

**UNPACKING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING PROCESS IN MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, MPUMALANGA
PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.**

BY

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Research Dissertation submitted for the requirements of the degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

In the

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

At the

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

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2023

ABSTRACT

During the apartheid era in South Africa, most black people were banned from participating in government planning processes. After 1994, the black democratic government took power and sought to address apartheid practices by enacting key policies to transform local government. As a planning instrument for local government, the integrated development plan (IDP), was seen as one of the mechanisms for including residents in policy and decision making. This research unpacked the participation of the community in the integrated development planning process. The study objectives were to conceptualize the understanding of community participation by the participants, examine the knowledge of the participants about the IDP process in the local municipality of Mbombela, identify factors that hinder participation in community meetings, and recommend strategies to improve the effectiveness of community participation in the IDP. The qualitative approach was used to collect data from 16 participants through semi-structured interviews. The data in this study were analysed using thematic analysis. The study found that one of the main issues that made it difficult for community members to engage successfully during IDP sessions was the use of English and political jargon. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the local language be used extensively during IDP meetings. Furthermore, it is necessary to simplify and unpack complex development concepts for residents, to facilitate their understanding of the issues discussed and the challenges at hand.

Keywords: Community participation, Sustainable Development, Participatory Democracy, and Community.

DECLARATION

I, Makhubela James Ansell, declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Venda for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science is my original work in design and execution, and has not been submitted for any degree at this and any other university or institution in South Africa or elsewhere. The dissertation does not contain other people's work, save work that is specifically acknowledged and referenced here.

Signed:.....

Date: 01 May 2024

Makhubela, J.A.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am humbly grateful to all the people who have devoted their time, expertise, experience, and suggestions to the success of this research study.

Firstly, I am grateful to my supervisors for their constructive discussions, criticisms, and insights. Supervisor, Dr YE Yende, and co-supervisor, Dr P Dzimiri, I have enjoyed many exchanges with you and have greatly benefitted from the discussions.

The Mbombela Municipality staff ward committee members and residents, I appreciate you for sacrificing their time to assist me with the information I needed to complete this research.

I acknowledge the great support I received from my family, especially my mother and father, Mr and Mrs Makhubela. I appreciate the financial support and unconditional love you have given me throughout the research process.

Above all, I want to express my gratitude to my sovereign God for providing me with the health and strength to complete this adventure. Thank you, God, for accompanying me down the winding road. Without you, I would not have made it.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:13

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
IDP	Integrated Development Planning
RDP	Reconstruction Development Programme
DPLG	Department of Provincial Local Government
LED	Local Economic Development
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
WB	World Bank
NEMA	National Environment Management Act No. 107 of 1998
MFMA	Municipal Financial Management Act No. 107 of 1998
MSA	Municipal Structures Act No. 117 of 1998
MSA	Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000
MEC	Member of Executive Council
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SDBIP	Service delivery and Budget Implementation Plan
PPP	Public Private Participation
SACP	South African Communist Party
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CDW	Community Development Work

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction and Background of the study

In most countries, community participation is considered a fundamental human right, particularly at the local government level. Sebola (2017) highlights that community involvement is not a new phenomenon, having been evident in ancient nations such as Greece and it is crucial for effective and accountable governance at local level. Kariuki (2020) argues that, as African countries encounter increased migration from rural to urban regions, as well as pressing socioeconomic needs, participation has become an increasingly essential component of local governance. To practice real democracy, citizen participation has become a guiding principle in how local governments provide development to everyone without excluding any segment of the population (Amtaika, 2013). Thus, community participation fosters participatory governance and democracy. There is need to align community participation with global governance discourse (Modise, 2017). Since the demise of apartheid in 1994, community participation in governance issues and planning in South Africa has seen significant changes. The movement toward participatory and direct democracy lies at the heart of these shifts. This can be seen; in the increased participation of a wide range of interest groups in a variety of governance processes, in the establishment of various consultative bodies, and in other mechanisms for community participation, such as integrated development planning processes and policy-making discussion conferences (Hassan, 2021).

In terms of community participation in governance, South African history demonstrates a lack of it. The fact that much of the population had no political rights until 1994 indicates the complete lack of involvement in governance. The government was extremely centralised, dictatorial, and secretive; ensuring that black people were denied access to basic public services (Fourie & van der Waldt, 2021). In support of this view, Thebe (2016) notes that service delivery was provided primarily for white people in apartheid South Africa, while other racial groups, particularly black people, were neglected. As a result, the other racial groups were excluded from the planning processes of their local governments. Water and electricity were distributed according to race, with white people enjoying better service at the expense of other races. Segregation policies created unequal societies and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Therefore, to redress the challenges of exclusion from decision making platforms, the South African government

developed legislations such as Municipal Systems Act at local level to ensure the participation of all stakeholders in a community development.

Since the democratisation of the South African government in 1994, the country has implemented a series of statutes that involve the citizen at the centre of development. The apartheid regime, characterised by the exclusion of the black majority at all levels of government, was rectified. As cited in the White Paper on Local Government (1998), local government is defined as a government that includes citizens and encourages them to define their own development. Furthermore, the White Paper on Local Government (1998) states that the government must come up with sustainable ways of improving the quality of life of its own people. To corroborate the argument above, the White Paper on Local Government, Section B, mandates local municipalities to identify individual and community projects that will improve the livelihood of community members at large. Through these projects, community members and other community stakeholders play a significant role in their success. Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 requires all spheres of government to create a conducive environment for community participation in government affairs. This has been further articulated by the Municipal System Act of (2000), which highlights that community participation is a key aspect of development in local government affairs. Local municipalities are required to ensure community participation in Integrated Development Planning, which is conceptualised as an integral process for ensuring that the people in South Africa govern as provided for by the freedom charter.

The IDP is identified as a critical tool for local government's promotion of the social and economic development of communities in the 1998 White Paper on Local Government and is linked to a broader set of instruments that includes performance management tools, participatory processes, and a service delivery partnership. This requires the full and active participation of people in their local wards in the integrated development planning process. Situmah (2018) argues that the implementation of the community participation process is critical to the democratisation of social values, as well as better planning and meeting of public needs. Furthermore, the government, led by the African National Congress (ANC), made great progress in 1994 in rebuilding municipal systems, structures, and service delivery mechanisms. This it did through

the implementation of efficient local government programmes, such as the integrated development plan. The plan was to ensure effective community participation and sustainable development in service delivery.

Against this background, this study unpacked community participation and its role in helping people define their own development. In this study, the participation of the community in the integrated development planning (IDP) process in the Mbombela Local Municipality was explored. In the context of the participation of local people in governance issues, the concepts community participation, public participation, community participation, and civic participation are used interchangeably. There is no common agreement on the conceptualisation of community participation. Different authors explain or interpret the concept differently, and do not provide the bases for their interpretations. For the purpose of this study, participation of the community in the integrated development planning process is referred to as ‘community participation’.

1.2.Problem Statement

One of the main limitations to sustainable community development and service delivery is the lack of community participation in the integrated municipal development planning process. This raises the question why the community does not participate in their own development agenda. Craython (2006) argues that 'community participation' is drawn from Section 152 (1) (E) of the South African Republic Constitution, 1996, which requires municipalities to encourage community and community organisation participation in local government affairs. As a result, community involvement is not a choice for local government; it is a constitutional requirement. Other structures, such as councillors, ward committees, and community development workers (CDW), are involved in ensuring that participation occurs. These structures are created to help the municipality keep the community active, which does not always happen. The initiation and implementation of an IDP should be a two-way process in which the local authority and community members exchange information. However, this is not the case with the Mbombela local municipality, since community participation in service delivery is constantly lacking in most rural communities (Ababio, 2010). Furthermore, community participation, especially in IDP processes, is limited, if not absent in the Mbombela Local Municipality. Literature highlights that various stakeholders are not consulted in the IDP processes, hence, when there are protests, people

destroy infrastructure (Modise,2017). The destruction of infrastructure might be a sign that the community does not own its infrastructure, as they were not consulted when certain infrastructure was built. Community participation is generally weak, and there is need for its strengthening. It is against this backdrop that this study unpacked community participation in the integrated development planning process as a mechanism for community development and service delivery, identifying methods used in encouraging community participation.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The study contributes to the body of knowledge on local governance and understanding of community participation.

- Municipal officials can get enhanced insight on the importance of community participation.
- The study exposed the researcher to basic community research on community participation in development activities.
- The results of this study might differ from those of other geographical areas as the study was conducted in the local municipality of Mbombela in Mpumalanga province. In addition, the results of this research could help government officials to pursue policy development by involving and consulting the population on government activities or programmes.
- The findings of this study could help the local municipality of Mbombela develop a better strategy to involve community members in the preparation, implementation, and review of the IDP.

1.4.Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the value of community participation in the integrated development planning process in Mbombela local municipality.

1.5.The Objectives of the Study

The study was based on the objectives below.

- To determine participants' conception of community participation.
- To examine the knowledge of participants about the IDP process in Mbombela Local Municipality.
- To identify the factors that hinder participation in community meetings.
- To proffer suggestions or recommendations to improve community participation in the IDP.

1.6. The Research Question of the Study

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What do participants conceptualise community participation in Mbombela local municipality as?
- What knowledge do participants have about the projects implemented in the Mbombela local municipality?
- What factors hinder the participation of the community from attending meetings in the Mbombela municipality?
- What strategies are recommended to enhance effective community participation in the Mbombela local municipality?

1.7. Preliminary Theoretical Framework

The ladder of participation was adopted to explain the participation of the community in unpacking the participation of the community in the integrated development process in the local Municipality of Mbombela in Mpumalanga province. The ladder of participation has eight steps depicting different levels of participation in the advocacy process Einstein (1969). The ladder steps range from non-participation to full participation when community members are included in the decision-making process. The lowest level of the ladder of participation is manipulation. At this level, community members have no voice or power. Some groups lie to and manipulate

them. The second ladder that explains non-participation is therapy, which can mean that community members are treated as decorations. They are asked to attend but must sit quietly without speaking or participating. Ladders 4, 5 & 6 are informing, consultation & placation respectively, and explain tokenism. Community members participate according to a pre-written script. Someone tells them exactly what to say or do. This is not full participation because members do not have power in the advocacy process. The final level represents full participation. At that level, participants know how to do advocacy. Community members create and manage their own advocacy projects. This is achieved through partnership, delegated power, and citizen control in the ladder of participation. Other stakeholders can contribute money and skills to advocacy efforts, as long as community members remain equal decision makers.

1.8. Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Monette (2008), a qualitative paradigm is an umbrella that covers several forms of inquiry that help us to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena, with as little disruption to the natural setting as possible. Qualitative research seeks to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context, and the interactions therein. The researcher was the primary instrument of data collection and data analysis. This approach was deemed fit for this study that is exploratory in design. The study is an empirical study where 16 participants were interviewed. After the collection of data using an interview guide, the data was analysed and interpreted. Data analysis in qualitative studies entails transforming the data to produce findings. This involves reducing the volume of raw information and sifting significant themes, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Monette, 2008). Thematic analysis is a way of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2001) generated. This was the proper method of data analysis, as it is the simplest form used in the analysis of qualitative data. It enabled the researcher to analyse a broad range of data to discover clear patterns and themes that would shed light on the research problems.

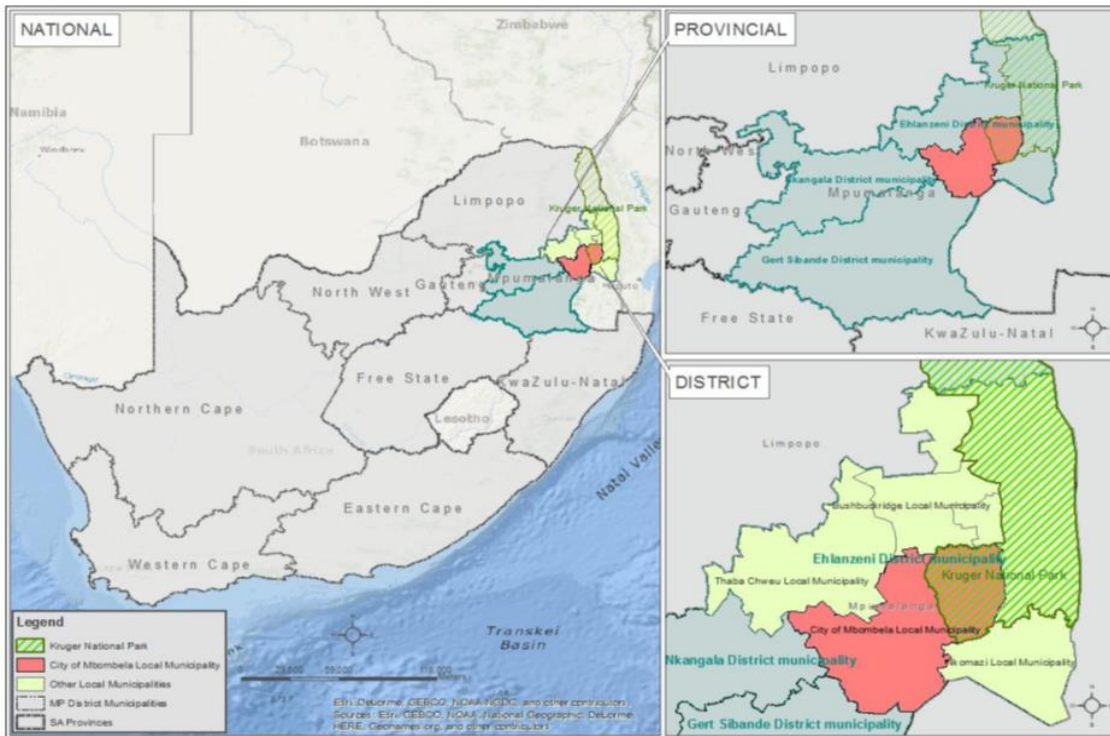
1.9.Limitations of the Study

The study was carried out during the covid-19 pandemic, which affected the researcher to collect data on time. Limited time reduced the scope of the research as the researcher had to spend less time with respondents.

1.10. Description of the Study Area

The Mbombela local municipality is one of the municipalities in South Africa, located in the Municipality of Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga province. It is the largest municipality within the Ehlanzeni district in terms of geographical area covered, with an area of 7,125km². The Mbombela Municipality was established in terms of Section 12 of the Municipal System Act (2000) by the MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in Mpumalanga. It was an amalgamation of two municipalities: the Mbombela Local Municipality (MP322) and the UMjindi Local Municipality (323). The delimited areas for the proposed new municipality were 45. This reduced the number of wards in Umjindi from nine to five wards (Wards 41 to 45) and increased those in Mbombela by one additional ward (Mbombela IDP Review, 2019/20).

The municipality is located in the north eastern part of South Africa within the lowveld sub-region of the Mpumalanga province. The geographic coordinates of the municipality are 25.4 ° south and 30.9 ° east. According to the Community Survey (2016), the Mbombela municipal area had, by that time, a total population of 695,913. The results of the 2016 Community Survey reveal that this population constitutes 39.6% of the entire population of the Ehlanzeni district. The municipal area of Mbombela is the most populous within the Ehlanzeni District, which it falls under. In this municipality, many households, and individuals, especially in rural areas, depend solely on government social grants, informal trading, and subsistence farming for survival (Community Survey, 2016). Below is a map showing the location of the municipality's area of jurisdiction.



Source: Mbombela GIS, 2017

The municipality is located in Mbombela, which is the capital city of the Mpumalanga province, and hosts the head office of the provincial government (legislature). The location and the city status of the municipality provides it with a competitive advantage as a corridor for growth and development. The city has two airports: Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport to the north east, and Mbombela Airport for general aviation to the southwest. Kruger Mpumalanga is used for scheduled flights to Johannesburg and, less frequently, to Cape Town and other cities. The municipality is bordered by Swaziland, located 167 km from the CBD, and the metropolitan areas of Pretoria and Johannesburg located 320 km inland, with the border post at Komatipoort approximately 120 km to the east, and the Mozambican coastline around 200 km away and 55 km from the famous Kruger National Park. The city of Mbombela is a major stopover point for tourists who travel to Kruger National Park and Mozambique (Mbombela IDP Review, 2019/20).

