within the Department. The following committee's response to the question namely - what is keeping the committee from performing the function of policy design and implementation? - illustrates this notion patently:

"because of 'party politics' within the department which derail the full involvement of grassroots participation in policy issues" Worcester District Committee, 1999). When asked about the possible solutions that could help in maximizing their participation within the Department, the committee appealed for an urgent democratic finalization of its position within the department.

Resourcefulness of the Committees

As in the case of Klein Karoo District Committee, the Worcester District Transformation Committee indicated that it does have access to financial resources and the Department's resources. Nevertheless, the committee members were not yet subjected to skills and capacity building training. This notion was elicited by following extract:

Is the committee well equipped in carrying out its mandate?
No, because most members lack appropriate technical skills.
Have the committee members or the people involved in the committee's activities received any kind of training for the tasks they are expected to perform?
Training of members has not yet taken off the ground (Worcester District Committee, 1999).

The committee remains firm that in order for them to equal their challenge, the emphasis should be on capacity building workshops, because most of its members do lack appropriate technical skills

Obstacles impeding mutual partnership between the department and committees

Fundamental to the obstacles impeding the committee's authentic participation is political manipulation and the poor reception the committee continues to

suffer in the hands of the Department's staff members. While the Department has put in place administrative procedures to facilitate grassroots participation, the committee is still of the view that the philosophy of civil society participation has not penetrated through some officials of the Department. To the question how these obstacles can best be speedily resolved? - the committee responded thus:

> " by campaigning against state's manipulation of the process of grassroots involvement in policy design and implementation and by concentrating on issues which affect the communities e.g. poverty, unemployment, smooth system of payment of grant and pension and substantial government support for welfare organizations with good service and administrative record" (Worcester District Committee, 1999).
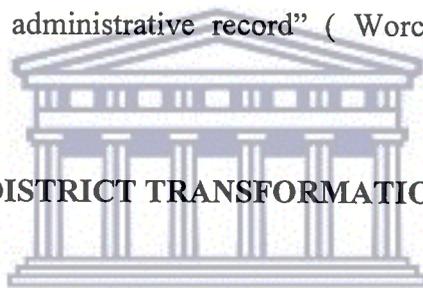
3. CAPE TOWN DISTRICT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Inclusiveness and representativeness of the poor

While reiterating what Klein Karoo and Worcester District Committees have already experienced under this theme, there were striking differences in the responses yielded by the Cape Town District Committee. Like the two foregoing committees, the Cape Town District Committee also alluded to the fact that the criteria regulating membership of the committee was not receptive to the socio-economic realities of the poor. The emphasis was on people with welfare background and academic status, thereby excluding the semi-illiterate. It also came out from the committee responses that the criterion regulating committee membership excluded the disorganized groups of the community. For an example, one of the criteria used to determine the eligibility of members expressly demanded that eligible members should be acclaimed leaders in their respective communities and most importantly should belong to a community structure.

Unlike in the previously discussed committees, attendance to the meetings of the Cape Town District Committee was open to any member of the communities represented. The opening of attendance of committee meetings to non- committee members needs to be commended for it bridges the gap between committee members and their constituencies. Disappointingly, while being afforded an opportunity to attend the committee meetings, members who are not elected members of the committee are granted observer status and therefore cannot influence the decisions of the committee.

Issues of ownership and control

On this theme the responses of the committee indicated that the grassroots people were not involved in the initial phases connected with the formation of the committee. While the Department followed the consultative route, the idea to establish the committee remained an imposition from the top and the committee was brought on board during the implementation phase. This notion is depicted by the following response of the committee to the question - who was involved in the decision to form the committee and how did they go about forming it? " Decision was taken by the Department of Social Services and delegated to each district office. District office then advertised the establishment of committee by means of media, word of mouth, invitations and the public" (Cape Town District Committee, 1999) .

