



**Access to information for community participation to enhance service
delivery in uMshwathi Local Municipality**

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Ralph Mafezwe Khanyile**, declare that:

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God bless you all for your support.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all my late family members: my father, Dennis Mpa Khanyile (*Isalukazi soMziki*), mother, Sarah MaMnyandu Khanyile, sister, Nikeziwe Khanyile, and brother, Mzovukile Khanyile. I honestly felt your support and motivation during this research; may all your souls rest in peace.

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, access to information, and community participation in local government matters during the Apartheid era, was reserved for the White minority, with all other races excluded. This was owing to the Apartheid laws that only catered for the White minority, while denying most inhabitants of the country, including Indians, Coloureds, and Blacks, their political rights and participation in their own governance. At the end of Apartheid in the 90s, the newly elected democratic government implemented policies whose purpose was to redress the imbalances of the past, with community access to public information amongst the new policies. Even with the new policies which are meant to ensure that communities have access to information, there are still wide gaps that have resulted in endless service-delivery complaints. Such complaints sometimes lead to service-delivery protests, especially at local government level. On closer inspection, these protests and complaints are seen to be a result of lack of information, caused either by insufficient information being provided to members of the public regarding public services, or not being provided at all, and or lack of community participation in decision-making by the municipality regarding public services. This study explores the complexities of access to information that ensure communities within uMshwathi Local Municipality can express their views on the municipal services they receive. The study adopted a qualitative research design. Through this research design, data was collected per interviews and focus group discussions, evaluating the data to achieve a thematic analysis. This study found that technology is key to providing information, while community structures for providing information are weak. There are politics in providing/sharing information about public services; and attention to community concerns is lacking. The cascading of information to the public is politicised, while it is also delayed and outdated. The interaction between ward committees, community members, the elected councillors, and municipal officials is complex, while being challenged by finger-pointing and playing the 'blame game'. The blame game is mostly about who is responsible for ensuring that members of the community have access to municipal information apropos of public services. Finally, the complaints-management system is egregious, and there is a need for training of ward committees, such being lacking.

Keywords: Community Participation, Service Delivery, Local Government, Protests, Umshwathi Local Municipality, Information.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBO:	Community-based Organisation
COGTA:	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DPSA:	Department of Public Service and Administration
FG:	Focus Group
ICASA:	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
IDP:	Integrated Development Plan
NGO:	Non-governmental Organisation
RRTF:	Rural Road Transport Forum
SALGA:	South African Local Government Association
SOCITM:	Society of Information Technology Managers
USA:	United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

As the government closest to the people (Thornhill, 1995), local government in the Republic of South Africa has a responsibility to provide basic services, such as water and sanitation, electricity, and access roads. It therefore becomes important to ensure that the views of the people who receive such services are heard, especially in the Republic of South Africa, because of its past, and its current constitution and Bill of Rights. When reflecting on the country's history prior to 1994, one of the most burdensome problems during the Apartheid era was that the majority of the citizens in the country were simply expected to receive services. This was instead of participating in decisions on the services they received or would receive (Mathekga and Buccus, 2006). The 2004-2009 third democratic parliament of the country was characterised by a strong move towards public participation, as well as strengthening oversight of government functions (Booyesen, 2009).

Public participation is legislated in Section 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. The expectation is that the public service, including the local sphere of government, should consult all sectors of its community on services being offered or about to be rendered. This is also supported by the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997), wherein the first of the eight principles of *Batho Pele* is 'consultation'. According to this principle, the views of communities are to be sourced on the nature of services being provided, as well as on the quality of such services (Booyesen, 2009).

The Republic of South Africa, here onwards referred to as South Africa, is a unitary state, according to the Constitution (1996), with uMshwathi Local Municipality one of the local municipalities in the country. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the municipality, like its counterparts, is governed by the same legislation that enshrines public participation. It is therefore important that the municipality comply with all legislated requirements of public participation and access to information by communities within their constituency, hence service recipients/customers.

Smith (2009), on the one hand, defines public participation as an engagement with a few or more citizens either represented by a structure, or who present themselves for public participation. Public participation may vary between highly and non-capacitated public institutions (Smith, 2009). On the other hand, Wight (1997) states that countries usually find themselves under tremendous pressure to ensure that everyone participates in democracy, beyond regularly termed elections. This study was aimed at exploring the impact of access to information on community participation in uMshwathi Local Municipality.

1.2 Problem Statement

Rural municipalities are faced with many challenges when it comes to public participation; such as illiteracy, finances for travelling to consultation processes, as well as access to technology (Mogaladi, 2007; Kanyane, 2014). This is also supported by Tshoose (2015), who adds that the situation is compounded by public officials who sometimes act as gate-keepers of public information. The basic policy of public participation in South Africa is enshrined in the 1996 Constitution of the country, which ensures a directed approach towards an improved public participatory programme. The Constitution of the country entrenches democracy by way of participation of members of the public within the public service. Meyer and Theron (2000) and Vivier, Seabe, Wentzel and Sanchez (2015) define such as a process of involving members of the public when decisions are to be made by the public service; attending to the role that the public plays in the evaluation of government programmes.

Just as in most municipalities of South Africa, uMshwathi Local Municipality has experienced several service-delivery protests that are as a result of “*a poor flow of information from the municipal council to the citizens on matters affecting them*” (Mtshali, 2016). The service-delivery protests in the Municipality unfortunately led to amongst other incidents, the torching of Municipal offices and vehicles, when the community of Ward Two of the Municipality was showing their dissatisfaction with their councillor (Mtshali, 2016).). In 2017, the community of Ward Three, also within uMshwathi Local Municipality, marched against the lack of service delivery in their area (Mtshali, 2016). The community of Mpolweni Mission (*an area within the Municipality*) also marched against lack of service delivery, and dissatisfaction with the ward councillor (Pieterse, 2016). Amongst the placards that were displayed during

both marches were those that pointed to lack of access to information, e.g., there was one placard that stated: “*Stop sharing municipal information only with your political friends*”, and “*What happened to Batho Pele?*” reported in a media publication (Pieterse, 2016).

Mtshali (2016) who conducted research investigating the use of ward committees as a means of public participation within the same uMshwathi Local Municipality. The researcher found that ward committee members believed that, at times, their roles were not being recognised; and that in most cases they were ignored by the Municipality. Ward committee members complained that they were not being provided with pertinent information regarding public services, whilst they were expected to be a conduit between the Municipality and the communities it should serve. Sometimes ward committee members, ironically, discovered that the communities had more information regarding public services than they did. This clearly indicates lack of information in a structure that is recognised in terms of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998.

A crucial element of sharing information is that, when there is an opportunity made available, for both the community and municipality to discuss and agree on a service-delivery issue (Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2005). The same findings were made by Matosse (2013) in a study on Ndwedwe Local Municipality, another rural municipality that failed to provide information to its community during their development of an Integrated Development Plan in 2013. This study also concluded that only two out of ten interviewees had received feedback or were invited to an information-sharing meeting with the Ndwedwe Local Municipality.

Whilst there is enough legislation that guides public participation within the South African local government, challenges associated with failure of public participation have resulted in service-delivery protests that have sometimes turned violent, such as in the case of uMshwathi Local Municipality. These protests continue to cost the public service millions if not billions of Rands in rebuilding public infrastructure with funds that could have been utilised elsewhere to improve service delivery to the very same communities.

Van Donk (2012) states that, while there are systems and processes in place to ensure that the public participates and has a say in their governance through public gatherings

(*izimbizo*) and integrated development planning (IDP), huge challenges still exist; usually resulting in service-delivery protests. This conclusion is supported by Allan and Hees (2008). Hence this study explores the impact of access to information on community participation within the uMshwathi Local Municipality.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

Access to information in South Africa is legislated by the Promotion to Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA) which enables people either to exercise or protect their rights; however, the enactment of the Act remains with implementation challenges (Peekhaus, 2014). In terms of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, municipalities are expected to secure community involvement in community-related municipal programmes. Municipalities are also encouraged to guarantee that local government is accountable to its citizens, through providing the public with the opportunity to have a say in how they are governed.

Legislated documents, such as a the White Paper on Local Government of 1998, the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, and the Local Government Municipal Services Act of 2000, all have the aim that public service, especially the local government, must involve public participation in government programmes. The public must have an opportunity to provide input into how local government functions. As a result, if public participation is not investigated within uMshwathi Local Municipality, service-delivery protests will continue, and service delivery will remain under threat.

One of the objectives of local government in South Africa, according to Chapter 7 (Seven) of the Constitution of 1996, is to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities, which includes community participation. In terms of Section 152 (1) (a) of the Constitution, all municipalities are expected to adopt community involvement in community-related municipal programmes. Municipalities are also encouraged to make local government accountable to its citizens.

1.4 Research Questions

The study will attempt to answer the following key questions:

- ✓ What systems are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information on uMshwathi Local Municipality?
- ✓ What is the extent of community participation systems' effectiveness in uMshwathi Local Municipality?
- ✓ What are the views of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive?
- ✓ What are the views of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- ✓ To assess the systems that are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information on uMshwathi Local Municipality,
- ✓ To examine the effectiveness of community participation systems within uMshwathi Local Municipality,
- ✓ To explore the opinions of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive, and
- ✓ To determine the perception of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Service-delivery protests with regard to South Africa's local government have become an almost daily occurrence. In most cases, there is a correlation between lack of information and these protests (South African Local Government/SALGA, 2018). The protests are most prevalent in rural areas, and are becoming more violent (Municipal IQ, 2018). Mchunu (2012) concluded that service-delivery protests in Khayelitsha (*an area in Cape Town*) result mostly from lack of knowledge and information. This is confirmed by Mathekga and Buccus (2006), as well as Van Donk (2012). Allan and Heese (2018) found that most of the service-delivery protests in urban areas are caused by lack of information.

This study can therefore assist local rural municipalities in understanding the complexities involved in access to information from municipal services, and how such could be resulting in protests, of which some become violent. Most importantly, the

study suggests how protests can be avoided before they have time to take place. The study can also help communities to be timeously informed about municipal services. Both rural and urban municipalities can develop better communication strategies, limiting spending of monies on infrastructure and properties destroyed during such protests.

1.7 Contribution of the Study

Service-delivery protests in South African local government have become an almost daily occurrence. In most cases there is a correlation between lack of information about municipal plans on services for different wards and these protests (SALGA, 2018). Protests are most prevalent in rural areas and are becoming more violent (Municipal IQ, 2018). Mchunu (2012) points to the service-delivery protests in an informal settlement as stemming mostly from lack of knowledge and information about the integrated development plans (IDPs) and related municipal plans on development. Such is also supported by Mathekga and Buccus (2006), as well as Van Donk (2012). Allan and Heese (2018) also point to service-delivery protests in urban areas being caused by lack of information disseminated to communities.

Service-delivery dissatisfaction is found within most local governments of South Africa. Hence, this study can help communities by pinpointing the intricacies of access to information and public participation. Specifically, the study findings can help predominantly rural municipalities develop better communication strategies enabling their communities to access municipal information. Pertinent strategies would limit the spending of monies on infrastructure and properties destroyed during such protests. This study, therefore, can assist local government in improving access to information regarding services offered by the municipality to its citizenry; and ensure that communities articulate the ways in which they seek to access municipal information. Through this study and its findings, it is also hoped that that more knowledge can be added to the field of Public Administration, specifically, the impact of access to information on enabling community participation in rural local government.

1.8 Study Site

This study took place within the uMshwathi Local Municipality in the following areas:

- Municipal offices, situated on 1 Main Road, New Hanover.

- Ward 02 in the town of New Hanover.
- Ward 03 in Efaye, just outside Fawnleas Village; and
- Ward 10 at Mpolweni Mission.

UMshwathi Local Municipality lies about 30 kilometres north of Pietermaritzburg. The municipality is one of seven local municipalities that constitute the Umgungundlovu District Municipality, the administrative capital of KwaZulu-Natal.

uMgungundlovu District Municipality








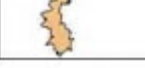

	Impendle Local Municipality		uMshwathi Local Municipality
	uMngeni Local Municipality		Msunduzi Local Municipality
	Mpofana Local Municipality		Mkhambathini Local Municipality
		Richmond Local Municipality	

Figure: 1.1 Map of uMgungundlovu District Municipality

Source:

https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/n2RU0aDdD80IpnQ7QBMIZBwB_N3-Kb4fDZRdABasaWnqfXMYrhxJX7c7RDwOnR65cGEGlb_YA_b5UL47Do0KUG5lv6PxK8I

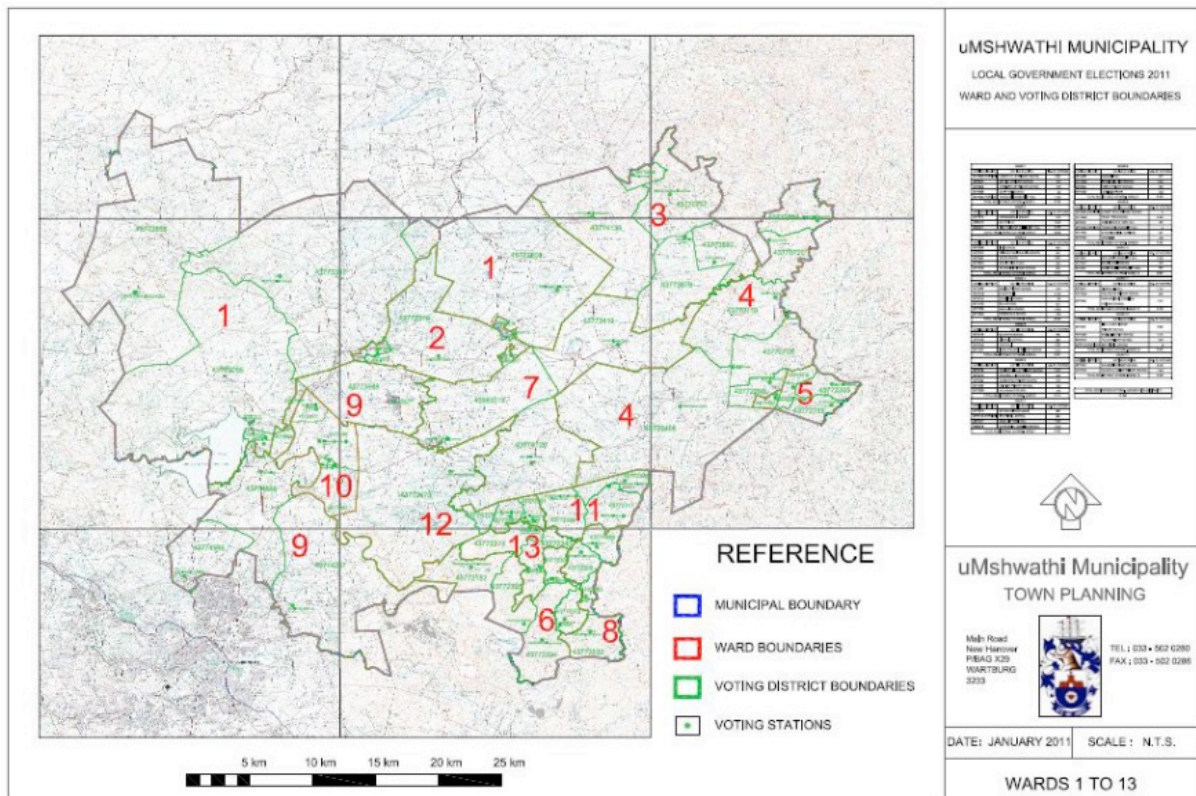


Figure: 1.2 Map of uMshwathi Local Municipality

Source: Umshwathi Local Municipality (2018)

1.9 Ethical Considerations

To comply with ethical considerations, all participants were asked to fill in consent forms, affirming their willingness to participate in the study (Teddli and Tashakori, 2009). The uMshwathi Local Municipality was the area of jurisdiction in which the research was conducted. Purposively sampled municipal staff and councillors participated in the study, together with community members. The researcher approached the Municipality for a gatekeeper's letter allowing access to and interaction with the participants: this was granted accordingly. The gatekeeper's letter was used to apply for ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC).

1.10 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of a study are defined as issues that may limit the researcher from achieving some of the intended activities during the research; such are normally issues outside of the researcher's control. Issues could include being unable to conduct

research in a wider area, possibly owing to the size and scope of the research (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

One of the limitations of this study was that not all the wards in uMshwathi Local Municipality were part of this research. Not all the community members in the identified wards could partake in the study (only those who were in the ward committees) because this would have been very costly and time consuming. Interviewing all the community members would have required vast resources not at the disposal of the researcher. The other foreseen limitation was that within rural municipalities, distances between wards are expansive. This required the researcher to travel long distances between the wards to conduct the interviews. For focus group discussions, this research also required that the researcher collect and return participants from and to their homes, which was costly and time consuming. However, this ensured the success of the research.

1.11 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 1: This chapter presents the introduction, as well as the background to the study. It provides reasons as well as the rationale for conducting the study. The problem statement, research questions, and objectives of the study, together with the significance of and contribution to the study, are also included. Ethical considerations and limitations conclude the chapter.

Chapter 2: This chapter discusses public and community participation globally, and presents the different systems used by various continents and countries to engage communities. The chapter also presents mechanisms suggested to enhance and enrich public and community participation in local government.

Chapter 3: This chapter presents the design of the research, in which all steps undertaken in the conducting of this study are presented. The study sample chosen, study site, tools used in the conducting of the research, data analysis, as well as data quality control, are presented.

Chapter 4: This chapter elucidates the findings and analysis from all participants, including the focus groups. The chapter scrutinises the views of the recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on how they access information from the municipality.

Chapter 5: This final chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations on identified gaps and contributions of the study. Areas for further research around the topic are also recommended.

1.12 Conclusion

It is hoped that through this research better and more efficient and effective communication systems and strategies will be found on how communities gain access to municipal information. This will go a long way towards creating an all-inclusive, jargon free, effective communication system so that communities understand the plans, processes, and systems of local government. It is also hoped that the number of challenges faced by local government in communities will be minimised, through providing timeous and effective information to the public.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the background, problem statement, research questions and objectives; the significance, and contribution to the study were also included together with the ethical considerations and limitations of this research. This chapter now reviews available and relevant literature on the topic, access to information on 'community' or 'public' participation, the terms used interchangeably. According to Creighton (2005), public participation and access to information is a process that affords members of the public 'a say' in how they are governed; their needs being considered when decisions on public-service delivery are made.