The study was carried out in the local municipality of Mbombela, specifically in the Mjindini area, in ward 41. The unit of inquiry for this study included the residents, ward councillor, ward

committee members, traditional leader, and municipal officials. Data was collected from these groups on the level of knowledge of residents and political leaders regarding the participation of community members in the integrated development planning. The most important unit of inquiry was the residents, since they are the beneficiaries of developmental projects, and the researcher had to collect data directly from them.

1.11. Definition of Key Terms

1.11.1. Community

Hornby (2004) defines community as a group of people who have the same religion, race, occupation, or common interest. However, Onyeozu (2017) defines the term community as a territorially bounded social system within which people live, and share common social, economic, and cultural characteristics. In the context of this study, community refers to people who stay in the same geographical location and participate in the programmes of their community.

1.11.2. Community Participation

According to Fox and Meyer (1995), community participation is the participation of residents in an extensive range of administrative policy-making activities. Such activities include the determination of, levels of service, budget priorities, and physical construction projects. These position government programmes towards community needs, development of public support, and encouragement of a sense of cohesion within society. This bottom-up approach to participation creates an environment where officials are held accountable based on services envisaged and promised in the municipal IDP.

1.11.3. Community Development

The United Nations (2014) defines community development as a process in which community members come together to take collective action. Roodt (2010) defines community development as a process in which small, geographical contiguous communities are assisted by more developed communities to achieve improved standards of social and economic life. This is done primarily through their own local efforts, and through local community participation at all stages of goal selection, mobilisation of resources, and execution of projects, enabling these communities to become increasingly independent. The Global Network of community practitioners refers to

community development as a practice-based profession and academic discipline that promotes participatory democracy and sustainable development (Shaw, 2008). From the above definition, community development involves a lot of time, since it is a process. Furthermore, from the definitions it was revealed that the main aspect of community development is problem solving and improving livelihoods.

1.11.4. Sustainable development

The notion that human societies must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nation, 2014). Sustainable development is defined as the integration of social, economic, and environmental factors into planning, implementation, and decision making to ensure that development serves present and future generations (National Environmental Management Act, Act No. 107 of 1998). Sustainable development entails fostering social progress, economic development, climate action, and the environmental sustainability. In the context of this study, social progress and economic development were considered.

1.11.5. Participatory democracy

This is the provision of services based on the establishment of a legal framework that allows participation and mobilisation of civil society in the legitimate formulation and execution of policies (Ababio, 2015). Modise (2017) describes participatory democracy as a model of democracy under which citizens have control over the rules and regulations that govern them, which politicians are supposed to implement appropriately. In a participatory democracy, the higher power lies with the power of the citizens, and they have the authority of running the country on their own terms (Elstub 2018).

1.12. Organisation of the Study

This study is composed of five chapters outlined below:

Chapter one- general introduction

The chapter discussed the background to the study, the problem statement, research objectives and questions, as well as the research methodology.

Chapter Two- Literature review

Scholarly views on the discourse of community participation and the Integrated Development Planning process in general, are reviewed. This chapter also explains the theoretical framework that informs this study, and the legal framework influencing community participation in South Africa.

Chapter three- Methodology

The chapter described the methodology of the study. The chapter comprises: the research design, research methodology, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection methods, and data analysis methods employed.

Chapter Four-Presentation of results and Discussion

This chapter used the empirical data collected to present the results and discuss the emerging issues related to community participation and the IDP process in Mbombela local municipality.

Chapter five- Conclusion

The final chapter draws conclusions from the foregoing debate and provides recommendations to that effect. The chapter provides the conclusions to the community participation discourse, and thereafter, proffers recommendations of the study.

1.13. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the introduction and background to the study, gave the problem statement and importance of the study, the aim and objectives of the study, research questions, study area, reviewed preliminary literature, definition of key terms, and a breakdown of the chapters in this dissertation. The literature review of the study is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.Introduction

The following topics were covered in detail in the previous chapter, introduction and the background, the objectives, the research questions, the theoretical framework, methodology, definitions of key terms, research, the description of the study area, organisation of the study, and the chapter summary. This chapter addresses the study's theoretical foundation, reviews the community involvement, and the application of integrated development planning (IDP) to enhance community development and service provision. The Arnsteien ladder of citizen participation is first considered because it was chosen as the theoretical lens to understand the research findings. Subsequently, the chapter conceptualises the concept of community and participation, explores community participation, community participation in integrated development planning, the legal framework for community participation, and barriers to community participation. The chapter concludes with a summary.

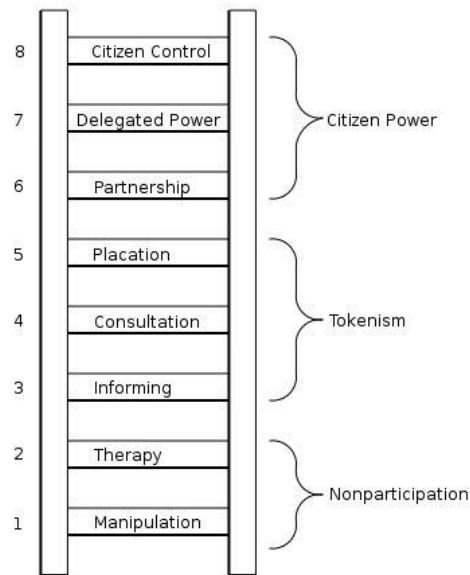
2.2.The Theoretical Framework behind Community Participation

2.2.1. Ladder of Citizens Participation

The theory of the "ladder of citizen participation" was developed by Sherry R. Arnstien in 1969 in America. Arnstien (1996:88) notes that "The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach, no one is against it in principle because it is good for you". The above suggests that citizen participation does more good than harm. Participation is something that everyone must strive for, especially when it pertains to decision-making processes that involve the community. In this study, the citizen participation ladder was adopted. Hardina (2003) argues that citizen participation is a way in which people can become empowered. The theory suggests eight levels of engagement for citizens, all correlating to a distinct level of participation. These are manipulation, therapy, Information, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated authority, and citizen control. These categorisations, according to Arnstein,(1996) are necessary in order to expose how people are manipulated by authorities and policymakers in the name of community involvement.

Manipulation and therapy are some of the lowest rungs on the ladder, with the least level of citizen engagement or participation. Informing, consulting, and pacifying people occupy the middle rungs of the ladder, straddling the line between manipulation at the bottom and citizen control at the top, and this is referred to as tokenism, in which people are allowed to participate only to the extent of voicing their opinions, but have no real say in the matter. The top three rungs of the ladder; partnership, delegated authority, and citizen control, are equivalent to citizen power, and represent genuine and meaningful involvement. This classification of various forms of people's engagement is crucial to separating non participation from true citizen power, as well as identifying the real motives behind participatory programmes, which are sometimes criticized as falling short of the notion of participation (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein's (1969) citizen participation ladder can be used to identify the responsibilities and processes necessary for effective community engagement. Utilising the citizen participation ladder can help to clarify the essential principles that ought to govern democratic engagement, and pose a challenge to the community's current limiting factors.

Tokenism, lack of power or engagement, and citizen power are further distinguished in Arnstein's (1969) paradigm. The lowest point on the scale is 'Therapy and Manipulation' in which residents' expressions are restricted, they are involved in community development, and they are forcibly handed a mandate to obey without inquiry and consultation. This stage exposes citizens to a top-down strategy. The second approach is tokenism to various degrees. This mode, according to Arnstein (1969), is one in which individuals are consulted and involved in the process, but they have no ability to enforce or influence decision-making. In a nutshell, residents are unable to hold officials accountable for their actions. The theory is pertinent to the study because local authorities and local leaders manipulate funds for community development initiatives, making communities lose interest in participating in planning for integrated development. Community participation can occur at various levels. Arnstein's theory (1969) is one popular method of categorising participation.



The ladder of participation (Ainstern, 1969)

- Citizen control

The bulk of decision-making positions are open to nonpowerful individuals, and these individuals may have total managerial authority. This shows that people can engage in meaningful participation.

- Delegated power

People in positions of authority have the ability to hold the government and its officials accountable. Additionally, people have the power to decide on particular projects. This also includes veto rights to fix problems and improve effectiveness.

- Partnership

The term "partnership" describes the handing over of power to the populace, also known as the citizenry. The authorities and the community members talk about share of power and electing community representative for community development projects. They create a structure in this situation to promote the planning and execution of group projects.

- Placation

People are granted some power and influence through appeasement, but only enough to meet their needs. It is merely a bribe to placate or control them. The action serves only as a window dressing. People can only support decisions that have already been taken. They lack the power to create their own.

- Consultation

Citizens are consulted during consultation. However, the issue arises when their suggestions are not taken into account or appreciated adequately for execution. The number of individuals who attend meetings when invited is the only way to gauge participation. The government authorities would, of course, have proof that invitations were received and the attendance list would demonstrate that people showed up to the meeting.

- Informing

The entire public is consulted during the consultation. However, the issue arises when their recommendations are not put into action or given enough credit. The number of people who attend meetings when invited is the only way to gauge participation. Undoubtedly, government officials would have evidence that invitations were accepted, and the attendance record would show that community members attended the meeting.

- Therapy

People are made to believe that they are actively participating in therapy. Instead of giving them actual authority, the objective is to keep them quiet while they question the status quo. They are made to believe that they have control over decisions even if they do not.

- Manipulation

Individuals do not have an actual possibility to participate in manipulation as a form of involvement. They merely approve of the government's and its employees' decisions. Only advisory duties are given to them. To accomplish the study's research goal, the researcher uses a consultation model. Local governments are required by law to consult community structures. However, the extent of their consultation must be established. For this reason, the consultation approach was adopted.

Participatory democracy, according to Ababio (2015), is "the provision of services based on the establishment of a legal framework that allows civil society participation, involvement, and mobilization in the legitimate process of policy formulation and execution." A variety of pieces of legislation require some kind of citizen involvement in municipal management. South Africa is a representative and participatory democracy, according to the Republic of South Africa's 1996 constitution. In a representative democracy, voters choose representatives to represent them when making decisions (Brooks, 2019). Residents elect municipal council members, for example, to represent their best interests in the local council. Participatory democracy is where people have the opportunity to make decisions themselves. All affected people have the opportunity to participate and there are no representatives who can make decisions on behalf of others without their consent. This typically works in small communities where everyone gathers to talk about a problem and come to a decision (Mafunisa, 2010). All stakeholders must be given a chance to be heard, hence the leaders must be innovative in handling a bigger community.

Modise (2017) argues that, due to the citizens' lack of understanding of how politics operates, both locally and globally, participatory democracy is a significant difficulty for democratic South Africa. Service delivery and demonstrations indicate that participatory democracy is one of the major challenges in democratic South Africa. Local government provides an ideal forum for participatory democracy to flourish as it is closest to the people. However, Craythone (2006) argue that, in many cases, local government is of utmost importance, and has a constitutional duty to offer a range of services to prevent people from living in terrible poverty and depression. The citizens have to inform local governance and politicians about their requirements through their

ward committee. People's needs must be communicated to the integrated development plan, as well as to the municipal, district, provincial and national governments (Modise, 2017).

The researcher was assisted to understand the dynamics of citizen participation in the advocacy process in Mbombela Municipality by the Ainstern ladder of participation. Citizen participation was explained using the eight ladders as explained in the literature. The ladder of participation was used to analyse the data and evaluate the findings in light of the objectives. The discussion of the study's findings was conducted using the ladder of participation of members.

2.3 An Analysis of Community Participation

Ababio (2015) holds the view that participation by the community in municipal affairs takes place for two primary objectives. The first is to take into account the idea and practice of participatory democracy and to guarantee the legitimacy of the nation in the area of local government by encouraging citizens to get involved in formal political processes like elections or municipal planning. The second objective pertains to the responsibility of local governments to fight poverty by providing services and supporting regional socioeconomic development programmes.

It can be argued that the key component in defining community participation is inclusion in processes intended to promote democracy through formal participatory mechanisms, as well as reducing poverty and improving service delivery (Makhoba, 2014). Unlike Ababio & Makhoba, Coetzee (2019) argues that the planning process continues to be largely ignored, despite numerous attempts to make participation a fundamental instrument in policy frameworks. The author further contends that planners and community representatives struggle to manage effective participation processes, and many politicians are failing to manage community participation. Municipalities must create participatory governance that complements formal representative government, as required by Section 16 (1) of the Municipal System Act of 1998. Municipalities have a responsibility to establish the necessary frameworks for the community to participate in municipal issues. The framework should foster effective planning, carrying out and evaluating the integrated development plan.

- The creation, execution and evaluation of its performance management system.

- monitoring and evaluating its performance, as well as the results and effects of that performance; and
- establishing its structure, budget, and elected officials as necessary; starting consultations with locally recognised community organisations and, where necessary, traditional authorities, and reporting back to the community.

Participatory culture is vital; and appropriate, relevant mechanism, processes, and procedure should be developed (Mziwakhe & Reddy, 2008). Developing a culture of participation would play a vital role between municipalities and residents (Mubangizi, 2017). This is because shared visions and areas with shared values are necessary for the integrated development planning process. In more diverse communities, general agreements are not easier to spot. This includes how a decision would be made regarding the use of resources.

The legally required Integrated Development Plan consultation sessions are not "people-friendly". In support of the findings by Dosoudil, Brooks (2017) argues that South African citizens now turn to "invented spaces" like protests, petitions, and marches to make their opinions heard, because participatory democracy has failed. One can say that there is no effective community participation.

2.4. Reflecting On Community Participation

2.4.1 An International Perspective

Governments at all levels, according to the World Development Report, have a greater grasp of the need for inclusive governance. Community participation is valued and important, not just at the national level, but also internationally, as recognised by the World Bank, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations. Awareness of the right to community participation fits into nations' various legal systems, and is one of the biggest issues facing all nations in building community participation mechanisms (World bank, 2016). The Council of Europe specifically urges all of its members to build an enabling institutional framework for citizen engagement in its proposals on the legal status of nongovernmental organisations in Europe (Mohanty & Thompson, 2010). The Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making

Process was approved by the Conference of International NGOs in 2009, which the Council of Europe views as the voice of civil society. Municipalities offer a legal framework and outline the participants and procedures to be followed during the consultation process in order to promote communication between citizens and public authorities (municipalities) (Wallis, 2009).

A White Paper on European Governance was issued by the European Union's wing, called European Commission, in 2001. The latter advocated increased transparency, accountability, participation, and effectiveness in EU institutions. Large portions of the EU's Lisbon Treaty were also dominated by citizen participation. This treaty reinforced the idea of representative and participatory democracy (including the function of political parties and people) (Wallis, 2009). The Hungarian Constitution mandates that, to fulfil its tasks and responsibilities, the state must collaborate with communities. With regard to community involvement in legislative processes, the 2002 Law on Legislative Procedures clarifies the constitutional commitment for consultation. According to the protocol, communities must be involved in the creation of policies that impact socioeconomic circumstances and the interests they represent and defend (Cebotari & Mihály, 2019).

2.4.2 An African Perspective

Many African countries view community participation as a key component that can support and uphold good and sound governance in their efforts to foster good and sustainable governance. For instance, the 53 member states of the African Union committed to fostering community involvement and openness, among other things, when they ratified the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance in 2007 (African Union's Commitment to Human Rights, 2007). The development of implementation strategies and the creation of policy frameworks are the two main foci of efforts to increase citizen engagement in Rwanda. With this strategy, citizens can participate in the creation and evaluation of policies. It incorporates all crucial participants in all community development initiatives. The government has made appropriate efforts to provide supporting legal frameworks that encourage community involvement. The government is essential to enable communities to influence the planning and implementation of all developmental projects, and to successfully voice their requirements (Mutanguha & Kamuhanda, 2016).

A case study by Moyo (2012) discovered that community members in Bulilima and Mangwe districts in Zimbabwe were dissatisfied with the implementation of development projects. Residents of Bulilima and Mangwe were disappointed due to their lack of full participation in the design, planning, and decision-making procedures of the project cycle. Additionally, beneficiaries were denied the opportunity to voice their opinions about the development efforts they wanted. Planning and decision making are the most important phases in which residents actively participate. The study also discovered that the Bulilima and Mangwe districts had not successfully implemented community involvement to benefit local people. According to Arnstein (1969), participation without the redistribution of power is a pointless and frustrating exercise for the weak. Thus, those who have power abuse their positions and impose projects on the powerless.

