

Conceptual framework for subnational citizen-based participatory democracy and empowerment

Case of Vhembe District Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The apartheid government had consciously entrenched a governance system in which local communities did not have a voice in their local development agenda. During the apartheid era, the national government held command of local authorities on all matters of developmental initiatives. This was the case with all areas inhabited by Blacks while those inhabited by Whites were allowed some degree of self-governance. Post-1994, as outlined in the 1998 White Paper on Local Government, the African National Congress government undertook to correct the apartheid governance discrepancies. As a result, Parliament enacted pieces of legislation and various regulatory frameworks to foster community participation in local development initiatives. Subsequent transformation has arguably registered some success in urban areas, amidst persistent failures in rural areas. Reasons for these variable spatial effects range from literacy issues among community members to capacity challenges of the elected municipal councils. This is exacerbated by persistent migration of the young and educated citizens to urban areas. This article assesses and, thereafter, formulates a subnational citizen-based participatory and empowerment model that allows for vulnerable communities to participate in their local development initiatives. Additionally, it derives a conceptual framework for assessing subnational citizen-based participatory and empowerment arrangements.

INTRODUCTION

As the 1998 *White Paper on Local Government* outlines, the African National Congress (ANC) Government has enacted legislation and regulatory frameworks that fosters community participation in local development initiatives (Department of Arts and Culture 1998). These arrangements have allowed for Vhembe District Municipality to establish the District Development Planning Forum, the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) Representative Forum, the Transport Forums, and the Community Policing Forums (CPF) to improve participation of communities within the District (Vhembe District Municipality 2014). Such arrangements have registered some success in urban areas but literature continues to report persistent failures of these measures in rural areas. The failure of these measures in rural areas is attributed to illiterate communities and incapacitated elected local representatives exacerbated by the migration of the young and educated community members to urban areas. The United Nations Development Programme (2011) shows that, South African illiteracy rate is 12 per cent with the majority of these individuals residing in rural areas. The 2010-2011 Vhembe District Municipality's Annual Report points out that skills shortage and compromised roads, water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructure affect its development. Obviously poor road and communications infrastructure have a direct bearing on the means of participation. Further, non-cooperation of the elected councillors and traditional leaders also complicate community participation efforts (Tshitangoni & Francis 2014).

In sum, the participation of vulnerable, marginalised, and dormant rural communities in their local development initiatives is minimal, if not non-existent. For example, out of the 250 unannounced monitoring visits by various government departments a widespread absence of joint citizen-government monitoring of public works as required by the country's regulatory frameworks were identified (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation 2013). Further, the *Citizen-Government Based Framework* (Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation 2013:10) reports that, "the participation of community members in the monitoring of government service delivery is ad hoc and in many sectors non-existent". One can associate the minimal or non-existent community participation in rural areas to absence of a model that empowers communities and maximise their participation. According to Coulibaly, Konare & Aboubacrine (2007), the current Integrated Development Planning approach tends to keep beneficiaries at arm's length as passive recipients rather than actors. This approach is based on the assumption that Africa will or should go through the same development trajectory followed by European countries. This might imply outsiders providing solutions to localities without or with minimal inputs from communities. This reduces community participation to a cumbersome ritual only necessary to comply with various laws and policy prescripts.

In this article, a conceptual framework is developed for assessing subnational citizen-based participatory and empowerment arrangements that will guide proceeding in collecting, processing, and analysing data as well as interpreting the empirical results. This could consequently pave the way to formulating a subnational citizen-based participatory and empowerment model that allows for vulnerable communities to participate in their local development initiatives. The current models of community empowerment and participation that do not allow for monitoring and evaluation are ineffective. Agere (2000) has argued that good governance can only be achieved when communities are duly empowered and



able to monitor and evaluate their development interventions. Besides, participation allows for accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. Similarly, Booth, Ibrahim & Morin (2001) have emphasised the need to regain or restore power to the rightful owners — that is, the ordinary community members. Further, they emphasise the transfer of power from the outside authorities to the local communities so that community members have full control over their political power, economic decisions, and social arrangements as well as knowledge. Community members feel empowered when they have a sense of ownership.

APPROACH TO SUBNATIONAL CITIZEN-BASED PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND EMPOWERMENT

A proposed outcomes-based literature review is used to develop an explanatory framework and more importantly a conceptual framework for assessing subnational citizen-based participatory and empowerment in Vhembe District Municipality in the next sections. *Firstly*, an understanding is provided of the context and then the research problem formulation on minimal or absent participation and empowerment in Vhembe District Municipality. *Secondly*, to establish the knowledge gap, research approaches, designs, procedures and methods applied are interrogated as well as findings and conclusions realised by past and current studies on and evaluation of participation and empowerment. Other than establishing the knowledge gap use is made of this interrogation to consider methodological options that we can employ for our assessment. *Thirdly*, a theoretical or rather an explanatory framework is proposed and detailed that will facilitate interpretation of empirical research findings on citizen-based participatory and empowerment in Vhembe District Municipality. Worth mentioning is the linkage between these explanatory frameworks and attributes of interest that will be collected and researched. *Lastly*, for now, a conceptual framework is derived that will guide the collecting, processing, and analysing data and information to assess and, thereafter, formulate a subnational citizen-based participatory and empowerment model that allows for vulnerable communities to participate in their local development initiatives.

VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY IN BRIEF

Limpopo Province is one of the nine provinces of South Africa comprising five districts—that is, Capricorn (35), Mopani (33), Sekhukhune (47), Waterberg (36) and Vhembe (33)—in the north eastern tip of the country. This situates Vhembe at the most north eastern tip of South Africa. It is bordered by Capricorn in the west, Botswana in the north-west, Zimbabwe in the north, Mozambique in the east, and Mopani District in the south. Further, according to Statistics South Africa (2011), Vhembe comprises four local municipalities of Makhado, Mutale, Musina, and Thulamela that cover a land area of 21 407 square kilometres. The District houses an estimated population of 1.3 million in slightly more than 415 thousand households. It is the traditional home of the majority of Venda speaking communities, alongside the BaTsonga and BaPedi. Vhembe can be described as a vulnerable and marginalised community, probably dormant as well. *Firstly*, the district is located in one of the driest parts of South Africa with low rainfall (Statistics South Africa 2013). *Secondly*, the

district is 70 per cent rural with an unemployment rate of almost 40 per cent with few job opportunities (Statistics South Africa 2013). As a result, most of its fairly educated youth continue migrating to other parts of the country in search of better job opportunities. *Lastly*, more than 55 per cent of the population receives some form of social grants (Vhembe District Municipality 2012).

In its Integrated Development Plan, the Vhembe District Municipality (2012) points out that the District has service delivery challenges ranging from poor infrastructure, lack of capacity, and inadequate funding to meet its basic needs. These are exacerbated by the apartheid legacy of dividing communities along tribal, ethnic, cultural, language, and religious line. Therefore, being largely rural and diverse with a poor road infrastructure, mobility around the District is difficult. The District is also dependent on the National Government for social grants and hence sustaining inaction among the majority of community members. These have become dormant and hardly participate in local developmental initiatives.

PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

Cloete (1997) has argued that the South African local government model provides for members of the community to play a central role in determining their local development initiatives. However, literature points to empowerment and participation challenges at subnational level. It reports persistent failure of the established forums, committees, and groupings meant to provide a participation platform for community members particularly those in rural areas. The 2010–2011 Vhembe District Municipality's Annual Report points out two reasons why effective community participation is lacking in rural areas: *firstly*, continued migration of the young and the educated robs rural areas of capable community members; and *secondly*, non-existent or damaged infrastructure for water, sanitation, roads, and electricity. Obviously, poor road infrastructure curbs mobility of community members and, therefore, they cannot attend meetings. *Thirdly* Makananisa (2011) has argued that travelling cost to and from council chambers discourage participation of rural community members in Vhembe. This is complicated by the vast geographic layout of the district. Tshitangoni & Francis (2014) provide the *fourth* reason which is a lack of cooperation between elected councillors and traditional leaders. *Fifthly*, the models for community participation are not contextualised. Coulibaly *et al.* (2007) argue that the current Integrated Development Planning model limits the beneficiaries of development interventions to passive recipients. The model assumes that Africa will go through the same development trajectory as contemporary developed countries. This is why experts other than community members pave the local development agenda without or with little input from community members. As a result, the so-called community participation is but a cumbersome ritual undertaken to comply with various laws and policy prescripts. This approach merely widens the gap between local authorities and their respective communities. It is this gap that fuels tensions between elected local authorities and traditional leaders (Tshitangoni & Francis 2014). The same gap provides a platform for entitlement tendencies and perpetuates the *us-and-them* syndrome in most rural communities.



Having described the symptoms and the consequences, the question is: what are the root causes of empowerment and participation challenges in rural municipalities? *Firstly* according to McLennan & Ngoma (2004), municipal councils do not provide the necessary information to their communities. Linked to this, is their failure to provide feedback on the implementation of interventions. Therefore, “the continued failure of municipal councils to clearly articulate the contents of their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) continues to frustrate community participation efforts” (Institute for Democracy in South Africa 2008:11–13). Further, Booysens (2007) has argued that ward councillors do not communicate the programme of action effectively and cites this as one of the factors perpetuating non-compliance to the municipal by-laws. As a result, the absence of systematic communication channels between ward councillors and their community members on service delivery frustrates participation; and, according to Pycroft (2009), this creates animosity and an unbearable distance between local government and their communities. *Secondly*, the “lack of understanding the planning processes, lack of community resources, over-reliance on volunteers, lack of access to information and the bad relationship between local government and its rural community members” (Dukeshire & Thurlow 2002:1). This is true in rural municipalities, such as Vhembe, because of illiteracy and, therefore, leaving their developmental initiatives to non-community members.