This chapter begins by defining the concept of public/community participation and what constitutes a 'system'. This is then followed by systems that ensure that communities have access to information vital for community participation, commenting on their efficacy, together with causes of ineffective access to information. The chapter reviews systems in selected South African municipalities and their advantages. Finally, the chapter discusses access to information and public/community participation deemed vital in/for community participation. The case of uMshwathi Local Municipality is presented, followed by the conceptual framework informing this study.

2.2 Defining Public and Community Participation

Scholars around the world all define public participation differently. In the northern hemisphere, such is referred to as public/community engagement (see Head, 2007; Driscoll, 2008; Dempsey, 2010; Herriman, 2011; Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014; Hickey, Reynolds and MacDonalds, 2015; Nabatchi, Ertinger and Leighninger, 2015; Haro-de-Rosario, Saez-Martin and del Carmen Caba-Perez, 2018; Christensen, 2018). For example, Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015) define public participation as a process by which the feelings and wishes of the people are considered by the public service, when decisions affecting the people are to be made. Masango (2002) defines public participation as a system in which government sends to and receives information from the public service, disseminating such to members of the community. This author

further states that, through public participation, the public service is able to respond to the needs of the community. Creighton (2005) posits that, for public participation to be effective, certain elements must be in place. Amongst others, these are: interaction between public servants and members of the public, public involvement, and their value placed on decisions taken by the public service.

The above definitions are confirmed by Slocum and Thomas-Slayter (1995), who describe public participation as a process used by individuals and the community at large to express their views to the public service on developments that will affect their own lives. Such views are succinctly expressed when communities have access to information related to the services rendered. The availability of information enables the public/communities either to accept, reject, or question services proffered them. Such makes access to information vital for community participation, which is a pillar of democracy, especially in democratic states such as South Africa, emerging from its dark past.

2.2.1 Conceptualising a ‘system’

Incoze (2014) defines a system as a combined set of steps or elements used to achieve a well-defined objective. In the context of community participation and this study, a system is a process by which municipalities are expected to ensure that communities are able to access public information.

2.3 Systems that ensure that communities have access to information

Walden, Roedler and Forsberg (2015) define a system as a combined set of components and subsystems intended to achieve a specific purpose. Ring (2016) defines a system as a process used to achieve a purpose. There are many different types of system used by municipalities to ensure that communities have access to their provided information (Ndinisa, 2017). These systems include, amongst others, council meetings that are open to the public, *izimbizo* (direct community-engagement programmes), face-to-face interviews, IDP meetings, and various other forums used to share information (Ndinisa, 2017).

The improvement in the use of technology has added another dimension to communication systems used by municipalities – the use of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp (Schwester, Carrizales and Holzer, 2009). Increasingly, our lives are influenced by technology. With the advent of the 4th Industrial Revolution, communication between individuals and communication through the internet has increased. The use of technology by the private sector to communicate with the community (*as customers*); as well as communication between the public sector and their customers, who are members of the general community, is on the rise. The increasing number of customers involved in the use of ICT has a huge impact on how we communicate and cascade information (Chung, 2017).

The remainder of this section reflects on the systems that offer communities access to information in selected countries around the world. The countries presented below provide a global glance at systems in other parts of the world, as well as within the African continent and in the Southern African development community (SADC) region. The available literature and the researcher's access to the available literature informed the review. Hence, the following countries were selected based on available information, which was also found to be relevant for this research.

2.3.1 The United Kingdom

The communication between citizens and the government in the United Kingdom (UK) is mostly through e-government. Up to 80% of this communication takes place between the citizens and local government (Society of Information Technology Managers/SOCITM, 2002). Local government in the UK, through their two-tier system of government, is responsible for the provision of local government services (SOCITM, 2002). In 1998 a White Paper was introduced to modernise local government, aimed at establishing an energetic partnership with citizens.

It was only in 2008 that local government realised that they had missed an important element of the community – the youth (Copus, Roberts and Wall, 2017). A special page was then added to their websites providing information to and communicating with young people Copus *et al.*, 2017. Hence, in the UK, while much is being done to improve community access to local government information through e-government, much more needs to be achieved in this area. Amongst other challenges is the lack of

understanding of information technology by management and councillors (Copus *et al.*, 2017). One of the most serious challenges again is that information being provided on these websites does not necessarily meet the expectations of the users in those municipalities. Websites post mostly soft copies of articles and brochures about government information (Copus *et al.*, 2017).

2.3.2 Australia

Soliman, Affisco, Shackleton, Fischer and Dawson (2006) assessed progress made by the Australian local government in Victoria on improving communication with communities, as well as providing services through e-government, as opposed to face-to-face contact. In this regard, Smyth, Reddel and Jones (2005) argue for local government in Australia to ensure that communities participate in the development of policies, achieving an inclusive government.

As part of this process, some of the researchers adopted an ethnographic strategy, spending ten months with the Victorian local government to gain first-hand information on how the Australian local government was improving communication with communities through e-government (Soliman *et al.*, 2006). These researchers concluded that, while central government is organised in terms of providing services through e-government, local government in Australia is occasionally not organised in terms of improving communication through e-government.

The National Constitution of Australia only recognises federal and state governments and not local government; however, the various states within the Australian national government do recognise local government (Grant and Drew, 2017). Amongst the many improvements with regard to access to local government information by members of the community was the introduction of the Government Bill Exposure Draft of 2018. This bill proposes clear scope and objectives for community engagements (Grant and Drew, 2017). Another Australian local government Act that supports the notion of public participation in Australia is the Victorian Local Government Act of 2019. This Act is aimed at increasing community participation in local government, giving communities more say in local government programmes in an effort to improve service delivery (Christensen, 2018). One of the challenges identified during the

review of the Victorian Local Government Act, however, was that issues of capacity would first need to be attended to before this Act can be reviewed (Savini and Grant, 2020).

Some of the challenges identified in the provision of information and public-participation processes were converted to positives (Bohnet, 2015). An example of this was the inclusion of non-technical community members in technical committees such as the Water Quality Improvement Plan, as part of availing access to information for the community (Bohnet, 2015). The gaps identified in the selection of community members resulted in local government providing basic training on related technical information. This action benefited both the community and their representatives on the committee (Bohnet, 2015).

2.3.3 The United States of America

Graham (2014) conducted a research on how local governments in the USA, through public information officers, and through social media, are providing information to their service recipients/constituencies. The findings of this research were that social media was effective in communicating with communities, especially the youth. Out of this research four themes emerged: dialogue was encouraged by this communication method; there was much engagement between local government in the USA and communities, more especially the youth; barriers to traditional communication such as formal face-to-face meetings were eliminated; and such communication was without constraints placed on community members (Graham, 2014).

The implementation of the E-Government Act of 2002 assisted a great deal in affording community members quick and easy access to information using technology (Bertot, Jaeger, Munson and Glaisyer, 2010). Graham (2014) concludes that the use of social media as a communication tool between local governments in the USA and their citizenry has encouraged two-way communication. This allows public information officers and the community to openly engage on many issues, including dealing with challenges and complaints from members of the community. This position is supported by Kent (2013), who also found that the use of social media encourages open and transparent democracy, through open communication. Jaeger and Bertot (2012) hold a similar view. These researchers concluded that, through the use of social media,

local governments have become more transparent. The researchers add that, through this medium, communities are updated, educated, and informed; and local government policies and processes are easily communicated, with queries about any of these immediately responded to.

2.3.4 India

Traditional communication between local government in India and the citizenry comes by way of citizens' charters, as well as community structures, such as community welfare (Bardhan, Mitra, Mookherjee and Sarkar, 2009). The researchers concluded that community participation in India is based on the needs of each particular community. Those with more pressing needs were found to be fully participating in local government programmes, whereas those with fewer needs had very little to no interest in accessing information on their own municipalities.

This finding is supported by research conducted in Indian schools across three Indian states after failure of the traditional meetings held in schools between teachers and parents. The research concluded that such meetings held in villages were much more successful and better attended than traditional meetings held in schools (Pandey, Goyal and Sundararaman, 2009). In an effort to improve access to information at all levels of government, the Indian government replaced the 2002 Freedom of Information Act with the Right to Information Act of 2005 (Laskar, 2019). This change was prompted by the Indian government's willingness to give citizens a right to access and provision of timeous and relevant information.

2.3.5 New Zealand

The legal framework that guides access to information in New Zealand's local government is the Resource Management Act of 1991 and the Local Government Act of 1992 (Cheyne, 2015). In 2009, the government decided to review the Local Government Act of 1992. This was based solely on the need for better and improved consultation with communities within the local sphere of government (Cheyne, 2015). In the early 2000s, Cullen, O'Connor and Veritt (2003) carried out an analysis of all available local government websites in New Zealand. The researchers discovered that, of 90% of users who went onto local government websites seeking desired information, less than 45% actually found what they were looking for. The researchers

concluded that these local government structures were not effective in using websites to communicate and provide relevant information to the people within their areas of jurisdiction. The researchers also found that the same websites did not cater for people with disabilities. Disabled people were therefore unable to receive information posted on relevant websites. Making websites disabled-friendly includes, amongst others, voice responses, clicks, and alt tags.

Amongst the challenges of access to information in local government, Curtin, McConnachie, Sommer and Vis-Sommer (2002) found that most of the same websites posted brochures (electronic), as opposed to providing relevant information to customers. The researchers also found that local government in New Zealand only provided 33% of information on services they provide compared to 66% of information provided by central government.

2.3.6 Zambia

Zambia has, over the years, been trying to improve local government communication and access to information for its citizenry (Chikulo, 2009). Seeking to improve communication and access to local government information, the Zambian government established committees responsible for ward development, as well as village productivity committees. These committees served as a link and two-way communication between the local government, the councillor, and the community members in each of the wards (Chikulo, 2009).

This system was, however, changed during the period 1980-1990, when the Zambian government introduced a "One Party Participatory Democracy". According to Chikulo (1985), such gave powers to one party to do everything at all levels of government, under President Kaunda. This period led to all aspects of local government communication being politicized. People struggled to access government information. All communication and public participation was limited to those who were politically active. Needless to say, this system failed and was done away in 1990, making way for a new communication system granting everyone access to government information (Chikulo, 1985). To date, the system of local government in Zambia allows for democratically elected councils. However, challenges associated with finances have

resulted in access to information and communication suffering, leaving communities frustrated (Crook and Manor, 2001).

Munyinda and Habasonda (2013) conducted a study on access to information in Zambia. These researchers concluded that, amongst the challenges faced by communities, is the attitude of both public servants and politicians. Members of the public seem to be at the mercy of both politicians and technocrats when it comes to access to information. Another problem for communities in accessing local government information is that policies such as the Local Government Act 6 of 2010 are developed and facilitated by national government (Munyinda and Habasonda, 2013). Community members have no say whatsoever in any role played in terms of access to information at local government level (Munyinda and Habasonda, 2013).

2.3.7 Nigeria

Nigeria, as with most countries, has put systems in place to deliver local government services. For this to happen, Zanna (2015) asserts that there is a need for communities to be part of the decision-making process for delivery of services to be a success. Local government in Nigeria falls under the Department of Personnel. This department works hand in hand with the Local Government Services Commission (Zanna, 2015). This system employs elected councillors and is the only representation that community members have in local government. Communities have subsequently been unable to access information on municipal programmes, owing to information being made available only at political gatherings (Eniayejuni and Evcan, 2015). Amongst the scholars who have made findings of political interference that has crippled access to information by members of the public in local government in Nigeria, are Adeyemi (2013), Idike (2016), and Osuebi, Nwachukwu, Arinze and Nnadi (2019).

Venter (2007) stresses the importance of political public representatives to keep constant communication with people who voted them into local government structures. This helps to avoid lack of communication and improves the provision of timeous information to the people (Venter, 2007). This also allows people an opportunity to participate in their own governance through open communication and consultation. Section 8(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Republic of Nigeria recognised local

government, authorising all communities including those in the rural areas, to be given priority of access to information (Wilson, 2013).

Ahmad (2013) concluded that the local government system in Nigeria has failed to provide steady access to information for community members. Community members are frustrated by lack of information; the situation has been worsened by endless corruption associated with local government in Nigeria (Ahmad, 2013). Unfortunately, Section 8(3) of the 199 Constitution of the Republic of Nigeria was abused by state governments in Nigeria. Many local governments were created simply to obtain funds. This jettisoned the intention of ascertaining access to local government information (Iwilade, 2012).

2.3.8 Libya

Long after the demise of former leader of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, in 2011, Libya remains a sharply divided country in which political fallouts, wars, divisions, and uncertainty, together with volatility, are the order of the day (Mikail, 2014). Democracy requires that all within a country follow the rule of law in that particular country; unfortunately this is not the situation in Libya (Randall, 2015).

The failure of democracy in Libya during the Gaddhafi era, meant that even people at local government did not have access to information on projects, programmes, and plans; leaving people thwarted (Randall, 2015). According to Geha and Volpi (2016), there have been some major changes in this regard. During the 2012-2013 period more and more community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and ordinary members of the community, were encouraged to participate in the drafting of the Constitution.

One of the legislations that dealt access to information a serious blow in Libya was the Interim National Transitional Council-adopted law No. 59 of 2012 (Sawani and Pack, 2013). Whilst this piece of legislation ensured that municipalities fell under the Ministry of Local Governance, some politicians have abused the system (Sawani and Pack, 2013). Powerful politicians have militarised the local government system, thus limiting communication between local government and communities (Sawani and Pack, 2013). Members of the army have taken over the local government responsibilities in

some municipalities, to the detriment of public participation (Richtarechova, Aoun and de Wilde, 2016).

2.3.9 Eswatini (Swaziland)

The applicable legislation for ensuring access to information at local government in Eswatini is the Urban Government Act, No.6 (S56) (Mkhonta, 2007). Eswatini is an absolute monarchy under King Mswati, who holds all supreme legislative, executive, and judicial powers, including decisions on public participation and access to information (Mthembu, 2018). One way utilised by local government in Eswatini of cascading information to members of the public is through *Tinkundla*, a siSwati word meaning “*name of the platform*” (Mkhonta, 2007). This platform is chaired by the local headman, who is elected by the local community. One of the many responsibilities of *Tinkundla* is to identify community projects and programmes as part of local government public participation and access to information (Sihlongonyane and Simelane, 2017).

This system, however, is on the brink of collapse, owing to many challenges. Such includes unclear roles and mandates of this structure, overlapping responsibilities between local councillors and the *Tinkundla* structures, lack of financial resources, as well as political instability in local government in Eswatini (Mkhonta, 2007).

Mthembu (2018) states that another platform used by the monarchy is *Sibaya* (cattle kraal). This platform is convened by King Mswati to discuss relevant issues affecting members of the community within the country. This platform was intended for men only; however, lately, women have been allowed to participate. Female participation on this platform is nonetheless strictly limited. One of the many criticisms of *Sibaya* is that, while it is a platform on which to access information about local government, participants are only expected to make submissions for consideration by the King (Mthembu, 2018). Romzek and Dubnick (1987) state clearly that, for any local government to be effective, communities must have access to reliable and timeous information, and justification for, as well as accountability for information that is provided to citizens. This is clearly a challenge in Eswatini.

2.3.10 Namibia

Namibia, a country neighbouring South Africa, and generally acknowledged as that which was 'administered' by Apartheid South Africa post World War Two, uses social media, as in the USA, as a tool. Charalabidis and Loukis (2011) assert that social media as a communication tool between communities and all levels of government is indeed a useful tool. However, the researchers insist on the importance of government officials managing such to have a thorough knowledge of social media. This is also supported by Landsbergen (2010), who adds that, for use of social media to be a success, government officials must provide instant, correct, and reliable information and feedback.

The Namibian local government, as with other governments in Southern Africa, uses social media to communicate with their citizens. A recent study found numerous challenges with the use of social media in Namibia (Maritz, 2015). It was found that, even though social media provides effective communication of their programmes, and policies, and general communication with citizens, local government has failed to utilise such effectively for the benefit of their people. Chief amongst the reasons for this failure is the lack of applicable policies to guide such, coupled with lack of trained local government staff to manage social media communication in Namibia (Matali, 2017). One of the gravest challenges with information retrieval is that the Constitution of Namibia is silent on access to information by its citizenry (Nakuta and Mnubi-Mchombu, 2015). This is supported by findings of a study conducted in Namibian local government. The conclusion is that formal platforms for communities to access government information are absent – information is only provided per kind favour of public servants (Nakuta, 2013).

2.3.11 Summary

Information is a critical driver of development through knowledge; however, it is only significant when we are able to retrieve it (Jacob and Herselman, 2006). While the communication platforms play an important role in providing information on public services, the public service itself has to make systems available which provide communities with direct access to relevant information (Hughes, Hughes, Black and Kaldor, 2007). Booher and Innes (2002) argue that such community participation systems must deliver collaboration and inclusiveness; and must be reactive.

2.4 Systems that ensure that Communities have Access to Information in Selected Municipalities in South Africa

2.4.1 (i) City of Cape Town (Province of Western Cape)

One of the systems used by the City of Cape Town to communicate and provide information to members of the community is ward committees. Smith (2012) states that, although ward committees are in place, the City of Cape Town does not have an effective system of guiding and supporting these ward committees. Challenges such as lack of resources for ward committees as well as inadequate training provided to ward councillors contribute largely to the ineffectiveness of these ward committees (Smith, 2012). Smith (2012) suggests that for access to information to be a reality, there needs to be a change in policies guiding ward committees. This is because ward committees are only allowed to make recommendations to the ward councillor; municipalities have a bigger say.

Bob (2018) conducted a study in the City of Cape Town, in the Makhaza area, on public consultation on a municipal project that delivered public toilets. The researchers found that, while the municipality does have public-participation structures and policies, all members of the communities who participated in the study indicated that they were never consulted. The community was simply told about the toilets to be delivered to them.

One of the important findings of this research is that, even though there was consultation between the municipality and the community representatives, the information was not cascaded down to members of the community. This points to the ineffectiveness of community representatives. Such representatives should forward information to their constituencies about decisions taken by the council on programmes and projects within the City of Cape Town. Representatives were rejected by communities who had nominated them to their positions. This led to public protests that eventually resulted in the much publicised 'poo protests' which community members viewed as highlighting lack of consultation by the City of Cape Town (Conradie, 2014).

Having understood challenges associated with access to information, the Western Cape provincial government introduced the First Thursdays concept to improve public participation and access to information (Western Cape Provincial Government, 2019). First Thursdays is a meeting that takes place on every first Thursday afternoon of the month at which the premier and all MECs meet members of the public. There are no specific agenda items for these meetings; however, community members can engage in any of the issues on access to information. The MEC for local government and the mayor of the City of Cape Town also attend, to engage community members on issues affecting wards within the city (Western Cape Provincial Government, 2019).