Equal participation of committees in the policy domain and service delivery

Once again it emerged from the responses of the Cape Town District Committee that it is well conversant of its role within the Department. For an example, when asked what it considered to be its major function, the committee cited the fact that its role was to ensure community input in welfare

policy and monitoring of welfare services rendered within the Cape Town magisterial district.

As was the case with the Worcester and Klein Karoo District Committees, the Cape Town District Committee was also not involved in the service delivery and policy processes of the Department. To both the questions namely - are there any policies that the committee has helped in formulating and implementing or any projects that the committee has been involved in designing and implementing? and has the Department acted upon any decisions or recommendations taken by the committee? - the committee's response was a disappointing no.

As was echoed before by both the Klein Karoo and Worcester District Committees, the Cape Town District Committee also blamed the Department for hindering the process of grassroots participation. The committee also intimated that the Department was paying lip service to a question of grassroots participation because its grassroots approach was actually anti-participatory. This is manifested in the committee's response to the question- what is keeping the committee from being involved in the policy processes of the Department? - to which it answered: " currently, the Department is of the view that policy issues are its exclusive domain" (Cape Town District Committee, 1999).

In spite of the problems which seemed to forestall the participation of the committee in the policy processes of the Department, nonetheless the committee remained zealous to execute this role. This has been signaled by its response to the question what improvements would the committee suggest be made in fully involving itself to the activities of the Department? - to which the committee replied: " the committee should be allowed to have inputs in policy planning from the start until the implementation phase" (Cape Town District Committee, 1999)

Resourcefulness of the Committees

An examination of this theme showed that other than the secretarial services the committee gets from the Department, there were no other resources that it enjoyed. Unlike the other two committees as discussed above, the Cape Town District Committee did not have financial resources whatsoever and its members had not received any kind of training. With no financial resources at its disposal it remained unclear as to how the committee was able to perform the tasks it was expected to perform. Set against this are its members who were not well attuned with the demands of the roles they were expected to enact. The following citation from the responses of the committee serves to justify this notion:

Is the committee well equipped in carrying out its mandate?

Not really, there is still more to be done in this respect

Have the committee members or the people involved in the committee's activities received any kind of training for the tasks they are expected to perform?

Not yet (Cape Town District Committee, 1999)

Obstacles impeding mutual partnership between the department and committees

One of the major obstacles preventing mutual partnership between the Department and the committee has been cited by the committee to be the Department's attitude of wanting to play a 'big brother' role in the relationship. Consequently, the committee finds itself in a position where its contributions are either not valued or ignored by the Department. However the committee believes that these obstacles could be overcome through recognizing the committee as an equal partner of the Department.

4. KHAYELITSHA TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Inclusiveness and representativeness of the poor

Our discussion of the perceptions of the committees concludes with the perceptions of the Khayelitsha District Committee. Under this theme it must be mentioned from the outset that the responses of the Khayelitsha District Transformation Committee tallied to a larger extent with the various aspects of the responses which came out from the previous discussion of the three committees. Like other committees, the Khayelitsha District Transformation Committee is representative of the entire Khayelitsha community and its surroundings. Corresponding to the views of the other committees as discussed above, the committee also alluded to the fact that in order for one to qualify for membership of the committee, one should be an affiliated member of a particular community structure, painting a picture that the committee is only a confederation of the organized groups of the community.

As witnessed in the previous discussion of the three committees, the criterion used to determine the eligibility of appointees emphasized a good track record in the welfare and social development field. Nevertheless, membership to the Khayelitsha District Transformation Committee was open to any community member irrespective of whether such member does or does not have a good track record in the welfare and social development field. As was evidenced in its response, emphasis was on availability, interest and willingness. The relaxation of the regulations governing membership of the committee meant that even the most disorganized groups of the community were afforded the opportunity to become members of the committee. Nevertheless, the emphasis on prior involvement to a community structure, serves to underscore this notion.

