

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CHALLENGES  
FACING WARD COMMITTEES  
IN THE SENQU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This purpose of this study was to investigate public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. This is a rural municipality under the Joe Gqabi District Municipality in the Eastern Cape. Constitutionally local government is legally bound to promote public participation through various mechanisms such as ward committees.

To obtain the research objectives, the research applies a qualitative research methodology, using Arnstein's Ladder of Participation Theory as a basis for public participation in the selected municipality. A literature review was conducted on public participation, local democracy and ward committees functioning.

A purposive non-probability sampling was used as it allowed a sample from which participants are selected on the basis of their knowledge on the subject. Primary data collection comprised of semi structured interviews with three municipal officials and focus group discussions with two selected ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality.

The study presents findings from the data analysis and depict that despite the imperative role played by the ward committees, there are still challenges that face ward committees on public participation. The study closes with conclusions, recommendations for the municipality and recommendations for further research.

**Key Words: Public participation, Ward committee functioning, Local democracy, Senqu Local Municipality.**

## **DECLARATION**

I, Masabbatha Judith Gqweta, declare that apart from the recognized references, this research report is my own original work done without assistance. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Management in the field of Public and Development Sector Monitoring & Evaluation in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university for purposes of obtaining a qualification.

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Masabbatha Judith Gqweta

23 September 2020

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my parents, my late father, Ntate Jacob Sabbath Mantutle and my mother, Mama Beulah Vuyiswa Mantutle. Ke a leboha Mofokeng, o robale ka kgotso, nakuwe Tshawekazi, sis Kay ndiyabulela.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACPPDT	African Charter for Popular Participation in the Development and Transformation
CBO	Community Based Organisations
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
ECSECC	Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IGR	Inter-Governmental Relations
JGDM	Joe Gqabi District Municipality
MIG	Municipal Infrastructure Grant
MFMA	Municipal Financial Management Act
MSA	Municipal Systems Act
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SONA	State of the Nation Address
South Africa	South Africa
SLM	Senqu Local Municipality
UDHR	Universal Declaration for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
WSG	Wits School of Governance

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

It is now 25 years since the dawn of democracy in South Africa. This country has come a long way, with a history of an apartheid government it is a sad reality that the democratic government inherited racially skewed structures of government (Davids, 2005:18). Needless to say, traditional leaders had limited powers over the communal land as they lacked decision making powers. Majority of South African citizens were denied participation and representation in government's decision-making undertakings. This left an indelible mark of an unequal society in South Africa. The past government ensured that their policies negatively affected the economic and social development of the historically disadvantaged communities through exclusion, resulting in service delivery backlog (Govender & Penceliah, 2011:19).

When the new government assumed power in 1994, it had to create conducive conditions to have a truly democratic state that would be inclusive of the people who were previously disadvantaged and excluded by the system. The new government's strategy was to establish a democratic state, through formalizing mechanisms of participation as a key feature of post-apartheid governance (Friedman, 2006:2) through the promotion of developmental principles and goals in a local democracy within a cooperative government environment that would ensure sustainable development (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996).

With this governance history, the mechanism of public participation became a significant feature of post-apartheid governance (Friedman, 2006:2), having to promote democratic policies while addressing inequalities. This is in line with the responsibility placed on local government as set out in the Constitution Act, 108 of 1996 to promote the participation of communities and their organizations in local government matters as evidenced in the formation of local government structures (Ababio, 2007: 615). A number of authors, for example, Moseti (2010); Madzivandila and Asha (2012) are in consensus that local

government planning and development is linked to public participation in South Africa (SA). In principle, public participation can be understood to be an enabling platform for affected communities to clearly communicate their concerns with the local government.

Despite the mechanism of public participation and the relevant legislation to promote public participation at local municipalities, local government has been in a struggle to effectively transform theories into reality (Govender & Pencelliah, 2011; Alexander, 2010, Maphazi, Raga, Taylor & Mayekiso, 2013; Tshoose, 2015). Furthermore, Action 24 (2018:3) in consensus proposes that there are challenges with implementation of public participation in South Africa and public participation is far from being meaningful to a large proportion of the population (Bob, 2018:11). Lastly, Mofolo (2016:231) strongly believes that after two decades of democracy in South Africa, local government public participation must be improved for the better (as cited in Bob, 2018:10).

Meaningful depth of participation at local government continues to be questioned in literature dealing with public participation and this is not exceptional to South Africa but a global challenge as well, World Bank, 2011, (as cited in Ndimma, 2017:1). Naidoo and Ramphal (2018: 82) concur that in as much as local government is the “coalface” of governments globally, they are continuously faced with challenges of not meeting their obligation of providing basic services as expected by communities. This, they attribute to the gap created between the design at other spheres of governments and implementation process at local level.

In addition, the South African democratic government still experiences service delivery protests from unsatisfied citizens. The dissatisfaction stems from poor or non-responsiveness and high demands for good services that should be equally distributed among communities irrespective of their socio-economic status. This means that little has been done to open opportunities for people to partake in decision making. In agreement/support, Mautjana and Makombe, 2014:54, (as cited in Mofolo, 2016:233) are of the opinion that South African Local government must shift from the outdated planning style of regarding citizens as beneficiaries to contemporary planning where citizens are regarded as experts.

This study aims to explore the challenges facing operations of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality (SLM) by looking at matters linked to their functioning and to the participation of communities in ward committees in the SLM. The study further examines the SLM public participation theoretical framework and conceptualization; analyses the institutional arrangements, specifically ward committees' mechanisms as employed by the SLM for the promotion of public participation.

The Senqu Local Municipality is a category B municipality located in the Joe Gqabi District Municipality (JGDM) in the Eastern Cape province, sharing its northern border with the country of Lesotho, Chris Hani District in the South, Elundini in the East and Walter Sisulu in the West. Senqu is a Sesotho name for Orange River (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2018). A category B local municipality (as described in section 155(1) of the Constitution) is a municipality sharing municipal executive and legislative power with a district municipality within whose area it falls, in this case, Joe Gqabi. It is part of the three municipalities in the district and accounts for a third of its geographical area (Joe Gqabi district municipality website). It is vital to note that the Eastern Cape is one of South Africa's provinces with the highest levels of poverty, unemployment and underdeveloped infrastructure (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), 2012).

Spatially SLM covers an area of about 7329km<sup>2</sup>. Demographically, the 2016 household survey indicates a population of 140 720 (Stats SA, 2016) with household numbers recorded as at 35 597 (2016), making it the most densely populated municipality in the Joe Gqabi District. The average annual household income is recorded at a median estimate of R14 600.00 (ECSCC, 2017) with a gini coefficient recorded as at 0.564 in Senqu Local Municipality in 2016, meaning that there is no difference between the high and low income earners within the population (p.57). The Municipal Demarcation Board postulates that a gini coefficient "measures the degree of inequality in a set of data and is frequently used as a method of measuring inequalities in income distribution in a population" (p.18). The Senqu IDP Review (2018-2019) reported that geographically, the mountainous terrain with poor road infrastructure impedes the provision of services to the communities in the vast terrain. This impedes the work of ward committees as they sometimes struggle to meet when required.



Figure 1 Senqu Local Municipality. Source: Municipal Demarcation Board, 2018

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, the three spheres of government (national, provincial and local) work together through intergovernmental relations that guide them in the execution of their functions with local government at the frontline of engaging communities. Public participation, especially at municipal local level governance has become an essential component of the efforts to promote development for democracy. For development to be inclusive and people-centred, public participation must be central to local government. In local government, quality does not only refer to the provision of basic services, it is also inherent in the ability of local government to preserve the rights of its citizens by creating invited spaces such as ward committees for democratic participation, Aiyar (2010:204) and confirming that local government speaks directly to the needs of people whose lives will be affected by such development. Theoretically, this makes development a community-driven process as opposed to an official-driven process that is top-down. The assumption of public participation is that communities will benefit if they are empowered to influence the direction of a community development project and Mkhwanazi (2013:9) views this as effective and accountable governance. For Madumo (2012:45) public participation in South Africa means anything ranging from election of representatives to citizen consultation when formulating legislation by the elected.

The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 108 of 1996 (the Constitution), places an onus on local government “to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.” (DPLG, 2007:7). Constitutionally, local government is obliged to engage its citizens in the formulation and implementation of local plans (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No.08 of 1996).

The right to basic services as enshrined in the Bill of Rights obliges the state to take sound actions to attain the progressive realization of these human rights. The democratic government’s commitment to deepening democracy is consistently faced with the provision of high quality services to the expectation of all citizens, which they are failing to meet. In consensus Sekgala (2018:4) argues that ward committees have endless challenges that need to be addressed, linking these to current governance issues at local government.

The SLM is no different from the findings in the literature as it also experiences challenges with its ward council system thus making it imperative to conduct the study.

In the international context, several studies conducted, for example, (Gaventa & Barnett, 2012) have suggested some commonalities in the relationship between participation characteristics and public participation. A study conducted in the US by Yang & Pandey (2011) found that public participation was a significant element in consolidation of democratic governance. In a different study, Maphazi (2012:184) found that Buffalo City Municipality had inadequate strategies that left negative relations between ward committee members, officials and Councillors. From the literature it is clear that there are controversies in terms of the value add of ward committees, thus this study. On the other hand, the existing literature lacks studies in relation to most rural areas (municipalities) in South Africa, especially the small municipalities, such as the SLM, the area of focus for this study.

It is of significance to note that in this study, public participation is viewed to be an active and significant process that encourages constructive exchange of ideas between communities and local municipalities (Mchunu, et.al., as cited in Theron & Mchunu; 2016: 171). Therefore, public participation is not just about “consultation” but about active and meaningful participation by citizens. Newbury and Wallace (2014:9) propound that in



addition to invited spaces there must be mechanisms put in place for transformation of power dynamics in society. Since there is a space for resistance, the spaces must have empowering systems and processes and used intelligently (Newbury & Wallace, 2014: 10).

Local government in South Africa, with all the systems in place from legislative frameworks to governance structures, is still faced with challenges in delivering quality service delivery to the communities, especially in the rural areas. Notwithstanding government promoting public participation in government policy-making, there is nevertheless a developing sense that government is unresponsive and not representative of several segments of the public or possibly even the majority (Mann and Ornstein 2012; Jacobs 2014).

From the background provided on public participation, the study acknowledges that the process of public participation is not a smooth one, but is met with some challenges when it comes to implementation and that there is a gap between planning on paper and implementation. The South African government established the ward committee system in December 2000 as a way of reinforcing democracy towards improved service delivery and bridging the gap between communities and the municipal structures. The challenges, especially for the rural municipalities like the SLM, might range from availability of resources, the capability of citizens constituting the municipality as well as the literacy levels of the community members as this will determine their level of understanding of issues and their level of contribution to relevant activities in the municipality. From the consulted literature it is suggested that the public participation does not, through ward committees, respond to local communities needs nor represent their interests as communities.

With regards public participation, modern-day research places communication as key to policy development and implementation at municipal local level (Canary, May, Rinehart and Barlow, 2018) and ensures that the public is accustomed to developments and can partake in the process. Thus, it is necessary to have a two-way communication between the citizens and the municipality through mechanisms such as ward committees. Through public participation, direct or indirect citizen involvement is enhanced under the bottom-up policy design (Ditlopo, Blaauw, Bidwell and Thomas, 2011) while the top-down

approach permits for restricted deliberations for participation where citizens are not involved and just get informed on decisions made by the municipality. Therefore, community members who are directly affected by issues of service delivery at local level should be regularly informed at points in the process of developing policies that will directly or indirectly affect them (Canary, Blevins & Ghorbani, 2015).

Public participation is a complex phenomenon, and the phenomenon of complexity describes how municipal service ideals at different levels such as those of an individual, a community and organized groups, can contribute towards restraining or enabling change (Eppel & Rhodes, 2018). In consensus, Malek, Lim and Tahir (2019:3) view public participation as a “largely controversial issue” due to different terminologies used when it comes to participation. For Sittu and Musbauddeen (2016: 24) it is “a complex act with varying dynamics, especially when the focus is on planning”. Similarly, Sebola (2016:55) views public participation as a “difficult practice”.

The context of public participation is relevant in South African local municipality functioning and this implies that communities forming part of the Senqu local municipality, given a space through efficient ward committees, would make a meaningful contribution to local government at policy development, discussions and implementation, especially the areas that concerns them as communities.

The document is divided into four sections, the first part provides a background on the topic and contains the problem statement, the research focus and questions. The second part is comprised of the literature review. Section 3 discusses the methodology containing the research design, sampling, research instruments, data collection and analysis methods, and issues of ethical considerations. The last section closes with a conclusion and recommendations.

## 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Of the three spheres of government, local government is the sphere of government closest to the people, Van der Walddt, Venter, Van der Walt, Phutiagae, Khalo, Van Niekerk & Nealer (2014:4). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) has

made provision for the local municipalities to establish ward committees as a mechanism for public participation. This is provided for in the Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) which encourage meaningful participation of the public in local municipalities, both as communities and community organisations, Van der Waldt, Venter, Van der Walt, Phutiagae, Khalo, Van Niekerk & Nealer (2014:42). Ward committees are, in turn, expected to expedite communication amongst the community and the municipality. Sekgala (2018:8) supports the point in stating that “the primary function of ward committees is to be a formal communication channel between the communities and municipal council”.

This has, however, been proven contrary in previous studies on ward committees showing that ward committees do not function well as expected as they don't produce the intended outcomes of enhanced public participation in governance of municipalities and this, Maphazi, 2012, (as cited in Mtshali, 2016:4) says can be ascribed to absence of resources and poor strategies of communication between committee members, the Councilors and the municipal officials. Additional literature (Piper, 2010; Piper & Deacon, 2009) as cited in Mtshali (2016) in consensus, highlight the unresponsiveness of ward committees to the needs of local communities as well as ward committees that do not truly represent communities' interests. In reality, according to Sekgala (2018:1) ward committees are faced with challenges specifically with regards to influencing the process of decision making in public participation. This weakness is highlighted by other authors such as Naidu, 2011; Masango, Mfene & Henna, 2013 (as cited in Sekgala, 2018:2) in that the ward committee system is failing in enhancing community participation as their performance is not satisfactory. The authors mention a number of challenges which they claim are a reflection of the weakness of the structure which they view as lacking in power. These challenges related to failing unsuccessful public participation are inclusive of, but not limited to, dearth of appropriate accountability mechanisms, responsiveness, proper coordination and integration of systems that will enforce policy implementation at local government.

Senqu is not exempt from these challenges and this leads to serious perception challenges of it as a municipality that is unable to promote and implement public participation, despite mechanisms of ward committees established in the municipality.

The SLM Integrated Development Plan (IDP) highlights some challenges for public participation such as infrastructure as the municipality is challenged with finding a common meeting area that is accessible by foot and spacious enough to accommodate all residents when they hold meetings. Another challenge is the education levels of community as most of them are illiterate and they must be educated to understand local government so they can make meaningful contribution in their public participation. Apathy is highlighted as another challenge as members of community just do not see the value in participating in government processes due to various factors (Senqu Municipality IDP 2017-2022 Review 2018-2019:124-125).

Similar studies on public participation and ward committees have identified similar challenges as facing municipalities and or metros that they studied, for example, Shaidi, et al (2011) in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, Madumo (2011) in Mamelodi and Maphazi (2012) in Buffalo City study, just to name a few. Likewise, Mtshali (2016:4) indicates that literature shows the non-responsiveness of ward committees to the necessities of local communities, nor do they represent these communities truly.

In addition, ward committees are seen as lacking in achieving public participation objectives of representing the communities. This forms the context for the basis of this study. The research problem of the study is to explore the public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. The study will propose recommendations for ward committees' challenges on how to improve on meaningful public participation and their process of making decisions that is inclusive of the public.

### 1.3. PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research is to explore public participation challenges as faced by ward committees in the SLM. This will be done through comprehending the legislative framework for public participation and ward committees. The study will close with proposing recommendations for the effective functioning of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality.

## 1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question dealt with in this study is: What are the public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape?

This main question leads to the subsequent question:

- What does local democracy, public participation and efficient ward committees' engagement in the Senqu Local Municipality involve?

## 1.5. CHAPTERS OUTLINE

The outline of the chapters in this research will be as follows:

### Chapter 1: Background & Introduction

This chapter functions as an introduction to the study and also provides the background as to why the study was conducted. The chapter further provides the context, problem statement, the objectives of the study and the research methodology.

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter discusses public participation as a concept through consultation of available literature locally and internationally. It further discusses ward committees and local governance. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks form part of this chapter.

### Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The chapter details the research methodology used in the study, as well as the research design adopted in order to realise the objectives of the study. The chapter discusses the paradigm that the study falls under.

### Chapter 4: Data Presentation

This chapter presents the data, data collection methods, and details of the tools used, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, as well as information available from secondary data that could be accessed.

### Chapter 5: Data Analysis

This chapter presents data analysis and interpretation of the collected data. The findings are integrated into the themes that were identified in the literature review, the chapter also shows how the research has addressed the research problem statement and answered the research questions.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

This is the last chapter that draws conclusions from the findings of the study and presents further recommendations on how the identified challenges might be addressed. It makes the overall summary of what was discussed in all the chapters of the study. This chapter provides overall findings and recommendations as well as areas for further research. Final conclusions are presented for the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

A literature review is a “critical analysis of a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classifications, and comparison of prior research studies, review of literature and theoretical articles” (University of Wisconsin Writing Center, 2014:1). This part of the study will include both published and grey literatures, comprising of authoritative books, newspaper articles, thesis, journals, municipal documents, policies, Acts and Government regulations on public participation. The literature reviewed for this study renders differing opinions on public participation, local government and ward committees, all acknowledging its values with clear identification of the objectives of public participation.

#### **2.2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION DEFINED**

The concept of public participation has constantly been globally discussed and defined in the domain of development and political literature, with numerous attempts made regards definition and categorization of participation. It is to be noted that the acquisition of public participation, as shown in the work of Chamhuri, Hamdan, Ahmah and Ismail (2015:350) is not met without challenges in that the inclusion of the public in the governance of their societies presents major challenges to governments globally. The public participation can be direct through representation by elected representatives and or indirect personal involvement respectively, Gaventa (2002) as cited in Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (2018). Similarly, public participation can be viewed as the process through which members of a public share power with officials who hold power in making decisions as well as taking responsibility for actions related to the public, Lazaroui, 2015 (as cited in Ljungholm 2015,138).

Globally, governments have established institutional developments with the objective of creating spaces of inviting the public to meaningfully participate in guiding, influencing and controlling the delivery of public services (Aiyar, 2010:204).

Invited spaces of participation are created spaces where the public is invited to contribute and control the governance of matters that affect them as communities. These spaces, according to Newbury and Wallace (2014:8) require collective effort of the public in mobilizing for a mutual cause because those who hold power may support or challenge their cause. This is further manifested in the works of Wight (1997:370) showing that globally the demand for public participation has its origins in the development of governance that channels countries in the direction of participatory democracy. This was earlier manifested by Cogan and Sharpe (1986: 283) in affirming that the origins of public participation can be drawn to Ancient Greece and Colonial New England respectively, where it was institutionalized in the mid-1960s with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs. They further allude that prior the 1960s government systems deliberately enabled "external" participation. Mapuva (2015:405) traces public participation in community decision-making back to Plato's concepts of freedom of speech, voting and equal representation that have advanced over time as mainstays of democracies upon which the United States were established. Henceforth the 1950s public participation had gained momentum as such that its requirements had been incorporated in most federal agencies, Pollak (1985) as cited in Mapuva (2015:406).

Accessed literature further shows that there were major development steps in the field of public participation as a human right (Pickaver & Kreiken, 2018) as depicted by the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (Principle 10) as well as the African Charter for Popular Participation in the Development and Transformation (ACPPDT) of 1990 as cited in Theron (2009:15) which advocates that through public participation people get empowered to generate joint structures, policies and programmes that will serve the interests of all people. Earlier, the 1989 Manila Declaration on peoples' participation and sustainable development had declared that governments must ensure public participation to enhance a sense of ownership in citizens and sustainable development (Theron: 2009;113). In the South African context, public participation is linked to local government (Moseti, 2010; Madzivandila & Asha, 2012) with a clear



mandate focusing on the development agenda. Overall, these show that globally, there is a will towards promoting public participation, although the study acknowledges that the existence of democracy is no guarantee for public participation. On the contrary, for Becker & Gill (2003:48) countries such as Britain, Australia, Italy and Norway public participation is national priority with the public taking decisions on major issues. This is manifested by a citation by Cohen and Arato (1992:87):

“...in recent years, citizens of Italy, Austria, and Sweden have voted to ban nuclear power in their countries; the people of Ireland voted to permit abortion in certain instances; those of Norway voted not to belong to the European Union; and the Australians voted to maintain their connection to the British monarchy; the French voted to cut the term of office of their president to five years, and in the near future, a national referendum will be tabled before the people of Great Britain decide whether to replace the pound with the Euro”.

The legal right to participate is well-grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

In South Africa, public participation is a fundamental right and a basis of democracy and it is linked to local government with an obligation to plan and manage activities of development (Moseti, 2010; Madzivhandila & Asha, 2012). Moseti (2010) further states that through participation all stakeholders are provided an opportunity to share a common understanding of all matters concerning local communities and this is a key character of modern democracy.

Various authors, for example Nzimakwe (2012) and Madumo (2014) that have defined public participation all seem to be in agreement that participation is vital in matters that directly or indirectly affect society and can be used as a tool to form democracy of a united government and the citizens. For example, Nzimakwe (2012:9) views public participation is a key instrument for creating policies and programmes that administrate the country while for Madumo (2014:130) “as a feature of governance” it is a vital tool of governance whose optimal use can result in an ideal service delivery to the community. This

understanding echoes South Africa's prevalent situation of extending public participation opportunities to members of society who were formerly excluded from partaking in government's decision-making processes.

