



**IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AS AN INSTRUMENT TO IMPROVED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**ABSTRACT**

The involvement of community in the matters of their development is vital for their improved life styles. This paper is about the public participation as a means to improved development of the community. In terms of chapter one of Skills Development Act; section (2); the purpose of the act are: (a) to develop skills of the South African workforce by promoting self-employment and improve the delivery of social services. To increase the levels of investment in education and training in the labour market and to improve the return on that investment. The focus of the paper is on the enforcement of public participation by the targeted community for their improved development. The various possible principles of public participation and the phases of needs with community participation where lives of people may be improved will be looked into. For example, by allowing participation, facilitation, designing, decision making, information, contributing ideas, taking responsibility and promotion of sustainable decisions.

As it is assumed that public participation is a desired and necessary part of the community development activities, it is vital to check the importance of public participation, the conditions under which community will participate and approaches to involve community in their improved development. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants including decisions makers. Hence public participation is based on the belief that those.

The challenges in public participation, advantages and disadvantages will be considered in the implementation of public participation.

**Key Words:** Community Participation, Community development and Empowerment.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Public participation is a proven approach to addressing issues and has long utilized in developing or training community. Community participation is the process that can meaningfully tie programs to people and encouraged people to do it themselves. It assists municipalities and other institutions with planning, formulating, approving and implementing public participation mechanisms.

As community participation assists municipalities and institutions with planning, formulating, approving and implementing public participation mechanisms, community development may be taken as a structured intervention that gives community a greater control over the conditions that affect their lives.

## 2. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Rahman (1993:150) defines participation as “an active process in which the participant takes initiative and takes action that is stimulated by their thinking and deliberation and over which they can exert effective control”. Participation in this context does not simply mean being involved in the construction of facilities – it means contributing to ideas, making decisions and taking responsibility. Participation may be taken as the most important concept that is related to community. From this discussion, it may be taken that participation involves being concerned and effectively taking part in development for the improvement of social, economic, political and technical factors in society. This may mean that even poor people themselves are involved in identifying the problems they face, determining ways to overcome them, designing realistic plans to achieve these goals and carrying these plans out to solve their own problems.

According to Paul (1987:2) community participation is an active process in which the clients, or those who will benefit, influence the direction and implementation of a development project aimed at improving the welfare of people in terms of income, personal growth, independence and other values regarded as valuable.

Van der Waldt & Knipe (2004:143) state that the RDP supports this in that it emphasizes that the Programme should be people-driven, and that the development of infrastructure should be aimed at satisfying basic needs and effecting participation in the decision making process and the implementation of the RDP. This means that the community should be actively involved in using its own initiative in implementing development activities.

Community participation is also a continuous process of education and learning. As part of the study it promotes knowledge. This means that every individual in the community should acquire and absorb knowledge. Only then can they contribute meaningfully to the development process in the community. The types of knowledge that apply here are as follows:

- **Social knowledge:** This is the knowledge acquired and processed by individuals as a result of their daily association with other people and institutions.
- **Scientific knowledge:** This is the knowledge acquired when a problem is experienced and solutions are proposed on the basis of facts.
- **Transformational knowledge:** This is the knowledge gained as a result of the interaction between social and scientific knowledge when people try to extend their knowledge in an effort to improve their situation and to raise the level of the community or institution. Transformational

knowledge is necessary for communities to make an active contribution to their own development; Van der Waldt & Knipe (2004:143)

From what has been stated above, it means that community should be given opportunity to volunteer in development. Their participation can be viewed from the perspective of benefits to be gained and costs to be borne. Involvement of volunteer groups is an important science for individuals' definitions of self-esteem and self-identity.

Although community development efforts are mainly directed to poor and deprived communities who are believed to be passive and disorganized with little potential for participation, special attention is given in development literature to the ways and means of promoting community participation according to Coetzee (1994:26); participation in a democratic society is both vital and problematic. Decision making bodies should be fully representative, democratically elected and accountable. Community workers are often entrusted with task of institution building.

People's participation forms the basis of community development. It is important to realize that community development is directed at promoting better living for people in their local communities, especially the disadvantaged people. It is by participating actively in community development activities that people can reap the fruits of development. So, community development is based on the community projects. Residents must participate in defining the content of these projects (i.e. they must determine their own needs).