The root causes, the symptoms, and the consequences of empowerment and participation in Vhembe District Municipality are obvious, but why then should this matter be researched? It is necessary to because this is a governance arrangement that we should rectify because of four reasons. *Firstly*, non- or minimal participation of communities in local development perpetuates vulnerability, marginalisation, and dominance. In turn, such as *status quo* creates lawlessness and disregard for authority and, therefore, overshadowing government’s intervention efforts. The *Citizen-Government Based Framework* (Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation 2013) notes that minimal or non-existent participation frustrates the community members who in turn destroy public infrastructure and other amenities meant to improve their living conditions just to get government’s attention. Further, a wide gap between the community and their local authority creates criminal opportunities that high-jack genuine community concerns. *Secondly* and related to the first, rather than advancing to living conditions public funds are spent on repairing damaged infrastructure. *Thirdly*, it allows for municipalities to design interventions without community participation and yet use them to merely rubber stamp (Crooks 1996; Crythorne 2006; Thornhill 2009). Lastly, Gaventa (2006) has argued failing to hold government accountable by the community allows elected leadership and the executive to do as they wish. They go as far as manipulating state institutions that should provide checks and balances and, therefore, undermining developmental efforts. It could be argued that non-participation of community members allows unscrupulous councillors and municipal officials to divert state resources for their personal gain.

In sum, amidst high illiteracy perpetuated by out-migration of the young and educated, the lack of coherent empowerment measures in Vhembe discourages community participation in local development initiatives. Further, the wide geographic expanse and rural nature of the District makes mobility a challenge leading to limited community participation, if any. The Integrated Development Plan contributes to non-participation considering the complexities

associated with this model. Use of experts or volunteers who are not part of the community in conceptualising local development initiatives isolates the local community.

EVALUATIONS OF PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Other than dealing with impediments to growth and development—such as corruption and maladministration—in municipalities, democratic principles strengthen accountability and responsibility of the government in the provision of services (Dye 2001). Similarly, Cranko & Khan (1999) identify the constitutional provision for the local sphere to forge a close partnership with its local community members given its proximity to communities. Such a partnership provides for effective service provision. However, Van Rooyen (2003) has argued that in the local sphere, South Africa does not have municipal-community partnership found in other countries despite devising a number legislative frameworks and policy imperatives. Therefore, there is a contradiction on the intended direction *vis-à-vis* municipal-community partnerships compared with what is happening on the ground. As a result, Nsingo & Kuye (2005) have argued that municipalities intentionally disregard this crucial democratic principle of active community participation in local development formulation and implementation.

Literature points to five reasons that can explain such a *status quo*: *Firstly*, dominance of national initiatives at the expense of local interventions. For example, while studying the fundamentals for improving service delivery in rural local government in Zimbabwe, Nsingo & Kuye (2005) found that municipal councillors were ineffective because they were inundated with national rather than local programmes. Further, the communities are not given any opportunity to pursue programmes that relate to their priorities. Similarly, Kakumba & Nsingo (2008) have noted undue interference of the central government in local governance matters. *Secondly*, party politics are placed at the expense of development interventions. Looking at citizen participation framework in Uganda, Kakumba & Nsingo (2008) found that despite the setting up Community Support Organisations (CSOs) to improve the effectiveness of Local Government Units (LGUs), the central government level still frustrates local communities who do not subscribe or support the ruling party. *Thirdly*, ineffective feedback platforms inhibit effective participation. Coulibaly *et al.* (2007) doubt the effectiveness of community organisations sending representatives to municipal meetings because they do not report back to the community they are representing.

Fourthly, the use of development models do not provide for effective participation. During their study of the Govan Mbeki Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) processes, Tshabalala & Lombard (2009) found that the community is only involved in the first phase (needs identification) of the five phases. Therefore, the IDP model does not exactly provide an enabling environment for community members to participate and, therefore, limiting their engagement. Similarly, during his investigations into the feasibility of using municipalities to advance the developmental state, Madumo (2012) found that municipalities did not explicitly encourage active citizen participation. This conclusion was supported by Brynard & Musitha (2011) as well as Tshitangoni & Francis (2014). *Lastly*, failure to integrate traditional political and economic arrangements in contemporary governance arrangements also plays a significant role. Brynard & Musitha (2011) have studied the role of traditional leaders in



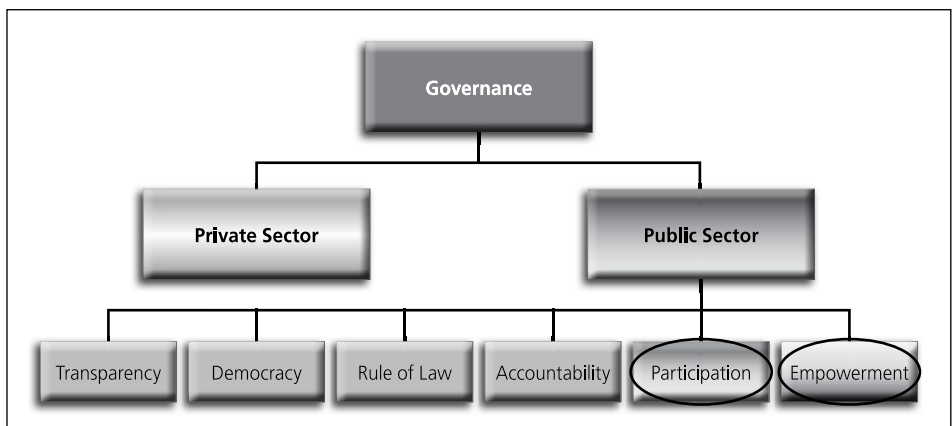
the Integrated Development Plan formulation and implementation. They found that though traditional leaders are consulted, their participation is limited, if not non-existent.