Further, Theron, Maxegwana and Draai (2015:77) advocate that participation in local government matters allows communities to have a level of influence on local economic initiatives through an ongoing process of negotiation and debate between local community and municipality (De Visser, 2005:39). The presence of local people in public affairs exposes local resources such as their capabilities resourcefulness and energy which could not have been discovered if they were excluded. Mubangizi (2010: 162) indicates that these resources can be collectively beneficial to the local area.

Likewise, Nabatchi (2014) echoes that public participation is a process whereby stakeholders input into law making and by so doing influence the results of their decisions. These are not met without complications and challenges as most ordinary citizens are unable to participate due to lack of capacity (Madzivhandila and Asha, 2012). Chado and Joha (2016; 185) resonate that public participation challenges in contemporary societies are attributed to inefficient practices related to poor mechanisms in facilitating participation. Public participation is further defined as any process that directly involves the public in decision-making and gives complete deliberation to public input in creating that decision (Kandil, 2018).

Through public participation, decision makers and community members, through ward committees are able to deliberate on matters that impact on the livelihoods of community members and active participation requires legitimate transference of decision-making powers to the local communities (Naidu, 2008: 86). South Africa recognizes local government as a sphere with decentralised administrative and political authority to manage its matters. The study wants to find out what challenges the SLM might be faced with in this regard.

The foregoing definitions have not gone unchallenged by antagonists, for example, Nichols (as cited in Minard, Jones and Paterson, 1993:31) had earlier viewed public participation as a policy tool that is overvalued or glorified for no reason. Later, O' Faircheallaigh (2010) says the rationale for public participation can be better articulated

(Benneworth, 2009) with clarity on partakers on decision-making and rules of engagement in order to improve the quality of engagement. Malefane (2007) is also antagonistic and sees public participation failing due to inconsistencies in the municipal ward system with the democratic principles objectives.

Consulted literature, for example Kandil (2018), Theron, Maxegwana and Draai (2015) illustrates that public participation is an active process whereby community members, through ward committees can assume positions of influence and meaningful contribution to planning and implementing development programmes towards the improvement and benefit of their livelihoods.

The next part looks at the purpose of public participation, focusing on ward committees as a mechanism for public participation in the decision-making processes of local government.

## 2.2. THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is an imperative element in developing a democratic society as well as public values and good citizenship. Numerous purposes have been put forth for public participation, and key being the provision of an opportunity for communication between decision-makers and the public, thus encouraging meaningful participation into the process of making decisions. For Quick and Bryson (2016: 3) the purpose is multifaceted in that it includes, partly, symbolizing the principles of democratic inclusion and participation, promoting social justice, keeping the public informed, fulfilling legal requirements and advancing social justice.

Several authors, for example Maphazi, Raga, Taylor & Mayekiso (2013) have discussed the concept of public participation. Almost all of them concur on the fundamentals of public participation as the encouragement of the community to have significant involvement into the decision-making practice. Public participation therefore provides the opportunity for communication (Theron, 2005:122), Kabemba, (as cited in Mubangizi & Gray, 2011), Phago (2008) between decision-makers and the public. Public participation is a necessity for good governance and social development in any society. It is thus an imperative

element in a developing a democratic society as well as public values and good citizenship. For Marzuki (2015) public participation is a vital catalyst to educate the public towards their improved awareness on local government issues, while Dorasamy (2017) posits that for an appropriate response to the needs of the public by local government, public participation is of vital necessity.

In South Africa, the aim of introducing public participation was partly to control and uphold public servants' principles in delivering services, as set out in the Constitution Act 108 section 195 (1996). The South African government esteems public participation as the foundation of democracy and service delivery. (Maphazi, Raga, Taylor & Mayekiso, 2013: 56). Reddy and Sikhakhane (2008:618) state that public participation is crucial in the local sphere for good governance as it develops accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to the requirements of the local community. For South Africa, as a democratic country, community member participation in governance matters across all three spheres and it is a constitutional right. Public participation for this study, is a practice that should contribute towards significant engagement of communities on their development needs through mechanisms such as ward committees at local government level.

## 2.2. KEY THEMES OF THEORIES OF PARTICIPATION

### 2.2.1. Legitimacy

“Without doubt citizen participation is essential for a vivid democracy; no democratic theory can do without the ideal of “government of the people.” Yet, democratic theories differ enormously as whom exactly should participate by which instruments, to what extent and for what functions” Abels, (2007:103).

For democratic political systems to endure, they require mechanisms to secure their legitimacy (Abels, 2007:105) and this can be achieved through two principal ways to which Scharpf (1970), as cited in Abels (2007) refers to as input legitimacy pertaining to participation and output legitimacy which are closely interspersed. For legitimacy on the

input side, the principle of fairness should be met, allowing all stakeholders an equivalent chance to effect the results of the interactive process. On the other hand, output-legitimacy is increased through interactive policy-making that should meet the competence criteria with the aim of reaching effective outcomes eventually. Competency requires highly skilled stakeholders. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) refers to these as indirect participation and direct participation respectively. Further, for Scharpf (2003) and Boedeltjie & Cornips (2004) as cited in Jagers, Matti, Pelzer and Yu (2018) "Input legitimacy refers to responsiveness to citizens' concerns while output legitimacy is conceptualized as policies that work effectively, while resonating with citizens' democratic ideals, values, and identity".

Boedeltjie and Cornips (2004:4) further coin legitimacy on the input side as depending on mechanisms that translate the 'will of the people' into political decisions whereby they stay only if people view those mechanisms as 'democratic' or 'good', will the input be legitimate. For Scharpf (1999:6) as cited in Boedeltjie & Cornips (2004:4) on the other hand, legitimacy on the output side exists only if government is performing effectively by satisfying the basic functions, which, for him, is about promoting the common welfare of the constituencies in question as well as achieving the goals that matter the most to the constituencies (1997:19) as cited in Boedeltjie & Cornips (2004:6). The basic functions can be related to basic service delivery matters in the case of South Africa.

It must be noted that both forms of legitimacy as coined by Scharpf (2004), input-oriented and output-oriented are correlated in that the latter results from the success of government and this success is only meaningful in relation to the inclinations of the public. Lastly, Ozawa (2012) postulates that when public participation is not perceived as legitimate, the public is alienated from government thus disrupting how policy decisions are implemented. Lastly, for Abels, 2007 (as cited in Fitzgerald, McCarthy, Carton, O Connor, Lynch & Adam, 2015:250) legitimacy is particularly significant if the issues of those holding power are supported as this has far reaching implications for various stakeholders.

### 2.2.2. Diversity and inclusion

Numerous authors have discussed the issue of diversity and inclusion, for example, Schlozman & Brady (2012) who highlighted the plight of participation as that of including those who are usually barred from making decisions by institutional biases. Likewise, the International Association for Public Participation (2014) concurs that in most cases, public participation is not inclusive as it excludes deliberation and joint discussions but focused on “consulting” with the public to gather input. Bryson (2004) proposes that a stakeholder analysis in order to accommodate the marginalized groups in the form of gender, ethnicity age, racial or socio-economic diversity of those partaking in public participation.

Stakeholder analysis and the active management of conflict and power are thus needed to ensure that under-represented and marginalized groups are at least considered and accommodated. For Quick and Feldman (2014) inclusion is about cooperation on matters of different identities, perspectives, issue identities and institutional confines.

### 2.2.3. Expertise and participation

Public participation employs various perspectives in making decisions and these often raise concerns on the quality and expertise in governance. It is vital that the experts are maintained to sustain the quality of decisions that are taken in a municipality, for example. It is imperative that in any decision making through public participation produces vital information and standards into decision-making processes as stated by Innes and Booher (2010), in so doing, offer a channel for essential civic learning (Ansell, 2011) as cited in Quick & Bryson (2016:5). This means that public participation has to have set standards in order to maintain standards for service delivery whereby the experts work hand in hand with the public.

## 2.3. MECHANISMS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation mechanisms are the accessible methods or mechanism for the purpose of consulting, involving and informing the public regarding matters that affect

them. In addition, public participation mechanisms seek to gather public opinions for the purpose of enhanced decision-making (Rowe & Frewer, 2005; Wang & Wart, 2007; Shittu & Musbaudeen (2015). The South African Framework on Public participation lists a number of these: newsletters, media feedback channels such as letters and phone calls from citizens, brochures, talk shows and/or interviews, public hearings, meeting with citizens, youth city and ward forums festivals, task forces, special competition or contest activities, frequently asked questions (FAQ), general public surveys, local partnership programs (DPLG (2007). For Smith and De Visser (2009) ward committees have established in 2001 as a strategic institutional mechanism envisioned to contribute towards bringing about people-centred, participatory and democratic local governance. The use of the concept ward committee is to be understood as per the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (RSA, 1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (Act No.32 of 2000) (RSA, 2000).

The study focuses on the ward committees as a point of study. Lastly, for Muse (2014) and Pourjafar, 2014 (as cited in Chado and Joha, 2016: 186) the mechanisms are not effective assurance to the efficiency of public participation programmes in traditional cities of countries that are still developing. The area of this study, SLM is a rural municipality and can be affected by these assumptions.

### 2.3.1. Ward Committees

South African municipalities have ward committees as significant mechanisms for promoting public participation. Mayekiso, Taylor and Maphazi (2013:192) advocate that section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998 makes provision for the formation of ward committees as an instrument for enhancing public participation. Ward committees are intended to uphold democracy (Van Rooyen and Mokoena, 2013:761) by forming connections amid the community and the local municipality. Similarly, Madumo (2011:68) propounds that the accountability for municipal affairs is enhanced by ward committees as they are capable of holding the municipal council accountable for the promises made to the communities. Therefore, ward committees play a crucial role in ensuring that public participation is strengthened through active engagement of citizens in governance issues.

This community participation is expedited through connecting the local municipality and the community (Mulaudzi & Liebenberg, 2013: 153).

Ward committees, as structures in the local government sphere, were created specifically to bring government closer to the people and thus municipalities should constantly encourage (Henna, Mfene and Masango 2013:91) the involvement of communities in the affairs of local government. They must be means of social change (Sikander, 2015:171) that are proficient in mobilizing communities to partake in resolving their developmental problems affecting them.

In consensus Ceasar and Theron (as cited in Mautjana & Makombe, 2014:52) suggest that direct community engagement and development should be facilitated at local government. Ward committees are an acceptable mechanism of enhancing the engagement of community in local municipalities and they are systems that encourage participatory governance (Sikhakhane & Reddy, 2009, 244). It is further evident that there are protagonists of ward committees, as stated above in concurring on the role of ward committees. Several authors, for example, Mhari (2014); Isaacs (2017) maintain that ward committees enhance participatory democracy through enhanced communication of local residents and the local municipality. The assumptions in literature is that with involvement of citizens in the municipal decision-making processes, they will be provided opportunities to express their views and cognitive tools. "Public participation in governance involves the direct involvement – or indirect involvement through representatives – of concerned stakeholders in decision-making about policies, plans or programs in which they have an interest" (Quick and Bryson, 2016:2).

On the other hand, there are antagonists, such as Davids and Cloete (2012: 97) who believe that ward committees have become political concourses and thus they question the efficiency of ward committees as a communication medium. For Tau (2013:142) ward committees are about the decentralisation of administrative and political autonomy of government affairs to local government.



#### 2.3.1.1. Composition of ward committees

The Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998, Section 73 (2) (a) (b) of the Local Government stipulates that ward committees should comprise of Councillor as chairperson of the committee, as well as represent the ward in council, and ten other persons. The ten members must show diversity in terms of gender, age, disability, employment status, education. The election process is guided by Local Government Structures Act which acknowledges diversity and guides the election process to consider women equitable representation and diversity representation in a ward.

### 2.4. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Department of Public and Local Government (DPLG) (2007: 22) highlights basic principles underlying public participation: Inclusivity, diversity, community capacity building, transparency, flexibility, accessibility, accountability, trust and commitment, and lastly, integration. By these principles of public participation have assumptions that see public participation as: intended for the promotion of good governance and human rights for citizens to participate in governance, thus narrowing the gap between the people and the elected institutions. Through engaging citizens their contribution to governance will be appreciated as individuals or groups. This interaction is facilitated through ward committees connecting citizens and elected institutions (DPLG: 2007: 15).

Similarly, the Praxis Group (2012:2) highlights the same principles of inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, communication, commitment and responsiveness as key to effective public participation.

Municipalities are required to promote communities and community organisations' participation in local government. According to Rowe and Frewer, 2005 (as cited in ECNGOC, 2019), it is a public participation principle that all affected stakeholders have a right to be consulted on any decisions and actions of public authority for their contribution to such decisions. Further, ward committees are to ensure that citizens participate in the IDP process in any municipality (SALGA and GTZ, 2006:69) through organizing IDP

processes of participation at ward level and these can be referred to as “community based planning” (SALGA and GTZ, 2006:70). In so doing, Councillors, ward committees and municipal officials can jointly make certain that in the plans of the municipality the needs of citizens are reflected (p.63). In addition, SALGA sees ward committees as one form of ensuring public participation in any municipality process. Overall the public participation partly depends on the effective operations of a ward committee as a mechanism located at local government.

The key to effective participation lies in governments’ preparedness to make themselves as available to citizens, especially the poor and interacting with them in a two-way process. Their role lies in making citizen involvement more possible and in responding to it if citizens engage in it. For Quick and Bryson (2016), public participation involves involvement in decision making on plans, policies and programs through representation in governance. For purposes of this study, public participation will be adopted as a dual process between government and communities working together in governing local government for the efficiency and effectiveness of the basic service delivery, in this case, the Senqu Local Municipality.

## 2.5. PROS AND CONS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It should be noted that in South Africa, public participation is a legal requirement in local municipalities, and it remains of paramount significance, more so that public participation is closely related to local development and the elevation of grassroots democracy. Morebodi (2015) pronounces that public participation upholds a stability and prosperity in a society through giving a voice to the voiceless and empowering them to contribute to the development of local policies.

Additionally, the World Bank Development Report (quoted in Shaidi, Pillay, Raga & Taylor, 2011:119) affirms that community engagement is a precondition for development. Through public participation municipalities keep in touch with communities, thereby uphold democracy in the local government sphere (Van der Walddt, 2014:28). One of the benefits of community participation is a better educated public (Mubangizi & Grey

(2011:5). For Plummer (2000) it improves the standard of service delivery at local level while keeping government on check as to their dealing with community issues. It essentially results in better outcomes and better governance (Kandill, 2018).

On the other hand, when citizens get empowered, they learn about government and this brings a balance in an integrated society (De Visser (2005). Similarly, Creighton (2005) sees increasing ease of implementation; avoiding worst cases scenario; maintaining credibility and legitimacy; anticipating public concerns and attitudes and, lastly, developing civil society.

A few disadvantages are mentioned, Bryson et al. (2013: 28), perceive public participation as a time-consuming process and at times costly as it involves many stakeholders and converging them is not an easy task. For Creighton (2005:18) the high number of people participating inevitably calls for conflict and people end up having to compromise in most cases. Moreover, for Creighton (2005), most challenges come at the implementation stage of public participation. The EIPP (2009) summarises the challenges to three, namely, cost, complexity and representativeness, and these will be dealt with in detail later. This is supported by Tshishonga and Mafema (2010:779) who attribute challenges to the following factors: policies existing just for compliance; conservative mindsets of officials; a prevalent dependency syndrome and dearth of synergistic action plan taking to policies. This hampers the efficiency of public participation.

With these differing views on public participation the study will have to bear in mind when engaging in the SLM to look for both perspectives. Some of the authors, for example, Thornhill and Madumo, (2011:134); Naidu, (2008:87) attribute challenges to ward committees lacking in: recognition and legitimacy; original power; political stability; the focus and clarity in their responsibilities; and the capacity to promote genuine public participation. Madumo (2014) sees challenges as two-fold: systematic and structural, linking with public participation directly and mechanisms that can be used respectively.

For Slavokova and Jilkova (2011) poor selection of representatives by government excluding citizens compromises efficiency of programmes and thus pose a huge

challenge. Woolcock (2017:2) states that “in East Asia the effectiveness with which service delivery policies are implemented also varies widely, between and within countries”. This manifest in a study conducted by Goh (2016) on policy implementation where Singapore encouraged frontline officials to experiment and iterate and this contributed to the state capability. In another study by Ang (2016) in contemporary China professionals had the independence to network and identify local solutions to local problems, leading to success in service delivery.

## 2.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The objective of the study, as stated earlier, is to investigate public participation challenges that are faced by the Senqu ward committees. To accomplish this, the study engages in a theoretical framework focusing on public participation theories, local democracy and ward committees.

Numerous reasons have been put forward to define the significance of public engagement in local government development, decision making and implementation of public participation. Some view public participation as esteemed and demonstrate an alignment towards a considerable democratic way of decision making with regards to ward committees and public participation. Several authors in defining the theoretical framework, for example Grant and Osanloo (2014) view it as the ‘blueprint’ and foundation upon which research is constructed, consisting of theoretical principles, constructs, concepts, and tenants of a theory. Similarly, Ravitch and Carl (2016) in accord view it as assisting researchers in relating recognized theories to their research as a guide. Fulton and Krainovich-Miller (2010) relate its role to that of a map or travel plan and, Brondizio, Leemans and Solecki (2014) view it as the specific theory or theories about aspects of human endeavor that can be useful to the study of events and it may only be used when a study is supported by a particular theory. Public participation, as stated earlier, is subject to various disciplines and academic methods. Theories and models are imperative because they support researchers to comprehend the phenomenon under study.

The study acknowledges that there has been much theoretical debate regarding public participation in the development studies field. Globally, the demand for public participation has its origins in the development of governance that channels countries in the direction of participatory democracy (Wight, 1997:370). This is evident in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (principle 10), a major development step in the field of public participation as a human right (Pickaver & Kreiken, 2018) and the African Charter for Popular Participation in the Development and Transformation (ACPPDT) of 1990 as cited in Theron (2009:15) which advocates that through public participation people get empowered to generate joint structures, policies and programmes that will serve the interests of all people. Earlier, the 1989 Manila Declaration on people's participation and sustainable development had declared that governments must ensure public participation to enhance a sense of ownership in citizens and sustainable development (Theron: 2009;113). In the South African context, public participation is linked to local government (Moseti, 2010; Madzivandila & Asha, 2012) with a clear mandate focusing on the development agenda.

For Gilbert (2015:28-30) theory is a tool to understand and explain a phenomenon that would be complex under normal circumstances. The study identified a few theories namely: social theory, the democratic theory and the ladder of citizen participation to complement them and it will be adopted as framework for this study.

## 2.6.1. Theories of participation

### 2.6.1.1. The Social Theory

The Social theory for Harrington (2005: 1) is “the study of scientific ways of thinking about social life”, covering social aspects on how societies initiate transformation and adapt to their changing surroundings. In so doing it explains social behavior and this makes it significant for this study in terms of understanding human interaction and social group dynamics in different contexts. The theory helps us to comprehend the roots of social participation in contentious issues and activism in political affairs. The Social theory helps us to understand the root cause of community discontent with poor municipal services at municipal local level (Netswera & Kgalane, 2014:261) and their impact on communities.

The social theory is appropriate to the study of public participation as it understands social dynamics and it explains participation through the ward committees as a group that is representative of the community.

#### 2.6.1.2. The Democratic Theory

The democratic theory emanates from the political theory field and primarily wants to find significance in democracy and its related concepts, emphasizing sovereignty and political authority as legitimate only through justification by and to the people on whom it is exercised (Abizadeh, 2008:41). According to Fung (2007:443-444) one of the components of democracy is a democratic government that is willing to heed and accommodate all citizens' views without reproach and have actively involved citizens in government affairs. This is in line with the public participation principles of inclusion, inclusiveness and responsiveness. Constitutionally, citizens have a right to be heard and this theory promotes the right to participate in any form, such as voting, engaging in programmes in order to influence programmes and policies to be adopted by government (Miller, 2009:204).

The democratic theory augments our understanding of democratic principles and how these are at play in a democratic society. Regarding public participation, the theory is relevant because it assists public administration scholars to identify how to connect public participation efficiently in a democratic dispensation with the intention of promoting local democracy in the local government sphere.

#### 2.6.1.3. Arnstein's Theory

The theory adopted in this study has been devised as one of the most persuasive measurement of public participation, the "Ladder of Participation" as coined by Arnstein (1969). Arnstein's model (1969: 216) of "a ladder of citizen participation" is based on eight degrees, ranging from manipulation to full citizen control, with each step corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product. The study acknowledges that there were various models developed from her original typology of citizen participation, for example, other "ladder" models, deliberative practices model, the wheel

model and target-centric approach (Ciaffi & Mela: 2011). The study does not go into detail on these models as they are not the focus of the study. The significance of Arnstein's work lies in the awareness that what is referred to as participation is essentially non-participation and concealment of dialogue. In her opinion, true participation empowers by placing control not in the hands of the governing bodies but in the hands of the people.

For Arnstein, citizen participation is a clear-cut term for citizen power. She sees it as a reallocation of power empowering the have-not citizens, who are most often excluded from the economic and political decision-making processes, only to be included at the end when decisions have already been taken. Through the ladder model she views levels of public participation through the lens of power distribution and she further defines participation as "the redistribution of power that enables the 'have-not' citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future' (Arnstein, 1969:216).