Issues of ownership and control

It came out conspicuously from the responses under this theme that the committee did not have ownership and control of the grassroots participatory process. The MEC for Welfare and Health wields absolute power in as far as deciding the functions of the committee and the overall decision-making exercise. In justifying this claim, the committee had this to say "...baseline policy and the terms of reference are sanctioned by the minister and presently he is presumed to have overriding powers" (Khayelitsha District Committee, 1999).

As was the case with other committees, it also came out from this theme that the Department did consult with the various stakeholders in terms of which the concept of grassroots participation was presented to them. The Department's consultative approach was only tailored at mobilizing community support for its initiative. The communities in which the committee was envisaged operating and subsequently established, was not consulted in any way on the issue of the formation of such structure, never mind how it would operate.

Equal participation of committees in the policy domain and service delivery

Following from the questions, which were designed to assess the committee's awareness of its role in the Department, it emerged once more that the committee was well acquainted with its role in the Department. Putting this view eloquently, the committee forwarded the following answer to the question why was the committee established:

> "to transform social welfare service where a community will participate fully in the policies of the Department, the committee also acts as liaison body between the department and the public" (Khayelitsha District Transformation Committee, 1999).

While the committee is well accustomed to its role in the Department, nevertheless it has not featured anywhere in the activities pertaining to the policy processes of the Department. Quite amazingly, since its three years of existence the committee has not yet been involved in the policy formulation and implementation, not to mention its involvement in service delivery. To the question what is keeping the committee from performing its functions? - like the Klein Karoo and Worcester committees, the committee blames this situation to the instability in the political leadership of the province (Khayelitsha District Transformation Committee, 1999).

In spite of the Department's initiative to decentralize its offices and to deploy its personnel to grassroots level, nevertheless the interplay between the committee and the Department's officials remains minimal, not to mention their interaction with the heads of the Department. This explains the reason why in their encounter with the Department, the committee appealed for more visibility of the heads of Department.

Resourcefulness of the Committee

Whereas the committee admitted that it does have access to the Department's resources i.e. finance, telephone, fax, photocopier and information and support services, however its human resource remained ill- capacitated in carrying out their tasks. With the Khayelitsha District Transformation Committee also, its members did not received training pertaining to the tasks they were expected to perform. The following excerpts illustrate this point quite vividly:

Is the committee well equipped in carrying out its mandate?
In terms of resources, yes but a more need for capacity building of members is need.

**Have the committee members or the people involved in the
committee's activities received any kind of training for the tasks
they are expected to perform?**

No (Khayelitsha District Transformation Committee, 1999).

Obstacles impeding mutual partnership between the department and committees

Featuring centrally in the reponses of the committee regarding this theme were
issues around non-support from the Department, uncertainty resulting from the
political manipulation of the process by the newly elected Provincial Welfare
and Health minister and attitudinal problems of the Department's top officials.

In an attempt to come up with possible solutions that could be explored to
address these problems the committee was of the view that there needs to be a
genuine political commitment underpinning the process of grassroots
participation which at best should rise above ideological inclinations. Also,
through retraining and reorientation programs there needs to be a dramatic
mind-shift from the Department's officials.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The first theme which assessed the inclusiveness and representativeness of the
poor in the activities of the committees reveals that membership of these
committees is principally limited to people belonging to a community based
structure or any organ of the civil society for example, NGOs and civic
organizations. With the exception of Cape Town District Transformation
Committee, the rest of the committees responded in one voice in elucidating
this claim, citing the fact that members of the committee are either elected
from community based structures i.e. RDP fora, civic organizations, local
authorities and NGOs. In view of this, it remains unclear as to whether such
recruitment strategy is effective in terms of attracting the most marginalized

groups of the community to serve in those committees. It is safe to say that even the criteria used in deciding who should form part of those committees minimized the chances of the poor being part of those committees. For example, a proven leadership record, reasonable experience in welfare and development setting, and community involvement seem to be the key requirements determining membership to those committees. The foregoing requirements pose considerable obstacles for the poor to participate in welfare and development participatory initiatives because they favored a relatively informed, educated and 'development aware' citizenry. Because of socio-economic factors such as low levels of education and widespread illiteracy the poor find themselves excluded from such participatory endeavors.