In seeking a solution, literature proposes the use of participatory monitoring and evaluation as well as integrating traditional leadership to foster community participation. In studying community empowerment efforts, Coulibaly *et al.* (2007) found that participatory monitoring and evaluation remains the effective way of skills transfer related to issues of community participation. Tshitangoni & Francis (2014) have assessed the effectiveness of Vhembe traditional leaders' avenues of engaging the communities in local development initiatives. They found that traditional leaders engage their communities effectively through regular meetings in the headman's kraal when mutual concerns are discussed and decisions jointly made. Therefore, to improve participation of rural community members on local governance matters, mechanisms used by traditional leaders should be strengthened rather than creating new ones.

PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN GOVERNANCE

Having settled for governance as the academic home of this research, governance and its important components will be discussed. Figure 1 shows governance and its main components. It is clear that the application of governance can happen in either the private sector or the public sector. In this regard, Renz (2007) distinguishes between private and public sector governance in this way. He describes public sector governance as a political process of policy and decision making and private sector governance as a process of providing leadership, direction and accountability to a specific entity. As Weiss (2010) puts it, the governance discipline remains concerned with the adaptation of leadership patterns which endeavours to solve the collective action puzzle to collectively provide public goods to community members. In describing the broader purpose of governance, Daniel Kaufmann, the Director of Global Programs at the World Bank Institute indicates that governance has the potential to bear multiple fruits such as broader community cohesion, but only if it is properly applied and its tenets accurately observed (World Bank 2002). Further, Figure 1 presents the major components of governance and those are transparency, democracy, and rule of law,

Figure 1: Major components of governance



accountability, participation and empowerment. However, this study will focus on the two complementary components of governance and those are participation and empowerment.

According to Rowe & Frewer (2004), participation embraces the practice of consulting and the involvement of communities in agenda-setting, decision-making and policy-formulation activities. For their effective participation, Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt & Jonker (2001) argue that community members deserve a comprehensive empowerment programme which will improve their contribution on how their quality of life ought to be promoted. Peters & Savoie (2000) point out that participation is not only limited to registering the concerns of community members, but includes the creation of environmental conditions for meaningful contribution. However, some government structures view community participation as uninformed, partial, arbitrary, contradictory, and even hostile towards government (Frederickson & Smith 2003). Booth *et al.* (2001) conceptualised participation as a process of inquiry and dialogue through which stakeholders share ideas in ways that help them have a multi-dimensional perception of their needs.

As for empowerment, Rappaport (1987) views it as the transition from the state of passiveness to a situation of active control. It is meant to influence the mind of the human beings and the social structure in which the human beings live. This is supported by Zimmerman (2000) who argues that, empowerment includes a process of transferring power from one side to the other and ensuring the effective use of such power to control particular situations. Even though literature review shows a clear absence of consensus on the meaning of empowerment, various scholars like Gruber & Tickett (1987), Serrano-Garcia (1984) and Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco, Schultz, Richter, Lewis, Williams, Harris, Berkley, Fisher & Lopez (1995) concur that empowerment is a complex and multifaceted concept and can take different forms for different people. As for this study, empowerment relates to the capacitation of community members to improve their ability to monitor government's work (Zimmerman 2000). This is important for fostering the accountability of municipal councils to local communities. Zimmerman (2000) further asserts that, community empowerment embraces a process in which the community transits from the state of powerlessness to a state of relative control over their lives, destiny and their environment. According to Rappaport (1984:2), empowerment is conceptualised as a "process by which individuals, organisations and communities gain mastery of their lives." As a field of study, governance embodies a number of processes which underpins its manifestation and operational modalities.

Given its complexity, governance embraces certain important facts as well as key issues, debates and processes. For instance, Wohlmuth (1999:7) indicates that, governance can be achieved when the following aspects are present and those are: "legitimacy of government; legal framework of the rule of law; popular participation; freedom of association and expression; and rational non-personalised public administration". Fourie (2006) denotes that governance remains intrinsically linked to the manner in which the state is managed particularly in relation to the way in which power is separated. Louw (2012:98) argued that, governance is "burdened with political, philosophical and ideological contestations". He then indicates that the biggest point of contestation is its possession of multiple meanings which is mainly caused by the general lack of conceptual clarity among scholars. Apaza (2009) and (Arndt & Oman 2006) describe governance as a set of traditions and institutions through which the authority of a country is exercised.