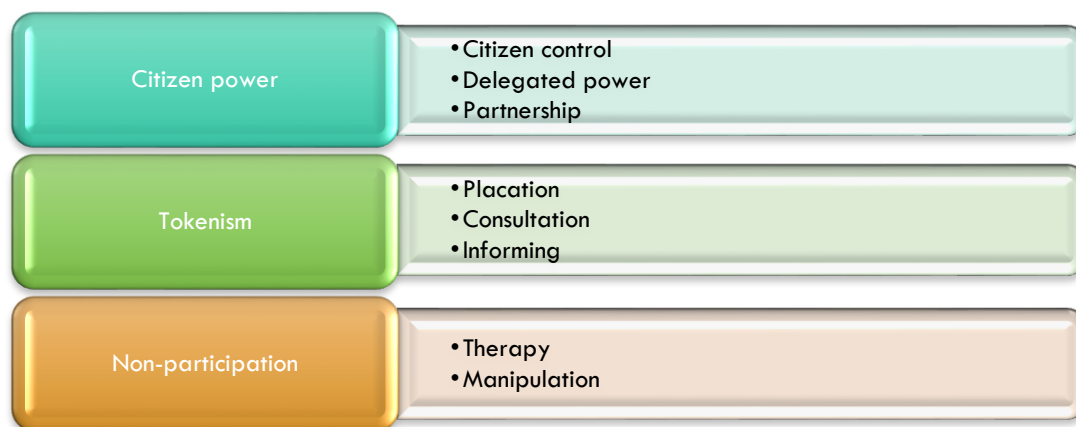


Figure 2 Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. Source: Arnstein (1969: 217)

The lowest level of non-participation is characterized by the total exclusion of the powerless in decision making, with power only in the hands of the few elites who make decisions for all, excluding the majority. This level is characterized by manipulation and therapy. The concept of manipulation is about pretending where decision makers pretend to have no power in order to advance their goals. The public has no say or power at all. At therapy the public just gets informed unilaterally without considering their opinions.

The second level is characterized by superficial participation and is called “Tokenism” and these Gangemi, 2012:13 (as cited in Garau, 2012:23) refers to as tokens used in monopoly, which are context bound, outside which they are meaningless. At this level there is debate, information on what is there, but no guarantee of inputs being implemented. The public are informed, and their support acknowledged. The consultation that occurs here is providing information on a project, for example, and the public only comments and there is no assurance that the inputs will reflect in the final decision taken. Placation is about asking for inputs just to meet the requirements and token deviations are done.

The last stage of “citizen power” gives citizens some level of power in that they are able to make decisions and have power in partnership and consensus can be reached on issues of common interest. These are three levels: partnership, delegated power and citizen control. In partnership there is joint and informed decision making between the public and those holding power. The public has significant influence on the process of taking decisions. With delegated power, negotiations are allowed and can result in fair plans and programmes. The last stage of citizen control is true power to the public where they can decide on matters that directly affect them independently so.

Arnstein’s model can be seen as encouraging participation through active decision making that has full transparency, accountability and responsibility. With all the benefits of the model, Arnstein’s model does not come without criticism, her work is disapproved for lacking in expansively speaking to the issue of control in the setting of developing countries. Abbott (1996) highlights the weakness in dealing with a single dimension of power of inclusiveness of individuals in the process of making decisions, excluding the “nature of the decisions to be made”, this, Abbott alludes, is complicated by the complex nature of the process of making decisions. Arnstein’s model will be used as a theoretical framework that underpins this study. The theory integrates all elements of public participation and good governance as cited in the literature review such as communication, transparency, accountability, consultation and delegation of power, just to mention a few, and how these can be used from a community inclusion perspective.



### 2.6.2. Local Government

Since public participation takes place at the local government level, it is imperative that the study looks at local government in context and what it entails. The basis for local government transpires from the need to promote values of democracy, increase and develop the delivery of basic services and expedite community participation in the development of their areas of interest (Sikander, 2015:171). This means that local government must create an atmosphere or space of governance that promotes effective participation of the people in what local government is contending to be doing on behalf of the communities. This means that local government cannot decide alone on what is good for the communities, but it must create spaces where discussions can be held to discuss, debate and agree on what is good for the communities. Ward committees form part of these invited spaces that municipalities can use to engage communities. All South African municipalities form part of the local government sphere, a sphere that interacts directly with ordinary people (Van der Walddt, Venter, Van der Walt, Phutiagae, Khalo, Van Niekerk & Nealer, 2014:4) and is held liable for service delivery and thus the engine of local development (Reddy, 2016). In examining the SLM participation challenges, the study interrogates ward committee operations in the municipality.

Local Government in South Africa is presented with the responsibility of driving the practice of public participation in democracy at local level through ward committees as one mechanism to increase public participation. Constitutionally, South Africa has three spheres of government, namely, National, Provincial and Local, with the latter sphere of government closest to the people (Koma, 2010), it is imperative that it promotes and understands public participation as embedded in Chapter 7 of the Constitution. It is a requirement of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (MSA) of 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) that South African municipalities promote a philosophy of municipal government that matches formal representative government. Section 16 of the MSA states that the South African Local Municipalities must be encouraged to participate on the affairs of the municipality. This government responsibility was echoed by the President in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) (2019) in saying that “we are duty bound to improve the conditions of life for all South Africans, especially the poor” (SONA, 2019).

The concept of “developmental local government” was introduced by the White Paper on Local Government (1998) and is defined as “Local Government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their economic and material needs and to improve the quality of their lives” (Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), 2006:9). Several authors, for example, Ntlemenza (2007); Mothae (2008); Kroukamp (2008) have looked at the transformation of local government after democracy and the promotion of public participation, culminating in the gradual provision of basic services to communities (Venter and Landsberg, 2011).

The transformation of local government was imperative for the development of the new developmental government as the local governments (Mogale, 2005) are vital to strengthening and restructuring local communities for the better. To facilitate the application of the transformation, government has put in place legislation and policies to support municipalities in implementing efficiently. These will be dealt with in detail in the detailed section of the study later. Therefore, transformation in local government brought about changes in the municipal systems promoting developmental local government as suggested by the consulted literature. The concept of democratic governance that simultaneously promotes public participation and the two should work together continuously.

### 2.6.3. Governance

A number of authors have described governance as an area of study that enunciates a set of policies, rules and use of power to manage the affairs of the nation. Governance reinforces the decision-making process as well as implementation in relation to economic and political administration. This is shown in the work of Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012) in describing governance as a dual process of making decisions as well as implementing these decisions or not implementing them. In consensus, the United Nations (UN) (2015) views governance as a decision-making process where rules are either implemented or not implemented. Another view from Adejumobi (2017) differentiates between good and bad governance and this depends on the manner of implementation and the quality of decisions that are taken in governance. For Van der Waldt (2004:3) “governance is the

acquisition of and accountability for the application of political authority to the direction of public affairs and the management of public resources”.

The authors capture the core of governance as jointly managing resources, implementing decisions for a sustainable developmental government in an accountable and responsive manner, thus achieving good developmental goals to sustain the resources of the country (Lin & Monga, 2012:660).

For purposes of this study, good governance can be about collective decision-making and inclusion of all stakeholders, with community representatives playing a key role with clear accountability and reporting processes in place. Chottray and Stoker (2010) also promote joint decisions with good relations between all stakeholders with public officials upholding good conduct to ensure sustainability of service delivery and good governance (Ababio and Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2010: 411). For the DPLG (2007: 17), good governance for improving public participation can be enhanced in eight significant ways such as: “Increased level of information in communities; Better need identification for communities; Improved service delivery; Community empowerment; Greater accountability; Better wealth distribution; Greater community solidarity; Greater tolerance of diversity” (p17).

One can conclude that governance is not to deal with one issue, but shared issues that affect the functionality of a country, in this case service delivery issues that need to be attended to and resolved collectively. For Quick and Bryson (2016:1) “public participation in governance involves the direct involvement – or indirect involvement through representatives – of concerned stakeholders in decision-making about policies, plans or programs in which they have an interest”. Furthermore, it is argued that in democracies, citizens are recognized to be significant stakeholders in their ability to participate either directly or indirectly through elected representatives in the founding, approval and operation of the laws and policies that affect them. Hence public participation is fundamental to the public–government relationship in democracies (Jacobs, Cook & Carpini, 2009; Bryson et al. 2013). Freeman (2010) describes stakeholders as people, groups or organizations that may impact or be affected by policy decisions, alternatively place a claim on an organization’s attention, resources or outputs (Bryson 2004).

## 2.7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The most imperative thing to appreciate about the conceptual framework is that it is mainly a conception or model of what are the things that the study plans to research, and exactly what is happening with these issues and reasons thereof, creating a tentative theory of the main issues to be investigated. Various authors have attempted to define the conceptual framework as an outline of the sequence of actions a researcher intends executing in a research study, for example, Grant and Osanloo (2014) highlight its significance in that it provides a depiction of how all ideas in a study are related to one another. Similarly, Adom, Hussein & Agyem (2018) view it as the researcher's account on how the research problem will be explored. Lastly, Luse, Mennecke & Townsend (2011) state that the framework assists the researcher in defining the concepts within the area of study (Luse, Mennecke & Townsend, 2012).

This study examines the challenges faced by the municipality ward committees as a mechanism of public participation as well as the association of public participation to service delivery by scrutinizing the challenges faced by the municipality ward Councillors and officials in implementing the concept. Currently, available studies on challenges of public participation were conducted in other big municipalities, and mostly Metros in South Africa, for example, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (Shaidi, et al: 2011); Mamelodi (Madumo, 2011) and Buffalo City (Maphazi, 2012), there is no available study conducted in this area of SLM. It is imperative to assess the degree and quality of public participation and how it relates to the challenges as faced by the selected municipality. This objective requires a qualitative study with a restricted population for in-depth analysis and understanding as well as the practicality of the study, considering the time constraints. Two concepts: public participation and consultation as a crucial element of the public participation, frame this study.

The ladder of participation model categorises the degrees of public participation as a useful tool that the public has in influencing the decisions affecting them directly and indirectly. Applying this model to the public participation and on ward committee system of the SLM members will create a platform for citizens to be able to make meaningful contribution at the level of "citizen empowerment" where they are at the level of equal

partnership with delegated powers towards democratic governance and improved service delivery. As stated earlier, the SLM is a category B Municipality with 17 wards and is rural based, so it is a relatively small municipality where, given an opportunity, public participation there contribute towards quality service delivery for the better in their municipal local governance.

Participation through inclusiveness and communication brings progressive changes in any setting, in this case public participation in the local municipality, whose implementation hinges on the former. The model also encourages the proper use of the IDP for planning and Govender and Reddy (2011) recommend it as a useful tool to use in planning with the community. The ladder model promotes the consideration of the views of the community as vital stakeholders as they bring insights on issues and information that is imperative in a developmental governance (Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012).

The ladder model steps can be viewed as indicators which can be easily measured when engaging citizens as participative or non-participative. These can be further broken down into variables and attributes that can be easily measured through either interviews or surveys at citizen level. When this happens ownership occurs, resulting in a feeling of ownership and responsibility for a collective idea agreed upon (Kincaid & Figueroa, 2009). Thus, the notion of local ownership represents community-driven procedures and decision making, which is exactly what public participation is about.

This study will make use of interviews that will measure the aspects highlighted above with the model of Arnstein (1969) as a basis. The interviews will take the form of semi-structured interviews, allowing for follow up questions for in-depth information and further clarity.

The research will employ the semi-structured interviews to measure the aspects of the study. The interviews will enquire on three themes, namely: local democracy, public participation and ward committee functioning using the Arnstein's Framework as a guide as well as the South African government legislative Frameworks in place. These will form an appropriate base to guide both interviews and the focus group discussions. The selected questions will be adapted from various studies conducted before on public

participation, a few are listed (Shaidi et.al, 2011; Madumo, 2011; Reddy & Sikhakhane, 2008; Maphazi, 2012, Seitlholo, 2016).

The local democracy section will be based on the Batho Pele principles, comprising of access, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, etc. The Public participation section will be based on the knowledge and understanding of the concept, IDP, skills development and capacity development, ward committees as mechanisms for public participation and available Forums within the municipality. The ward committee functioning section will deal with the quality of value addition, representation and composition, the level of knowledge and professionalism regarding support and remuneration, etc.

This section will also highlight the gaps from the previous research. However, it was significant to offer a working definition for this article informed by the literature consulted for the study. The researcher views public participation as a valuable process providing an opportunity for ordinary individuals to influence public decisions through participation and thus influencing public decisions, especially at local government where they are mostly affected. Furthermore, studies conducted on public participation (Gaventa & Barret (2012); Yang and Pandey (2011) mostly agree in identifying similarities in the relationship between participation characteristics and the effectiveness of public participation. Common among these are administrative policy frameworks in place, representation and competency of the involved citizens; the capacity, representativeness and the level of connection to the broader community.

This study focuses on the concept public participation, with a focus on ward committees and their effectiveness and efficiency in the Senqu Local Municipality as a unit of study. The study bases its assumptions on Arnstein's model of the ladder that the inclusion, understanding and engagement of the communities in the planning, decision making and implementation of set plans at local government is a good recipe for good governance and democracy. For Arnstein (1969) the participation process allows those who are excluded in the decision-making process to be included going forward. For example, the inclusion of citizens in ward structures opens channels for better understanding of their

requirements from government as well as them understanding how government functions, thus reducing the existing gap that normally leads to unrests at local government.

Evidence from available literature shows that public participation is not met without challenges as these cause the failure of most of the initiatives, from non-cooperation of officials, dearth of set budget, non-representation and non-transparency on the side of government. Literature also shows that it is imperative that the citizens are knowledgeable on how government works as this facilitates their engagement with understanding.

The theoretical framework opens room for the study to assess the link between public participation and the level of efficiency within the selected municipality of Senqu. The ladder model adopted for this study advocates for total control by citizens, for effective and efficient public participation in a democratic governance to happen and be sustainable. Even with systems in place, there still has to be vigilance on how the relationships are structured, maintained and sustained for effective and efficient local government public partnerships through ward committees.

## 2.8. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

The achievement of public participation is of key significance and this is evident in the publication of the Municipal Systems Act, the Constitution and other legal frameworks on public participation and ward committees. The emphasis of the Municipal Act is to promote public participation and the mechanisms thereof at local municipality level. In as much as there are great benefits to public participation, challenges cannot be overlooked. Of the debates, the most pertinent one is on what determines the meaningful participation of community members in local government decision making bodies. With full control and engagement, public participation can be easier formed and implemented. The literature has also highlighted the element of legitimacy, which is quite crucial in public participation.

The literature has emphasised the significance of inclusion, participation and contribution of the community to lead to full public participation. A sample of officials and some ward committees within the Senqu Local Municipality will be interviewed for primary data

collection of the study as well as get an understanding of the challenges as faced by the selected municipality.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter comprises the research methodology of the study. It details the research strategy, design, method, procedure, sampling, data, data analysis, data collection methods, sample selection, validity, reliability as well as ethical considerations and lastly, research limitations. The concept of research methodology is concerned with the processes and the decisions taken by the researcher to accomplish the research project. For Leedy and Ormrod (2010:12) research methodology denotes the general approach of the researcher in carrying out the research project. For Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013:5) it is “a systematic way to solve a problem”.

#### **3.1. RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Research has been defined by Pandey and Pandey, (2015:7) as an intellectual activity responsible for uncovering new information, rectifying the existing inaccuracies, eliminating prevailing misconceptions and adding new information to the available knowledge.

Social science has two broad research approaches, qualitative and quantitative research and the study opts for the qualitative methodology because it is likely to yield rich descriptive data in the spoken words of the participant (Bryman, 2012), making it the most appropriate tool for enquiry as the study would like to pursue the participants' experiences on challenges of public participation in Senqu. It is informed by the interpretivist paradigm which “addresses an understanding of the world as others see it” as defined by Chilisa and Kawulich (as cited in Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012: 55) using semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The study opts for qualitative research because it produces descriptive data from the viewpoint of the participant such as the spoken and written words (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015), it is also inductive (Taylor, et al (2015) in that the researcher develops the

insights, models and understanding from patterns in the data rather than collecting data to measure hypothesis or theories. This fits in with the data collection method where participants will be interviewed face to face to obtain qualitative data, a process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing (Schurink, Fouche and De Vos, 2011: 399) The study is interpretive as it explores how the people in the Senqu interpret their experiences on public participation and ward committees' challenges and the meanings they attach to these. This study looks at the practicality of public participation through ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality and will, at the end, provide strategic recommendations regards their challenges.

The objective of the study requires a qualitative study, which requires use of structured face to face interviews, details of which will be discussed in a later section. The next section looks at the selected research design for the study.

### 3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

Several authors have defined research design, for example Van Zyl (2014); Mouton (2001) as a procedure, plan or technique and system of a study that the researcher prefers to conduct research. Of the approaches available to research design are the following: comparative research, longitudinal survey, case study, cross-sectional survey and experimental/quasi-experimental. The study opts for the case study for the Senqu Local Municipality because as a method it predominantly useful in obtaining an in-depth examination of real-life matters or occurrences in their reality context (Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, (2011). This was useful for the study as through a case study, public participation was investigated within its real-life context, and in so doing be able to meet the objectives of the study.

Through a case study design method, the study will be able to examine public participation for service delivery in Senqu Local Municipality, providing detailed and comprehensive understanding of the Senqu public participation and ward committees. For Yin, 2014 (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:37) "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') within its real-life context,

especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 16). Yin further makes an observation that case study designs are mainly suitable to conditions where the phenomenon’s variables are connected to their specific context.

The study acknowledges that there are numerous diverse definitions and kinds of case studies (Gustaffsson, 2017), however, Creswell suggests that a case study is a method that “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). A case study design is appropriate for this study as it defines the boundaries and context of the study. This study makes use of the qualitative research design from a constructivist/interpretive paradigm. This is suitable for this research as it addresses the appreciation of the world through the experiences of others (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012) as well as its nature of using words rather than numbers (Bryman 2012: 380).

The descriptive research design is applied as qualitative data is an outcome of an inductive reasoning process and it applies theoretical analysis relating to the research. The study acknowledges other forms of research design, namely, evaluation; explanatory and exploratory research but does not focus on them. With qualitative research the researcher will be able to source data from different sources through interviews and focus group discussions as primary sources, and official documents as secondary data, thus ensuring credibility of the study by observing a phenomenon from differing viewpoints (Neuman, 2013). With the use of various resources, the study is able to conduct data triangulation (Denzin, 1978) with data from officials and the members of the ward committees; as well as methodical triangulation with the use of semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, documents and observations. Triangulation denotes the usage of various approaches or sources of data in qualitative research in order to develop an in-depth understanding of a social phenomena, Paton, 1999 (as cited in Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014). The details of how the triangulation is applicable to the study will be dealt with in detail later in the paper.

### 3.3. RESEARCH METHOD

Literature has shown that numerous studies have been conducted on related topics either using quantitative or qualitative methods. Studies such as Shittu & Musbaudeen (2015); Garau (2012), among others, have an international perspective on public participation, while for a local perspective on public participation and ward committees, available authors, among others are Madumo (2011), Govender & Reddy (2011), Mhari (2014), and Maphazi (2012), have conducted studies in different municipalities in South Africa.

“Methods are the means used for gathering data and are an important part of the methodology” Chilisa & Kawulich (as cited in Wagner, 2012, p. 52). To meet the objectives of the research, a qualitative study research using a semi-structured interview with prepared questionnaire is used because this defines the line of enquiry (Nieuwenhuis and Smit as cited in Wagner et al (2012:134) thus enabling the researcher to probe further deeper for more detail on the subject. It also allows for clarity, probing and cross checking questions. For Babbie (2010), qualitative research method is an instrument of inquiry which aids the researcher to comprehend a social or human problem from numerous viewpoints. Questionnaires are a good way to obtain information from groups of people and can be administered in a variety of ways. Nieuwenhuis & Smit (as cited in Wagner, et al, 2012: 133) define interviews as two-way conversations with purposive interaction and it is a valuable source of information if used correctly. Taylor, Bogdan, and De Vault (2015) contend that qualitative research is inductive in nature as concepts and insights are developed from patterns in the data and not adapting to existing theories.

The study used two types of qualitative data collection for primary data collection, structured interviews for municipal officials and focus group discussions for members of ward committees. The researcher requested permission to conduct the interviews within the municipality from the Acting Municipal Manager. These were open ended in order to draw on participants’ experiences on public participation challenges in the municipality. The interviews were conducted face to face by the researcher, taking notes that were transcribed immediately after the interviews for easy recollection. The main question was broken down for participants to understand and answer easily, using an interview

template for recording the responses by the researcher. The questions are organized into three themes: Local government, public participation and ward committee functioning. Follow up questions were asked to develop themes and concepts as developed by the participants. The semi structured interviews with municipal officials took approximately 45 minutes to an hour maximum each. The researcher, with permission of the respondents, recorded the interviews, explaining that these would only be used for academic purposes of the research. The transparency put the participants at ease to open up without fear. The interviews were later transcribed by the researcher, organised to categories, coded, and recurring themes identified, in preparation for analysis.

Additional information was acquired from the focus groups in order to provide a different view of information from a group discussion in addition to information collected from the individual interviews. The focus groups comprised 2 ward committees selected from the 17 ward committees of Senqu and that represented the target population (Nieuwenhuis & Smit (as cited in Wagner, et al, 2012: 137) and these sessions were targeted to take about one hour. Although the discussions were flexible, they were guided by prepared questions, facilitated by the researcher. the environment and the groups were homogeneous. These focus group discussion sessions were also recorded with prior permission from the respondents, with the purpose explained, with short notes taken for comparison of data at transcribing stage.

Purposive convenience and selective sampling was used to select the 2 ward committees because of their differences, one rural, one semi-urban, as well as their geographical proximity to the municipal offices to sample. This is a sampling technique used by qualitative researchers to recruit participants who are effortlessly reachable and opportune to the researchers and in most cases this may include using the geographic position that make the recruitment of participants convenient.

### 3.4. SAMPLING

A sample refers to a fraction that is representative of the population, and a sample should strive to be representative of the population (Alvi, 2016). For Good and Hatt (as cited in

Pandey & Pandey, 2015:44) a sample “is a smaller representation of a larger whole” while Firebaugh (2018: 18) views it as a subset of individuals’ representative of the population from which they were selected. The next section will define the population, the sampling frame and the sampling methods traditionally used in qualitative research.

#### 3.4.1. Population

In Research Methodology, as stated in Pandey and Pandey (2015: 41) population means characteristics of a specific group. For Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013:162) population is “the entire set of objects or people that is the focus of the research project and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics”. The target population for this research comprises of the ward committees and municipality officials in the Senqu Local Municipality. Generally, sampling is “an integral component of all research designs” (Abrams, 2010:536) and thus a basis of research reliability in all methods of social science. The Senqu local municipality has 17 wards but for purposes of this study data was collected from 2 wards, ward 13, a rural ward and ward 10, a semi-urban ward due to time and cost constraints. It is rare for a researcher to question all the people in a study, Henn, Weinstein & Ford, 2006, (as cited in Muronda, 2017:9).