2.4.1 (ii) EThekwini Municipality (Province of KwaZulu-Natal)

This is one of the many municipalities that fails to consult communities during the implementation of programmes and projects. Lesia (2011) found that, even though this municipality has policies on community consultation, such are not implemented accordingly. In a study on the renaming of the streets of KwaMashu, the researcher found that communities were never consulted on this idea; the community members were simply informed of the *fait accompli* at public meetings (Lesia, 2011). This study found that not even the local councillor had been consulted on the renaming of these streets; rather, the councillor had simply been apprised of the *fait accompli*.

Nzimakwe (2010) states that eThekwini Municipality has a well-documented system of consulting customers through ward committees. However, there are many challenges with public consultation within the municipality. These challenges include, amongst others, lack of public participation in consultation meetings (Nzimakwe, 2010). This situation is also compounded by lack of understanding of the role of ward committee members by members of these ward committees. Capacity-building for ward committee members is another challenge faced by eThekwini Municipality and members of ward committees, in general (Nzimakwe, 2010). This finding is supported by Reddy and Maharaj (2008) in Saito (2008), who add that ward committee members do not seem to have a clear understanding of local governance systems.

According to Xhakaza (2019) the situation in Ethekwini Municipality has still not changed. An assessment conducted at the KwaDabeka housing sector plan on

whether the community of KwaDabeka was consulted or not concluded that this community had not been consulted about this (Xhakaza 2019).

2.4.1 (iii) Mtubatuba Local Municipality (Province of KwaZulu-Natal)

This local municipality, based within the uMkhanyakude District Municipality in northern KwaZulu-Natal, went through the process of renaming St Lucia Wetland Park the Isimangaliso Wetland Park (Xaba, 2009). Xaba (2009) found that, while the mayor and a representative of Mtubatuba Local Municipality had claimed to have consulted widely locally, this was not the case. All those who participated in the study disputed this, saying none of the communities was consulted. This assertion was even supported by the local councillor who elaborated that the municipality does not consult on such matters (Xaba, 2009). The IDP of Mtubatuba Local Municipality (2021) indicate that there are still serious challenges with the communities being able to access municipal information. According to information on this IDP the municipality is not adhering to programmes like *Batho Pele* (People First) as well as minimum community participation in IDP roadshows as a result of the municipality not implementing its communication strategy (Mtubatuba Local Municipality IDP, 2021).

2.4.1 (iv) Ndwedwe Municipality (Province of KwaZulu-Natal)

A study conducted by Matosse (2013) on community participation in the development of integrated development plan (IDP) processes of Ndwedwe Municipality, found that, albeit there are clear policies and processes within the municipality, the implementation was dubious. Systems used by the municipality to invite communities to attend such meetings are so questionable that one of these meetings was attended by only seven people (Matosse, 2013). Community members who participated complained that the ward committees do not represent the various sectors of their communities in these two wards (Matosse, 2013). The difficult language and terminology, as well as the 'thick documents' used in IDP documents, make it difficult for illiterate communities to attend any meetings (Matosse, 2013).

The IDP of Ndwedwe Local Municipality (2021) points to the failure of the municipality to ensure that public participation is implemented by the municipality and this clearly shows that the status quo still remains. According to this IDP the municipality will be embarking on a programme to ensure that structures responsible for public

participation are constituted and monitored for effectiveness (Ndwedwe Local Municipality IDP, 2021).

2.4.2 Summary

This section provided information on the wide-ranging systems used by selected municipalities in South Africa to promote access to information for communities. Despite all these municipalities having challenges with the systems they use, the City of Cape Town was able to identify these problems. This municipality addressed the problems in order to ease the frustration of community members not afforded regular opportunities of airing their views with the political leadership.

Based on the information presented above on selected South African municipalities, it must be concluded that there are no clear systems in place to ensure that communities have access to information for effective public-participation purposes.

Having effective systems such as timeous, well publicised meetings, as well as updated websites with relevant information giving communities access to municipal information is an important element of the local government public administration Municipal Systems Act of 2000. According to Smith (2009), effective communication systems may involve individuals, community representatives, or communities themselves. Effective communication systems may be direct or indirect, either participating directly, or through technology.

2.5 The effectiveness of community participation systems

This section will provide an insight into effective systems in selected countries that provide communities with access to information. Thomas (1993) defines effective participation as applying correct methods that are suitable and in sync with the intended public-participation outcome. The level of trust by communities in the local sphere of government will be improved through effective communication of their programmes, plans, and projects (Berner, Amos and Morse, 2011). This assertion is supported by Wang and Breyer (2013), who add that, through effective communication, municipalities are able to drum up community support for their government. The downside is that, when there is great support, government has to spend more to provide for the demands of increased support; for example, more human and financial resources are needed (Callahan, 2007). The following countries

were selected based on available literature and the researcher's access to the publications found relevant for this research.

2.5.1 The United Kingdom

Andrews, Cowell, Downe, Martin and Turner (2008) argue very strongly that effective local councils are those that have invested both in human and financial resources, in providing useful, friendly, and effective information to their citizens. This is also supported by Lowndes and Sullivan (2004), who state that the civil service must take appropriate steps in building internal capacity for effective consultation. This would replace an assumption that what they have is sufficient, no further efforts to improve internal capacity being needed. Andrews *et al.* (2008) conclude by arguing for all local government to show some form of appreciation to those community members who participate and contribute during public-participation processes at local government. These researchers say that this will help promote public-participation processes within communities, for pertinent and meaningful public participation.

The United Kingdom has put in place a system allowing communities to participate in government activities. At the core of this system are the *what? how? and who?* questions (Chilvers and Kearnes, 2016). The ability to respond to *what* is to be engaged on; and *how* members of the community will access information helps to answer the *who* – who are the right and relevant people to participate in and access information (Chilvers and Kearnes, 2016).

One of the other reasons for access to information being sacrosanct in the UK is that, in local government, there are clear policies in place seeking community participation (McKenna, 2011). Legislation that ensures that communities have access to local government information includes Bills such as: The White Paper Communities in Control; and Real People – Real Power and Economic Development & Construction.

Newman, Barnes and Sullivan (2004) add that the UK has also developed other systems, such as effective community structures ensuring that communities may access information at local government. These included youth committees, area-based forums, as well as panels for users of different services offered by municipalities (Newman, Barnes and Sullivan, 2004).

2.5.2 India

Johnson (2011) conducted a study on the effectiveness of community participation in India. The researchers found that key to the success of participation systems was developing new ways of a community approach to participation. The new approach included identifying leaders in communities to fight for the needs of the community, skilling them, and providing sufficient resources for their participation. A community plan was then developed for the participation of other members of the community.

This plan has six stages of community organising, which are: conducting an assessment of the community, putting together an action team, developing the action plan, mobilising to action the plan, implementing, and monitoring the plan. This plan has been effective in making community participation in India a success (Emmanuel, 2011).

Other successes of the Indian government with regard to access to information are, for example, in the mitigation, planning, and assessment of hydro-projects (Diduck, Pratap, Sinclair and Deane, 2013). The government has also warranted that the public participate fully through Section 16 of the Conservation and Management Rules (Diduck, Pratap, Sinclair and Deane, 2013). One other platform used by the Indian government is the e-participation of community members through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Alathur, Ilavarasan and Gupta, 2014). This is also supported by (Reddick, 2011), who states that the use of e-participation tools and guidelines by the Indian government has helped increase access to information. Through the use of e-government and e-participation, the Indian government has seen public participation increase; more people now have access to relevant and timeous information (Reddick, 2011).

2.5.3 Cameroon

In Cameroon, rural councils have very few to no sources for additional income for funding programmes such as public participation. This is compounded by the high illiteracy rate in that country (Njoh, 2011). Such has had a negative impact on how communities are provided access to information, English and French being the most commonly used languages in that country (Jean and Laure, 2018). Furthermore,

according to Njoh (2011), community members who speak the indigenous languages of Cameroon, find themselves alienated when it comes to information provided by local councils. The situation is aggravated in that women, who constitute 52% of the population of Cameroon, hardly participate in public-participation activities. This has rendered public participation in that country ineffective.

2.5.4 Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, a country once considered the breadbasket of Africa, is currently facing dire economic status, this having a parlous effect on socio-economic development. However, according to Chikerema (2013), local government systems in Zimbabwe allow for effective public participation. Researchers have identified public hearings, civil society organisations, as well as consultative forums as affording local communities an opportunity to engage freely with local government/municipalities. Non-governmental organisations also play a pivotal role in allowing local community members to be active in public-participation programmes initiated by local municipalities in Zimbabwe (Shava and Thakathi, 2016). This ensures effective public participation and access to information. However, Masvaure (2016) disagrees about public participation in the city of Harare, Zimbabwe. The researcher states that public participation in that city is totally ineffective because opportunities for public participation are not made available. The result of this is lack of transparency, leading to ineffective public participation between residents and the city of Harare (Masvaure, 2016).

2.5.5 The effectiveness of community participation systems in South Africa

Rowe and Frewer (2004) define effective participation as a successful end result of an engagement with members of the public. Evaluating the effectiveness of community participation is not easy. However, researchers who want to evaluate this can participate in public-participation exercises, monitoring and engaging the participants on their perceptions of public participation (Laurian and Shaw, 2009).

There are various community public-participation systems used by municipalities in South Africa; however, effectiveness of these seems to be a problem. Ward committees, as well as public gatherings such as *izimbizo*, IDP meetings, and road shows, etc., are all legislated requirements, but are seen by communities as irregular,

providing limited opportunities for significant input (Zondi, 2015). Hence many challenges still exist in ensuring their effectiveness (Zondi, 2015). Parameters guiding access to information include the need for municipality councillors and staff to be accessible to community members. These officials must be available and transparent, being flexible, forthcoming, and accountable to the citizenry (Chenwi, 2008). In a research conducted at Ilembe District Municipality, for example, it was found that, while 58% of participants were satisfied with the community participation systems, 36 % were not (Zondi, 2015). The problem of community participation in South Africa is multi-faceted. For example, Madumo (2011) found that the City of Tshwane, South Africa's capital city, did not have a framework supplying guidance on how ward committees should function. Below are municipalities in various provinces selected per available information found relevant to this study.

2.5.5 (i) City of Cape Town

One of the challenges facing public participation in South African local government is the reliance on government-initiated community participation structures such as ward committees, *inter alia*. (Williams, 2006). The writer states that during the Apartheid era, South Africans had their own community structures that helped promote the demise of the Apartheid government.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, those community structures were abandoned and replaced in 2005 with government-initiated structures such as ward committees (Jikeka, 2014). Matibane (2010) states that, in the City of Cape Town, ward committees are not necessarily helping to provide effective consultation between local government and the communities. Matibane (2010) also argues, therefore, that communities must return to establishing civic bodies and organisations, for more effective communication between the City of Cape Town and the communities they serve. However, Masiya, Davids and Mazenda (2019) are of a different view. These authors recommend a collaborative effort between public officials and community members, engaging during the development of policies. This will help create an understanding between both parties on what the community expects regarding accessing government information well before the actual engagement takes place.

2.5.5 (ii) Limpopo province

Aklilu, Belete and Moyo (2014) conducted a study on the effectiveness of public participation and access to information in municipalities in the province of Limpopo. The research included both urban and rural municipalities in all five districts of the province. The conclusion of this research was that there are indeed challenges with the way in which local government in that province provides information to local communities, and the effectiveness thereof.

Amongst the findings were challenges with incapacity of municipalities to deal with effective communication to communities, dysfunctional ward committees, and lack of interest from communities in municipal programmes, owing to political interference at this level of government. Such leads to deficient community-initiated structures aimed at improved communication between municipalities and the community (Aklilu *et al.*, 2014).

These findings are echoed by a research conducted by Mosotho (2013) on the effectiveness of public participation in the Capricon District Municipality in the province of Limpopo. This particular research concluded that public participation by the Blouberg and Aganang local municipalities within the Capricon District was ineffective (Mosotho, 2013). The main reason for the futility of public participation, according to Mosotho (2013), is that communities have lost confidence in these municipalities. Confidence has been lost owing to lack of information and feedback. Secondly, there is the matter of high illiteracy of most community members. The local municipalities do not cater for the illiterate, using unintelligible jargon in communiqués to communities (Mosotho, 2013).

2.5.5 (iii) Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

Naidoo and Ramphal (2018) conducted a study on the effectiveness of community-participation systems in the ward committees of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. Their study included ward committee members from both previously disadvantaged and previously advantaged groups (Black and White ward committee members). Naidoo and Ramphal (2018) concluded that Black ward committee members believed that public participation was more effective for them than for White ward committee members. Another important factor that made public participation more effective for

Black ward committee members was their clear understanding of the principles of *Batho Pele* (People First). Such was not the case with the previously advantaged ward committee members. The general conclusion of this finding clearly points to the fact that facilitated public participation is more effective to some sections of the communities, notably, those previously disadvantaged (Naidoo and Ramphal, 2018).

Facilitated public participation is also supported by Bovaird and Downe (2008), who developed a policy paper on various useful and innovative methods to improve local communication. The researchers concluded that direct engagement with citizens is an effective communication strategy. Another factor that ensures effective public participation from communities is financial incentives. The researchers argue that lack of effectiveness of public participation and access to information also results from poor financial resources of community members (Bovaird and Downe, 2008). The researchers' argument is based on members of the community, especially those who come from the poorest of the poor, being expected to fund their own transport to public-participation activities. The members tend to pit the costs of transport against the needs of the family. In most cases, community members opt to pay for family needs rather than paying for transport to public-participation activities (Bovaird and Downe, 2008).

2.5.5 (iv) Summary

The general finding on the effectiveness of community participation systems in South Africa is that most of the systems utilised by almost all municipalities who are part of this research were not effective for various reasons. Challenges included failed ward committees, lack of understanding of the principles of *Batho Pele*, and the general loss of confidence in some of the municipalities by members of the public.

SALGA conducted a study on the failure of community-participation systems in South Africa. The study found that over half of the respondents (51%) believed that there is a need for municipalities to improve systems used for community access to information and public participation (Ngwenya, 2015). A survey conducted on models and systems of public participation found that there were 36 different models used. Important to note in these systems and models is that they are linked to Arnstein's (1969) Ladder

of Participation (Masiya, Davids and Mazenda, 2019). The article then concludes that municipalities in South Africa must improve systems of community participation, failing which an ever-increasing number of protests will take place in municipalities (Masiya *et al.*, 2019).

2.6 Access to Information and Public/Community Participation

Many scholars, such as Ngwane (2017), Nzimakwe (2011), Skenjana and Kimemia (2011), Mtshali (2016), Zondi (2014), and Madumo (2011), have written extensively on access to information, as well as community participation and challenges associated with such. Factors such as cost, monitoring, and the bottom-up approach are some aspects discussed.

2.6.1 Cost as a factor in public participation

Ebdon and Franklin (2006) are amongst a number of scholars who have expanded on this topic. These researchers state that costs related to public participation are a hindrance to public participation in government programmes. The costs refer to the transportation of the public to these gatherings; and to costs such as meals and finances related to logistics. This is supported by Irvin and Stansbury (2004), who state that *“the per-decision cost of citizen participation groups is arguably more expensive than the decision making done by a single administrator”* expertise and experience are combined. Robbins, Simonsen and Feldman (2008) also regard cost as a factor. One of their findings is that direct mass citizen participation is both burdensome and very costly.

According to Wang and Breyer (2013), costs associated with public participation are classified into two types, namely, production, and participation costs. This is confirmed by Breyer (2011), who states that production costs are those incurred by the public administration in preparing for the public-participation process. Such includes, for example, photocopies, transport, human resources, etc., whereas participation costs are those used by community members to participate in the information-sharing or discussion processes of the public service (Shirky, 2008). Sometimes it becomes difficult to determine which costs are higher – costs of accessing information or production costs by the public service. For members of the public what is more

important is spending as little as possible to access information: high costs hinder access to information (Andersson, Fennell and Shahrokh, 2011).

Yang, Wickens, Park, Fong and Siah (2015) state that higher costs of accessing information is one of the factors that prevent people from obtaining timeous knowledge. Nchabeleng, Botha and Bisschoff (2018) hold the view that, while the use of e-governance and social media by the public service is effective, the cost of data is expensive, and not determined by the public service. This makes for a difficult decision for some members of the public – whether to put food on the table or to purchase data needed to access the internet, gaining information. Bryer (2011) also believes and states that the higher the cost of giving the public access to information, thus strengthening democracy, the more it costs members of the public to gain such information.

2.6.2 Monitoring in public participation

Public participation conveys the ability of citizens to monitor how government performs. Such is another area that has been researched before. Scholars like Robbins *et al.* (2008) contend that the danger of some of the very active citizens is that they ultimately represent themselves, rather than the public they should be representing. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund/UNICEF (2003) further states that the participation of youth in governance issues is critical to involvement in the decision-making processes. Democracy then becomes a reality. Ile and Boadu (2018) conclude that the youth are more active in monitoring public service delivery than are adults. According to these researchers, the youth are better at this function and are more invested.

Madumo (2011) concluded that monitoring and evaluating of communities' access to information from municipalities is the responsibility of the municipality's Office of the Speaker. Through this monitoring and evaluation, the Office of the Speaker is able to identify weaknesses in the system and to improve these to the benefit of members of the public. Failure to monitor how communities access information at local government level results in members of the communities being unable to access relevant information on public services. Namondwe, Ille and Ukpere (2014) conducted a research monitoring how communities access public information. The researchers

found that, without monitoring access to information, members of the communities sometimes have a gap of three months with no access to government information. Varghese and Heese (2012) adds that, for monitoring of access to information to be effective, community members must have a say in how they are able to access public information.

2.6.3 Approach to public participation

The notion of ensuring that communities have access to public information is being encouraged in many countries around the world. This helps local governments to develop varying systems for giving access to public information (Sancton and Zhenming, 2015). Citizens demand to play a role in how they access public information, rather than being passive in public participation (Cochrane, 2015). The bottom-up approach to public participation can be seen as the traditional and basic way of conducting actions. Marzuki (2015) states that, in most countries, the government makes sure that the public participates in government programmes; with the exception of the United Kingdom, where the public and companies actually initiate consultation with the public service. This can be seen as a bottom-up approach rather than the conventional top-down approach.

Felt and Fochler (2008) also supports the bottom-up approach finding. In his research into the science and technology field, this researcher concluded that community members who have a clear understanding of this field took a stand. Such members initiated public participation when there were changes in science, whether to do with the weather, or anything else: science affected their livelihood. These members believed that the authorities did not want to engage them in decisions that would affect them, because they had assumed that they did not understand the field of science.