In his personal encounters with the committee, the researcher also observed that members of those committees were relatively endowed with academic and technical expertise. Most of them had high academic qualifications, while others were either welfare professionals or people with at least welfare background, invoking an impression that the participatory process was somewhat an academic exercise. However this notion of grassroots participation is rather different to that of grassroots participation as defined in terms of deprivation and disadvantage in Chapter Two. As was suggested there, the participatory mode crafted on the notions of deprivation and disadvantage involves maximizing the access of the poorest of poor in decision-making structures and mobilizing them to drive the process of development. A close look at the composition of membership of those committees discloses the Department's failure to take cognisance of the distribution of power within the marginalized communities. As was argued in Chapter Two marginalized communities themselves are replete with uneven relations of power which consequently impair even the most carefully designed participatory processes. Those who wield power and social status often get the disproportionate representation in the participatory encounters with the marginalized group either completely excluded or under represented. By all accounts, the Department is guilty of having been naïve to the question of power dynamics within the community. Exclusionary devices (i.e. good track

record in welfare and development) regulating membership of committees have only served one purpose of eliminating the poor from being part and parcel of those committees.

Owing to the above, it is only fair to conclude that the establishment of those committees though well intended, does not enlist the contributions of the poor as the emphasis is on people of intellectual and academic grounding. Instituted in this manner, the Department's participatory initiative is bound to fail as it did in Zambia with the multi-purpose development committees. Nevertheless, it needs to be put on record that, in view of the socio-economic realities of the poor, for example, high levels of illiteracy, the argument here does not suggests that the committees should be predominantly manned by people who can scarcely read or write, but the point being hammered home is the importance of including the privileged few along with representatives of the poor whom people themselves in the community relate to and recognize.

In his personal dealings with the committees surveyed and as documented by the committees responses, the researcher found inappropriate participatory techniques which are too often, alienating to the poor. Such techniques include documents written in academic or scientific jargon, documents in a language not commonly understood by the poor, meetings conducted in a language not customarily understood by the targeted group and public meetings in which the official proceedings are dominated by academic jargon not easily understood by the majority of the poor. The foregoing participatory techniques were quite rife in the summit convened by the Department, of all 14 District Committees operating in the Western Cape region, of which the researcher was also part. Having been exposed to such participatory techniques, the only fair conclusion that the researcher could infer was that such techniques are defeatist to the ideals of grassroots participation as they are intimidating or antagonizing the very marginalized group they are attempting to involve.

For some strange reasons also, there are some incidences where committee membership was also open to the Department's senior civil servants, as in the

case of the Cape Town District Transformation Committee which was under the chairmanship of the Department's senior official. The involvement of senior civil servants in the executive positions of the committees could further defeat the ends of grassroots participation. Department's officials are bound to be mindful of their career prospects, resulting in their promotion of the Department's official policies rather than the interests of the poor. Additionally, it remains unclear as to how the committee's autonomy could be preserved under the circumstances where its leaders are also salaried officials of the Department. By all means, this amounts to a typical centralized and bureaucratically administered participatory program, which as Midgley (1986) correctly put it stifles initiative and weakens local self-reliance. The centralizing elements inherent in the Department's approach to community participation, throws some doubts to the question of their commitment in enhancing grassroots self-sufficiency. Evidently, the department's approach bears testimony to a rather absurd notion that local communities do not have the expertise to deal with development problems, thus confining this role to the hands of technocrats. In fact this is an implicit policy stance that th Department has taken as shall be revealed later on.