According to De Beer & Swanepoel (2001:128) Participation implies some form of organization. Community based organizations (CBOs) are the vehicle through which community participation takes place. In this case these CBOs can take different forms, such as farmers' unions, women's associations, church groups, youth clubs, development committees and project committees, for example. People's participation in development must be voluntarily and democratic, and not be manipulated to serve the interests of unscrupulous persons or groups.

In this paper the level of participation by the community during the presentation of workshops need a close attention to be looked into. How the power and privilege may impact the quantity of community contribution. Usually the balancing power in the meeting and /or workshop would require active work by the facilitators and participants.

The active participation of community may be advantageous them in this way: The citizens can bring about desired change by expressing one's desire, either individually or through community group. The individual learns how to make desired changes. They will learn to understand and appreciate the

individual needs and interests of all community groups. They will learn how to resolve conflicting interest for the general welfare of the group and begin to understand group dynamics as it applies to mixed groups.

Coetzee (1994:264) mentioned seven phases of the needs in the community participation: The first phase consists of an initial reconnaissance with the community by the community worker. The main aim here is to identify initial goals for the action and to commit the development team (committee) which must include representatives from the community to these goals.

The second phase is the identification of priorities by means of field studies. Based on the knowledge gained in the first phase, the development team now designs and performs specific investigation in order to identify areas of priority or problems. These problems may be considered as obstacles to attaining the goals of the community as a social system. These areas should be investigated formally. Knowledge gained in these studies may be used as a base line in the phases that follow. In this phase, team members and other agents are trained in problem identification and analysis. Also, insight is gained in the functioning of the system and its problems Coetzee (1994:264).

The third phase consists of the formulation of possible solutions for the identified problems. A key element is participation by all involved in problem solving research. The community worker gives direction but team members are involved fully in exercises of discovering solutions. Continued participation and involvement must be ensured.

In the fourth phase feasibility studies are performed. Proposed solutions have to be tested before full-scale implementation is feasible. Such studies will facilitate evaluation by specifying criteria of success. Furthermore, objectives must be mutually compatible and organizational requirements for the intended programmes specified clearly.

The fifth phase, project implementation, is only possible if and when the results of the research for the first four phases are available. Project implementation also implies various political and planning activities. Official approval for a particular project or programme may be needed. Also, it has to be formally planned and organizationally designed. A need for technical staff and experts may arise, formal project descriptions will be necessary and communication with authorities and bureaucratic office will be required. Liaison and linkages with other institutional agencies have to be established. The authorization and financial support of the programme will be necessary and the availability of bureaucratic resources is required. Physical input, specific services, coordination with other organizations with similar objectives, and broad-based support have to be organized.

The sixth phase refers to project evaluation. All projects have to be evaluated. Formal project evaluation, preferably by an external agent, and supported by internal evaluation procedures, can be identified analytically as a separate phase but should be seen as an ongoing activity in the development process. Monitors and audits should be regarded as part and parcel of evaluation activities. The main function of evaluation is to identify weaknesses in a project in order to evade similar problems and to facilitate sound planning projects.

The final phase consists of planning about the completion, termination, or continuation of the project. An indication of success is when a project becomes institutionalized and is able to continue for instance with fewer project personnel. However, some projects can be completed successfully in time after which it should be terminated. Evaluation research will facilitate decisions about these matters Coetzee (1994:264).

As part of this article, the identification of priorities by means of field studies and knowledge gained in these studies may give the community the knowledge of resolving conflicts interests for their general welfare. Knowing this, the community will be happy as they will be promoting their dignity. The formulation of possible solutions for identified problems may lead to fully participation of community because participation of one promotes dignity and self-sufficiency.

Taking the above discussion further, the participation of the community serves to check and balance political activities. Participation allows fuller access to benefits of a democratic society as community betterment is a product of citizen involvement. The advantages and disadvantages from Bridges (1974) and Van der Waldt & Knipe (2004:143) have been compiled to if they can meet the objectives of the study:

## **2.1 Advantages:**

- The citizens can bring about desired change by expressing one's desire, either individually or through a community group
- The individual learns how to make desired changes.
- The citizens learns to understand and appreciate the individual needs and interest of all community
- The citizens leans how to resolve conflicting interests for the general welfare of the group.
- The individual begins to understand group dynamics as it applies to mixed groups.
- Participation in the identification of basic needs;

- The more effective development and management of resources to meet needs;
- The distribution of and increased access to essential services such as water and sanitation;
- Satisfaction of the psychological need of individuals to become involved in decisions that affect their lives.
- However, the greatest advantage is probably that people are directly involved in the development activity or project, and that it will therefore benefit more member of the community.