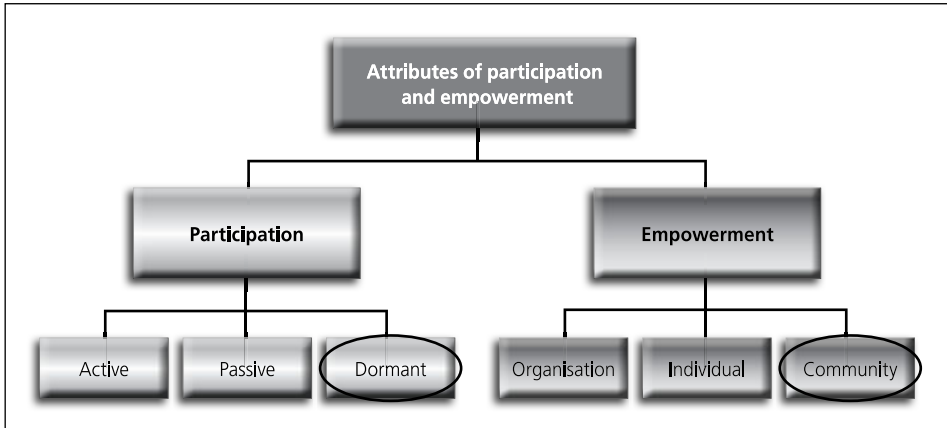
Further, Landell-Mills *et al.* (1995) outline the prominent processes and conceptual subsets of governance and those are corporate governance, non-profit governance, project governance, environmental governance, internet/digital governance, information technology governance, regulatory governance and participatory governance. According to Fourie (2006), governance cannot be reduced to just the administration of public affairs for it fundamentally bears political imperatives by providing guidance and processes of governing by a multiplicity of structures.

Based on the above discussions, it could be concluded that governance is indeed a fairly new discipline and remains embroiled in serious contestations among various scholars. As Fourie (2011) would put it, the theory of governance remains the essential cornerstone for the development of societies. It is further concluded that, a country that can improve its governance imperatives from a relatively low base to average levels, such a country could triple its income *per capita* in the long term and reduce infant mortality and illiteracy. It is furthermore argued that the application of the relevant systematic good governance approach is critical for serving as deterrent for any kind of unethical behaviour. The purpose of governance is not only visible in the public sector. Renz (2007:9) indicates that, "it plays a central role in guiding the leadership of non-profit organisations, including their boards of directors on how to provide coherent strategic direction to the entire organisation". Given its requirement for a transparent and accountable government, we concluded that the effective application of governance has the potential to promote the trust relationship between the government and local communities.

The next focus is on establishing and then discussing key governance attributes and variables related to participation and empowerment that can enable strategically collecting information and data in the quest to understand participation and empowerment challenges in Vhembe District Municipality. Figure 2 shows the dissection of both participation and empowerment into various attributes which are critical in the collection of empirical data. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the literature review points to three participation attributes—they are *active*, *passive*, and *dormant* participation. These attributes resemble the manifestation of community participation when coming to issues of local developmental initiatives. Among communities, there are those members who are actively involved in such matters while some are passively involved or are just dormant. Therefore, this study will focus on community members whose participation remains dormant. In this context, participation is described as "a process wherein the ordinary community members exercise power on the decisions related to the general affairs of their locality" (Brynard 1996:40). As for the empowerment component, scholars indicate that it can be done at the individual, organisational or community level (Zimmerman 2000). Here the community based empowerment approach is used as the main entry point for empowering communities.

In describing direct community participation, Netswera & Phago (2011) confirm that it is when people actively attend meetings, engage local leaders and take full ownership of the issues at their locality. Netswera & Phago (2011) came up with this understanding after holding focus group discussions to understand the state of community participation in Thulamela Local Municipality. As for passive/indirect community participation, Netswera & Phago (2011) found that this refers to people who are just concerned with the payment of municipal services and broadly respect the general municipal by-laws. As for this study, it will be very important to determine the level of passive participants in

Figure 2: Governance attributes of participation and empowerment



order to effectively address the problem at hand. As for dormant community participants, Netswera & Phago (2011) refer to them as people who do not participate in the planning and implementation of local developmental initiatives. This article will focus on the dormant community members and the quest to understand the nature of barriers they face. This is important for deriving an effective citizen based participatory monitoring model to enhance the participation of community members in the planning and implementation of local developmental initiative.

As for empowerment, Israel, Checkoway, Schultz & Zimmerman (1994) denote a clear distinction between individual/psychological, organisational and community empowerment. In his assertion, individual empowerment focuses on individuals gaining mastery of their individual lives. Further, Zimmerman (1995, 1999) denotes that individual empowerment addresses the way in which individuals think about themselves and how they relate to their social environment. For many years now, individual empowerment has been used as the ideal approach in helping people stand their ground and make things happen (Jonson-Reid 2000). According to Wilson (1996), there is general consensus that individual change is a precondition for community empowerment. However, Palumbo & Oliverio (1989) earlier argued that there is little empirical evidence confirming the success of such approach for empowering communities. For instance, an empowered individual might not necessarily be able to bring change in the community. This is supported by Rappaport (1993) who argues that individual empowerment does not necessarily lead to community empowerment. According to Perkins & Zimmerman (1995) organisational empowerment embraces collective decision making and shared leadership. It is according to Peterson & Zimmerman (2004) that an organisational effort is critical to generate individual empowerment among its members for its collective effectiveness. They decided to measure an empowered organisation on its ability to apply its members' skills and satisfy the expectations of its stakeholders. As an approach, community empowerment directs its efforts towards the emancipation of broader communities without singling out individuals or certain organisations. As Eng & Parker (1994) put it, empowered communities are able to collaborate, identify common goals, strategise to achieve collective objectives, promote participation and maintain communal cooperation at all times. Literature confirms that empowered communities maintain unity in the face

of conflict and collectively tackle issues of common interest. Earlier, Zimmerman (1998) indicates that community empowerment emphasises collective actions for the improvement of people's life, their connection among agencies and broader national organisations.