#### 3.4.2. Sampling strategy

For purposes of this study, a purposive and non-probability sampling strategy is used as is commonly used in qualitative research and does not involve random sampling (Wagner, 2012: 126) and it allows for a sample from which most can be learnt in order to gain insight. It allows for participants to be selected on the basis of their knowledge on the subject, Babbie, 2014 (as cited in Muronda (2017:9).

The purpose is to gain insight from the experienced, in this case the Senqu Local Municipality officials and ward committee members who will provide rich information for purposes of addressing the objective of the study with in-depth information. With this approach, information cannot be generalized in the bigger population (Battacherjee,

2012:69). Later, in agreement Maltreud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016) stated that a size of a sample can be determined relatively to what they refer to as the 'information power' that a given sample holds. The non-probability purposive sampling method allows for the selection of participants that may be considered worthy information providers (Kumar, 2011), in this case ward Councillors and municipal officials working in the public participation unit within the Senqu municipality were selected based on their expertise and experience in the field. It is imperative to collect rich data from people who are knowledgeable or experienced on the subject for in-depth analysis for rich data that can be verified with other data sources. In research it is common practice to select a portion of the whole population from which to draw conclusions. One ward committee had 7 members available and the second one had 4 members available, totaling 11. 3 municipal officials were interviewed, bringing the total to 14.

**Semi-structured interviews:** Information was gathered from representatives from the Office of Corporate Services: Stakeholder Engagement as this is where public participation is placed in the municipality. The sample was selected purposively because they deal directly with public participation in the municipality and have expertise in public involvement in the municipality. The researcher visited the municipality and conducted semi-structures interviews with municipal officers dealing directly with public participation.

**Focus group discussions:** In addition, the researcher engaged with ward committee members in the form of in-depth focus group discussions to gather their opinions on challenges with regards to public participation. Focus groups draw data from a group of participants simultaneously, allowing for additional comments from other members which might not have been mentioned by others in the group. This allows for rich interaction, sharing of different viewpoints on the same topic, resulting in enriched data from the discussions. Focus groups were opted for because of time and cost limitations. In a group more information is acquired simultaneously, and rich data is obtained. Through focus groups the participant interaction stimulates the identification and sharing of various perspectives on the same topic, resulting in rich data acquired in a short space of time.

The sample size is viewed in relation to saturation distinguishing between what is termed 'code saturation' (where no additional *issues* are identified) (Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi, 2017), and 'meaning saturation' (where no further *insights* are gained)". The

sample size is defined because the research had limitations of time and will use available data collected.

The participants (municipal officials and members of ward committees) were purposively selected (Delpont & De Vos, 2011: 65) with a small sample, a characteristic of a qualitative study with a non-statistical method. The selection criteria used as informed by the SLM IDP 2017-2021 stating one of the challenges as that of the geographic spread in a rural terrain that makes it difficult to meet with members from different wards. The participants were also informed beforehand of the purpose of the exercise and assured of confidentiality.

Secondary data sources, in the form of documents, were also consulted, inclusive of municipal policy documents, legislation, minutes and reports. The objective was to use the documents to triangulate the research.

### 3.5. DATA

The data used for this study comprises of primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with municipal officials and focus group discussions with ward committees based on a sample of 2 wards in Senqu and 3 municipal officials that are based in the public participation unit within the Corporate Services section in the municipality. Secondary data was obtained from available documents from the municipality such as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), reports and minutes, just to name a few. The primary data will, however, form the major source of the information for the study and will be obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

#### 3.5.1. Qualitative data collection techniques

##### 3.5.1.1. Semi-structured interviews

For purposes of this study, primary data collection comprised of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The semi-structured interviews are very useful in exploring intensively and extensively (Kumar (2014:177), while excavating deeper into a situation, phenomenon, issue or problem. The municipal officials were informed



beforehand of the purpose and significance of the study and they were also asked for their consent for participation as well as the right to withdraw if they so wish. On interviewing, the researcher asked prepared questions with follow up questions, listened attentively, took notes and recorded the responses, using audio recording. Permission was requested and granted for the recordings.

A structured interview with questions that are in line with the study objectives had been developed to guide the interviews. The study followed the one-on-one interviews for the municipal officials and the researcher conducted the interviews at the municipal offices at scheduled times by appointment. The questions for the officials were classified according to themes, with each theme having questions based on the study research objectives and concepts emphasized in the study.

The researcher, with permission from the municipal officials, made use of audio recording, using an interview schedule that is in line with the research aims and an alternative form of recording the proceedings in writing short notes. This was mainly to give structure to the information collected.

#### 3.5.1.2. Focus group discussions

In addition to the interviews, in-depth focus group discussions were employed, with several participants partaking (Bryman, 2012:502) and these are characterized by participants who have been involved in ward committees and public participation. A focus group is comprised of participants who are selected for a purpose and have a special composition and size, as stated earlier, and follows specific procedures (Krueger and Kasey, 2014). The study works with focus groups primarily to examine the insights of ward committee members with regards to the challenges they might be facing as members of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. Focus group discussions are tools of choice for the study because they allow for simultaneous interviews of individuals by a facilitator (Du Ploy-Celliers & Bezuidenhout, 2014:183). They are group interviews and Bryman (2012:502) regards them as a form of interviews comprised of several participants who have knowledge and experience on the selected topic and the discussion and questioning is focused on a specific topic. In this study ward committees

were selected because they meet the requirement of being knowledgeable and bring experience in the area of study.

A sample of 2 ward committees was purposively selected based on their different stature of rural and semi urban respectively. These ward committees were also selected based on their geographical proximity and ease of access as well as one being rural and the other semi-urban.

Data was audio-recorded by a smart phone. Although the questions were prepared in English, language of preference was considered to allow for quality feedback and information during the discussions. This was done by consent at the onset of the discussions and the participants indicated a preference of IsiXhosa as a language of choice for the discussions, the researcher translated the questions through the discussions. This facilitated the discussions as the respondents were at ease and expressed themselves accurately in their language. Of the seventeen ward committees, the two were selected to accommodate time constraints of the research study.

#### 3.5.1.3. Secondary data

For secondary data collection, Strydom and Delport (2011: 379) recommend that official documents may also be used to gather data. The study relied on written sources of data such as minutes from meetings of the municipality and ward committees, municipal official documents, government legislation around public participation and ward committees, internet sources, documents from previous research and thesis that have studied public participation and ward committees. The main document the researcher used was the Senqu Local Municipality IDP (2017-2022) purposively to gain a broader view of the context within which the ward committees operated. The researcher compared the contents of the IDP and what materialized from the semi structured interviews and the focus group discussions so as to respond to the objectives of the study in determining the challenges facing the municipality with regards ward committees within the public participation space.

**Triangulation:** With the different forms of data collections, namely: semi-structured interviews, official documents, literature and focus group discussions, the study uses the

triangulation strategy that uses multiple methods for data collection in qualitative research to get an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 1999 as cited in Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, Di Censo, Blythe and Neville, 2014). For purposes of this study the triangulation was employed to determine the extent of ward committee officials' participatory role in the municipality and the challenges that they face as well as the municipal officials' perspective. This is methodological triangulation as it uses more than one method to gather primary and secondary data.

### 3.5.2. Data analysis

Analysis was informed by the structure from the themes that emerged from the data that was collected, with responses grouped into meaningful categorizations with significance for the study purpose. Analysis commenced after description, discussion and transcription was completed. The study used the thematic content analysis using manual coding as per the literature themes, namely:

- i) local democracy
- ii) public participation
- iii) ward committee functioning

Thematic analysis can be defined as a technique for categorizing and analyzing patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). For Du Ploy, Celliers and Bezuidenhout (2014; 243) while content analysis is used to explore hidden and obvious themes. To structure and interpret the data, the study draws from a Framework by Brawn and Clarke (2006) on Thematic analysis that has six phases to follow as a guide. The analysis was done in conjunction with the themes as derived from the participants' responses from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions. The table below presents the phases or steps that the study followed to analyse the collected data:

Table 1 Thematic analysis as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006)

Phase number	Phase name	Description of phase
1	Becoming familiar with data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of data in a systematic way across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map of the analysis
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names of each theme
6	Producing the report	The final opportunity of analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

In summary, all data was transcribed into electronic format via Microsoft word. The information was structured in an interview matrix to capture each response for each question per participant and was numbered, 1 to 3, and the focus groups was numbered 1 and 2. An example of an interview matrix developed is illustrated below, as an example:

Table 2 Interview Matrix

Interviewee/Themes	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
Participant 1	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Participant 2	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3

The researcher, using the tools illustrated above, identified similarities and differences in the responses and analysed accordingly. During the analysis, thematic areas were assigned and colour coded for ease of reference for the researcher.

### 3.6. TRUSTWORTHINESS (VALIDITY & RELIABILITY)

“Trustworthiness in qualitative research is the equivalent of validity in a quantitative study” (Jacelon & O’Dell, 2005:51). To ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study, the writing should have enough clarity on the processes employed for readers to evaluate the scientific rigour of the study (Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo & Mash, 2014:4).

Credibility is the main criterion that the study will establish for trustworthiness and the study used two techniques of triangulation and member checking (Marshall & Rosman, 2011). Credibility is about the credibility of the research method used and it requires that the researcher makes clear connections between the study’s findings with reality in order to demonstrate truth of the findings (Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo and Mash, 2014). Through triangulation the study used multiple methods to collect data in order to check the consistency of the findings, in this case the semi-structured interviews for the officials and focus group discussions for the ward committee members in Senqu. It is also used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

In addition, member checking was employed, with the researcher checking the transcriptions and emerging themes with the participants. Simon and Goes (2013:36) define member checking as the process of validating information with the participants, thus allowing a chance to correct all errors on data collected and transcribed. The researcher also used reflexivity (Babbie and Mouton, 2010) when facilitating focus groups to eliminate bias and being factual, guarding against the researcher preferences, assumptions and bias to ensure that the reliability of the study is not compromised. All the interactions with participants were recorded with consent and short notes captured, with prior arrangement and approval by all participants. The information will provide recommendations towards the challenges faced by the ward committees in Senqu.

### 3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All researchers should be subjected to ethical considerations (Gratton & Jones (2010:121) and these mainly have to do with consent to conduct the research, participation of respondents, the community as well as the processes for data analysis in a study. Ethical issues form part of challenges facing both quantitative and qualitative social science as researchers are required to report on the ethical considerations of their research (Connely, 2014). Thus, it is imperative that all data collected is treated with utmost professionalism and is not manipulated or altered to maintain the original meaning of data collected (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:85). This is also to ensure the protection of the participants and also show respect to them throughout the process.

All of the required forms regarding ethical clearance were completed and are attached as appendices. These include the Wits School of Governance (WSG) Ethics clearance form, participants' information sheet and Ethics Application Form for Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Non-Medical). Participants were also asked to consent before participating in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Participants were assured of confidentiality, respect and professionalism throughout the process. The researcher is committed to observing all ethical protocols prescribed by the Wits School of Governance. For audio-recordings, the researcher requested permission from the participants and explained the purpose of the recordings.

The study upholds ethical considerations as prescribed by the social sciences such as voluntary participation and informed consent by all participants. All participants were informed of their rights during the process of the research as well as their right to withdraw should they wish to do so. The senior municipal officials and the selected ward committee members were formally informed about the purposes of the study and its significance well in advance. These principles were adhered to, in order to guarantee that all participants participate voluntarily by choice and that they have been fully informed concerning the procedures of the research project and any potential risks. The researcher guarded against bringing harm to the participants throughout the engagement with the study, while respecting the confidentiality and anonymity of all the participants and treating them with

dignity throughout. For issues of access, the concept of gatekeeper was used, the researcher formally approached the Acting Municipality Manager as the gatekeeper to give access to the officials and documents, as well as ward committees in the SLM. Regards relevance, the study concentrates on the issues relevant to the study, public participation and ward committees.

It should be noted that the researcher is not an employee of the municipality and thus there will be no conflict of interest. The researcher was born and bred in the town of Sterkspruit, situated in the Senqu Local Municipality, where residents are continually disgruntled about non-service delivery issues by the municipality. It is hoped that the study will contribute towards improved public participation and addressing the weaknesses and mostly challenges faced by the municipality.

### 3.8. UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES

#### 3.8.1. Challenges relating to access to participants

This study, similar to other studies, encountered challenges and limitations. With regards to this study, the researcher encountered challenges with issues of access to some of the municipal officials who were recommended as relevant officials to take part in the research interviews, despite the Acting Municipal Manager and the Head of Corporate Services having given permission and authorisation to conduct the research swiftly on time. Initially there were four municipal officials targeted, but only three availed themselves for the interviews. There were no challenges encountered with the focus group discussions access.

### 3.9. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant in that it will add to the body of knowledge that is available in public participation, but with an angle from the Senqu Local Municipality. The study will also contribute to the enhancement of public participation mechanism of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. Additionally, the study contributes through contextual recommendations that will contribute to the effective and efficient functioning of ward

committees in Senqu Local Municipality. These will be relevant and appropriate for implementation by the municipality in addressing any challenges faced by the municipality. The findings of this study will be to the benefit of the residents of Senqu, ward committees and the local municipality, considering that public participation plays a significant role in service delivery at local government.

### 3.10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Simon and Goes (2013:1) define limitations as “matters and occurrences that arise in a study which are out of the researcher’s control”. One limitation is that the researcher does not work for the Local Municipality and depends on the officials for available information and their experiences. They might want to give a good impression. Secondly, the study focuses and is limited to one small municipality in a province, this restricts the results from being generalised as they can only be applicable in the selected municipality. Collected data will only be applicable to Senqu municipality. The findings will aid in addressing the existing gaps and inadequacies regards ward committee functioning in the municipality. The officials to be interviewed, as employees of the SLM, might want to manipulate information provided in order to project a positive image for the municipality and the researcher, as mitigation will analyse the internal official documents of the municipality.

### 3.11. CONCLUSION

The Constitution of the Republic and other legislative frameworks all promote the public participation at local municipality levels across the country. Consulted literature has shown that there are some practical infringements on the implementation stage due to several challenges alluded to in the proposal.

This chapter delivered a brief narrative and process of the proposed research on public participation and ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. Public participation remains a governance issue for the democratic government in place despite all the legislative frameworks and structures in place. The cited literature was investigated against the backdrop of democracy, governance, legislation, public participation and human rights frameworks.



From this research, the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how exactly the public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality occurs and challenges thereof, from the views of the officials as well as members of the ward committees. The study has selected the qualitative strategy informed by the interpretivist paradigm using semi-structured interviews with prepared questions for standardisation and focus group discussions with purposive sampling. For purposes of this study primary data was used collected from the face to face interviews with the officials as well as the focus group discussions. Secondary data was acquired from the municipality documents such as annual reports, IDPs. For data analysis, the study employed the thematic approach as the best suited to aid in responding to the research questions.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter concentrated on the methodology adopted by the study to collect data which assisted in responding to the main question of the study: “What are the public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape?” In doing so it is imperative to echo that the main objective of the study was to explore public participation challenges as faced by ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. This chapter presents the findings and analysis from the in-depth interviews with municipal officials as well as the focus group discussions conducted with the ward committee members. The responses of the participants relate to their experiences of participation in and with ward committees respectively.

The presentation and discussion of the data/findings is based on the themes that emerged from the data in line with the focus and key research questions of the study.

The chapter first provides a brief overview of the Senqu Local Municipality, just to provide context, followed by the biographical information of all those who participated in the research. The characteristics of background of the respondents is of key significance in aiding to appreciate the effectiveness of public participation in local government processes of service delivery. The chapter then presents data gathered in the following sequence: the municipal officials’ interviews are addressed first, followed by the focus group discussions with ward committees.

It is imperative to note that all data that was collected was arranged in a logical structure with the objective of responding to the primary research question as well as achieving the objectives of the study, as detailed in the introductory chapter.

## 4.2. BACKGROUND: OVERVIEW OF SENQU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

This section aims to locate the experiences of ward committee members within the contextual background of the Senqu Local Municipality (SLM). This is mainly to factor in any other broader influences that might have had an influence in how their experiences turned out and how they related their stories or experiences.

The Senqu Local Municipality is a category B municipality located in the Joe Gqabi District Municipality (JGDM) in the Eastern Cape province. A category B local municipality (as described in section 155(1) of the Constitution) is a municipality sharing municipal executive and legislative power with a district municipality within whose area it falls, in this case, Joe Gqabi District Municipality. It is part of the three municipalities in the district and accounts for a third of its geographical area (Joe Gqabi District Municipality website). It is vital to note that the Eastern Cape is one of South Africa's provinces with the highest levels of poverty, unemployment and underdeveloped infrastructure (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), 2012).

Spatially SLM covers an area of about 7329km<sup>2</sup>. Demographically, the 2016 household survey indicates a population of 140 720 (Stats SA, 2016) with household numbers recorded as at 35 597 (2016). The Senqu IDP Review (2018-2019) reported that the bad terrain impedes the provision of services to the communities. The name Senqu is coined from the Sesotho name for Orange river. There are three major towns, Sterkspruit, Lady Grey and Barkly East with 85 villages and 17 wards, with Rossouw and Rhodes providing administrative units.

Below is a representation of the municipal boundaries of the Senqu Local Municipality (Demarcation Board, 2018)

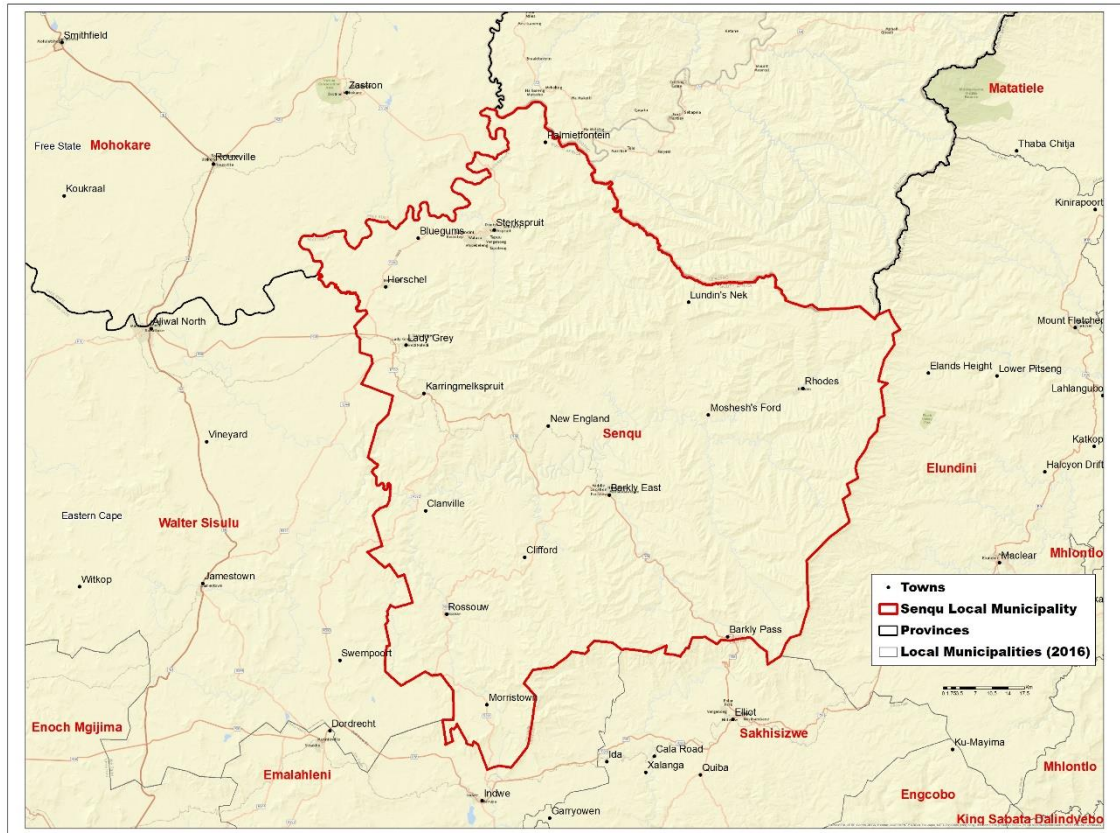


Figure 3 Municipal Context Senqu Local Municipality- Source Municipal Dermarcation Board (2018)

#### 4.3. DATA PRESENTATION

The aim of the study, as stated earlier in the introductory chapter, is to explore public participation challenges as faced by ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. In this chapter the participants' views and comments are presented with regards to challenges in line with the main question of the research. The study gained the findings from the insight and experience of 14 (N=14) participants, three (N=3) of which were municipal officials and eleven (N=11) were ward committee members. The researcher used two research tools for the two groups respectively, scheduled semi-structured interviews for the municipal officials and focus group discussions for the ward committee members.

#### 4.3.1. DATA ANALYSIS

The study employed thematic analysis, a technique for categorising and analysing the qualitative data collected (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The analysis entailed organising and synthesising collected data into meaningful portions. The study drew from Brawn and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis of six phases that were followed in the study. The data was recorded, some notes taken, transcribed into electronic format on Microsoft word and excel and an interview matrix developed for both semi structured interviews and the focus group discussions.

#### 4.3.2. MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, interviews with municipal officials were discussed according to thematic analysis and the three themes are listed hereunder:

Theme 1: Local Democracy

Theme 2: Pubic participation

Theme 3: Ward committee functioning

The three themes were discussed in detail in the literature review chapter earlier.

##### 4.3.2.1. THEME 1: LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Public participation takes place at the local government level and for Sikander (2015) local government is based on the need to promote democracy values, increasing and developing delivery of basic services while expediting public participation. This means that local government must create an atmosphere or space of governance that promotes effective participation of the people in what local government is contending to do on behalf of the communities. Local government must create spaces where discussions can be held to debate, discuss and agree on what is good for the community. Ward committees form part of these invited spaces that municipalities can use to engage communities. For Arnstein (1969), citizen participation is a clear-cut term for citizen power, the last stage of her ladder of participation, gives citizens some level of power in making decisions in partnership with the local municipality.