From the advantages above, participation of community in their development may promote the coordination of institution serving the community, attempt to increase both the social and capital in a community and participation of residents in the planning and develop new resources.

## **2.2 Disadvantages:**

- Projects may be slowed by a lengthy negotiation process with the community or certain groups in the community;
- More personnel members are required to deal with the increase in participation;
- Community members may oppose projects when they are consulted on them;
- The community can participate in the development process in unpredictable ways;
- Excess input can be received from people with little or no experience and knowledge of certain problem or situation

From the discussion above; these disadvantages may lead to poverty that needs to be addressed by influencing participation. The community may participate when they see positive benefits to gained, when they see some aspect of their way-of-life threatened, when they feel committed to be supportive of the activity and when they feel comfortable in the society. The participation may be improved by stressing the benefits of participation, by organizing appropriate groups to community input, by helping community to find positive ways to respond to threatening situations and by helping participants feel comfortable within the development group.

### **3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPEMNT**

According to Coetzee (1994:269) Community Development is the process of helping people to help themselves. Community development (CD) is a broad term applied to everybody to improve quality of life. Community development (CD) seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with skills they need to effect change in their own communities. These skills are often concentrated around building political power through the formation of large social groups working for a common agenda. In this sense this means that Community developers must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions.

Although Community Development Exchange from <http://www.cdx.org.uk/community-development/what-community-development>. 2010:1 defines community development as both an occupation (such a community development worker in a local authority) and a way of working with communities, its key purpose is to build communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect. It involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience, opportunities for the community to learn new skills and, by enabling people to act together, community development practitioners help to foster social inclusion and equality. It seeks to empower individuals by providing them with skills they need to effect change in their own communities.

Considering these, there are skills that are often created through the formation of large social groups working for a common agenda. In the CD there are Community Developers who must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions. This involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives.

#### **3.1 Possibilities of Community Development**

As Coetzee (1994:269) states that community development is the process of helping people to help themselves; when taking this statement into the consideration, CD starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which if used in a creative ways, can be channeled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals.

Such a statement presupposes the outreaching of a benevolent development agency to a particular community. Where black communities are concerned, various forms of institutions and strategies for community development are provided for, for example through the Black Communities Development Act

No 4 of 1984. The purpose of the act is to provide for the purposeful development of Black communities outside the national states; to amend and consolidate certain laws which apply with reference to such communities; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Meyer & Theron (2000: 5) took Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP) of 1994 as necessary to embrace people-centered development. Nevertheless, this was a good means to provide a starting point in addressing the injustice of past development efforts through its 1994 socio-economic policy framework. By looking into their statement, this may led to public participation, social learning, empowerment and sustainability which will be discussed later in this chapter.

According to Davids, Theron & Maphunye; (2005: 40) the human development perspective emphasizes a holistic understanding of poverty in terms of which anti-poverty actions enlarge people's life choices. This refers to enabling individuals to lead a long and healthy life. From the above statement it can be deduced that community development is important as it will lead to elimination of poverty and is directed at promoting a better standard of living for people in their local communities especially the disadvantaged people whereby a desired change could be brought about in communities.

### **3.2 Characteristics of community development**

De Beer & Swanepoel (2001:125) stated the following characteristics and it is anticipated that the following characteristics will achieve the long term priorities: Felt needs; Educative process and Conflicts resolution

**a. Felt needs:** It is the people themselves who must define their needs and not the government or any other development agency. This means that a government or a non-governmental organization that wants to be effective in its development efforts must engage in dialogue with the intended beneficiaries to determine their needs. However, Jeppe (1985) notes that in some cases there could be encouraged felt needs. Due to lack of access to information about factors which affect them, community may not be able to clearly define their needs. Thus, the necessity could arise for community development workers to help them to clarify these needs and to priorities them. Yet Jeppe (1985) states that; cautions that are must be taken to distinguish between needs inducement and manipulation of the people to make them see needs imposed from outside as their own needs. In the end, inducement can only mean that community members are served with information that will enable them to see the broad picture.

