

AN ANALYSIS AND APPRAISAL OF THE *IMBIZO* AS AN INSTRUMENT OF
DEMOCRACY IN
SOUTH AFRICA

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

POLITICS

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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February 2010

Abstract

The *imbizo* was introduced in the light of the problems associated with indirect democracy, as well as attempts to bring democracy closer to the people in ways with which they are more familiar.

The problem of the study was approached by putting the *imbizo* in perspective. Hence, a cybernetics model was used with the two information systems, namely the GCIS and the spider-web. They were used to describe the workings of the *imbizo* in the political system.

A mixed method using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches investigated the problem by surveying students' understanding of the *imbizo*. A case study regarding service delivery and public participation was conducted at villages where the *imbizo* had been held. Generally, findings confirm the *imbizo's* role as an instrument to enhance service delivery.

The findings have some far-reaching implications for democracy: Unlike indirect democracy, the *imbizo* "takes the government closer to the people" through unmediated engagement of the people in order to realise direct democracy and accountability.

KEY WORDS: Democracy, *imbizo*, direct democracy, participative democracy, indirect democracy, public participation, public consultation, public mobilisation, service delivery, responsive government.

"Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract and Discourse* (1762) in Rodee, Anderson, Christol and Greene, 1983:45 and in Thomson, 1969: 98).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to both Dr S.Botha and Dr P.F.G Mtimkulu as supervisor and co-supervisor respectively for providing valuable guidance regarding the study. The supervision of the study was extremely thorough leaving no room for a theoretical lacuna. This study has involved painstaking research and a great deal of work. I am also indebted to the University of Venda's Professor D.T Ngobeli for allowing me to conduct a survey at the university. In addition, Professor A.K.A Amey, Miss Sia Mchau and Mrs Tshilidzi Mathabi are thanked for their assistance with the statistical analysis used in the study. I am also thankful to Mrs Carol Jansen from the Unit for Academic Literacy and the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Pretoria and Unisa respectively, who has not only edited the research, but also used her superb motivational skills to keep the researcher on his toes.

Professors V.N Ralushai, I.P Matamba, A.E Nesamvuni and Dr M.H Nemudzivhadi; served as cardinal points by providing much-appreciated direction without whom the study would not have been a success. An equal measure of gratitude goes to Dr M.A Nemapate for providing strategic advice on maintaining a culture of discipline throughout the research.

I also owe considerable appreciation to my colleagues in the fourth estate for their efforts, advice and encouragement regarding this study, namely, Mrs Pippa Green (SABC board member and former SABC news head), Messrs T. Gumani (the former MWASA President) and T.W Muhali (SABC news senior producer). The Cardiff- based Thomson Foundation in Wales and the Carter Center in Atlanta-Georgia, both sharpened my interest in research through their training projects.

Approval to conduct the study from the following institutions is highly appreciated: Unisa, GCIS, Mutale municipality, Rambuda Tribal Authority, Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda communities.

My special thanks goes to my wife Mbula and my children - Hangwelani, Mulweli, Mueletshedzi - for being responsible and understanding throughout the research project. The community of Mbilwi is also mentioned for providing an enabling environment, which nurtured my personal growth and maturity. Many thanks also go to Pastor E.M Livhebe of the Mbilwi King Jesus Baptist Church for his contribution in the study. Lastly, my praises go to the Almighty and Saviour Lord Jesus Christ, for giving me strength and wisdom. It is also in Him where I continue to be taught about His Assembly (*Tshivhidzo*) for His people. I am so humbled.

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ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBA	Commonwealth Broadcasting Association
CE	Compton's Encyclopaedia
COMTASK	Communication Taskgroup
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
DA	Democratic Alliance
DP	Democratic Party
FPTP	First-Past-The-Post
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
HoC	Head of Communication
HRC	Human Rights Commission
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
KNP	Kruger National Park
MEC	Member of Executive Council
MP	Member of Parliament
MWASA	Media Workers Association of South Africa
NEC	National Executive Committee
NNP	New National Party
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PR	Proportional Representation
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party

SANCO	South African National Civics Organisation
SCOPA	Standing Committee on Public Accounts
SoNA	State of the Nation Address
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNIVEN	University of Venda
USA	United States of America
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO AN ANALYSIS AND APPRAISAL OF THE *IMBIZO* AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In June 2001, the government of South Africa announced the introduction of the *imbizo*¹ in order to bring the government closer to the people, through direct contact with the people and thereby facilitating the discussion of issues pertaining to service delivery with the people.

An element of democracy is its responsiveness to the people, but in an indirect democracy such as South Africa, people elect their representatives to represent them in parliament. Therefore, in an indirect democracy, particularly those in which the party-list electoral system is used, the government and the people are two separate entities, which implies a “distance” between the government and the people unless steps are taken to the contrary. These limitations are often overcome by a range of mechanisms of direct participation, such as a people’s assembly, referendum, the popular initiative and the recall. The question is thus whether the *imbizo*, as essentially an institution of traditional African society, could be regarded as an instrument for direct participation and thus resulting in the broadening of democracy in South Africa in a similar way.

Since everybody in practice cannot be a Member of Parliament (MP), “taking the government to the people” through the *imbizo* provides an opportunity where everybody could become involved in government at communal level. Netshitenzhe (SABC 2c 2008), the spokesperson of the South African Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) at the time, for example, has clarified the idea behind the introduction of the *imbizo* as a communication tool, which government uses to symbolise its presence by going to the people and engaging with them directly. Such interaction requires a two-way

^[1] In documents of the South African government the *imbizo* is often written in italics.^[2] The *imbizo* held at Muswodi-Tshisimani was a government *imbizo* held during the national *imbizo* week of October. It was addressed by the national Minister of Water Affairs Buyelwa Sonjica.

communication process, where information is exchanged between the government and the people. In this exchange, government poses as an equal to the people and simultaneously doing a supervisory role as a facilitator by mobilising the people to become “own liberators” through active participation in government. In the Mail & Guardian newspaper Netshitenzhe (2008:23) further states that it is important for the government to have “a mobilising vision which can unite the nation in action.”

It is against this background that this research on the *imbizo*, as a possible instrument that could provide a more participatory dimension to democracy in South Africa, has been conducted. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to provide the necessary information on how the research that is the focus in this dissertation, was conducted.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The government’s introduction of the *imbizo*, with its origins in traditional African institutions, into what is usually considered as a “Western” system of rule, raises a number of issues that requires research. The matter is further compounded by the fact that historically, the *imbizo* has several different traditional antecedents due to the differences in the histories and extant cultural practices of different cultural groups. Furthermore, it is an institution that is no longer faithfully adhered to by African communities, particularly in urban areas. However, it cannot be denied that it may share similarities with for example the popular assemblies of the ancient Greeks, the Swiss *Landsgemeinden*, the town hall meetings and the more formal town meetings of the United States of America (USA).

As a possible instrument for direct participation in South Africa’s democracy, two issues are important. Firstly, whether from a theoretical perspective the *imbizo* could be utilised as a mechanism of direct democracy similar to for example the aforementioned popular assemblies. Secondly, what are people’s perception and understanding of the *imbizo*?

With the mainly Venda-speaking regions of Limpopo Province included in the case study, the question that is the focus of this research is whether the *imbizo* could, in the context of an indirect democracy with a party-list electoral system, be utilised as an instrument that could broaden democracy in South Africa? Of particular importance is whether it could:

- Bring the government closer to the people.
- Make the government more responsive to the needs and ideas of the people, particularly with regard to service delivery.
- Promote participation by the people.
- Mobilise a positive attitude towards South Africa's democratic political dispensation and particularly among the population of the traditionally Venda-speaking regions of Limpopo Province.

The hypothesis underlying the research is that the *imbizo* can be utilised in South Africa as an instrument to invite direct public participation in the political process, to mobilise popular support and, thus, to make government, in the execution of its functions, more responsive to the requirements of society.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In the light of the above, the objectives of the study are the following:

- To understand the reasons why the government introduced the *imbizo* .
- To analyse whether the *imbizo* could be an instrument of democracy that could bring government closer to the people, as well as making it more responsive to their needs.
- To identify any similarities with other mechanisms of direct or participatory democracy particularly popular assemblies.
- To determine the attitude towards the *imbizo* of the people, by making use of a case study (for this purpose the mostly Venda-speaking regions of the Limpopo Province where an *imbizo* was held at Muswodi-Tshisimani² in 2005, was selected).
- Based on its perceived role among the people in the Venda-speaking regions, to make some inferences on the role the *imbizo* could play within the context of South Africa's democratic political dispensation.

^[2] The *imbizo* held at Muswodi-Tshisimani was a government *imbizo* held during the national *imbizo* week of October. It was addressed by the national Minister of Water Affairs Buyelwa Sonjica.

It should, however, be noted that this is not an anthropological, nor a historical study of the *imbizo* as it exists/existed among a number of cultural groups in South Africa. Neither is the intention to determine the level of “democraticness” of the South African political dispensation, nor to what extent South Africans still adhere to traditional “African” lifestyles. Furthermore, it is not the intention to determine the attitudes of all South Africans with regard to the *imbizo*.

1.4 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

At this stage, it is important to clarify a number of concepts pertaining to the statement of the problem and the objectives, in order to eliminate possible misunderstanding.

Imbizo

The word “*imbizo*” is a Zulu term meaning the gathering of the subjects of the King. The original meaning of the concept of *imbizo* refers to an important meeting called by a traditional leader in order to discuss issues with the tribe. Today, the term “*imbizo*” is used interchangeable and also refers to meetings, conferences and workshops at workplaces of organisations and companies (Somers 2005:2; Pretorius 2006:754 & Netshitomboni 2007:23-24,131).

The Xhosa, like other Nguni tribes, share in the usage of the word “*imbizo*” in reference to such gathering. However, “*intlango*” is a Xhosa word for a gathering or meeting (see Oxford English-Xhosa dictionary 2007:241). The other indigenous people of South Africa have similar practices of gathering. The Venda people, of the Limpopo Province use the word “*tshivhidzo*,”³ with its verb “*vhidza*” meaning to call. According to Van Warmelo (1989:431), *tshivhidzo* means a meeting, assembly or congregation. Sotho people, in turn, use the word “*pitso*” also meaning to call (Ashton 1947:237). The Tswana people of Southern Africa have also a similar traditional system of “*kgotla*” (Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie 2006:37, 44).

^[3] *Tshivhidzo* is a gathering called by Vhavenda chiefs in order to discuss important issues affecting the people. Other cultures similar to it are Basotho and Zulus, practicing *pitso* and *imbizo* respectively. In all these gatherings, Chiefs and Kings are surrounded by senior men (see Sono 1993:52).

It is evident from the above that with the traditional *imbizo*, the subjects will go to meet the traditional leader and some prevailing circumstances would dictate that the traditional leader meets with the subjects. However, in such circumstances the modern *imbizo* cannot be regarded as a traditional *imbizo* in the true sense of the word. Former President Mbeki's statement on the government *imbizo* shows some difference with the traditional *imbizo* : "What happens at an *imbizo* is that you get called by the leadership in your area, village or whatever, you get called to a discussion of particular issue...you don't act, you discuss the action that you should collectively take" (Pahad & Esterhuysen 2002:166).

The government *imbizo* requires that the leaders go to the people whilst with the traditional *imbizo* the opposite is the case. Furthermore, a distinction should also be made between a government and a presidential *imbizo* because technically speaking, they are not the same. The former consists of government officials ranking from ministers to other senior officials going to meet the people. It encompasses the Minister, the Member of the Executive Council (MEC), the Mayor and councillors (Gauteng presidential *imbizo* week 2002:1). On the other hand, a presidential *imbizo* is where the President meets the people face-to-face, escorted by the Premier, MECs and mayors of the particular province (Limpopo Provincial Government 2009:8,9). Lately, mayoral *imbizos* have also been held by municipalities. However, the focus of this study is the government *imbizo* in general.

Democracy

Abraham Lincoln defined the concept of 'democracy' as "government of the people, by the people and for the people" (Godsell 1990:51). The original meaning of the word "democracy" is derived from the Greek word, *demos* (meaning the people) and *kratos* meaning power or rule. This is the meaning of democracy as an ideal and a political system, which constitutes direct rule by the people.

A democracy may however assume either a direct or an indirect form. In a direct democracy, participation in the political process takes place without the intervention of an intermediary or representative. A classic example of such a direct democracy is the Athenian democracy of antiquity. On the other hand, in indirect democracy the people participate through the intervention of an intermediary, or representative. Thus, direct democracy means the people rule themselves directly without intermediaries, while

indirect democracy means they rule themselves indirectly through intermediaries acting on their instruction and on their behalf (Rodee, Anderson, Christol & Greene 1983:44).

However, many societies with a political system based on indirect democracy have adopted various direct mechanisms of participation to enhance the participation of the people in the political process. Examples, as already mentioned, are popular or people's assemblies, the plebiscite, referendum, popular initiative and the recall.

Representation

It is admitted that there is no precise definition of the concept of representation. "Still, the word generally connotes to make present, to symbolise or to stand for something absent; thus it implies presenting the views of those who cannot be present. To represent someone politically, in short, is to serve on behalf of another person and somehow to be held accountable to that person" (Cronin 1989:26).

A number of electoral systems are used for electing representatives. In South Africa, the system of proportional representation based on a party-list is used at national and regional levels of government. This implies that the various political parties draw up a list of candidates and that the voter merely selects a particular list without being in a position to endorse, or dismiss, particular candidates. Thus, it could be regarded as being even more indirect than "constituency based" voting where the voter may indicate his preference for particular candidates. At local level of government, a combination of constituency based representation and party-list proportional representation is used.

Government

The concept of 'government' implies the machinery by means of which, ordered rule is maintained within a society and policies and objectives are realised through the execution and enforcement of collective decisions for a whole society (Heywood 1997:24,406). For the purpose of this study, it is accepted that a government has to conduct its activities in a fashion that is responsive to the needs of the people.

Taking the government to the people

Bringing the government closer to the people is a generic expression that indicates involving the people. The government *imbizo* is one such an opportunity, but not the only one. “Taking the government to the people” implies the provision of opportunities for the people to meet government representatives, as well as to make inputs into the affairs of government, such as the implementation of service delivery. Within the context of this research, it is linked to the *imbizo* as an instrument meant to “take the government to the people.”

The people

Godsell (1990:56) provides a collective definition of the people as subjects under one government. He continues to offer a more appropriate description of the word, which is relevant to the study. “It is also used as the personification of the national political will or purpose and hence as a rhetorical device to lend legitimacy, or suppress opposition, to a particular political programme or movement.”

Service delivery

For the purpose of this study the concept of ‘service delivery’ refers to the rendering of services to the public, which are fundamental to people’s lives, such as water, housing, sanitation, health, and electricity, education, safety and security.

Public participation

The concept of ‘public participation’ refers to the engagement of communities in governance and decision-making with regard to the issues affecting their lives. Within the context of this study, the focus is on engaging communities regarding the delivery of services to communities. “...the public must be given an opportunity to debate and evaluate service delivery options; they must also evaluate the performance of service providers” (Nabe 2000:40).

1.5 CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

As mentioned in the introduction, the context of this study is the South African government's introduction of the *imbizo* as an instrument to bring the government closer to the people and to facilitate direct participation in the political process. However, according to Compton's Encyclopaedia (CE) (1996:266), Switzerland with its *Landsgemeinde*, the Greek city-state of Athens ^[4] with its "agora," as well as the town meetings in the USA are famous examples of direct participation in the political process.

The significance of the study lies in the fact that the *imbizo* is based on a centuries-old African tradition, used in systems of traditional rule. Today, the South African government is employing the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy. "An important benefit of the *imbizo* programme is that people can let their voices be heard. They have the opportunity to talk to government leaders about issues relating to governance and service delivery" (Rohan 2008:27).

According to Pallo Jordan (2004:203), the Minister of Arts and Culture in South Africa at the time, the idea of an *imbizo* is part of the political culture of the African National Congress (ANC). He points out that this is, for example, evident in the adoption of the Freedom Charter through direct participation by the people at the Congress of the People held in Kliptown in 1955^[5]. Another example is the introduction of the People's Forum during the ANC's 1994 election campaign, as manifested in the town hall meetings. These People's Forums were based on the principle that the ANC listens and wishes to involve the people and communities in issues that affect them. The town hall meetings target residents of a town with issues to be addressed. The town's residents assemble in the town hall to deliberate on the issues. Jordan indicates that the Forums provided the general members of the public with opportunities to question ANC leaders on any aspect of its election manifesto or policies. He concludes that:

They proved hugely successful in bridging the social distance between politicians and the citizen. The degree of interaction at such forums increased the sense of

^[4] In Greek city-states adults would gather at the *Agora*, a Greek word for "a city centre" of ancient Athens and which was the gathering place and market place for citizens to shop, discuss affairs of state, and exchange gossip" (Compton's Encyclopaedia 1996, sv "Greece, Ancient"). Direct democracy in ancient Greece dates back to about 500 to 300 BC.

^[5] The 1955 Congress of the People can be attributed to have given birth to the idea of the "government *imbizo*." The rationale behind the Congress was to invite the views of the people on an important decision.

identification with a party that was prepared to listen and did not insist on talking to the electorate all the time (Jordan 2004:209).

The government's *imbizo* -cycle shows that the first *imbizo* week of the year takes place after a cabinet *lekgotla*.^[6] In turn, the *lekgotla* takes place in January and is followed by the opening of Parliament in February. After that, the *imbizo* week will follow in April when the government "goes to the people" to discuss issues affecting them (GCIS 2007:11).

It is therefore necessary to analyse and appraise the *imbizo*, because it has been part of the traditional political system and still continues to be used in the modern system of indirect democracy. It is then of equal importance to study the *imbizo* in terms of the role it plays or may play today.

Such research could serve to strengthen the idea of the *imbizo* for use in both public and private life. However, the current term "*imbizo*" cannot be said to be a new word coined by the South African government, but its inclusion in the South African political process can be said to be new to democratic government.

Historically, the practice of the traditional *imbizo* played an important role in the life of African communities. Likewise, it is believed that the *tshivhidzo*, as practised by the Vhavenda⁷ traditional leaders to this day, have been used by their ancient predecessors to discuss important issues directly with the people.⁸ It is regarded as important to focus on the *tshivhidzo* of the Venda people in an analysis of the attitudes of people towards the *imbizo*. Hence, works on Mapungubwe and the Vhavenda royalty by the local historians, Ralushai (2003) and Nemudzivhadi (2001), can be used to link the traditional practice of *imbizo* with traditional leaders.^[9] This could help to enhance the understanding of the

^[6] The cabinet *lekgotla* is a meeting of senior high-ranking persons similar in importance to the traditional council meeting, namely the President, Ministers and Heads of departments (Government Communicators' Handbook 2005:11).

^[7] Vhavenda means, in this study, a people of the Venda region in the Limpopo Province. They speak the Tshivenda language as a home language.

^[8] It is even possible that the royal leadership of Mapungubwe might have used the *tshivhidzo* to gather and rule the people.

^[9] SABC Radio Current Affairs (2004) talks about the ancient Kingdom of Mapungubwe as an organised traditional political community, *circa* 700 and 1200 AD. This centuries-old African Kingdom is said to have traded with Far Eastern countries, like China and India. Ralushai argued that Mapungubwe may have been built by the Venda people under the leadership of the royal leaders (2003). Nemudzivhadi presented

imbizo, as it is evident that the Vhavenda traditional leaders have used the *tshivhidzo* to liaise with the people (Stayt 1968:209,210). It is therefore appropriate to research the use of the *imbizo*, by using one of the indigenous communities in South Africa, namely the Vhavenda, as a case study.

The understanding of direct participation in traditional Venda was that men should attend the gathering without the inclusion of women.^[10] The traditional Venda is a description of a patriarchal life, with a father as the head of the family or extended family. The village politics is centred on the headman as the leader of the village, who reports under the Chief.^[11] The *tshivhidzo* gathering was a meeting of a “men’s league,” also with traditional courts held regularly, to administer disputes such as assaults, theft and land matters. Fagan (1963:76, 77), states that the chief presides over such meetings, and listens to what the tribesmen are saying. One of the procedures is that: “All adult tribesmen may take part in the discussion.” The traditional political structure had to allow norms and values as elements of culture to prevail during the gathering. It is in these gatherings where issues of nation building were discussed with respect and loyalty to the royal leader and his council.

The importance of the *tshivhidzo* among the Vhavenda is demonstrated by the fact that a boy child may be given the name¹² of *Tshivhidzo* in dedication. These are children born during or immediately after gatherings of this nature. However, it is unheard of for a girl child to be named *Tshivhidzo* even in the present-day Venda.

Various gatherings of this nature are called by Vhavenda royal leaders, for example “*dzima*” (a ploughing season gathering), “*thevhula*” (religious gathering) and “*mudalo*” (to celebrate conquering of enemies). “*Phala-phalas* (horns) were used to call the people together for various gatherings. Each horn produced its own “note”...weird tunes

an account of the Vhavenda’s long history of kingship and their association with the central African and Middle Eastern history at the accession to office of Thovhele Gole Musiiwa Mphaphuli in Venda (2001).