The theme had 2 areas that it looked at, that of the principles of local governance and the challenges of local governance.

### **Q1: Principles of local governance in the Senqu Local Municipality**

The first question required municipal officials responsible for public participation, to confirm whether the Senqu Local Municipality, in their opinion, has been able to uphold the principles of democracy in local governance with a motivation.

Most of the respondents stated that democracy was not completely practiced in the municipality due to various reasons that they put forth. For them, there was poor local democracy practiced in the municipality because the meetings and outreaches that they hold are only to inform the people and not to engage them. This most often leads to the community not trusting them as a municipality as stated by one respondent:

*It does and sometimes it doesn't. We have outreaches where the Mayor goes out and informs the community about the IDP. At the same time when the Mayor goes in the next outreach she sometimes does not inform the community about what happened with the previous budget. So I can't say there is democracy there because you go to school you learn, you know the principles but it does not happen like that.*

Furthermore, the respondents acknowledged that the municipality still has a long way to go in terms of upholding local democracy as stated by Opuamie-Ngo (2010) that democracy is about well-informed public, accountability to the public by those in power and freedom to participate in decision making process. Some raised concerns about the conduct of some of the Councillors who most often do not follow the processes of local governance through the inclusion of the public stakeholders. This they were concerned about because in the respondents understanding the outreaches should be transparent and informative to the public and explain the plans as well as provide feedback in due time. In failing to do so the communities are left dissatisfied resulting in endless complaints. One respondent stated that they experience politicisation of government at local level as this manifested in Councillors wanting to take charge and push the agenda of their political parties, instead of addressing service delivery issues that are reported on. This the respondents attributed to the level of education of some of the Councillors.

This affects the level of productivity of the municipality as the officials are affected by the poor application of democracy principles by some stakeholders at local government, despite there being municipal process plans for all their processes, including public participation. Even though the municipality calls public meetings, these are not sufficient to promote local democracy as required.

*We experience a clash between public participation principles and politics. You explain to them, if you want to focus on working with people, you focus on 1..2..3.., but he will tell you... I've been a politician for years.*

The municipality has developed the IDP and the Budget in accordance with the requirements as set in the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) 32 of 2000, the Local Government: Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations 2001 and the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (Senqu IDP 2017-2022).

From their responses the study can deduce that Senqu Local Municipality still lacks in upholding the principles of democracy in local government through implementing the correct processes as stated by the interviewed municipal officials.

## **Q2: Challenges associated with local democracy at Senqu Local Municipality**

The second question posed was on what the opinions of participants were regarding the challenges to effective local democracy in the local government sphere were, particularly for Senqu Local Municipality. The majority of the respondents were in agreement that the municipality is faced with a myriad of challenges which they attributed to various factors and they were in accord that it is imperative that the municipality establishes relationships with the community to sustain local democracy standards, which they saw as lacking. In the literature review, Chado and Joha (2016; 185) resonate that public participation challenges in contemporary societies are attributed to inefficient practices related to poor mechanisms in facilitating participation.

Most of the respondents stated that they experienced challenges of non-transparency to the community by Councillors as they continuously promise the public things that cannot be done. Additional to that was the political affiliation problems that create political power

games where political local agendas are put before the interest of the wards by some ward Councillors. This creates a challenge in the local democracy.

*The challenge is non-transparency to the communities by the Councillors on the ground. This causes protests as people get promised things that cannot be done.*

*Communication is also a challenge, communication in this way: eh....as the municipality, we are supposed to always engage and inform the community members, because what I've noticed is that the community always comes to the municipality and complain neh., and lodge the complaints but we don't always provide feedback, because we set the 7 day timeframe, but sometimes we don't meet that 7 days.*

*I cannot say there is democracy here..., no, because whatever we do we rely on politics, we rely on the..thee.... what you call... I don't want to say ANC.... the ruling party, so whatever we do we rely on that. Sometimes if you are not doing things as they want, they would tell you that you are sabotaging us and you know that we can take you out "singakukhupha thina" sizakugxotha, meaning we will expel you.*

Funding and poor communication were also declared as key challenges in that the municipality never has enough budget to maintain community projects. One of the officials alluded to budget challenge as the municipality has to manage limited funds as to adhere to effective local democracy is costly, thus the budget challenge. In the municipal projects they encounter scope creeps that they have to handle, such as disaster management, this is exacerbated by the ill communication of the political deployed ward committees who promise citizens contrary to what is on the IDP. Additionally, communication poses a major challenge in that, according to the respondents, the municipality does not always communicate or provide feedback on complaints that the public submits to the municipality in the form of reports. The municipality promises but does not always provide feedback within the stipulated times, if at all it is provided, and this creates major challenges because the residents sometimes rebel in frustration.

A few participants agreed on the issue of the level of education of councilors as posing a challenge because in their misunderstanding the documents such as the IDP. Thus the



respondents were of the opinion that there is a need for educated and young people to be deployed for the municipality to realise the democracy at local level as some Councillors were difficult, despite the induction training offered by the municipality at the start of their terms.

*Councillors are uneducated, they will come here, they will bully you, they will do anything, and you just feel, you know what... I should just leave everything behind.*

*The thing about Councilors is that they are uneducated, they mislead people, you give them a document they say different things to communities, and we ended up having unrests, ...yhooo.... they were many from 2012, and then last year or this year, Barkly East and Lady Grey... places which never had an unrest before, misleading, yho!! there is so much. For me I think they should hire or deploy more educated people in the political whatever so that they understand and can read even the IDP, because they can't read. Even if it's a policy you need to break it down and make them understand the pieces, it's a difficult thing. Even if you tell them the correct thing they go to the public, they don't want to say we can't do this or its impossible.*

Senqu Local Municipality operates within a regulated sphere of government and implementation seems to be a challenge when it comes to implementing the legislations. From the respondents' responses it can be deduced that the main challenges, as highlighted are the budget, the level of literacy of the ward Councillors, communication and political affiliation of ward councilors. At some point in the process there is communication breakdown as the cascading of information and sharing the IDP information done incorrectly, thus uninformed communities. This creates an enormous challenge for the municipality when they are not able to deliver due to the gap that gets created through false promises.

Notwithstanding the challenges highlighted, the respondents' experience and level of understanding places them strategically to manage and continue in promoting local democracy in the municipality.

#### 4.3.2.2 THEME 2: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The purpose of this theme was to get an understanding of the knowledge of the municipal officials with regards to public participation, secondly determine the level of significance with which the municipal officials' public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality. This is done in alignment with the bigger objective of the study of exploring the challenges of public participation as faced by ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. In the literature review chapter, sections 2.2 and 2.3 this study public participation has been defined as any process that directly involves the public in decision-making and gives complete deliberation to public input in creating that decision (Kandil, 2018). This study understands public participation to be a meaningful and participatory process meant to encourage profitable conversations between municipalities and communities (Mchunu et al., as cited in Theron & Mchunu, 2016: 171). Newbury and Wallace (2014:9) further state that in addition to empowering participation, the creation of invited spaces for participation may not suffice and require the establishment of certain mechanisms that will ensure transformation of power dynamics in society. The respondents were asked interconnected questions to determine their understanding of public participation and its significance as a concept with reference to the literature review on public participation.

##### **Q1: The concept of public participation**

The majority of the respondents responded in unison that public participation involves engagement with the local stakeholders.

*What I can say is that public participation happens where there are local stakeholders. Ehh....., Traditional leaders, the Speaker is the chairperson, ward committees, ward councilors and the officials of the public participation at the municipality where IDP issues of the wards are discussed.*

Majority of the respondents viewed public participation as an engagement of all stakeholders, including the community. However, they were mindful of the fact that it is not only about the stakeholders, but that meaning gets realised in practising

developmental local government which promotes the consideration of the people as represented by the municipality.

All the respondents further stated that the municipality does practice public participation to some extent in that they hold meetings with stakeholders to discuss the IDP, the budget, as well as address the complaints from the public. This platform deals with all basic service delivery issues except water issues that are the competency of the Joe Gqabi District Municipality, these are referred to the district. Sector departments and ward committees are part of the meetings and the ward committees are then expected to report back to the community after the meeting discussions on the IDP and budget issues.

One respondent stated that there is no public participation in the municipality because of how public participation is practiced in the municipality. Despite the public participation frameworks, the municipality meetings are there to inform people and not engage them, they submit reports as received from the community on complaints but those do not get attended to. As such, the meetings are not public participation as they are just for information transmission with no engagement. This happens despite the municipal public participation frameworks detailing the process of public participation such as the IDP and the Structures Act, just to name a few.

*There is no public participation in Senqu... there isn't.... The Structures Act says the community should choose, so it means there is still no democracy to the wards because people are unable to choose whoever they want. For example, if you are the Councillor you are the president in the ward and can choose whoever you want and that person serves in the ward even if the community does not want, if there is an outreach they wear their party regalia, and other parties cannot come as they view this as a party thing. We have tried to stop this practice but in vain.*

From the discussions it became clear that the municipality is faced with a number of challenges in implementing public participation on the ground for various reasons raised, despite the municipal officials having a good understanding of the concept. The participants agreed that the municipality should reinforce the available frameworks and promote public participation and local democracy for public participation.

## **Q2: Senqu Local Municipality's enhancement of local democracy**

The participants were asked their views if public participation has enhanced local democracy the Senqu Local Municipality. The literature review chapter has stated that public participation is the foundation of local democracy. The participants' responses suggest that both are interdependent and cannot exist one without the other.

Most of the respondents agreed in stating that public participation has somehow enhanced local democracy because the members of community and other stakeholders are directly involved, despite the challenges experienced. The respondents see public participation as a platform allowing more people to be part of the IDP process, although there are some challenges, thus enabling them to experience service delivery through direct involvement, despite the setbacks as experienced here and there

*Yes it does because when we raise issues of service delivery, we do get help from the departments. We don't only help the municipality who delivers the services, even the departments, so when we meet in the public participation its where we discuss about the challenges of the communities and we solve them there and ward committees have to give communities feedback.*

A few of the respondents stated that through public participation, they can work with sector departments and ward committees as a municipality in addressing issues of service delivery and these are discussed at public participation meetings. The meetings are platforms to table, discuss and resolve challenges as received from the communities. Further, the respondents also stated that the municipality has some of their projects delivered in response to the complaints that were received from the community for service delivery.

*We also get the information from the departments about their budget for the year, how much they have for their communities of Senqu. Because in the public participation we talk about the IDP, the budget for the departments and the municipality, and we also deal with the complaints in the public participation because there are complaints that come with information that in a certain ward there are complaints. Since the municipality does not deal with water issues, they fall under*

*Joe Gqabi District who will be part of the meeting, the district will take up the issues and the follow up.*

From the responses provided, it can be deduced that Senqu is doing its best to enhance local democracy through public participation, despite the challenges that were highlighted under question 1. This shows that the municipality is trying despite implementation challenges. This is in line with the literature review, chapter 2, in stating that local democracy is at the grassroots level and entails allocation and distribution of public goods as per the preferences and needs of the people (Van der Waldt et al., 2014).

### **Q3: Senqu Council Understanding public participation: Roles and Responsibilities**

The majority of the respondents stated that Senqu Local Municipality has all systems in place to induct all newly appointed stakeholders, especially the ward committees and the roles and regulations are clearly spelled out in the legislative documents of the municipality. Despite the formal induction some of the stakeholders understood public participation differently and this manifests in the conduct of some Councillors who cannot differentiate between political party politics and serving the people at local government, *“We experience a clash between public participation principles and politics”*.

This, the respondents partly attributed to their level of education as indicated earlier in question 1 as a challenge for some ward committee members and Councillors as they did not understand the IDP contents and this resulted in them ill informing the public.

This non-understanding of roles is shown in the conduct of some of the Councillors, it must be granted that some of them understand their roles and responsibilities. Coupled with this was their association with party politics, thus using this as a platform to do as they please in the municipality, and this, to the detriment of public participation, local democracy and service delivery.

The study can deduce that the respondents understand the roles and regulations but these get misunderstood by some of the stakeholders for reasons stated above. The municipality has challenges in the public understanding their roles and responsibilities in the public participation space. Some stakeholders understand their roles based on the

cooperation the municipal officials were getting in carrying out their duties. Overall this means that the municipality still has a lot of work in training their stakeholders for them to see true public participation and local governance and meaningful participation.

#### **Q4: Need for training/retraining of municipal officials and skilling/reskilling to improve level of public participation**

With the Fourth Industrial Revolution upon us, there will always be a need for training as the world evolves. The same applies for the municipality as most of the respondents highlighted the need for continuous training as municipal officials as they acknowledged that they were lacking in understanding local government legal frameworks.

The respondents agreed that there is a great need for continuous training and as well as upskilling of municipal officials as currently they would only go for two-day training. One respondent said that she was not conversant with the by-laws and would welcome any training.

*Yes there is a need so that we can know and understand more about local government, more so on the legal frameworks and the laws. Currently we don't get trained well as we only go for two day trainings....and two days cannot do anything, we need maybe a full year course on a part time basis. In that way we can learn more about the regulations.*

From the above responses the researcher can deduce that there is a need for training of the officials as stated by the respondents. We live in a society that is forever changing with developments even at local level the municipality needs to keep its officials abreast through constant training.

*Yes there is a need for training but it's so unfortunate...There was no public participation here before, it used to be public liaison, it was broken down to customer care, now there is public participation I started as an intern in 2012, and the only training I got was a two day training. We haven't been trained on public participation and we consult other municipalities for updated information.*

#### **Q5: Different kinds of mechanisms for public participation in Senqu Local Municipality**

The majority of the respondents stated that there were quite a number of mechanisms that the municipality employs to encourage public participation, highlighting the ward committees as the primary mechanism that is used by the municipality because through the 17 ward committees, the municipality is able to reach and connect with more people on the ground, despite the challenges that have been mentioned. One of the respondents further stated that as part of the mechanisms the municipality uses door to door, village to village, public participation forums, outreaches, Mayoral Izimbizos and community development workers.

The study can infer that Senqu Local Municipality indeed has public participation mechanisms in place and they are operational, notwithstanding the challenges that come with them. Within the Municipality, there is cooperation between the Mayor's office through the Izimbizos, the Office of the Speaker and the Corporate services, under which public participation within the municipality sits.

The study can deduce that the municipality has a number of mechanisms in place for public participation enhancement, as stated by the respondents.

#### **Q6: IGR Forums, participation of the Senqu Local Municipality and promotion of public participation**

Most of the participants were in agreement that the municipality houses an IGR section which liaises with the provincial public participation forum and they hold quarterly meetings. The IGR forums assist them in dealing with issues of public participation because that is where they meet with sector departments and discuss and can resolve some of the public issues they have from the discussions. One of the participants highlighted the fact that it would be more appropriate and better if the municipality included all the officials in the public participation unit, because only a selected municipal official attended these forums.

*We have an IGR Section and attend quarterly IGR forums provincially. This is where we report on public participation issues and we also get assistance as a municipality on challenges that we have”.*

This study can therefore deduce that the IGR is a structure that adds value to the operations at Senqu Local Municipality.

#### 4.3.2.3. THEME 3: WARD COMMITTEE FUNCTIONING

The objective of the study, as stated earlier, is to investigate public participation challenges that are faced by the Senqu ward committees. In examining the SLM participation challenges, the study interrogates ward committee operations in the municipality. The preceding chapters have discussed ward committees and that these are primary mechanisms of public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality and the literature review has indicated that ward committees are intended to uphold democracy (Van Rooyen and Mokoena, 2013:761) by forming connections amid the community and the local municipality. By so doing, ward committees play a crucial role in ensuring that public participation is strengthened through active engagement of citizens in governance issues. Ward committees, as structures in the local government sphere, were created specifically to bring government closer to the people and thus municipalities should constantly encourage (Henna, Mfene and Masango 2013:91) the involvement of communities in the affairs of local government.

Under this theme, participants were asked interrelated questions, the purpose of which was to determine the functionality of ward committees in the municipality.

#### **Q1: Ward Committees; are they a liability or an asset to the municipality**

Most of the respondents responded positively that the ward committees are an asset in the municipality because the municipality mostly depends on them for information from the communities. They further stated that ward committees always represent the municipality, and this makes the work of the municipality easy.



*They are an asset because they are assisting the municipality a lot as we cannot go to all the villages, so they bring the information to the municipality. I say this because they submit monthly reports where they report on the outcomes of their meetings with villages, and issues and challenges raised in the reports are then escalated to departments for action and they get assistance.*

Municipal officials further declared that ward committees are good as they show interest in their work and they always do their best, despite display of poor people skills when dealing with the communities, especially when communicating with the community as some of the ward committee members get impatient. This requires that the ward committee members require training on how to deal with community members.

The feedback from the participants shows that the ward committees assist in relaying important information between the municipality and the community. They provide information to the ward councilor, who in turn submits the information to Council. Although they lack in some skills, with proper training they can improve and perform better. A few said that there are some exceptions in some ward committees whereby some committee members who belong to certain political parties don't differentiate between party political agendas and the work of the ward committee, resulting in ward committees struggling to execute their duties.

The researcher can, from the combined responses of the participants, deduce that ward committees are an asset to the local municipality, despite the, minor challenges that they are faced with, overall they are a value add. Their composition can be improved as they continue with the work through training of the members that require training for people skills.

## **Q2: Diverse composition of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality**

The purpose of this section was to determine from the participants' responses if the ward committees were representative of the diverse community in terms of women, youth, people living with disabilities, etc.

Most of the respondents' responses reflected that the composition of all ward committees was representative of the diverse community, except that they did not have people living with disabilities, however, these were represented in the ward committees

*They are accommodated, except the disabled ones because we don't have the disabled ward committee. But the gender, age and everything is fine. We also have youth born in the 90s. So, for the gender we have males and females in all the wards. Because the mayor was also asking about that since in the Structures Act of 2000 there is a clause that says the gender must be checked when electing ward committees. So, we do have diversity and all groups are represented.*

With regards the composition of ward committees, all age groups are represented well and this was clear in the biographical information that was collected for the focus groups as the age ranged from about 22 to over 60 years as members of the ward committee. One respondent highlighted that the composition of ward committees can be complex at times as some members were in it for selfish reasons other than serving the community.

The study can therefore deduce that in this municipality there is fair representation of all diverse groups as required by law. The respondents acknowledged the lack of representation of people living with disabilities, however, stated that they were represented by other members and their needs were always attended to. According to the Senqu IDP, they have the Special Groups managed by Portfolio Councillors for each area as allocated by the Executive Committee, a Section 80 Committee, and one of these is the Disable Forum. This forum develops plans and promotes awareness and recognition for people with disabilities as well as develop a database for employment opportunities in the sector departments.

### **Q3: Ward committee knowledge of local government legislation and council by-laws**

The majority of the respondents were in agreement that the ward committees' knowledge of local government legislation and by-laws is very limited, if there at all. They attributed this partly to their level of education which in turn affects their level of understanding of

issues. One of the respondents further alluded that at times ward committee members depended on the municipal officials to interpret the documents for them and break it down, for them to understand, which was proved to be tedious. This is despite all new members being taken through an induction course on arrival.

*I think it's dark to them, there are a few of them who know. Some deal with politicians and are committed, so those ones know about local legislations and government. Some don't know. The ones who know are few.*

A respondent stated that those who are knowledgeable do so because they are in their second term. This called for a need for further training of ward committee members.

The study can deduce that ward committees deal with communities' problems outside the legislations and by-laws. They are not knowledgeable on all the legislations and this has a negative impact on public participation. It is only a few of the ward committee members who are knowledgeable from the training provided to them, the rest have challenges of interpreting, understanding and applying government legislation and by-laws. All the respondents were in consensus that the knowledge was limited to a few and the majority were lacking.

#### **Q4: Challenges facing effective functioning of ward committees in Senqu Council**

The responses of the respondents show that there are several challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. The objective of this study, as stated in chapter one, is to find out what the challenges facing this municipality are. All respondents highlighted the challenge of transport costs, the insufficient stipend, ward committee members not understanding the legislation and by-laws, thus Councillors wanting to operate independently as ward Councillors outside the legislative framework that guides the ward committee work.

Another respondent declared that the vastness of the villages poses a challenge as some of the rural ward committees are sometimes unable to meet because of distant areas, making it difficult for them to reach the central meeting point and they depend on others to update them. This affects the quality of the work as information takes time to be

escalated or shared. Some of the meetings are held at community halls, if a ward has that facility, one of the meetings was held in one community hall, where they all managed to converge on time. Some of the villages are in the remote rural areas and transport becomes a challenge. It was further stated that the stipend of R1000.00 was an added challenge as it was not sufficient to run the duties of ward committees.

One respondent highlighted as a challenge the fact that some of ward Councilors wanted to run their wards as they wished outside the legislation, thus view ward committees as under the control of their parties and not the communities as expected. This creates problems in the operations as now the focus shifts from ward committee work to a political base.

*Ward Councillors are the challenges to ward committees. We've got letters from Councilors wanting the new ward committees because they want someone who will listen to them. Even the legislation governing ward committees doesn't say much, it says if the Councillor is not happy with how ward committees are functioning he's got the right to dismiss.*

*For example, if you are the Councillor you are the president in the ward and can choose whoever you want and that person serves in the ward even if the community does not want, if there is an outreach they wear their party regalia, and other parties cannot come as they view this as a party thing.*

The study can therefore deduce from the municipal officials' inputs that the municipality is faced with a variety of challenges which impact negatively on the effective functioning of ward committees. The key challenges highlighted were the stipend, ward committee stipend, conduct of some ward committee Councillors, transport issues and well as infrastructure in terms of venue for meetings. All these need to be attended to by the municipality to enhance their public participation.