**b. Educative process:** To reach its objective community development must be an educative process; it must continuously improve the ability of the people to deal with the challenges confronting them; (Jeppe 1985:30). Considering this characteristic, there are many ways in which people's participation in

community development becomes a learning process. Firstly, people learn technical skills necessary for them to carry out their development projects. Secondly, people acquire administrative skills through community development projects. According to Walters (1987:24) they learn to keep proper records of their activities, to conduct meetings, to manage time as well as to manage other people.

From the discussion above it has been deduced that people learn differently and have different strength, and in that the community and learning methods in the community need to respect the diversity of learning methods if the diversity of environment that provides opportunity for people to participate fully need to be created.

**c. Conflict resolution:** According to Kemp (1999) through community development people learn to resolve their conflicts and so solve problems together. It has been realized that they acquire confidence in themselves and learn to become the interrelationship between the different dimensions of development. Although according to Beer & Swanepoel (2001:129) by learning to work together (social aspect) the people increase their chance of implementing their projects successfully (economic aspect), conflict and problems resolution increase the community's learning capacity.

### **3.3 Self organizing community**

This is a process where people who live in proximity to each other come together into an organization that acts in their shared self-interest. There are three elements necessary for the development of such a community according to Merali; 1999:81.

- **A clear identity:** the community identity defines what the community stands for and what it is. Individual and collective action and knowledge claims are legitimized in terms of the community identity.
- **Belonging:** there has to be a sense of membership and a reciprocal attachment between the individual and community as a whole.
- **The concept of self and non-self:** there has to be established, shared sense of whom and what parts of the community are, and what lies outside its boundary.

Apart from what has been discussed above, self-organizing community is not merely a process that is good for its own sake. It is not just a neighborhood thing, not just a minority thing, not just a thing of the past. It is the process of building power through involving a constituency in identifying problems of the community where they must share and solve those problems they identified. This process may help the community with identifying the people and structure that can make those solutions possible.

### 3.4 Making self-organizing to happened

To make self-organizing to happen, every member of the community should plan. As part of the study, it is the responsibility of the executive committee to manage itself and the members of the community properly. The major task of a community project management committee is to facilitate correct understanding the nature of the changes members of the development process. By understanding the nature of the changes that have been initiated, the temporary confusion can be transformed into a new beginning. Continuity and clarity of presentation are a must. Meetings on regular basis must be held for the interested of the public and according to the schedules.

To allow a self-organizing community to develop one must:

- be clear about the values and guiding principles that are embodiments of the community identity;
- provide autonomy within a connected network (the network will create a self-defining space for individual self-regulation);
- create visible choice spaces (enable individuals to be conscious of, and responsible for, their actions and knowledge contribution);
- design for interdependence;
- provide space for reconfiguration of networks
- create space for abstraction (allow people to step out of 'designated role'; provide a viewing gallery; allow them to do information 'spacewalk' to see the patterns of organizational networking, and realize how they fit the different dimensions of space). The potential for knowledge creation is not confined to specialist groups: individuals learn through their daily interactions with the environment. In a knowledge-based community, everybody is a contributor and knows something useful; experts can abstract from the specific and apply knowledge to new situations. Creating a space for abstraction is a design developing expertise.
- The identity must be refreshed to remain congruent with the community's position in the external context, (the identity is refreshed by knowledge that is generated abstraction from individual experiences);
- The community must co-evolve in response to changes in the external context; and
- A healthy community will spawn new communities to create an ecosystem of diverse and complementary resource pools.

### **3.5 Commitment and choice**

According to Merali (1999:82) the viability of a community depends on the commitment of individuals to the survival of the community and the persistence of the shared identity. Commitment is embodied in the willingness of individuals to share information and knowledge with other members of the community. Studies of clan-based societies show the act of choosing to commit is very important in communities where relationships are based on mutual trust and interdependence. Uncommitted individuals may eventually become dysfunctional and damage the clan unity and its ultimate survival. In these societies rituals and ceremonies exist to enable individuals to demonstrate their commitment to the clan.

According to Merali (1999:82) these acts of commitment are effective because they are:

- Explicitly volitional, underlining the individual's responsibility for choosing to belong to the clan;
- Visible, publicly signaling, the individual's allegiance to the clan;
- Irreversible, demonstrating the individual's investment in the future of the clan identity.

As part of this article the commitment of the community is needed with power of knowledge they have to be applied in the community development. The objective of this paper is to test community to be committed and make their choices so that they can realize the importance of development. People must consider themselves important to each other and to truly feel it.