2.4.3 South Africa's perspective from two political eras

It is common knowledge that improving community engagement in government affairs and decision-making is an effective strategy. The Department of Provincial Local Government (2008) noted that successful and responsible local governance is greatly influenced by public participation, as evidenced by international experience. In South Africa, community participation can be distinguished from two major political eras, apartheid and democracy. Community participation in governance during the apartheid era was discouraged by an exclusive and self-perpetuating government. Citizens' engagement in various government programmes was suppressed by the undemocratic apartheid government that prevented the country's majority black population from participating in issues of governance and service delivery.

However, the new democratic government committed to communicate with, and include the community as, end users of services in its administration, after the establishment of democracy in 1994 (Enaifoghe & Abosedo, 2021). South Africa's 1996 Constitution placed a strong emphasis on community involvement. The country's policy framework was distinguished by more laws, such as white papers, that explicitly outlined the goals of the government and welcomed substantial community involvement in decision-making and service delivery. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, stipulates that all levels of government (national, provincial, and municipal) should create procedures and methods that make it easy for people and organisations in communities to participate in government-led initiatives and programmes. The

democratic government build legislative structures and legal frameworks in order to increase community participation in the three domains of government.

A range of structures and mechanisms were established to facilitate and encourage community participation in various municipalities. A question might be asked why community participation? The National Policy Framework (2005) identifies four reasons for community participation. First, community participation is encouraged because it is a legal requirement for communities to be consulted. Second, it must be nurtured to make development plans and services more relevant to local needs and circumstances. Third, to improve community action and give the community ownership of the responsibility for services. Fourth, to give communities more control over their own economic future.

The participation of community members, especially those from disadvantaged groups, in shaping the direction of policies at the local level is necessary for community participation in development processes. A politically engaged citizen, who freely participates in elections, provides the foundation of the democratic debate in South Africa's new political system. Contrary to the electorate directly participating at all levels of decision-making in all spheres of government, it is assumed that elected officials, speaking on behalf of the populace, proclaim the noble ideals of an inclusive society by representing their particular constituencies in all areas of government (Phango, 2008).

2.5 Legal Framework Influencing Community Participation

2.5.1. The White Paper on Reconstruction and Development 1994

In relation to the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) challenges of community engagement, Davids (2005) states that 'the birth of a transformed nation can only succeed if the people themselves are voluntary participants in the process towards realisation they have themselves helped to define'. The RDP policy was significant to the first democratically elected black governance because it promotes people-centered development. The ANC-led government recognised the value of improving community participation and launched initiatives to improve service delivery, alleviate poverty, and minimise inequality in South Africa. Due to the background of South Africa's history of top-down decision making and disempowerment under

colonial and apartheid governments, Following South Africa's first democratic national and provincial elections in April 1994, a policy was adopted to redress historical wrongs caused by the colonial and apartheid systems. The African National Congress (1994) emphasised the value of community involvement, and argued that everyone should be included in government planning and decision making, regardless of colour, sex, location (rural or urban), wealth, or income levels. Davids (2005) argues that the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development differs from the Reconstruction and Development Programme in that the latter became the integrated socioeconomic policy framework, whereas the former was the ANC's manifesto. David's explanation focuses on the ANC's failure to put the RDP's guiding principles into practice following elections.

2.5.2. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

The South African Constitution of 1996 designates local government as a separate wing of government in charge of service provision. The national and provincial governments have a defined set of duties regarding the effectiveness, efficiency, and operation of municipalities. Municipalities are required by Section 152 of the Constitution to make every effort to carry out the objectives of the local government, namely:

- To provide communities with democratic and transparent government.
- To guarantee that services are delivered in a sustainable manner.
- To promote community participation in local government issues and community organisations.
- To encourage a secure and healthy environment.
- To encourage the growth of society and the economy.

Additionally, Section 2 of the 1996 Constitution states that the Constitution is the ultimate law of the Republic, and any law or conduct that conflict with it is unlawful. The Constitution's duties and responsibilities must be upheld. This means that the Constitution is the only legal standard that governs the state. The Constitution and the laws that follow it govern and regulate every aspect of government (Van der Waldt, 2014). The 1996 Constitution introduced many changes in governance in South Africa. For example, the municipal government is now regarded as a realm

of government rather than a level of government. Again, public and civil society participation is provided in the three spheres of government. The constitution expresses this more clearly for the local government sphere, by defining public and civil society participation as one of the objects (Nkwinika, 2011). Lufuno (2013) however, argues that municipal officials are unaware of Section 195 of the South African Constitution and other relevant legislation, which mandate that public management be regulated by democratic principles and ideals. This indicates that municipal officials are not formally inducted, educated, or instructed about the importance of the Constitution. It is critical that local municipal officials receive formal induction and thorough education on all matters pertaining to their position, as well as on how they should interact with the public and carry out their current constitutional obligation.

2.5.3. The White Paper on Local Government: 9 March 1998

Municipalities are given a structure by the White Paper on Local Government and the Legislative Framework for local government to run and manage their business. The White Paper serves as the foundation for a new local government that is devoted to engaging communities, organisations, and residents. As a result, a human settlement would be created, that offers a decent standard of living. Furthermore, it would address the social, economic, and material requirements of communities. The White Paper empowers municipalities to develop local democracy by creating strategies and procedures to consistently interact with citizens, businesses, and community groups to achieve this goal. In a nutshell, the White Paper mandates municipalities to articulate the needs and interests of the community and collaborate with all groups within it, to create a shared vision and establish developmental goals. Despite its "noble sentiments" and "visionary dimension," the White Paper on Local Government is associated with several issues. The White Paper has come under fire for being unduly idealistic and ambitious in its conception of municipalities as the driving forces behind social and economic development, efficient service provision, and promotion of local-level democracy (Lufuno, 2013).

2.5.4 Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998

The Municipal Structures Act's Chapter 4 and Section 4 guarantee the establishment of various municipal governance structures. The purpose of this is to improve the participatory democracy of the local government. Additionally, Chapter 2 (Section 19) of the Act directs municipalities to

create procedures for: consulting the community and other community organisations when carrying out their duties and using their power towards achieving their goals, involving the community in all municipal operations, and conducting an annual review of the community's needs to establish municipal priorities and strategies to address them. Ward committees, IDPs, and traditional leaders are only a few of the stakeholders connected to community participation that are specified in the afore mentioned Act.

2.5.5 Local Government: Municipal System Act, 32 of 2000

The Municipal System Act presents the goals of local government and promotes community participation in municipal affairs as an essential tenet of local government in its preamble. For community participation to be realised, the Municipal System Act places focus on local communities collaborating with the municipality's administration and political structures within the municipal areas. The municipal council is required to promote community participation and consult with local communities regarding the quality and impact of services provided by the municipality, in accordance with the principle of cooperative government and Section 4 of the Municipal System Act. This is significant because members of the affected community would be able to take advantage of the opportunity to better empathize with common social problems. The Municipal System Act puts emphasis on residents owning the municipality and being part of the development processes. However, community participation appears to be rhetoric. Section 5 states the rights and obligations of community members, which are thought to be significant because they outline what citizens should expect from municipalities and establish a deadline for filing complaints and holding municipal employees accountable (Malefane & Mashakoe,2008).

2.4.6 Local Government: The Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA)

A key component of local government development and change is the MFMA. The act sets guidelines and criteria for financial administration at the municipal level of government. A municipal budget is a crucial instrument for managing municipal finances. It is crucial that all parties involved in municipal affairs, including officials, council members of wards, mayors, traditional leaders, and interest groups, are knowledgeable about the Municipal Financial Management Act, other relevant laws, and how they should be applied (Mantzaris, 2014). Section 21A of the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000, which requires citizen involvement, states that

every municipality's budget must be open. The accounting officer of a municipality is required to post the following papers on its website in accordance with Section 75, Subsection (1) of the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003: annual and adjustment budgets, all budget-related records, municipal and quarterly annual reports, and all performance agreements required by Section 57 (1) (b) of the Municipal Systems Act. This is for the public to use information technology to access information relevant to them in order to make inputs. Ward committees have the responsibility of ensuring that funds transferred from the national government are used for the appropriate reasons, such as providing basic services to the underprivileged. Only once the public is made aware of the multiple effective policy measures for community participation, and as awareness of ward committees' existence and usefulness grows, can these provisions be implemented (MFMA, 2003).

2.5.7 The Batho Pele Principles

The Sesotho expression "The Batho Pele" means to prioritise the needs of people. Its goal is to ensure that service delivery is improved so that it meets the needs of residents and communities. The Batho Pele Principles must be applied to transform the public sector and local government. Thus, local governments are required to consult and involve individuals in the planning of the services to which they are entitled, which would help the country's social well-being and economic stability (Baloyi, 2008). In summary, welfare, equity, and efficiency are the three main objectives of service delivery. The Batho-Pele principles are eight guidelines for providing services:

- Consultation
- Service standards
- Access
- Courtesy
- Information
- Openness and Transparency
- Redress
- Value for Money

Consultation is one of the fundamentals of community participation, and a component of Batho Pele's core values. This principle emphasises the need for communities to be consulted about the services they receive from any government institution in South Africa and builds on the constitutional guarantee of public participation (Madzivhandila & Asha,2012). Importantly, the Batho Pele White Paper highlights the necessity of the larger community's active participation in the establishment of a service-oriented culture. If municipalities are to improve their operations, service customers must provide ongoing input. It is necessary to mobilise stakeholders to create a service culture. Local companies or non-governmental organisations, for instance, may help with funding certain initiatives, supplying details about particular services, and detecting service needs (Maseko, 2008).

2.6 The importance of Community Participation in Government affairs

The importance of community engagement as a local government duty lies in Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution (1996), specifically Section 152 (1) (a), which states that, it is the local government's duty to "provide an accountable and democratic government system for local municipalities, and to encourage the engagement of community organizations in matters of local government". To ensure that services are provided to communities in a sustainable manner, and that individuals are engaged in their own development, local government must provide for democratic and responsible government for communities, in accordance with the constitution (Moodley & Govender, 2006). Municipalities must prove their administrative, technical, and financial ability in accordance with the democratic constitution, to fulfill their constitutional obligations. Nzimakwe & Reddy (2008) assert that. Participation in the community is a crucial component of social responsibility and domestic participation, two concepts that are central to the idea of effective local administration. Participants in democratic governance processes are entitled to do so. Fundamentally, citizens should be afforded the same opportunities to engage in decisions that have an impact on their lives, regardless of their educational background, profession, social status, gender, or place of residence. People must believe it is in their best interests for them to participate. Individuals who are expected to participate should understand the benefits. However, there are obstacles that stop people from taking part, such as cultural, economic, and political challenges. Women are particularly affected by this.

The World Bank (2014) argues that, in the impoverished societies, women are underrepresented in decision making, and unless special measures are taken to ensure their participation and benefit, they are unlikely to participate. The government must continue to make extraordinary efforts to address such issues if the poor's concerns are to be heard. Raniga & Simpson (2012) observed that community participation has emerged as a key topic in the broad field of social development in democratic South Africa, as a way of addressing imbalance and historical injustice. Community participation is a model that provides previously disadvantaged groups a chance to actively partake in the development activities affecting them. Commenting on community participation, Schurink (2011) argues, “the creation of a democratic system and procedure to enable community members to be actively involved and take responsibility of their own development helps to improve their decision-making power”.

2.7 Types of Participation in Local Government

According to Hemson (2008), there are three types of participation in local governance. The first is official voting, which occurs when people cast votes in local and national elections. The second is participation of the general public in government structures including imbizo, ward committee meetings, and the municipal integrated development plan (IDP). Last, is participation in a number of initiatives that are started through the growth of social movements, including protest marches for service delivery, filing community memorandum, and reversing the dysfunctional community structures. This is what is referred to as citizen participation (Ainstein, 1969).

Participation by the community in all three sectors of government is a fundamental right in democratic states like South Africa. This enables the government to work to enhance the overall welfare of the populace as it was democratically chosen by the people. Therefore, community participation is necessary for guaranteeing that the needs of the most vulnerable groups are given top priority. In South Africa, community participation is valued as a crucial strategy for strengthening the country's still-developing democracy. Democracy must be strengthened through community input that should guide decisions made by governments (Phago, 2008).

Surveys, such as that conducted by Dosoudil (2018), have discovered a capacity gap resulting from the failure of participatory local governance mechanisms. There is insufficient consultation,

and the community's day-to-day conversations echo a desire for citizens to have decision-making powers and capacitation to interact with the new local government functions. The Integrated Development Plan consultation meetings that are mandatory in law are not 'people friendly'. In support of the findings by Dosoudil, Brooks (2017) argues that South African citizens now turn to "invented spaces" like protests, petitions, and marches to make their opinions heard because participatory democracy has failed. It might be said that there is no actual community participation.

Numerous authors understand community participation in different ways. Bozo & Hiemer (2016) understand community participation as a democratic process that includes involvement, engagement, transparency, and good governance. Singgalen, Sasongko & Wiloso (2019) argue that development is more likely to be sustained when poor and rural people participate in policies and initiatives that affect them. In support of this view, Hassan, Ong'ayo & Osore (2018) opine that including people at the community level improves community project design, allows programmes to adapt to real-world needs, and affords the community a voice; all of which results in effective decision-making and execution.

Theron (2015) sees community participation as "an elusive concept that functions as an umbrella term for a new kind of development planning intervention". It is impossible, according to Theron, to propose a development plan or intervention that is not "participatory." In other words, the author believes that community members should participate in municipal activities and make decisions that affect their future. Shabalala & Lombard (2009) define community participation as "a democratic process of involving people in the development and operation of services that have an impact on their lives". As a cornerstone of democratic development practice, community participation facilitates the development of people, their structure, and their institutions, as well as their constitutional rights as benefactors of their welfare (Modise, 2017).

In his argument, Masango (2014) indicates that, in a democratic society, in order to give underprivileged people a chance to participate in decision-making and execution of projects, community engagement should be encouraged. The democratic era in South Africa gave previously marginalised and excluded people the chance to take part in government activities.

The Draft National Policy Framework (2007) describe community participation as a transparent and accountable process, in which individuals from specific communities share ideas and potentially influence government decisions. Draai & Taylor (2009) argue that “it is still an ontological dispute that communities within particular municipalities participate in the entire integrated decision-making process”.

Midgley (1986) notes that community engagement only appeals to middle-class activists with Western education who do not always share the goals of regular people. While communities in South Africa are characterized by high levels of poverty and illiteracy, there are few opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making by means of participatory processes (Schulenburg, 1998). To enable people to take charge of their own development activities, political elite education is crucial. This will help to promote a new mandate for local government, which should be viewed as a proactive process rather than a reactive one. The African National Congress-led government (1994) indicated that development should be viewed as active engagement, participation, and increased empowerment, rather than the distribution of goods to passive populations. The post 1994 South African democratic government established an approach for local government that seeks to eradicate the apartheid regime’s legacy. The adoption of a legislative framework that promotes citizen participation in local government issues and decision-making processes gave credence to community involvement (Crayton, 2006). For instance, according to the White Paper on Local Government (1998) a developmental local government "is a government that is committed to working with citizens and groups within communities" to discover sustainable means of addressing their material, social, political, and economic demands to raise their standard of living.

Additionally, the South African Constitution (1996) presents a strong legal basis for ward committees’ participation in local government. In order to give communities a systematic and institutionalized mechanism to be heard at the local government level, ward committees were incorporated in the legislation. These types of participation denotes community participation in the activities that shape their future and development. According to Van Rooyen (2013), effective community participation requires collaboration between the local government and other stakeholders. Because the concept of community participation changes from practitioner to

practitioner, and is perceived differently by diverse participatory stakeholders; the manner in which it is enlisted also differs.