In terms of participation component, it is concluded that one's ability to accurately separate active, from passive and dormant participants remain critical to correctly tackle the real problem. Therefore, the determination of these categories can be done through a number of actions. For instance, various records such as attendance registers, minutes, invitation letters, memos or communiqués may be consulted. Similarly, the determination of passive community members can also be found through the review of district documents on meetings. However, the determination of dormant community members can only be solicited through direct engagement with the relevant community members in the area. In terms of empowerment component, it is argued that the community plays a central role in the advancement of all empowerment efforts. However, this does not mean that community empowerment efforts will not have an impact on individual and or organisational level. Although the three levels are considered highly connected, they are interdependent and the aim of each may differ. This was also reflected by Robertson & Minkler (1994) and Wallerstein & Bernstein (1988) who argued that, within empowered communities there are empowered organisations and the level of organisational empowerment depends on the empowerment levels of its members (individuals). However, despite the highly inter-connected nature of these attributes this article adopts community based approach as the main entry point for community empowerment efforts.

EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK FOR SUBNATIONAL CITIZEN-BASED PARTICIPATORY AND EMPOWERMENT IN VHEMBE DISTRICT

Table 1 provides a list of these theories, their critical features, key proponents and critiques. Out of these theories, this article chooses two theoretical considerations for utilisation in the interpretation of empirical data. After close consideration of the five theoretical and explanatory frameworks, it was decided on the good governance theory and the empowerment theory for the interpretation of empirical data. Unlike other fields of study that lack established frameworks for explaining the role of community participation and empowerment, governance researchers developed several frameworks capable of explaining the role of communities in the management of local developmental initiatives. Good governance theory emerged from the dismal failure of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to produce the expected economic outcomes from the macroeconomic and fiscal policy reforms implemented in developing countries (World Bank 2002). According to the World Bank (2002:13) good governance relates to a situation wherein "a government is characterised by predictable, open and enlightened policy making; bureaucracy imbued with professional ethos, an executive arm of government that is accountable for its actions; strong civil society participating in public affairs; and, all behaving under the rule of law". Good governance theory is supported by a multiplicity of scholars such as Thornhill (2006), Agere (2001), Adejemboi (1998), Van Jaarsveldt (2010), Schwella (1999), Frederickson (2005), Pauw (1999), Cloete (1997) and King (2009), amongst others.

Further, Adejombi (1998) and Van Niekerk *et al.* (2001:64) argue that, good governance promotes social interaction between the state and the private sector. Like all other theories, even good governance has its own contradiction. For instance, Agere (2000:1) conflates it with increased managerial autonomy and reduced central controls while Hayden & Braton (1993:7) describe it as the level of responsiveness between members of the community and the government. As Agere (2000:5) puts it, lack of accountability could lead to corruption resulting in the suffering of the ordinary community members.

As for the empowerment theory, it emerged in the 1980s from the work of various scholars such as Zimmerman (1981, 1984), Swift & Levin (1987), Rappaport (1981, 1987) and Cornell Empowerment Group (1989). In its early evolution, empowerment theory emphasised the need to link the individual well-being with the larger social and political environment (Zimmerman 1984). According to Perkins & Zimmerman (1995), this theory emphasised the need to connect one's mental health to mutual help towards concerted efforts to create a responsive community. Earlier, the Cornell Empowerment Groups (1989:16) defined empowerment in the following manner:

intentional on-going process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation through which people lacking equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources.

This definition is seen as the main embodiment of the various definitions as provided by other scholars such as Rappaport (1989), Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz & Checkoway (1992). In its origins, empowerment theory recognises the centrality of participation towards the achievement of goals, gain access to resources, and gather understandings of the socio-political environment in which one resides. In the past 30 years, empowerment theory has grown exponentially especially as a psychological construct (Perkins & Zimmerman 1995) which endeavours to enlighten people for the greater good. According to the World Bank (2002), empowerment is committed to enhance the capacity of individuals and/or groups to make choices that transform their desired actions and outcomes. In practice, empowered communities should be able to negotiate, influence, control and hold government institutions accountable on matters affecting their daily lives.

Following the above discussion, we conclude that both good governance theory and empowerment theory complement each other and provide a good basis for the effective interpretation of the empirical data. Based on Louw's (2012) assertion, it is argued that the migration of governance to other disciplines and sub-disciplines before its full maturity allows some scholars to start adjusting the concept to suite their study objectives. This situation creates limitations for anyone who tries to assess what the theoretical framework really is. As a result, it is argued that it was on the basis of these developments that the adoption of governance as a field of study and its application as a theoretical consideration is based. In agreeing with Perkins & Zimmerman's (1995:570) assertion, it is argued that empowerment theory focuses on identifying capabilities instead of cataloguing risk factors and exploring environmental influences of social problems instead of blaming victims. Ultimately, it is argued that both good governance and empowerment theories complement each other and provide a good basis for the effective interpretation of the findings of the research.