### **3.6 Principles of Community Engagement**

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1997); before a community engagement effort can start; there are facts to be considered first:

- The clarity about the purpose or goals of the engagement effort, and the population and communities you want to engage because community engagement goals vary.
- Knowledge about the community in terms of its economic, condition, political structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history and experience with engagement efforts is important. Learning about the community's perceptions of those initiating the engagement activities is also important.

- Establishments of relationships, building of trust, working with formal and informal leadership and seeking of the commitment from the community organizations and leaders is important for the creation of processes for mobilizing the community.
- Community self-determination is the responsibility and right of all people who comprise a community and it is important to remember and accept that because people in the community are more likely to become involved if they identify with the issue being addressed and consider them important. Community like it more if they make contributions in their development.
- Partnership with the community is important and necessary as this will create a change and improve development.
- The sustainability of community engagement can only be experienced by identifying and mobilizing community assets, and by development capacities and resources for the community development decisions and actions. These includes inters, skills and experiences of he individuals and local organizations.
- The community engagement process is also a way to facilitate behavior change that is acceptable to the community and this may results in in a change that will occur in relationships and in the way institutions and individuals demonstrate their capacity and strength to act on specific issues.
- The diversity of community must be recognized and respected by all aspects of community engagement and this is related to economic, educational, employment and development status as well as to differences in cultures, language, age mobility, literacy and interest.
- Long-term commitment is required in community collaboration and this can only happen by engaging organization and its partners. For example, people and organizations in the community might need long-term technical assistance and training related to developing and organization, securing resources, organizing constituencies to work for change, participating in partnerships and coalitions, resolving conflict, and other technical knowledge necessary to address issues of concern.

### **3.7 Community organizing**

It must be first understood that community organizing is not merely a process that is good for its own sake. It is not just a neighborhood thing, not just a minority thing, not just a thing of the past. It is the process of building power through involving a constituency in identifying problems of the community

where they must share and solve those problems they identified. This process must help the community with identifying the people and structure that can make those solutions possible.

According to Merali (1999:82-83) there are certain features that appear common in the development of communities to leverage intellectual capital. They relate to issues of co-operation and coordination and include the following: Interdependence of individual endeavors; Co-specialization of knowledge; Language and communication; Environmental sense making and Co-evolution

- **Interdependence of individual endeavors:** if individuals need to communicate and exchange information for mutually successful outcomes of their endeavors, they are more likely to learn from each other and to articulate their personal knowledge in a way that is useful to the community.

For its part, community organizing can provide community building with the power necessary to confront imbalances between members' and external actors. According to Bradshaw, Soifer, and Gutierrez; (1994) community building is not always honest about how agenda's within their own society are influenced. As development is for the community and the land, through using the more formal staff positions of a professional organizer, the roles between members and leaders can be more overtly discussed and negotiated. Networking may also provide members with involvement in issues larger than, and perhaps vital to, residents' own neighborhoods.

- **Co-specialization of knowledge:** if synergistic relationships between individuals can be realized such that the co-specialization of their personal knowledge: Creates new knowledge; or enables the community to do something more effectively, or creates causal ambiguity, preventing outsiders from imitating community achievements; then this study will lead to improved community development; Merali (1999:82-83).

It is the aim of this paper to give community a chance of creating new knowledge, to do something more effective that will take a lead in their development. This may help the community to depend on themselves not only by creating new knowledge but also by creating employment for themselves.

- **Language and communication:** for knowledge to become absorbed in community development; individuals need to make sense of it, to talk about it, to reinterpret it, and to incorporate it into their own context. Communication is a powerful tool in organizing or building. Involvement of the community by communicating their issues may take them to better levels of their development.

- **Environmental sense making:** members interact with the environment in distinctive ways and will sense changes in multiple dimensions. The community as whole must have a mechanism to ensure that local adjustments to external changes do not disrupt the network of community coordination. The community's sense of its relationship with the external world is continually refreshed, incorporating significant individual insights as they arise.
- **Co-evolution:** to continue to be viable in dynamic contexts the community must change over time. The requisite changes in individual behaviours and competence must be orchestrated in a coordinated fashion.

From the issues of co-evolution and conditions discussed above, it would be indicated that, development corporations may help to provide community developers with the technical assistance and training needed to handle outside resources for larger projects. Furthermore, community developers can use the generally larger projects which development programs work on as an opportunity for taking their social capital development to the bridging level. Again, community networks are in a better position to mobilize a movement around State and National issues. From this discussion community members may stand a good chance of economic involved in large projects.