Marzuki (2015) adds another dimension in terms of communities accessing public information: the jargon used by public servants, especially in their complicated reports. This makes it difficult for the general public to understand such articulation. The researcher suggests that public servants use clear and basic terms in documents that are to be accessed by community members. Community members have varied levels of understanding and educational backgrounds. Public officials must bear this in mind

during the development of policies around access to information and public participation (Shiplely and Utz, 2012; Kahane, Lopston, Herriman and Hardy, 2013).

Nevertheless, the continued improvements in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) allow for communities to access information on time, and hence remain better informed (Mukhtarov, Dieperink and Driessen, 2018). This finding is congruent with the literature review in which scholars like Ndinisa, (2017), Schwester *et al.* (2009), Chung (2017), Copus *et al.* (2017), Bertot *et al.* (2010) and Graham (2014) all agree that the use of technology guarantees communities timeous information.

2.6.4 Capacity for public participation

There is a balance between local government skills, and public participation in service delivery. Mathekga and Buccus (2006) argue that technocrats believe that technical skills in local government and the ability to find well-trained managers with all the required technical capacity will help improve service delivery. The need for public participation in local government is crucial.

According to the National Treasury of South Africa (2011), rural municipalities and rural towns are affected, partly because of the requirements of employment equity. Such makes it difficult for municipalities to attract suitable candidates. The South African Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) (2009) adds that the situation is further compounded by institutions of higher governance not having adjusted to provide specific technical, administrative, and communication skills to suit a rural local government. These rural municipalities have then to source such services from outside the public service. This view is also supported by Madumo (2011) who adds that the lack of capacity in ward committees assisting members of the public to gain access to public information is a huge problem in most municipalities in South Africa. This is further compounded by local municipalities lacking the staff capacity to help members of the communities to receive public information (Lesia, 2011).

Municipalities must employ well-qualified employees who can capacitate communities on public information (Mtshali, 2016). This view is also held by Sekgala (2016) who

also adds that municipalities need to delegate more powers to ward committees who help communities gain access to municipal information.

2.6.5 Interest in participation

The responsibility of the service recipient, or the participant, is vital. Public participation in the public service is crucial for the qualifying public to partake in government programmes (Nzimakwe and Reddy, 2008). Bekkers, Volkers, Van der Gaag and Flap (2008) concur that being a citizen of a country calls for an individual to have an interest in and to participate in their own governance.

However, Davies, Flanagan, Hogarth, Mountford and Philpott (2009) identify that some members of the community have lost interest in the public administration issues; there are many reasons for such. Midden (1995) found that young and very old citizens have no interest in attending public-participation processes. In the same study, this researcher concluded that the highly educated are those who show more interest in public-participation processes. Ebdon (2002) concluded that part of the reason for people not participating is that they have no trust in public servants and politicians, such people showing very little care for the proletariat. According to Mchunu (2012), lack of interest by certain sectors of the community (the youth and the elderly) results in insufficient empowering, honest, and reliable public-participation processes by the public service.

Fuo (2015) notes that community members have lost interest in ward committees giving access to local government information. Politics involved in nominating members of ward committees is given as the reason. The same finding was made in Msunduzi where a study found that ward committees are more of an extension of the local political structure (Fuo, 2015). Councillors would influence the election of their political party members in their ward committees (Piper and Deacon, 2008).

Making communities aware of the benefits of participating in public engagements helps them access information; this influences public decisions having a direct bearing on their lives (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2017). When participating in, for example, local government programmes, knowledge and input assist in making quality decisions (Kantamaturapoj, Piyajun and Wibulpolprasert,

2018). Thus governments should ensure that public engagements and information access by the communities allow for engagements to produce positive outcomes; as opposed to simply gathering the community in a venue such as a hall, making communities lose interest in accessing public information (Suwanteep, Murayama and Nishikizawa, 2017).

2.6.6 Public servants and politicians

Public servants and politicians are key stakeholders in service delivery and in fostering community participation. Shleifer and Vishy (1994) argue that politicians will always favour their own political party followers. They will even pressurise public-service administrators to allocate funds for public participation, to court their followers. Svava (1998) agrees, stating that municipal managers being appointed by politicians already suggests political interference.

Noyila (2013) found that, amongst the challenges of public participation in rural areas, is that there are usually two parallel structures in rural areas: the democratically elected public representatives, who are councillors; and the traditional leadership. This, according to this writer, creates confusion as to which meeting should be attended. Such, for other community members, is also compounded by traditional leaders now being paid by the state, which effectively makes them government employees.

Politics plays a major role in how communities access public information (Mtshali, 2016). Most councillors are usually suspicious of ward committee members when they enlist guidance from public officials in helping communities who seek public information (Mtshali, 2016). Councillors fear that ward committee members might create the impression that they are more efficient than the ward councillor in preparing for the next election (Mtshali, 2016). There is therefore sometimes tension between public servants and ward councillors when it comes to public participation, and how communities access public information. Some ward councillors put forth the impression that they are better at assisting the communities than are the officials (Mtshali, 2016).

The politics-administration dichotomy of Woodrow Wilson back in 1887 is still relevant today. An example of this is the development of a policy in government and its execution as seen today in the light of that dichotomy (McCandles and Guy, 2013). This makes some politicians sceptical about policies being developed, believing that the policies would favour one political group over another (McCandles and Guy, 2013). This is especially the case when it comes to communities accessing public information.

2.6.7 Government support and the community's understanding of public participation

Finally, the community's understanding of public participation and government support is crucial to service delivery at local government. Such local government structure, functions, and programmes will improve service delivery. Mphahlele (2010) comments that lack of understanding of government programmes such as the IDP, coupled with municipalities' failure to provide transport to meetings, is a major hindrance to public participation. Mphahlele adds that the failure to issue notices of such meetings is an obstacle to attending. Notices do not necessarily reach all intended participants. The Public Service Commission (2008) on public participation found that, while some departments and municipalities have clear policies and guidelines, most of them do not have these in place, leaving this process to chance.

Members of the public decide which information they want to access. Their choice is based on the appropriateness of the information, as well as on how useful that information is to them (Mtega, 2012). Mtega (2012) concludes that local governments are not making it easy for rural municipal residents to access information. This has a negative bearing on how communities access crucial information. Most of the relevant information such as a draft IDP which requires public input, vacant posts, health-related issues, etc., are made available online (municipal website), on social networks, and in the print media. The high cost of data, as well as the unavailability of newspapers in rural areas, makes it difficult for rural communities to gain crucial information. This is a hindrance to obtaining community information (Jain, Nfila, Lwoga, Stilwell and Ngulube, 2011).

Reluctance of public-service managers to engage communities in public participation is also an issue. Some public managers do not necessarily want the public to

participate in matters that are either technical, or have financial implications (Felt and Fochler, 2008). They would prefer that such decisions are made by the 'right' people and would invite the public only to legitimise decisions already taken (Kerfoot, 2018). Hansen and Reinau (2006) add to this, that managers would even prefer "*politically active, middle-aged, well-educated males with a higher education and income above average*" to participate in such public-participation processes. Masiya *et al.* (2019) find that the status quo in the public service is maintained by public-service managers and officials still acting as gatekeepers of information for the public.

Commenting on the reluctance of public managers to engage the community in public participation are Ebdon and Franklin (2006), who state that the community's lack of understanding of management of finances is another factor. The researchers argue that some managers would prefer to use community participation in the area of finances as a formality, rather than sourcing community input. One of the gravest challenges faced by public managers is finding a balance between satisfying the needs of their political principals and those of members of the public, in terms of ensuring access to information (Quick and Feldman, 2011).

2.6.8 Summary

The literature above has identified key factors that impact public participation and eventually public-service delivery in South Africa. Costs associated with accessing information, politics involved in electing ward committee members, failure by municipalities to monitor how community members access information, all contribute negatively to community receipt of information. Municipal staff are also reluctant to engage community members on technical matters. This has resulted in community members losing confidence in these municipalities, negatively affecting their access to information.

These factors mentioned above are clearly negative effects on community members' accessing of municipal information. Addressing these factors will therefore help to improve access to information by members of the community within municipalities.

There has been some literature touching on information, public participation, and service delivery. The challenge with this literature is that it is limited. The linkage

between access to information and the community's participation in the services they receive needs further interrogation. Hence, there is a lack of understanding of impact of access to information on public participation, especially in rural local government.

2.7 uMshwathi Local Municipality's Communities and Access to Information:

The Case Study

In line with the 2018/2019 IDP of uMshwathi Local Municipality, community meetings took place in all wards of the Municipality between 16 February and 25 March 2018, as part of the IDP roadshows (uMshwathi Local Municipality, 2018). The document further lists the following public-participation methods used by the Municipality: *izimbizo*, ward committee meetings, council meetings which are open to members of the public, IDP and budget meetings.

The public engagements mentioned above were aimed at promoting community members' access to information, thus providing them an opportunity to have a say in Municipal programmes. An examination of the Municipality's public-participation indicates that, even though the Municipality has an internal public-participation unit, this unit does not have access to a council vehicle to travel between communities in the different wards. Furthermore, uMshwathi Local Municipality normally uses a vehicle to loud-hail information such as an urgent meeting called by the ward councillors. The same vehicle is also used by the public-participation unit to attend quarterly public meetings, giving community members municipal information. However, lack of information is likely to result in public/community protests.

The evaluation of access to information involves many aspects of public service involvement in the community decision-making processes regarding programmes and projects that affect them (Brown and Chin, 2013). This includes how the community members are represented, how soon they are informed of a public engagement, how transparent the public service is in providing information, and how the community influences the programmes and projects (Brown and Chin, 2013).

Challenges associated with public/community participation in uMshwathi Local Municipality are reiterated by Mtshali (2016), who conducted a study at uMshwathi Local Municipality on public participation through ward committees. Mtshali (2016)

concluded that, while there are proper systems in place to ensure effective public participation, members of ward committees had many challenges causing a negative impact on the effectiveness of public-participation systems. These challenges included interference by ward councillors, who are chairpersons of ward committees. This interference by ward councillors starts during the nomination process of ward committee members. Ward councillors influence the nomination of their political party members to the ward committee structure (Mtshali, 2016). Once nominated into the ward committee, ward councillors, as chairpersons of ward committees, influence decisions to be taken along political party lines, rather than in the interests of all members of the ward (Mtshali, 2016).

While ward committee members are said to represent their communities and are expected to serve as a conduit between the community and the municipality, this is actually not the case, because ward committee members do not have direct communication with the municipality. They meet with the chairperson (*ward councillor*), who then communicates with the municipality on behalf of the community.

Community members at Ward 2 within uMshwathi Local Municipality went on a rampage, burning six government vehicles and torching municipal offices during their complaint about lack of consultation with the Municipality and their ward councillor (Pieterse, 2016). The ward councillor was accused of not listening to members of the community, 'doing his own thing' (Pieterse, 2016). As a result, this study endeavours to explore the impact of access to information on community participation within uMshwathi Local Municipality.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

This section is aimed at presenting the conceptual framework for this study. It unpacks the concept of democracy that underpins public/community participation. Without information, people cannot exercise nor protect their democratic rights. For any country to be fully democratic, it must have effective public-participation processes. The United Nations eighth Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, in his 2015 speech during the International Day of Democracy, stated that public participation is the ultimate foundation for any democracy, opening up a two-way communication between the public service and its citizenry.

2.8.1 The concept of democracy

Democracy is described as a governance system in which all citizens have a right to sovereignty (Black, 1990). This is supported by Shihata (1997), who states that citizens residing in a democratic country play a significant, direct, or indirect role in the affairs of the state. Keane (2009) further adds that democracy endorses parity and an inclusive government. The researcher reminds that it is usually members of a community who form themselves into a political party, and vote for policies guiding them, aimed at improving their own lives.

Held (1992) classes the six ideal types of democracy as legalist democracy, competitive democracy, plebiscitary democracy, pluralist democracy, participatory democracy, and libertarian democracy. In his assessment of democracy using these principles Held (1992) debates whether the role of citizens is to help government form an opinion, or to help governments make informed decisions. There are various existing notions related to democracy, which are communication, development, and equality.

Equality

One of the existing notions in relation to democracy is equality. Von Leyden (1985), in Aristotle, defines equality as all people receiving the same treatment from anyone who provides a service. Wall (2007) mentions four crucial elements that provide democratic arguments aimed at ensuring equality. These elements are the equal worth of all citizens' lives; equal regard for all citizens by political parties; failure to show equal regard for all citizens by political parties that do not distribute equal political standing; and the importance of governments that practise democracy in the equal distribution of political standing to its citizenry. Clearly from the above, equality is the cornerstone of successful community participation.

Failure to observe these four critical elements of equality sometimes results in disaffected citizens who may resort to extreme measures to show their displeasure with the unequal treatment meted to them by politicians. This was confirmed by Mchunu (2012), who concluded that there is a correlation between public protests and failure of community participation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

(1996) clearly spells out the role of equality in public participation as part of the Bill of Rights so that every South African citizen is treated equally. Another key concept in democracy is communication, which can be seen as enabling participation through communication.

Communication

Key to ensuring access to information for communities is the provision of information; and equally important in the provision of information is keeping up with the times. Stoyanov (2016) argues for the need of the media to keep up with the changes taking place in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, in that digital migration will ultimately replace the media if they remain stagnant. This, according to the researcher, is the weakness of the communication systems in the 21st century.

The use of e-government as a communication tool was explored in USA municipalities focusing on application tools as a communication means between these municipalities and their citizens (Weare, Musso and Hale, 1999). This research also examined the use of e-government in providing communities with the relevant tools and the general communication between the communities and the municipalities. The findings of Weare *et al.* (1999) identified that the use of e-governance is mostly affected by politicians who want to influence information made available to the citizens, based on their political affiliations.

Sebola (2017) argues that, while much has been done by government to communicate with its citizenry in the traditional way, there are other options, such as social media, on which governments must capitalise. This argument is based on many people having access to social media. Political parties can use such means to communicate their policies and also to canvass for votes. This is supported by Maarek (2014) who argues for the use of various communication tools to forward the message to the intended recipients. Maarek (2014) uses the 2012 re-election of Barack Obama as a perfect example of the successful use of various forms of communication. The key essence of concepts such as equality, information and communication in democracy is to ensure that, ultimately, developments will be availed those who are affected or are going to be affected.

Development

One of the notions that cannot be separated from democracy is development. This statement arises from research first conducted by Lipset (1959). This research was subsequently supported by various other researchers and scholars. Amongst the researchers who presented similar conclusions were Gerring, Thacker and Alfaro (2012), who also concluded that development is crucial for democracy. Development improves quality of life, improves health conditions, as well as gender equality (Gerring *et al.*, 2012).

There is a strong belief that development, and more specifically, economic development, stimulates democracy (Tang and Woods, 2014). Lerner (1958) agrees, concluding that the movement of people from one area to the next dictates to governments the need to develop areas where they can next move to. These statements have, over the years, led to researchers linking development to democracy. Nonetheless, community participation as a democratic notion, to be fully realised, needs to embrace communication through the sharing of information, creating and using the most effective tools/mechanisms available.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed available and relevant literature on access to information and community participation in selected countries abroad, on the African continent, and within South Africa. Literature from a selection of provinces and municipalities including KwaZulu-Natal was reviewed. The chapter also reviewed systems used to ensure community access to information which is seen as vital in/for community participation. Based on the literature reviewed, information is made available randomly to members of the community by local governments. Community participation is highly complex and is influenced by the varied circumstances and legislative/regulatory measures countries have put in place. This greatly influences community participation, its varied systems to ensure that it takes place, and its effectiveness. Nonetheless, access to information is vital to community participation.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) define research as a study conducted by a researcher with the purpose of answering questions on a certain area, in order to understand the subject matter, supporting such with evidence. Du Toit and Mouton (2013) accept this, defining research as a tactical plan used by a researcher to ensure that planned research findings are rational. Kothari (2004) defines research as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. Kothari (2004) defines research methodology as a system utilised by researchers to resolve a research problem.

3.2 The World View Informing the Study

The philosophical foundation for any study to be undertaken is referred to as a research paradigm or a world view. Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) define a world view as a collection of theories and beliefs that helps guide researchers on how, what, and why a particular research has to be conducted. According to Pham (2018), there are three main approaches to conducting research, these being positivism for quantitative research, critical realism for a mixed-methods research, and interpretivism for qualitative research. This study, being a qualitative research study, adopted an interpretivist approach.

Creswell (2014) states that interpretivism allows a researcher a clearer understanding and meaning of issues being researched, rather than using a general approach. Hammersley (2013) concurs, adding that, during interpretivism, researchers must avoid bias when studying phenomena, events, and human beings. This study is interpretivist. The researcher wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants in their own environment, in line with the research topic (Black, 2006).

3.3 Research Design

Research designs emphasise that the planned study must provide results that address the research problem (Mouton, 2011). Creswell (2014) believes that research designs

are studies using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches that provide guidelines for the study to be undertaken by the researcher. There are three main types of research design or strategy, namely, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Creswell (2014) defines research strategy as an analysis of the three research strategies to help guide techniques during the research process. The research design used in this study was a qualitative design.

Creswell (2014) defines the qualitative research design/strategy as a research that uses language and words; as opposed to the quantitative research strategy that concentrates largely on numbers and close-ended questions during data collection. The mixed-methods design uses a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative research strategies.

Qualitative research was relevant to this study. According to Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth and Keil (1988), qualitative research would allow the researcher to analyse systems and processes, actions and triggers. Through this, the researcher was able to assess the effectiveness of the current participatory systems used within local government, from the perspective of participants in this research. Creswell (2014) agrees with this notion of qualitative research, believing that it helps the researcher to understand and explore how groups and individuals respond to a human or social challenge.

3.4 Research Strategy

In order for a researcher to decide on the most effective research strategy to be used in a research, the purpose of the particular research must be stated. Creswell (2014) defines a research strategy as techniques used by the researcher to conduct an analysis within the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods design types. Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davies and Bezuidenhout (2014) refer to such as field-research methodologies. There are five research strategies in qualitative research, namely, narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2014).

Fetterman (1998) defines ethnography as a study of the ethos, culture, and beliefs of a certain group of people. Angrosino (2007) accepts this, stating that this type of research design could include spending time with a particular group to observe their

behaviour patterns as they go about their daily lives. Riesman (1993) defines narrative research as making sense of research conducted by a researcher, through storytelling by participants. The researcher then incorporates all these stories into his or her own story. In phenomenological research, participants describe an occurrence. Through this, the researcher describes their experiences (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) also defines the grounded theory research as research analysis based on the actions, views, and understanding of the research participants. Case studies are commonly used for evaluation purposes, especially when a researcher seeks an in-depth understanding of projects, programmes, events, and strategies (Stake, 2005).