#### **Q5: Complaints from communities about ward committees functioning**

Majority of respondents stated that ward committees work closely with communities highlighting that there were various complaints that they received from the communities

about ward committees and the complaints range from the public complaining about not being given employment opportunities when they come and this escalated to perceptions of nepotism.

*Yoo!! they do... they do...complain, but what we do as the officials we don't just go to the community. We escalate the complaint to Speaker's office as that office deals with the ward committees and ward Councillors and the speaker will give us a way forward on what we should do. For example, last week we received a letter from ward 2 where the communities were saying the ward committees "abasiqashi": meaning "they don't hire us", they take their families and the ward Councillor was forcing the officials to go and elect the new ward committee and whereas we are not the heads.*

It is clear that the community was complaining about nepotism and these complaints were escalated to the Speaker's office to deal with. One respondent explained that some community members are coerced by Councillors into complaining about ward committees, only to find that on the ground the reality is contrary.

So, the study can deduce that there were two opinions on complaints received from the community about the effective functioning of ward committees. Majority respondents were in agreement that they received some complaints, and these were forwarded to the Speaker's office to attend to. The other respondent, to the contrary, said had never received complaints and the only complaints they had received were from some Councillors who did not want ward committees and not communities complaining. Those complaints received by the municipality are an indication of ward committees not functioning well, for communities to report their complaints directly to the municipality, as they should be able to voice these at ward committee level and they in turn can escalate to the Speaker's office in the municipality.

#### **Q6: Ward committees support received from Senqu Local Municipality**

Majority of the respondents agreed that ward committees receive support in the form of capacity building through induction and training when they join office, and this is the

responsibility of the municipality. Furthermore, the ward committee members receive stationery in the form of 2 books and pens, transport assistance to attend meetings and a stipend of R1000.00 for each member. Additionally, the municipality has a municipal officer who always attends the various meetings related to public participation with all stakeholders.

Ward committees are the responsibility of the Office of the Speaker and they get the support as stated above. The study can therefore deduce that there is a form of support provided as stated by the officials during the interviews as well as stipulated in the Senqu Local Municipality IDP. This is important for the effective functioning the ward committees, despite the challenges in place.

#### **Q7: Ward Council and the remuneration of ward committees**

Majority of the respondents stated that the remuneration came in the form of a stipend totaling R1000.00 monthly per ward committee member and this was dependent on the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) and the municipal budget. The stipend, as stated by one of the respondents, was not enough because the municipality depends on the MIG and the budget. The officials are of the opinion that it should be increased.

The study deduces that there is a form of remuneration given to the ward committees.

#### **Q8: Is there lack of professional participation in ward committees due to it functioning on a voluntary basis?**

Majority of respondents stated that there was lack of professional participation in ward committees. This lack of professional participation they attributed to the demands of the work required and the time required, resulting in professionals not availing themselves due to their work commitments. They further stated that in most cases members would be retired professionals who have enough time and a few teachers and ministers residing in some semi urban areas.

This clearly shows that it is a struggle to achieve professionals' involvement in ward committees due to the nature of the work. The study can deduce that professional participation is limited in the ward committees in the municipality.

#### **Q9: Any improvements as a result of effective functioning of ward committees**

Majority of respondents were in consensus that there were a number of service delivery improvements in the wards that can be attributed to the work of ward committees, citing the roads projects in wards 10 and 12. These are maintained because of the inputs received through the reports as prepared by ward committee members, with inputs from the communities. For the remote villages the municipality provides assistance to indigent households in the form of paraffin and candles.

One respondent added that in the nearby locations the streetlights and electricity are in place and roads have been improved as well as the building of toilets was completed in response to the reports and these have been prioritised. Ward committees also facilitate the correction of challenges regarding grants as they liaise and report back to SASSA and the people get assisted on grant needs. Some of the projects are done and responded to with the assistance of the Joe Gqabi District Municipality.

One of the participants stated that the municipality has an IDP that guides their operations and it does not change to accommodate the requests or complaints, but they can only prioritise as they receive the requests. The study can thus deduce that the ward committees partly contribute to the work and improvements in the municipality because they report on the needs of the community and these get acted upon, though not all of them. These form part of the planned work that the municipality carries out to deliver services to the people and improve services.

#### **4.3.3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

This section presents findings from focus group discussions with ward committee members. The presentation will follow the structure of the questionnaire, first presenting

the biographical information and then the responses to the questions as per questionnaire.

#### 4.3.3.1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

This section on the respondents' profiles provides statistical information on the gender, age, qualifications and work experience. All those who participated were informed that the information was necessary for statistical purposes only as well as to summarise the conclusions of the study in the proper manner while reflecting the opinions of a diverse group of people involved in the functioning of ward committees within the municipal boundaries of the Senqu Local Municipality. The participants were requested to mark with an "X" the appropriate box. The findings were gained from the perceptions and experience of eleven (N=11) respondents, using focus group discussions as a research tool. All participants were members of the community and ward committee members from 2 wards. Below is a presentation of the biographical statistical data of the participants.

#### 4.3.3.2. Gender of respondents

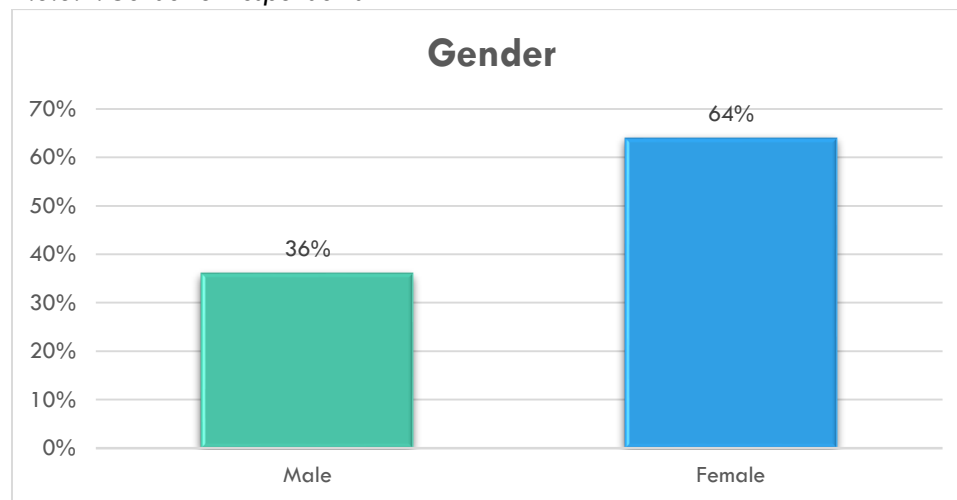


Figure 4 Percentage distribution of respondents by gender

Overall, of the participants who participated, 36% were male and 64% were female. This shows that women representation was higher than males, however, both genders were represented proportionately. This removes the influence of views by the dominant presence of one gender among the respondents, it can also be viewed as a reflection of



increased engagement of women in issues of governance and community engagement. This can be viewed as a positive indicator depicting women empowerment at local level in the Senqu Local Municipality.

The next section looks at the age distribution

#### 4.3.3.3. Age distribution

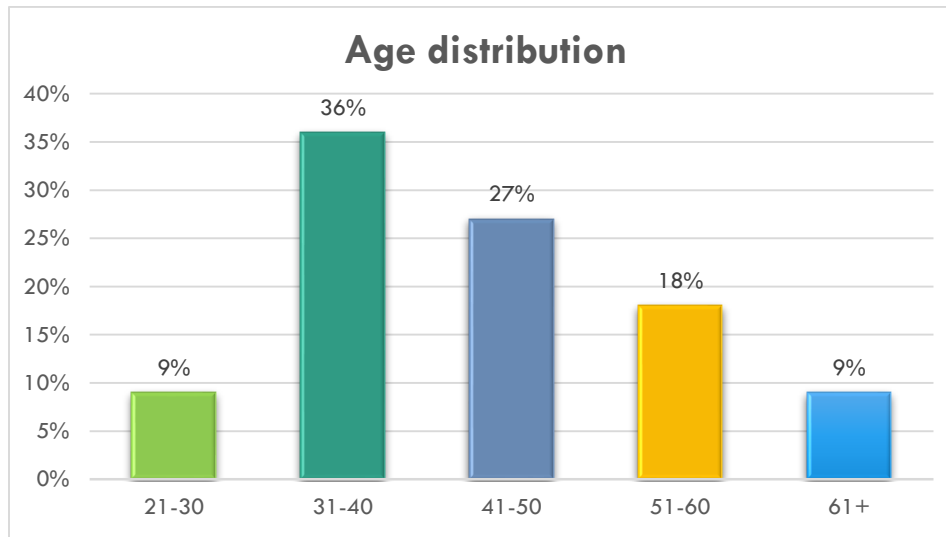


Figure 5 Percentage distribution of respondents by age

The age of the respondents was inclusive, cutting across the spectrum of age categories. It can be deduced that most of the participants were in the age bracket of 31-40 years at 36% and these can be viewed as being at their prime time, energetic, followed by 21% of the 41-50 age group. The spread of the years is evenly balanced as all the age groups are represented with 51-60 representing 18% and 61+ and 21-30 both sitting at 9%. This shows that all age groups were part of the public participation and ward committee work in the Senqu Local Municipality, presenting a good age mix of the young ones and the matured experienced members to do the ward committee work.

#### 4.3.3.4. Respondents' Education levels

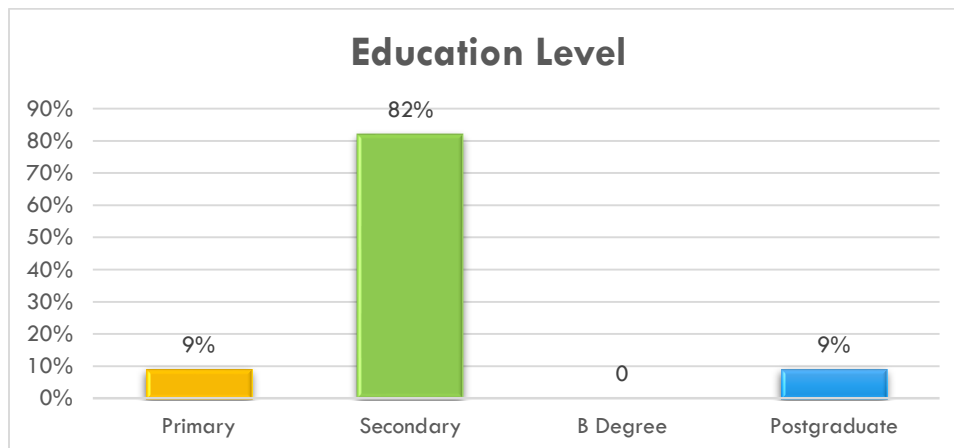


Figure 6 Distribution of research respondents by education level

Figure 6 depicts that most of the respondents (82%) hold a secondary qualification. This is followed by both postgraduate and primary both at 9%. With the secondary education this means that the ward committee members would be able to engage meaningfully with documents and participate meaningfully in ward committee and other meetings.

The following section looks at the experience in ward committee work

#### 4.3.3.5. Respondents' experience in ward committees

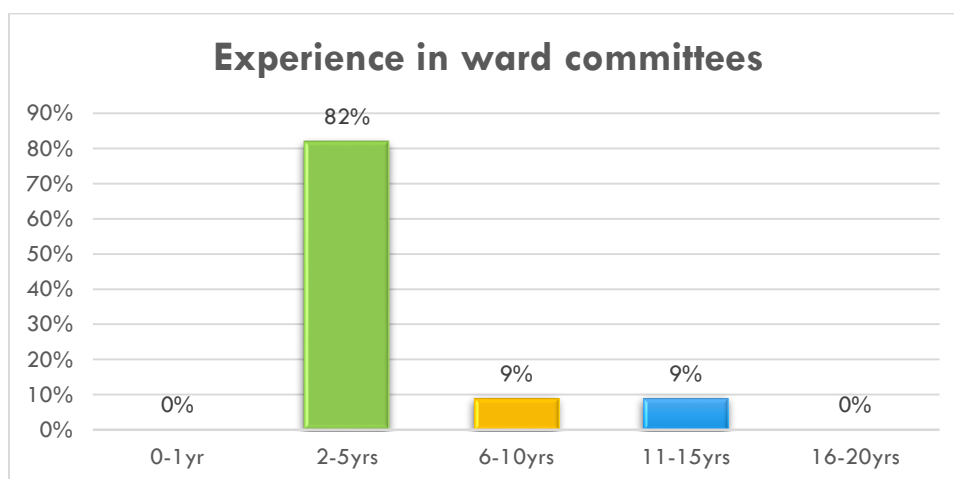


Figure 7 Distribution of research respondents by experience in ward committees

The statistics in Figure 7 show that the majority (82%) of the members had between 2-5 years' experience working in ward committee. The remainder 9% was for both 6-10 years and 11–15 years. It is of note that none of the members were either 0-1 year or 16-20 years. These results show that the 2–5 year period is enough experience to facilitate ward committee functioning in a local municipality.

The next section looks at the responses to focus group discussions

#### 4.4. WARD COMMITTEE (FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW) QUESTIONS

##### **Q1. Familiarity with the functions and responsibilities of ward committees**

Upon questioning ward committee members about their understanding of their roles and responsibilities most of the respondents were in consensus in their understanding of the overall responsibilities, and more so on the expectations of community members from them. The common understanding was that they are there to help the community members with regards service delivery issues that affect them daily and that they are “the face of the municipality”. Further the respondents view themselves as the first point of contact and conduit between the people and the municipality.

Some of the respondents declared that part of their responsibilities was to help community members with issues regarding service delivery matters and they strongly felt it was imperative that they reside in the areas that they represent as that assisted them in identifying and understanding the day to day challenges that the communities encounter. In this way, they can be the direct ears and eyes of government. Attached to their work they also added the way of treating people with respect as key to the success of public participation.

*As ward committee members we are the first point of contact and a conduit between the municipality and the people, thus we represent the municipality... we are the face of the municipality and the ward committee is where people start with everything.*

*No man ... sister.....I know the work of the ward committee. It means that you must treat people well and when they have complaints you escalate these to the Councillor.*

A few respondents concurred that it still remains their responsibility to offer solutions, document these and be able to report back later to the entire community. They further acknowledged that by virtue of their proximity to their communities, it was crucial to understand their roles and responsibilities.

*I think.... another important thing is that a ward committee member should reside in the area that he or she is representing so as to be the ears and eyes of government. You must use your eyes mainly to assess the conditions of the people, for example...if there is someone who needs SASSA, Social Development or Health services.... In this way you are able to advise and refer a person according to their need, working together with the Councillor and the responsible government officials.*

From the responses the researcher can deduct that members had a fair understanding of what their responsibilities entailed, some of their responses were in line with what the literature earlier had stated as functions of ward committees, although not all were mentioned. The literature earlier stated that local government is the sphere closest to the people, this, links with the ward committees as local structures to facilitate public participation. Overall the respondents highlighted the significance of ward committees as channels of communicating community concerns to the municipality, being the most direct form of contact to the municipality, taking the responsibility of updating both the municipality on community problems and providing feedback to communities how their problems are being addressed. Although the participants reflected a fair understanding of their roles and responsibilities, this does not automatically translate to a proficient ward committee and public participation system in the municipality and this can partly be attributed to other variables that may be involved in the process of public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality.

## **Q2. The necessity of well-functioning ward committees within the municipality?**

Majority of the respondents stated that they saw the need of well-functioning ward committees in the municipality for various reasons ranging from filling the gap of councilors to being the first point of contact for the community members. They stated that with the busy schedules of Councillors, ward committee members acquire detailed information

regarding community complaints that they get from meeting various stakeholders such as traditional leaders, sub headmen, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and religious leaders. From the meetings they prepare structured reports for submission to Council for consideration in a form of a report.

*In the community you are the person who walks in the village, a Councillor is forever busy and absent and the municipal officials do not see the problem faced by the people, you are the one who lives with the people most of the time.*

Overall, all the respondents shared the value add in having good ward committees as mechanisms put in place in the communities. They further showed their understanding and knowledge that ward committees are a legal requirement. Ward committees are set up to identify the needs of the community and they do this in the absence of Councillors who get engaged in executive meetings, thus, they are a necessity. The study can deduce that the respondents were in unison in their understanding of the need for ward committees and their work.

The next section deals with whether ward committee inputs are considered in the IDP and budgeting process.

### **Q3. Consideration of ward committees' inputs and involvement of ward committees in the IDP and budgeting process.**

The majority of the respondents stated that the municipality does consider their inputs which takes the form of reports from the ward committees for inputs in the IDP, but the challenge is that the feedback to these reports never comes back in order for the ward committees to report back to the community. The respondents were in consensus that in as much as their inputs are considered, they never get responses, most often they are just presented with a final draft of the IDP and their inputs are not really considered urgently as they would like them to be. Some respondents even acknowledged that if there can be a system in place to track and ensure feedback on reports that they submit, matters would be better handled and there would be quick turn-around times for all reports submitted.

Some of the respondents were conflicted in stating that as much as the municipality considers their inputs or requests, the municipality is not able to attend to all the requests. This they partly attributed to the feedback loop which was lacking and a structured system in place as the municipality's response tended to be general and not ward specific. This inclusion came with challenges. The respondents acknowledged that it is happening due to the vast nature of the wards and this results in the municipality only attending to some of the concerns raised and not all of them simultaneously. They also shared the challenge of late feedback by the municipality.

With regards their inclusion in the IDP majority respondents stated that they are included in the IDP process planning as they sit and deliberate on key issues and some of the issues, they highlight are reflected in the IDP but not all of them. With regards to the budget most of the respondents stated that they are not included in budget planning as they only get a report on the budget which they then take the report back to the community with no contribution.

The study can deduce that with regards to inputs to the IDP document, the majority respondents concurred that they were consulted and part of the IDP content included some of their inputs, but not all of it and their inputs were also considered. On budget issues the municipality conveys the budget information to the ward committees and they are not consulted.

The next section deals with the representation in ward committees

**Q4. Ward committees' representation and inclusivity of the diverse community, e.g. youth, women, disable, elderly, etc.**

Majority of respondents agreed that ward committees were indeed representative and inclusive of the diverse community in their portfolios. This can be attested to by the statistical information on the age, and gender statistics presented in the biographical information. These structures are representative of different portfolios, such as women, children, senior citizens and people living with disabilities. The participants did, however,

acknowledge that they did not have a member living with a disability but that only a portfolio was created to represent people living with disabilities.

Some declared that they use the platform of a war room, a type of meeting that sits quarterly chaired by the Councillor, to accommodate groups that are not represented in ward committees such as people living with disability and traditional healers and others to participate.

From the discussions it can be deduced that those groups that are not part of the ward committees are represented in the different portfolios. For youth representation cultural stereotypes factored in as the rural people believe in mature representation from the elderly, thus few youth representations, though represented.

#### **Q5. What ward committees deal with? eg, crime, sanitation, etc.**

- **How do you decide which issues to deal with first and why?**

Most of the respondents stated in consensus that they are structured in portfolios to be able to manage the community work and this allows them to pay attention to the different portfolios. The main issue that they highlighted as priority was water and roads infrastructure as areas that require immediate attention. All respondents in addition stated that there were many other issues that were of concern to the citizens, such as SASSA grants, youth unemployment, electricity and housing problems just to name a few. Road construction was high on the priority areas of concern since the municipality is vast with sparsely populated rural areas, thus poor road infrastructure hinders access of services to the far and remote areas.

*We deal with things happening there in the community. When we meet we all have portfolios and if in my area it so happens that I deal with her portfolio, I must tell her that she must report about that issue. We deal with all issues that affect the whole ward so a person does not only focus in one's area only. The issues that always come up top of the list are water and roads.*

From the discussions with the respondents, the study can deduce that issues of priority are water and roads in the municipality. All the issues are dealt with according to portfolios

as allocated to the ward committees. A few ward committee members also felt strongly that the issue of their stipend should be a priority as it is not enough.

The next section looks at whether ward committee members make a meaningful contribution in the resolution of Council.

**Q6. In your view, do ward committee members make a meaningful contribution in the resolutions of council?**

Most of the respondents strongly agreed that although they make contributions to council, these were not regarded as meaningful as they were not considered for implementation at the end. One of the respondents cited that as an example some of the reports they submit are never responded to and this makes them doubt the seriousness with which the municipality takes these significantly.

*When you submit a report as sent by the community, they expect that in the next meeting you provide feedback, which does not come back from the municipality. You submit a report and there is no response to indicate we are delayed by this and that.....we understand you..... or we are not able to. This really makes us doubt if our reports are taken seriously by the municipality. But the municipality cannot operate without ward committees, it is impossible.*

A few respondents stated that, contrary, they felt the municipality took their contributions as significant because they have evidence of things that happened due to their contributions. Overall, the study can deduce that the majority of respondents felt that most of the Council resolutions were not representative of their views as ward committees and only a few felt they made significant contributions.

*Indeed, ward committees have great influence on the municipality, we have things that we can point to that are evidence that had we not met and discussed as ward committees we would not have today. They exist because we forwarded them to Council as ward committees. For example, in Zwelitsha there was vacant land that belonged to a school and the principal refused to hand over the land, it was only after the intervention of ward committees that the land was handed over and RDP*



*house were built. We also have electricity installed in rural areas through the influence of ward committees.*

The next part looks at the meetings and contents thereof.

#### **Q7. Frequency of ward committees' meetings and the agenda**

- **Does the chairperson (Councillor) attend meetings regularly?**

Most respondents responded in consensus that the Senqu Local Municipality ward committees meet monthly with the community. They reported also meeting with the traditional leaders and Councillors per village. On a quarterly basis they meet with the Municipal Representative, Ms Z, where minutes are taken, there is an agenda and an attendance register which is filled in. They prepare reports from these meetings and send to the municipality, but they do not know what happens once the report is submitted.

All participants agreed on the frequency of the monthly meetings, quarterly meetings that have an agenda and attendance register and this was done diligently. Respondents stated that Councillors attend and committed when they could attend meetings, due to their busy schedules.