^[10] Note that this is not unlike the situation in ancient Athens.

^[11] The titles of Chief and Headman are discredited by royal leaders in the new dispensation in South Africa. Royalty prefers indigenous titles such as Thovhele, Khosi, Inkosi, Hosi, and Vhamusanda. The titles refer to a King, Queen, senior traditional leader and traditional leader.

^[12] A long-serving executive member of the Mbilwi Civic Organisation, Mr Tshivhidzo Muthelo, was given the first name of *Tshivhidzo* at his birth in April 1947, following a *tshivhidzo* gathering of Chiefs at Sekgosese [sic] in Soekmekaar in the Limpopo Province. He was given the name by his father who was a policeman in the area (Muthelo 2006).

resulted” (Duggan–Cronin [n.d]). It is said that the residents understand the tune and would know if it is meant for a *dzima* or a *mudalo*. It is important to note that meetings for *dzima* and *thevhula* purposes were held before the rituals, while for the *mudalo*, they were held following the conquest. Stayt (1968:210), also states that the blowing of *phala-phala* horns was a frequent exercise in the traditional capital, except at “*mativha o xa*.”
[13]

The traditional Venda remained largely patriarchal. During the era of “independence” granted by the South African government during the apartheid-era, the so-called independent Venda was ruled by Vhavenda royal leaders - as was the case with the other homelands in South Africa, who were also ruled by traditional leaders. The royal leaders-turned politicians promoted and practised the rule that buttressed their continued survival as institutions of African royalty. Thus, other than turning into politicians, the royal leaders continued to lead the traditional authorities.

Oomen (2005:39) adds another important dimension to participation by subjects of the royal leaders during apartheid: “It would seem more appropriate to imagine apartheid’s institutional legacy not as bifurcated, but as a *patchwork* of institutionally drawn boundaries within which the degree of public participation was left largely to the discretion of the traditional authority.”

The homeland system fully lost its position as official policy during the dawn of democracy in the 1990s. The period towards the end of apartheid in the late 1980s, was also characterised by the emergence of civic organisations under the banner of the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO). These structures “took over” and called meetings, which were originally the prerogative of the royal leaders. For example, at Mbilwi ^[14] village, village politics centred on the newly formed Mbilwi Civic Organisation, which started as a Crisis Committee in 1990.

[13] “*Mativha o xa*” literally translated deep waters have dried out, is a Vhavenda royal language meaning the death of a traditional leader. It is during this period when the blowing of a phala-phala horn is forbidden until after the conclusion of the “*u pembela*” ceremony which occurs two or three years after the accession of the new chief. “*U pembela*” means an act of celebration (Stayt 1968:209, 210).

[14] The Mbilwi village is where the researcher was born and bred. The researcher served in the Executive Committees of the first two successive civic structures in the village.

It held a considerable number of meetings with the residents discussing amongst others crime, land matters and burials. The civic organisation was elected democratically, and the trend continues even today. Its meetings are held at the Mphaphuli royal kraal with women freely participating in the village politics. Some of these meetings are held in the presence of traditional leaders. Oomen (2005:39) clarifies this even further:

Even if the degrees of power that chiefs could wield in their areas differed, it was their formal sovereignty that was essentially at stake, time and again, in the discussions concerning South Africa's future that erupted after De Klerk yielded to the winds of change in 1990.

These changes have been taking place, and it is therefore important to determine how the people view them and the possibilities of the *imbizo*. Note that the civic organisation still calls the *imbizo* (meeting) even today, without first seeking permission from the chief.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

There is not much literature that deal explicitly with the *imbizo* as a focal point of study, as a recent phenomenon of South Africa's democracy. However, a survey of the literature indicates that related topics include theoretical perspectives pertaining to direct participation as an element found in both the *imbizo* and direct democracy. For this reason, Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:23), state that one of the purposes of a literature review is "To sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of the research, that is, to study the different theories related to the topic, taking an interdisciplinary perspective where possible."

1.6.1 Studies on indirect and direct democracy

There are several sources on indirect and direct participative democracy. The sources on indirect participation have a central theme, which argues that citizens in representative democracies feel excluded thereby not engaging with the government. Still, some of these sources have shown a need for indirect participation as a practical alternative (Pitkin 1967; King 1990; Brennan & Hamlin 1999; Eulau & Karps 1977; McCrone & Kuklinski 1979; Crisp & Ingall 2002).

On the other hand, sources on direct participation state that democracy cannot be fulfilled without direct contact between the people and their government. They argue for the application of several mechanisms of direct democracy: referendum, recall, initiative. The “modernisation” of traditional practices such as *pitso* and the *imbizo* in Botswana and South Africa respectively, is an act of inclusion, in a way, of some traditional direct participation mechanism in an indirect rule (Bowler, Todd & Karp 2007; Barczak 2001; Matsusaka 2005; Hoesly 2005; Thomas 1984; Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie 2006; Ashton 1947).

Both these sources of indirect and direct democracy will be discussed in chapters three and four.

Several studies conducted on mechanisms of direct participation provide important literature for this research, for example the referendum. Butler and Ranney (1994:11), state the following with regard to studies conducted on referendums between 1920 and 1980:

But the 1980s and 1990s have seen the number of such studies more than double, including works on referendums in the American states, comparative analyses of referendums and other forms of direct popular participation as ways of realizing democracy, and speculation about the possibilities of new forms of electronic communications for establishing something approaching town-meeting democracy on a national scale.

Such studies may have been influenced by the fact that there was a perception that there was a problem pertaining to indirect democracy, namely that it may be falling short of the expectations of democracy and direct participation.

According to Levitt and Feldbaum (1973:61), a study conducted on public participation at Charlotte in North Carolina, the USA in 1968, found that a small number of people attended several public meetings held in the area. This was despite their socio-economic status. However, attendance was high in the Black community when the meetings were held in their area to deliberate on issues affecting their lives, such as the Antidiscrimination Ordinance, which was adopted in 1968.

The participation of the White middle class section of the community was similar. However, it differed depending on the issue under discussion, such as street construction projects as opposed to the aforementioned Antidiscrimination Ordinance.

Levitt and Feldbaum (1973:63) state on the importance of political efficacy¹⁵ as a “factor that stimulates individual articulation”. Thus, a public, which has some trust in its public officials’ responsiveness and responsibility towards the electorate, is more likely to be politically involved in terms of influencing public policies. Therefore, such an individual citizen is more likely to engage the government than those who feel disillusioned by the political process. Such citizenry do not see election or ballot box as the only mechanism for engaging the government and its public officials.

A survey conducted by AC Nielsen in South Africa in 2006 and 2007 on the rating of elections and protest with regard to their impact on the improvement of service delivery shows, amongst others, “that protest has come to occupy a central position in local democracy, *circa* 2006. It demonstrates that a majority of South Africans see protest as a credible and legitimate means to advance delivery. This positions protest alongside elections and representation. Specifically, the poll showed that more than half of urban and metropolitan South Africans support protest as ‘an effective way to get the municipality to deliver better services’...The findings thus point to a new reality: protest, as a form of direct action, has become an accepted and legitimate part of political action repertoires in democratic South Africa” (Booyesen 2006:10).

At the dawn of democracy the government may have thought of devising a mechanism that would bridge the gap between itself and the citizenry. According to Booyesen (2006:10), the South African government uses *imbizos* to make its regular contacts with the people. This was evident from the series of *imbizos* held from 2001 when this programme was launched that still continues today. Similar findings were made by Khumalo (2004:12), on South Africa’s Presidential *imbizos*. The findings revealed that a significant percentage of the poor urban and rural communities are not aware of the

^[15] Political efficacy “is the belief that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process. Furthermore, political efficacy includes the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing this change...” (Levitt & Feldbaum 1973:63).

services and benefits they are entitled to as citizens. In both types of *imbizos*, either government or presidential, the people is the common denominator as the aim is to make direct contact with them.

Another study conducted by Nabe (2000:7), before the start of the *imbizo* programme on Enhancing Service Delivery at the local government level at the City of Cape Town, emphasised the need for effective public participation to realise service delivery. Nabe sees the engagement of the community as democracy in practice at local level resulting into sustainable economic development.

A television debate on moral laws and public participation in South Africa on the “Asikhulume / let’s talk” programme on the *South African Broadcasting Corporation’s channel one* (SABC 1), revealed that some laws, for example, the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act No. 92 of 1996 and the Civil Union Act No.17 of 2006 (RSA 1996) (dealing with the controversial topic of same sex marriages) were pushed through the parliament without the participation of the people.

The participants in the debate concurred that there were problems with the system of representation in South Africa; with people feeling alienated from the Parliament.

In his paper, “Government by or over the people? The African National Congress’s conception of democracy,” Pretorius (2006:753-755), refers to Nelson Mandela’s ideas about the *imbizo* during his trial held in the Old Synagogue Court in Pretoria, 15 October to 7 November 1962, where Mandela described his ideas about the traditional *imbizo*. He described the traditional *imbizo* as an important deliberative and decision making body, which is the constitution of traditional councils. Mandela praised the traditional deliberative institution for its involvement of the ordinary people in decision-making.

Pretorius (2006:753) also admits that the practice of the *imbizo* does have some political significance:

The practice is potentially appealing because it has the appearance of direct interaction between people and government. Its symbolic power might also be amplified because former President Nelson Mandela recalled it as a significant traditional African institution...

Pretorius (2006:754), also states that there is an overwhelming attendance of these gatherings. Still, he is not convinced of the efficacy of the participation of these gatherings, with regard to policy making and implementation. Thus, a large number of people attending the *imbizo* make participation difficult, and how “representative” those who speak will be. It is also compounded by the fact that the impact of what people say at the meeting can only be measured through implementation, rather than based on “purely on the fact of their occurrence.”

In addition, Pretorius (2006:755) cites Sartori (1962, 1987), who is critical about the ANC’s “strategic task” of mobilisation and participation which “is also linked with the battle of ideas and, hence, with the propagation and inculcation of hegemony:”

The dividing line between participation as self-activation and self-realisation by the people and participation as direction by the mobilizer is slim. When direction overtakes self-activation, the invocation of participation signals government *over* the people instead of government *by* the people. However, a conclusion to the effect that *participation* dissimulates partocratically inclined *mobilisation* cannot be inferred unambiguously from the ANC’s participation discourses...On the other hand, the party’s persistent invocations of a mission to conscientise and educate ‘the people themselves’, as well as others, with regard to ‘their own interests’ does insert the accent of a mobilisation regime into ANC discourses.

However, this should not suggest that the modern *imbizo* is an end in itself in relation to the realisation of the ANC’s democracy. It may suggest that the government *imbizo* is a means to an end on the way to the realisation of mobilisation and participation.

The other theoretical works on direct democracy, particularly social contract theories, provide some valuable information for the study. For example, the theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau talk about the relationship between the government and the people. The three social contract theorists move from the premise that it is the people themselves who must be directly involved in the formation of government, which in turn serves them. “The ideas of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau belong to one category of political theory, in that all invoked the notion of a ‘social contract’ as a basis for political authority and for reasons why citizens should obey their governments” (Thomson 1969:14). Hobbes and Locke did not support direct democracy – only the establishment of the social contract.

Rousseau, however, favoured direct democracy and in his political theory, he puts the people at the centre of every governmental action:

The moment people allow themselves to be represented, they surrender their freedom. Thus, every law that the people have not ratified directly is invalid; it is not a true law. In line with these views, later thinkers have argued that once a distance is placed between citizens and their delegates, the representatives will become oligarchic and the citizens will grow more and more alienated (Cronin 1989:39).

Political thinkers like Thomas Jefferson, advocated the will of the people as a vanguard of political authority or government. The sovereignty of the people ought also to manifest itself in the power to recall, the popular initiative and referendum. These democratic mechanisms place political power in the hands of the people (Cronin 1989).

Some sources look at the *imbizo* within the context of deliberative democracy. Though some regard deliberative democracy as one of the mechanisms of direct participation, some regard it as a separate form of democracy. Deliberative democracy involves principles that promote cooperation in a democracy and it particularly requires of citizens and representatives to provide in public forums the necessary reasons for a particular authoritative decision. Thus, citizens will feel that at least all alternatives or views were considered (deliberated) even though they may not agree with the outcome (Hague & Harrop 2007:46, 47; Hartslief 2005, 2009).

In her paper, “The South African presidential participation programme (presidential *imbizo*): engaging communities for a better life”, Hartslief (2005:4), deals with several studies conducted on participatory governance and policy-making. She cites Fischer (2003), with the shift from empiricist approaches to deliberative theories: Thus, challenges and limitations of empiricist theories gave rise to deliberative approaches. Some of the challenges had to do with the fact that empiricists were detached from norms and values of society. The “neglect” of values and social reality, as well as the need for “interpretive inquiry” urges governments to think differently in relation to citizen’s participation. The full involvement of the citizenry in governance is a “cornerstone of the democratic political process” (Hartslief 2005:4).

The significant findings of these studies centred on engaging the people in matters of policy. Thus, for policy to be successful, it ought to involve the people for which it is supposed to be catering. The bottom line of these findings is that there should be open discourse in policy-making if service delivery is to be realised.

1.6.2 Cybernetics model and related theories

The lesson of theoretical integration can be learnt from the study by Steenkamp (1993), where different theories were studied in relation to the cybernetics model. This can help with the analysis of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy in South Africa. These theories deal with the transmission of information (messages) from one component of the system to another. The information also feeds back.

Steenkamp (1993:41, 45, 51, 53) conducted a study on “the intelligence function of the political system,” where the system has a mechanism to provide feedback. He uses a cybernetics model to describe the communication and control function in the political system. Thus, for a political system to work, it must include communication and the control of information. He cites Easton (1965) regarding his input-output model of the political system, which requires that there should be inputs in the form of demands and support from the environment to the system’s conversion where they will be converted into outputs, such as policies.

In his study, “An application of cybernetics theory and certain aspects of organisation theory to public policy in legislative systems,” Beville (1977:13,127,145,146,147), designed a theoretical framework of the cybernetics model in order to analyse the decision-making process in modern legislatures. He recommends the cybernetics approach for studying social systems. Beville indicates that this approach provides a framework to explain how legislatures respond to the environment. In this sense, the cybernetics model is relevant to a study of the *imbizo*.

According to Mncube (1998:167), the South African government’s plan to introduce a new communication system that would be “responsive” to the people’s needs, has led to the appointment of a Communication Task Group (COMTASK) by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in 1995, to study the effectiveness of the communication service. This

development has made the cybernetics model frame of reference more relevant for the *imbizo* study. Hence, the birth of the new communication system (the GCIS) has led to the introduction of the *imbizo* as a mechanism to make democracy responsive to the needs of the people, by allowing people's participation in matters of government programmes and policies. The *imbizo* system is ultimately designed to operate like a self-steering system, which would also have sensory, analytical, decision making and execution components. Other than responding to issues from the environment, it will be able to be pro-active and correspond with the environment.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

A mixed methods approach is used in the study. The research involves two different domains of enquiry, namely, on the one hand a theoretical analysis and appraisal of the *imbizo* as a possible instrument of direct democracy, and on the other hand, the processing of empirical evidence obtained from research participants with a view to reaching conclusions about the research problem. For both the theoretical analysis and the interpretation of information gathered from research participants, the cybernetics model is used.

From a theoretical point of view, the *imbizo* is analysed in order to determine whether it could add a participatory dimension to South Africa's indirect democracy and whether it could make the government more responsive to the needs of the people. These are then evaluated against the democratic theory to determine whether the *imbizo* could be used successfully as an instrument of democracy.

Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are used in the collection of empirical evidence. However, these methodologies have certain advantages, as well as limitations, for research of this nature (Creswell 1994). Qualitative research is regarded as subjective and biased, however it often provides depth in the understanding of the research problem. In addition, a case study, as was used in this study, usually lacks external validity. On the other hand, quantitative research is regarded as objective and unbiased but often lacks an in- depth understanding of the research problem. By combining these methodologies in a complementary manner, objectivity as well as a deeper understanding of the topic being researched can be obtained (Creswell 1994:174-192). Thus, in the collection of data from

research participants, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to enable the researcher to reach a more informed conclusion on the research problem.

The complementary approach is used in order to increase the external validity of the study, due to the small sample selected in the case study. This also helps with the reduction of subjectivity in the study. Despite the internal validity of the study, it still cannot be generalised to the wider population. The rationale of mixing methods in the study is premised on the concept of “triangulation” which, according to Kelle (2001:4), “has often been used to account for the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in sociology...” Triangulation involves complementary, convergent and dissonant approaches when gathering data (Flick 1992; Creswell 1994; Erzberger & Prein 1997). These approaches utilise both qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain data aimed at reaching the objective of the study. For example, a convergent approach implies that there would be a point of convergence of data between the two methods, whilst dissonance refers to the opposite angles of data without convergence. The methodological aspect of the study uses the complementarity of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

However, this study mainly makes use of a qualitative approach, with the quantitative approach being used to a lesser extent. For the gathering of empirical evidence, a case study is used. The area selected for this purpose is the predominantly Venda-speaking region of the Limpopo Province. The *imbizo* held in 2005 at Muswodi-Tshisimani, located in the Mutale and Thohoyandou areas¹⁶ of the former Venda homeland, provides an opportunity for researching the potential of the *imbizo* as a mechanism of direct democracy and for making government more responsive to the needs of the people. The Venda-speaking people also have their own traditional *tshivhidzo*, which makes it suitable to research the problem that is the focus of this study. Furthermore, the researcher’s first language is Tshivenda, which facilitated the gathering of information in a traditional setting in a qualitative manner. In addition the case study also included less traditional respondents from Univen where students of politics were surveyed using a quantitative methodology for descriptive purposes.

^[16] The areas from which the participants came were Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages, both of which fell under the Mutale Municipality. Mbilwi village is situated on the outskirts of Thohoyandou and Sibasa towns in the Thulamela municipality (formerly the Greater Thohoyandou Transitional Local Council). Mbilwi is within a three kilometer radius of both towns. The royal palace of the Mphaphuli tribe where the Tribal Authority meets is also found at Mbilwi. The towns of Sibasa and Thohoyandou were built on the land of Chief Thovhele Musiwa Gole Mphaphuli, which stretch up to the Kruger National Park.

Several data gathering instruments were employed for both types of methodologies. These included document analysis, a literature survey, observations, interviews and survey questionnaires. In addition, a rationale for the data collection procedures was provided by using arguments based on costs, availability and convenience (see chapter five for full details).

As stated above, the qualitative methodology informed the bulk of the research. Structured and semi-structured interviews, as well as fieldwork, were used in the gathering of information from the research participants. Accordingly, a qualitative approach was used in a case study with a retrospective design, to focus on past events in particular, when interviewing village representatives and GCIS officials.

Four sets of research participants were used, namely government officials in the GCIS in the Presidency, rural people from the villages of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda, and tribal or traditional leaders of the villages and students from both the University of Venda (Univen), and the University of South Africa (Unisa).

For purposes of discovering the utility of the *imbizo*, it is important to obtain in-depth information on the *imbizo* from government officials who plan, organise and do the follow-up work on the *imbizo*. Government officials were interviewed by making use of a semi-structured telephone interview and because the officials could provide information on the *imbizo* in general.

However, gathering information from only rural people and traditional leaders could not provide information on how people outside of this context might view the *imbizo*. Therefore, students studying politics at Univen were used in order to gather information on how people with a political science background, view the *imbizo*. This was important to determine whether the *imbizo* was still relevant in a developmental context. As mentioned previously, case studies often have limited external validity and for this reason, a sample of students in politics from Unisa was used to compare the results obtained from the Venda region with those obtained outside the region. The aim was to determine whether there were significant differences that could affect the generalisability of conclusions made from the data obtained from the Venda region.

1.7.1 Qualitative methodology

The qualitative methodological approach is important for the study as it is used for social science research where the emphasis is on objective facts rather than on numerical ones. Accordingly, the building of theory in this type of study is inductive. According to Creswell (1994:96), the study of this nature has to start by collecting information and asking questions from the participants. The collected information will serve as a basis for forming categories and for comparison with the models or theories employed in the study.

The population or universe regarding this study, consisted of the people (representatives) who exercised authority and performed administrative functions in the villages, which included the ward councillors, civic organisations, traditional leaders of the villages Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda in the Mutale Municipality in the Limpopo Province; and the GCIS officials. The universe was selected by the researcher with the purpose of targeting informed members of the universe, with the necessary background information about the *imbizo*, which took place in 2005, three years earlier.

An important aim when selecting role-players or representatives was to determine whether they had attended the *imbizo*, or not. For example, Musunda village decided to send only role-players to represent the residents during the *imbizo* held at the nearby Muswodi-Tshisimani village. This development affected the study in the sense that the people who represented the residents were in an authoritative position in the village, hence their selection to represent them at the *imbizo*. Thus, the study could not include any other important representatives apart from those in positions of authority in the village.

Purposive sampling was used for the fieldwork at Muswodi-Tshisimani and the nearby Musunda village under Chief Rambuda. This sampling technique is biased in terms of the selection of the role-players who are considered informed members in the village. Hence, such information is regarded as being representative of the ordinary residents. Therefore, it was done with the rationale of focussing on the role-players of the villages, as “people” who represent the residents. Information is thus collected on the problem of the study through fieldwork by interviewing specific individuals and groups on the spot and under

natural circumstances (Welman & Kruger 2001:183). Therefore, a purposive sample will realise the objective of research by identifying these important people. It would have been difficult to use forms of sampling other than purposive, due to technicalities of the other procedures.