Another reason for adopting a case-study strategy is that this allowed the researcher an opportunity to gain a clear and in-depth understanding of a process. Such dealt with how local government provides information about public services to its citizens; the challenges and/or the successes of the current system on the information being provided. The same views are expressed by Creswell (2014) who suggests that case studies provide a researcher with a detailed scrutiny of a project, programme, or an event. Rowley (2002) adds that questions like 'why' and 'how' are best answered through the use of case studies. Such will be relevant in finding out how and what information is made available to participants. Case studies allow the researcher the opportunity of testing the understanding of the quality of information, deciding whether this is free of jargon.

3.5 Data-collection and Tools

According to Knatterud (1998:322), data collection "*is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluates outcomes*". There are two types of data, namely, primary, and secondary data. Hox and Boeije (2005:593) define primary data as data collected for a specific research problem, using best-fit procedures for the research problem at hand, thereby adding new data to an existing knowledge repository. The researchers refer to secondary data as data available for reuse by the general research community for various purposes. Kothari (2004) states that there are many factors to consider when selecting methods of data collection. Factors include the nature of the research, the scope of the

research, the time factor, the availability of funds for the research, as well as the scope and objective of the enquiry (Kothari, 2004).

Primary data for this study was collected through focus groups discussions and interviews, both face to face and telephonic. Those who were not available to participate in telephonic interviews were contacted. Telephonic interviews replaced face-to-face interviews to comply with the COVID 19 pandemic regulations. Only three of these telephonic interviews were conducted: one with a ward councillor and two with municipal officials. All these interviews were recorded with the permission of participants.

Focus group discussions are used during a qualitative research process, usually consisting of between four and twelve participants. The total number of participants for each of the three focus groups during this research was 10. This was the number of ward committee members per ward. Focus group discussions provided an opportunity to engage with and discuss the questions posed by the researcher (Dilshad and Latif, 2013). The telephonic interviews that were conducted were in line with the COVID-19 regulations during the lockdown period. It was through all these formal interviews that the researcher was able to fully understand the participants' responses (Maree, 2017). One of the advantages of qualitative research using primary data is that the sample size can be influenced by the researcher, to suit the needs of the study (Schurink, 2003).

3.6 Population and Sampling

Rubin and Babbie (2011) defines a population as participants in a study who will be a concentration point to help the researcher gain a clear understanding of the topic being researched. To ensure multifaceted participants in this study, the population of the study comprised the community members who were ward committee members, the community leadership, and municipal officials of uMshwathi Local Municipality. According to uMshwathi (2018) IDP, uMshwathi Local Municipality is one of many rural municipalities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal: 14 wards constitute this municipality. A total of three wards (Wards 2, 3, & 10) were targeted to form part of the sample underpinned by non-probability sampling strategy.

This study employed a non-probability sampling strategy, which is defined by Bhattacharjee (2012) as a study in which the likelihood of the selection may not be accurate. The non-probability sampling method/strategy which was adopted by this study is usually employed in areas when accessing the entire population is not possible (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The reason for choosing this sampling strategy is that this study was qualitative; hence not all the participants in the population had an equal chance of being selected/sampled (Showkat and Parveen, 2017).

Participants that were sampled were drawn from wards: Ward 2 which is an urban ward, Ward 3, a deep rural ward, as well as Ward 10, a peri-urban ward. According to Census 2011, the total number of the population in each of the three wards is: 3175 in Ward 2, 1262 in Ward 3, and 6362 in Ward 10 (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Webster (1985) defines sampling as a process of identifying components of a defined study population for the purposes of research. These wards were selected on the basis that Ward 3 is a deep rural ward with limited access to cellphone network coverage, and indifferent access roads; Ward 3 has been faced with many service-delivery protests. Illiteracy levels are high, with only 2.0% of the 1262 total population having a post-matric education qualification. Ward 10 is a peri-urban ward with reasonable access to networks, with a total population of 6362, 4.7% of which have a post-matric education; while Ward 2 is an urban ward with a total population of 3175 people – 3% of this population have a post-matric qualification (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

There are six types of non-probability sampling technique: volunteer sampling, snowball sampling, accidental sampling, convenience sampling, purposive/judgmental, and quota sampling methods. The sampling techniques employed in this research were purposive and convenience sampling. In purposive sampling a researcher identifies and decides on the components and elements either to include or exclude in the research (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). It was useful for the researcher to gain crucial and specific information about the research topic; and this information was provided by the research participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Hence the researcher purposively sampled key individuals in the Municipality, who were knowledge-holders, and who would provide the necessary information (Khumalo, Mthuli and Singh, 2019).

Convenience sampling is a sampling process whereby participants are selected simply because they assist the researcher in meeting a specific criterion (Maree, 2017). This study used convenience sampling for the focus group participants because it was convenient, and they were willing to participate in the focus group discussions at the required date and time. Interviewing ward community members individually would have been time consuming. The focus group discussions included all ward committee members in the selected wards, their primary role being to serve as a link between the Municipality and the general ward community they are part of.

The conveniently sampled participants from the three wards who were in this study were members of each ward committee of the three wards. The purposively sampled participants were ward councillors of the three wards and the traditional leader of one of the wards. The Municipal officials, the municipal manager as the accounting officer of uMshwathi Local Municipality, the manager responsible for communication (communication manager) as well as the manager responsible for public participation (Public Participation Manager) were sampled. Hence the identified participants in the research were taken from the total population, making up this study's sample (Taherdoost, 2016).

This study sample hence was composed of members of the ward committees at Wards 2, 3, & 10. Ward 3's traditional leader was the only traditional leader interviewed in the Municipality because this was the only ward under traditional authority of the purposively sampled wards. In the other wards (Wards 2 & 10), the ward councillors were sampled. Although Ward 3 is under traditional authority, it is a rural ward, having a councillor who was then also interviewed. The manager responsible for public participation at uMshwathi Local Municipality, and the communications manager of uMshwathi Local Municipality, were interviewed.

3.6.1 Sample size

Focus group discussions and in-depth one-on-one interviews formed part of the process of collecting data for this research. For this research to meet its objective, a specific sample of participants was identified. This study had a total of 37 participants. Data-collection was broken down into interviews (7) with municipal officials, ward councillors and the traditional leadership; and focus group discussions (3), which were

held with ward committee members totalling 10 each. Focus group discussions for the three wards were held at the community halls. Participants are presented in the table below:

Table 3.1: Sample of Participants

SAMPLE	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	SAMPLING TECHNIQUE	SAMPLE SIZE	DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE
Community	Members of the ward committees from Wards 2, 3, and 10	Convenience sampling	30 Participants (<i>10 participants from each ward</i>)	3 Focus group discussions
Community leadership	Councillors of Wards 2, 3, and 10. Chief/traditional leader of Ward 3.	Purposive sampling	4 Participants (<i>Wards 2, 3, and 10 councillors; and Ward 3 chief/traditional leader</i>)	4 Interviews
Municipal officials	Municipal manager, managers for public participation and communication.	Purposive sampling	3 Participants	3 Interviews
Total			37	

Source: Author's own

Public participation, herein referred to as community participation, is a vital part of our democracy. Such participation allows for citizens to partake in how they are governed by the elected officials. At local government level in South Africa, the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 requires, amongst other matters, that municipalities develop mechanisms to consult communities and community organisations on performing their functions and exercising their powers (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs/CoGTA, 2019).

These structures, commonly known as ward committees, are an important link between ward councillors, the community, and the municipality. Committees are made up of representatives of a particular ward, members who represent various interests

within the ward, chaired by the ward councillor (CoGTA, 2019). Committees are intended as institutionalised channels of communication and interaction between communities and municipalities. Ideally, this should allow for members of communities to influence municipal planning in a manner which best addresses their needs (CoGTA, 2019).

Section 81 of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 states that a maximum of 10% of traditional leaders may participate in municipal council activities to represent interests of traditional leaders within a particular municipality. The participation of traditional leaders in council matters and meetings gives members of their traditional council and subjects access to municipal information. Traditional leaders are above politics, making them neutral in seeing that all members of the public gain equal access to municipal information (Noyila, 2013). The traditional leadership was therefore very important for this study. Of the three wards identified for this study only Ward 3 has traditional leaders; of all 13 wards of uMshwathi Local Municipality only two wards have traditional leaders; these traditional leaders reside in Ward 3.

Participants in this study were selected based on the role that they play in providing community members with access to municipal information: According to the Municipal Systems Act of 2000, the municipal manager is the accounting officer of the municipality. The municipal manager is expected to develop a community participation system allowing community members access to municipal information. The two other managers identified for the study are the manager responsible for communications, and the manager for public participation. These persons were identified based on their role in ensuring community members access to municipal information. The Manager for Communication is responsible for communicating municipal information to members of the uMshwathi Local Municipality through all types of media including print, broadcasts, and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

The manager responsible for public participation must ensure that the relevant structures in all wards are put in place to facilitate the flow of information between the municipality and community members. This is in line with Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000. Section 73 (2) (a) of the Municipal Structures Act (1988) states that ward councillors are chairpersons of ward committees. They therefore have an

important to role to play in ensuring that community members within their wards gain access to municipal information.

3.7 Data Quality Control

An important part of research is ensuring that data collected is analysed and the quality assured, making the research legitimate. Neuman (2014) maintains that, for data quality control to be acceptable, interviewees must be able to translate their experiences into what happens within their own society. An important part of data quality control in qualitative research is certifying that data collected is trustworthy (Koonin, 2014; Mthuli, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985); and Koonin (2014) state that proper quality control in qualitative research must find the research credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. Techniques can be used to ensure qualitative data quality (Mthuli, 2018).

To ensure data quality, this study adopted the credibility technique to maintain the trustworthiness of the qualitative data. Credibility can be confirmed and increased by the researcher being in the field for a reasonable length of time conducting research with participants, to understand them better; or by triangulating data-collection methods (Du Plooy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout, 2014), or interviewing key individuals deemed vital knowledge-holders (Mthuli, 2018). The researcher purposively and conveniently sampled and interviewed knowledge-holders based on the positions they held, and the roles they played in their communities and in the municipality, affording some credibility on the data received. The study also triangulated data-collection methods by using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to collect the data.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to a process of analysing all data collected by the researcher during the process of researching a particular topic (Adler *et al.*, 2011). De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005) avers that data analysis is the process of making sense of all data collected by the researcher, collating it in a structured and understandable way.

This study used thematic analysis to analyse all data collected. This allows the researcher to identify what is common to all the qualitative data collected,

understanding it all. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis in research is a technique used to scrutinise patterns in qualitative data. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) adds that, through thematic analysis, researchers are able to search for and identify both obvious and not-so-obvious themes in qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2013) identified six critical steps in thematic content analysis:

Step 1: Familiarising yourself with all collected data

As researchers collect data, they start to understand what is being collected. However, this step suggests that the researcher needs to read data more than once in order to fully understand it.

Step 2: Creating initial codes in the computer programme

In this step, codes are allocated, based on themes identified during Step 1.

Step 3: Looking for themes in data

Classification of themes from the responses given during the one-on-one in-depth interviews and focus group discussions takes place during this step.

Step 4: Reviewing all themes

This step involves grouping together all similar themes and codes, using information collected from the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions.

Step 5: Naming and defining themes

This level involves combining similar themes, thus helping to tell a convincing story about each of the themes identified. This also helps to identify how each of the themes contributes to overall research. At this point some of the themes are either grouped together or rejected.

Step 6: Producing a report

Using data collected, a comprehensive story about the topic being researched is then written, including all identified themes identified, covering the views of the participants. This story must also be linked to existing literature on the research topic.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented the research methodology used in this study. The chapter started with the world view informing this study, going on to discuss the qualitative research design used, as well as the strategy. Data collection and relevant tools used in this study were presented. The chapter then discussed how sampling was conducted, how data quality control was ensured, and finally, how this data was analysed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The chapter below presents findings informed by the analysis of the data collected from the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted with participants (the respondents) in the study. This study was aimed at exploring the impact of access to information on community participation in uMshwathi Local Municipality. The three focus groups (FG) are coded as FG1 for Focus group One, FG2 for Focus group Two and FG3 for Focus group Three. Groups consisted of ward committee members from Wards 2, 3, and 10. The rest of the participants from the interviews are coded as respondent (R), the sample consisting of coded identities of the interviewees comprising the traditional leader, the municipal manager, ward councillors, the manager for communications, and the manager for public participation.

4.2 Overview of Findings

Table 4.1: Overview of Findings

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES
To assess the systems that are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information on uMshwathi Local Municipality.	What systems are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information in uMshwathi Local Municipality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology in providing information. • Community structures in providing information. • Politics of providing/sharing information.
To examine the effectiveness of community participation systems within uMshwathi Local Municipality.	What is the extent of community participation systems' effectiveness in uMshwathi Local Municipality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving community concerns • Cascading information to the public • Delayed and outdated information • Municipal information and rural areas.
To explore the opinions of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive.	What are the views of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the public's input into 'final' municipal documents • (In)effective complaints-management system • Public engagement in service-delivery issues.
To determine the perception of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services.	What are the views of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training ward committees • Part-time ward councillors • Lack of transparency and information • Municipal representatives, and information about services.

Source: Author's own

4.3 Systems to ensure that Communities have Access to Information in uMshwathi Local Municipality

The first objective was aimed at assessing the systems to ensure that the communities of uMshwathi Local Municipality have access to information. The public service is bound by the Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000 to provide relevant and accurate information to the public. This is to maintain the accountability and transparency of the public service (McKinley, 2003). In order to obtain answers to this research objective (4.3), participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of the systems used by uMshwathi Local Municipality to provide information to members of the public; and to share their experiences of how this is achieved.

The study found that the views of the participants differed on the information systems used by uMshwathi Local Municipality to relay information to members of the public. This may be because the participants were made up of employees of the municipality, elected (councillors) and appointed (staff), a traditional leader, as well as ordinary members of the public, but who were members of the ward committees in the various wards of the municipality. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the data were the use of technology, community structures, and politics in providing information to the communities of uMshwathi.

4.3.1 The use of technology in providing information

Over the years, the use of technology as a means of access to information has improved from internet browsing in the early 1990s to cellular telephones with internet connection in the mid-90s, to almost 2 billion smartphones that subscribe to the internet (Kayisire and Wei, 2016). Over the past two decades, Africa has seen an increase in the use of mobile phones, as they become more and more affordable (Kayisire and Wei, 2016). This study found that uMshwathi Local Municipality uses technology to communicate by sharing information with members of its community, gaining varied results.

Respondent (R) 2:

“...this municipality has developed effective systems to provide information to members of the public and these include the use of social media, the website, ward committees, the local radio stations as well as local newsletters”.

Respondent 4:

“uMshwathi Local Municipality has an approved communication strategy that guides it on how to provide information to members of the public. This strategy is informed by the democratic principles of the country with regards to communication as well as information systems. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa also emphasises the need to ensure that communities have access to information and related systems”.

Another participant pointed to a key shortfall in the municipality’s communication strategy.

Respondent 3:

“The network reception in most rural wards in this Municipality is very bad and until the Municipality attends to this with the network providers, access to information through the use of technology will remain a huge problem” (R 3).

FG 3, Participant 4:

“uMshwathi Local Municipality needs to pull up their socks with regards to information systems because it takes too long for information to get to Ward committee members and the general public. Also relying on the network is a huge challenge because the reception in most wards is a nightmare”.

F G 2, Participant 2:

“... the website of the Municipality is hardly updated, for example I tried to download the communication strategy of the Municipality and it was not there. If I as a member of a Ward committee, have never seen a copy of the newsletter, what about a Grandfather or a Grandmother in the most rural parts of this Municipality?”.

FG 2, Participant: 3:

“For those of us who are lucky to access internet, we do post request for information on the Facebook page of the uMshwathi Local Municipality but they hardly respond to our requests”.

FG 3, Participant 7:

“uMshwathi Local Municipality does have a Facebook page where they post some of the information but when we request clarity or more information you are lucky to get a response”.

FG 3, Participant 10:

“Complaining through their Facebook page is a waste of time because they do not respond to complaints”.

These findings indicate that there is a challenge in the use of technology at uMshwathi Local Municipality. Firstly, while the uMshwathi Local Municipality uses technology such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp as platforms to provide information to members of the public, access to the internet is still a major challenge for some, especially those residing in rural wards of the municipality.

This finding clearly proved that the website of the municipality is not updated on a regular basis; and that crucial documents such as the Municipal Structures Act and the Municipal Systems Act are not available on the municipal website. On the other hand, informational communication tools such as Facebook cater only for those who either have internet access or good internet access, disadvantaging the poor and destitute, mostly located in rural areas. Until recent (2020), the cost of internet access through ‘data’ was very high in South Africa, making use and access to the internet very difficult for many. Triggered by the need to use more information technology, prior to and during the COVID 19 lockdown in South Africa, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) achieved its commitment by the service providers to reduce the cost of data in the country (ICASA, 2020).

The uMshwathi Local Municipality needs to engage the various telecommunication service providers so as to improve or invest more in telecommunication infrastructure within the municipality, especially the quality of the access to the internet for the rural wards. The municipality must determine when and how the municipal website is updated. This will help improve access to municipal information, especially for those with means and access to the internet. Responding timeously to concerns/requests from members of the public on the social media platforms such as Facebook should also be attended to. In this regard this municipality must develop a formal policy on

social media platforms that creates social networks for its staff responsible for communications.

This finding supports the findings of other researchers like Cullen *et al.* (2003) in New Zealand, and Landsbergen (2010) in Namibia, that municipalities must respond timeously to requests for accessing municipal information.

4.3.2 Community structures for providing information

There are various community structures in place within uMshwathi Local Municipality that the municipality utilises to provide information on public services to members of the public. These include the Traditional Council of Ward 3, this being the only ward with traditional leadership, Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS), ward committees in all wards, and the uMshwathi Rural Road Transport Forum, which was established by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport to deal with access roads within the municipality.

Respondent 6:

“We use different systems to ensure that communities have access to the municipal information. These include the Traditional Council structures led by the Amakhosi (Chiefs), the uMshwathi Local Municipal Facebook page and the presidential hotline also helps a great deal in providing members of the public with an opportunity to communicate with the municipality on their frustrations and challenges”.