With respect to the second theme which assesses issues of the poor, owning and controlling the participatory process, the committee's responses to the questionnaire guide, highlight a number of interesting points. The questions who decides on the committees function and how were those functions decided? and who was involved in the decision to form the committees?, provide us with a classic picture of the top-down approach operating within the department. Firstly, to the questions who decides upon the committee's functions and who was involved in the decision to form the committees, although the committees acknowledge the consultative approach that the Department adopted in forming the committees, nonetheless, they all testify to the fact that their role was that of backstage participants with the Department steering the participatory process. With this in mind, it follows that the kind of participation facilitated by the Department through the committees is one of manipulation. As Boulle (1992) noted, this kind of participation is concerned

with creating an illusion of partnership but where those in power have the ultimate say over what is implemented and how it is done. A participatory initiative implemented in this manner is bound to raise questions about the possible motives of those who steer it. At this stage a question could arise as to whether the Department values the participatory process for its own sake or whether it has a deliberately concealed agenda. Nonetheless, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, in their current status committees have little decision-making powers, the participatory agenda has been imposed upon them rather than being designed and carried out by and for themselves.

What is even more disturbing is to learn that the Provincial Minister for Welfare and Development has overriding powers over the functions of the committees. The Worcester and Khayelitsha District Committees have made this notion explicit. The political domination of the participatory process is prone to ideological and 'party political' manipulation. It is the researcher's view that government response to grassroots participation may fall anywhere between a continuum of complete opposition to grassroots participation, manipulation of the participatory mode, indifference and a complete acceptance of the ideals of grassroots participation. In Chapter Two example, it has been documented as to how the Tanzanian government manipulated the participatory mode to attain political ends. In Guatemala, it has been indicated by Heggenhougen (1984) how the participatory endeavors were stamped out with brutal determination by government because of the perceived threat that it presented to the status quo. Government's efforts to live true to the ideals of grassroots participation have been witnessed in countries like, Cuba, China and Philippines. In South Africa the earlier hesitance of the Apartheid government to employ community development and the participatory nature of the Black Consciousness Movement's development efforts bears witness to government's indifference to grassroots participation. In view of this, the Western Cape Ministry of Welfare and Development's determination to control the participatory process could rightly be viewed with intense skepticism.

At this stage, a balanced view is of great significance when the question of grassroots participation and the role that other stakeholders (i.e. government, NGOs, development practitioners) ought to play thereof. It needs to be acknowledged that the fundamental ideals of grassroots participation as pointed out in Chapter Two should be taken as an ideal type. Realistically, grassroots participation could not operate in isolation with other stakeholders, as De Beer and Swanepoel clearly point out "it is not a matter of the community versus the rest, but rather the community and the rest" (1998:23). Resource constraints of many kinds (i.e. financial and technical resources and infrastructure) warrant outside intervention. This situation therefore compels a trade-off of local autonomy in favor of external resources, which are needed for the success of grassroots participation itself. Even though the initiative for local social development programs may be taken by the community, external funds and expertise are often actively sought and widely used. As grassroots participation often takes place within a political environment, government in particular will always be responsible for providing material and other support to grassroots initiatives. Under the grassroots participation paradigm the major issue is therefore finding the appropriate role for each role-player in a manner which allows the poor to define and take control of their destiny and which recognizes their potential in defining and addressing their problems.

Coming to the third theme, which looks at the nature of committees, what surfaces predominantly from this theme is the fact that the participation of the committees is simply a 'white elephant'. In all the cases, participation in policy matters and service delivery has not yet taken off the ground. To the questions about whether the committees have been involved in policy formulation and implementation and service delivery and that which looks at whether the Department has reacted upon any decision or recommendations taken by the committees, in all their responses the committees answered no. This is peculiar, given the fact that the committees have been operational for the past two years. Interestingly an answer to the question which surveyed the factors preventing the committees from being fully involved in respect of policy issues