2.8 Encouraging Community Participation through different Structures: Ward Committees

In Msunduzi Municipality, a study by Piper & Deacon (2008) found that ward committees were heavily influenced by politics, especially where it was difficult to distinguish between ward committees and branches of political organisations because ward councillors occasionally combined ward committees and branch gatherings of political organisations. According to the South African Communist Party (2009), the ward councillors do not regularly and efficiently interact with the residents of the area. Because some of the committee members lack knowledge of reporting to communities, the ward committees are unable to operate effectively. In a similar vein, Himlin (2005) claims that many ward committee members in the City of Johannesburg were unaware of their duties. Ward committee members were let down by their lack of awareness of their roles and their inability to have any real influence on Johannesburg's city council's decision-making. In most of the communities in South Africa, ward committees are now in operation. However, their usability, viability, and efficacy have mainly been untested and unaccounted for (SACP, 2009). According to Bendle (2008) skills assessment of 373 ward committees in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, 34 of the members (9%) had tertiary training, while 59 members (16%) did not even possess a matriculation certificate. A challenge is that some of them lack any prior committee meeting participation experience (Ward Committee Resource Book 2010, 2010). For those who wish to serve as community leaders, such as ward council members, education is a necessity that must be considered.

Mzwakhe & Reddy (2008) hold the view that, since issues like poverty and inadequate service delivery persist, active community participation of rural inhabitants has proven problematic. Considering that the rural areas have the highest percentages of developmental backlogs, the communities with the lowest incomes are where such backlogs are located. People need to be included in decision-making processes that affect their future development. However, most municipalities face significant difficulties in prioritising the demands of the populace and integrating community participation.

Insufficient level of education of residents on how, why, and when they should participate, has compromised the process, and as such, they are unable to hold municipal officials accountable for their behaviour or omission. (Modise, 2017). A municipality must take into account the special needs of those who are illiterate or have disabilities, women, and other underrepresented groups when establishing mechanisms, processes, and procedures under subsection (2) of the Municipal System Act. To do this, the municipality must create educational programmes.

Ward committees should be established as facilitators of community engagement and service delivery under the Municipal Structures Act of 1998. According to Reddy and Skhakhane (2008), ward committees are ineffective in this capacity. This is, in part, due to the local government not providing them with information, guidelines, and capacity building. This has an adverse effect on community participation and the provision of essential services to communities. Additionally, there is lack of cooperation between the ward committee and the ward councillors, which makes it difficult for the community to participate effectively.

2.9 Factors That Hinder Effective Community Participation

2.9.1 Barriers to Communication

Several meetings are held in English and most of the documentation is published in English, which discourages community participation (Nye, 2010). The author further argues that, locals are reluctant to attend meetings, since they are unsure that their opinion would be taken into account in the final IDP paper (Nye, 2010). According to the Department of Provincial and Local Government (2005), it is important to provide essential information for participatory processes in a way that is clear to the participating communities. This calls for training to be given in the people's native tongue. Communities must understand the differences between giving information, consulting others, and participating in a situation to make informed decisions. It is imperative that meetings be conducted in the native language. Language provides one with confidence, allows one to express themselves properly, and be heard. When the English language is used at the grassroots level, there must be an interpreter.

2.9.2 Leadership and the Role it plays in Community Participation

The personal interest of the locally elected representative is one of the obstacles to community participation. Ward council members are often in charge of choosing community projects to launch within their sphere of influence (Onyenemezu,2017). It seems that certain elected representatives' leaders choose community projects based on prospects for personal profits, than community needs. To do this, they collaborate closely with the contracted project implementers while neglecting the original beneficiaries (the locals). The most important component in the growth and achievement of community projects is efficient leadership (Raniga & Simpson, 2012).

2.9.3 Lack of Transparency

This is a situation where there is lack of public education and information exchange on how community participation can be accomplished within a municipality. There are various examples where community participation breaks down due to poor consultation by municipalities. Typically, municipalities undertake projects with the purpose of growing local residents. Therefore, projects should be chosen, planned, and carried out in consultation with residents of the area. In line with this idea, Everatt (2001) proposes empowering a community by involving the target group in the planning and allocation of projects that are beneficial to them. Baker, Adams & Davis (2005) argues that engagement needs honest, transparent, and open dialogue with all stakeholders.

Communities should be made aware of the IDP's expenses for operation, how provincial and national governments function, and what difficulties there are in developing and implementing the IDP. All officials and communities must be able to participate in the IDP process (Nembedani, 2017). As beneficiaries of projects, people have a right to information (Oakley 2016). However, it seems that information about development projects is almost non-existent at the grassroots level, making it difficult for community members to participate in development initiatives.

When the time arises for local members to participate, members of the community do not have knowledge and skills. This might be the reason why each municipality should conduct its outreach programmes, such as the integration of development planning to its communities. Leach (2018) holds the view that, if community participation is required but nothing is done about it, it is

useless. Therefore, it is important that the local population is informed or taught how to engage when it is necessary to do so.

2.9.4 Lack of Accountability

Leach (2018) identifies the strategies used to provide feedback to participants as not effective enough in providing feedback or ensuring authorities are answerable for their actions. It is necessary that after a community participation event or service provision, local members receive a progress report that outlines the concerns raised at Imbizo, council proceedings, committee meetings in the ward, and IDP meetings. To community members, it is significant to know their inputs are received and taken into consideration. Following the identification of community members' requirements, the municipal councils should be informed or given feedback. Members of the community must receive feedback from the local municipality so that they understand the value and application of their contributions. According to DPLG (2005), providing feedback on participatory procedures and the resulting decision is crucial.

2.9.5 Effective Community Participation

Effective community participation revolves around giving the community equal access to decision-making processes, as well as providing accurate and timely information. The final choice should consider the goals of both the project's proponents and the public. Therefore, it is necessary to involve the community in problem identification and other talks and to provide community members operational power (Jain, Urban, Stacey & Balbach, 2006).

Daniels & Walker (2015) suggest that engaging the participants in constructive dialogue or debate must be the goal of effective participation. According to previous studies, to be successful in community participation, it must be supported by representativeness, access to information, better decision-making processes, and training and assistance for participants (Daniels & Walker, 2015).

2.9.6 Representation and Access

The interested and affected parties must be actively involved for community work to be effective (Moote, McClaran, & Chickering, 1997; Petts, 2015; Buchy & Race, 2001; Agger & Löfgen, 2008). All participants, including the weaker and less fortunate, should have the same opportunity to participate, regardless of their political, religious, or racial affiliation (NEMA, 1998). Shepherd

& Bowler (2002) note that, when there is no widespread engagement, the public loses faith in a project. They also state that it is difficult or impossible to win back public trust once it has been lost in a project or its proponents.

Everatt, Marais & Dube, (2010) suggested that, to guarantee effective participation, municipalities must take into account the fact that large gatherings are not necessarily the most effective approach to encourage conversation. The internet may be useful as one of a number of ways to engage communities and stakeholders. There are many diverse, innovative approaches of involvement that may be employed at various phases of the process (including focus groups and participatory rural assessment. Participation must be carefully and efficiently structured as it may become a very time-consuming and expensive process, especially in newly demarcated districts that have a large and highly differentiated population. It should be noted that many people and communities still lack access to electronic forms of communication (Harrison, Huyssteen & Meyer, 2000).

In addition, all participants should be able to attend meetings at times and locations convenient to them. There should be accessible transportation options, generally understandable language used, and a safe environment free from crime and other potential risks. Harrison *et al.* (2000) further observe, in *The Framework for Transforming Gender Relations in South Africa, published in August 2000*, the importance of taking gender issues and concerns into account when designing community participation procedures and mechanisms. Other participation principles include the need to consider the unique concerns of people with physical disabilities and other disadvantages, language preferences within a municipality, and alignment of participatory methods with the municipality's administrative and financial resources.

2.9.7 Early participation

Members of the public need to be involved or consulted at every level of the process for community participation to be effective in any circumstance (Petts, 2012; André *et al.*, 2004). This is founded on the idea that early participation gives the public a chance to give input on issues that impact them. This they do by contributing ideas, amending them, or rejecting the stated issue and/or its geographic boundaries (Enserink & Monnikhof, 2021). Early participation gives

people a chance to contribute their feedback and make adjustments, giving them a chance to co-produce the necessary services. This strategy improves service delivery (screening, scoping, and decision-making), reduces rumours, builds trust, saves time, and enhances the public's perception of local government.

Lufuno (2013) observes that the idea that more public consultation would result in delays or opposition to the project leads some project proponents to only conduct the bare minimum of outreach. The author argues that, when members of the public believe or suspect that the project proponents are violating their rights, they swiftly file lawsuits against the project proponents, which sours the relationship between these parties.

Information that enables community members to participate actively in decision making should be availed to them. The public should have proper access to the information (Innes, 2004; Palerm & Aceves, 2004). Kenyon & Edward-Jones (1999) advise that information provided to participants should be straightforward, understandable, or both. In the same vein, Palerm & Aceves (2014) indicate that such communication should be interactive, i.e., involve a mutually beneficial exchange of information. A well-informed populace will be able to participate in the public participation process meaningfully and successfully (McEwan, 2003; Charnely & Engelbert, 2005).

2.9.8 Knowledge, Wisdom, and Skills

Public education should be promoted to encourage citizens to engage effectively in discussions about service delivery. This is because it gives people more information about the issues for discussion. Education gives people an opportunity to participate more effectively as they will understand one another and understand the issues. Participants learn their values, interests, rights, obligations, and claims through education (Daniels & Walker, 2015).

Education also provides community people with information about a project's potential effects on their life (Kenyon & Jones, 1998). Each member is expected to gather and disseminate information to foster collective learning (Moote, 1997). Public participation requires education (Sinclair & Diduck, 1995). A knowledgeable participant will push for improved performance,

resulting in a long-lasting approach to service delivery and public participation (Melnick, 2018) that benefit all stakeholders.

There are people who did not attain educational certificates but are very wise. Therefore, it is important that all stakeholders with different types of knowledge are identified and then profiled so that whenever there is a community meeting, they are invited. For example, traditional leaders may resolve some disputes in the community without law degrees. Thus, community knowledge professors or aspect in community participation must be involved in community meetings.

2.9.9 Improved decision-making

Final decisions should consider community suggestions made at meetings, or processes for integrated development planning (Buchy & Race, 2001). Petts (2012) “underlines the importance of the final choice being advantageous to community members and should inspire them to take part in the future”. Doelle & Sinclair (2006) suggest that issues raised by the public must be taken into consideration when it comes to projects or making other decisions.

2.10 Community Participation and the Integrated Development Plan Processes

The IDP was established in 1996 by provincial, district, and local government departments, as a means of ensuring the efficient delivery of national government structure development, and rebuilding. The IDP's main responsibilities were in the area of local government. The IDP is described in the White Paper on Local Administration (Government Gazette No: 18739 of 1998) as a crucial tool for an effective and developing local government (Harrison, 2006).

According to COGTA (2018), IDPs have helped make municipalities more effective. Municipalities would be less committed and less driven without IDPs, and the connections between plans and finances would be significantly weaker. Fundamental needs are given priority through IDPs. In many towns and municipalities, funds are allocated to projects in the IDP. The integrated development plan have helped to reallocate funding to previously underfunded areas. The IDP drafting was required for municipalities. It is obvious that IDPs need to be greatly improved. As a comprehensive strategy, the IDP's implementation is crucial. The plan of action should include budget-related projects, programmes, and plans that have been prioritised. It is

important to address the slow pace of service delivery to the poor, low community involvement in the administration of the municipality, and ineffective financial management (Mashamba,2008).

According to Reddy, Sing, and Moodley (2013), Integrated Development Planning is very important for municipalities in South Africa. It helps them use their limited resources wisely and get things done faster. It also lets councillors make choices that match what their communities really need. The big issue with South African municipalities is to ensure that basic needs of people are met. This means that the programmes and projects in the integrated development plan must comply with national and provincial guidelines. Mogaladi (2007) stressed that it is important to have open and honest communication with the public during the planning process.

Mudzanani (2013) identifies three main problems with IDP. These problems are typical of the issues ward committees grapple with because they are the main people that regular people through which the community can get involved in the IDP discussions. The Municipal Structures Act, Section 81 (1) says that traditional leaders who have been recognised by the members of the Executive Council for Human Settlement can take part in the council meetings. However, according to Section 81 (2), only 10% of the total number of elected councillors can be traditional leaders. And if the Council wants to make a decision that affects a certain area, they have to talk to the traditional leaders or the traditional authority first, as stated in Section 81 (3).

The integrated development planning should ensure that there is integration of activities within a municipality, which guarantees that developments are consolidated. The effectiveness of municipalities in providing services is embedded in their ability to plan and distribute resources in a developmental and sustainable way (Mafunisa & Xaba,2008). The IDP was created to guarantee political accountability by offering a strategic framework for municipal management, budgeting, service delivery, and execution. The IDP is a significant tool that South African municipalities can use to fulfil their responsibilities, according to Coetzee (2019). Through the IDP, all resources are allocated fairly through a comprehensive consultative process that involves various community structures. Nevertheless, because not all community members attend conferences that the municipalities call, some community projects end up failing.

According to Govender & Reddy (2014), community involvement and integrated development planning are seen as a locally based planning strategy that can help governments and communities address the crises of substandard service delivery, poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The notion of inclusiveness and participation of all people, representing consultative stakeholders in local government, serves as the foundation for the development planning strategy. The entire municipality and various stakeholders are included in the development planning process to find the best alternatives to achieve long-term development goals. The IDP is viewed as a mechanism that enables as many stakeholders as possible to come together to discuss, clarify, and advance their shared interests (Tshabalala & Lombard, 2009).

The creation of a participatory development setting is essential for the IDP to include those who have been excluded from political and economic life for a long time. According to Natsios (2005), development programmes should address people's concerns as they see them rather than from a policy standpoint. The development, through widespread inclusion or participation, becomes the guiding principle of the IDP. Municipalities are in charge of organising the IDP and making sure that all local stakeholders are sufficiently involved.

The community may become more empowered because of this process. That may also improve its ability to have a significant impact on the IDP process. It is believed that the participation of the community in the IDP process will foster communication between residents and local authorities. According to Williams (2006), community participation ought to be viewed as direct participation of the community in local planning, governance, and development programmes. According to the (2015) Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipal Communication Strategy, community involvement is the sincere contribution of a community to the advancement of their society.

The White Paper on Local Government (1998) makes it clear that community involvement in the IDP process must be a platform for negotiations between the community and the government, where communities are actively involved in decision-making and execution. Municipalities have a variety of difficulties, and integrated development planning would help municipalities overcome these difficulties (Govender & Asha, 2011). According to Ingle (2008), IDP ensures that there is coordination between various stakeholders and municipalities, to understand the

dynamics that exist. This enables them to meet the interests of the communities and improve communities' standard of living by establishing clear vision and strategies.

Community participation has advanced as a result of the IDP's implementation. The Municipal System Act 32 of 2000, which governs local government, emphasizes the importance of municipalities creating and fostering an environment that encourages citizens to actively participate in matters that affect them, such as the creation and implementation of the IDP. Moyo & Madlopha (2016) emphasize the need for local governments to assist residents in developing their capacities so that they can participate in local government affairs.

According to Maphunye & Mafunisa (2008), South Africa's integrated development planning has its roots in the history and legacy of apartheid's spatial and development planning processes, which led to the country's racially segregated cities and towns, as well as to poorly designed residential and commercial areas for the poor. To ensure that local people participate in their own development, reduce inequality and poverty, and restructure urban and rural areas, IDPs must be developed and implemented. There are several reasons why integrated development planning is important. First, the IDP acts as a tool for service delivery and second offers a framework for social and economic growth within the purview of a specific municipality. The formulation, integration and sustainability of projects and programmes is achieved through integrated development planning procedures in local government (Coetzee, 2019).

Similar arguments are made by Parnell & Pieterse (1999), who see the IDP as a significant departure from the conventional apartheid planning, and as an efficient tool for ensuring local government change. According to the IDP's guiding principles, local governments must switch from shoddy, disjointed, segmented planning, to coordinated, all-inclusive developmental planning. The IDP brings together all the service delivery goals in South Africa. Community development must be improved through the IDP, and development should not be isolated. Various demographic groups in South Africa have various goals, but all share the desire to raise the standard of living. However, the establishment of the IDP seems not to be achieving its goals because most people are still trapped in poverty, there is high rate of youth employment, and poor infrastructure (Raniga *et al.*, 2012).

The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), which outlines the phases the municipality must go through to create integrated development plans, outlines several integrated development planning procedures. These stages are listed below. Section (29), of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), requires the municipal council to identify and consult state organs, including traditional authorities, while creating the integrated development planning. Community involvement in IDP planning is ensured following the phases below.