Respondent 5:

“Amongst the different systems that are used by the Municipality to provide information to members of the public are the war-rooms of OSS. The systems that are utilised by the Municipality are approved by the uMshwathi Local Municipality that consists of councillors who reside in the same communities who are the intended recipients”.

Respondent 1:

“...at the dawn of Local Government in the 2000s there were no systems to ensure that information is provided effectively to members of the public.

Fortunately, this gap was addressed through Section 81 of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 which impresses on 10% participation of local Amakhosi in council meetings. Whenever there is to be a programme or project in a ward, the ward councillor first consults the local Inkosi before making a full presentation to the local Traditional Council. Members of the traditional council will then cascade this information to their constituency...”.

FG 3, Participant 1:

“...whilst we appreciate the efforts of the Municipality in putting up structures like the Ward Committees, Operation Sukuma Sakhe and the use of Traditional Leadership structures to communicate information from the Municipality, the challenge is that members of these structures do not cascade information to the public. I have never been invited by Inkosi or Induna or Ward Committee member in my village for a feedback session resulting their meeting with municipal officials”.

FG 1, Participant 4:

“I am one of the members of one of the structures created by the Municipality back in 2016 but we have never met with the people who nominated us into these positions and the Municipality does not ask us to account for this”.

FG 2, Participant 9:

“We submit quarterly reports to the Municipality on the work that we do as ward committee members. In these reports we highlight the challenges we are faced with but no one attends to these. This implies to us that these reports are only meant for compliance purposes and we suspect that no one even reads our reports”.

Whilst most participants agreed that there are structures in place to ensure that information from the municipality reaches them, none of the participants stated with certainty that per these structures, the information is cascaded to members of the general public. Participants were not always aware of the structures put in place so that general members of the public could meet the officials they had nominated to these structures. This finding is a clear ‘red flag’ that there are problems in the

structures created to provide information to the public. This requires uMshwathi Local Municipality to address such a finding. The municipality must monitor the structures put in place, ensuring their effectiveness. Failure to monitor and to ensure that community structures are effective, leads to uninformed and frustrated communities, and ultimately, violent protests (Fuo, 2015). Such was witnessed in uMshwathi Local Municipality, when six government vehicles and municipal offices were burnt down (Pieterse, 2016).

Rowe and Frewer (2005) argue the importance of public participants during the public-participation process. The researchers state that, for the public service to deliver customer-centric services in line with their mandate, providing access to information for the public should be a priority (Rowe and Frewer, 2005). Most participants believed that these community structures had completely failed to meet objectives. They saw this as a 'tick-box' exercise, because none of these structures, except for councillors, provide feedback from their engagements with the municipality.

4.3.3 Politics of providing information

The Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2002 clearly states that municipalities must have structures that serve as a link between communities and the municipalities, such that effective consultation between the two may be achieved (Barichievy, Piper and Parker, 2005). While the legislation states clearly what should happen, the unfortunate reality is that ward committees are linked to party politics, and hence are seen as an arm of the political party branch within a ward (Piper and Deacon, 2008). This was the unfortunate case in uMshwathi Local Municipality.

FG 1, Participant 1:

“Our councillors are politicians and unfortunately some of them still consider political affiliations when it comes to sharing of information. You will find that information is shared with those who are aligned to the councillor first and the rest of the community members will get it very late. This is a ploy to ensure that those who are politically connected get all the opportunities”.

FG 2, Participant 5:

“The problem with ward committees is that ward councillors will always influence nomination of members who are politically aligned with them. This then ensures that information is kept within members of the same political party excluding even those who are not politically affiliated”.

FG 2, Participant 8:

“Most structures in this Municipality are dominated by politics because you will find councillors as part of these structures. Even during the election of these structures political party representatives play a dominant role in canvassing political party representatives to be elected to these structures”.

FG 3, Participant 7:

“Political parties want to ensure that they control public participation structures because this is all about sharing information about job and tender opportunities within the political party. This is all about votes and paying back those who support the ward councillor and his or her political party”.

This finding points to politics playing a major role in the functioning of ward committees, hence this supports the findings of previous researchers, the likes of Thabanchu (2011), as well as Seitholo (2016). Politics, unfortunately, has a negative effect on the functioning of a structure created to give access of information to members of the public. In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, various community structures such as the youth, church organisations, the business sector, women, and people with disabilities must be represented. However, with politics playing a role in ward committees, many areas have been neglected. While it is true that politics plays a role in who runs a government, the reality is that there must be systems put in place to hold any government accountable (Butler, 2004). Structures that represent the interests of the community in uMshwathi Local Municipality must be representative of the broader community, for effective and independent functioning of such a structure.

This research found that there is a communication gap in access to community information systems within the municipality. The participants differed sharply with regard to access to information systems at uMshwathi Local Municipality. Those who are in the employ of the municipality, together with those who sit in council meetings, supported the systems used by the municipality to provide the community with access

to information through the available systems. Conversely, participants who are members of the public rejected the efficacy of such systems.

Blair (2000) argues that a communication gap between the officials in a municipality and members of the community must be addressed if communication between the two structures is to be improved. Aji and Dewi (2018) assent to this, stating that good consultation and communications between the state and its citizenry help to improve the image of governance, and create a sense of good governance.

An important element of access to information in the public service is found in the Batho Pele principles. The White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery (1997:8) states that "*citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive*". The views of the public, the participants who are representatives of members of the public, proved clearly that there is a gap in the provision of information to service recipients.

4.4 The Effectiveness of Community Participation Systems in uMshwathi Local Municipality

The purpose of this objective was to examine the effectiveness of community participation systems in uMshwathi Local Municipality. Ensuring effective participation systems between a municipality and the community that it serves is crucial if service-delivery protests are to be avoided that have become synonymous with local government in South Africa (Mdlalose, 2016). Fuo (2015) is like-minded; adding that decline in interaction between municipalities and the people they serve is the reason for community participation systems being ineffective. uMshwathi Local Municipality has seen several protests over the years (Mtshali, 2016). The views of participants differed on the effectiveness of community participation systems at uMshwathi Local Municipality. The study found that community-participation systems are effective in uMshwathi Local Municipality if and when they are attending to community concerns, and cascading/sharing information to the communities of its constituency. The themes that emerged from the analysis were the receiving of community concerns, time and venues of public meetings, delayed and outdated information as well as municipal information for rural areas.

4.4.1 Receiving community concerns

It is important for any country to deal with consultation concerns of its communities, thus ensuring that democracy becomes a reality (Priscoli and Homenuckm, 1986). Creighton (2005) adds that, for a government to be effective, it must take into consideration the concerns of members of the public. The DPSA agrees, and states that the public service must use satisfaction surveys to gauge community concerns on the provision of public information, to address gaps identified (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2011). Lesia (2011) adds that municipalities should establish systems to deal with community concerns that have to do with access to information. This study found that the receiving of community concerns was seen as the right step towards an effective community participation system. However, this was as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic: the methods used, the radio and use of the short message system came into play because conventional systems could not be used.

Respondent 6:

“The COVID 19 virus has reminded us of the importance of the use of technology because for example when the Municipality wanted to present its IDP, it used the local radio station for this purpose. This provided the Mayor of the Municipality an opportunity to present the IDP as well to engage with the callers who reside within the Municipality, who phoned in during the broadcast of this IDP. This system of public participation was very effective, and it provided several participants with an opportunity to engage the Mayor directly, with specific questions. What was even more interesting to note was that whilst our formal IDP meetings are normally attended by senior citizens, callers to the programme were mostly young people who had some very interesting points to make which made the engagement to be very interesting”.

FG 1, Participant 3:

“The uMshwathi Local Municipality IDP address by the Mayor on a radio station in June 2020 was probably one of the most effective ways to attend to our concerns as voters at this Municipality. The Mayor was able to effectively respond to almost all the concerns including those of accessing municipal information”.

FG 3, Participant 9:

“UMshwathi Local Municipality is really trying their best to provide us with information. The use of Short Message System (SMS) for urgent information is proof enough that they do not wait for formal meetings to communicate with us”.

However, another participant in a different focus group had an opposing view on what used to transpire before the pandemic hit, indicating that the system was just used to inform instead of engaging communities.

FG 2, Participant 1:

“UMshwathi Local Municipality does invite us to Izimbizo as part of public participation and access to information but what I have noticed is that Izimbizo are only meant to inform us of their plans as opposed to providing us an opportunity to engage with the municipality”.

FG 2, Participant 4:

“This Municipality needs to create a platform for members of the public within their area of jurisdiction on how they will address our concerns with regards to accessing municipal information because the website is hardly updated and ward committees are not effective”.

FG 3, Participant 10:

“Public gatherings of uMshwathi Local Municipality do not afford us an opportunity to engage the management of the Municipality on how to access public information. They always come with a fixed agenda to address what they want to achieve and do not consider our input”.

The problem with community concerns on access to information is usually the way in which access to information is structured at government level (Offenbacher, 2004). Siegal (2001) advises that community members should expect to be given little-to-no feedback during public engagements with municipalities, for various reasons, including limited time allocated to such meetings, and the large number of participants. This finding supports the previous finding of Graham (2014) that attending to community concerns on public participation helps to ensure smooth communication

between the municipality and the community that it serves. However, this is not a good indicator of the effectiveness of a community participation system. Members of the public are usually left with more questions than answers with reference to concerns on accessing local government information.

This finding supports the finding of previous researchers on receiving community concerns Copus *et al.* (2017), Savini and Grant (2020), Cullen *et al.* (2003), Chikulo (2009) and Nakuta (2013).

4.4.2 Times and venues for public meetings

Those inviting community members to a meeting must ensure that the venue for the meeting is known, easily accessible, and that members of the public are given an opportunity to supply input for the agenda (Young, Williams and Goldberg, 1993). This study found that effectiveness of community participation was also dependent on the time and the location of the public meetings.

FG 3, Participant 4:

“Communication by the Municipality to us as members of the public is not effective because their meetings are called at very awkward times and dates resulting in most of us missing out on valuable information. How do you call a community meeting on a Wednesday at 10:00 when most people who should be recipients of such information are either at work or at school? Are they expecting pensioners to be able to grasp that information and take decisions for the majority?”.

The 2016 Statistics South Africa survey shows that the age group of 65 years and above accounts for only 3.9% of the population that resides within the uMshwathi Local Municipality. Holding these meetings during weekdays therefore means that less than 5% of the community members can attend. This becomes a disadvantage for the most active age group of between the ages 15 – 64, especially the youth and those who are either out seeking employment opportunities, or at work.

Respondent 7:

“Whenever there is a public gathering that is called to a central point by the uMshwathi Local Municipality, they send a fifteen-seater taxi per ward to collect

15 people to represent over 3000 voters and those representatives do not cascade that information to the rest of the residents of the ward after that meeting”.

Creighton (2005) states clearly that the time and venue of public engagements should suit the participants and not staff; and therefore holding meetings for the benefit of the latter does not help the community at all. The ward councillor and members of ward committees must provide members of the public with transport to attend municipal public meetings, clarifying their role in those meetings (Matosse, 2013). The transportation that is provided also poses a challenge because it is never enough nor bears in mind the size of a ward and the cascading of the information.

One of the advantages of a proper consultation process is that people will always support a decision when given an opportunity to participate meaningfully before any decision is taken (Arvai, 2003). The danger with only providing information to a few members of the public, and not giving them an opportunity to contribute negatively damages the integrity of community participation systems; results can be as devastating as the “Poo Protests” of the City of Cape Town (Bob, 2018). This finding is supported by Chikulo (2009), who concluded that the decision to politicise access to local government information in Zambia also had devastating effects on the community of the people of Zambia.

4.4.3 Delayed and outdated information

The reality of public participation and access to information is that this is a concept that was born in Western countries. It has become an important element of the transmission of information between the public service and the public it serves throughout the world (Nadeem, Hameed and Haydar, 2016). For this system to work effectively, this information must be shared timeously, delays in providing information usually having a negative effect on the community (Naidoo and Ramphal, 2018). Guenter, van Emmerik and Schreurs (2014) also believe that it is crucial for public service institutions to provide timeous information. This study found that information from the municipality tended to be delayed, and outdated, with negative implications for both the communities and the municipality.

Respondent 1:

“Full Council meetings are only held on a quarterly basis and this is where decisions about municipal services are taken and how members of the community will access municipal information. Sometimes we find information that should have been communicated say a month or two ago but because no one updates us on this information, this information is sometimes outdated”.

FG 1, Participant 2:

“Participation systems in uMshwathi Local Municipality are not effective because of poor planning. You would find that in most cases they will send crucial information very late either because of bad planning or because they want to achieve communication targets that were set for them”.

FG 1, Participant 3:

“One of the challenges with the policies of our local municipality is that when they develop policies like those that have to do with public participation, we as members of the public are not requested to provide our input. I have serious reservations with the systems they are using because for example our area has bad reception for some of the radio stations, but you will find them using the same radio stations and we miss out”.

FG 3, Participant 1:

“...delaying in providing the community with relevant and timeous information usually leads to the community inventing their own form of public participation which sometimes end up in unnecessary service delivery protests. The moment they delay providing information on time results in suspicions of councillors colluding with their friends and family to access municipal jobs and tenders and this is when the community feels left out”.

Respondent 5:

“...as ward councillors we are always updated with information timeously through emails and the WhatsApp group but information for members of the community is usually delayed and hence ineffective. I have since made it a point that as soon

as I get information, I cascade it to members of my ward committee who in turn forward it to members of the public. Even a simple document like the Municipal Systems Act is not on the municipal website”.

Municipalities must provide timely information because this enables community members to have a say in the municipal decision-making processes (Allan and Heese, 2008). This also helps to eliminate unnecessary confusion and may reduce suspicions of collusion between the ward councillors and officials. The delay of information to the public undermines the effectiveness of community participation systems. This was identified as the main reason for service delivery protests, nicknamed “Poo Protests” in the City of Cape Town (Mchunu, 2012). Such demands the attention of uMshwathi Local Municipality. This problem requires the municipality to instal corrective measures to fast track the sharing of information.

4.4.4 Municipal information and rural areas

Effective and sustainable rural development can be enhanced through giving people in rural areas access to information (Jacobs and Herselman, 2006). Soriano (2007) and Mukerji (2007) concur that making information technology available through telecentres in rural areas will improve access to information for the communities. This study identified challenges faced by rural communities in accessing municipal information. Challenges include lack of access to the internet, and the long distances residents must travel to attend public meetings: most of the time transport provided by the municipality is insufficient.

Respondent 1:

“We have a serious problem of limited access to the internet within most wards within the uMshwathi Local Municipality. Traditional Leaders also rely on the internet to access municipal information as well as to communicate with all people within the various wards of the municipality”.

FG 3, Participant 1:

“Access to information in a deep rural area like our ward is a huge challenge because we do not have access to the network, the houses are far apart which

makes walking from house to house to invite people to a meeting an even bigger challenge”.

FG 3, Participant 3:

“You will find that the Inkosi will call us to a meeting at the Traditional Council offices on a Monday and the Ward Councillor then invites us to a different meeting two days later. The distances that we travel to attend these meetings in completely different parts of the ward coupled with lack of public transport in rural areas is too much for us”.

FG 3, Participant 6:

“Unlike urban wards of uMshwathi Local Municipality, our rural wards are wide to make up the required demarcation and the number of voters to have a ward. This Municipality must help improve access to the internet in the rural areas if they are serious about us accessing public information. They hold these meetings during the day on weekdays and so how they expect pensioners to walk such long distances to attend public meetings”.

Respondent 7:

“The Municipality expects us as ward councillors to ensure that the public participation systems are effective and yet they have not been able to engage the network service providers to improve network reception in the rural wards of the municipality. The Municipal Manager and officials must assist in this regard”.

Molawa (2009) sums this up very well when he refers to South Africa as being a first- and third-world country rolled into one, when it comes to access to information technology. This is the case in uMshwathi Local Municipality where there is a great divide between rural and urban communities, yet access to municipal information is vital to all. This is a serious problem that requires intervention by local government. Clearly, the rural community of uMshwathi Local Municipality lives in a third-world country in which they have no access to the internet. This is because of the lack of network infrastructure, while also having to cope with the high cost of internet access before the Covid pandemic and long distances to travel. Such undermines the effectiveness of the community participation systems of uMshwathi Local Municipality.

4.5 Opinions of Service Recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their Participation in the Services they receive

Backlogs in the delivery of services at local government level remain a challenge, most service-delivery protests in South Africa being caused by lack of information or lack of accurate information (Mdlalose, 2016). More than ever, the views of service recipients are imperative, especially relating to their participation in service delivery (Madlala, 2005). This study found that communities believed that their inputs are not considered by the municipality; and uMshwathi Local Municipality has an ineffective complaints-management system which negatively affects their engagement in municipal issues.

4.5.1 Consideration of the public's input into 'final' municipal documents

Alberta Municipal Affairs (2012) states that municipalities affording meaningful public engagement prior to making decisions that affect their communities reduce public protests. However, this study found that most participants complained of the way they are compelled to access public information. Their views seem not to be considered by uMshwathi Local Municipality. Participants are given an opportunity to give input about the services provided to them by the municipality; however, their input is never evident in the final municipal documents. Members of the community are of the view that their involvement is only for compliance; hence their input is not used.

FG 1, Participant 2:

“Our participation in the consultation process is more for compliance purposes than information sharing because even the requests and proposals that we make during the IDP roadshows are not considered when the final document comes out”.

FG 1, Participant 7:

“...for some reason uMshwathi Local Municipality does not do what we ask them to do as members of the community, they do their own thing”.

Members of other focus groups expressed similar dissatisfaction with both councillors and municipal staff. Municipal officials are seen by FG 3, Participant 1 to:

“...engage us very late and then see our input as less important maybe because they see themselves as experts in the field compared to us the general public”.

FG 2, Participant 4:

“...once a councillor is elected, s/he will influence the nomination of people within their political party to all municipal committees and from there everybody else is side-lined. Tenders in the wards, job opportunities, information, etc. will all go their cronies”.

Overall, however, some focus group members believed that the municipality was doing much better than its neighbouring municipality, nevertheless acknowledging that they still have problems, while not as bad as ‘next door’.

FG 2, Participant 2:

“...compared to big cities like our neighbour the Msunduzi Municipality, uMshwathi Local Municipality is trying their best, we have seen them collecting refuse religiously, they patch potholes and they ensure that grass is cut timeously. Compared with the filth, lawlessness and smoke in Msunduzi Municipality I honestly think they are way ahead of the Capital City of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal”.