Purposive sampling requires that the researcher's experience add value to the success of the research. The relevance of the sample is because of its convenience in research in which other samples such as snowball and random sampling cannot be used. The nature of the case study and the fieldwork did not require a representative sample.

Purposive sampling is thus not necessarily representative, and it serves to achieve its purpose of interviewing people and individuals whose ideas are the nucleus of the village. Thus, generalising the results of the interview has limitations.

Some important documents pertaining to service delivery were also sought from the Mutale municipality, which is under the Vhembe District Municipality. Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages fall under the Mutale Municipality and are adjacent to each other, with the former falling under ward 7 and the latter ward 8.

A qualitative research approach is therefore important in this study in order to find answers to the research questions based on the respondents' impressions and opinions about the *imbizo*.

The findings that emanated from the interviews with the government official representing the GCIS are likewise important but cannot be generalised as the interview was biased to obtain an official position. This is despite the fact that the interviewee was objective when giving responses.

1.7.2 Quantitative methodology

Quantitative methodology is used mainly for pure science studies, as they are interested in numerical facts. In this study, a survey design was used in which samples of Political Science students from Univen and Unisa were used. A simple random sample was used in

the survey of political science students at Univen, using a student register obtained from the institution.

The universe consisted of the total number of students doing politics in the 2008 academic year. The student sample was used for investigating the research problem. The sample has been selected by making use of the following sampling techniques used in quantitative methodology:

One way to collect a simple random sample is to assign a different number to each member of the population and then use a random number table...Responses, counts, or measures from members of the population whose numbers correspond to those generated using the table would be in the sample” (Larson & Farber 2003:17).

This sampling method is common to quantitative research and each member has a probable chance of being drawn in the sample. Welman and Kruger (2001:53) contend that a study, which used random sampling, guarantees equal chance of being selected to the participants. Also in this study, each student had similar chance of being selected. “In the simplest case of random sampling, each member of the population has the same chance of being included in the sample and each sample of a particular size has the same probability of being chosen” (Welman & Kruger 2001:53).

A lottery technique was used to get a sample of 100 out of a total number of 358 Politics students registered for the second semester of 2008 at Univen. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:89) indicate that this technique is most commonly used for random sampling, “a symbol for each unit of the population is placed in a container, mixed well and then the ‘lucky numbers’ drawn that constitute the sample. The symbol for each unit of the population can be the names of participants, written on identical pieces of paper, or a number assigned to each participant.”

Accidental sampling or convenience sampling was used to “sample” Unisa Politics students that were available to respond to the questionnaire, as per “happen-stance”. “An accidental sample is the most convenient collection of members of the population (units of analysis) that are near and readily available for research purposes...Examples of accidental samples are the students who have registered for a particular course and show

up at class on a particular day” (Welman & Kruger 2001:62). The circumstances were such that it was difficult to conduct a random sampling of the Unisa students. Unisa is a distance learning institution and its students are not full time students although they appear in the student register and voluntarily attend group discussions from time to time.

1.7.3 Ethical considerations

Research participants participated voluntarily and were informed about the rules and procedures involved in the study. The following human rights principles were upheld:

Firstly, a respect for participants’ human rights was upheld throughout the research. These include rights such as privacy, disclosure of information, dignity, freedom of association, and freedom of choice. Participants’ rights to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and fair treatment were protected. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:102), state that researchers must respect participants’ right to refuse or participate in the study. Still, researchers must possess skills to persuade the participants to participate in the study voluntarily.

Secondly, Unisa was requested to write letters to seek institutional approval to conduct the study. The letters were taken to the University of Venda, the Mutale Municipality, the GCIS and local traditional leaders. Unisa also allowed the researcher to conduct the study in principle.

Thirdly, the researcher observed scientific honesty by being objective at all costs and avoided plagiarising other people’s works and results.

1.8 DATA ANALYSIS

As mentioned above, both quantitative and qualitative data were used in this study. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews using semi-structured questionnaires of role-players from the community such as civic organisation leaders, traditional leaders, ward councillors and GCIS officials.

Qualitative data analysis was done systematically in terms of the semi-structured in-depth individual interviews with the leadership of civic organisation, traditional leaders, and

ward councillors; and content analysis of Mutale Municipality documents. This includes document analysis of the universe of all projects in the Mutale Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The results of the fieldwork conducted at Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda in the Mutale Municipality were analysed inductively.

Qualitative data were manually summarised using notes of responses from participants. Frequencies of responses were summarised and compared between participants and as focus groups of the two villages. At the Mutale Municipality, IDP documents on service delivery projects in 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007/08 were analysed. These projects pertained to Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda. Similar basic infrastructural projects were also traced and perused with other villages in the area. This helped to understand the municipality service delivery plans on a global scale.

Quantitative data were obtained through the questionnaires used in the survey of Univen and Unisa students. Quantitative responses from study participants were summarised using frequency tables, pie charts and bar charts. The cross-tabulations of responses were made with demographic variables such as gender, education, income. A comparison was made between respondents from Unisa and Univen. Quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS 16.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software package. The pie charts and bar charts were drawn using Microsoft excel (2003).

Note that this study employed descriptive statistics for data analysis as opposed to inferential statistics. In other words, the results of the data were analysed descriptively. “Descriptive statistics is the branch of statistics that involves the organization, summarisation, and display of data” (Larson & Farber 2003:5). Therefore, such results were not inferred with the aim of generalising them to the entire population.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has some shortcomings with regard to validity. In any case study, the external validity or generalisability of the findings is a problem. However, the survey of a sample of Unisa students was done to determine how the responses of respondents outside the case differed from those within the selected case.

1.10 TIME DIMENSION

The study is cross-sectional and the information was collected at one point in time as opposed to over an extended period of time or longitudinally. Both the survey and case study data was gathered within a period of few days.

1.11 RESEARCH LAYOUT

The theory relevant to the study is discussed in chapters one to four. In chapter two, the theoretical framework for this study will receive attention with the justification of cybernetics model in describing the workings of the *imbizo* in democracy.

Chapter three will deal with the literature on indirect democracy, which exposes the limitations of indirect democracy and requires the direct participative mechanisms to supplement this type of democracy. In chapter four, the focus is on direct democracy and attention is paid to how societies, including traditional societies, practice direct participation.

The collection and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to the research is discussed in chapters five and six. Chapter five deals with the gathering of data from its venues, and discusses which data collection instruments were used. In chapter six, the collected data will be analysed and interpreted. The analysis of data was carried out using a statistical and descriptive analysis. The data is presented in the form of percentages and verbal summaries.

Lastly, chapter seven contains a summary of the main points of the study, the conclusions reached as well the recommendations made pertaining to the study. The summary of the study examines to what extent the objectives of the study have been met; while conclusions are reached based on the findings of the study with regard to the hypothesis formulated and recommendations are made on the resolutions of the study.

1.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided information on this study against the background of the South African government's introduction of the *imbizo* in an attempt to bring the government

closer to the people. Certain ethical principles were taken into consideration during the research process to uphold human rights principles, institutional approval and scientific honesty. In addition, the study was limited in terms of its scope regarding the beginning and end of the problem. Furthermore, the time dimension of the study was cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal. In the next chapter, namely chapter two, the focus will be on the theoretical perspective of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy in South Africa. The reasons why the government decided to introduce the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy, provides the backdrop for this study. Important in this regard are the problems associated with indirect democracy, as well as the attempts to bring democracy closer to the people in ways with which they are more familiar.

Therefore, the cybernetics model^[17] was used to analyse the effectiveness of and problems associated with indirect democracy in general and in South Africa in particular. The cybernetics model helped explain what the government *imbizo* does in communication, as well as the control of the information it receives from both inside and outside the political environment.

In this chapter, it is important to discuss what a model and cybernetics entail, before stating the reasons for selecting the cybernetics model. The cybernetics model will be described firstly, in terms of how it was used in pursuit of achieving the greater purpose of the dissertation.

Secondly, this chapter will end with a conclusion that explains why the cybernetics model is a relevant theoretical framework for the study.

2.2 THE CYBERNETICS MODEL

The cybernetics model is used in this study to describe how the system of government functions within its environment. A model can be regarded as a simplified representation of a complex reality used for demonstrating and analysing how something works or calculating what might happen. For example, you can create a copy of an activity or a

^[17] Plato was the first to use the word “cybernetics” from a political perspective (Bardis 1965:827-828).

situation; so that you can study it before dealing with the real activity or situation (Oxford advanced learner's dictionary 2000:755).

For the purpose of this study, two analogies will be used to explain the application of the cybernetics model in an analysis of mechanisms of democracy, namely the analogy of the anti-aircraft system and the analogy of the spider web.

The concept of 'cybernetics' can be defined as the science of communications and automatic control systems in both machines and living things. Cybernetics was derived from the Greek word "kubernetes" or "steersman" (Concise Oxford English dictionary 1995:334).

Stenkamp (1993:52) cites Karl Deutsch's (1966) definition of cybernetics as all-embracing and refers to:

[The] systematic study of communication and control in organisations of all kinds... represents a shift in the centre of interest from drives to steering, and from instincts to systems of decision, regulation, and control, including the non-cyclical aspects of such systems...The viewpoint of cybernetics suggests that all organisations are alike in certain fundamental characteristics and that every organisation is held together by communication. Communication is a process different from transportation on the one hand and from power engineering on the other. Transportation transmits physical objects such as liquids in pipelines, or boxes or passengers in trains or on escalators. Power engineering transmits quantities of electric energy. Communication engineering, by contrast, transmits neither tons of freight nor kilowatts of power. It transmits messages that contain quantities of information.

For the purpose of this study, it is accepted that a cybernetics model provides a simplified representation of how a government receives and processes information, reacts to information, changes or could be changed, in order to improve its receipt and processing of, as well as reaction to information. In terms of a political perspective, it implies that the government may have messages that contain important information aimed at reaching the people and *vice versa*.

In a democracy it implies, that the government requires relevant information from its environment in order to improve its responsiveness in line with the interests and wishes of the people. Isaak (1985:288-289), as well as Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones (1988:173), assert that communication is an important aspect in politics. It is through

communication that a political system or government copes well with its environment. They say that the communication function helps governments in their political responses and decision-making.

There are recent sources, which focus on cybernetics in terms of the socio-cultural aspects, governance and maximisation of democracy. It refers to the usage of cybernetics in societal systems including the biological and physiological aspects of life. In addition, the regulation, control and the system's feedback is also emphasised (Andrew 2008:1066-1068; 2009:1433-1435; Scott 2009:863-878; Yolles, Frieden & Kemp 2008:850-909).

2.2.1 Advantages of the cybernetics model

There are several advantages in using the cybernetics model within the context of analysing the successful use of democratic mechanisms in a state with a democratic political dispensation.

The first of these advantages lies in the way in which the cybernetics model can be used to explain the functions of an autonomous self-steering system, as a means of carrying the communication and control processes out automatically. According to Ashby (1964:1, 2), the greatest focus falls on aspects such as co-ordination, regulation and control. Cybernetics deals with all forms of behaviour in as far as they are regular, determinate or reproducible. What cybernetics offers is the framework in terms of which all individual machines and living organisms may be ordered, related and understood.

The process of communication and control in both machines and living things is automatic and incorporates certain components of the systems of machines and living organisms. In this regard, the components or capabilities have "specific tasks" which are essential for the effective operation of a system. For example, the human brain system is capable of functioning with information carried to the other parts of the body by neurons for communication purposes. Thus, the nervous system is controlled by the brain that communicates the message to parts of the body, such as hands and feet, that they must move. The brain is also "guided by its interpretation of the information gathered by the eyes and a sense of touch" (CE 1996 sv "cybernetics"). This system also provides feedback, unless there are some psychological impediments that impair the proper functioning of the brain system.

Secondly, the cybernetics model can be used, as indicated above in an analysis of the functioning of a democratic regime. Before starting to link the cybernetics model with democracy, it is important to provide an operational definition of the concept of ‘democracy.’

Although ‘democracy’ remains a much debated and diffuse concept, for the purpose of this study, the following working definition based on the work of May (1978:1), will suffice:

“Defining democracy: a bid for coherence and consensus”, he stresses the importance of governmental responsiveness by defining democracy as the “necessary correspondence between acts of governance and the wishes with respect to those acts of the persons who are affected.”

To put it more succinctly, for the purpose of this study, it can be inferred from the above that democracy, as defined by May, may not be attainable without cybernetics or communications; without which there can be no interaction between the government and the people. Thus, communications are central to ensure that information is exchanged between the government and the people.

Roskin *et al.* (1988:173) cite Deutsch (1966), who contends that both systems (politics and communications) clearly parallel one another. They doubt that one could exist without the other. This view is shared by Isaak (1985:288,289). Further inference can be made from the above that a government that is responsive, operates like an automatic machine system, which has communication components that makes it responsive.

It is also worthwhile to take note of Abraham Lincoln’s definition of democracy, which he sees as the “government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Godsell 1990:10). This definition puts government in a responsive position with its people as active participants. It also suggests that such a government will automatically respond to the needs of the people, as they have the ownership of the government and nothing ought to be done without the people and which is not for the benefit of the people.

Many definitions of the concept of ‘democracy’ are provided by different authors. However, for the purposes of this study, May’s definition has, as discussed, been found to be relevant and useful.

It follows from the foregoing discussion that the government and the people should be jointly involved in democratic activities through various mechanisms such as representation and the referendum – both of which are provided for in the South African Constitution, namely The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Act No.108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a).

The purpose of this study as mentioned in chapter one, is precisely to investigate to what extent the *imbizo* which was used in traditional political systems by traditional leaders to rule over their subjects, could be a useful mechanism in this regard within the South African context (see chapter one).

For this reason, the government *imbizo* is analysed in this study in an attempt to introduce an additional participative and communicative dimension to South Africa's democracy. In this regard, Roskin *et al.* (1988:173) state, “face-to-face communication is the most effective means for altering or reinforcing political opinions, because it allows for dialogue...” This is what the *imbizo* is supposed to be.

Therefore, it would necessitate that the government *imbizo*, as face-to-face communication, be seen as an important channel for communication and control (steering) in matters of governance and that it is brought in line with the wishes and interests of the affected persons in the political system. May's (1978:1), Responsive Rule should be a maxim of democracy if there is a correspondence between the issues of the government and the affected persons. Thus, within a democracy, this helps to improve government responsiveness to the wishes of the people.

In the case of direct democracy, there is a direct link between the government and those affected by its decisions and actions. However, direct democracy is usually not attainable because it is time-consuming and impractical - it would for example be very difficult to make decisions involving all citizens of a state. For these reasons, most democracies are indirect because they function with the help of intermediaries, - that is representatives – who then represent the wishes and interests of the “people” in authoritative decision-making and actions that affect them.

The case for a representative government is justified by Slabbert, F. van Z (1992:7, 8) and McQuoid-Mason, Mchunu, Govendor, O'Brien and Larkin (1994:7). However, there are

states, such as Switzerland, that have elements of direct democracy, although these writers view the return to direct democracy as an impossibility. Slabbert, F. van Z (1992:7), contends that:

The shift from city-state to nation state profoundly affected who the *demos* (people) were and what *kratos* (rule) meant. To insist that the *demos* of the city state can be transferred unchanged to the *demos* of the nation state is to fundamentally ignore the complexity that comes about as a result of changes in size, technology and composition of population.

Still, the approach to communication warrants that for it to be effective it should be in the form of direct communication (Roskin *et al.* 1988:173). Thus, if the government and the people engage in a face-to-face manner, it is the direct exchange of information between the two.

As alluded to above, democracy in South Africa, as in most other democracies, is also based on the principles of representative democracy or what is referred to as indirect democracy. However, Butler and Ranney (1994:12) concede that there are disadvantages to indirect democracy such as the lack of trust and legitimacy of information from the intermediaries. Therefore, in a situation of representative democracy the intermediaries or representatives link the government and the “people.” This political scenario negates the participative dimension found in direct democracy. Thus, the information going through the intermediaries or third party is vulnerable to distortion and bias.

Such communication, which goes through a third party, affects the workings of the components in a cybernetics model. Thus, the components of the cybernetics model operate automatically, that is, they are self-steering and regulatory. A system, which has self-steering mechanisms, does not need a third party to steer and regulate its motion since its components are self-serving.

Simply stated, a machine system, which is not automatic, can only be operated manually, through a third party, once the manual button is switched off and it becomes difficult for that machine system to give feedback as it was designed. A self-steering mechanism, on the other hand, gives feedback.

As mentioned, in order to enhance democracy within the context of indirect democracy, states often make use of mechanisms that bring an element of direct democracy into the system of government such as the constitutional referendum, initiative and recall in

Switzerland. These democratic devices helped to involve the people directly, in major constitutional changes and even to recall a politician who cannot be accountable (Knutsen 1991-2003:5). The government *imbizo* in South Africa could also be described along those lines, namely as an attempt by the government to add a participative dimension to its democracy.

For any mechanism to be successful in this regard, it should be self-steering and capable of communication and control. It can therefore be inferred that if the *imbizo*, as a traditional institution was capable of communication and control, the government *imbizo* could possibly be capable of steering communication and influencing public policies in modern government. This endorses the responsive nature of democracy, with communication being central for the realisation of real participatory democracy.

Sono (1993:52) explains the procedure, which resembles communication and control in the traditional *imbizo*:

Sometimes, depending on the nature of the business to be discussed, attendance was compulsory....The chief presided over these gatherings. If the matter required discussion, some of the chief's advisers initiated deliberations by stating their views, which they may have bounced off the chief prior to the formal gathering. Usually, these senior men were followed by their other important men, after which anyone so desirous might speak or ask questions. The chief then summarized what had been expressed, and announced his decision. Rarely did the assembly raise any topic for discussion. All that it did was to deliberate upon the issues tabled before it, and the meeting generally went on until a decision was reached.

Mandela's description of these meetings is similar to the above. The description will be detailed in chapter four (Mandela 1995:24, 25; Matshediso 2008:1-2).

The government's perspective of the *imbizo* makes it an important aspect of communication and control. On an SABC 2 television programme, Netshitenzhe (SABC 2 c), pointed out that the idea of the government *imbizo* is that government facilitates these gatherings, in order to enable the people to become their own liberators. Thus, they become their own liberators when they interact directly with the government and *vice versa*, by participating in governmental programmes that result in a participatory government.

Netshitenzhe's statement may imply that the government *imbizo* should evolve into a system of government that works on its own like a machine, with government being the facilitator. Pahad (2007:1, 2), likewise emphasises that:

The *Imbizo* remains an expression of true participatory democracy,... Communication to realise the People's Contract requires *active listening* and it binds government and citizens in a pact of mutual accountability where political *decision makers* have to engage in a dialogue with, listen to and respect the wisdom of all including the poor, and then to use the *knowledge* gained to develop more informed public *policy* [my italics] and thereby improve the conditions of life of all.

Therefore, the cybernetics model is of significance in this regard, for its description of systems that work in a similar automatic manner.

If the government and the people participate jointly in the democratic actions and activities pertaining to governance, it is similar to putting democracy into practice. Therefore, the government following the indirect democratic system may result in the bypassing of the wishes of the people by taking decisions without directly consulting the people who are affected by them. This would be in direct opposition to direct democracy and would fall short of both Lincoln's dictum of democratic politics, as well as the principle of responsiveness. Indirect governance is, as mentioned a system of government where the people are governed through representatives. There is thus no direct contact between the government and the governed.

As mentioned, a real democracy is responsive to the aspirations of the people. Such a democracy is based on direct participation of the people whose wishes correspond with the acts of government.

Butler and Ranney (1994:11), explain that in an indirect democracy, the system of government is in a form of representation. Since the South African political dispensation is based on an indirect democracy, public participation at the level of the government *imbizo* could serve to counteract the bypassing of the people.

What can be inferred from the above discussion is that the cybernetics approach can be used as a model for the government *imbizo*, which is similar to saying that there are similarities in the way both systems function.

In the cybernetics model, the components of the government *imbizo* system are similar to those of an anti-aircraft system. To explain this analogy, one needs to consider that the sensory, analysis, decision-making and execution capabilities are found in the *imbizo* system of the government. These capabilities in both machines and living things operate through automatically instructed (programmed) tasks and the creative process respectively. For example, the capabilities of human beings, namely sensory, analysing, decision-making and executive are influenced by creative thinking, which machines do not possess.

Apart from using May's definition to provide coherence and consensus regarding the understanding of democracy, this definition is used to link the use of the cybernetics model with democracy. In effect then, as elaborated in the above discussion, the cybernetics model could be used to explain how the government *imbizo* would function as a communication tool in the South African democracy.

The capabilities or components used in a machine system like that of an anti-aircraft system are also central to the government *imbizo* system, which steers democracy because of its participative nature. The capabilities found in the government *imbizo* have creativity aspects. Those components enable the government *imbizo* to be operational in a democracy as an instrument used by the government to strengthen, reinforce and extend the basis of democracy in South Africa.