Phase 1: Analysis

Analysis is the first stage of the integrated development planning process. At this stage, the real conditions facing a community, or a local government municipality are examined. For example, the Mbombela local municipality is faced with the challenges of youth unemployment, service delivery delays, and poor infrastructure. Robinson (2009) argues that analysis is important since it helps determine and prepare the future development of the municipality and the local community. The analysis gives a guide to the developmental issues of the municipality, and ensures that the decisions are based on the needs of people and their problems. Furthermore, it gives reasons to restructure the appropriate programmes in accordance with development priorities and availability of resources.

Phase 2: Strategies

The developmental phase is a comprehensive way and means of solving a significant issue. It includes considering the policy guidelines, principles, availability of resources, and contending requirements. Robinson (2009) argues that developmental strategies should be about improving the lives of people. The Mbombela Local Municipality developed Vision 2030 strategy that is aligned to the National Development Plan as well as the Vision 2030 of the Mpumalanga Province (Mbombela, IDP/2016/17). This was done through the review of the Mbombela Local Municipality IDP, to ensure that the strategies are in line with the IDP vision and development objectives of critical importance.

In addition to the struggle against poverty, youth unemployment and HIV/AIDS, it also includes lack of service delivery in housing, water, electricity, sanitation, and other necessities. The

Mbombela municipality also wants to encourage democracy, maintain accountability and openness in service delivery, and encourage community involvement (IDP Mbombela, 2015). Additionally, in this phase, choices are made from a variety of options to identify the most suitable innovations and affordable solutions.

Phase 3: Projects

Under the Municipal System Act of 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), all municipalities are expected to create or develop five-year development projects or programmes with distinct performance indicators, outputs, and targets. The planning details the project budget, beneficiaries, and sites. The projects were started to address the main concerns raised by stakeholders and community members. The viability and location of a project should be determined to make it successful. A project will fail if this procedure is improperly managed because it will not satisfy the needs of the people. The start and end times of a project's life span must be properly used to determine the project's life span.

A capable project manager must be chosen, as soon as the project has been recognised and developed, in order to manage it according to the project management principles. To start and finish the project more economically, the project manager must ensure that the correct budgeting is done. Municipalities should clearly define the financial source of a project, whether it will be funded by a national, provincial, or local municipality. If the municipality does not have a sufficient budget, donors may pay for the project. Clear targets and indicators should be used to measure the project success and community effect (Venter, 2014).

Phase 4: Integration

The IDP's fourth stage, Integration, outlines all of the tasks that will be accomplished through it. The municipality is required to integrate and match the designated projects with its goals, resources, tactics, and legal requirements. To create a consolidated and integrated programme, the municipality should consider initiatives at this stage based on their content, setting, and scheduling. An operational strategy, which typically includes a five-year action plan, a financial plan, and an integrated environment plan, is the product of the fourth stage.

Phase 5: Approval

When the IDP process is completed, it is presented to the municipal council for review and approval. The municipal council examines the IDP to see if it identifies the developmental issues and difficulties present in the neighbourhood, and determines how much projects and methods aid in resolving the issues there. The council also checks if the municipality gave the public a chance to comment on the draft, and that the IDP complies with legal requirements before approving it. The IDP is then considered for approval by the council once it has been modified in response to public feedback.

Phase 6: Assessment

A local government assessment by the provincial department is the sixth stage of the IDP process. A copy of the IDP, along with a process plan and an IDP framework, must be sent to the province's Member of Executive Council (MEC) within 10 working days of the municipality adopting it for evaluation. The Municipal System Act simply requires the MEC to evaluate if the IDP corresponds with the Act's requirements, and whether it is not at odds with the IDPs and strategies of other municipalities and governmental institutions. The MEC is not required to approve the IDP (GOGTA, 2018).

2.11 Structures that Promote Community Participation

2.11.1 Meetings of Council Structures

The council structures include substructures that include the executive committee, the corporate service portfolio committee, the community service portfolio committee, the development planning portfolio committee, and the technical services portfolio committee. They cooperate with all councillors from the local wards. Through the adoption of rules, bylaws, and procedures, council structures are tasked with enhancing their legislative and governing functions (Bradshaw & Burger, 2005).

2.11.2 IDP Representative Forum

To promote community involvement and involve other stakeholders, the Provincial and Local Government Department (2008) suggest creating an IDP Representative Forum. The forums consist of:

- traditional leaders;
- ward committee representatives;
- councillors and district councillors;
- members of the Executive Committee of the Council;
- representatives of organised stakeholders' groups;
- heads of departments and senior officials from municipal and government departments;
- people who fight for the rights of unorganised groups, e.g., a gender activist;
- community representatives, e.g. the RDP Forum and;
- resource people or advisors.

The forum was created to provide stakeholders with a chance to speak for the interests of the people who make up their constituency, and to provide a framework for dialogue, compromise, and group decision-making. By identifying their main needs, communities are offered a chance to contribute. Stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the IDP process and its creation and execution, if they live or conduct business in the municipal area (Ehlanzeni District Municipality 2009/10 IDP Review Analysis Report).

It also improves communication between the municipality and stakeholders, and keeps an eye on planning and execution processes (DPLG, 2008). According to Ndzimakwe and Reddy (2008), forums allow discussions, debates, and decision-making between different stakeholders and local government. This enhances effective communication between various stakeholders and the local government. It also keeps an eye on how the IDP's planning and implementation processes are going.

2.11.3 Ward committees

Ward committees are the organisations that allow for a closer relationship between local government and the communities it serves because they are familiar with, and knowledgeable about, the people they serve. Ward committees are the official forums for community participation often established in local municipalities, to promote participatory democracy and act as advisory councillor bodies. According to Skenjana and Kimemia (2011), the key duties of a ward committee member include advising the ward councillor on policy issues that pertain to the ward, identifying the needs and challenges that the wards face, and disseminating information to the communities residing in those wards. According to a 2004 assessment by the Australian-South African Local Governance Partnership (DPLG and GTZ, 2005), there are few requirements for the ward committee system to function well. The preconditions are described as follows:

- For an effective and meaningful participation process, and to be seen as beneficial to both parties, it is paramount that the public and the municipality listen to each other rather than talk to each other.
- To provide clarity on who makes the final decision, for instance, in a situation where the opinion or views of community are against the views of the counsellors, whose views would be considered?

People's perceptions might be that South African ward committees have already met the utmost of the condition, but what is necessary is how these conditions are being met. This requires meaningful participation, where people in the community actually participate in the process relevant to them in order to make a valuable contribution to their own development and to the municipality (DPLG, 2005). The 2005 document, *Guideline on the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees*, outlines the standard procedures for ward committee formation and management. Ward committees should be unbiased, independent, representative, and advising entities, according to standards.

In the Cape colony, ward committees first appeared in the nineteenth century. Later, the apartheid systems employed them, but the majority of Africans rejected them as unjust. The ward system was examined and reinstated in the post-apartheid period. The ward committee's principal goal is to make sure that local government practices participatory democracy. The ward system should

be formal, and have impartial channels of communication that convey complaints from local members to the council on service delivery, communicating plans and decisions, and on effectively mobilising local members to attend meetings and take part in municipal affairs (Hyden & Venter, 2012).

The ward committees act as a link between a municipality and local members that are only established through provincial legislative Section 12, and are confined to local municipalities and metropolitan municipalities of the ward participatory type (Davids, 2005). Steward (2013) points out that 'although district committees are not the only vehicle for community participation in local government, they only exist currently as the most widely applied and accepted model'. According to Davids (2005), the ward committee is an elected body which aims to deepen democracy and is characterised as follows:

- a council committee that is needed to be transparent and accountable to the community at large,
- a community-based structure inclusive of all organisations, sectors, and independent individuals in the community,
- a facilitating forum representing the community interests and communicating this to the council, and
- a link between the community and the council.

According to Section 73 of the Local Government Municipal Structure Act (1998), a ward committee must have no more than 10 members and be chaired by the councillor who represents the ward. The composition of the ward committee should be diverse in terms of interests and gender representation (Steward, 2013). Multiple ward committees have been shown to be unfairly underrepresented. As Steward (2013) asserts, ward committees are set up to facilitate effective participation in Local Government, and serve as a channel for communication with the local populace. Ward committees, which are important channels for communicating with members of the local community, no longer operate efficiently. There is no easy way to pass information from the municipality to the ward committees and to the community (Steward (2013).

According to Moodley & Govender (2006), ward committees are established to promote participatory democracy, disseminate information, assist in forming partnerships for better service delivery, and to help in finding solutions to issues faced by residents at the ward level. Ward committees serve as a formal channel for communication between local communities and municipal councils. Additionally, they serve as points of contact on municipal issues between the ward councillor and ward residents. Ward committees have the responsibility to mobilise agents for community initiatives in addition to their primary communication duty, such as when local projects are being implemented.

Ward committees must continue to serve as a mechanism for successful community involvement in local government matters (RSA, 1998). The ward committees have a specific function to perform in an IDP process (DPLG, 2001). The implementation of IDP participation processes at the ward level, including community-based planning processes, is something the ward committees may achieve (SALGA & GTZ, 2006). All South African local government legislation promotes community involvement. The Constitution, as well as other laws and policies, have established the framework for community involvement. As a result, ward committees should be viewed as a legal tool used by the government to help municipalities comply with constitutional requirements (DPLG & GTZ, 2005).

Traditional figures are expected to be represented on the ward committees. According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) legislation can establish a place for traditional leaders as an institution to speak for local communities on issues. Traditional leaders are welcome to attend and participate in council meetings, but they may choose not to vote. According to the Constitution, only council members may vote. However, traditional leaders might pose questions and make suggestions.

Ward committees are required to have terms of reference that outline the rules and regulations that apply to their positions and a code of conduct to ensure that each member conducts himself in a way that is appropriate, observing their rights and obligations (DPLG & GTZ, 2005). According to Ababio (2007), ward committees should play a significant role in ensuring that citizens participate satisfactorily in the IDP process. It is necessary to build organised IDP

engagement mechanisms at the ward level through community-based planning to achieve success in the job. A ward committee that produces plans for their respective wards and links ward priorities to the municipality's integrated development planning is necessary for this type of planning. It is the responsibility of councillors, officials, and ward committees to ensure that the plans of the municipality reflect the needs of its citizens (Heydenrych, 2008).

2.11.4 Imbizos

The term imbizo is derived from the Zulu word, which means 'Public gathering'. The Imbizo is another mechanism to promote community participation in various municipalities. Usually, municipalities organise different forms of Imbizo, specifically, the mayoral, provincial, and national Imbizo. The president and other officials like ministers, premiers, and mayors, are obligated under Imbizo, to visit local areas. This needs to be carried out occasionally to engage and interact with the locals directly. This makes it easier to recognise the poverty and difficult living situations that individuals experience on a daily basis (COGTA, 2018). The imbizo is designed to facilitate an open dialogue about issues related to service delivery that affect communities between the government and citizens at the local level. The imbizo gives the government a chance to outline its plans of action and the advancements it has made. However, it also allows the public a chance to hold the government responsible and exert influence over decision- and policy-makers (Hartslief, 2007).

2.11.5 IDP Steering Committee

As part of the IDP preparation process, the council resolves to establish an IDP Steering Committee, which comprises managers of the municipality, to act as a support structure to the IDP Representative Forum, ward committees, the municipal manager, and the IDP manager. These structures should continue to function throughout the IDP review phase and afterward (Mbombela, IDP 2016/17). The steering committee's role and responsibilities in the IDP review process include commissioning research studies, where additional information is required to allow the council to make informed decisions, comment on and take into account stakeholder input, supervise the compilation and collation of the reviewed IDP reports, assist with the preparation of meeting materials, make recommendations regarding the content of the IDP review inputs.

Section 35 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000) states that an 'IDP which has been adopted by the municipality's council is the principal strategic planning instrument that guides and informs all planning and development in the municipality'. According to the Act, the municipality must follow its IDP when conducting its business and is obligated to do so. A "developmental local government" is envisioned in the White Paper on Local Government as focusing on collaborating with the neighbourhood communities to find long-term solutions to their needs and enhance the quality of their lives.

More research needs to be done to examine the circumstances and challenges that communities face. It is important to identify and maintain the fundamental amenities that are now available, including roads, housing, sanitation, youth unemployment, and access to water. Additionally, the steering committee must adhere to the ideology of the policy for the growth of local communities and local government. The Batho Pele principles (White Paper on Local Government, 1998) must also be followed in this case. The members of the Ward Committees are tasked with a number of duties as part of the local community leadership in their districts, including: (DPLG & GTZ, 2005).

- To advocate community concerns during the planning process of projects involving the utilisation of land or natural resources in rural areas, and, when appropriate, the participation of traditional leaders.
- To participate in the development of project ideas; analyse issues, prioritise concerns, and come to an agreement.
- To discuss and provide feedback on the draft IDP, and track implementation progress.

The representative IDP forum, which will serve as a formal bridge between the Municipal Government and the public, should have representatives from each ward committee and stakeholder organisation. According to the IDP Guide Pack-Guide (DPLG 2001), project task teams are "small operational teams" that are essential throughout the planning stage of the IDP process. The requirement states that members of these task teams must come from "municipal sector departments and technical people." Many parties are involved in supervising the

implementation of the IDPs, and, when necessary, those community stakeholders directly impacted by the project in question are also included (DPLG, 2001).

The role of the project task team (DPLG, 2001).

- providing inputs related to the various planning steps;
- summarising/ digesting/ processing input from the participation process;
- discussing / commenting on input from consultants or other specialists; and
- deciding on a draft (DPLG, 2001).

According to Brinkerhoff & Cosby (2002), support, legitimacy, openness, and responsiveness to a particular policy, are some of the guiding principles of democratic governance. IDP Representative Forums do not promote "active participation," according to the DPLG's (2002) assessment, but they contribute to ensuring accountability and openness. According to Smith (2003a), involvement of the community in the policy-making process helps to resolve disputes and foster consensus. According to the DPLG, the IDP Forum serves as a forum for discussion and engagement, by bringing together various stakeholders from various contexts (DPLG, 2002).

Ward committees present a significant obstacle to community involvement because they are only advisory organisations created to assist the ward councillor and notify the council of local needs (RSA 1998b). Therefore, their participation in local administration cannot guarantee that municipalities will decide the problems they discuss and agree on. The adoption of IDPs that do not accurately reflect the conclusions of the talks in some wards or the final decisions made, are the end result (Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, & Piper, 2007).

Regarding the ward committee's involvement in the procedure, the DPLG (2001) states that the ward committee chairperson should attend the IDP Representatives Forum. Ward Committees are anticipated to ensure that citizens actively participate in the IDP process (SALGA & GTZ 2006). This type of planning "requires functional Ward Committees who develop plans for their own wards and link ward priorities to the IDP of the Municipality," as stated by the Planning and Development Act. Ward Committees have the duty to ensure that the plans of the municipality

reflect the requirements of its residents, particularly those they serve, along with council members and other officials (SALGA & GTZ, 2006).

There are obstacles to community participation through ward committees. For example, in towns without ward committees or with ineffective ward committees, IDP Representative Forums have taken the lead in facilitating community involvement in the IDP process (Todes, 2003). According to Masango (2002), the consequence is that communities in these municipalities were not given a fair opportunity in their own communities to participate significantly in the creation of IDPs. It was challenging for ward council members and members of the ward committees to actively participate in the IDP and budget procedures (Yusuf, 2004).

Ward committees were not always used as structures for IDP participation, despite the fact that they were intended to be the primary public engagement mechanisms in their areas in the framework of local governance (RSA 1998a). Instead, municipalities created several platforms designed exclusively for citizen participation in the IDP procedure. As a result, there were unnecessary conflicts and rivalries between ward committees and those formed primarily to encourage public participation in the IDP (DPLG, 2002).

2.12 Implementation of Integrated Development Plan in Mbombela Local Municipality

According to the Mbombela (2019/20) IDP Review report, the Mbombela municipality has created a community involvement strategy that describes the systems, processes, and procedures for stakeholder and community participation. The Public Participation Strategy states that communities are encouraged to participate through a Ward Committee System run by the Public Participation Unit in the Office of the Speaker and the IDP Representative Forum organised by the office of the Executive Mayor. The municipality's public participation process also includes engagements with corporate and commercial stakeholders, traditional leaders, mayoral imbizos, zonal meetings, community gatherings, and speaker outreach programmes (Mbombela IDP, 2019/20).