One of the crucial elements of ensuring communities’ access to public information is inclusivity (Quick and Feldman, 2011). Inclusivity suggests that the public service and the communities they serve ‘work hand in glove’ in the processes leading to the delivery of public services; and that the community has a say in how these services are delivered to them. To achieve this, the public service must use varying methods and avenues to consult the public, treating members of the public as partners, rather than mere service recipients (Bovaird, 2007).

Participants pointed to a gap in how the uMshwathi Local Municipality considers their input during the consultation processes of the municipality. The data collected points to either misinterpretation of public views or lost translation in the process of drafting the final document. This is a crucial factor that must be considered when dealing with public views.

The focus of the municipality should be on public input being scrutinised. Feedback must be provided to members of the public when their input has been rejected. Such allows the public to be 'truly' partners in services, rather than simply recipients (Bovaird, 2007). Full engagement (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2012), hence fully informed communities, ushers in true democracy (Bastidas, 2004). This outlook is currently lacking in uMshwathi Local Municipality.

4.5.2 Ineffective complaints-management system

Local government should develop a leaflet to help guide communities on how to lodge their complaints. More importantly, how to follow up on a complaint already lodged must be illustrated (Brennan and Douglas, 2002). Once a complaint is received and successfully attended to, confidence in the municipality by the public is noted on willingness to redress gaps identified in the service-delivery chain (Linton, 1995). This study found that in uMshwathi Local Municipality, the complaints system was not seen as effective because no feedback is given after complaints are lodged. No one takes responsibility – instead, a 'blame game' is resorted to.

FG 1, Participant 4:

"...maybe someone from the Municipality needs to tell us how to register our complaints because whenever I am not happy with something I usually phone reception at the Municipality. They usually take my complaint and contact number down but out of the four or complaints not even once have I been called and given feedback of an update".

FG 3, Participant 5:

"The uMshwathi Local Municipality needs to implement Batho Pele principles accordingly because they do not attend to our complaints. If you complain to the ward councillor, they will always blame officials of the Municipality but my ward councillor has never provided me with feedback".

FG 3, Participant 3:

"Some of the public servants employed at uMshwathi Local Municipality need to earn their salaries. They do not treat us in line with the Batho Pele principles of "Putting People First". I would have thought that we would have been aware of

the complaints management system of the Municipality and that they would wear name badges when at work but these things are not in place”.

Comments made by these participants are supported by a citizen satisfaction survey commissioned by uMshwathi Local Municipality in 2017. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was made by the service provider. It was concluded that, amongst the weaknesses identified by the customers of the municipality, was the poor work ethic, and poor implementation of plans and policies by staff (uMshwathi Local Municipal, 2017).

Allan and Hees (2008) and Van Donk (2012) all state that failure to implement policies, including not providing timeous and accurate information on local government, usually leads to service-delivery protests. This finding demands urgent intervention from the uMshwathi Local Municipality to minimise the number of service-delivery protests within the municipality. The municipality must adhere to the *Batho Pele* principles. The municipality must address the issues of ‘finger-pointing and the blame game’ between the elected – the politicians in this case who are councillors of the municipality – and the appointed: the administration of the municipality/municipal employees, for community participation to flourish. Local government in Zambia has a similar problem: public servants provide information to members of the community as and when it suits them. This has also resulted in a number of public protests owing to inability to access local government information (Munyinda and Habasonda, 2013).

4.5.3 Public engagement in service-delivery issues

Qwabe and Mdaka (2011), studying public participation, concluded that one of the challenges with participation in service-delivery issues is that ward councillors do not consider public input into municipal documents and policies. Several other researchers have concluded that most members of the public lose interest in participating in service-delivery public engagements, seeing themselves as merely passive participants (Lodge and Mottiar, 2016; McGowan, 2017 and; Umraw, 2017). As long as members of the public do not play an active role in service-delivery issues, they will continue to withdraw their participation (Masiya *et al.*, 2019). Van Donk, Pieterse, Parnell, and Swilling (2008) argue that community members must participate in public service delivery issues in order to ‘strengthen citizen right and voice’. This study found

that uMshwathi Local Municipality does engage the traditional leadership and other relevant structures of the municipality. However, there is a divide in terms of people who want to engage; there are also political tensions and bias in the general processes adopted by the municipality.

Respondent 1:

“UMshwathi Local Municipality always engages the traditional leadership and it participates fully in all service delivery issues. They have never excluded it and its input is considered”.

An official of the municipality put blame on the ‘appointed’.

Respondent 3:

“...we do our best to ensure that we take our communities along and encourage them to participate in service delivery issues but we get very little support from the officials of the Municipality. They need to use different avenues to ensure the public is well informed and informed timeously”.

FG 1, Participant 1:

“Our ward is blessed in that our ward councillor works very well with almost all community members in this ward. The ward councillor encourages us to participate in service delivery issues and we cooperate fully”.

The issue of regulatory compliance emerged.

FG 2, Participant 4:

“Our participation in service delivery issues and engagements have no value because our input is not considered by the uMshwathi Local Municipality. It looks like they do this as a requirement and not because they need our input”.

FG 2, Participant 6:

“There is usually tension between ward committee members and the ward councillor which brings political power dynamics to the fore. The truth is that most ward councillors feel threatened by ward committee members and they therefore

exclude ward committee members as well as those members of the community who they regard as a threat to their positions as ward councillors”.

FG 3, Participant 1:

“One of the challenges with regards to participation in service delivery issues in rural wards is that capable people do not want to associate themselves with activities within the ward. Here I am referring to people who are professionals and specialists in the various fields like education, security, health, legal, etc. This robs the local community of their skills and expertise and we find ourselves only left with people who see these committees as a vehicle to self-enrichment and employment opportunities in the uMshwathi Local Municipality”.

FG 3, Participant 4:

“There is just too much politics in the public participation process of the Municipality and the elderly seem to be losing interest in participating. It is only when meetings are held during the week that you would find most of them participant in service delivery issues”.

Ward committees should be representatives of the various structures within the ward. Unfortunately, most of the ward committees are simply an extension of the local political party branch within the same ward (Piper and Deacon, 2008). This has led to tensions because those who are not politically aligned feel neglected, only the views of those politically aligned being considered, as this study has found. Clearly, at least from this research, there is enough evidence to suggest that some people in the various wards within uMshwathi Local Municipality do not want to participate in service-delivery issues because of the ‘politics-administration dichotomy’ (Wilson, 1887). There is a need for this municipality to attend to this matter. The issue seems to be spreading within the Umgungundlovu District Municipality. This was also discovered in the Msunduzi Local Municipality in the same district back in 2008 (Piper and Deacon, 2008).

These findings clearly indicate a gap and loss of faith by most members of the public in participating in the services they receive from uMshwathi Local Municipality. The municipality must change focus and do more to encourage participation in the activities

of the municipality, especially those in which the public receive services. This can start by training and educating the communities on their engagement rights in the services they receive, as envisioned by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Van der Waldt (2011) stresses that participation in service-delivery matters is the responsibility of both the public service and members of the community. Municipalities should offer training to members of the community on the importance of participating in service-delivery matters. Such has a direct impact on their livelihoods (Andoh, 2011).

4.6 Perceptions of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on Access to Information Regarding services

An important element of assessing the role of information in public/community participation is the views of the people for whom these services are intended. Opinions of the public, in this case the communities within uMshwathi Local Municipality, are essential, and should be considered during the decision-making processes of the municipality (Johnson, 2008). With regard to service recipients' views, this study found that training of ward committee members was necessary for them to be able to access information. The information could also then be shared with ordinary community members. Another issue of 'part-time' councillors was of grave concern. Councillors and ward committees are at the front line of sharing information to their communities. These are the themes that emerged.

4.6.1 Training of ward committee members

Several participants pointed to the lack of understanding of their roles as ward committee members, specifically on the policies and prescripts used by local government and, most egregiously, those of uMshwathi Local Municipality.

FG 2, Participant 9:

"The reality is that if you were to ask me or anyone in this focus group about the IDP document of the uMshwathi Local Municipality very few of us would know what it contains for this ward let alone having a copy of the document".

FG 2, Participant 10:

“...our lack of understanding of applicable policies point to the poor quality of training we receive as members of ward committees. This has a bearing on what we cascade to people who nominated us to represent their interests in the Municipality”.

Respondent 3:

“The Speaker of the Municipality is responsible for transferring information to members of ward committees who serve as conduits of information between the municipality and members of the community and they report directly to her. The municipality provides them with training as well as stationery to enable them to do their work. This arrangement has proven to be problematic because when we as ward councillors engage with them, we find lots of gaps in their knowledge and this points to insufficient training. The other problem is that this training as well as training materials are all in English which is a problem for those who do not understand English. Whilst the municipality monitors the performance of ward committees through formal reports that we submit to the municipality there is no analysis and feedback on the reports that we submit. It seems like the reports are only meant to tick boxes”.

4.6.2 Part-time ward councillors

Many participants raised very sharply the issue of ‘part-time’ ward councillors. Their most serious concern was that councillors who are full-time employees elsewhere and part-time councillors do not have enough time to consult community members on matters that affect them on a daily basis. Being a ward councillor is seen and treated as a part-time job, with negative consequences.

FG 1, Participant 9:

“...sometimes we need crucial information from ward councillors only to find that they are in class teaching learners and we lose out. This responsibility is sometimes given to people who treat us as a by the way and we lose out on important information”.

FG 3, Participant 2:

“Our experience has taught us that the Municipality cascade information during the week because offices operate between Monday and Friday. If there is information about a programme or project of the Municipality, we miss this information because our councillor is baking bread at the factory where he is a full-time employee and work a twelve-hour shift. By the time he gets home it is late and he is too tired to call a meeting”.

FG 3, Participant 4:

“...why is this Municipality allowing people who have full-time jobs to be ward councillors? There are very capable and unemployed people in this community who would do a good job but they are not given an opportunity. The public service regulation and other relevant legislation must make it difficult for full-time employees to be elected as ward councillors”.

4.6.3 Lack of transparency and information

The principle of openness and transparency is an important element of the principles of *Batho Pele*, as espoused in the White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery (1995). Researchers, the likes of Nzimakwe and Reddy (2008); Nzimakwe (2010); Nzimakwe and Mpehle (2012) also stress the importance of the *Batho Pele* principles in improving and moving South Africa’s local government forward. In this study, several participants stated that the unemployment levels within almost all the wards of the uMshwathi Local Municipal area are so high that most people rely on municipal projects to put food on their tables. Hence, information relating to these projects and other employment opportunities is vital, but not transparent.

FG 1, Participant 7:

“I have two unemployed graduates in my family and they rely on contract jobs in the Municipality but they have not worked for a number of years now due to delayed information from the Municipality. The last time they got contract jobs was when we had a full-time councillor who was able to cascade information on time”.

FG 1, Participant 8:

“...if you are not friends with the ward councillor or employees in the Municipality you will not get information on time. Tenders are given to friends of people who work in the Municipality especially those who work at Supply Chain Management. You must see the vehicles they drive and their houses where they stay”.

FG 3, Participant 3:

“UMshwathi Local Municipality is a rural municipality and its people depend largely on agricultural products to make a living. Realising this, a few years ago this Municipality sent a delegation a few youths to an educational visit in the Southern Asia in Vietnam to study the processing of agricultural products to boost youth employment and reduce unemployment. How the youth was identified for this training and how they assisted other youth when they returned was never communicated to the rest of the youth within the Municipality. What we do know, however, is that all that youth that spent months being trained overseas are all sitting idle at home and unemployed. Why spend so much money where the selection criteria was not clear and in the end there was no return on such a huge investment?”.

FG 2, Participant 1:

“It is normal to find that members of the same ward committee do not have the same information from the same uMshwathi Local Municipality. Our councillor attends council meetings but he does not share the council agenda with us and does not provide us with feedback on council matters”.

4.6.4 Municipal representatives and information about services

Municipal representatives include both the elected and the appointed. Key to the provision of information to communities, is the elected (politicians) and appointed (staff) of the uMshwathi Local Municipality. Participants were asked to share their views on their engagement with staff (including top management) of the municipality for the purposes of the provision of information about services they receive. This research also found that there was confusion with regard to how information is cascaded to members of the public.

There are various units within the uMshwathi Local Municipality that provide different sets of information to the public. This causes much confusion to the recipients of this information, the study has found. For example, the Community Services Department, the Technical Services Department, the Integrated Development Plan Unit, and the Public Participation Unit, all provide varying and confusing information to service recipients, causing dissatisfaction in the process. An example would be that sometimes a staff member from Technical Services would state that the road project included in the IDP had been budgeted for, and that it would be implemented soon. Conversely, an IDP unit employee would assert that the project will be implemented in two years' time.

FG 1, Participant 4:

"...our Municipality need to ensure that their frontline staff is well trained on how to engage and respond on information requests. They take too long to respond and sometimes they provide us with incorrect information".

FG 1, Participant 2:

"Staff of the uMshwathi Local Municipality confuse us a lot. Staff members from different departments of the same Municipality will provide us with different and confusing information about the same topic. The Mayor and Municipal Manager must intervene and stop this confusion".

FG 2, Participant 4:

"Sometimes we wonder whether the same staff from the same Municipality give us confusing information for the sake of confusing us or whether the Municipality does verify information before it is given to the public".

FG 2, Participant 7:

"Staff seem to be too scared of ward councillors. I have asked for information more than once for public information that the Municipality should be able to provide to us and they keep referring me to my ward councillor for such information".

FG 3, Participant 2:

“Why does the uMshwathi Local Municipality have frontline staff who cannot provide us with information about services we receive from the Municipality but instead refer us to ward councillors?”.

FG 3, Participant 6:

“UMshwathi Local Municipality should have a system for us to be able to complain if we are not satisfied with the service, but we have not been made aware of the complaints procedure”.

An institution that provides prompt, efficient, and effective information and service stands head and shoulders above its competitors. Such an institution always has satisfied service recipients (Peterson, Neels, Barczi and Graham, 2013). The views of service recipients on information regarding services paint a bleak picture of uMshwathi Local Municipality, this study has found. Lack of staff training, barely available (part-time) councillors in some of the wards, insufficient training for ward committee members, and lack of monitoring of the performance of ward committees, all result in dissatisfied service recipients. All these elements have emerged in this study.

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1995) refers to a few ideas that uMshwathi Local Municipality should be implementing to provide citizens with pertinent services. These include the setting of specific standards for the delivery of services, being open and transparent about public-service delivery, as well as establishing redress mechanisms, which are currently lacking in uMshwathi Local Municipality. This research has identified specific gaps within the municipality in terms of community perceptions on access to information regarding services. Such matters must be addressed. If the issues identified by this study are not addressed, and are allowed to continue, this municipality will open itself to service-delivery protests in the future.

4.7 Access to Information and Democracy in Local Governance

This study was informed by the literature and conceptual framework and, more specifically, by the need for equality, communication, and development. In terms of equality, the study found that uMshwathi Local Municipality is not willing to ensure that all members of the public are treated equally in gaining access to information.

Councillors and ward committee members seem to enjoy better treatment in respect of access to information than most ordinary members of the community. The municipality also needs to recognise the role of traditional leaders, ensuring that they are provided with accurate and timeous information.

The other element of democracy that the study perused was communication. This municipality was expected to deliver timeous communication to the citizenry. This would include the use of e-governance and social media, *inter alia*. The study found that, while this municipality has put such systems in place, these systems were lacking/not effective and inefficient in this regard. Requests for information through the use of e-government platforms are seldom responded to. There is insufficient access to the internet in most wards, because the municipality is mostly rural, and shared communication is mostly delayed.

The final element of the literature review on democracy in this study was development. Development is linked to democracy based on being a continuous process. Such requires the various stakeholders in a given jurisdiction to coordinate and collaborate in addressing needs. This is founded on access to information. Whenever there are new developments in a ward, for example, communication is needed. Communication has to be improved so that democracy (*as enshrined in the Bill of Rights of South Africa*) is guaranteed through provision of basic services. The study concluded that there is some improvement in the peri-urban wards of the municipality, while the rural wards remain largely underdeveloped. Hence the lack of proper communication is negatively affecting development of the area.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to find answers to the research questions and objectives of this study. A thorough analysis of the findings has been presented, based on the information collected from all participants. The analysis clarified that, while uMshwathi Local Municipality has put systems in place to ensure access to information to members of the public, there are gaps that the municipality must address. These include providing people of uMshwathi Local Municipality with timeous information. Ward committees must be capacitated accordingly. The performance of ward

councillors should be monitored closely, and internet connectivity must be improved in all wards.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented data that was collected on access to information for community participation in uMshwathi Local Municipality. The findings were presented, analysed, and discussed; and implications are reflected with relation to the theoretical foundations of this study. This final chapter concludes the study, and makes recommendations on identified gaps and contributions of the study. Chapter 5 also recommends areas for further research on the topic.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 Conclusion aligned with Objective 1: *To assess the systems that are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information in uMshwathi Local Municipality.*

This objective was to assess the systems that are currently in place giving communities access to information in uMshwathi Local Municipality. The researcher noted systems that have been put in place by the uMshwathi Local Municipality giving communities access to information and improving access to information by communities residing within the Municipality's area of jurisdiction.

This study found that systems used by the Municipality rely mostly on technology which is also not used effectively, efficiently, and economically. The greatest challenge is that access to the internet is very limited for most people residing within the uMshwathi Local Municipal area. There are poor telecommunications infrastructures in most of the wards within the uMshwathi Local Municipality. The Municipal newsletter intended to provide further information does not help much; very few copies are printed by the Municipality. There was no proof that copies of this newsletter are distributed to all wards within the Municipality.

5.2.2 Conclusion aligned with Objective 2: *To examine the effectiveness of community participation systems in uMshwathi Local Municipality.*

This study found that responding to community concerns is not effective. Cascading information to communities was delayed, and shared information was sometimes outdated, or late. This study concludes that several challenges exist on effectiveness of community participation systems within uMshwathi Local Municipality.

The fact that formal meetings are held during the week when most people are either at work or attending classes in school coupled with long distances that must be walked to attend such meetings is a problem. Failure by the Municipality to open up avenues for members of the public to voice their displeasure with accessing public information is another challenge raised by participants (*the community members*) in this study. All the above is exacerbated by information that is delayed or communicated very late, either through suspected poor planning by the Municipality, or only communicated for compliance purposes. Finally, there are staff members from the various departments of the Municipality who provide different information on the same topic. This confuses those (*the community members*) who are meant to consume this information.