Table 1: Theoretical Frameworks of Governance

Theory	Features	Proponents	Critique
1 Good governance theory	Advances efficient service delivery, non-corruptibility, responsiveness to civil society, guarantees stability and promotes transparent and equitable resource allocation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosenau (1997) • World Bank & IMF (2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louw (2012) argues that it lack conceptual clarity. • Agree (2002) argues that it lacks well defined scope.
2 Empowerment theory	Professes a situation wherein the individual, the organisations and the communities gain collective mastery of their issues of concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rappaport (1987) • Zimmerman (1995) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swift & Levin (1987), argue that it has not been clearly operationalised in the field of mental health.
3 Agency theory	Advocates for the proper treatment of shareholder as the main bosses and the company managers as the agents of the shareholders. It also provides prescription on how the principals should control the agent to curb managerial opportunism and self-interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jensen & Meckling (1976) • Lan <i>et al.</i> (2010) • Zajac <i>et al.</i> (2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mara (1985), Perrow (1986) & Shapiro (2005) argue that its assumptions are detached from reality & oversimplified problem solving.
4 New Public Management theory	Professes the enhancement of the efficiency of the public sector with the government's full control. Its key values are embedded in the transplantation of the private values into the public sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osborne <i>et al.</i> (1992) • Pierre & Peters (2000) • Larbi (1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferlie <i>et al.</i> (1996), views it as just organisational theory that concentrate on implementation. It is just a bundle of managerial thoughts.
5 Participatory governance theory	Institutionalise government-civil society interactions through the promotion of public deliberations and decision making. It promotes active citizen involvement in public life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pateman (1970) • Putnam (1993) • Avritzer (2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avritzer (2002) advance the closing the political space and advances democratic elitism.

CITIZEN-BASED PARTICIPATORY AND EMPOWERMENT AT SUBNATIONAL LEVEL: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

After introducing the research problem statement and the methodology thereof, this article began by reviewing literature that allows an understanding of the governance challenges in subnational communities. As already indicated, the main aim of this article is to present the conceptual framework as the detailed discussion on how the research will advance beyond the literature review. To this end, literature was consulted which discussed issues of community participation and empowerment within the context of governance field of study. Therefore, the conceptual framework is the abridged summary of the components of participation and empowerments and their relevant attributes as they relate to the development of citizen-based participatory monitoring model. Moving towards the presentation of the conceptual framework, this article started by unpacking the governance modalities of Vhembe as a

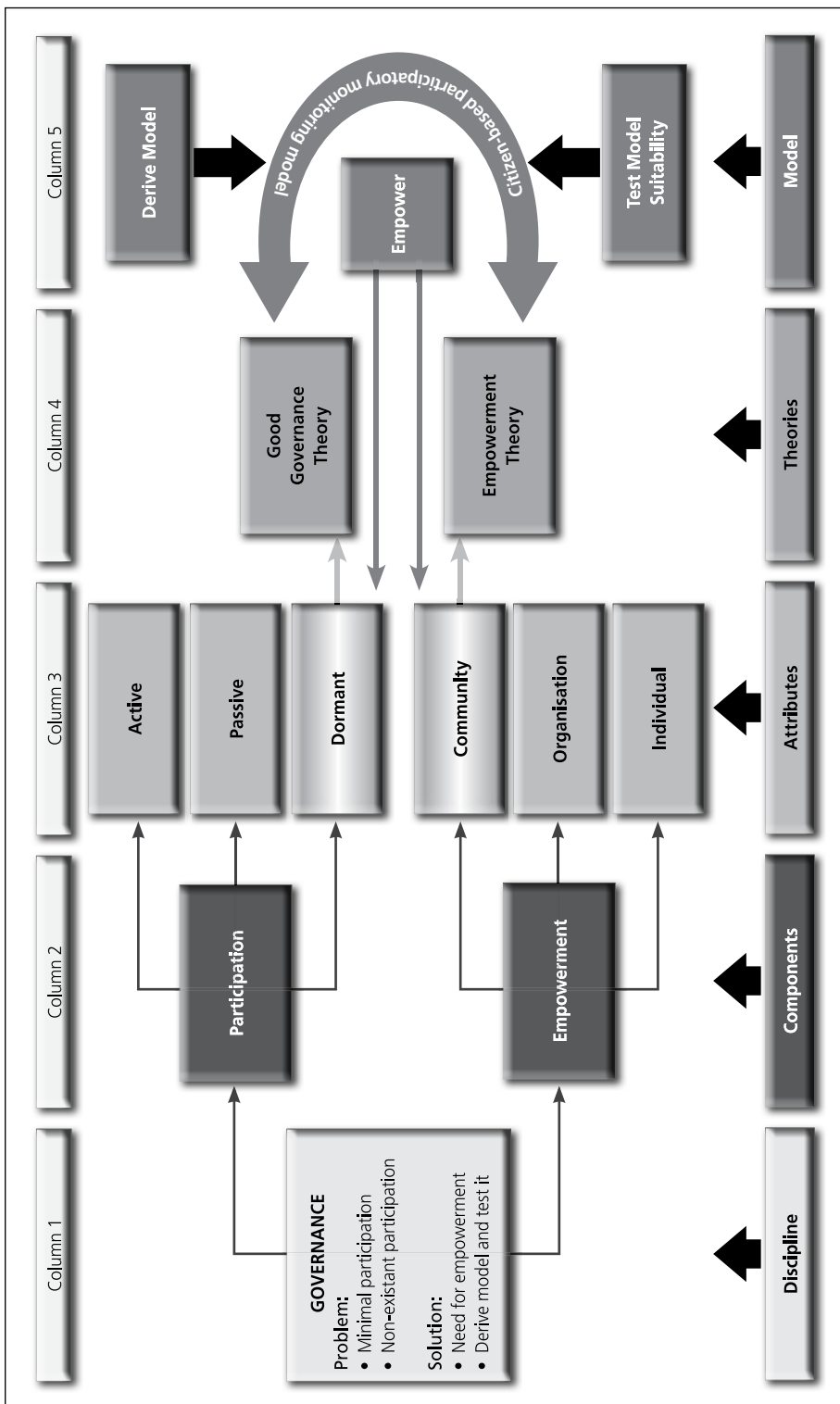
district municipality and the nature of its community participation and empowerment efforts. According to its IDP (2014/2015), Vhembe established a multiplicity of structures and forums to facilitate the participation of community members in local developmental initiatives. These forums include the IDP forum, transport forum and the Community Policing Forum (CPF) amongst others. Francis (2010) indicates that a number of rural development initiatives were implemented across the district. However, there is persistent minimal or non-existent community participation among the vulnerable, marginalised and or dormant communities in local developmental initiatives. As a result, this article explores the underlying reasons for minimal and or non-existent community participation to test the suitability of citizen-based participatory monitoring model for empowering communities to maximise their participation in local developmental initiatives. Figure 3 shows the summary of how the research question links with the reviewed literature and the manner in which they attempted to address the similar problem.