#### **Q8. What challenges are ward committees faced with?**

Most respondents reported overwhelmingly on numerous obstructions that had a negative impact on their work as ward committees in the municipality. They were in consensus that these required serious consideration by the municipal officials. Overall that participants highlighted nine (9) key challenges that they were faced with ranging from (i) insufficient stipend (ii) infrastructure, (iii) red tape (iv) disaster management (v) poor stakeholder relations, (vi) Unfulfilled promises (vii) transportation (viii) political affiliation and lastly (ix) sewage and street lights. The participants highlighted their concerns through sharing their day to day experiences.

- (i) **Insufficient stipend:** The majority of the respondents regarded the insufficient stipend as the main challenge which they strongly felt hindered them from doing

their work efficiently especially in reaching out to the remote rural areas, as well as being able to communicate with the people when necessary. In the Senqu Local Municipality ward committee members get stipend of R1000.00 monthly and this is towards covering their responsibilities in the wards.

- (ii) **Infrastructure:** Most of the respondents expressed that they also experience infrastructure challenges in terms of services that are centralised in Sterkspruit town for basic services such as Eskom services, SASSA services. The poor road conditions were cited as another infrastructure challenge as the remote wards are difficult to reach, more so that they have no services and the people must come to the main town of Sterkspruit in order to get basic government services.
- (iii) **Red tape:** Some respondents stated that another challenge was that of red tape that delays processes as the ward committee members view it as unnecessary and delaying service.
- (iv) **Disaster management:** The participants shared that what partly makes their work difficult is the slow response of the disaster management officials on any work or reports submitted to them relating to disaster issues of blown roofs, burnt houses, and people with no houses to stay in.
- (v) **Stakeholder relations:** There are numerous stakeholders involved in the process of public participation and sometimes the tensions between them affects the work on the ground. It becomes a serious challenge when stakeholders are not communicating, despite the framework that guides their operations in the public participation space as this affects the quality of service delivery work.
- (vi) **Unfulfilled promises to the people:** most of the challenges are attributed to non-response by the municipality to concerns as raised by the ward committees and this non-delivery on the promises made to the people puts ward committees in a bad light.
- (vii) **Transportation:** This only affected the ward committee members working in the rural wards in that they stated that they had to fend for themselves while the ones in the urban area have loud hailer for announcements while they struggle to reach the rural areas.
- (viii) **Political affiliation:** respondents stated that their political affiliation is sometimes misconstrued negatively against them to the detriment of service delivery in the

wards where they serve in that projects are not given to a certain ward because a ward committee belongs to a certain party.

- (ix) Sewage and streetlights:** This were a highlighted as a long standing challenge in one of the locations for many years, resulting in a bad image for the ward committee members who are viewed as doing nothing by the community.

From these challenges as received from the ward committee members, sharing their experiences, the researcher can deduce that all the various challenges mentioned impede the potential to develop public participation through ward committee work at local level. The collected data shows that there is a need for a coordinated effort across all stakeholders, coupled with non-response by the municipality on the concerns as raised by ward committees resulting in non-delivery of promises made to the communities. All these challenges eventually make the ward committees to be perceived as not doing their work and not caring about the people's concerns as reported to them. These can be summarised as issues of representation, limitations of ward committee powers, unavailable information and politics.

The next section looks at successes of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality

#### **Q9. Mention significant improvements achieved by means of effective functioning of ward committees.**

Despite the challenges that the ward committees are faced with, most of the respondents had a basket of improvements in service delivery as a result of effective ward committee functioning. The respondents cited that most of the work going on can be attributed to the work of ward committees who conduct door to door campaigns in the villages to collect information on the needs of the people, the results of which are visible in the toilet project in all villages except for three villages, electricity installation in response to ward committee reports and road construction. Furthermore, the respondents cited the paving as a collective project of ward committees, a housing committee registering people for RDP houses and people get their houses through ward committee effort, citing RDP houses built on a land belonging to a school which they fought for.

#### 4.5. DATA TRIANGULATION

The aim of the study as stated in the introductory chapter is to explore public participation challenges as faced by ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. In this section the study makes a comparative analysis of the interview and focus group discussions with the literature review findings, in so doing this section aims to confirm the literature review trends as well as explain the disparities, if any in the selected Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, against the practices of public participation in the selected municipality.

For purposes of this study triangulation is applied to determine the extent of ward committee officials' participatory role in the municipality and the challenges that they face as well as the municipal officials' perspective and secondary data of municipal documents. This is methodological triangulation as it uses more than one method to gather primary and secondary data.

This approach is in line with literature which propounds that credibility is about the credibility of the research method used and it requires that the researcher makes clear connections between the study's findings with reality in order to demonstrate truth of the findings (Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo and Mash, 2014). Through triangulation the study uses multiple methods to collect data in order to check the consistency of the findings, in this case the semi-structured interviews for the municipal officials and focus group discussions for the ward committee members in Senqu. It is also used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

##### 4.5.1. CONSISTENCY MATRIX

The table below elucidates the relation between the research question, objectives of the research, semi-structured interviews and focus group questions as well as the three themes.

Table 3 Consistency matrix

Research main question	Objectives of the research	Data source	Theme(s)	Specific questions	
				Semi – structured interviews	Focus group discussions
What does local democracy, public participation and efficient ward committee engagement in the Senqu Local Municipality involve?	To explore public participation challenges as faced by ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality	Semi – structured interviews:  Focus Group Discussions	Local Democracy	Questions 1-2	Questions 3 & 5
What does local democracy, public participation and efficient ward committee engagement in the Senqu Local Municipality involve?	To explore public participation challenges as faced by ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality	Senqu Local Municipality IDP	Public participation	Questions 1–6	Questions 1,6 & 7.
			Ward committee functioning	Questions 1-9	Questions 2, 4, 8 & 9.

In addressing the main objective, the study had secondary research objectives which comprise of the analysis of the theoretical framework relating to local democracy, public participation and ward committee functioning. Chapter two on literature review dealt with this objective. The second objective was to investigate challenges as faced by ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality and it was dealt with in detail in chapter 2 on literature review.

The comparison is done according to the three themes of local democracy, public participation and ward committee functioning as outlined in the consistency matrix.

#### 4.5.2. LOCAL DEMOCRACY

The study has earlier stated in section 2.8.2 that the basis for local government transpires from the need to promote values of democracy, increase and develop the delivery of basic

services and expedite community participation in the development of their areas of interest (Sikander, 2015:171). The objective of this theme was to determine the respondents understanding of local democracy, its significance as well as find out the municipality's efforts in promoting the inclusion of the public in decision making through public participation. The study in addressing the issue of local democracy dealt with matters of the principles of democracy in terms of the degree of involvement of ward committees in the processes of the IDP and the budgeting as well as challenges encountered with regards effective local democracy in the Senqu Local Municipality. The Senqu IDP (2017-2021) says that IDP and budget processes should involve municipal officials, Councillors as well as stakeholders outside the municipality (p.119).

In comparing the responses from the interviews and focus group discussions the study found that both municipal officials and ward committees had the same views that the municipality is not upholding principles of democracy holistically as both groups felt that although it was practised, it was not 100% so. Both groups further identified the challenge of the insufficient stipend for ward committees. Municipal officials identified politicisation of posts as an issue while for the ward committees it was about poor communication and feedback on reports submitted as well as not being involved in IDP and budget processes 100%. From the literature, Arnstein coined this as "tokenism" where the public is just informed under the pretext that it is part of the process. Some of the meetings, for example, Izimbizo are mere information sessions and not to engage the public representatives. The IDP says they must be part of the all IDP and budget processes.

Literature has in detail in chapter 2 stated that local government cannot decide alone what is good for the communities but must create spaces for the discussions of these. Chottray & Stoker (2010) promote joint decisions with good relations between stakeholders with public officials. Senqu Local Municipality still needs to improve on these relations and transparency to ward committees.

With regards to challenges there were similarities in that both municipal officials and ward committees highlighted communication and the budget as key challenges affecting local democracy. Some of the challenges highlighted in the Senqu IDP (2017-2021:124) are challenges of infrastructure such as roads and service centres not centrally located to the public. Municipal officials, on the other hand, raised the level of education of ward

committee members and Councillors as a challenge affecting their understanding of by-laws and regulations, thus negatively impacting their performance, despite them being inducted and trained on joining office. They further highlighted party political affiliation that clouded the work of the Councillors who ended up not differentiating their government work from politics.

Ward committees had a myriad of challenges, such as slow response of municipality to disaster management issues, red tape, transportation, stipend, and stakeholder relations, just to name a few. All these challenges reflected badly on them as when there is no delivery, communities blame them. Evidence from available literature shows that public participation is not met without challenges as these cause the failure of most of the initiatives, from non-cooperation of officials, dearth of set budget, non-representation and non-transparency on the side of government. Likewise, Chado and Joha (2016; 185) resonate that public participation challenges in contemporary societies are attributed to inefficient practices related to poor mechanisms in facilitating participation.

The study can deduce that the challenges that were raised by both municipal officials and ward committee members need to be attended to for the municipality to have true local democracy. These challenges as experienced at Senqu are not new as literature has shown that local government has been in a struggle to effectively transform theories into reality (Govender & Pencelliah, 2011; Alexander, 2010, Maphazi, Raga, Taylor & Mayekiso, 2013; Tshoose, 2015).

#### 4.5.3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It is of significance to note that in this study, public participation is viewed to be an active and significant process that encourages constructive exchange of ideas between communities and local municipalities (Mchunu, et.al., as cited in Theron & Mchunu; 2016: 171). From the collected data both municipal officials and ward committee members had similar understanding on what public participation is about, in that it was about the inclusion of everybody in governance processes for the benefit of the larger society. Both groups, further, similarly agreed that public participation to some degree enhanced local

democracy because of the involvement of stakeholders and were in unison that it can be improved. Both were in accord that capacity building in the form of meaningful training was a necessity in order to improve the municipality work from the municipality and ward committee side. Both groups identified the same mechanisms of public participation in place in the Senqu Local Municipality, just like in the Senqu IDP as well as stipulated in the literature review in chapter 2. Literature further stated that even with mechanisms in place, the spaces must have empowering systems and processes and used intelligently (Newbury & Wallace, 2014: 10).

The study can then deduce that between the literature, the data collected and the Senqu IDP (2017-2021) the understanding of the term public participation is common. There are gaps between what is stated in the literature and what is implemented in the municipality, such as full participation of stakeholders in the processes of the IDP and the budget. Senqu still needs to work in this area.

#### 4.5.4. WARD COMMITTEE FUNCTIONING

Local Government in South Africa is presented with the responsibility of driving the practice of public participation in democracy at local level through ward committees as one mechanism to increase public participation. Literature states that ward committees are intended to uphold democracy (Van Rooyen and Mokoena, 2013:761) by forming connections amid the community and the local municipality. South African municipalities have ward committees as significant mechanisms for promoting public participation. The data collected from municipal officers and ward committee members shows similarities in that they define the expectations

Senqu Municipality has few mechanisms in place despite the challenges it is facing and ward committees are the primary mechanism as stated in the Senqu IDP (2017-2021). As stated earlier in chapter 2 of the literature review, public participation mechanisms are the accessible methods or mechanism for the purpose of consulting, involving and informing the public regarding matters that affect them. Sekgala (2018:4) argues that



ward committees have endless challenges that need to be addressed, linking these to current governance issues at local government.

Data collected from Senqu is no different from the literature findings in that the municipality, with ward committee as a mechanism in place, still encounters implementation challenges and these were articulated by both the municipal managers and the ward committee members. This is in accord with the literature review, chapter 2, where Muse (2014) and Pourjafar, 2014 (as cited in Chado and Joha, 2016: 186) indicated that the mechanisms are not effective assurance to the efficiency of public participation programmes in traditional cities of countries that are still developing. Senqu municipality is going through what other municipalities have experienced with its challenges. Similarities were in the fact that ward committees are indeed an asset in the public participation space as they act as a conduit between the municipality and the community and their composition is diverse and representative of the diverse community except people living with disabilities, who are catered for in another platform, this was confirmed in the Senqu IDP.

Data collected shows similarities on the value placed on ward committees, municipal officials view ward committees as an asset to the municipality while the ward committee members saw themselves as the face of the municipality adding value by bringing important information to the municipality. The data shows that ward committee members play a significant role in the municipality despite the challenges that they encounter. The level of ward committee officials' participatory role in the municipality and the challenges that they face as well as the municipal officials' perspective. A common challenge identified by both groups is that of communication and the budget.

#### 4.6. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter was a presentation of the data collected from the interviews and the focus group discussions that were held with municipal officials and ward committee members respectively in the Senqu Local Municipality. The chapter laid the context through a presentation of the area of interest. The chapter, from the participants'

inputs, was able to make significant deductions from the research data as collected with regards the challenges that all the recipients experienced and were faced with daily. The data was collected in order to address the research objectives, answering the research questions. The findings were presented from data collected from interviews with municipal officials and from the focus group discussions with ward committee members.

The data presentation followed the themes that were identified for the municipal officials and for the focus group discussions, questions were followed as a guide. For analysis of data, an interview matrix was used to follow the themes from the questions for both tools used, semi-structured interviews for municipal officials and focus group discussions for ward committee members. The matrix assisted in thematic analysis of the data collected.

The first part was the presentation of the municipal officials' responses and opinions. The structure followed three themes, namely, local democracy, public participation and ward committee functioning. The second part provided the opinions of ward committee members on the challenges that are facing the Senqu Local Municipality. All the responses enlightened the researcher on the real public participation challenges that are facing the Senqu Local Municipality and ward committee functioning. All the participants participated openly, outlining the issues through answering the questions, specifically highlighting challenges as poor communication and budget limitations, political interference, poor implementation of municipal systems that are in place. The chapter ends with the triangulation of the data as collected from the individual interviews and focus group discussions in relation to literature trends as highlighted in chapter 2.

From the data presented above, the study can deduce that there are still challenges with regards public participation, ward committees and local democracy in the municipality. Although there are legal frameworks in place, the municipality has shown limited capacity to enforce, maintain and monitor public participation processes holistically due to numerous challenges as alluded to above. The challenge lies in the implementation of all the strategies, including the IDP.

On the side of ward committees, data presented indicates that there is willingness on their side to participate and engage the municipality on governance matters but these are hindered by numerous challenges such as illiteracy, dearth of access to information, poor

communication and others. These prevent communities from engaging with the municipality meaningfully.

The next chapter will comprise of the data analysis, showing how the research objectives and questions were accomplished.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to integrate the themes as identified in the literature survey and in so doing manifest how the problem statement of the study was addressed in answering the research questions. The data will be interpreted with reference to the theoretical framework as presented in chapter 2 on literature review.

Further, the study makes a comparative analysis of the interview findings with the literature review findings, in so doing this chapter aims to confirm the literature review trends as well as explain the disparities if any in the selected Arnstein's Ladder of Participation Theory against the practices of public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality. The study notes the significance of linking the practical reality on the ground and the literature.

The objective of this study is to explore the public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. In realizing the research objectives, the study has looked at three themes to address the problem statement and answer the question of the study. These are dealt with hereunder.

#### **5.2. LOCAL DEMOCRACY**

For purposes of this study, good governance, as stated earlier in the literature review chapter, is about collective decision making and inclusion of all stakeholders playing a key role throughout the process as promoted by Chottray and Stoker (2010). The objective of this theme was to determine the municipal officials and ward committee members' understanding of local democracy, its significance as well as find out the municipality's efforts in promoting the inclusion of the public in decision making through public participation. The study did this bearing in mind that Senqu Local Municipality is constitutionally bound by the broader context of local government of the Republic of South

Africa with a commitment to developmental local government that provides democratic and accountable government for local communities, more so, encouraging community involvement in local government matters (Akinboade, Mokwena & Kinfack, 2013:458). On the other hand, as grassroots level democracy, local democracy involves the delivery and distribution of public goods consistent with the preferences and needs of the public (Van der Walddt et al., 2014:25).

Further, literature has shown that local government cannot decide alone on what is good for the communities, but it must create spaces where discussions can be held to discuss, debate and agree on what is good for communities. Data collected from municipal officials and ward committee members shows that the municipality has created such invited spaces in the form of ward committees as one of the mechanisms to promote public participation and these are not met without challenges as stated by the majority of the respondents.

Literature dealing with public participation continues to question meaningful depth of participation at local government and this is not exceptional to Senqu Local Municipality, South Africa but a global challenge as well, World Bank (as cited in Ndimu, 2017:1). Naidoo and Ramphal (2018: 82) concur that in as much as local government is the “coalface” of governments globally, they are continuously faced with challenges of not meeting their obligation of providing basic services as expected by communities and this, the respondents have attested to. This, they attribute to the gap created between the design at other spheres of governments and implementation process at local level. Senqu Local Municipality has the IDP in place to guide on public implementation, but implementation is proving to be a big challenge in the selected municipality and this is echoed in the literature review earlier in chapter 2.

Despite the mechanism of public participation and the relevant legislation to promote public participation at local municipalities, local government has been in a struggle to effectively transform theories into reality (Govender & Pencelliah, 2011; Alexander, 2010, Maphazi, Raga, Taylor & Mayekiso, 2013; Tshoose, 2015). Furthermore, Action 24 (2018:3) in consensus proposes that there are challenges with implementation of public participation in South Africa and public participation is far from being meaningful to a large

proportion of the population (Bob, 2018:11). Lastly, Mofolo (2016:231) strongly believes that after two decades of democracy in South Africa, local government public participation must be improved for the better (as cited in Bob,2018:10). The respondents at the municipality indicated that the municipality is faced with key challenges of the budget, communication, politics and illiteracy among the ward committee members and this hindered the enhancement of public participation. The challenges can be translated there being little done to open opportunities for people to partake in decision making.

The study uses Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation views participation as a clear cut term for citizen power. The ladder model promotes the consideration of the views of the community as vital stakeholders as they bring insights on issues and information that is imperative in a developmental governance (Maynard, Gilson & Mathieu, 2012). Senqu Local Municipality can be placed at the second level of power, that of "tokenism" to which Gangemi, 2012, (as cited in Garau 2012: 23) refers to as tokens used in monopoly that are context bound, outside which they are meaningless. This is the level where there is engagement, but no guarantee that inputs will be implemented. This, the respondents have raised quite a lot in that although their inputs are taken, they don't have guarantees to their being implemented. This, for them poses a huge challenge both for the municipality and its stakeholders. With regards ward committees' influence on council decision-making the study acknowledges the little influence that ward committees seem to have and this is partly attributed to the lacking organised mechanisms or systems for ward committee inputs to be factored in meaningfully in the decision-making processes of council. The current reporting channel of submitting reports through the ward Councillors to the Speaker has proved to be futile since they sometimes do not get feedback from the reports submitted.

Lastly, Section 17(2) of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 makes provision for municipalities to open spaces for community participation. The Act, however does not offer guidance of how this is to be carried out. This gap is completed by the National Policy Framework in prescribing strategies to fulfill the participation obligation through communication, ward IDP and budget processes as well as structures of ward and forum committees. These are the minimum requirements and municipalities are encouraged to contextualise other means of community involvement in municipal affairs

and processes. The Local Government Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003 (MFMA) prescribes that municipalities must promote meaningful involvement of communities in their budgeting processes in alignment with IDP processes. Senqu Local Municipality, as stated earlier, has all these mechanisms in place, but the challenge comes with implementation.

Another challenge that was highlighted by some of the respondents in the semi structured interviews was the issue of politicization of the ward committee posts with regard to employment as they stated that this led to misconstrued expectations by the officials. In the literature review Reddy (2016) refers to this as “*The dilemmas of local government “politicisation”*” citing Booysen (2012b) when referring to the appointment or the election of municipal “functionaries” that are not sufficiently qualified, on the basis of nepotism and patronage as a constraint on the performance of local government. Similarly, some of the ward committee members shared the same sentiments when coming to employment as they felt that some Councillors employed people through nepotism.

### 5.3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The objective of the study as stated earlier, is to investigate public participation challenges that are faced by the Senqu ward committees. The study acknowledges that there has been much regarding theoretical debate regarding public participation in the development studies field. As stated earlier in chapter 2 of the literature review, public participation mechanisms are the accessible methods or mechanism for the purpose of consulting, involving and informing the public regarding matters that affect them. In addition, public participation mechanisms seek to gather public opinions for the purpose of enhanced decision-making (Rowe & Frewer, 2005; Wang & Wart, 2007; Shittu & Mubaudeen (2015). The South African Framework on Public participation lists a number of these: newsletters, media feedback channels such as letters and phone calls from citizens, brochures, talk shows and/or interviews, public hearings, meeting with citizens, youth city and ward forums festivals, task forces, special competition or contest activities, frequently

asked questions (FAQ), general public surveys, local partnership programs (DPLG (2007)).

The conceptual framework has earlier in chapter 2 cited two concepts of public participation and consultation as crucial elements of public participation framing this study. The study uses Arnstein's Ladder of participation as an indicator of participation. The preceding chapter has revealed that the Senqu Local Municipality meets the minimum requirements of creating public participation spaces for their committees. These are comprised of ward committees, public hearings (izimbizo) structures where IDP and budget issues are discussed, and communities are informed. The urban wards are at an advantage as they sometimes use additional forms of communication such as loud hailer announcements on the affairs of municipality. The study noted a difference in implementation between rural and urban ward committees and the respondents attested to this in stating that the urban wards have better access to things and the rural in the remote areas are sometimes left out due to distant areas. This was attributed to various factors such as access to meeting venues, levels of literacy affecting understanding of IDPs, policy objectives and content thereof, thus eventually affecting proactive participation.

The data collected is evidence that the Senqu Local Municipality is in partial compliance with the creation of spaces for participation as there are still major challenges for the minimum requirements regarding public participation to be implemented. The study recognises that both the municipality and the communities do not fully understand the obligation of public participation. This is so because, in availing spaces for participation, the municipality makes no further means beyond that to enhance public participation as these spaces are not enough and these create impediments. The issue of an insufficient budget to ensure full public participation is a major impediment. The study further acknowledges that public participation is a constitutional right that, if adhered to, stands to benefit both the communities and the municipality.