and service delivery, speaks volumes. In all four cases, the blame is put squarely on the shoulders of the Department. The process is derailed by a lack of clarity both at departmental and political level, as to the role that the committees should play within the Department. Ironically, Chapter Four displays how the social development policies of the Department increasingly reflect emphasis on participatory strategies and how the Department has employed the rhetoric of community participation in its development plans and other official documents and has also established administrative procedures for implementing community participation. In spite of these developments, there seems to be a lack of political support for community participation programs. For instance this was made explicit on the summit convened by the Director General of the Department in September 1999, involving all District Transformation Committees and senior civil servants. At this summit an official document was tabled which stated clearly that the Western Cape MEC for Welfare and Health was not supportive of the idea of DTCs being involved in the policy domain of the Department, believing that this was an administrative function. The document also entailed policy proposals, tailored at overhauling the entire system of District Transformation Committees. In view of this it remains unclear as to whether the policy intention of the Department, under the current political dispensation in the Western Cape, is indicative of earlier conceptions of community involvement which found application in centralized and bureaucratically administered community development.

Accordingly, a policy proposal which set out to diminish the powers of and abolish the existing TLC, DTC, and MAC and put in their place, structures with reduced powers, was tabled for discussion in that summit. Reliable sources confirmed that changes in the existing structures had more to do with party politics. The existing structures were not supported by the current MEC for Welfare and Development who is a Nationalist, because they were the invention of the former MEC for Welfare, who was an ANC member. This could explain the reason why the Department's support for grassroots participation has been haphazard and ad hoc. This also bears testimony to the

evidence that the state's support of grassroots participation is often orchestrated to exploit grassroots participation in order to attain ideological ends, and in the process stifles authentic grassroots participation and defeats the ideals of genuine grassroots participation in social development. Notwithstanding a patent political manipulation inherent in the Department's program of grassroots participation, many obstacles seem to dog the smooth running of these committees. These were uncovered by the last two themes, which investigated the resourcefulness of the committees and obstacles impeding mutual partnership between the department and committees. In documenting these, the researcher shall start with the former, and then, the latter.

In the theme assessing the resourcefulness of the committee, it becomes apparent from the committee's response that the committees are poorly resourced. In all four cases, there has been no training received. Other committees, like the Cape Town District Committee, have no financial allocation and those which have received financial allocation from the Department have received marginal allocations. Below is a diagrammatic illustration of the DTC's annual budget.

Districts	1998/2000	1999/2000
Athlone	R43000	R43000
Atlantis	R11664	
Bellville West	R21000	
Bellville	R4000	R50000
Cape Town	R8352	R8352
George		R24000
Khayelitsha		
Mitchells Plain	R3455	
Oudsthoorn	R8466	R16000
Vredendal	R30000	
Worcester	R12000	R40000
Wynberg		R40 000

Source: Terms of Reference of DTCs :1999

From the diagram above, it is vividly illustrated that budget allocation is indeed inequitable and uneven. For reasons only known to the Department, some of the DTCs are operating on a zero budget. What is even striking to note is a disproportionate allocation of the budget, with urban-based DTCs receiving the biggest chunk as compared to those based in the rural areas. Certainly, the need for financial resources is greatest in the rural areas. In some cases, the committees do not receive any kind of logistical or other support from the Department. They appear to have been established and left to their own devices. The danger in this is that should they crumble because of resource constraints, this will be blamed on the committees incapability to operate independently and free of external agencies, thus reinforce the notion that grassroots participation should be centralized and nurtured by the state. Like any social program, grassroots participation requires assistance from outside

agents in terms of organizational training, technical skills, and education, without which it could disintegrate.