#### 4. EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is the element of Community Development. Community cannot be empowered without being developed and for the community to be developed, community participation is important. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:91), empowerment of communities is the objective of people-centred development and therefore the training of communities simply becomes a tool in this process. Liebenberg and Stewart (1997:125) state that empowerment takes place within the context of social learning, which is a process in which knowledge is acquired by all people in the process of living. Taking these statements into consideration, empowerment can be referred to as the increasing of the spiritual, political, social, educational or economic strength of individuals and communities. It must be understood that through the empowerment process people must be enabled to express and assert what development means to them, otherwise development, in terms of the manipulation of resources and the fulfilment of basic needs, cannot take place.

Here it is emphasized that confusion must be avoided as empowerment does not refer to giving people power as people already have power in the wealth of their knowledge and motivation to work. Hence the study is not about giving people power, but it is about applying knowledge management for the development of people.

According to Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2005: 21), empowerment relates to “power to” and “power within” thus empowerment is more than simply bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it (“power to”), again empowerment includes the process that leads people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy the decision-making space (“power from within”), this is how Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2005: 21) are explaining empowerment. From the above discussion that empowerment is not about giving people power there must not be contradiction and again as Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2005: 21), are talking about the power within and the power to which people already have. Taking the above discussion into the consideration, the process of empowerment cannot be imposed by the outsider as true power cannot be given – it may come from within the community. However, appropriate external support and intervention can speed up the process of empowerment as the community may need knowledgeable people from outside to help or come up with better ideas.

In relation to the description above, empowerment is more than the process that challenges the community’s assumptions about the way things are and can be. Empowerment is about power that can change circumstances and if the power present in a community cannot change circumstances, it can cause problems in development. If the power present in a community can bring about change, then empowerment is possible.

#### **4.1 The Characteristics of Empowerment**

According to Davids *et al.* (2005:22), empowerment is collective action in the sense that individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than the impact each individual could have made alone. This collective action includes participation in political structures, but it may also cover collective action based on cooperation rather than on competition.

The following are the characteristics of empowerment (Davids *et al.* (2005:22) :

- Empowerment is a process that involves some degree of personal development.
- The process of empowerment cannot be imposed by outsiders and it cannot be given – it has to come from within; however, appropriate external support and intervention can speed up the process of empowerment.
- Empowerment involves moving from insight (an inner awareness of one’s human abilities and potential) to action (doing). The concept of empowerment is similar to Freire’s (2005) concept of “conscientization”, which centres on individuals developing a critical understanding of their circumstances and social reality. This understanding leads to action because the individuals no longer see themselves as victims, but as active individuals with the ability to change their circumstances.

- Empowerment is not a zero-sum process. An increase in one person, organisation or group's power does not necessarily diminish that of another.

From the list of characteristics above, it can be said that the concept of empowerment depends on power that can be expanded and increased. This increase may be seen on the community that understands their needs. Empowerment may be taken as a social action process that promotes the participation of individuals and communities to gain control of their lives in their communities and society. In addition to these characteristics, it can be emphasized that empowerment is the ability to make decisions about personal and/or collective circumstances and it may also be considered as the ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.

Under development the Reconstruction Development Programme (*RDP White Paper* of September 1994, as cited in Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2005:43), state that empowerment aims to empower people so that they can become self-reliant in the long run, to build local capacity through development support, to initiate development programmes and projects on a participatory basis, to address the injustices of the past caused by both colonialism and apartheid, and to promote community development as a poverty-oriented approach. In other words, the successful realisation of the objectives of community development depends on empowering the disadvantaged (De Beer and Swanepoel, 2001:129).

From the discussion above it may be deduced that people who truly participate in their own development are permanently strengthened by empowerment as empowerment also promotes more substantial incomes and projects to improve the skills and the experiences of those involved. These projects may also help to build people's self-confidence and to make them believe that they can make a difference and that they can improve their lives. In this paper, if the proposed projects can give poor people confidence, hope, dignity, and strength, the projects will strengthen the people more than any short-term financial assistance.

De Beer and Swanepoel (2001:134) identify three points for successful empowerment and those are; equity, capacity building, and participation.