Traditionally, the structural arrangement of the *imbizo* would include key players who are referred to as the "ears, eyes, hands, and feet" of the system. These various portfolios provide the functions by means of which the traditional *imbizo* can ensure the smooth operation of the system. These functions are symbolic of the sensory component and the role of the government to facilitate and mobilise the government *imbizo*. These key players are the capabilities or components of the *imbizo* system. The role played by the key players or senior men who surround the chief, is crucial for the success of the *imbizo* (Sono 1993:52).

The chief's court (advisers and other important men) serves as the system's capabilities or functionaries. The Tshivenda serial drama "*Muvhango*" ^[18] (SABC 2 a), illustrates the

[18] "*Muvhango*" is a drama, which depicts the Vhavenda traditional political life as characterised by disputes which even spread to village and family life. "*Muvhango*" is a Tshivenda word literally meaning

concept of government *imbizo* well by confirming the important functions that are performed by the senior men who surround the chief and are seen as his ears and eyes. The drama is true to life in that it depicts the actual Venda traditional political system. In this drama, Chief Azwinndini Mukwevho instructed “*Vhakoma*” (headman) Nenzhelele to be the “ears and eyes” in the community over the controversial mining issue.

The above scenario and emphasis on communication in a traditional political system cannot be separated from modern politics easily. It is because the philosophy behind the traditional *imbizo* entailed communication and control, influencing and legitimising of the decisions taken. As mentioned in chapter one, Pretorius (2006:753), reports on Mandela’s praise of the *imbizo*:

...which governs the affairs of the tribe...was so completely democratic that all members of the tribe could participate in its deliberations. Chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, all took part and endeavoured to influence its decisions. It was so weighty and influential a body that no step of any importance could ever be taken by the tribe without reference to it.

In the context of South African politics today, the government’s aim with the *imbizo* is that it should be used as a mechanism, or machinery of participation in democracy. Similarly, the traditional *imbizo* requires that the above capabilities or “specific functions,” which it can employ in the process of transmitting information from one component to another, should be a part of a communication and steering system.

The components of the *imbizo*, as envisaged by the government, are its capacity to function in a democracy. A task team^[19] charged with certain tasks during the process of the government *imbizo*, capacitates the system as will be discussed in chapter four. According to the GCIS *Government Communicators’ Handbook* (2007:39), the task team should consist of officials from the GCIS, the Presidency, the protocol, the security and service-delivery departments and “a senior person (normally the HoC²⁰ in the Premier’s Office), who will be the link with the provincial department of the executive council and others as may be deemed fit.”

disputation, mainly within the traditional leadership (Dzebu 2007:16). As mentioned in chapter 1, the Vhavenda traditional system has used *tshivhidzo* as an instrument to rule over its subjects.

[19] A task team is responsible for implementing the Imbizo in general. It must inter alia do environmental scanning of the venue of the *imbizo* and create a favourable climate for it to be a success from the start to the end.

[20] Head of Communication.

The fact that the task team consists of selected key players, makes it a strategic group in the *imbizo*. The group has capabilities that are similar to the capabilities of an anti-aircraft system in a cybernetics model, namely the sensory, analytical, decision-making and execution capabilities. The capabilities of the government *imbizo*, as represented by the task team, are manifested in the specific tasks of the group. Just as in an anti-aircraft system, the capabilities of the *imbizo* are regulative or in motion during the *imbizo* process. The capabilities are linked by messages that translate into information, from one capability to another. Thus, information is passed on systematically through the capabilities.

A number of tasks that apply to both the cybernetics model and the task team members, include a sensory capability, as well as analytical and decision-making components. The system, in both the cybernetics model and the task team, should be capable of prediction as a precursor to reaching the decision-making level. Thus, when a system makes predictions based on the information at its disposal, it is able to distinguish between positive and negative intentions of the environment. Its decision is therefore likely to be an informed one.

The first task performed by the task team members, which also applies to the cybernetics model, involving the sensory capability, requires the gathering of information about the *imbizo* and its environment. The sensory capability allows the members to listen, observe, and explore their feelings about the proceedings at the government *imbizo*. This is similar to an anti-aircraft system, which uses its radar to collect information from its environment. The collected information is subsequently sifted for clarity so that a clear command can be sent to the analysing capability. In an anti-aircraft system, the system is operated from the command communications centre or room.

The analysing component is involved in the next step, which entails the documentation of the information gathered at the sensory level. The task team members collate information not as robots, but also as informed members of the team. Thus, they should be able to apply their reasoning capacity in order to discern the facts from the opinion. The GCIS^[21] *Government Communicators' Handbook* (2007:45, 46), explains:

^[21] Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)

The task team needs to evaluate the *imbizo* and critique where necessary for future improvements. The evaluation should be the first step towards writing a report about the *imbizo* ...The co-ordinator needs to collect all scribes' notes and collate them into a follow-up report of all issues raised. Ideally, this should be in the form of a database...

In comparison, in the analogy of the anti-aircraft system, the latter is programmed in such a way that it uses its experiences derived from the past knowledge, which gives it an intellectual capacity. "The stored data and the reasoning capacity together form the analytical capability with which incoming information from the sensors is evaluated for veracity and appropriateness – for example, distinguishing between birds and aeroplanes" (Steenkamp 1993:50). Both birds and aeroplanes oblige the system to consider various probabilities. Thus, if they are birds, they need to determine how they will affect the aircraft and if they are aeroplanes, it must be ascertained further whether they belong to their own force or an enemy aircraft. At this stage, the communication process becomes strategic for the system to be decisive and ready to take a decision.

The decision-making component of a government *imbizo* system involves the raising of some issues at the gathering that will still be responded to during the *imbizo*. "Where it is not possible to respond immediately, the government has to commit itself to get back and respond at a particular time-frame" (GCIS 2005:25).

When briefing the Portfolio Committee on Communications on the Government GCIS budget vote, Netshitenzhe (2003:9.2) argues about the challenge that goes with the government *imbizo*:

One consequence of the rapid growth in *Imbizo* is the challenge of processing those concerns that are not immediately dealt with on the spot. To address this GCIS is developing an information management system to which provinces will have access, and which will collate issues raised at *Imbizo*, in order to promote effective follow-up and feedback.

For example, if water and housing issues are raised, the responsible provincial departments will be responsible for these services. While the national departments may be accountable, the responsibility lies with the departments involved who should take decisions regarding these issues. Unlike the anti-aircraft system, the government *imbizo* system is a human-driven system and may suffer from indecision or a lack of decision-making because of the indecisiveness of people.

Furthermore, “The task team has to produce a report about the *imbizo*, which is submitted to management. The report should contain recommendations about how issues raised will be taken forward” (GCIS 2007:45). Likewise, the decision-making component of the anti-aircraft system takes all the information interpreted by the analytical component into consideration. This is done to avoid miscalculations of the likelihood of the threat if the enemy wants to strike. If it is a friendly environment, the system may decide not to take any action at all. Thus, the available information will determine the types of decisions that have to be taken. However, an own force anti-aircraft might pose the threat of an accident such as a head-on collision. This means that information is crucial to the government for the analytical, decision-making and executive functions. It is therefore proper for the government to handle the information at its disposal with care, thereby avoiding insensitive decision-making such as the duplication of services and non-delivery of services.

It is important to note that a decision taken is not equivalent to a decision implemented. Therefore, the next step involves the executive component that is the capacity of the system to execute the decision taken by the system. In the government *imbizo* system, even if a decision is taken, implementation may be lacking due to challenges such as processing the information as mentioned by Netshitenzhe. For this reason, it is important to develop some implementation mechanisms, such as who does what and when? This is clarified in the Government Communicators’ Handbook (GCIS 2005:30):

The consolidated report, which will also include timeframes of action required by responsible departments and bodies, should be presented to the principal, i.e. President, Deputy President, Premier, Minister, Mayor, Councillor, etc. The report must be communicated to the relevant responsible departments or bodies via the proper protocol channels, to ensure that action is taken and communicated to the affected province or area.

This is unlike what happens in the anti-aircraft system as automation makes it execute the command automatically. According to Steenkamp (1993:51), the autonomous system of an anti-aircraft would not stop functioning, once the executive component (guns or missile batteries) has applied the command. It is important to note that the sensory component must always be on the alert in case the enemy aircraft has dodged the missile. Furthermore, the system must provide continual feedback in order to keep updating itself regarding any new developments. This will also determine the appropriate course of action to be taken.

The system should thus be in a position to communicate, control and prevent the enemy from outwitting it. In this sense, the *imbizo* system will perceive poverty, underdevelopment and crime as enemies that must be tackled, for example. The democratic government has a mandate to create a climate conducive to promoting democracy in South Africa as a national goal. Therefore, elements that threaten the achievement of this national goal have to be detected through the sensory components and analysed as such. This will result in appropriate decisions being taken and executed to counteract or neutralise such elements.

The elements may not necessarily be human beings, but also social challenges such as poverty and hunger. The *imbizo* system should be able to respond to such challenges, with continuous follow-up and feedback. Rohan (2008:27) explains that:

The *imbizo* programme is aimed at strengthening democracy [through involvement of the communities in service delivery – my inclusion]. It helps South Africans to learn more about government projects and builds partnerships so that we can all work together to improve our lives.

2.2.2 The “spider web” analogy

To give an over-arching example, the analogy of a spider web could serve to provide a further understanding of the science of communication and control, even to a layperson that finds it difficult to understand the concept of ‘cybernetics.’ This is a clear shift away from machines to living things. One is tempted to call it “spidernetics.”

The Concise Oxford English dictionary (1995:1588, 1025), defines a spider web and the pheromones used to construct the web vividly:

Web... a network of fine threads constructed by a spider to catch its prey, from fluid secreted from its spinnerets...a snare or trap (*a web of deceit*)...**webwork**...a web like mesh or system of links; a network...**pheromone**... a chemical substance secreted and released by an animal for detection and response by another, usually of the same species. **pheromonal**...[Greek *phero* ‘convey + hormone’].

The spider web is designed in such a way that it is capable of carrying out the sensory, analysing, decision-making and executive functions. The webmaster (spider) will use the first three components to find out whether a friend or foe has approached its web

(Muradzikwa, Smith & De Villiers 2004; Jacob 2003; Vos & Schoemaker 2005).^[22] This will cause the spider to analyse and take decisions such as whether it should expand the web by constructing another thread upwards to avoid an enemy that is perceived as being more powerful than itself. In addition, it will go down to the web to catch its prey or attack if the enemy is perceived to be powerless.

The capacity of a spider to detect certain phenomena and respond to them is a clear manifestation of its system's readiness to undertake the executive function, which is analogous to how cybernetics operates. "Spiders have several sensory organs to get an impression of the surrounding in which they live" (Nieuwenhuys 1999:1).

The detailed description of the spiderweb suggests that, other than being used as a snare, it is also a tool for communication and control without which a spider would become vulnerable to problems such as hunger and enemies from the environment. Importantly, the web is flexible from the centre outwards, which makes it easier for the spider to receive information from the environment and within.

2.2.3 A comparison and synthesis of the three information systems

The three information systems referred to in this study are the anti-aircraft system, the spider network system and the GCIS. Like the spider network system, the anti-aircraft system is also capable of analysing and predicting the intentions of the enemy aircraft. The prediction ought to inform the decision to be taken. The analysis has to point at both perceived and real threats. It is obvious that if it were a friendly aeroplane, it would not pose a threat to the aircraft. It is also a fact that a friendly aeroplane could still cause some danger, for instance, in the case of an accident between own force's aeroplanes. In other words, prediction becomes an important element as it prepares the system to be decisive.

It is important to note that the longer the line of communication, the more easily information can be intercepted by the enemy or an unintended audience. In addition, long communication lines may result in the distortion of communication content. This will

^[22] The cobweb model (spider web) is used in economics by Muradzikwa and others to describe the cyclical relationship of supply and demand of goods and services in the market. There is no indication with regard to the use of the model in politics. The model is said to have been developed by a Hungarian economist Nicholas Kaldor. The term "spidernetics" is used in this study of the government *imbizo*. A theme of Chika Onyeani's book centred on the spider web economic doctrine. Other studies on the spider web were reported by Marita Vos and H.Schoemaker and Nina Jacob.

cause a breakdown in communications. Likewise, the spider will avoid long threads in the construction of its web, for communication purpose.

According to Compton's Encyclopaedia (CE 1996 sv "spider's silk"), spiders use silk to construct a web:

Although the diameter of the silk can be regulated by muscular action, there seems to be a correlation between the diameter of the silk fibre and the size of the spider, at least among the orb spinners. Spiders use silk for a variety of purposes in addition to weaving webs. They use silk to wrap their prey, to protect their eggs, and to make nests or line their burrows...These silks act as signal lines that are triggered when an insect walks over them.

Similarly, the GCIS serves as a webmaster. The role of the government in mobilising and facilitating its *imbizo* through the GCIS signifies its mobilising power. It can therefore be postulated that the GCIS functions as a cybernet, using the *imbizo* to communicate and channel government information to the people through its systems that were put in place. Thorne (1998:218), for example, states with reference to the former Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that:

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) base document underlines the importance of information and an informed population. The RDP's success hinges on the ability of government to communicate with communities and for communities to communicate their needs and interests to government. If people do not have the means to express their needs, they will not have effective control of their development. There can be no sustainable development without participation by the people, no participation without public debate and no public debate without information.

This implies that there should be both an active government and an active society in a democracy as implied by May's definition of the concept of 'democracy.' Furthermore, it may seem like a contradiction to suggest that the government wants to see its role as a facilitator being minimised, while the government *imbizo* develops into a self-regulating tool in an indirect democracy.

On the following page, figure 2.1 provides a schematic diagram of the cybernetics model combined with a spider web:

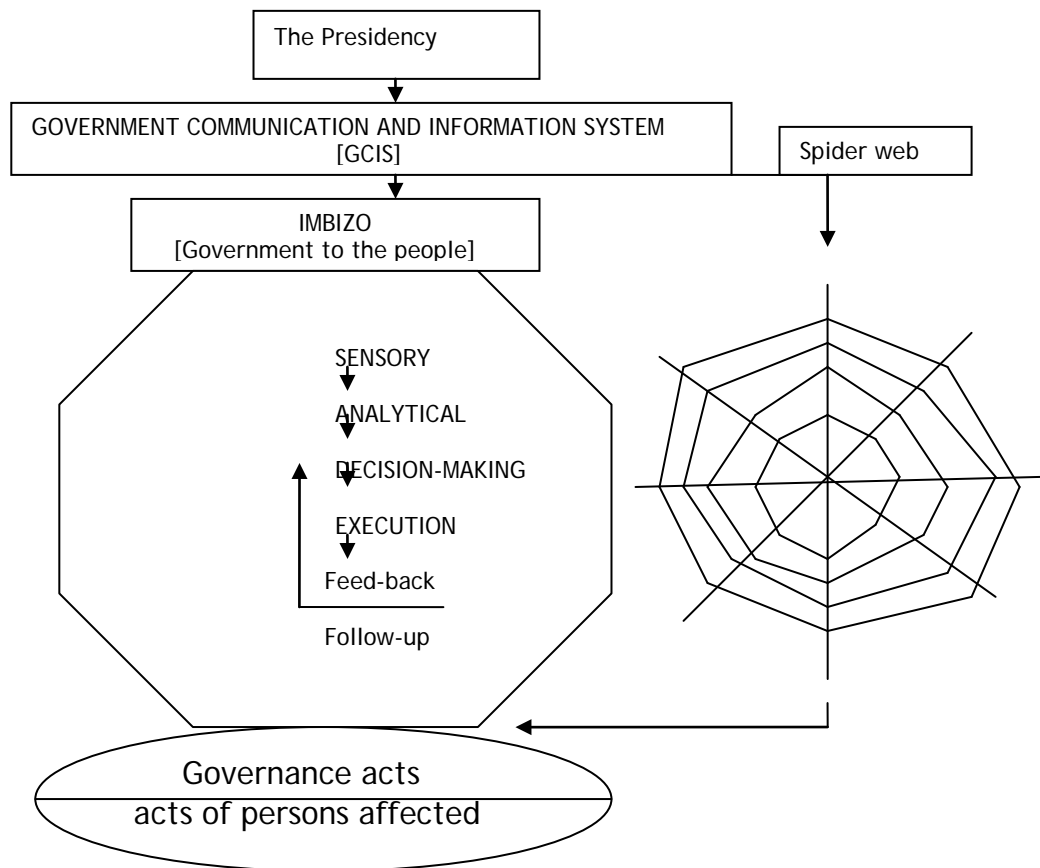


Figure 2.1: Schematic diagram of a cybernetics model combined with a spider web^[23]

The above diagram, figure 2.1, depicts the *imbizo* as the lid of a Vhavenda traditional drum made from a wooden tree. The drum, apart from being used for traditional dances, is also used to call the chief’s subjects to gather at the kraal, for example, when the enemy has entered their territory or is waging war against another chief.

The Tshivenda language expression “*ngoma madzula-wo-vhambwa, musi wa mmbi a u dihwi,*” literally meaning a drum that is readily made for the day of a military attack, is unknown (Milubi 2004:155). This implies that it is always better to be prepared and ready for a surprise military attack by the enemy force, as it is not known when the enemy might strike. The drum is beaten as a call to gather the people. This is similar to the

^[23] The design was influenced by the GCIS role (and media perception of seeing it as a “spin-doctor”) in facilitation and coordination of the government *imbizo*, comparing the workings of a spider as with the GCIS. The usage of May’s definition of democracy as an operational definition, served to support the study.

English expression “forewarned is forearmed.” “This expression means that if you know something is going to happen you can be prepared for it” (Beke 2004:1, 2).

The above diagram is an illustration of the flow of information in a self-steering system. It illustrates the cybernetics model, in which the system's information would flow through its components; namely its sensory, analytical, decision and executive capabilities. The system also feeds back to itself through the feedback loop. Like a spider network system, the diagram is a further illustration of the fact that the *imbizo* system cannot operate well without the communication of information from its different components.

Accordingly, the cybernetics model was used to assess the information and messages communicated at the government *imbizo*. In addition, it was used to determine the components found in the system of government *imbizos*, and their capacity to give feedback. Yet, it remains a question whether the introduction of the government *imbizo* has more to do with the weaknesses of indirect democracy in South Africa or whether political expediency is an important motivation. Note that such an assessment and the functioning of the components of the government *imbizo* will be discussed in chapter six in the analysis of the survey and interview results.

It is against this background that there is a need for the development of theoretical arguments to substantiate the accommodation of mechanisms such as the *imbizo* to supplement the practice of indirect democracy. Hence, an indirect democratic system could accommodate mechanisms such as the government *imbizo*, to supplement its information sensory, analytical, decision-making and executive (the system feeds back) capabilities in order to be responsive to people’s wishes and interests. There is no reason why this should not be the case in a system of indirect democracy, which is often blamed for creating a divide between the government and the people and thus a break in the communication between them.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The theoretical approach is significant for describing the theoretical framework for the study. In this regard, the cybernetics model served as a theoretical framework for the understanding and explanation of the *imbizo* system.

The analogy of the “spider web” to the cybernetics model has strengthened the theoretical frame of reference. Furthermore, the comparison and synthesis of the three information systems – the “spider web,” the anti-aircraft and the GCIS systems respectively – have all displayed the workings of the cybernetics model.

In addition to the above, the government *imbizo* is seen as an instrument that could enhance democracy in South Africa. It is assumed that the government *imbizo* has components, which the traditional *imbizo* system uses to communicate with its constituents and that has the advantage of providing feedback.

In chapter three, the focus is on indirect democracy, its problems, challenges and solutions to the problems.

CHAPTER THREE

INDIRECT DEMOCRACY: PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Indirect or representative democracy has become the dominant mode through which citizens (the people) participate in the political process in a democracy as is the case in South Africa that is also an indirect democracy. Against the background of the requirement in a democracy that government has to be responsive to the needs and demands of the people, the main objective of this chapter is to investigate the problems and challenges associated with indirect democracy, as well as possible solutions to these problems.

Attention will be paid to some problems and remedies pertaining to indirect democracy, in general, but also to their relevance within the South African context in particular.

It is important to discuss indirect democracy, because the *imbizo* will be analysed as a mechanism of direct democracy that could enhance communication in an indirect democracy and particularly within the context of South Africa.

In this chapter, attention will be paid, firstly, to the concept of ‘indirect democracy’ and how it differs from direct democracy. Secondly, the general problems of indirect democracy will be examined with a closer look at the limitations of indirect democracy in South Africa – *inter alia*, the problems of representation, the electoral system, responsiveness and the exclusion of interests. Thirdly, possible solutions to the problems associated with indirect democracy, will be discussed.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF ‘INDIRECT DEMOCRACY’

There are two basic approaches regarding the ideal “mode” of democracy, namely the participationist, in which the emphasis is on direct involvement by the citizens (hence, direct democracy) and the representationist, in which indirect involvement through

representation is advocated (hence, indirect democracy). Jean-Jacques Rousseau is a notable proponent of the former, while most contemporary scholars of democracy at least accept the impracticalities of participationism.²⁴ However, the proponents of each approach claim their approach to be the best. Therefore, the arguments of the advocates of each approach are useful in order to identify the limitations of indirect democracy.