The preliminary analysis and the evaluation of the past and present studies indicate that the vulnerability, marginalisation and the dormant nature of certain communities remain the dominant problem across many rural communities in South Africa. Further, other researchers, scholars and academics argue that the vulnerability, marginalisation and or dormant nature of certain community members indicate the complexities associated with the implementation of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) across municipalities. However, it could be observed that the vulnerability, marginalisation and or dormant nature of certain sections of the communities remain associated with the state of illiteracy of the affected community members. While studying the state of community participation in Vhembe, Makananisa (2011) concluded that state of community participation in Vhembe is very poor. In mentioning the barriers of effective participation, Makananisa (2011) referenced phenomena like language, transportation, illiteracy and complexities associated with the application of the IDP processes.

This article is concerned with the fate of dormant participants as the previous studies on community participation had no definite explanation on the rationale for certain sections of the community being vulnerable, marginalised and or dormant. In this regard, most of these studies focused on the determination of the state of community participation of which their finding confirmed the poor state of community participation (Van Rooyen 2003). Although other studies wanted to develop mechanisms for improving citizen participation, their focus remained limited to the generation of new policy direction and the creation of structures and forums (Kakumba & Nsingo 2008). Further, Tshabalala & Lombard (2009) investigated the state of community participation in the IDP processes while Madumo (2012) investigated the feasibility of using a municipality to advance the developmental agenda of the state. In this regard, none of the scholars and researchers attempted to derive a model and test its suitability to improve community participation in local developmental initiatives.

Based on the above discussion, this article asks the question: "How might a citizen-based participatory monitoring model empower communities to maximise their participation in local developmental initiatives?" To this end, a citizen-based participatory monitoring model (column 5) will be derived and its suitability tested in empowering communities in Vhembe. In developing the model, the primary focus will be based on empowering the vulnerable, marginalised and or dormant (column 3) community members for obvious reasons. That is,

Figure 3: Proposed conceptual framework for citizen-based participatory and empowerment at subnational level



literature indicates that it is this section of the community whose participation is minimal and in certain cases is non-existent. Therefore, this article endeavours to resolve the problem of the vulnerable, marginalised and or dormant community members. This will be done by exploring the kind of activities, processes, systems and or modalities that communities undertake or go through when participating before mapping out the operational successes and or failures of citizen-based participatory monitoring model for empowering communities and maximising their participation. Further, this article draws its primary unit of analysis from the broader community members and singles out the ones whose participation (column 2) is dormant. This is an important approach in order to avoid the limitations associated with trying to empower all community members. Despite pronouncements by Zimmerman (1984) that full empowerment (column 2) embraces individual, organisational and community, the adopted approach elevates community empowerment (column 3) as the main entry point of the empowerment efforts. This move is then contextualised by the determination of the operational successes and or failures of citizen-based participatory monitoring model for community empowerment.

This article is located within the governance discipline (column 1) using both good governance theory and empowerment theory (column 4) for the interpretation of research findings. To this end, good governance advances the idea of the participation of the entire community. However, given the non-participation of dormant members, empowerment theory therefore provides for the need to empower these dormant members using the broader community as the main entry point of reaching them. At the end, the municipality would together with the community members derive a citizen-based participatory monitoring model and test its suitability for empowering communities and maximise their participation in local developmental initiatives as shown in column 5 (Figure 3).

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