#### **4.2 Equity**

According to Hariharan (1995:15), empowerment does not only have a political aspect, but it also has economic and social aspects too. The underprivileged are empowered when a fair distribution of the resources and opportunities takes place. De Beer and Swanepoel (2001:134) are of the opinion that poor people often do not have access to assets, such as land and financial resources. The poor also have minimal access to health and educational facilities – facilities which could enhance their social wellbeing (De Beer and Swanepoel, 2001:134). Therefore it may be deduced that empowerment, in part, entails

giving the poor access to these things to enable them to achieve their desired goals. Whereas community development offers people the opportunities to realise their full potential and to have access to the basic necessities of life.

### **4.3 Capacity Building**

In the case of capacity building, Bryant and White (1982:15) state that the process of capacity building has three main components. The first component of capacity building involves the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required by disadvantaged people to produce the goods and services they need to satisfy their needs. The second component of capacity building pertains to the necessity of making productive resources available to the underprivileged (Bryant and White, 1982:15). The third element of capacity building refers to the establishment of effective and efficient administrative and institutional structures (Bryant and White, 1982:15).

The connection between the different aspects of capacity building illustrates the relationship between the political, economic and social goals of development. Without political empowerment, it is difficult for underprivileged people to realise their social and economic goals. Van der Waldt and Knipe (2004:145) identify two views of community empowerment. The first view is that empowerment is the development of skills and abilities which enable people to interact more effectively with the development system and process (Van der Waldt and Knipe, 2004:145). The second view is that empowerment is a process which aims at equipping people to make decisions regarding development and equipping them to implement these decisions (Van der Waldt and Knipe, 2004:145).

### **4.4 Empowerment and Participation**

The simple manner according to researcher in describing genuine community participation is that people must have the power to influence the decisions that affect their lives where without empowerment, participation becomes ineffective. This aspect of empowerment has been thoroughly discussed above with regard to community participation. In addition, skills development and equipping people to make decisions and implement those decisions illustrates the connection between individual action and community action. From the discussion above individual change is encouraged through training sessions and discussions and community action is encouraged through the participants' efforts to change their communities.

As it is the objective of the study to develop the community, the above concepts identified by De Beer and Swanepoel (2001) will be used to involve the strengths of the community and to promote the provision of opportunities and resources for the people to gain experience and skills, while they also gain control of their lives throughout the development process. In this study participation and empowerment cannot be

separated for the development of the community. Empowerment can be seen as a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives.

The *Broad Based Economic Empowerment Act, 53 of 2003* (South Africa, 2003) was established as a legislative framework to promote black economic empowerment; to empower the minister to issue codes of good practice and to publish transformation charters; to establish the Black Economic Empowerment Advisory Council; and to deal with matters connected to the above factors. The main objective of the *Broad Based Economic Empowerment Act, 2003* (South Africa, 2003) is to facilitate black economic empowerment by:

- “promoting economic transformation in order to enable the meaningful participation of black people in the economy;
- achieving substantial change in the racial composition of ownership and management structures, and in the skilled occupations of existing and new enterprises;
- increasing the extent to which communities, workers, cooperatives and other collective enterprises own and manage existing and new enterprises and increasing their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training;
- increasing the extent to which black women own and manage existing and new enterprises and increasing their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training;
- promoting investment programmes that lead to broad-based and meaningful participation in the economy by black people in order to achieve sustainable development and general prosperity;
- empowering rural and local communities by enabling access to economic activities, land, infrastructure, ownership and skills; and
- Promoting access to finance for black economic empowerment”.

From the discussion throughout the paper thus far, it can be concluded that empowerment, as social action, promotes the participation of people, groups and communities to achieve the goal of increased control. It must be kept in mind that although people cannot be given power and they cannot be empowered, resources and opportunities can be provided to enable people to be involved and empowered. It must also be kept in mind that empowerment may also have a negative impact on individuals, depending on an individual's views and goals. Individuals with strong skills and critical capabilities are often held back to make opportunities for those who meet the empowerment criteria.

Again it can be deduced that empowerment should not be used selfishly and that those that use empowerment selfishly and to their own advantage tend to become difficult, demeaning and even hostile members of the community. However, empowerment is seen as positive as it will encourage people to

gain skills and knowledge that will allow them to overcome obstacles and ultimately help them to develop themselves and/or their community and society.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In the conclusion of this document, the community is not as simple as one might think because the views and perspectives of what constitutes a community and the roles the community should play in the development process are broad and contradictory. People who form a community provide the most direct opportunity for making a difference within that community. The community development may not be improved without their participation in the application of knowledge management and strategic management process.

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