The participationists argue that a democracy ought to take a participatory form where the citizens are directly involved in the decision-making and legislative process. Butler and Ranney (1994:12), for example, state that the participationist school is an extension of the centuries-old direct democracy. The proponents of the school envisage a government where people meet and discuss issues face-to-face. The New England town meetings in the USA²⁵ and the Swiss *Landsgemeinden* are both clear examples of direct democracy as advocated by the participationist approach. The New England town meetings are inclusive of the adult population who decide on important local issues²⁶ (Butler & Ranney 1994:12).

The participationists thus advocate that people should determine and decide their own future, by participating directly in matters affecting their lives, because this is how they develop their capacity and potential. The proponents of this school argue that representation will result in the distortion of the views and interests of the people. Direct participation is usually associated with small communities such as ancient Athens. Importantly, participation is meant to be frequent and continuous. However, the emergence of representative democracy changed participation from direct to indirect participation.

According to Cronin (1989:36-37), the representationists, in turn, favour government where the citizens (the people) send their representatives to parliament, where the representatives then make decisions and legislate on behalf of the citizens. Thus,

^[24] Note that in the literature, mechanisms of direct participation such as the referendum and popular initiatives are often referred to as direct democracy. These mechanisms are however combined with representation and for this reason, in this research a combination of representation and direct mechanisms of democracy will be referred to as semi-direct democracy. The term “direct democracy” will only be used where participation takes place in a form usually associated with classical Athens.

^[25] Residents of a town in the New England region gather once a year and act as a legislative body, voting on operating budgets, laws and other matters for the community's operation over the following 12 months.

^[26] Considering the level at which these “assemblies” took place, together with the powers they had, they could be regarded as forms of direct democracy at that particular level. However, they are not the only place of decision-making when the state as a whole is considered.

representatives are best suited to represent the people, to whom they should also be accountable. Representationists contend that this should be seen as a rule by the people themselves, rather than direct democracy, which they say, is rule by individuals.

Brennan and Hamlin (1999:109,125) argue for indirect democracy as a justifiable option to direct democracy. Their point of departure is that representative democracy is centred on the intermediary for decision-making, rather than the people, as was the practice in direct democracy. Representative democracy demands that intermediaries assume responsibility for their actions such as policies. “Direct democracy is the relevant ideal and representation simply a useful device to render democracy less costly” (Brennan & Hamlin 1999:126). However, the nature of participation in a representative democracy is sporadic and usually limited to the election of the representatives, or deciding which political party should rule.

Butler and Ranney (1994:13), refer to the representationists’ comments on the impracticalities of the participationist approach in modern nations, due to the demands of the modern political economy, which would not have enough time to attend to every public decision directly. The impracticability of direct democracy is further compounded by the large numbers of citizens in the modern state, which is more than the population of traditional societies.

In spite of the opposing views of these two approaches, it is possible that a compromise can be made that accommodates some of the most important elements on both sides, resulting in a semi-direct democracy.

3.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIRECT DEMOCRACY

Indirect democracy has certain fundamental common features, which distinguishes it from direct democracy. These characteristics are the pillars on which the system rests without which it cannot survive. Cronin (1989:248,249) indicates that three institutions are involved in the system, namely the people (the electorate), the representatives (intermediaries) and the legislature. The representatives in turn, govern on behalf of the electorate and are accountable to them.

In other words, a linkage between the people, representatives and the legislature ought to signal a communication that takes place “indirectly” through a third party – that is the representative. Ideally, such a communication system ought to make government responsive to the needs and wishes of the people. The following features can be discussed as characteristics of indirect democracy:

THE ELECTORATE

The term “electorate” refers to the enfranchised citizens of a state, who regularly exercise their right to vote. Indirect democracy assumes that the citizenry has wishes and interests that it wants to take to the authorities or government. In an indirect democracy, the electorate has the right to send its own representatives who ought to serve as intermediaries between the government and the governed. In other words, the ownership of such representatives is in the hands of the people. This political arrangement provides the citizenry with sovereignty. This is also seen as democracy in practice. Matlosa (2003:4) cites Bujra & Buthelezi (2002:1) who declare that democracy is about:

The ability of the citizens in society or participants in an organisation to effectively take part in the choice of their representatives or leadership and to effectively participate in the decisions made on issues that affect them or society in general. And as a system, democracy should be biased in favour of social justice and equality of access to national resources (Matlosa 2003:4).

REGULAR ELECTIONS

Indirect democracy is also characterised by the holding of regular elections in order to elect the government of the day. An election is a political process through which political agents or representatives are elected by the voters, which in turn, represent the latter in the government. The general rule is that the election process should be “free and fair” for the results to be valid and generally accepted, for the legitimacy of the government. According to Heywood (1997:211-212), elections are important for political representation. Apart from being used to select political intermediaries, elections provide an opportunity for making intermediaries accountable for their actions.

THE INTERMEDIARY

An intermediary is primarily a representative of a constituency. The intermediary serves as the representative of the people and represents their wishes and interests. Thus, the proper place of the intermediary is found in a political space existing between the people and the legislature. Unlike the electorate and legislature, intermediaries cannot be sovereign like the former (the popular sovereignty) and the latter (the parliamentary sovereignty), but they have to be servants of the former. If the opposite were the case, intermediaries become autocratic.

Both Pitkin (1967) and Heywood (1997) provide important information about types of representatives or intermediaries in democracies. The role of the intermediary in the facilitation of communication between the people and the authorities will be discussed in full in 3.3.4 under “responsiveness.”

THE LEGISLATURE

The legislature or parliament is an important institution in an indirect democracy. It is in this chamber where the intermediary undergoes a metamorphosis by becoming a Member of Parliament, which seems to carry more weight than just a representative of the people does. Thus, theoretically the first condition for an intermediary is as that he/she must be a representative of the people and then an MP in the parliamentary assembly as a second condition.

Above all, assemblies [legislatures] provide a link between government and the people, a channel of communication that can both support government and help to uphold the regime, and force government to respond to public demands and anxieties (Heywood 1997:297).

For this reason, the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, sees democracy as a method of communication that should be applied through deliberations (see Hague & Harrop 2007:46).

Thus, despite the fact that intermediaries find themselves in parliament because of the wishes and needs of the people they represent; any political action on behalf of the people is done by the parliament. In his famous speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774, a

parliamentarian of Bristol, Edmund Burke, expressed this viewpoint: “You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member for Bristol,²⁷ but he is a member of Parliament...” (Hague & Harrop 2007:311).

The above characteristics are relevant for the discussion of the problems of indirect democracy below.

3.3 PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF INDIRECT DEMOCRACY

In general, indirect democracy is affected by certain inherent problems and challenges. Such inherent limitations are important to help one understand how they affect communication between the people and the authorities. The complicated lineage of representation forms a basic understanding of indirect democracy from both a theoretical and practical point of view.

It is therefore, significant for this study to raise some basic arguments, which point at fundamental problems affecting representative or indirect democracy. These limitations pertain to certain problems and challenges facing indirect democracy, namely limitations regarding participation, the nature of representation, elections and electoral systems, responsiveness, as well as the exclusion of interests.

Therefore, at this point, it is important to look into these limitations in relation to the government’s responsiveness in general.

3.3.1 Limitations on participation

The protests over service delivery and distribution of resources are an indication that an election cannot be an end in itself. It is an indication that there are limitations regarding participation, as people want to be involved in matters of governance and politics. In general, there is no government that can claim to be immune from these challenges (Mc Lennan & Munslow 2009:4,5). Booyesen (2006) adds that the shortfall of indirect democracy has become a worldwide phenomenon. “It is recognized the world over that indirect, representative democracy is not without its lapses, especially in bringing

^[27] Burke was the elected MP for Bristol in 1774 (Hague & Harrop 2007:311). The researcher visited the venue in Bristol in 2004, where Burke made his famous speech in 1774. The researcher emulated Burke by using some of the words in his speech as part of a journalism training course on “live reporting.” The researcher was later attached to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio Bristol, for advanced training.

representation to communities” (Booyesen 2006:10). In short, the system lacks political fusion between the representatives and their constituencies.

There are indications that a lack of trust, as well as feelings of exclusion may prompt people to demand a greater say in the political process. Importantly, there is the possibility that the government may be out of touch with the needs and wishes of the people. According to Bowler, Todd and Karp (2007:351:352-353), citizens of affluent democracies prefer direct participation in matters of governance. The widespread support for direct participation has been fuelled by a lack of trust of the elected representatives. Thus, for indirect democracy to be underpinned, there is a need for citizens to be engaged through consultation and participation, thereby becoming active rather than relying on untrustworthy elected representatives. The nature of the problem connected with indirect democracy is that, because democracy has become indirect, direct popular consultation and participation, which are characteristic of direct democracy, are compromised.

To supplement indirect democracy, Butler and Ranney (1994), state that certain principles must be applied and that “most political theorists and practitioners appear to be in agreement that democracy subscribes to the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation and majority rule” (Butler & Ranney 1994:11,12). It is a problem when some of these principles are not adhered to political life.

With regard to direct-popular consultation and participation, as mentioned above, the failure to realise them leaves the system of indirect democracy with challenges regarding consultation and decision-making. Those who argue for participative democracy (the direct democracy school), contend that indirect democracy leaves much to be desired as far as consultation is concerned. Such consultation ought to be a meaningful exercise in which people’s interests are converted into policies.

The concept of ‘consultation’ also goes deeper than the mere meeting of people at the chief’s kraal or the government square. Cronin’s (1989:27), emphasis on the independent informed decisions regarding serious policy issues by the representative is made clear when he says that in indirect democracy, representatives of the people are supposed to consult those they represent, although at certain intervals. This means that there will be a time when the representative will not be consulting the people, but making his/her own informed choices for the benefit of the constituency in the legislature.

Meaningful consultation and participation must go beyond the periphery and the realm of the political parties. This is of particular importance in a democracy with an electoral system based on party-lists, which often results in a lack of contact between the representative and the voters. It is also evidenced by the support shown at a Global Coalition for Africa Conference held in November 1995 on the theme of “Africa's Future and the World,” as Msekwa (2000:55) puts it:

Many of the participants underscored the importance of going beyond the political parties by involving the larger society in the democratisation process. While recognising the importance of multi-partyism to promote political competition and facilitate representation, that conference also emphasised the need for a strong civil society in building and sustaining democracy, as well as in acting as a check on government. The conference cautioned that multi-partyism does not automatically lead to democracy.

It has already been noted that it is a developing trend the world over, that people want direct participation in the political process (Bowler *et al.* 2007:351-353).

3.3.2 The nature of representation

In a discussion on indirect democracy, it is important to analyse the nature of the concept of representation. The idea of representation is also traceable to traditional political systems with people not directly involved in the government. Heywood (1997:206), states that even the absolute monarchs were expected to rule with some advice from the important members of the population. In Africa,²⁸ for example, kings and chiefs were regarded as the representatives of the people even before the Middle Ages.

Cronin (1989:22) explains the nature of the concept of representation²⁹ as a complicated lineage in the history of political discourse:

It can be traced back at least to the Middle Ages. Popes were sometimes viewed as the representatives of Christ and the apostles; kings were viewed as the representatives of the people; and, later, parliaments were thought to represent the people, even before election processes were developed. The consent of the parliament was viewed as the consent of the people as a whole. After the English Civil War, the concept of representation as a political right of the citizen

^[28] This was even before the birth of Christ.

^[29] Representation of the pope and kings was often hallowed, remained largely unquestionable and infallible, and to question these leaders would be tantamount to questioning Christ or God. Suppose the nature of these traditional institutions had not changed, it may result in unnecessary conflict in democracy as it is understood today.

developed further, but not until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did institutional inventions and a more refined political philosophy translate that right into reality.

The above quote from Cronin suggests that the concept of ‘representation’ goes far back. Thus, if popes were seen as representatives of Christ and the apostles it would also mean that the apostles were also viewed as representatives of Christ and Christ of God.

It may be inferred that the above complexities have influenced the development of representative government and its operations today. For example, the explanation given above by Cronin points to the relationship between the people, representatives and the parliament. Assumably, such relationships will impact on how the representative ought to operate between the parliament and the people.

In the tripartite relationship between the electorate, the representative and the legislature, the representative is at the centre of the debate over whose instructions or mandate he/she should take and whether to use his/her independent judgement.

According to Compton’s Encyclopaedia (CE 1996 sv “constitution”), the revolving issue of representative democracy is the responsiveness of government in respect of the basic needs of the people. Thus, a government, which fails to deliver the wishes of the people, is in violation of the fundamental human rights and freedoms. This is similar to May’s (1978:8), definition of democracy as the “necessary correspondence between acts of governance and the wishes with respect to those acts of the persons who are affected.”

There are various clarifications of the concept of ‘representation,’ for example, in the work by Hanna Pitkin (1967) on representation. However, for the purpose of this discussion, the focus will be on the following four models of representation, namely the trusteeship, the delegate, the mandate and the resemblance models (Heywood 1997:206).³⁰

It is important to note that these different models prescribe different forms of behaviour to representatives.

^[30] Other theories on representation also exist and notably those identified by Hanna Pitkin (1967), namely the formalistic, descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation models respectively.

Trustee model of representation

The trustee model is based on the independent judgement of the representative or intermediary, “once elected, representatives should think for themselves and exercise independent judgement on the grounds that the mass of people do not know their own best interests” (Heywood 1997:207). This position was advocated by the father of the trustee model, Edmund Burke, as mentioned, a parliamentary representative of Bristol in England in the 1700s.

Cronin (1989:24, 26-27), also states that Burke believed that the representative has to apply his/her sense of judgement wisely. However, this has to be done with the interests and wishes of the constituency at heart. Still, Burke saw the representative as a member of parliament rather than a member of his/her constituency. This is seen from Burke’s extract from his famous speech of 1774 (Hague & Harrop 2007:311).

The delegate model

The delegate model posits that an intermediary is someone who should carry out instructions from the constituency and present them as they are. An intermediary of this type (delegate) cannot apply his/her judgement when serving the people. According to Heywood (1997:207):

A delegate is a person who is chosen to act for another on the basis of clear guidance or instructions. In other words, a delegate is expected to act as a conduit conveying the views of others, while having little or no capacity to exercise his or her own judgement or preferences.

In addition, a true practice requires that a delegate takes instructions from a higher authority as he or she will be expected to report back. It is not to suggest that the opposite may not happen. According to McCrone and Kuklinski (1979:278, 281), a delegate has to reflect the wishes and needs of his or her constituents. Like the representative who should take the preferences of the people at heart, the people should equally be well informed so that they can work with the delegate to make his/her work easier. In other words, both the representatives and the electorate have equally important responsibilities.

The mandate model

In terms of the mandate model of representation, the emphasis is more on the political party than on the people themselves. Thus, the representative should be linked more to the party than to the people. In other words, it is the party that is given a mandate by the people, not the individual representative - hence the intermediary of this type should carry the mandate. Heywood (1997:209) explains as follows:

This is based on the idea that, in winning an election, a party gains a popular mandate that authorises it to carry out whatever policies or programmes it outlined during the election campaign. As it is the party, rather than individual politicians, that is the agency of representation, the mandate model provides a clear justification for party unity and party discipline.

McCrone and Kuklinski (1979:278) cite Pitkin (1967), regarding her view of the mandate theory:

A mandate theorist will see the representative as a “mere” agent, a servant, a delegate, a subordinate substitute for those who sent him. The representative, he will say, is “sent as a servant,” not “chosen with dictatorial powers,” and so the purpose, which sent him, must have been the constituents’ purpose and not his own. They sent him to do something for them, which they might have chosen to do for themselves, which they are perfectly capable of doing and understanding. Hence, the representative was sent to pursue his constituents’ will and not his own (Pitkin, 1967:146).

With the advent of political parties, particularly in an electoral system based on party-lists the implication is that it is the party that receives the mandate and that individual representatives serve their constituents by serving the political party they “represent.”

The resemblance model

The resemblance model of representation is premised on the idea that the intermediary should resemble the group or constituency being represented. The rationale behind such representation is that a person who is associated to the groups would be in a better position to represent them. “The resemblance model suggests that only people who come from a particular group, and have shared the experiences of that group, can fully identify with its interests” (Heywood 1997:210). The resemblance model is similar to Pitkin’s view of descriptive representation, which also posits that the representative resembles those he or she represents, by sharing common circumstances (Pitkin 1967).

To summarise, indirect democracy does not always meet the intended expectations. According to Murray and Nijzink (2002:11-12), the core of the problem of representation is that it is no longer realising the original idea behind its inception: Thus, the original idea was that the electorate would elect their representatives (MPs), who would, in turn, represent them through constituencies in parliaments or legislatures. In essence, even in modern democratic countries like the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada, this practice is no longer followed meticulously. Instead, in general, MPs have become more accountable and loyal to their political parties than to their constituencies.

Undoubtedly, the problems and challenges associated with indirect democracy discussed so far, show that there is a need for more direct participation among citizens. Some of the work in this regard, for example, on limited participation and models of representation, also stresses the fact that representatives are not really representing the electorate and that is the reason for the demand for greater participation.

3.3.3 Elections and electoral systems

“An electoral system is a set of rules that governs the conduct of elections” (Heywood 1997:214). These electoral systems determine, through these rules, how the people ought to be represented. Basically, electoral systems are divided into either majoritarian or proportional systems. However, there are certain problems affecting electoral systems with regard to representation, which affect the ability of indirect democracy to engage the people.

The most important electoral systems are single-member constituencies, with either a plurality or an absolute majority; proportional representation; and mixed systems. However, many variations can be found within these systems. Note that single members often result in under representation and the possibility that some interests may be excluded (Bogdanor & Butler 1983:17).

The electoral system of proportional representation (PR) using party-lists creates problems with representation and particularly with regard to responsiveness. Bogdanor and Butler (1983:248) state, “electoral systems can also profoundly affect the relationships between elected members and their constituents. These relationships are, of course, likely to be the weakest under party list systems where there is no choice of candidate.” They also cite Duverger (1959) to point out that “the parliamentary

representatives are chosen by the inner circle; the party in this case is a closed circuit” (Bogdanor & Butler 1983:248).

The consequence is that in an electoral system based on proportional representation with party lists, loyalty is important for members of the party to stay on the list to retain their political jobs (Heywood 1997:221). Thus, in relation to the above, the representatives, find themselves in the predicament of representing their party in the parliament, instead of representing the people. Thus, representatives pay their allegiance and loyalty to the political parties. The people become accustomed to the idea of meeting their representatives only during election times. Therefore, under these circumstances, real consultation becomes difficult to realise, as representatives do not use their legislative time effectively to the extent of organising regular consultations with the people.

From the above, it follows that the dominant role of political parties in a representative democracy exacerbates the problem of representation. A dominant party (not necessarily a one-party state), which is obviously the ruling party, may consider it less important to liaise with the people. As a result, there is a tendency to centralise everything at the head office of the party (Heywood 1997:221). Heywood goes on to mention that the dominance of one party in the political terrain will lead to the emergence of weak small parties, which will also be unable to liaise with their constituencies.

Another problem of the proportional representation system is separating the party and the state, particularly if members of the ruling party are offered key positions in the government. The electoral system (the PR with party-lists) prompts such members or deployees to fail to make a distinction between the party and state. The understanding is that because they have been deployed by the party, they should pay complete allegiance to it. As a result, the idea of democracy as a “method of communication” is thwarted due to a failure to understand the distinction between the party and state. As mentioned previously, Jürgen Habermas saw democracy as a method of communication (Hague & Harrop 2007:46:309-311).

With regard to problems concerning elections and electoral systems, King (1990:176), discusses a combination of the two major electoral systems:

In the U.S., for example, multimember districts are widely used in state and local elections, but these generally operate under at-large, rather than proportional

representation, rules. As a result, they are often used to dilute the strength of racial and other minorities – increasing rather than decreasing partisan (and other forms of) bias. Thus, multimember districts would probably need to be combined with proportional representation within districts in order to reduce biases. However, as this type of system was found here to produce a relatively low level of electoral responsiveness,...it is unlikely to be politically popular.

In themselves alone, elections and electoral systems cannot make representative government responsive to the needs of the people (Alence 2004:83-85).

3.3.4 Responsiveness

The issue of “responsiveness” is at the heart of representative democracy. Thus, for indirect democracy to be seen as a substitute for direct democracy it must be responsive to the wishes and needs of the people.

The context of indirect democracy is contextualised in the election of the intermediaries by the electorate, to represent them in the legislature. The intermediary is the focal point of communication between the electorate and the authorities. In terms of the cybernetics model, the intermediary’s communication lines are lengthened by the process in which the political party filters the needs and aggregates the interests articulated by the citizens. “In the process of developing collective goals, parties also help to articulate and aggregate the various interests found in society” (Heywood 1997:236). However, the position of political parties in this regard may not necessarily reflect the ideas and priorities of the people. The lengthened communication lines may slow the response time, so instead of being responsive, the system becomes non-responsive or reactive. In addition, incorrect information may be processed due to the lengthened lines of communication. Thus, unlike the intention of the cybernetics model, the lengthened lines of communication of indirect democracy could make the system less responsive to its context.