The IDP is implemented in the Mbombela Local Municipality according to Section (152) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which mandates that municipalities involve community organisations in their operations. According to Section (29) of the Municipal Systems

Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), traditional authorities and other state institutions must be identified and consulted when creating the IDP.

The planning, strategies, projects, integration, and approval phases of the IDP process were used to establish the IDP for the local municipality of Mbombela City. The municipality has followed a process that starts with defining the municipality's vision, then identifying key developmental objectives, then suggesting various strategies to address these objectives, and then translating these strategies into programmes and projects that have been budgeted for and are waiting to be implemented and monitored.

2.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the creation of the IDP in local government, as well as community engagement as a method of service delivery. It highlighted the issues and factors that the municipality and the nation face with regard to community involvement. Also discussed was the theoretical framework that guided the study, and the legal framework that governed community participation. The research methods are covered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the conceptual dimensions of the study, as the concepts and notions of community participation and citizen participation were discussed. Furthermore, it reviewed the available literature on participation in the integrated development process. It also discussed the ladder of citizen participation that was adopted as a theoretical lens for the interpretation of the research findings. This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and procedures used in this study. The chapter ends with a summary of the chapter.

3.2 Research Design

The plan and methods used to carry out a scientific study are known as the research design (Feldman, 2012). According to Babbie and Mouton (2013), a research design is a strategy for coming up with solutions to an issue. According to Silverman (2013), a research design is a comprehensive blueprint used to direct a research study towards its objectives. The research design for the study was a case study. When an inquiry has no control over a situation, and when the focus is on a current event within a real-world setting, that is a case study (Creswell 2016).

According to Maizel and Persell (1997), a case study is an in-depth examination of a person, a community, a social group, a scenario, a programme, an institution, or any other social unit. According to Yin (2013), a case study is a good method to organise social data to maintain the unitary nature of the communities being studied. The case study has the benefit of allowing the researcher to focus on a particular area, define the issue, and contextualise it. The choice and identification of participants was influenced by the study objectives.

Participants' experiences, backgrounds and points of view in relation to the research topic were taken into account. Due to its adaptability in terms of data collection and processing, this method was used. To meet the criteria for a case study, the research concentrated on a unique location, Ward 41, in the local municipality of Mbombela. The case study methodology was suitable for

the study since it allowed for an understanding of people's issues and experiences in their social environment.

3.3 Research Methodology

The qualitative technique served as a basis for the study. The qualitative method offers a framework for conducting research. It makes it easier to critically think about a topic and to ask questions in a flexible manner (Biber, 2011). The basic idea is that, by putting the participants in their social contexts and asking open-ended questions, it is possible to better comprehend how they see their own situations and activities (Maisel & Persell, 1997). The qualitative approach was the most appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the opinions of the respondents on community participation in the integrated development planning process of the Mbombela Local Municipality. The approach would further enable the researcher to understand all possible barriers to community participation in the integrated development plan of the Mbombela Local Municipality.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

3.4.1 Sample Size

In this study, a combination of nonprobability and probability sampling techniques were employed to select research participants. Purposive and convenience sampling methods were used to identify key individuals who could provide information on community participation in the integrated development planning process. To gain entry into the community and recruit participants, the researcher employed several strategies. Firstly, the researcher established connections with local community leaders, organisations, or gatekeepers who had knowledge of the dynamics of the community and could facilitate access. These gatekeepers included community leaders, local authorities, or individuals involved in the integrated development planning process.

Once initial connections were established, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and sought permission to conduct research within the community. This process involved building rapport, addressing any concerns or questions, and ensuring that potential participants understood

the voluntary nature of their participation. The researcher then used a combination of purposive- and convenience-sampling techniques to identify and recruit participants. Purposive sampling was used to select key individuals who had in-depth knowledge and understanding of community participation in the integrated development planning process. These participants were selected based on their expertise, experience, and relevance to the research objectives. The participants were selected with the basis that they have work more than five years in the Mbombela municipality.

In addition, convenience sampling was used to select 11 residents who could provide insight into their experiences with community participation. The convenience sampling approach facilitated the identification of participants. This was perceived as an indication to discontinue data collection. This was done in accordance with Fusch & Ness's (2015) advice that data saturation must be reached in qualitative research to improve the quality of the results. The five key participants were purposefully sampled. The reason is that participants who were knowledgeable about the focus of the study were preferred. This aligns with Creswell's (2016) observation that purposive sampling helps in collecting relevant data for the study. The advantage of purposive sampling is that you can obtain participants that are relevant and able to provide responses guided by the objectives of the study. The researcher chose these because of their accessibility and familiarity with the study area.

Brynard and Hanekom (2016) state that sampling is a method used to select a small group (the sample) in order to learn about the characteristics of a larger group (the population), and that if the sample is carefully chosen, it will exhibit the same traits as the large group. At the municipal level, an official was selected, namely, the Chief Director responsible for the integrated development plan. At ward level, two-ward committee members, the ward councillor, a traditional leader, and eleven local residents were selected for this study.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The nature of the problem dictated that interviews and documentary sources be used to collect data (Given, 2012). The advantage of using more than one data collection method was to enable the researcher to combine strengths of the different instruments and offset their shortcomings.

This increased the validity and reliability of data collection (Bond, 2018). The investigation adopted two data collection methods: interviews and review of documents.

3.5.1 Interviews

In-depth interviews are defined as a formal meeting in which one or more people ask, consult, or evaluate another person (Strauss,2010). In Mbombela, the researcher was the principal data collector. The interviews were adopted because they are flexible and give the informants the freedom to express their views. Semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions were included in the qualitative data collection tools created in English and iSiswati. The design of data collection techniques makes it easier to think about the nature of the issue and potential participant responses to a given inquiry. The semi-structured interview gave the participants the freedom to express themselves and share their ideas or opinions, while also giving the research team the opportunity to learn more by asking follow-up questions. To find out how the community of Mbombela Local Municipality participated in the IDP process, interviews were conducted with the councillor, members of the ward committee, the traditional leader, and municipal officials.

The researcher in Mbombela conducted in-depth interviews to examine the community's participation in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) procedure. To respect the preferences of the participants, the interviews were held in English and in iSiswati. The primary data gathered in this study was the researcher. The researcher approached the participants during the fieldwork phase, including council members, members of the ward committee, traditional leaders, and municipal officials involved in the IDP process. The interviews were held in a formal setting, either in the participants' offices or in a venue that the researcher and the participants both agreed upon. Semi-structured interviewing was used to capture the participants' perspectives and experiences while allowing for flexibility.

As the researcher engaged the participants in English and iSiswati, several observations were made. First, the participants freely expressed their views, taking advantage of open questions that allowed them to provide detailed responses. The use of the participants' preferred languages helped create a comfortable atmosphere, ensuring that they could fully express their thoughts and opinions. During the interviews, the researcher actively listened to the participants, allowing them

to share their perceptions and experiences regarding community participation in the IDP process. The researcher also used probing techniques, which involved asking follow-up questions to deepen the investigation into specific issues, and gather more in-depth information.

Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher noticed the enthusiasm and willingness of the participants to share their insights. They demonstrated a strong understanding of the IDP process and expressed their opinions on the level of community involvement. The researcher also observed variations in perspectives among the different groups of participants, reflecting the various roles and responsibilities within the IDP process.

By conducting these in-depth interviews, the researcher gained valuable first-hand information about the community's participation in the IDP process. The use of English and Siswati languages helped to fostered effective communication. Overall, the fieldwork phase provided a rich and comprehensive understanding of the participants' views, as reflected in the research findings and analysis.

3.5.2 Documentary Review

According to Babbie & Mouton (2013), documentary review is a body of literature created by experts on a topic. The documentary review was useful in double-checking the precision of the data coverage that other data collection methods missed. It offered details on the requirements set forth in the policy for community involvement in the IDP. By examining the documents in detail, it was possible to assess the clarity and feasibility of the IDP plans for the Mbombela municipality, and how the municipal system in South Africa was designed, and how much discretionary power policy implementers have within such a system. Based on this method, the researcher accessed secondary information through consulting published books, journal articles, newspapers, research reports, and municipal documents. These included the White Paper on Integrated Development Plan, Annually Reports, and the Local Economic Development (LED) Strategy publications for the Mbombela Local Municipality. Relevant municipal documents were studied for more information on community participation and integrated development planning. These documents were used to build a strong argument for this study in Chapter 2 (2).

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The topics were examined to see if they fit the research objectives. It was decided to use thematic analysis to find recurring themes, concepts, and patterns of meaning. The data was organised into themes and memos, and then coded. In addition, a narrative framework was used to present the data. The use of thematic analysis has the benefit of providing data to assist in the interpretation of themes. Thematic analysis is a method of analysis that helps one to go through qualitative data. This process follows an organised manner to effectively uncover hidden trends and other inferences based on criteria or a theme, defined by the researcher (Kiger, & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis was appropriate due to the methods that were used to collect the data, that is, interviews. Three steps were followed in the analysis process.

First step: familiarisation with the data

Familiarisation with the data involved reading and going over the data several times to fully understand the data (Lochmiller, 2021). The recordings were transcribed into text form to easily manage the data.

Second step: coding the data

After the transcription of data and fully understanding it, the main features of the data were identified. There is need to identify the main features of the data Belotto (2018). Notes were in the form of labels for this particular study. After coding the data, initial patterns for the themes in the data were identified. The identified themes were the basis for the analysis. In order to ensure that the analysis was done appropriately according to the objectives of the study, the themes were reviewed to avoid errors (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The validity of the data was carefully examined, along with the originality and applicability of the data to the study. When processing the data, the researcher checked the accuracy of the information by comparing it with responses and information gleaned from secondary sources. According to Lochmiller (2021), these strategies allowed the researcher to interpret the research questions and achieve the study objectives, which drowned in conclusions and suggestions.

Naming and defining the themes was done, and this facilitated boundaries and distinctions within the data. In addition, this helped organise the data and ensure no mismatches with the themes.

Finally, the review was done.

In this study, the data analysis process involved several phases, including transcription, data cleaning, verification, theme identification, coding, validity scrutiny, and writing. Thematic analysis was the method chosen to analyze the qualitative data collected through interviews. The following provides a detailed explanation of each phase and how it was executed, supported by relevant literature.

Transcription:

The first step in the data analysis process was transcribing the recorded interviews into text form. Transcription involved converting spoken language into written format, capturing the participants' responses and ensuring the data was easily manageable for analysis. Transcribing the data allowed for a more detailed examination of the content and facilitated subsequent coding and theme identification (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data Cleaning and Verification:

After transcription, the data were subjected to a cleaning process. This involved reviewing the transcribed text, checking for errors or inconsistencies, and making necessary corrections to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data. Verification included cross-checking the transcribed data with the original audio recordings or interview notes to ensure the fidelity of the transcriptions (Belotto, 2018). Any discrepancies or uncertainties were addressed during this phase.

Theme identification

The next phase involved identifying themes within the data. Familiarization with the data was crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. The researcher read and reviewed the transcriptions multiple times to become acquainted with the participants' responses, ideas, and

patterns of meaning. This process helped identify common themes, concepts, or ideas that emerged from the data (Lochmiller, 2021). The themes were reviewed to ensure alignment with the research objectives, providing a framework for further analysis.

Coding

Following theme identification, the researcher proceeded to code the data. Coding involved systematically labelling or categorising segments of data that related to specific themes or concepts. The main features and patterns within the data were identified and assigned appropriate codes. This process allowed organisation and categorisation of information, allowing for a more focused analysis (Belotto, 2018).

Validity Scrutiny

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the researcher analysed the information collected. This involved evaluating the credibility, relevance, and creativity of the data in relation to the research questions and objectives. The researcher cross-checked the data with secondary sources or additional information to verify the responses of the participants and ensure the accuracy of the findings (Lochmiller, 2021).

Naming and Defining Themes

After coding, the identified themes were named and defined. This step facilitated clear boundaries and distinctions within the data, ensuring coherence and consistency in the analysis. The naming and defining of themes helped organise the data and prevented any confusion or mixing of themes during the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Writing-Up

Finally, the data were carefully categorised, analysed, and synthesised to generate a comprehensive review. The article included all the aspects of a report, such as introduction, methodology, findings, and conclusion. The analysis was presented in a narrative form,

incorporating relevant quotes, excerpts, or examples to support the interpretation of the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

By adopting a thematic analysis, the research aimed to identify common themes, ideas, and patterns of meaning within the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. This method allowed for a systematic and organised analysis, helping to uncover hidden trends and inferences based on identified themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis was chosen because it aligned with the nature of the collected data and provided a robust framework for exploring the research objectives. Overall, the data analysis process followed a structured approach, from transcription and cleaning to theme identification, coding, validity scrutiny, and write-up. Each phase was executed with careful attention to detail and supported by relevant literature on qualitative data analysis methods.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

According to Nueman (2011), ethics are moral guidelines for appropriate behaviour or a collection of morally righteous beliefs. When negotiating entry into the study region, the protocol was followed. The researcher considered to safeguard data fabrication and falsification, plagiarism, harm to participants, secrecy and anonymity, informed consent that encourages voluntary participation, and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants. Ethical consideration considered included the following:

- **Permission to conduct study**

The permission to conduct the study was granted by the Mbombela Municipal Office and Tribal Authority. Here is a summary of the steps taken:

Mbombela Municipal Office:

The appropriate contact within the Mbombela municipal office was identified through research on the office structure and hierarchy. A formal letter was written addressing the appropriate contact. The letter introduced the researcher, explained the purpose of the study, and outlined the specific research activities planned within the Mbombela municipality. The request for permission to conduct the study was clearly stated. The letter provided the necessary information

about the study objectives, methodology, duration, and possible impact on the municipality and its residents. Assurances were given about compliance with ethical guidelines, confidentiality, and privacy of the participants. The potential benefits of the study to the municipality were highlighted. This included the generation of valuable insights, the formulation of policy decisions, and the contribution to the development of communities. The alignment of the study with the municipality's goals or initiatives was explained. A request for a meeting was made, expressing the willingness to discuss the research proposal in person. This allowed the opportunity to address any concerns, clarify details, and demonstrate a commitment to conducting the study responsibly.

Tribal Authority

The structure of the tribal authority was investigated and the relevant tribal leader or office responsible for granting research permissions was identified. The appropriate channels were used to establish contact with the tribal authority. This involved reaching out to local community leaders, respected members, or community liaison officers, who assisted in connecting with the appropriate tribal authority. A formal request was made, either by letter or direct communication, to meet with the tribal leader or designated representative. The researcher expressed his interest in conducting the study and provided an overview of the research objectives, methodology, and potential benefits to the community. Cultural sensitivity was demonstrated by acknowledging and respecting the customs, traditions, and values of the specific tribal community. Assurances were given that the study would be conducted in a culturally sensitive manner aligned with the interests of their community. The concerns and questions raised by the tribal authority were addressed during the meeting or in subsequent communication. Guidance was sought on any specific protocols, permissions, or procedures that needed to be followed within their community. Throughout the process, the researcher-maintained patience, respect, and responsiveness to any feedback or requests for additional information. Necessary documentation, such as research proposals, ethics clearance certificates, or letters of support, was provided as required. Consultation with local research ethics committees or institutions ensured compliance with any legal or ethical requirements specific to the Mbombela municipality and the tribal community involved in the study.

- **Informed consent for participation**

Respondents were informed of their rights and given the opportunity to give their consent before participating in the study. To protect participants from being exposed to hazards greater than any potential rewards, agreement to participation was required. This allowed respondents to participate in the study project voluntarily. According to Feldman (2012), obtaining informed consent involves informing participants about the study objectives, the risks associated with their participation, and any potential drawbacks. Merriem (2010) asserts that the following components should characterise a consent form: identification of personal information on how the researcher can be reached, participant confidentiality, a component of voluntarism, and participant consent, must strengthen the principle of voluntary participation.

- **Respect for respondents**

Before and during data collection, potential participants were respected by informing them about the research process and its limitations. No pictures were taken for the purpose of this study. Respondents had the freedom to choose whether or not to participate in the study without facing any risk or unjust treatment. Respondents had the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time, as well as the right to withhold information and the right to request further information regarding the study's objectives.