5.2.3 Conclusion aligned with Objective 3: *To explore the opinions of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive.*

This objective was to solicit and understand the views of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services offered to them. It was found that consideration of the public's input into 'final' municipal documents was not considered. There is an ineffective complaints-management system in place, and there is limited public engagement in service-delivery issues. This is problematic: the legislative framework around access to information and public participation by service recipients is very clear in democratic South Africa. This includes the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which is supreme, and its cornerstone, the Bill of Rights, the Municipal Systems Act, and the *Batho Pele* principles, amongst others. All such are aimed at seeking the views of service recipients, considering these before decisions are made by the public service. In South Africa, democracy is not limited to a vote: it is a continuous process of government engagement with communities.

Based on the information collected from participants, the researcher was able to conclude that this Municipality has not been able to fulfil this requirement, leaving

service recipients frustrated. Failure to incorporate input from service recipients into the final documents, and an ineffective complaints-management system are just some of the gaps that this research was able to uncover. Other factors that were concluded as problematic include insufficient transport to attend public meetings, lack of timeous documents to help participants prepare for these meetings, as well as considerations of the venue, date, and time of public engagements/meetings.

5.2.4 Conclusion aligned with Objective 4: *To determine the perception of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services.*

In trying to determine the perceptions of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality a number of themes emerged. Such included the need for training of ward committees, the issue of ward councillors with other commitments beyond their municipal duties, the lack of information critical to transparency, and having a balance in roles of information-sharing between those elected and appointed within the Municipality.

Having councillors who are employed on a full-time basis elsewhere, for example, who are teachers, robs the service recipients (*the community*) of crucial information that should be cascaded to them, often resulting in delayed information. Participants stated that whenever they needed to access certain councillors, these people were seldom available – having other pressing commitments to their full-time employer.

The study also found that some employees of the Municipality, especially frontline staff, should be capacitated on how and which information must be cascaded to members of the public. Failure to be transparent about municipal services is another area that needs attention.

5.3 Revisiting research questions

5.3.1 What systems are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information on uMshwathi Local Municipality?

This research question was aimed at finding out systems that are currently in place to ensure that communities within the uMshwathi Local Municipality's area of jurisdiction

have access to municipal information. Various systems are used to communicate municipal information. These include face-to-face engagements such as *izimbizo* and Ward Committee meetings, the use of technology such as the municipal website, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp for communities to access municipal information, the use of print media and radio stations. The researcher therefore had to identify and research the systems used by uMshwathi Local Municipality.

The study found that the uMshwathi Local Municipality uses various systems to ensure that communities have access to municipal information. These include the use of technology such as the website and social media networks like Facebook, municipal website, Twitter, WhatsApp messages, and formal face-to-face meetings. The study found that systems that rely on the use of such means of communication (municipal website, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp messaging), are a challenge in most wards because there is limited/poor or no access to internet connectivity. The study also found that the traditional face-to-face structured meetings are not structured; and that representation in these meetings is insufficient, only a few people being invited to such meetings.

5.3.2 What is the extent of community participation systems' effectiveness in uMshwathi Local Municipality?

This research question was aimed assessing the effectiveness of the community participation systems of uMshwathi Local Municipality. The researcher engaged research participants on their assessment of the effectiveness of the community participation systems by the Municipality. This included when and how the community access municipal information and identifying gaps (if any) on how community members gauge the effectiveness of these systems.

The study found that the community participation systems used by uMshwathi Local Municipality are not effective. There are complaints registered by members of the community regarding access to information; these complaints are not attended to by the Municipality. Requests for information by members of the community are also not attended to timeously.

5.3.3 What are the views of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive?

This purpose of this research question was to discover the views of the community on their participation in the service they receive from the Municipality. The researcher had to engage the participants on what happens to their input on accessing information and how public services are delivered to them. The researcher had to find the views of service recipients on whether their input is considered in the final documents of the Municipality. Also, the researcher had to assess the perspective of the service recipients on the number of representatives per ward who are invited to public engagements where the Municipality shares public information.

The study found that most of the input from members of the community during their participation in the services they receive is not included in the final documents of the Municipality. Community members are not even provided with feedback relaying why their input was not considered.

5.3.4 What are the views of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services?

This research question was intended at assessing the views of service recipients on access to information regarding services. In this question the researcher had to seek the views of service recipients on the role of the ward councillor, the ward committees, as well as the role played by officials of the Municipality on information regarding services.

The study found that community members are dissatisfied with ward councillors who have full-time employment elsewhere; such people do not pay full attention to their responsibilities as ward councillors. The other finding was that ward committees are not effective. Members are invited to municipal meetings; as representatives of the community they are expected to provide feedback to their constituencies. Unfortunately, they have not been providing this feedback. Officials in the Municipality were also found to be failing in ensuring that members of the public can access timeous information regarding services.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations aligned with Objective 1: *To assess the systems that are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information in uMshwathi Local Municipality.*

This study revealed that there is a problem with the accessing of the internet in most of the rural wards of the uMshwathi Local Municipality. This makes it burdensome for the Municipality to rely on this system for communities to gain relevant municipal information. Clearly, this is a challenge that must be overcome if members of the community are to access municipal information shared via the internet/web platforms.

The South African Department of Communications and Digital Technologies has over the years committed to improving internet access for all South Africans. Through telecentres, this department has been able to augment access to information, more especially in rural areas; and this is what is being recommended for uMshwathi Local Municipality.

UMshwathi Local Municipality should use these telecentres to empower women and people with disabilities, ameliorating unemployment within these vulnerable sectors. Telecentres will also help give communities access to municipal information posted on its website. Such should include the municipal newsletter, written in both English and isiZulu.

UMshwathi Local Municipality must also engage internet access per high-mast service providers, with the view to installing these masts. This will help increase internet access for members of the public residing within the Municipality's area of jurisdiction.

The role of mobile cellphone network providers is also crucial for ensuring that people within uMshwathi Local Municipality can access municipal information through cellular phones. It is therefore equally important that the management of this Municipality has a formal engagement with the service providers. The purpose of this engagement would be to improve the services of the uMshwathi Local Municipality by equally distributing their network coverage. Their services are not provided evenly within the entire jurisdiction of the Municipality.

5.4.2 Recommendation aligned with Objective 2: *To examine the effectiveness of community participation systems within uMshwathi Local Municipality.*

This objective concluded that, while the Municipality is unable to meet all the demands and needs of community members on access to information, there are no avenues to redress this by the uMshwathi Local Municipality.

This Municipality must develop a documented system aimed at addressing community concerns on public participation. Such should include a system to deal with complaints, as espoused in the redress principles of *Batho Pele*. The systems of community participation by the Municipality must be made effective.

Evidence from various studies points to most employees in the public service acting as gatekeepers of information meant for members of the public. Such emerged strongly from this research. There should be ongoing open and transparent interface between members of the community and the frontline staff of this Municipality.

Evidence from this research confirms that ward committees who should act as a link between the Municipality and the communities are not doing so effectively. The uMshwathi Local Municipality must ensure that ward committees understand their role, and that they are well capacitated to carry out this function.

5.4.3 Recommendations aligned with Objective 3: *To explore the opinions of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive.*

This study concluded that there is a problem of input of members of the public not being incorporated into the final documents of the Municipality after each consultation process. It may well be that the Municipality has recourse to logical and sound reasoning; however, the greatest challenge here seems to be lack of feedback to participants. Based on this conclusion, it is clear that the *Batho Pele* principles are not being implemented by the Municipality. In this regard, three of the applicable principles – consultation, information, and openness and transparency – are not being implemented. UMshwathi Local Municipality must offer a formal workshop for all

frontline staff and management, who must understand and implement these principles accordingly.

Further, it is recommended that a unit responsible for public participation in the office of the speaker of the Municipality should develop and implement a strategy and plan for public participation. This will help ensure that the community is able to access relevant and timeous information. The research also found that there are staff members in various departments within the Municipality who are responsible for providing information to members of the public.

5.4.4 Recommendations aligned with Objective 4: *To determine the perception of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services.*

This research concluded that there are challenges of ward councillors who are employed elsewhere, only acting as part-time ward councillors. Such people are not always available to the communities they are meant to serve. Amongst the many responsibilities of ward councillors is that they should be spending much of their time attending to the needs of the community within the municipal ward they represent.

Such members should provide leadership, forwarding agendas and outcomes of the council meetings to their communities. In this regard, it is recommended that the office of the speaker of the uMshwathi Local Municipality develop a monitoring system on the performance of ward committees. Such employees should act in accordance with a code of conduct for councillors.

There is a need for the public-participation unit of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to conduct a training workshop for the officials of the municipality. Such would focus on public-participation legislation processes and requirements. Also, the recruitment process of the Municipality should adopt people with relevant qualifications for employment in the various units and departments, more especially, in the public-participation unit. The Municipality will then be able to perform accordingly with regard to offering communities the correct and timeous information.

5.5 Area(s) for further research

This research has brought to the fore challenges faced by members of the community within local government, more specifically, the uMshwathi Local Municipality, on access to information on public services. The research clearly indicated that politics plays a huge role in how information is cascaded to members of the public. The fact that members of ward committees are seen as an extension of the political party within the ward is certainly an interesting area for further research. Finally, there is a need to ensure that municipal staff members who are tasked with cascading information accordingly, are monitored, and held accountable.

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APPENDIXES

Consent Form

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
(HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Greetings,

My name is Ralph Mafezwe Khanyile from University of KwaZulu-Natal. My contact details tell / cell number respectively 033 328 1794, 083 385 0756 and my email address is mafezwe.khanyile@kznpremier.gov.za

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research. The aim and objectives of this research is to explore the impact of access to information on community participation in uMshwathi Local Municipality.

- To access the systems that are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information in Umshwathi Local Municipality
- To examine the effectiveness of community participation systems in Umshwathi Local Municipality
- To explore the opinions of service recipients of Umshwathi Local Municipality with regards to their participation in the services they receive
- To determine the perception of service recipients of Umshwathi Local Municipality with regards to access to information regarding services

The study is expected to include 37 participants and will be conducted within the Umshwathi Local Municipality's area of jurisdiction and specifically at Umshwathi Local Municipal Offices and wards 2, 3 and 10 of the municipality. It will involve collecting data through interviews post the coronavirus (covid 19) outbreak and lockdown. All

necessary measures such as social distancing will be adhered to hence the interviews will be 2 metres away as advised by the World Health Organisation. If you are uncomfortable with this, you will not be forced to participate. The duration of your participation if you choose to participate and remain in the study is expected to be 45 minutes. The study is self-funded.

Post the coronavirus (covid 19) outbreak and lockdown the study does not include any risk to participants. We hope that the study will create the following benefits which will assist the participants to understand the importance of accessing information for community participation in terms of getting to know the research findings of the thesis. The study does not have any participants who are currently on treatment for any health conditions.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 033 328 1794 / 083 385 0756 or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Your participation in the study is voluntary and by participating, you are granting the researcher permission to use your responses. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in the study. Your anonymity will be maintained by the researcher and the School of Management, I.T. & Governance and your responses will not be used for any purposes outside of this study.

All data, both electronic and hard copy, will be securely stored during the study and archived for a minimum of 5 years. After this time, all data will be destroyed in accordance to UKZN policies.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the study, please contact me or my research supervisor at the numbers listed above.

Sincerely

Researcher name:

Mr Ralph Mafezwe Khanyile

Signature:.....

Date:.....

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have been informed about the study entitled: Access to Information for Community Participation to Enhance Service Delivery in uMshwathi Municipality by Ralph Mafezwe Khanyile, the researcher contact details: Cell: 060 547 5297 Email: mafezwe.khanyile@kznpremier.gov.za

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

I have been informed that these interviews are taking place post the coronavirus (covid 19) outbreak and lockdown in South Africa

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

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Additional consent,

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Gatekeeper's Letter



uMshwathi Municipality

Umshwathi Municipality
Main Street
NEW HANOVER
3201

School of Management and Public Governance
University of KwaZulu Natal
WESTVILLE
3630

Dear Mr Khanyile

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY WITHIN THE UMSHWATHI MUNICIPAL AREA

I acknowledge receipt of your letter to conduct a research within Umshwathi Local Municipality using the topic *"Accessing information for community participation in local government: creating an enabling environment for service delivery in Umshwathi Municipality"*.

As a progressive municipality that promotes knowledge and development Umshwathi Municipality hereby grants you permission to conduct this study and you are requested to present this letter whenever you need to engage with the participants of your research study.

Please note that confidential information that you will receive from the officials of this municipality should be treated with the required confidentiality whether in form of storage of this data, analysis or during the publication process. We will endeavour to provide you with the required statistical information as well as approved reports of your subject matter of study if requested where this information is available.

I wish to thank you for choosing Umshwathi Municipality as your area of study as this will certainly go a long way in helping us improve service delivery for our community and request that you provide us a copy of your approved dissertation. If you could also share a soft copy of the approved dissertation to be uploaded in the research repository of the Umshwathi Municipality.

We would also appreciate a presentation to the Management Committee of the municipality on a date to be communicated as soon as we receive

DATE: 22/01/2020

VISION

"uMshwathi Owethu - Lets Build Together"

uMshwathi Municipality, Private Bag X29, Wartburg, 3233 • Main Road, New Hanover, 3230
Telephone: 033 816 6800 • Fax: 033 502 0286

Interview Schedules

Interview guide for in-depth interviews with the top management: uMshwathi Municipality

Below are the research objectives of this study:

The objectives of the study are:

- ✓ To access the systems that are currently in place to ensure that the communities have access to information on uMshwathi Local Municipality,
- ✓ To examine the effectiveness of community participation systems within uMshwathi Local Municipality,
- ✓ To explore the opinions of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on their participation in the services they receive, and
- ✓ To determine the perception of service recipients of uMshwathi Local Municipality on access to information regarding services.

Interview guide with Top Management of uMshwathi Municipality

- What is the role of uMshwathi Municipality in providing relevant and timeous information to members of the community with the area of jurisdiction of uMshwathi Municipality?
- Does the uMshwathi Municipality have an approved communication strategy?
- Are there any formal reports on the monitoring of the implementation of the approved communication strategy?
- What is the expected role of traditional leaders as conduits of information to and from the uMshwathi Municipality?
- What is the role of ward committees as conduits of information to and from the uMshwathi Municipality?
- Does technology play a role in providing information to members of the public?
- What media platforms does the uMshwathi Municipality utilise to provide information to the public?
- Does the uMshwathi monitor the performance of ward committee in providing information to the public, are there any formal reports to this effect?
- What support is provided to ward committees to ensure they are able to carry out their responsibilities?

- Days and times of meetings with the general members of the public?
- How is the public invited to attend council meetings and have they attended any of these meetings?

Interview guide for in-depth interviews with appointed management and the elected (councillors) at uMshwathi Municipality

- Does the uMshwathi Municipality have a communication strategy that was approved by council
- What are the roles of managers communication and public participation?
- What is the role of ward committees as conduits of information between the municipality and members of the communication?
- What is the role of ward councillors in as far as providing information to members of community is concerned
- What support, if any, is provided by uMshwathi Municipality to its ward committees?
- Is there any formal or informal training that is provided by uMshwathi Municipality to the ward committees?
- What challenges has the uMshwathi Municipality been faced with in as far providing information to members of the public?
- What systems are in place for the uMshwathi Municipality to receive and provide information to members of the public within your area of jurisdiction?
- Are there any formal reports provided by ward councillors with regards to the role of ward committees is concerned?
- How often is the uMshwathi Municipality website updated and when last was it updated?
- How often does the ward councillor meet with members of the ward to provide relevant and timeous information?
- How is urgent information cascaded to members of the public?
- Days and times of meetings with members of the public?

Interview guide for traditional leadership

- What is the role of traditional leadership in as far as receiving and cascading information to the subjects of the Inkosi and general members of the public?

- Is the traditional leadership represented in any of the structures of uMshwathi Municipality
- What is the relationship between the ward councillor and the Amakhosi within the uMshwathi Municipality?
- What is the role of the traditional leadership councillors and Izinduna is concerned with regards to providing uMshwathi Municipality information to members of the public?
- What are the views of the traditional leadership in as far as the provision of information to the subjects of the traditional leadership by the Umshwathi Municipality is concerned
- Does the traditional leadership have any formal meetings with ward councillors and ward committees?
- Are there any recommendations that the traditional leadership has in as far as receiving and cascading information from the uMshwathi Municipality to members of the public within uMshwathi Municipality's area of jurisdiction is concerned?

Interview guide for focus groups (Ward Committee members)

General:

- What role does the ward committee play in as far as receiving and providing information to members is concerned?
- Are all sections and sectors of the ward represented in the ward committee i.e. business, religious, sport, the elderly, youth, professionals, etc.
- Are there formal meetings, reports, relevant documentation, etc of the ward committee?
- Does the ward committee formally meet with members of the public within the ward?
- How do you access information from uMshwathi Municipality and cascade it to members of ward?
- How is the relationship between the ward councillor and the ward committee?
- What challenges, if any, are you faced with whilst receiving and cascading information from the community to the public?

- Times and day of meetings with members of the community that you represent?
- How is urgent information cascaded to members of the public?
- What is the role of churches in cascading information to and from uMshwathi Municipality?
- How would you rate the quality of information provided to yourselves and by extension to members of the public in your respective wards?
- What are the areas of improvement for the municipality with regards to providing information to members of the ward committees as well as members of the community?

Editors Certificate



Lydia Weight
NTSD English Specialist
SACE No: 11135129

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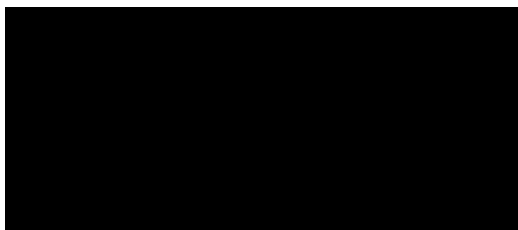
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09 July 2021

To whom it may concern

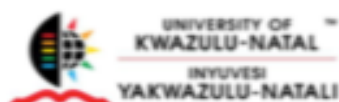
This is to certify that I, Lydia Weight, have proofread the document titled:
Access to information for community participation to enhance service delivery
in Umshwati Local Municipality, by Mafezwe Khanyile. I have made all the
necessary corrections. The document is therefore ready for presentation to the
destined authority

Regards



L. Weight

Ethical Clearance



18 June 2021

Mr Ralph Mafezwe Khanyile (21 707 7198)
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Khanyile,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001318/2020

Project title: Access to Information for Community Participation to Enhance Service Delivery in uMshwathi Municipality.

Amended title: Access to information for community participation to enhance service delivery in uMshwathi Local Municipality

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 01 June 2021 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Funding Companies: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

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