Depending on the model of representation, feelings of exclusion and distrust may develop, which, in turn, may give rise to resentment and more populist activism in order to make the government more responsive. Crisp and Ingall (2002:734), cite Archer and Shugart (1997), as well as Nielson and Shugart (1999), on Colombia’s citizenry’s frustrations and dissatisfaction about service delivery. This led to violent protestations, characterised by marches and demonstrations. Citizens were concerned about the lack of service delivery and problems regarding crime. Similarly, recent protestations about

service delivery in South Africa are a case in point. Therefore, a model of representation may either enhance or restrict the intermediary's role in making the government more or less responsive to the needs of the governed.

According to the trustee model, an intermediary should be flexible and capable of sensing, analysing and taking decisions on matters at his/her disposal, as well as executing such decisions. This model is in contrast with the delegate and mandate models. The mandate model, in particular, places the intermediary in the position of only taking instructions and advocating the manifesto of the political party respectively. On the other hand, the resemblance model requires intermediaries to be a microcosm of the represented group.

Because of the capacity to facilitate the needs of the people, both as a representative and as a MP, it may be argued that the intermediary as a trustee who is accountable to his constituency, is a better form of representation than the delegate and the mandate models. If the delegate model of representation is understood as the representative, being a delegate of those that elected him (and not of the party), communication lines may also be lengthened and the communication process may be slowed because of the need of the delegate to consult with his constituency. In the case of the mandate model in which the political party is an "additional intermediary," the voters may simply be ignored or bypassed; therefore, it can be said to be unresponsive to the needs of the people.

Problems with representation affect the performance of indirect democracy. "One hundred years later 'mature democracies' in Europe and elsewhere are said to be experiencing a 'crisis of representation.' Democracy appears at best unresponsive and at worst hostile to the goals of human liberation" (Sachs 2003:23).

When democracy is "unresponsive," it falls short of its definition as understood by May. It is in the environment of indirect democracy where the correspondence between the government and the governed is not easily optimised.

When democracy is "responsive," there is a strong link between the people and the government. The absence of such a link results in a weak government, in terms of addressing the wishes and interests of the people:

It is even more curious that today's alleged crisis of representation is commonly ascribed to the erosion of the very features that differentiated party democracy from parliamentarianism. These were the features that seemed to bring representative government closer to popular rule, namely the identification of voters with particular parties and their representatives in Parliament, and the choice of representatives on the basis of platforms (Manin 1997:196-197).

3.3.5 Exclusion of interests

Responsiveness implies that all interests should be considered, which is not necessarily the situation in indirect democracy and particularly in instances where the decisions are those of the majority party only. Research has indicated that feelings of exclusion may nurture increased demands for direct participation as some of the previous references have indicated.

To summarise, the conundrum raised above serves to highlight the challenges of indirect democracy in general. Hence, it is important to provide some solutions below.

3.4 SOLUTIONS FOR THE PROBLEMS OF INDIRECT DEMOCRACY

The foregoing discussions have proved that a system of indirect democracy is not without its anomalies. Therefore, there can be no doubt that those mechanisms of direct democracy, such as popular assemblies and plebiscites will remedy such anomalies and weaknesses. There are other mechanisms like the *imbizo*, which could be used to steer indirect democracy, hence its usefulness will be investigated in chapters four, six and seven.

The Swiss experience can serve as a model for other democracies to emulate. Knutsen (1991-2003:5), praises Swiss democracy for its devices that enable people to participate and help decide important local issues. Thus, mechanisms of direct popular participation are used to supplement representative democracy. Accordingly, it is important to note that governments use devices such as popular assemblies³¹ for understandable reasons. The mechanisms used most often are the popular assemblies, referendum, recall and popular initiative.

^[31] Note the *imbizo*, as will be discussed in chapter four, comes closest to popular assemblies.

Popular assemblies

The popular assembly is a mechanism of direct democracy. It was in practice in its pure form in ancient Greece, although it has some elements of election by lot. The traditional African *imbizo* is said to be similar to the popular assembly.

The current uses of the popular assembly can be found in the town meetings and the *landsgemeinde* of New England and Switzerland respectively. These two mechanisms allow the people to participate in matters of governance affecting their lives. Issues under discussion varied from basic infrastructure such as street construction to anti-discrimination laws (Levitt & Feldbaum 1973:61). The town meetings have seen public representatives engaging on issues with citizens. According to Matsusaka (2005:187), the town meeting provide space for citizens to gather, discuss and take decisions on matters affecting their lives. These meetings have become largely outdated, and replaced by the practice of ballot measures or propositions.

The Swiss system evolved from its *landsgemeinde* tradition of cantons. Important direct mechanisms today are the referendum, the popular initiative and the recall. Such practices provided citizens with an opportunity to decide on issues affecting policies and laws. The Swiss people can, for example, petition the authorities on important issues (Butler & Ranney 1994:98-102).

Referendum

A referendum entails referring an important national question to the electorate to vote directly on the matter. The outcome is usually binding on the authorities. The referendum is widely used in most representative democracies by referring important political issues and constitutional changes to the people.

For example, in apartheid South Africa, a referendum was used to decide on the important decision of reforming the country to a democracy. The referendum has been widely used in Switzerland in constitutional matters and the legislation of national interest (Butler & Ranney 1994:108-109). In addition, the European Union membership and the devolution in the United Kingdom have been characterised by the use of

referenda. Significantly, several countries in Europe made use of the referendum device in this regard (Butler & Ranney 1994:38-47).

Butler and Ranney (1994:14), mention the importance of the referendum in legitimising decisions. It is the belief of ordinary people that when they participate in a referendum, the decisions they make are their own, therefore, they have ownership of the decisions made. It needs to be stressed that such decisions are not made under pressure, such as bribery and intimidation, which may be the case with decisions made by public representatives and officials (Butler & Ranney 1994). Thus, the referendum could enhance responsiveness and feelings of inclusion.

Recall

The recall is another device of direct democracy in use today. “Recall is a term used to describe a process whereby the electorate can petition to trigger a vote on the suitability of an existing elected representative to continue in office” (Coleman 2009:3). This is unlike the recall where a ruling party recalls its leader in government, like the recall of South African President Thabo Mbeki in September 2008. Mbeki was recalled by the party and not by the people. This is unlike the circumstances that led to the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger in California (Coleman 2009:3,5). The practice of the recall requires signatures to justify the election on the issue of recalling a leader, as Cronin (1989:130) puts it:

The recall idea is based on the political theory that voters should retain the right of control over their elected officials. Candidates may be elected for a wide variety of reasons, including some that bear little relation to their ability to perform their public duties effectively. The premise of the recall is that if people can be elected for non-job-related reasons, they can also be removed for a variety of reasons.

The recall has been used as a device of representative democracy with the recalling of leaders who are believed to have performed poorly. Recall has been in use in several countries such as the USA, Switzerland, the Philippines, Venezuela and British Columbia (Coleman 2009:3-5).

The recall is thus useful in ensuring accountability by representatives and other elected officials. In turn, this may improve responsiveness.

Popular initiative

The popular initiative has also been used by citizens to make input regarding policy matters. The practice has been to gather signatures as a sign of support for their cause to request the authorities to make some changes in the constitution. “An *initiative* is a ... law proposed by ordinary citizens that is qualified for the ballot by collecting a predetermined number of signatures from eligible voters” (Matsusaka 2005:187).

Again, Switzerland³² is important with regard to the use of the popular initiative to ensure responsiveness to the wishes of the electorate. Most countries in South America³³ practise the initiative device, with the exception of Chile. Here, citizens send their proposals to the legislature (Barczak 2001:44; Cronin 1989:160-164).

Citizens submit their proposals for making constitutional changes or initiating legislation on important public issues. According to Hoesly (2005:1194, 1196), initiatives can either be direct or indirect. Direct initiatives are proposals from the people to the ballot, thereby bypassing the legislature. On the other hand, indirect initiatives are proposals, which go through the legislatures.

Deliberative democracy

The idea of deliberative democracy is a device to steer an element of deliberation in policy matters. The idea purports that when people deliberate more on issues, the outcomes of such deliberations become sound (Hartslief 2005:4-5). The emphasis of deliberation is on deepening the discussions to realise informed decisions.

Hague and Harrop (2007:46-47; 311) conclude that democracy should be about communication that involves deliberations. Importantly, the participants should be free to express their views and opinions on arguments about issues of common public interest.

^[32] Two popular initiatives were submitted aiming to ban the export of weapons and the construction of minarets in September 2007 and July 2008 respectively. The initiative on weaponry export was rejected by the National Council and Council of States. The initiative regarding the banning of minarets was also rejected by both of them. The other initiative on jet-fuel duty was approved by both the National Council and the Council of States (Swiss Review, October 2009).

^[33] The initiative practice is not as common as the referendum (*consultata*) in South America. For example, Uruguay and Ecuador held more referenda than initiatives between 1978 and 1998, the ratio was eight to four (Barczak 2001:44). Although not used as much as a referendum, the initiative has been in use in Europe and Australia. Swiss nationals had recorded over hundred initiatives since mid-1800s. The initiative is not a nationwide phenomenon as is the case in the USA (Cronin 1989:160-162).

Thus, in a way, it is an element of deliberation that brings indirect democracy and direct democracy in harmony with each other.

To summarise, it is undoubtedly so that all these devices serve to supplement representative democracy, by maximising the legitimacy of the decisions arrived at by the government.

As mentioned in chapter one, the South African government has indicated that the *imbizo* was designed to maximise popular participation and support for government programmes. Therefore, if popular participation and support are maximised, the legitimacy and authority of government actions will not be questioned.

The success of governmental programmes in a representative democracy largely depends on full participation and support by the people. Butler and Ranney state that extensive participation in politics is an indication of “political good health, while low participation is...a symptom of political sickness. Voting is the indispensable minimum form of participation” (Butler & Ranney 1994:15).

Despite some significant progress in the mechanisms of direct democracy, there are some problems associated with these mechanisms. The problems that followed direct democracy in the State of Oregon are a case in point as reported by Hoesly (2005:1203):

This industrialization of the initiative process highlights the three main problems plaguing direct democracy systems today: they are too often exploited by well-financed corporate media campaigns; interest groups regularly take advantage of them to enact pet laws without meaningful public debate; and they facilitate discrimination against minorities.”

These problems lead to issues of national importance being driven by big corporations, thereby polarising the citizenry and too little attention being paid to these activities. The problems, challenges and solutions to indirect democracy will now be discussed specifically in terms of how they apply to South Africa. The idea is to understand the relevance of the problems and challenges faced and what the role of the *imbizo* could be in this context.

3.5 PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS FOR INDIRECT DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA

As noted before, South Africa's democracy is a representative democracy based on proportional representation using closed party-lists.³⁴ Thus, as explained previously, it is to be expected that these could be some challenges regarding the government's responsiveness to the needs and interests of the people, as well as to the government's accountability to the people. For example, Alence (2004) has been critical "about the government's responsiveness to public needs and aspirations. Closed-list proportional representation makes members of parliament more directly dependent on the backing of party leaders than on voter support" (Alence 2004:83).

It is important to see how some of the general problems, challenges and solutions associated with indirect democracy discussed above, would subsequently be relevant in the South African context, in particular.

In the past, South Africa may have lacked full participation by the people, which goes against the dictum that a democracy should entail the government of the people by the people for the people. In fact, since 1994, there have been problems related to the practice of representative democracy. Consequently, Wiechers (1997:21, 24) refers to the birth of South Africa's indirect democracy as a qualified success:

This does not mean to say, however, that participatory democracy is well advanced, as it should be in South Africa. Representative democracy, which is a precondition for constitutionalism and by which, the legal system is imbued with its own legitimacy, must evolve in a participatory democracy.

Perhaps, even today, such participation is not well advanced given the problems that have resulted from a lack of consultation. Thus, there is a causal connection between consultation and participation with a lack of the former negatively affecting participation. The changing of the name of the former colonial town of Louis Trichardt to Makhado³⁵ in the Limpopo Province has been criticised by some in terms of the lack of consultation. Consequently, the Makhado Municipality was ordered by the High Court to reverse the

^[34] Some list systems allow input from the electorate, but in a closed party-list there is no opportunity for such input.

^[35] King Makhado of Venda in the Limpopo Province fought fierce battles against the Boer settlers who invaded his land in the 1800s. He is famous for forcing several thousand settlers to retreat at Schoemansdal in the Soutpansberg Mountains. He passed away in 1895.

name-changing process because of the lack of consultation (Maponya 2007:10). After that, the municipality had to re-start the process of consultation from scratch.

The theoretical challenges were discussed in terms of general problems, challenges and solutions regarding indirect democracy. They will now be discussed systematically with regard to the South African situation. It should, however, be noted that South Africa's democracy is enshrined in the highest law of the land. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a), presupposes a government based on the will of the people with equal protection before the law. The Constitution also calls for a partnership between the government and the public in realising development and charging the government to be responsive to peoples' needs and facilitating public participation in policy-making (see section 195 (1)(e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996).

Limitations on participation

Representative democracy places some limitations on participation in South Africa's representative democracy.³⁶ There are several examples of political events that demonstrate a lack of engagement of the people with regard to policy-making within the South African context.

A case in point is when the local government MEC in the North West Province, Mr F Vilakazi, speaking on a radio news programme (SAfm c), blamed the series of violent protests in Khutsong³⁷ township on the lack of basic information about service delivery regarding housing and sanitation to the community. The protests were aimed at demonstrating the people's reaction to the lack of service delivery and the boundary issue. He remarked that it was unfortunate that people did not attend ward meetings with councillors; however, such meetings were often perceived to be ANC meetings owing to its dominance in such structures. According to Vilakazi, the province managed to build about 21 000 houses in 2006, despite the backlog and the practice of the toilet-bucket system. Thus, a lack of participation at the ward level may have resulted in the lack of

^[36] As mentioned, the introduction of the *imbizo* in 2001 was aimed at engaging the people in the government through direct participation in matters affecting their lives.

^[37] Khutsong residents were concerned about the lack of service delivery and demanded to be incorporated into Gauteng. Residents believed they would be better serviced in Gauteng than in the North West Province.

basic information. In other words, a lack of basic information is an indication of non-participation by the people.

Similarly, Matshiqi (2007:10) contends that two extremely contentious laws were pushed through the parliament without participation by the people, “The Khutsong boundary dispute and how the Civil Unions Act came into being are an indication of how the interests of party bosses can override the will of citizens.”

The lack of basic information could have influenced the South African government to introduce the century-old practice of *imbizo* into the modern political system of representative democracy. According to the government, the introduction of such a traditional mechanism could provide a platform for engagement and the sharing of information with the people to deliver services to them.

Speaking on a news bulletin (SAfm e), Jody Kollapen from the Human Rights Commission, said that engaging the people is similar to participatory democracy and warns that a lack of such engagement between the government and the people leads to a situation as the one that developed in Khutsong. In other words, to inform as a mere formality without the necessary prior engagement between the government and its people, falls short of the dictates of a participatory democracy. Thus, information going to the people should be balanced with the ability of the community to participate in matters affecting their lives.

In practice, the parliament that is often dominated by the ruling party, is sovereign, which is a shortcoming of indirect democracy. An example in this regard, is a debate on “Asikhulume / let’s talk” television programme (SABC 1) which revealed some serious anomalies and weaknesses of indirect democracy in South Africa. The debate focussed on the passing of moral laws and public participation, with reference to the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act No.92 of 1996 (RSA 1996c) and the Civil Unions Bill No.26 of 2006 (1996d). The former deals with the controversial issue of termination of pregnancy, whilst the latter allows people of the same sex to get married. The programme participants agreed that the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act was pushed through

the Parliament, without the full participation of the people and that this also applied to the passing of the Civil Unions Bill.³⁸

One of the participants, Dr Mathole Motshekga of the Kara Heritage Institute, stressed that the Constitutional Court should have referred the Civil Unions Bill to the parliament for public participation. In this regard, the “Asikhulume / let’s talk” programme (SABC 1), reported, but could not test the allegations that some ANC MPs who were against the passing of the Bill had to follow the position of the party, that is, they had to tow the party line; instead of representing the wishes of the people on abortion and same sex marriages.

Another participant in the programme, Professor Shadrack Gutto of the Centre for African Renaissance, asserted that public participation sessions on the Civil Unions Bill, such as public hearings, were merely a formality. The process should have been re-opened with the aim of really interrogating and engaging with citizens and allowing them to debate the issues of same- sex marriages.

This raises the question of public participation, particularly within the context where the Constitutional Court is sometimes seen as overriding the legitimacy of the parliament; and the lack of clear demarcation of the separation of powers between the legislature, executive and the judiciary (*trias politica*).

The participants in “Asikhulume / let’s talk” (SABC 1), concurred that there are problems with the system of representation in South Africa; with people feeling alienated from the Parliament, when the court takes the position of the Parliament. However, the participants in the programme came out in defence of the highest law of the land, namely the Constitution, that they indicated is not responsible for these weaknesses.

The results after voting on the issues raised in the “Asikhulume / let’s talk” programme (SABC 1), showed that thirty-nine percent of the viewers voted “No” to the statement that the Constitution does not promote moral values in South Africa. Seven percent voted “Yes” to confirm that the Constitution does promote moral values in South Africa. Note that it is the same Constitution, which provides for public participation regarding aspects

^[38] Already passed as the Civil Unions Act, No.17 of 2006 (RSA 2006d).

of life, such as these. Still, the passing of both acts is a practical example of how the Parliament dominated by one party, can bypass the people in the name of democracy.

The above examples raise some serious doubts as to whether such crucial bills would have been put before the public for serious debate. Will the inclusive setting of the agenda of such a debate, be considered politically wise and convenient? Popular support may serve to expedite the legitimisation of a policy, yet it might be politically inconvenient.

The question that will be explored in the chapters that follow is whether the *imbizo* will be an appropriate instrument for realising the above partnership, even though it is unlikely to have the final say in serious matters concerning the country. Thus, the question remains whether it would be wise to put hard political issues like the termination of pregnancy and homosexual marriages, on the agenda of *imbizos*? This is despite the fact that, as mentioned above, participative democracy is encouraged in the Constitution. Note that this aspect will be discussed in chapters four and seven.

A project of millions of rand³⁹ for the Sinthumule-Kutama Water Scheme in the Limpopo Province failed to materialise due to the lack of participation and support by the people. Radio coverage (Phalaphala FM a), on the project as a preview for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in South Africa, revealed that people were not properly or fully consulted. The water scheme, which was supposed to be sustainable could not materialise as people refused to pay for water using prepaid meters. Instead, they vandalised and destroyed the meter boxes saying they could not pay for street taps because such water was not installed in their homes. Attempts by the local Makhado Municipality could not succeed in resolving the issue and residents continued to use the water free of charge.

The Sinthumule-Kutama Water scheme is lesson in politics, as the project launch “coincided” with the climax of a democratic victory in South Africa, which was that of a government with overwhelming popular support. It is still a prerequisite, even for popular governments, to consult with and involve the people fully in matters of governance and its programmes. Thus, although it would have been expected that the residents would

^[39] The Sinthumule-Kutama community has some elements of a traditional society. For example, the Kutama tribe continues to practise the *tshivhidzo* tradition with important gatherings held in the middle of every year (Gabara 2008:15).

support the project, the results proved the opposite. In other words, an electoral victory cannot be used as a party ticket by the government to do as it wishes in the name of “the people” or “our people.”

PROBLEMS WITH REPRESENTATION

There are three levels (tiers) of government which must be understood in terms of service delivery, namely; the national, provincial and local government levels.⁴⁰ Article 25 of the Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a), provides for the three levels of government, which should practise cooperative governance when they deliver service to the people.

South Africa’s representation and electoral system also has an effect on these levels. Thus, both national and provincial governments use proportional representation with a party-list. At the local level, a mixed system is used that is a constituency- based “winner takes all” or the first-past-the-post system (FPTP), plus a party-list to correct the proportionality of each political party’s share in the vote. However, political parties still dominate at the local level and party dominance has a negative impact on the relationship between the representatives and the voters. Thus, the electoral system also poses a serious problem for democracy in South Africa. Moreover, proportional representation is blamed for causing some of the weaknesses in South Africa’s democracy. As discussed earlier on, Booyesen (2006) indicates that South Africa is not immune to the limitations of indirect democracy. “South Africa is a case in point. It has struggled to bridge the divide between elected representatives and their communities. It has even considered altering the electoral system” (Booyesen 2006:10). Thus, with regard to representation, it has become difficult to make democracy responsive to the needs of the people.

The party-list proportional representation system compromises representation seriously, because the political party often allocates representatives who have no link with, nor interest in the constituency and, in addition, is not accountable to the constituency. Similarly, such representatives see no reason to liaise with the constituency as it is

^[40] Note that the different types of *imbizos* (presidential, premier’s and mayoral *imbizos*) resemble the three tiers of government; namely the national, provincial and local levels. The mayoral *imbizo* would be more appropriate to deal with service delivery challenges practically, than the other two. Thus, the mayoral *imbizo* is best placed at the point of service delivery. However, the presidential and premiers’ *imbizos* may appear to be more important than the mayoral *imbizo*. These factors have far-reaching implications for the performance of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy.

beneficial to them to maintain “loyalty” to the party, which awards political jobs. Refer to Alence (2004:83-85) for full details.