Coupled with the resource constraints were bureaucratic obstacles which prevented the committees from fulfilling their roles. The respondents underlined attitudinal and bureaucratic negative traits such as the 'them and us' syndrome as the major stumbling block to effective participation. Although not much prevalent from top-level management, it is more pervasive among middle and lower level bureaucrats, precisely where adherence is vital for the eventual success of partnership. This trait was mostly experienced in the form of suspicion, mistrust, stonewalling and accompanying arrogance. Such attitudinal problems stem in part from the prevalence of old bureaucratic traditions and staff averse to change and lacking the communication skills necessary to engage in partnership with the grassroots. For these bureaucrats who have a firm belief in their technical expertise and professional competence, grassroots participation is viewed as an uninvited encroachment into their exclusive domain.

In conclusion, the notion of grassroots participation as promoted by the Department (at least rhetorically) is far from the ideals of grassroots participation, as discussed by the researcher in Chapter Two. From the evidence gathered from the DTCs surveyed and the observation made by the researcher in his dealings with the committees and the Department, it becomes quite obvious that the Department's notion of grassroots participation is less considerate of the poor. It is a typical example of a centralized, top-down, and co-opted participation, which lives little room for the marginalized group of the society to own and control the process. It has been argued in this Chapter that, it is the effective devolution of power to local communities to decide on matters that concern their welfare and development that is at the center of the philosophy of grassroots participation. Incidences of ideological manipulation, resource constraints and bureaucratic obstacles, corrupting grassroots participation, have also been uncovered. The last chapter will thus deal with a

few recommendations aiming at bringing the Department's notion of grassroots participation closer to the ideals of authentic grassroots participation.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDAIONS

CONCLUSION

The fundamental objective of this mini-dissertation was a critical examination of grassroots participation in the policy processes and service delivery of the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Service. Chapter One has given a contextual background of the study and presented the underlining problem which gave the impetus to the study. The researcher has argued in this Chapter that even in most democratic governments, the philosophy of grassroots participation is often oparationalized in a contaminated manner and often far from the ideals of genuine grassroots participation.

In Chapter Two, the researcher has explored the various understandings of the notion of grassroots participation, by firstly undertaking a journey to its historical evolution, and secondly by documenting the literature, which attempts to give its conceptual analysis. Given the misconceptions and abuses of the concept of grassroots participation as documented in the literature, in this Chapter the researcher clarified the meaning of this concept within the context of the study, in which he stated that grassroots participation is operationalized through the lenses of deprivation and marginalization. It has been the researcher's contention therefore that grassroots participation crafted on the deprivation involves local people taking part in decision-making of grassroots structures and lays emphasis on them owning and controlling the participatory process. The ideals of authentic grassroots participation

uncovered in this Chapter have laid a conceptual framework within which the Department's grassroots participation approach has been measured.

As it has been discovered in Chapter Two that the grassroots approach requires institutional change on the part of bureaucratic government structures, as the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services has for long been socialized under the Apartheid dogma which was anti-participatory in character, Chapter Three attempted to investigate whether the Department has undergone such institutional change which is suited to grassroots participation. The conclusion to which the researcher has arrived in this Chapter was that, given the apparent signs of resistance to change within the Department as documented in this Chapter, the likelihood of the Department implementing efficiently its grassroots participation policies was slim.

Chapter Four outlined the transformation initiatives that the Department embarked upon in terms of implementing its grassroots participatory approach. It is in this Chapter that the grassroots, consultative and democratic structures as established by the Department were introduced. A descriptive discussion of their functions and powers has also been discussed. The researcher has argued in this Chapter that decentralized, consultative and democratic structures by themselves do not necessarily amount to the realization of the ideals of grassroots participation.