Data displays that both the municipal officials and the ward committee members had a good understanding of what public participation is but they all acknowledged the challenges on the ground when it comes to implementation especially getting its meaning realized in practicing developmental government which promotes the consideration of the



people as represented by the municipality. This was highlighted by literature as well as shown by Tshisonga and Mafema (2010) who attribute public participation challenges to various factors, such as policies existing for compliance, conservative mindsets of officials and the dearth of synergistic action plan talking to policies. For Madumo (2014), challenges are structural and systematic and directly link with public participation and the mechanisms that can be used respectively.

#### 5.4. WARD COMMITTEE FUNCTIONING

The literature review chapter discussed in detail ward committees as mechanisms established solely to enhance public participation and local democracy. For ward committees to achieve that they need to comply with an organizational structure for participatory governance in the Senqu Council. Further, in contextualizing the effective functioning of ward committees, the literature review chapter has shown that for any organization to achieve their set objectives depends on the institutional milieu within which it operates (Zoogah, Peng & Woldu, 2015). An organization, as defined by Douglas (2016), is a group of persons who connect to achieve a common goal. Ward committees, in this regard, as stated in the literature review chapter, consist of stakeholders belonging to diverse groups functioning as a sub structure under a municipality that is a bigger organization. Van der Walt et al (2014:5) further states that municipalities are organisations with bureaucratic structures comprised of hierarchical groups or individuals established to realise specific objectives. The literature further suggests that the effectiveness of ward committees hinges on whether they achieve their set objectives as well as the degree to which they solve targeted problems (Holtzhausen in Thornhill, Van Dijk & Ille, 2014: 252) in the case of ward committees would be matters of service delivery at local government and efficient public participation.

Ward committees were discussed in detail in chapter 2 on literature review as structures in the local government sphere that were specifically created to bring government closer to the people and the respondents have referred to them as spaces for community engagement with great potential to fulfill the requirement, nevertheless, the space is reported to be overwhelmed with challenges which ultimately render it ineffective. This

opinion held by the respondents is supported in the literature by (Govender & Pencelliah, 2011; Alexander, 2010, Maphazi, Raga, Taylor & Mayekiso, 2013; Tshoose, 2015) who observed that despite the mechanism of public participation, ward committees and the relevant legislation to promote public participation at local municipalities, local government has been in a struggle to effectively transform theories into reality. Thus ward committees are viewed as ineffective in promoting public participation.

One more challenge as highlighted in the findings was the way ward committee representation is constituted in that it is an extension of the ward committee members' political affiliation extension resulting in the work of ward committees being compromised. This has been raised as a major concern in literature (Kabane, 2013) in stating that members of ward committees are selected by ward Councillors in line with their political affiliation. This poses a huge challenge in doing what is expected and this was raised by respondents as a concern.

The Local Government Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003 (MFMA) states that municipalities must make sure that communities are actively involved during the budgeting process and ensure alignment with the processes of the IDP. Other spaces of public participation are the Izimbizo or public hearings and these are meant to cover the IDP and the budget. The interviewed respondents (municipal officials) as well as members of the ward committees indicated that the municipality does engage on IDP shows through izimbizos where the mayor addresses the communities. They stated, however, that these engagements of izimbizos proved to be fruitless because members of the community are most of the time unable to understand the content of the budget, and this they attributed to the limited literacy skills of most of the community members. An additional challenge is linked to the caliber of the membership as the respondents had indicated that they have few professionals in their membership and the professionals are unavailable to attend the izimbizos which are mostly held during the week and those present are not able to fully understand and engage with the meeting content. Even the community members in attendance do not fully understand the meeting.

The literature has shown that ward committees are used as political concourses (Davids & Cloete, 2012) and they question the efficiency of ward committees as communication mediums. On this note some of the respondents highlighted the issues of nepotism and

Councillors prioritising their political party over the work of the local government. This compromised the quality of the work in the affected areas and contributes to the challenges that are faced by the municipality.

With regards to support and resources, the finding of this research, in confirming the findings of other studies was that there is a need for more municipal support to ward committees to be more effective. First on the priority would be training of ward committee members as well as ward Councillors, as indicated in their responses. The additional support that ward committees get in the form of stationery, transport money and the stipend proved to be inadequate, especially the latter as majority of the respondents highlighted that it was not enough considering the amount of work they engage in towards supporting development in the community

For capacity building the respondents indicated that there must be more meaningful trainings for municipal officials as well as ward committees and this can be done through budgetary arrangements and more resources allocation towards the Izimbizos logistics.

## 5.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter depicted an analysis of the data as collected and presented as findings in chapter 4. This chapter aimed to show how research objectives were achieved and the research question answered by triangulating the data collected with the literature review as well as the secondary data available in the form of the municipality IDP. The researcher in the process has noted that with all the public participation spaces created, the municipality still needs to attend to the competence and value of such spaces. The ward committees have come through as the most trusted spaces, still have a myriad of challenges that prohibit them from appropriately involving communities in matters of the municipal matters meaningfully so.

The municipality has also shown a shortfall in the provision of sufficient systems in fully implementing public participation. The municipality lacks capacity and structures to ensure appropriate implementation and literature has shown that for implementation to succeed, it requires everyone's efforts. This can start with a clear understanding of public

participation as a constitutional right for all stakeholders, who stand to all benefit, if public participation is practiced correctly by all.

The next and last chapter provides final conclusions and recommendations in accord with the findings in chapter 4 on the responses by ward committee focus group discussions and responses from the municipal officials with regards challenges faced by ward committees in public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

This final chapter of the study is intended to offer conclusions based on key findings of the research and these will provide the basis for the recommendations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. The study has acknowledged that ward committees are the primary mechanism, amongst others, that promote local democracy in the Senqu Local Municipality. Chapter 4 and 5 presented the data as well as an analysis of the data in comparison to the literature review. Chapter 4 also aimed to find out the level of understanding of ward committee members of their roles and responsibilities generally.

This chapter concludes with a summary of how the study addressed the research objectives in each chapter through the literature review conducted, the methodology followed by the study, presentation of data or findings from the interviews, focus group discussions and some municipal documents and analysis of the findings. The chapter concludes with recommendations towards improving the functioning of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality as founded on the findings, thus offering suggestions regards public participation for the municipality and for possible future research.

#### **6.2. CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of the study was to explore public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. The study adopted Arnstein's Ladder of participation as a model of measure for public participation and a measure of how Senqu Local Municipality fares in practicing public participation through ward committees mechanisms. Of specific significance was finding out what challenges exactly were experienced with regards ward committee functioning and public participation. Additionally, was the identification of spaces created by the municipality for public

participation and the adequacy of such spaces for the engagement of communities. In chapter one the study provided a background on public participation, focusing on ward committees as mechanisms to enhance public participation as established through legislation. The chapter further highlighted the significance of the study, objectives and the problem statement. The study, to address the objectives assessed the challenges of ward committees in promoting local democracy in Senqu Local Municipality. The researcher supports the view that with the correct public participation practice, democracy can be deepened and consolidated. Further, the researcher further acknowledges that the concept of public participation is still not understood in local government, despite all the South African legal and policy framework in place. The challenge starts at implementation, resulting in unhappy community members and delayed development.

To better understand the key concepts of the study, the study used chapter two on literature review which focused on the theoretical framework on local democracy, public participation and ward committees in South Africa. The literature review provided a basis of research already conducted in the area and this was done to fulfill the objectives of the study and a provision of the model of Arnstein's Ladder of participation as basis or indicator to assess public participation in the selected municipality.

The study employed the qualitative research methodology as detailed in chapter three in order to arrive at answers to achieve the objectives of the study. The study used purposive qualitative sampling using data collection tools which comprised of semi structured interviews for municipal officials and focus group discussions with ward committee members from the selected wards.

The study presented the collected data in chapter four of the responses from the officials and the ward committee members on the three themes of the study, local democracy, public participation and ward committees. The chapter ended with triangulation by comparing responses from the semi structured interviews and focus group discussions and the literature review. The different tools were used in order to get a rounded view of the reality on the ground. The researcher deduced that from the interviews with municipal officials, it was evident that the government is aware of its obligations to include communities in their planning processes at local government, but this is hindered by

systematic challenges that hinder the processes. The government puts measures in place but these are inadequate.

The last chapter six provides a summary of the study, recommendations based on the research findings. In realizing the objective of the study the research paper tackled the different areas in the different chapters as summarized above.

In contextualizing the effective ward committee functioning, the study has shown that meaningful participatory governance requires and involves adequate resources and an empowered community that is able to understand and interpret municipal documents for them to contribute significantly to local democracy processes. Ward committees have been portrayed as one of the mechanisms of promoting public participation and local democracy, to be able to achieve their objectives as ward committees, they must meet all the requirements of a fit structure for participatory governance in Senqu Local Municipality.

Despite their set up, ward committees have proven to still have challenges as shown in the literature review and from the data collected, and these need to be addressed for effective public participation to happen. Although ward committees have been established to facilitate public participation, participation is still not at the level that it was anticipated it would be in. Some stakeholders still lack clarity on their mandate and are not sufficiently capacitated. This challenge has neither been addressed in detail by available literature on ward committees such as Buffalo City, Mamelodi and Nelson Mandela.

The study can conclude that although ward committees represent communities and should be consulted, they are excluded from decision making on issues affecting the communities. Despite ward committees being regarded as a mechanism for public participation, there is a gap between the principle and practice regarding their role. Lastly, political interference affects and compromises justification for their existence.

Local Democracy is also faced with a myriad of challenges from lacking principles to challenges on its implementation varying from budget constraints, poor communication and other challenges. The study also showed that public participation is an understood concept and expectations by municipal officials and ward committee members but the

issue came with the implementation as this has proved to be difficult due to other factors that were common between literature and all data as collected from the respondents.

The study shows that although the stakeholders are engaged in different platforms, they are not engaged meaningfully as per Arnstein's model, which can be seen as encouraging participation through active decision making that has full transparency, accountability and responsibility at the last stage of "citizen power" which gives citizens some level of power in that they are able to make decisions and have power in partnership and consensus can be reached on issues of common interest. They are engaged at the level of "tokenism" in the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969) where they are just given information at Izimbizos and other platforms. Ward committees in the study have proved to lack focus and clear roles and are sometimes misused as extensions of political parties. The study through the data collected revealed that ward committees have no decision-making power with no clear role and thus are unable to influence municipal councils and this was attested to by some of the respondents. The study deduces that if the ward committees followed the procedures that have been provided by the municipality for their operation, they could play a meaningful role in promoting public participation.

In this study, public participation has been reported to be negatively affected by many factors such as the bureaucracy as identified by some of the respondents in that it delays the response time during disaster management crises they face in the communities. Key challenges that were highlighted was the budget and communication across the board and this has greatly affected public participation in the municipality.

Another key finding was that of lacking capacity for both municipal officials and ward committee members to implement policies of public participation. Both officials and ward committees need continuous training and skilling in the area of local government and public participation. For ward committee members training is needed more due to their levels of literacy which affects their level of understanding of municipal documents such as the IDP and the budget.

The next and final section provides recommendations for the well-functioning of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. The recommendations are provided in



accord with the findings of the study in chapter four, the responses from the municipal officials and the ward committee focus group discussions on challenges of public participation as faced by the ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. The data collected revealed that the municipality is doing its best to promote and support the running of ward committees in the municipality but there are some hindrances experience by both the municipality and the ward committees.

### 6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made with the purpose of reinforcing the implementation of public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality:

1. Senqu Local Municipality lacks a public participation strategy that is working, this makes it difficult for ward committees to promote public participation even though they have undergone induction. The municipality must develop a public participation strategy that will coordinate public participation in Senqu.
2. More infrastructural and financial resources should be allocated to ward committees to encourage their contribution beyond the minimum duties. The municipality could, for example, consider increasing their stipend.
3. Establishment of a communication strategy to enhance communication between the community, ward committees and council. Clarity on procedures with regards reporting and feedback would ensure accountability. This will ensure that issues reported on are attended to and if not, reasons be provided to communities.
4. In addition to the induction for the ward committees, the municipality should develop a full training programme that is aimed at addressing gaps from the induction that they offer. This will empower ward committee members and improve their meaningful contribution to issues of IDP and the budget as they will be enlightened.
5. For the municipal officials responsible for public participation, the municipality should also develop a training programme for them to be educated on issues of local governance and public participation.

6. The municipality must take precaution against political influence on public participation processes in order to promote non biased participatory democracy.
7. Ward committees must be depoliticized so that community members participate freely with no political association fear.
8. The events must be held in the remote rural areas with proximity to the rural people.
9. Rural communities should be educated about their constitutional right to participate in the IDP formulation processes.

#### 6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- The study recommends that further studies examine how politics influence the implementation of public participation policies.
- The study recommends further studies to determine institutional barriers affecting participatory democracy in municipalities.
- The study recommends further studies on the opinions of citizens on public participation and service delivery.
- The study recommends studies on how municipalities can find means to expedite meaningful public participation in matters of the municipality holistically.
- The study recommends studies on how to avoid bureaucracies that affect public participation.
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#### 6.5. FINAL CONCLUSION

This study's focus was on the ward committees as mechanisms of public participation promoting local democracy. Constitutionally, government has provided legal frameworks supporting the establishment of ward committees as mechanisms to entrench participatory democracy at local government. Participatory governance encourages public participation characterised by the representation of communities in governance processes. Municipalities are thus constitutionally bound to enhance public participation and it is their responsibility to establish ward committees and enhance public participation. The study found that there were plenty of challenges that were hindering the effective

functioning of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality and these negatively affected the functioning of the ward committees. The study recommended strategic recommendations for the municipality to deal with the challenges encountered.

The study further realised that it was imperative that ward committees be involved in the decision making processes of the municipality so as to bridge the communication gap amid the municipality and the communities that they represent, as well as ensuring that major issues raised by the community reach the agenda of the council. Ward committees, as conduits of vital information from community to municipal council, are a vital catalyst to facilitate public participation as well as promote local democracy.

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## ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE (Officials)

### RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THE SENQU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

#### SENIOR OFFICIALS THEMES & QUESTIONS

##### **Theme 1: Local Democracy**

**Q1:** Democracy is an important concept in South Africa and the principles thereof need to be upheld by all spheres of government. Has the Senqu Council been able to uphold the principles of democracy in local government?

- Motivate how.

**Q2:** In your opinion, what are the challenges associated with effective local democracy in the local government sphere?

- Particularly for Senqu Local Municipality.

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##### **Theme 2: Public participation**

**Q1:** What comes to mind when you think about the concept “Public participation”?

**Q2:** Has public participation helped to enhance local democracy in Senqu Council’s area of jurisdiction?

**Q3:** Do you think the community of Senqu Council understand public participation, i.e. their roles and responsibilities?

**Q4:** Is there a need for training/retraining and skilling/reskilling of municipal officials to improve the level of public participation within the municipality?

**Q5:** Please explain the different kinds of mechanisms used to encourage public participation in the Senqu Local municipality.

**Q6:** IGR Forums are structures to improve a place for discussion and consultation on areas requiring cooperation between government spheres. Is Senqu Local Municipality partaking in such a forum and how has this assisted the promotion of public participation?

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**Theme 3: Ward Committee functioning**

**Q1:** Ward committees are the primary mechanisms to enhance public participation in the Senqu Council's area of jurisdiction. In your opinion, have ward committees been an asset or a liability towards the municipality's community development? i.e. are they lacking; improving; good; bad; or not good at all?

**Q2:** Are the ward committees representative of the diverse community, i.e. women, youth, disabled, etc? How would you describe the composition of ward committees?

**Q3:** Are ward committees knowledgeable when it comes to local government legislation and council by-laws?

**Q4:** in your opinion, what would you say are some of the challenges facing the effective functioning of ward committees in the Senqu Council?

**Q5:** Are you aware of any complaints from communities regarding the effective functioning and meaningful contribution of ward committees?

**Q6:** What support do ward committees receive from the Senqu Local Municipality and / or the Office of the Speaker?

**Q7:** Where does Council stand in terms of ward committees remuneration?

**Q8:** Is there lack of professional participation in ward committees due to it functioning on a voluntary basis?

**Q9:** Have you seen any improvements in service delivery as a result of effective functioning of ward committees?

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## ANNEXURE B: QUESTIONNAIRE (Focus Group Discussions)

### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The following personal information is necessary for statistical purposes only as well as to summarise the conclusion of the study in a proper manner and to reflect the opinions of a diverse group of people involved in the effective functioning of ward committees within the municipal boundaries of the Senqu Local Municipality.

Please indicate with a cross (X) the following general questions in the appropriate box

<b>A. 1 Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>		
<b>A.2 Age</b>	<b>21-30</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>51-60</b>	<b>61+</b>
<b>A.3 Education Level</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>B Degree</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>	
<b>A.4 Experience in ward committees</b>	<b>0 – 1 yr</b>	<b>2 – 5 yrs</b>	<b>6 – 10 yrs</b>	<b>11 – 15yrs</b>	<b>16-20 yrs</b>

### SECTION B: FOCUS GROUP THEMES AND QUESTIONS

This section investigates the effective functioning of ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality. The purpose of the questions is to determine the extent to which you, as a member of a particular ward committee execute your responsibilities in order to ensure the promotion of local democracy.

Please provide concise, to the point and where necessary, detailed answers with regards to the questions listed below:

**NB:** Please note that the questions may take approximately an hour to complete.

Thank you, once more, for availing yourself in participating in this research.

## **WARD COMMITTEE (FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW) QUESTIONS**

**Q1.** Are you familiar with the functions and responsibilities of ward committees?

**Q2.** Do you see the necessity of well-functioning ward committees within the municipality?

**Q3.** Does the municipality:

- Consider the inputs from ward committees?
- Involve ward committees in the IDP and budgeting process?

**Q4.** Are ward committees representative and inclusive of the diverse community, e.g. youth, women, disable, elderly, etc.?

**Q5.** What issues do ward committees deal with? E.g, crime, sanitation, etc.

- How do you decide which issues to deal with first and why?

**Q6.** In your view, do ward committee members make a meaningful contribution in the resolutions of council?

**Q7.** How often do you meet as ward committees?

- Is there an Agenda compiled for every meeting?
- Does the chairperson (Councillor) attend meetings regularly?

**Q8.** What challenges are ward committees faced with?

**Q9.** Mention significant successes achieved by means of effective functioning of ward committees.

## ANNEXURE C: Participation information sheet: Semi-structured interviews

### Participant Information Sheet



Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Pinky Gqweta and I am a Masters student in the School of Governance at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating **Public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality, Eastern Cape**. The aim of this research project is to find out what public participation challenges there are in the municipality in order to assist in the development and implementation of appropriate policies focused on the ward committee efficient functioning.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This activity will involve yourself answering a few questions and it will take around 30 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will remain completely confidential as the information you provide will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge or at a minimum cost.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408.

Yours sincerely,

Pinky Gqweta

Pinky Gqweta, [pinkygqweta@gmail.com](mailto:pinkygqweta@gmail.com), 082 896 5661

Dr Ivor Sarakinsky, [ivor.sarakinsky@wits.ac.za](mailto:ivor.sarakinsky@wits.ac.za)

## ANNEXURE D: Participation information sheet: Focus Group Discussions

### Participant Information Sheet



Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Pinky Gqweta and I am a Masters student in the School of Governance at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating **Public participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality, Eastern Cape**. The aim of this research project is to find out what public participation challenges there are in the municipality in order to assist in the development and implementation of appropriate policies focused on the ward committee efficient functioning.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in the focus group discussions. This activity will involve yourself, as part of a group, answering a few questions and it will take around 1 hour. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The discussions will remain completely confidential as the information you provide will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge or at a minimum cost.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408.

Yours sincerely,

Pinky Gqweta

Pinky Gqweta, [pinkygqweta@gmail.com](mailto:pinkygqweta@gmail.com), 082 896 5661

Dr Ivor Sarakinsky, [ivor.sarakinsky@wits.ac.za](mailto:ivor.sarakinsky@wits.ac.za)

## ANNEXURE E: Participant consent form

### Participation Consent Form



Title of research project:

**Public Participation challenges facing ward committees in the Senqu Local Municipality**

Name/s of principal researcher/s: Masabbatha Judith Gqweta (Pinky)

Telephone: 082 896 5661

Email: [pinkygqweta@gmail.com](mailto:pinkygqweta@gmail.com)

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of the research: The research takes the form of an interview/ focus group discussion.

Participant's involvement: Responses on the prepared questions.

What's involved?

Risks: None

Benefits: Better understanding of the challenges that are facing ward committees in the Senqu Local municipality.

I acknowledge the following:

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form or was read the form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition that my privacy is respected, subject to the following:
  - I understand that my personal details will not / may be included in the research / will be used in aggregate form only, so that I will not be personally identifiable (delete as applicable.)
  - I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
  - I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.

Signature of Participant / Guardian (if under 18): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person who sought consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person who sought consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management  
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

**Letter of Introduction**

**4 February 2019**



The Municipal Manager  
Senqu Local Municipality  
Sterkspruit

Dear Sir

My name is Pinky Gqweta and I am Masters student in Public & Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at the Wits School of Governance. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating public participation in the Senqu Local Municipality. The aim of this research project is to find out if public participation through Ward Committees promotes service delivery and development in the municipality.

I am writing to you to request for permission to conduct the research in the municipality. The municipality has been selected because of easy access for me. If permitted, going forward I would like to invite you to take part in an interview, as well as officials who are responsible for the public participation within the municipality. I would also like to conduct Focus Group Discussions with Ward Council members, the prerogative may be yours on which ones to engage with.

If permitted, I will prepare all the necessary documents for all participants and further details will be provided. Participants will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study and there are no disadvantages or penalties for participating.

Please note that the research is still at proposal stage, this might take 2 months or so and I might be conducting the actual research in the second quarter of the year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Pinky Gqweta", written over a horizontal line.

Pinky Gqweta

Researcher, [pinkygqweta@gmail.com](mailto:pinkygqweta@gmail.com); 082 896 5661

Date: 04/02/2019