- **Confidentiality**

The study was carried out ethically and no private information was recorded or shared. The researcher protected the confidentiality and privacy of the participant's personal information and data. Participants received information on the gathering, storage, and use of their data. The researcher did not infringe on the participants' right to privacy. Without the participants' permission, the researcher did not talk about the participants' personal information. Only the objectives of this study were used to process the generated data. The expectations from the community members during the interviews were explained to them in advance. Respondents had the option of not using their real names or remaining anonymous.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research design and the data collection methods were discussed. A brief description of the data analysis procedure was also given. The methods used to collect and analyse the data, informed by the qualitative approach, were discussed. Since the inquiry was qualitative in nature, the data collection and analyses methods used were consistent with the qualitative research. The ethical considerations that guided the researcher throughout the study were also explained. The next chapter provides an analysis of the data collected during the interview.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter provided the methodology of the study, discussing the concepts and notions of the research methodology, design, sample and sample size, and data collection methods. The primary focus of this chapter is to present and analyse the data collected to establish the participation of the community in the integrated development planning process in the local municipality of Mbombela. The results of the study are presented and discussed guided by the objectives that anchored the data collection process. The chapter is presented in three segments. The first part deals with the demographic information of the research participants. The second segment deals with the presentation of the results that emerged from the study. The last part deals with a discussion of the results. The summary of the chapter contains the major findings and conclusions of the chapter.

4.2 Demographic Information

Table 4.2.1: Demographic properties of the respondents

	Number of Participants	Percentages%
Gender		
Male	10	62.5
Female	6	37.5
Age		
18 to 30	3	18.8
30 to 35	4	25
35 to 40	6	37.5
40 and Above	3	18.8
Years lived in the village		
0 to 5 years	1	6.3
5 to 10 years	5	31.2

10 and Above	10	62.5
Level of Education		
Matric	2	12.5
Diploma	3	18
Degree	8	50
Postgraduate	1	6.25
Other	2	12.5
Total	16	100

Sixteen respondents participated in this study. Most of the respondents were men (10) and most of the participants were between 35 and 49 years of age 6 (Table 4.1). Furthermore, those aged between 18 and 30 years, as well as 40 years and older, were equally and least represented. These findings indicate that the young and the old attended meetings less compared to the middle aged stakeholders. The majority of the residents had lived in the community for more than 10 years. One person had lived in the area for 5 years. The demographics of the study show that gender inclusivity was an important aspect in research work as women and men think differently. To corroborate the above arguments, studies conducted by various scholars concur that gender plays a major role in research that investigate development issues (Kjeldsberg, Yavorsk 2019 & Kramer, & Galiè, A, 2020).

4.3 Participants' Understanding of Community Participation

From the research findings, it was established that the research participants understood community participation differently. For example, participant 1 explained community participation as “the inclusion of communities in decision making that affect their life directly or indirectly”. Participant 4 indicated that community participation “is a working relationship between Umjindi residents and the municipality in solving the problems of this community”. Participant 5 stated that 'Community participation should be consulted and involved when the

government takes decision that could affect us as a community.' Similarly, participant 11 said: "Community participation is a situation in which my people come together to discuss a problem that affects the community". Participant 16 notes "I will say participation is the participation of communities or citizens in government matters, nothing for us without us, so communities are important to be part of government decision-making processes." Participant 12 put it this way: "Community participation involves the ongoing attendance of community or municipal meetings, giving ideas and views to political leaders and municipal officials to resolve any existing problems. At the same time, they [municipal officials] create opportunities to discuss community matters with citizens".

Despite the fact that participants understood community participation from a different dimension, the majority of participants (7 out of 16) argued that community participation encompassed the participation of local people in decision-making processes, from the initial stage to the implementation phase. The different meanings that participants attached to community participation reflect the contestation of community participation in the literature reviewed. For example, the perceptions of most of the participants resonated with the advice by the Municipal Integrated Development (1998) that, during participation, communities must be involved at a grassroots level in the decision-making process.

Bozo & Hiemer (2016) perceive community participation as a democratic process that includes involvement, engagement, transparency, and good governance. Furthermore, the World Bank (2014) highlights that during community participation, stakeholders who include local people and municipal officials, among others, must influence and share power in development projects, decisions, and resources.

Despite community participation in research findings and the literature including the participation of all community stakeholders from the initial to the implementation phase, Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation challenges these meanings attached to community participation. For example, the ladder of citizen participation views the mere 'involvement' of people in different phases as a form of tokenism. This is a form of participation in which people are made to believe that their 'involvement' is significant, while their views are not taken, but are presented only to bribe or appease them.

How the research participant and the literature define community participation can be classified and categorised within the first and second phases of the ladder of citizen participation. This is because the meanings do not give local people total power or total control, where local people see themselves as partners in development with municipal officials. In terms of the citizens' ladder of participation, genuine participation is when citizen control is implemented as an approach to achieve the desired ends. Community members must be given real power to take ownership of their development.

It is necessary for communities to be at the forefront of taking charge of their community development. The data collected revealed that some members of the Mbombela community interpret community participation as a working relationship. People who are not in power have the option of having majority decision-making seats or complete management power, and cannot participate meaningfully. Based on this premise, it can be argued that community participation must be contextualised and defined using the local lenses of that particular community, and a uniform definition must be established for it to be understood.

The results demonstrated that local people understood community participation as participation, attending meetings, working relationship, and decision making. This is inconsistent with the ladder of participation, which argues that people should be given power to influence decisions through citizen control. This indicates that if community members are granted power, they can participate meaningfully.

4.4 Structures that facilitate community participation

The evidence from the study establishes that there are various structures that facilitate community participation in the Mbombela municipality. For example, participant 1 highlighted that “there is need to involve the community in all structures to be decision makers”. On the contrary, the five respondents argued, the committee of the neighbourhood is a link between the community and the Mbombela municipality. The above argument is confirmed by respondent 2 who emphasised that “Imbizo and ward committees are structures that play a role in community mobilisation”.

Respondent 4 indicated that “Communities are an important entity that must be considered in decision-making platforms and its legislative requirement, because it is there in the constitution, municipal must promote the participation of communities in their affairs through ward committee, public meetings, and IDP forums.” Participant 11 stated that, “without information people will not be able to participate in the structures that were intended to promote community participation”. Respondent 12 confirmed that “it is important that people are educated about the municipal structures and are part of it”. The study results indicate that most of the participants (6 of 14) were aware of the existing structures that facilitate community participation. The structures indicated by the respondents were rich and diverse.

Ward committees are the structures that make it possible to narrow the gap between local municipality and communities, since they have the knowledge and understanding of the citizens and communities they represent. As the formal forums for community participation, ward committees, are mainly established in local municipalities to enhance participatory democracy and to serve as advisory bodies to councillors. The main functions of the ward committee member include advising the ward councillor on policy matters that affect the ward, identifying the needs and challenges that face the wards, and communicating information to communities living in those wards (Skenjana & Kimemia, 2011). A survey conducted in 2004 by the Australian-South African Local Governance Partnership (DPLG and GTZ, 2005) indicates suggested pre-conditions for the ward committee system to be successful, effective and meaningful participation process and to be seen as beneficial to both parties, it is paramount that the public and the municipality listen to each other rather than talk to each other.

People’s perception might say that South African ward committees have already met the pre-conditions, but what is necessary is how these conditions are being met. This requires meaningful participation, where people in the community actually participate in the process relevant to them in order to make valuable contributions to their own development and to the municipality (DPLG, 2005). A Guideline on the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees (2005) indicates uniform guidelines on the establishment and operation of ward committees. In terms of the guidelines, ward committees should be advisory bodies, representative structures, independent structures, and impartial bodies. Ward committees are expected to play a major role in ensuring the active participation of citizens in the IDP process (SALGA & GTZ 2006). This kind of

planning “requires functional ward committees who develop plans for their own wards and link ward priorities to the IDP of the municipality”. Together with councillors and officials, ward committees have the responsibility of ensuring that the municipal plans reflect the needs of its citizens, especially those they represent (SALGA & GTZ, 2006).

A well-informed participant will insist on better performance, which will culminate in a more rational and sustainable service delivery and public participation practice, for the benefit of all the stakeholders (Melnick, et al., 2005). Therefore, the Mbombela municipality has a mandate to provide and identify information on all stakeholders that support communities. When the relevant structures are defined and conceptualised, the community is empowered to demand services and become a part of the structures.

The above findings help to understand and filter community participation to the issues of service delivery in which the community must be involve and know why they participates in municipal structures and their views are taken into consideration. To buttress the above argument, the ladder of participation indicates that the citizens must be informed to participate effectively. It is imperative that the Mbombela community members receive all the necessary information about the structures that support them in the IDP process. The study findings indicate that there are various stakeholders that influence community participation. The results call for research and innovative ways to encourage collective action in the municipality of Mbombela.

4.5 Participants’ Knowledge of the IDP Process in Mbombela Local Municipality

The evidence from the research findings indicates that residents of Mbombela had some knowledge about the IDP process. Respondent 12 explained that “My role is to attend all meetings to provide recommendations and ensure that the needs of the community as given by the community are being put in the IDP document or draft”. Respondents 3 and 7 corroborated that “the IDP process has to do with a guideline that is followed to implement the IDP process”. However, participant 4 stated that “we have to encourage people to participate in the IDP process, as it helps them list their needs”.

In addition, it was revealed in this study that some respondents were able to provide explanations on the IDP process. Respondent 8 explained that “IDP is a particular approach that the municipality uses to ask people about their needs to supply them”. Participant 6 said that “I know the IDP even though I cannot explain it in detail, but it is a guide plan for the municipality that runs for a period of five years”. According to respondent 3, the IDP 'Is a guiding plan that the municipality is using to prioritise the needs of people in different wards. Similarly, respondent 11 said that: “IDP is a super plan for an area that gives an overall development and coordinates the work of the local government and other spheres of government in a coherent plan to improve the delivery of services”. Furthermore, participant 10 argued that: the IDP “Is a plan for the municipality.” Respondent 10 also explained that the IDP process must be prioritised like campaigning for elections, which highlights the importance of the IDP process in the development of communities.

In the study, it emerged that participants in Mbombela conceptualised the IDP process differently. It is important to appreciate the differences in people because it is diversity that makes communities, institutions, and governments function. At the end of the day, it is humans who cut across different structures of society. From the responses of the participants, both the municipal officials and the politicians should conduct an IDP awareness campaign to enhance the knowledge of community members about the IDP process. To buttress the responses by the participants above, the IDP, according to the Municipal System Act (Act 32 of 2000), is a legitimate binding document that must be adopted by all municipalities. The System Act outlines the objectives and procedure of the IDP. The IDP process plan needs to be elaborated and made accessible to community members of a municipality.

In the study, it emerged that some members of the Mbombela community did not understand the IDP process. Respondent 9 indicated that:

'Angikafundzanga, angikucondzisisi kahle kutsi yini IDP, futsi ngingayicondzisisa kanjani ngobe yonkhe intfo emihlanganweni ikhulunywa ngesilumbhi lesilukhuni, awukhoni kubuta noma kufaka umbono, indzaba bangasebentisi lulwimi letfu lwesiswati kute sitocondzisisa kutsi kutsiwani.' Translation |: 'I'm not educated, I don't know what IDP is and how can I understand it while everything in meetings is communicated in complex English, I'm unable to even ask a question or raise an opinion in meetings I usually attend, I don't understand why they don't use our mother tongue '(SiSwati) in order to understand what they are talking about'.

On the same note, Respondent 6 pointed out that:

'I once heard something about IDP, in our traditional leader during Ummemo (imbizo), but I cannot explain it to someone else and I doubt even others that they understand it, because the IDP is explained using big English by politicians and municipal officials, and they expect people from rural areas to understand it, I doubt even our committee members understand the IDP.'

The above statements resonate with Human's (2007) view of a lack of knowledge about the IDP process, as part of capacity building on IDPs. An enabling environment should be established for community members to partake meaningfully in the IDP. Jackson & Kassam (1998) concur with the view by indicating that participation in the IDP process can only be made real if the community is educated on how to participate in meetings and ensure all the necessary information is accessible to the poor and the marginalised, so that their wishes aspirations and interests are taken into consideration.

The ladder of participation shows that sometimes citizens are manipulated. In this case, the participation of citizens is complex because participants are invited and included in IDP meetings. However, it has been argued that participation without knowledge is a manipulation of the citizens. The majority of the participants (8 of 16) noted that they had an understanding of what the IDP had been set up to do.

Some respondents (3 out of 16) in this study indicated that they had little or no knowledge of the IDP process. Therefore, the status quo in the Mbombela municipality where some members of the grass-roots community were left out of the IDP process persisted. According to the ladder of participation, this indicates that the IDP process was carried out to fulfil municipality mandates, even though the community members were not involved in the decision-making process. Respondents highlighted that they were not educated enough to better understand the IDP process. Visser (2006) argues that there is a legislative emphasis that the process should involve the local members in planning, decision-making, assessing, prioritisation needs, implementation programmes, and monitoring programmes. This view implies that there should not be a limitation to awareness of IDP by citizens, despite their educational basis.

To lessen the problem of misunderstandings, an executive summary must be made available, particularly in the local language, according to Human (2007). As a result, the executive summary must include public comments and encourage greater community involvement. It has been highlighted that most of the IDP materials are too intricate and technical for common readers. Furthermore, Hemson (2014) makes a significant point about the same issue raised by the respondents, by stating that participatory forums must be evaluated based on the degree of community involvement in their forums and the effectiveness of engagement.

The degree of involvement for 2007 Western Cape municipalities was ineffective. According to the study, 78% of respondents from all metro municipalities said that they were unaware of their city's municipal budget, and 77% said that they were unaware of the IDP. The findings were similarly depressing due to the perceived effectiveness of IDP fora. According to 82% of respondents (Report on Survey done by the Western Cape Provincial Government on Public Participation, 2009), their requirements were not taken into account in IDP fora.

The ladder of participation advocates citizen control. In citizen control, citizens can define and negotiate the decision-making process. In Mbombela, citizen control is yet to be realised because some citizens are not aware of the process that influences their livelihood. Therefore, decisions they are not part of impact them negatively due to their lack of understanding of the process. It can be argued that if they do not understand the IDP process, it means they are also left out in defining their own development.

4.6 Role played by municipal authorities towards community participation in IDP

In this study, municipal officials stated that they had three roles to play when improving community participation in the IDP process, which are issuing statements, radio talk shows and requesting a schedule for meetings from community wards. The roles are quoted below as spoken by the respondent.

First, usually when the consultation season starts, we issue a media statement through the office of the Member of Executive Counsel, by which we notify and encourage communities to participate, we encourage them to check their scheduled dates with their local branches, check the website and new local papers. We create awareness around the issue of participation, because we

want them to participate meaningfully”. “Secondly, the MEC goes to a radio station during that consultation season, to do the same. Taking calls and answering questions. We have good relations with Ligwalagwala FM, during that season, we do go there to present our expectations and provide civil education on how to participate, what they should expect and how to behave themselves. through, we have a monitoring system that we are using in the department; immediately, when the season starts, we request the municipal meeting schedule according to the wards, the meeting time, and the venue. Therefore, the Mbombela municipality will give us the schedule of the 45 wards. However, they do not necessarily give the 45 wards; they use what we call zone or regional. So, when they are done, they provide us with a report on how the consultation was conducted and these are the challenges discovered”.

From the above responses, the municipal official highlighted the roles they execute in the IDP process to enhance community participation. It is, however, important to indicate that general community members of the Mbombela community did not agree that these roles are implemented or that the implementation yields results. This is revealed by Respondent 5 who said: 'I know some projects. However, what I have noticed is that the municipality impose projects that are not solving our problems, they do not consider our input, they do not listen to the people, and the consultation and meetings are conducted for compliance purposes. For example, in the community we have a water crisis, but instead of resolving the water crisis, they decided to build a tennis court, which cost a lot of money”.

In conclusion, there is no link between community members and municipality officials. It is important to note that, not even one respondent mentioned the level of roles identified by the municipal official. As argued in the ladder of participation, community members are invited but not given the opportunity to influence the decision-making process. This suggests that there is a need for effective communication channels in the Mbombela municipality.