Chapter Five has specifically evaluated the notion of grassroots participation as implemented by the department through the establishment of structures discussed in Chapter Four. Pending a critical evaluation of those structures, it has been documented in this Chapter that the Department's grassroots approach is far from the ideals of authentic grassroots participation. The overall impression of the researcher as argued in this Chapter was that, in spite of their good intention, those structures remained alienating to the poor, and signified a centralized, top-down and co-opted participation, which left little room for the marginalized groups of the society to own and control them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What came out predominantly in the evaluation of the DTC structures, was that the marginalized groups of the community for which these structures are made are disproportionately represented. As was suggested elsewhere in this study, that the participatory grassroots approach grounded on the notions of deprivation and disadvantage should maximize the access of the poorest of the poor in decision-making processes and should mobilize them to drive the process. However it is acknowledged that the socio-economic realities of the poor will continue to impact negatively on the grassroots participatory process.
In view of their socio-economic realities, the priorities of the poor will always center around issues of survival, with participation in grassroots participatory processes often being perceived as a secondary issue, and thus of little significance to their lives. It becomes of pivotal importance that any grassroots participatory process should primarily focus around the fulfillment of basic needs first, before going on to focus on broader issues such as policy issues. With the satisfaction of basic needs could eventually develop a desire to participate in broader socio-economic and political activities. For the Department to effectively operationalize its grassroots participatory policy, it must speedily address the immense backlog of fulfillment of basic needs which has been inherited from the legacy of Apartheid.

It also came out in the findings that the grassroots participatory process was not fully utilized by its intended beneficiaries. On the contrary, the grassroots participatory process appeared to be a monopoly of a relatively informed, educated and 'development aware' citizenry. Based on this, a grassroots participatory process should attempt to address the uneven relations of power within communities with a view to mobilize the majority of the poorest of the poor to effectively partake in the grassroots participatory process. As much as it is advisable to include people with academic grounding in the grassroots participatory program, it is equally important to include them along with various marginalized groups. The poor also have specific knowledge about

their social environment, given this, they need to be allowed to make decisions regarding their development. Once again, high illiteracy amongst the poor may stand in a way of ensuring active participation in the development initiative. However, guidance could be sought from this group as to what kind of format and procedure would be suitable for them to speak and discuss openly both among themselves and in combination with other groups.

Conducive circumstances and constraints influence grassroots participation. There are conditions that are in general conducive to grassroots participation, such as the availability of skilled leaders as well as resources for the participatory program and a high employment level in the community. These virtues are often lacking in the marginalized communities, necessitating therefore an outside intervention, which often compromises local initiative and self-reliance. Of special importance is the allocation of resources to build the community's capacity for participation. It must be noted here that the researcher is not opposing external intervention, but rather that intervention must mainly focus on imparting developmental skills on the poor with a view to empower them to eventually run their own affairs.

In Chapter Five the respondents underlined attitudinal and bureaucratic negative traits as the major stumbling block to effective participation. It became apparent in the preceding Chapter that there still exists an old bureaucratic tradition, which serves to derail the grassroots participation. For the past four years the Department has been undergoing a process of transition in order to be in keeping with the new dispensation. However, it has gone into this new era with generally the same individuals and groupings that implemented the apartheid policy. Such attitudinal problems stem in part from the prevalence of old bureaucratic traditions and staff averse to change and lacking the communication skills necessary to engage in partnership with the public. It is thus essential that a program be implemented which will result in the reorientation of civil servants. Such a program's main objectives should be

the building of capacity of personnel in community partnership. The ability to relate intimately to the community in which the officials work is of utmost importance. As long as the people who are tasked with creating the environment supportive to grassroots participation do not understand that it is a social process, and not a technical intervention, the Department will not be able to facilitate community participation in policy design and implementation.

It was also salient from the respondents that the grassroots participatory process can be subjected to political manipulation and be used to achieve ulterior motives. From the respondent's responses it has came into light that quite often, it is a political environment which determines the objectives of a development process, and that participants in a grassroots participatory process are often used as instruments of political control. Equally, people targeted by development also used it as a way to realize unstated selfish ends. This presents itself as a learning lesson for those charged with facilitating grassroots participation. Facilitators will rarely find all of the stakeholders in the grassroots participatory ready and willing to declare their intentions, for obvious reasons. However, they may be able to address the implicit and submerged objectives of each group by being attentive to signals about these undeclared agendas as the process unfolds.

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