To apply the theories or models of representation to the intermediary as such, South Africa’s democracy is mainly based on the mandate model. Thus, the voters give a mandate to political parties on the basis of their proposed party programmes, while the representatives mainly act as delegates of the political party. The rareness of the trustee model of representation renders the system unresponsive, lengthens communication channels and includes the possibility that the government may be out of touch with the needs and wishes of the people. The intermediary, as a trustee, is in a better position to facilitate the communication of information between the people and authorities.

Thus, the electoral system in South Africa also affects the accountability of political parties to the electorate. Faure (1996:71) explains as follows:

A serious concern of the present electoral system is the effect of the party list system on voter accountability. While, there can be little doubt that proportional representation in conjunction with the party list system guarantees an acceptable degree of proportionality, the present system with closed party lists is bound to erode the accountability of representatives to the electorate. Party members will no doubt seek listing by the party bosses as a first priority, and there is really no way for the voter to discriminate between a party and its candidates. It is entirely a party matter who makes the list and who remains there.

The accountability of representatives to the electorate is “eroded” as they will have to tow the party line to guarantee their listing by the party. In addition, the party has the final say when compiling a candidate list. In general, the proportional representation system holds representatives accountable to their respective political parties rather than to constituencies. They become accountable to the electorate, at most, during election time and when the parliament is in recess. This raises a question around the level of trust by the electorate. For problems of accountability in South Africa’s democracy (See also Friedman 2010:22).

With reference to the above statement, the voting system in South Africa further alienates voters from their representatives. The idea of people voting for a party rather than candidates, prompts the representative to be entirely dependent on the party, thereby creating a distance between the representative and the represented. “The reality is that

candidates run for office as members of parties, and citizens tend to vote for a party rather than an individual politician” (Murray & Nijzink 2002:12).

The system provides voters with a platform to elect their representatives in the name of the party. It uses a party-list of candidates ranked according to their position where voters are able to see who is ranked at the top of the list.

Election of the president

Although the President is elected by the parliament, it is, in fact, the majority party in the Parliament that elects the President. Thus, it is the party that elects the candidate for Presidency whether the people support the candidate or not. The result is that a President elected in terms of this arrangement will obviously tow the party line and will be seen more as a “Party President” than as a State President.

Political party domination

From the above discussions, it is clear that political parties dominate the political scene in South Africa. Furthermore, the ANC has managed to position itself in a dominant position as can be concluded from the past four general elections in which it won over sixty percent of the votes, which is a cause for concern for the country’s democracy. Representative democracy thrives in an atmosphere where there is a competitive edge for multipartyism. On the other hand, South Africa’s multi-party system does not allow for other parties to become the government of the day.

Matshiqi (2007:10), a political analyst, asserts that South Africa is a political party-dominant system. “Citizens and public participation processes are reduced to an engagement with the state after the policy fact. Citizens are, therefore, reduced to playing a role akin to the oversight function performed (ineffectively) by their parliamentary representatives.” Indeed, a representative democracy needs a strong opposition for it to be sustainable.

The ANC dominance is also blamed on weak opposition parties that are accused of being divided and not really posing a political threat to the ANC. In effect, the opposition lacks clear policy positions that could be used to mobilise and lure voters away from the ANC. The party-list system nurtures loyalty to the party and thus has implications for

opposition parties as well. Therefore, representatives of opposition political parties would also have to follow the party line and would consequently, not be able to act as trustees. For full details of South Africa's dominant-party regime, see Giliomee (1998:128-134).

The issue of floor-crossing

Although, it was abolished in January 2009, floor-crossing legislation⁴¹ in South Africa still needs some mentioning. During its existence, floor-crossing highlighted the debate concerning the role and position of the representative as an intermediary. The legislation embodied in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Amendment Act No.18 of 2002, had an impact on the political system (RSA 1996b). This legislation allowed party representatives to cross to other political parties during a window period. The practice was seen as the further alienation of voters from their representatives, despite the fact that it counterbalanced the role of political party dominance. However, floor-crossing made a mockery of indirect democracy in the eyes of some voters. Therefore, the system of floor crossing (Floor crossing South Africa 2006:2), has created some political complexities:

The system has been the source of much controversy, with many commentators arguing that it disenfranchises voters, by effectively allowing politicians to 'reallocate' votes as they see fit. Other critics of floor crossing also argue that it lends itself to bribery and corruption. The official opposition, the Democratic Alliance, has pointed out that during the 2002 floor crossing window period in Cape Town, 87 % of National Party Councillors that crossed to the ANC were appointed to a position with a better salary.

Note that the criticism levelled at floor-crossing by the opposition parties, should not rule out the fact that it was the same parties, namely the former Democratic Party (DP) and the New National Party (NNP), that had wanted floor-crossing to be legalised to enable the merger that would result in the Democratic Alliance (DA) in 2000.

Still, floor-crossing (Wikipedia 2006:2), continued to negate South Africa's democracy:

Floor-crossing is particularly controversial because South African MPs are elected by proportional representation, and are nominated by political parties on a *party list* before a general election. Voters thus vote for a political party rather than for an individual MP. However, floor crossing allows MPs to

^[41] There were other acts involved in floor-crossing, namely; the Local Government Municipal Structures Amendment Act No.20 of 2002, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Second Amendment Act No.21 of 2002 and the Loss or Retention of Membership of National and Provincial Legislatures Act No.22 of 2002.

change parties, with the possible result that the composition of the elected bodies no longer represents the original vote count.

Furthermore, floor-crossing was done without prior consultation between the candidate, the “home” political party and the people. Several participants in a radio programme (SAfm b), concurred that the system of floor-crossing distorts representation and makes it difficult to hold representatives accountable.

In practice, the ten percent threshold required for floor-crossing, served to discriminate against small parties, with bigger parties like the ANC and DA benefiting. Jonathan Faull of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) (SAfm b) points to the fact that the scrapping of floor-crossing legislation is a temporary solution, which should be followed by electoral reform in South Africa.

Floor-crossing could therefore be regarded as diametrically opposed to the philosophy that informs the *imbizo* that subscribes to public consultation and participation. The scrapping of the floor-crossing legislation is therefore a relief to South Africa’s electoral system and representation.

Separating party and state

Another challenge facing democratic South Africa is the lack of a clear distinction between the party and the state. An allegation made against the ruling ANC party is that it mixes its functions with those of the government. An article by AZAPO’s Mogotsi in the *Sowetan* newspaper (2009:14), asserts the following regarding the ANC:

It is an open secret that since 1994 the ruling party has battled to separate powers between state and party, so being accused of interference will not hold water. The alleged failure by Mboweni to provide leadership to avert the financial crisis should be seen as an overall failure of the ANC’s loyal cadre deployment strategy. When some people are parachuted into leadership merely on their association with the ruling elite or on the basis of membership and not expertise as alleged, both the Stellenbosch and Polokwane groups must accept full responsibility and stop blaming “reactionary forces” after 15 years in power. This confirms the ANC and its alliance partners’ failure to provide the country with leadership for 15 years and its lack of clarity on its ideological position or orientation.

Furthermore, Murray and Simeon’s comments in the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper (2008:21), stress the fact that the ANC constitution cannot override the RSA Constitution.

The ANC is practising its party democracy, which should be distinguished from the country's electoral democracy of indirect representation. The problem is that ANC MPs and the President are "deployees" of the party, who should carry out the instructions of the party. This practice may conflict with parliamentary accountability.

A radio news report (SAfm d), on the ANC Secretary-General, Gwede Mantashe, serves to confirm the contradiction raised by Murray and Simeon, in relation to role clarification between the party and the government:

The ANC is a party in power...it has deployed people in government and that interaction is quite important because it is an effective ANC government that should implement the programme that benefit society. So that interaction is going to be very important...so that the ANC does not make public pronouncement and the government makes pronouncements that are not in line with what we are saying...because every time that happens we saw confusion in society.

Seemingly, Mantashe's statement is suggestive of the fact that there are two centres of power – the Chief Albert Luthuli House (the ANC Head Office) and the Union Buildings (the seat of government). The ANC is not in favour of a radical differentiation between these two seats of power and often regards the government as an extension of the ruling party as is alluded to in the quote from Mantashe.

Likewise, the ANC's National Executive Committee member Mathews Phosa (The Star 2007:13), believes the party is the steering partner in the relationship between the party and the state:

There is a simple principle that guides the relationship between party and government. The political party is the authority figure in that relationship. The government derives its power from the mandate it receives from the party that wins the national elections. The government therefore should be an extension of the policies and programmes of the political party, and not the other way round...The government can never be – and should never be allowed to be – a standalone entity that governs without consulting its mandate-giver.

On the other hand, Brown (Business Day 2009:1), reports that Joel Netshitenzhe, the Presidency's policy chief, who is also an ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) member, warns that the ANC should not "meddle" in government matters. These include issues such as the deployment of party members to key strategic positions, the independence of the judiciary, the police, and the rebuking of ministers by party bosses,

inclusive of the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). These, according to Netshitenzhe, are dangerous tendencies that the party is revealing. “The ANC is a strategic centre of power, but it should not micro-manage the government...It will undermine the legitimacy of the State” (Business Day 2009:1).

The lack of a clear role for the party and the government in society, affects democratic governance and service delivery. Brown (Business Day 2009:2), in addition to the above, cites the Netshitenzhe statement that the “service delivery protests” engulfing some of the townships “should serve as a wake-up call.” According to Helen Zille (2009), the leader of the opposition DA, the deployment policy of the ANC is the root cause of the lack of service delivery. This policy, which deploys party cadres to key positions in the government and the parastatals, leads to the fusing of party and state as opposed to the separation of the two. Thus, the mixing of the party and the state serves to destroy a basic element of democracy, namely the separation of the two. This leads to poor service delivery, as deployment penetrates all tiers of the government.

The nature of the electoral system exacerbates the problem of separating the party and the state in South Africa. Thus, proportional representation with party-lists makes representation to be “loyal” to the party at the expense of accountability to the people. It leads to MPs paying more respect to their party than their constituencies. This also creates a problem for the government, because political deployees in the government continue to see themselves as an “extension of the political party mandate,” and this makes it difficult to separate the party and the state.

An additional problem concerning the separation of the party and the state within the South African context is the role of the traditional authorities, which is relevant to this discussion. Thus, indirect democracy in South Africa is not without the influence of the traditional political system. The question of traditional leadership has remained a feature and an issue in South Africa’s political dispensation. Traditional leaders still regard themselves as representatives of the people. Hence, it is the general understanding that they command a particular constituency. According to Mzimela (2005:2), the traditional leader has to do his work with the understanding that ancestors are watching and expecting community virtues from him, “the task of guarding the interests of my

community. It is a task that I intend carrying out in the manner that my ancestors would expect of me.”

To argue that Mzimela’s statement imbues the traditional leadership with divine powers is to put it in its proper context. Hence, the need for traditional leaders to preserve and protect the institution, as opposed to undermining the ancestors, which might be detrimental to the community at large.

A Tshivenda traditional political expression serves to illustrate the link between the traditional leader and the people. The expression “*khosi ndi khosi nga vhalanda*” literally means, “A chief is a chief because of the subjects or people.” Simply put, it means that without the people to represent, a chief is nothing.

This saying is still justified in traditional communities today, despite the fact that the parliament regards itself to be representing the people through the political parties. Today in South Africa, the parliament is regarded as a representative of the people, although traditional leaders are also regarded similarly in the rural communities. Chapter 12 of the Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a), makes provision for traditional leaders to play a role in issues at the local level of government. In practice, it is a mixture of indirect democracy and traditional direct democracy. This situation also requires a separation of the roles of the ANC as a governing party and the state, or else the traditional leadership institution will also be submerged in this distinction of party and state; causing them to become “an extension of the ruling party”.

Undoubtedly, the practice of democracy is not completely exempted from these challenges in South Africa.

Mechanisms to address the limitations of indirect democracy in South Africa

Of importance are the various mechanisms adopted by the South African government as possible solutions to enhance the responsiveness of the political process in South Africa. These are general mechanisms such as constituency work and report meetings, accountability and multi-partyism. In addition, the government has embarked on introducing a public participation week, a programme aimed at strengthening partnerships with communities and stakeholders. Furthermore, the government has introduced

interactive mechanisms such as the Presidential Hotline number 17737 for the public to register their concerns. Other activities for participation include, amongst others, ward committees, community meetings and Thusong service centres. Decidedly, the government regards interaction with the communities an important aspect of democracy (Public participation week 2009). In addition, MPs in South Africa are given time to go out to the constituencies to deal with issues affecting their constituencies. Still, the level of service rendered by the MPs may be questionable, given the list system, which gives some MPs seats in Parliament without proper identifiable constituencies. This may result in political mediocrity with regard to service rendering by the MPs. However, the government public participation programme during the Public participation week is aimed at improving participation. The following devices of direct democracy are also important.

The referendum

The South African Constitution, Act No.108 of 1996 does make provision for a referendum (see articles 84, 127, Annexure B) (RSA 1996a), The interim Constitution of 1993 also made provision for a referendum in the adoption of the final Constitution (see Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Third Amendment Act No.26 of 1996) (RSA 1996b). Although it is not used, it provides the electorate with the powers to change a constitution. A referendum helps to limit the powers of the executives by the people. Even before the birth of the new Constitution, Slabbert, F. van Z (1992a) comes out in full support of a representative democracy in South Africa, while not ruling out strengthening its rule with certain democratic mechanisms.

This does not mean that aspects of assembly democracy such as referenda and plebiscites cannot play an important role to test mass support for national issues, nor that special techniques cannot be found to establish a more regular interaction between representatives and supporters. But there is no way in which ‘the masses’ or ‘the people’ can govern in the sloganised sense of the word and South Africa sustain democratic government (Slabbert, F.van Z 1992a:8).

Slabbert, F.van Z’s assertion is underpinned by the fact that a referendum was held before the negotiations for a democratic change in South Africa. It was an important national issue to test the will of the Afrikaner people for the democratic inclusion of all races in the country.

Constituency service

The government introduced “constituency service” in order to counteract the disadvantages of party-list representation. Murray and Nijzink (2002:12) have the following to say regarding the idea of “constituency service:”

In South Africa, members of legislatures have constituencies assigned to them for community service after they have been elected. The electoral system, however, is not based on constituencies but on party lists. In South Africa's system of representative democracy, political parties are the main vehicles through which different social and political interests are represented in national and provincial legislatures. Legislatures are parliaments of parties rather than individuals.

The above scenario has a negative influence not only on voters, but also on the party representatives who have to tow the party line and be “loyal” to it. For example, in South Africa, the electoral system of proportional representation leaves the voter with the single option of voting for a party rather than a candidate. Therefore, the representative is chosen along party lines.

The idea of “constituency service” is also a device to strengthen representative democracy in South Africa. “Any member of the community can appeal to his or her MP for help in dealing with difficulties in their relations to government offices” (Murray & Nijzink 2002:12). In South Africa, there are constituency offices aimed at providing a service to the people of the constituency, the efficacy of the constituency service offices remains questionable as the people’s representatives give their loyalty to their individual political parties. Thus, in reality the representatives are accountable to their parties rather than to the people (constituency).

Cooptation

The ANC has continued to include members of other parties in the executive structures and key political and administrative positions. This is an attempt to be more responsive. To mention just a few, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) chairperson Mr Themba Godi, entered his second term as an MP for the PAC and the African People’s Convention respectively. The former Ministers of Science and Technology and Home Affairs were also from other parties, namely, Mosibudi Mangena and Mangosuthu Buthelezi from the Azanian People’s Organisation (AZAPO) and the

Inkatha Freedom Party respectively. In addition, Minister Martinus van Schalkwyk enters his second term as the political head of the Ministry of Environmental Affairs.

Multipartyism

Despite its weakness, the opposition party has continued to enhance and sustain representative democracy in South Africa. For instance, the multi-billion rand arms deal and the Petrolgate scandals were revealed by the opposition parties.

Party democracy

The ANC has a strong party democracy which allows for self-criticism as was demonstrated by the events in Polokwane in 2007 and the subsequent recall of President Mbeki by the party. According to Green (2008:558), the “recall”⁴² of Mbeki was decided by the ANC’s NEC, which is the highest decision-making structure of the ruling party. Other than the fact that there were problems in the party, the recall was sparked by the court decision which linked the Zuma trial to some political influence.

In addition, the tripartite alliance involving the ANC, COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP), contributes to the internal democratic order of the ANC, although this may be a source of division in the alliance.

The *imbizo*

The introduction of the *imbizo* in 2001 was aimed at enhancing democracy in South Africa. The function of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy in a political system of representative democracy should be seen in terms of facilitating a participatory democracy. In this regard, Slabbert, F.van Z (1992a:8), may have foreseen the possibility of introducing other techniques such as the *imbizos* and warned that the “masses” or “the people” should not be allowed to use slogans to govern. Importantly, there should be communication regarding the acts of the government and the persons affected. The government has introduced the *imbizo* for this purpose, but the question arises whether it

^[42] The Pietermaritzburg High Court Judge, Chris Nicholson, ruled in favour of the ANC President, Jacob Zuma, regarding possible interference when the National Prosecuting Authority recharged him. The fresh charges followed his winning of the party presidency in Polokwane (Green 2008:558). Later on, Mbeki was also vindicated by the court regarding the charge of possible interference.

is indeed suitable and acceptable for this purpose. This will be the focus of chapters four to seven.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Basic theoretical arguments concerning indirect democracy were used as a premise for understanding the representationist theory or school of indirect democracy, as well as the participationist theory or school of direct democracy.

The general problems and challenges regarding indirect democracy were identified and discussed. Such weaknesses relate to limitations concerning participation, the nature of representation, elections, the electoral systems and responsiveness and the exclusion of interests. As a solution to the problems of indirect democracy, it was mentioned that for the system to work effectively, it is often supplemented by direct participation devices, such as popular assemblies, the referendum, the recall, the popular initiative, the plebiscite and deliberative democracy. These devices are regarded as mechanisms of direct democracy. Therefore, a fusion of such devices with the mechanisms of indirect democracy realises a system of semi-direct democracy.

The cybernetics model described how a self-steering system operates through its sensory, analytical, decision-making and execution components. In addition, this system feeds back to its environment. With regard to a governmental system, which cannot operate in a similar manner to an automatic system, direct democracy mechanisms are required to improve its functioning.

Lastly, South Africa's democracy is also affected by the general problems and challenges associated with indirect democracy. Hence, the introduction of the *imbizo* by the government to supplement the system. This idea was expressed by Netshitenzhe in a television programme (SABC2 c) when he spoke of the idea of "taking the government to the people."

Chapter four will focus on the mechanics of the government *imbizo*.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GOVERNMENT *IMBIZO* IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapters one and three, reference was made to the South African government's introduction of the *imbizo* to involve the people in the political process. However, in order to determine the suitability of the *imbizo* as a mechanism of direct democracy that could be used in conjunction with a representative system to broaden democracy, the nature of the *imbizo* as introduced by the government, needs to be analysed first.

For this purpose, attention will firstly be paid to the nature of the *imbizo*, including its rules and procedures. Secondly, the viability of the *imbizo*, as a mechanism of direct democracy, will be analysed. Thirdly, it is important to determine the relationship of the "modern" *imbizo* with other forms of public assemblies, as well as its historical and traditional antecedents. The differences and similarities between the modern and traditional *imbizo* systems will also be identified. Since this case study focusses on traditional Venda territory, it is particularly important to relate it to Venda customs. Lastly, the advantages and disadvantages of the modern *imbizo* will receive attention.

4.2 THE NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT *IMBIZO*

As indicated in chapter one, the concept of the 'government *imbizo*' became known when the ANC came to power in South Africa. The idea of a gathering of the people was introduced in the Congress of the People in 1955 and the People's Forums, prior to the transition to democracy in 1994.

It is important to bear in mind, as was mentioned in chapter one, that there are various manifestations of the government *imbizo*, namely mayoral, premier's, ministerial and presidential *imbizos*, as reflected in the "Terms of reference for the provincial *imbizo* steering committee" of the Limpopo Province:

[The] *imbizo* can take the form of a gathering in a village or township where the State President, Minister, Premier, Mayor and the Councillor come to listen to ordinary people and where possible provide answers to raised questions...Provincial Outreach Programmes where the Executive Council meets the people from one region to the next are a reflection of the *imbizo* (Limpopo Provincial Government 2009:8).

For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the presidential *imbizo*. It is also believed that a presidential *imbizo* carries more weight than other *imbizos*, because the presidential *imbizo* is also attended by ministers, premiers, MECs, mayors and councillors.

4.2.1 THE RULES AND PROCEDURES OF THE *IMBIZO*

The South African government *imbizo* is a mechanism designed to bring the government closer to the people with the aim of mobilising people, through their involvement, to tackle service delivery issues. The government believes that the *imbizo* is an appropriate forum for corresponding with the people when raising their concerns with regard to service rendering, whilst the government listens with the idea of addressing those concerns.