4.7 Factors Hindering Community Participation in the IDP Process in Mbombela Local Municipality

In the study, it emerged that 6 out of 16 respondents observed numerous restrictions to community participation in the Mbombela municipality. Respondent 9 noted:

'Kumenyetelwa kwemihlangano lesinye sikhatsi akufinyeleli kitsi sonkhe takhamunti talendzawo, loko kwenta singati ngemihlangano lekumele siye kuyo. Lokunye kutsi lemihlangano ibitwa phakatsi kweliviki labanye basemisebentini abakwati kuphumelela kulemihlangano.'

Translation “The communication channel that is being used to call meetings is poor as some of the community members do not receive invitations, as a result, we find ourselves not attending such meetings, and sometimes such meetings are called during the week where others are still at work, and they cannot attend the meetings”.

Similarly, respondent 4 added to the above argument and said:

'We don't have proper ways of communication with our leaders and the municipality, and sometimes we are not informed or given information about a certain project, you will just see people starting to work, you don't know how, when, and where. Poor consultation is another obstacle to community participation.'

Respondent 5 verified that there was poor communication in the Mbombela municipality when he said:

'Imihlangano lesiye sibenayo ibitwa ngekushesha, so lesento lesenta kutsi labanye bangakhoni kuphumelela emihlanganweni' Translation 'Meetings sometimes are called in last minutes, as a result, some community members cannot attend such meetings'.

However, respondent 6 explained the following.

'Residents do not attend meetings, even though they know about a certain meeting, they do not come in numbers, and this is a problem because the fewer people who attended have to take a decision on behalf of the majority of residents who did not attend the meeting.'

Furthermore, Respondent 6 specified that

“Some of the community members use these meetings to insult us, call us with funny names, and deviate the purpose of the meeting into something else and I have noticed, many people attend meetings if they know there will be food served after the meeting, if there are no refreshments, the attendance is always lower”.

Furthermore, the research established that political interference was a major impediment to people participating in Mbombela meetings. Respondent 11 noted that:

'The stumbling block towards community participation is the fight among leaders, there are ongoing fights about the merging of the municipalities (Mbombela and Umjindi), the former mayor of Umjindi is funding certain boys to protest over this issue and vandalise our infrastructure, four months ago our roads were blocked and some buildings and cars were burned down, the strike is influenced by the boys hired by the former mayor to cause destruction”.

Respondent 11 stated that:

“What I have noticed as a problem is that people do not attend meetings in numbers, because of the distance they have to travel, no transportation is provided and sometimes even food is not provided. Also, the fight between the political parties, the ANC and EFF members, all the time we have meetings, they will be a disturbance because of them, in our community meetings there is always political interference, meetings are always hijacked for political agenda, and that makes it difficult for the community members to discuss their problems and needs”.

Participant 12 stated that:

'For now, I wouldn't say the system is good, the reason being that people don't attend meetings, some they will complain about not knowing about the meetings, they will say the meeting was meant for specific people who once benefitted from the municipality.'

In the study, it emerged that there were various issues that caused poor attendance to meetings. According to Respondent 3: 'Most of our community meetings are conducted in big English, a language that old and uneducated people do not understand'. Participant 10 indicated that:

“It is a challenge to participate in municipal activities and programmes due to distance. Sometimes, people from the rural area cannot attend some meetings that are happening in the city because there is no transport for them to attend such meetings”.

The challenge of discriminatory approaches in communication in the Mbombela participatory structures was noted. Nye (1997) detailed that community participation is not achieved because some meetings are conducted in English and most documents are written in English. Therefore, the local population was reluctant to attend meetings because they doubted whether their input

would be considered in the final IDP document. In the ladder of participation, this shows that citizens are consulted but are not informed about the details that they must engage with to empower them to make decisions. Therefore, it is recommended that Mbombela municipality empower residents.

The factors identified by residents as hindering community participation align with the different factors highlighted in the reviewed literature. For example, a study conducted by Tenzer (2014), which buttresses the views above, shows that language barriers lead to trust issues. As argued in the literature, due to frequent use of the English language and complex development concepts, coupled with literacy and education challenges, community members, mainly the elderly, who compose most of the meetings, fail to comprehend the issues discussed. These findings are consistent with the revelation by Neumeier (2017), who said that inefficient communication, coupled with language barriers, make it difficult for successful diffusion of community needs and innovation into the IDP plan. The barrier in communication in the context of the local municipality and the community fosters suspicion. Therefore, there is mistrust. For every relationship to be sustainable, trust is needed.

Respondent 7 indicated that effective participation was hindered by fewer publications of IDP meetings. Furthermore, poverty and inconvenient meeting venues contributed to the limited public participation in IDP. The findings of this study are consistent with earlier conclusions by Tosun (2000), that the prevailing socioeconomic and political conditions significantly limited the participation of communities in developing countries.

Similarly, the study findings are consistent with the findings of Muslimin, Arsyad & Sarmadan (2020) that awareness, community capacity, and income levels are key drivers and pillars of true community participation. Unawareness of IDP meetings by community members, as also revealed in literature, could be ascribed to poor communication channels and limited means of collecting information (Tosun & Timothy, 2003). Kim, Park & Phandanouvong (2014) discovered similar findings of power disparities and locals' distrust in authorities, and conflicts between community leaders and political parties.

The studies carried out in Vuwani, South Africa; and Gweru, Zimbabwe, offer relevance for the study's findings, according to Kanyane (2020). The author suggested that the importance of social responsibility and public participation in local governance was impacted by citizen participation. To keep the government responsible, there must be robust and transparent citizen involvement. The two study contexts illustrate how problematic it is to lack a constructive participatory framework, where all key stakeholders are given a voice and informed about all developments, and how this can lead to disastrous effects in one case, and persistent political frustrations in another.

Again, exploring the factors that hinder community participation in Mbombela local municipality, it emerged that poor understanding of their job description by appointed and elected officials was one. This is not a new phenomenon. This is confirmed in a study conducted by Barnett *et al.* (2019), which revealed that there are councillors that are a serious problem to local government. As argued in this study, if they do not know their role, it means they do not have skills in their role, and they will not be able to facilitate the IDP process because they do not understand it in the first place.

Mello (2018) argues that the absence of qualifications of councillors, lack of training and time, and remuneration are contributing factors to poor oversight by councillors and political structures. Enhancing civic education for councillor nomination and election, partnering underperforming municipalities with best-performing municipalities, enhancing councillors' access to ongoing education, and enhancing the oversight of interventions and the transitions following interventions, are some of the key recommendations to make.

It emerged from this study that fights among leaders were another impediment to community participation in the Mbombela local municipality. The results revealed that community members were affected by economic factors that resulted in poor attendance or no attendance at all in meetings and other participation opportunities. Lack of transport fees seemed to be the main challenge that was caused by poverty and lack of basic income generating opportunities. People could not afford their own cars to drive to meetings or pay taxi fare to go to meetings.

However, one can argue that hunger and poverty were motivating factors in the attendance of some community members. Due to the inadequacy of basic needs such as food, people viewed gathering as an opportunity to get a meal. In a scenario where communities had at least basic commodities in their households, there was a chance that they would participate in meetings for the right reasons. Sadly, the opposite was true in some parts of the Mbombela community. The study revealed that the lack of representation of the ideas of the youths consequently hindered their participation because they were excluded. Traditional leaders in the community of Mbombela municipality were aware of the factors that hindered community participation as they pointed out economic and financial challenges that were a major problem.

The unavailability of resources, such as transport, largely contributed to the lack of participation of community members. The lack of different modes of transport to get people to meetings on time frustrated the flow of operations in the structures of community participation in the Mbombela community. From the above discussion, community members of Mbombela municipality highlighted the following reasons as the cause of barriers to community participation in the ward committee: poor communication patterns and language barriers, fights among leaders, lack of representation of youth ideas, poor understanding of job description by appointed and elected officials, and punctuality challenges.

In the study, it emerged that there were administrative shortfalls within the committees, and inadequate provision of the required resources to carry out tasks. Respondent 6 indicated this by stating that: “To make it short, our ward committee is not functional as they are convening sectoral meetings to collect the challenges of community members, since three members of the committee resigned, they were not replaced up to date”. Moreover, another respondent 8 added that: “The problem is that we are not getting enough resources to implement our community project”. The research results indicated that the committees of the neighbourhood were not helping to transform local governance due to inadequate resources. In addition to the suggestions above RSA (1998b) states that a major challenge with regards to community participation through ward committees is that these committees are only advisory bodies, and are designed to support the ward councillor and inform the council of the needs at community level. Their participation in local governance thus cannot guarantee that municipalities will decide upon the issues they

discuss and agree on, resulting in the adoption of IDPs that do not reflect the outcomes of the discussions in some wards, as well as the final decisions arrived at (Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, & Piper, 2007).

There are various generic problems and challenges encountered during the implementation process, such as incompetent and uncommitted municipal officials and political office bearers (Parnell, Pieterse, Swilling & Wooldridge, 2002). Consequently, corruption has led to the collapse of municipal projects while people wait for results to be delivered. This view was supported by the respondent 6 when he said: “You will find that people who were at an IDP meeting in 2016 and the issues they raised to date are not resolved. What can make them attend meetings. So, those are the challenges, and what that does is it leads to apathy, something like that. People get discouraged”.

4.8 Strategies to improve community participation in Mbombela Municipality

The study findings indicate various strategies to enhance efficient and effective community participation in the Mbombela municipality. The municipal official interviewed advocated breaking down the wards for better effective communication in the Mbombela municipality divisions when he said, “each ward must be consulted on its own issues separate from others”.

In this study, it was observed that the use of technology was imperative to enhance community participation. Respondents highly recommended coopting technology and electronic means of communication in participation, as technology is not limited by locations or distance. Technology would be used for communication purposes between the municipal official and the community members. The municipality should update its website.

The educational approach should be adopted to enhance community participation. In this segment, one respondent articulated the importance of education in regard to behaviour and how people think. The lack of knowledge leads to undesirable behaviours in the face of a challenge. The respondent emphasised this when he said, “civil education is important. Yes, protests are allowed, but sometimes you find that someone is starting a protest, and the community says no, we not join it because we are aware, people do certain things because they don’t know, they get frustrated. Therefore, if you educate the people, they become better, reason better. They can be

civil about how they approach things. Therefore, we need this kind of experience to help people understand how the municipality and government operate. For example, when it is time for RDP construction, you can find someone complaining that they are not allocated, because they do not have information and they are not educated about how the process of getting an RDP house unfolds '.

The traditional leader made recommendations that can improve the process in the community participation structures of Mbombela municipality. The respondent emphasised the Ubuntu principle that promotes oneness and unity among government officials, politicians, and the community members. It also eradicates corrupt systems such as nepotism and the importance of hiring qualified professionals for job positions and tasks that need to be carried out. In the following comment, the respondent said:

'I think as community leaders together with district councilors, mayor, and municipality we should start working together including the community, we have to consult with the community every time we want to do something for the community. Again, fighting among us as leaders does not help the community develop and solve the problems, the fights must be resolved, because when we fight as leaders the most people who suffer are the people because we focus on the fight and forget about the needs of the community. The last thing I want to mention is corruption and nepotism with our municipality, the municipality must hire people who are qualified and appoint tenders who are capable to do the job.'

The questionnaire made it clear that the participants were aware of the value of community involvement. However, it is advised that the Mbombela Municipality concentrate on already-existing structures like ward committees and imbizo, which may inform and inspire residents to take an active role in municipal operations.

4.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, data collected using a qualitative approach to examine community participation in the integrated development planning process in the Mbombela municipality in Mpumalanga province was analysed. Sixteen participants were interviewed to collect data. An all-

encompassing method of data analysis was thematic analysis. In the Mbombela Local Municipality, community participation was defined and interpreted differently. This study made the case that community involvement was crucial at the grassroots level because it affected service delivery. The IDP procedure was crucial to community development and delivering the necessary services. However, there were obstacles to community development and participation. The study overview, a summary of the research results, suggestions, and conclusions are covered in Chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed and analysed the collected data to unpack the participation of the community in the integrated development planning process in the local municipality of Mbombela, Mpumalanga province, South Africa. This chapter looks at the overview of the study, summarizes the research findings, makes recommendations, and concludes the study.

Citizen participation is a way through which people can become empowered. Citizen participation is a process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programmes, and environment that affect them (Wandersman, 1984). The argument above echoes the freedom charter of the democratic government of South Africa that states, “People shall govern”. For people to govern, there is need for them to exercise their right in defining their own development. This brings to light that the projects implemented in their communities improve their daily life. Problems and needs must be identified in communities, not manufactured in municipal offices, whereby a consultant will plan development without the opinions of the grassroots community. For example, if the community participates in the development agenda, many issues like service delivery protests can be avoided. Service delivery occurs because communities are not getting the services they need. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to ensure that the citizens participate in local developmental agendas as mandated by the government, thus improving lives and creating sustainable communities.

5.2 Justification of the Methodology Used in the Study

Qualitative research was the approach used in this study. This was appropriate because the study sought to provide or explain a glimpse of a phenomenon (Strydom 2017). In the study, a case study design was used. The design of the case study complemented the research tools used to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Table 5.1: Summary of the Study and Key Issues

Objective	Methodology	Major findings
To conceptualise participants understanding of community participation	<p>Case study design</p> <p>16 respondents were purposively selected.</p> <p>Data was collected through qualitative approach, through literature review and empirical data collected through interviews.</p> <p>Data was transcribed and coded and analysed thematic analysis</p>	<p>It was established from the research findings that community participation is understood differently by the participants.</p> <p>Thus, majority of the participates (10 out of 16) argue that participation encompasses the participation of local people in decision-making processes, from the initial stage to the implementation phase.</p> <p>Community participation must be contextualised and defined using local lenses of that particular community.</p>
To examine the knowledge of the participants about the IDP process in Mbombela Local Municipality	<p>Explorative Design</p> <p>16 participants participated were purposively selected.</p> <p>Data were analysed during using thematic analysis.</p>	<p>Participants were knowledgeable about the IDP processes.</p> <p>A number of participants could not define what IDP is.</p>

<p>Identify the factors that hinder participating in community meetings.</p>	<p>Case study design 16 participants were purposively selected. Data was analysed through thematic analysis.</p>	<p>IDP processes are essential for the development of local communities in Mbombela .</p> <p>Various developmental projects were being implemented in Mbombela although some participants indicated that water was scarce in Mbombela</p> <p>Language barriers prevented effective participation.</p> <p>Incapacitated leaders could not implement the IDP process and play their roles effectively.</p> <p>Merging of the municipality slowed down development.</p> <p>Lack of transportation to IDP meetings prevented community members from attending meetings.</p>
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5.2.1 Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge on political science

The study contributed to the provision of knowledge on political science.

- a) Contextualised perceptions of citizen participation in IDP processes in rural South African communities.

- b) Evidence that communities must be empowered in the development agenda.
- c) Limitations and suggestions for further research to unpack the terrain of community participation in the integrated development planning process. This will improve the delivery of services to communities.

5.2.2 Recommendations for policy

- a) There should be a close link between science and the community to collaborate and inform policy on citizen participation and development debates.
- b) Partnerships are needed with various stakeholders utilising information technology to work together with communities and educate them on what the IDP is, and why it is important for them to participate in meetings.
- c) There is need for consulting communities on what projects are needed in the communities to reduce service delivery strikes.
- d) There should be integration of technology by using social media, as a medium of communication.
- e) Appointing individuals who professionally coordinate the communication and agenda of the meetings, to ensure that meetings are productive, should be considered.
- f) Leadership is about vision and mission, and management is about maintaining routine tasks. Aitken & Higgs, (2010) construed that community leaders, municipal councillors, and officials even though they are leaders, experience challenges of backlog in service delivery. The results of the study indicate that Mbombela Local Municipality can be recommended for training officials, managers, and community leaders in different areas to upgrade their leadership qualities and understand their role.

5.2.3 Recommendations for further Research

- a) Research is needed on the skills audit of community leaders.

- b) More studies are needed documenting success stories in local development in communities.
- c) The importance of participatory democracy in South Africa needs further exploration.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, recommendations were made and study conclusions. The findings and themes of the four groups of persons who were interviewed the community members, municipal officials, traditional leaders, and members of the ward committee of the Mbombela Municipality community were used to form the conclusion and recommendations given in this chapter. Recommendations were made to community members, elected, and appointed municipal authorities, and future research. Based on the data findings mentioned in chapter four, the main objectives of the study were met, and research questions addressed.

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