The underlying premise of the government *imbizo* is the unmediated engagement of the people. Thus, as a facilitator, the government must not be seen to be imposing restrictions and normative measures that would compromise people's freedom.

Hence, everybody is allowed to attend the government *imbizo*, irrespective of age, gender, colour, creed or standing in society. It is open to everyone and even foreign nationals are allowed to attend.

The researcher has observed some of the *imbizos* in action, and in most instances, the facilitators of the *imbizo* programme kept on warning people against making a noise that tended to disrupt the programme and even interrupted the addresses by important speakers such as the President, a Premier, a Minister or a Mayor.

In essence, the procedures of the *imbizo* revolve around its motto of "taking the government to the people" through the unmediated engagement and interaction of the people with their political leaders. The government's role is viewed as that of a facilitator. According to Hartslief (2005:8), the government *imbizo* system "promotes active

involvement and direct participation of the public on various levels in the implementation of government programmes.”

However, there are important steps that must be followed in the *imbizo* process. These procedures are manifold and are characterised by a considerable amount of red-tape. According to the Government Communicators’ Handbook (GCIS 2005:39, 40-43), these steps involve planning, establishment of a national task team, role clarification, establishing the provincial coordinating task team, budgeting, consultation with the province and local municipality, developing the *imbizo* programme, media liaison, publicity, promotional material, conducting research for *imbizo*, assessment and follow-up research. In short, the *imbizo* project has a “pre-*imbizo*” phase, the actual *imbizo* event, the post *imbizo* phase and the follow-up phase (Hartslief 2005:9-13).

4.2.1.1 Pre-*imbizo* steps

These procedures are to be considered before the actual holding of the *imbizo*. It is a prerequisite to embark on these steps, which are a requirement for the holding of an *imbizo*. These pre-requisites are planning, establishing a national task team and provincial coordinating task team, role clarification, budget, consultation with the province and local municipality, developing the *imbizo* programme, media liaison, publicity and promotional material, as well as conducting research for an *imbizo*.

Planning

It involves setting down a total strategy for achieving the objectives and goals of the *imbizo* campaign. “This embodies initial conceptualisation of how the *imbizo* will take place, using the communication strategy as a guide. At this stage, role-players must be identified and the necessary steps and processes specified in a work breakdown structure and action plan” (GCIS 2005:39).

Establishing a national task team

According to the Government Communicators’ Handbook (GCIS 2005:39), once the task team is established, it has an overarching responsibility of the implementation and

success of the *imbizo*. The task team is composed of the GCIS, Presidency, Service-delivery government departments, representatives from protocol and security, a senior person (normally the HoC in the Premier's Office). The HoC⁴³ serves as a link for the provincial department (GCIS 2005:39).

Role clarification

Role clarification means that every member of the task team should be given a responsibility and duty to perform. This helps to avoid a situation where a structure is set in place and end up not functioning. The functions are wide-ranging and concern the programme, marketing, media liaison, monitoring the *imbizo*, recording, developing *imbizo* posters, developing media advertisements and media monitoring and analysis. In addition, the provincial co-ordinating task teams have their own responsibilities such as drafting of the *imbizo* programme, liaising with the national minister's office and submitting reports of the *imbizo* (GCIS 2005:40).

Budget

An *imbizo* cannot take place without a budget allocation, from either the national department or the province.

Sometimes, budget commitments will be shared between the national department and the province. When this is the case, it must be made clear which aspects of the budget are the responsibilities of the province and which of the national Government. At times, this is left hanging and often results in unnecessary debts and unhealthy relations" (GCIS 2005:40).

Consultation with the province and local municipality

There should be consultation between the province and the municipality concerned, before the holding of the *imbizo*. The aim is to undertake a proper check and inspection in which every party involved is consulted (GCIS 2005:41). It is important for the task team members to visit the province where the *imbizo* will be held, to observe and report developments on the ground, such as social development project sites. Usually, such

^[43] The HoC refers to the Head of Communications in the Premier's office.

projects are visited by the political principals or the President and his (her) entourage on the day of the *imbizo*.

4.2.1.2 Developing the *imbizo* programme

The programme will depend on the situation on the ground and the community to be visited by government for the holding of the *imbizo*. In other words, a programme may differ according to the needs of the area. In general, the programme will deal with basic services such as water, roads, housing, electricity and health (GCIS 2005:41).

The needs of a particular locality in the province to be visited are suggested by the province concerned, based on projects and programmes and submitted to the task team for consideration. “The task team should select suggestions that are closest to the objectives of the *imbizo* as outlined in the communication strategy” (GCIS 2005:41). Examples of issues that are closest to the objectives would be services such as water, roads and electricity. Obviously, the prioritisation of issues in poverty-stricken rural areas will not be the same as in urban areas.

Media liaison

The media liaison function deals with the relations with the media with regard to amongst others, briefings, interviews and imparting messages about the *imbizo*. The idea is to popularise the *imbizo* campaign (GCIS 2005:42).

Publicity and promotional material

It is important that some publicity materials should be disseminated regarding the *imbizo*. Such materials are also crucial for the government to inform the public about its progress and challenges (GCIS 2005:42).

Conducting research for an *imbizo*

Preliminary, secondary and follow-up research has to be conducted about the location of the *imbizo* with regard to service delivery. This should be in the form of statistics, which

show delivery trends “from 1994 up to the most recent and verified reports.” It is also important that preliminary information should be verified (GCIS 2005:43).

As part of secondary research, information should also be collected from the government departments affected by service delivery. Such information should show the successes and challenges with regard to service delivery. Hence, follow-up research is important in this regard. Accordingly, notes taken by the scribe during the *imbizo* should be “collected and collated” in order to compile a report. This helps to follow up issues raised during the *imbizo*. Ideally, the follow-up procedure exhibits some elements of a cybernetics model as and when it serves to regulate or steer the *imbizo* so that action can be undertaken (GCIS 2005:43-44).

In addition, the scribe’s notes are used to compile a consolidated report, which will be submitted to government departments responsible for service delivery. The report is submitted with an indication of the timeframes allocated for the action to be taken. Thus, follow-up research is central to the ability of government *imbizo* to deliver its essential services (GCIS 2005:43-44).

4.2.1.3 The *imbizo* in progress phase

Other than the above steps, there are also guidelines that are followed during or when the *imbizo* is in progress. These guidelines involve the recording of the proceedings, monitoring of programme and guidelines for effective scribing during an *imbizo*.

In general, the agenda is essentially about service delivery issues. In addition, everybody has to identify himself/herself before raising a question or making a comment. This also helps to identify the origin and contact point of the question being raised.

It is important for task team members to allocate some people with the responsibility of recording the proceedings and scribing every issue raised by the public as well as responses of the public representatives and government officials (GCIS 2005:44).

Simultaneously, the task team should also charge some officials with the responsibility of monitoring the programme, when the *imbizo* is in progress.

Any problems should be reported immediately to the project leader for alternative arrangements, if necessary. The provincial project leader should at all times be with the principal, advising on proceedings and managing the time as prescribed in the programme (GCIS 2005:44).

The idea is to capture and sensor every issue that is being discussed during the *imbizo*, thereby avoiding any possible omission. These tasks require flexibility and adaptation to any changing situation.

It is shown from the above discussion, that decisions in the government *imbizo* are not taken immediately during the *imbizo* but referred to the responsible department for action.

4.2.1.4 The post-*imbizo* phase

Other steps are for the post-*imbizo* tasks, which include evaluation of the *imbizo*, the *imbizo* report and follow-up report (GCIS 2005:44, 45). The post-*imbizo* steps to be followed include evaluation of the *imbizo*, the *imbizo* report and follow-up.

The evaluation of the *imbizo* is an important prerequisite to gauge the achievements and problems encountered from the planning stage to the end. Ultimately, the evaluation will inform the writing of the report. “The task team has to produce a report about the *imbizo*, which is submitted to management. The report should contain recommendations on how issues raised should be taken forward” (GCIS 2005:45).

The last point that should be raised is that pertaining to the important task of follow-up to the issues raised. This helps when giving feedback to the people on how far the issues raised have been addressed. The task team should see to it that there are some mechanisms in place to follow up the issues raised with the relevant authorities. Such follow-up should be a continuous process (GCIS 2005:45).

It has already been alluded to that decision-making is not done during the *imbizo*. According to the Government Communicators’ Handbook (GCIS 2005:45), the *imbizo* report is compiled after the holding of the *imbizo*, for the attention of management, “action is taken and communicated to the affected province or area” (GCIS 2005:46).

Implementation ought to follow the decision-making component, which is a current challenge for the government in terms of service delivery.

The stated procedural arrangements in the government *imbizo* are indicative of the system's ability to sense and analyse the information from the environment. However, what remains to be seen is its capacity to take decisions and execute the implementation of those decisions.⁴⁴

4.2.2 The government *imbizo* and responsiveness

In order to evaluate the government *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy, it is important to pay attention to whether the *imbizo*, in its current form, could improve the responsiveness of the government within the context of indirect democracy. The “value” of the government *imbizo* as an instrument of direct democracy will be analysed, using four categories of responsiveness. Thus, if the *imbizo* is to be seen to be viable, it must comply with the requirements in this regard.

According to Eulau and Karps (1977:246), the categories of responsiveness are policy, service, allocation and symbolic responsiveness. The first three constitute behavioural components, whilst the symbolic responsiveness is considered psychological. Policy responsiveness is about how the intermediary makes a decision, whilst service and allocation responsiveness is about the intermediary's soliciting of the benefits of the constituency. Symbolic responsiveness relates to people's identification with their own government.

Policy responsiveness

The government *imbizo*, as a mechanism to enhance policy responsiveness, deserves serious scrutiny. According to Eulau and Karps (1977:242), policy responsiveness refers to the level of interaction that should exist between the intermediary and the constituency with respect to public policy-making. They talk of the underlying premise of “congruence” of Miller and Stokes (1963) and “concurrence” of Verba and Nie (1972), as both important in this regard. Congruence refers to the relationship between the

^[44] Some of the problems regarding the capacity and ability of the components of the system to perform their function will become evident in chapter six.

representative's position on issues and the constituents' opinions on those issues. Concurrence, in turn, refers to the citizen-leader agreement on priorities within a particular community. The understanding is that, in this regard, responsiveness is not necessarily dependent on whether the intermediary is a trustee or a delegate, has a mandate or resembles the population. However, it should also be noted that such congruence and concurrence may be dependent on the "homogeneity of constituents' wishes."

From the rules and procedures that apply to an *imbizo*, it can be deduced that the *imbizo*, at best, merely provides inputs into the policy-making process and could not really be considered as policy-making as such. Except for the plebiscite, most other mechanisms of direct democracy involve the decision-making process *per se*. Thus, policy-making has become a complex process in South Africa. Furthermore, the divergent understanding by participants of policy issues, resulting in a lack of homogeneity on either policy preferences or priorities, makes it difficult to be policy responsive or at least to determine policy responsiveness. An example of the lack of responsiveness of the *imbizo* is the Botswana system, which has been more symbolic than substantive within the context of parliamentary democracy. "Decision-making is centralised with government failing to respond to people's complaints" (Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie 2006:44, 45). The same could be said of the government *imbizo* in South Africa.

Thus, the centralisation of decision-making is likely to continue, resulting in the implementation of what is in the interest of "government," rather than what the people prefer. There is limited consultation with the people in the pre-*imbizo* phase. For example, the agenda, which mainly discusses tribal affairs and some developmental issues such as government policies, is set beforehand by government officials.

This is not necessarily a critical issue for Bowler, Todd and Karp (2007:353) who cite Cronin (1989) regarding the important point that the citizenry do not see direct democracy as a platform to remove decision-making powers from the intermediaries. Citizens merely wish to participate in influencing the political process while mindful of the fact that the intermediaries are their representatives who should have the final decision-making powers.

The above reference should be gauged against May's definition of democracy as a necessary correspondence between the government and the wishes and interest of the governed.

For the debate is over whether the representative should act according to what *he* thinks is in the 'best interest' of the constituency, regardless of constituency "wants", or whether he should follow the 'expressed wishes' of the district, regardless of how he personally feels. The debate really turns on the competency of the citizenry in matters of public policy (Eulau & Karps 1977:243).

Given South Africa's system of proportional representation with party lists, a representative may find himself or herself in a political predicament. Despite the fact that he/she may want to express the view of the constituency, the towing of the party line becomes paramount. However, it could be argued that the greatest agreement exists on policy issues and priorities based on "ideological congruence" in a system of proportional representation based on a party-list.

In the current political landscape, the lack of service delivery despite a number of *imbizos* already held, as well as the level of protests over service delivery since 2006, raises some questions regarding the *imbizo* as an appropriate tool for making democracy responsive in South Africa, despite the possibility of "ideological congruence." This is substantiated by the government's occasional admittance that service delivery is a serious challenge.

Service responsiveness

Service responsiveness refers to the representative's ability to cater for his/her constituency with respect to service delivery. In South Africa, this would refer to the ability of Members of Parliament to elicit what the constituency wants at a particular point in time.

The representative intervenes between constituents and bureaucrats in such matters as difficulties with tax agency, delays in welfare payments, securing a job in government, and so on. Providing constituent services and doing case work constitute for many representatives more significant aspects of their representational role than does legislative work like bill-drafting or attending, committee hearings (Eulau & Karps 1977:243-244).

Although the *imbizo* can be responsive with regard to service delivery because of its strategic nature, the lack of services and on-going service protests are again signs that the *imbizo* does not necessarily facilitate responsiveness. However, there could be some areas where people's complaints are heard during the *imbizo* and addressed, such as the accessibility of welfare payment points and the building of RDP⁴⁵ houses at the beneficiary's original home, as opposed to the previous practice of building them at a different place. Some rural residents in Limpopo raised this concern and their concerns were heard and heeded.

Allocation responsiveness

Allocation responsiveness centres on what is called pork-barrel politics, which is an allocation to the constituents aimed at winning their votes. In the context of the *imbizo*, it would imply using the *imbizo* by government to allocate certain benefits in order to win elections. "The critical point to be made is that in being responsive as an 'allocator', whether in the legislative or bureaucratic processes, the representative seeks to anticipate the needs of his clients and, in fact, can stimulate their wants" (Eulau & Karps 1977:245). Thus, whether it is about winning elections or not, the constituents benefit from the allocation.

The South African government has already been blamed for using the *imbizo* campaigns to lure voters. It is against this background that the *imbizo* can still be used to allocate benefits to the constituents; thereby government is seen as "responsive." Similarly, the ruling party has been accused of making an "attractive" election manifesto during rallies, to lure voters, as was the case in the 2009 general election. The example of the ANC, promising to create five hundred thousand jobs before December 2009, is a case in point. Since then, the ruling party admitted that this would not be possible.

In addition, there were allegations that some councillors were using government food parcels to lure voters during the 2009 election campaigns. Thus, there is a tendency to supply food parcels as if they are provided by the party.

^[45] A housing programme as part of the reconstruction and development of South Africa.

Symbolic responsiveness

Symbolic responsiveness refers to the psychological nature of the government *imbizo*, in terms of how the people feel, as well as their impression regarding the government going to the people. Eulau and Karps (1977:246) cite Wahlke (1971) who sees the relevance of Easton's concept of 'diffuse support' (1965). The idea is that people feel more satisfied while seeing the processes of government, than following every step of policy outputs as they unfold.

The symbolic aspect of responsiveness fits in well with the government *imbizo*. As it is about unmediated engagement with the people, they see it as an important public gesture by the government, which is prepared to meet the people. Thus, the government *imbizo* has more symbolic significance than "policy output of the process." This was also stated by a government official in the Presidency's GCIS in an interview (see chapter six). It is believed that people feel the presence of their government when there is direct contact between them and the leaders. This helps to minimise the distance that exists between the government and the people. A detailed discussion of the responses from the GCIS is given in chapters five and six.

Lastly, note that the usefulness of a mechanism such as the government *imbizo* is what makes representative government responsive. The idea is to bring representative government closer to direct democracy. "...the attractiveness of the notion of responsiveness in the most recent period has been due in part to the fusion of participatory and representational ideas about democracy" (Eulau & Karps 1977:250).

4.3 THE GOVERNMENT *IMBIZO* AND OTHER FORMS OF PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES

In order to determine the usability of the *imbizo* as a mechanism of direct democracy, it is important to indicate its relationship briefly with other extant mechanisms of direct democracy, as well as its historical traditional antecedents. The *imbizo* is a gathering of people and thus comes closest to public assemblies as mechanisms of direct democracy. It is therefore important to pay attention to these public assemblies. Furthermore, its relationship with its traditional historical antecedents could be advantageous in the sense

that the people find it easy to identify with the *imbizo*. However, there is a possibility that it may conflict with traditional practices.

It is ancient Greece, through the popular assembly,⁴⁶ that was the epitome of real democracy in practice long before the Middle Ages.⁴⁷ Direct democracy in the form of a popular assembly was practised in Athens around 500 B.C. However, similar assemblies are still practiced in a number of political settings and of particular importance are the town meetings in the USA, the Botswana system and the emergence of deliberative democracy.

4.3.1 Ancient Greece

The citizens of the city-state of Athens qualified to participate in politics, with the exceptions of women, slaves and criminals. The slaves served the agrarian economy of Greece, thereby supporting its political democracy, but did not enjoy political rights.

The attendance of a people's assembly was limited to all adult male citizens. The women, slaves, non-residents and children were not allowed in the Assembly. Athenian democracy provided for the establishment of a council and a people's court. The Council consisted of elected members selected by lot serving for one year, but a man could only be a member twice. The Council set the agenda for the Assembly. The agenda carried issues of common interest, as opposed to individual interest. All adult males were allowed to speak in the assembly. "All citizens could attend meetings of the assembly, serve on the governing council and sit on citizens' juries" (Hague & Harrop 2007:44).

The Athenian system was characterised by assembled people engaging each other collectively in the matters of governance. "As far as we can tell, meetings were lengthy, factional and vigorous, with the talking – and hence probably the subsequent show of hands – dominated by influential orators known as demagogues" (Hague & Harrop 2007:45 citing Dahl 1989).

^[46] Also referred to as people's assemblies and public assemblies.

^[47] The period of the Middle Ages is reminiscent of the struggle between the Church and State. The proper role of both institutions in society was not clearly defined. The Church had authority, control and power over the traditional leaders. It was the Church, which also set the political agenda in matters of policy and administration (see Rodee *et al.* 1983:5).

The members of the People's Court were selected by lot for a specific case from a panel of volunteers. The membership was on rotational basis. They served as magistrates who were responsible for administering the decisions taken at the Assembly, but a man could only serve once as magistrate.

Still, the Popular Assembly was supplemented by the administrators of the city comprising of magistrates or juries. Thus, discussions taken at the assembly would warrant administrators to implement them. Manin (1997:11) explains as follows:

The Athenian democracy entrusted to citizens drawn by lot most of the functions not performed by the Popular Assembly (*ekklesia*). This principle applied mainly to the magistracies (*archai*). Of the approximately 700 magistrate posts that made up the Athenian administration, some 600 were filled by lot.

Such a democracy allowing the involvement of a reasonable number of people in the passing of laws and policy making are often praised (Rodee *et al.* 1983:45). However, less than ten percent of the citizenry participated in this exercise, out of the total forty thousand who were eligible to participate in the meetings of the *ecclesia*. In other words, it was not everybody who actually took part in direct democracy, only a reasonable and manageable number of them participated.

Of particular importance is the fact that meetings were held on a regular basis, the attendees were familiar with the rules and procedures that applied. Not everybody who could, attended the Assembly, made policy decisions and oversaw their implementation. Decisions were thus made on the spot where it mattered. However, it was also marred by a lack of knowledge among the participants on important issues, often resulting in indecision or poor decisions being taken.

4.3.2 The system of town meetings

Town meetings⁴⁸ are also a form of popular assembly. The town meeting system is inherent in the American democratic tradition. "The *town meeting*, in which citizens assemble at a particular place and time to make public decisions, is the earliest form of

^[48] It should also be noted that another form of town meeting is used by politicians to provide voters with an opportunity to ask questions. The term town hall meeting is used for these types of meetings or more correctly gatherings.

direct democracy, dating back at least to ancient Athens” (Matsusaka 2005:187). The New England town meetings in the north-eastern part of the USA (for instance, Vermont) have seen residents attending and participating in governance issues affecting their lives. For analytical purposes, these are regarded as being similar to the Swiss *landsgemeinde* on a cantonal (provincial) basis.⁴⁹

The emergence of direct participation⁵⁰ in the USA cannot be isolated from the influence of medieval Europe, for example among the Basques in Spain. However, such a practice was not the norm in medieval Europe, which saw mainly monarchical rule: “Notions of popular government, or self-government animated New England town meetings and also prompted public votes on the ratification of state constitutions and state constitutional changes” (Cronin 1989:41).

The town meeting serves as a mechanism for direct democracy in the USA. It serves as a platform for citizens to raise issues and express their feelings about programmes and policies of government. The idea of direct democracy in America is rooted in the involvement of the people in government actions. It is the practice of the government of the people, for themselves by themselves.

According to Cronin (1989:41), historically all freemen (if not most) in New England were allowed to participate in the town meetings, but slaves and immigrants were restricted to participate in the town assemblies. According to Levitt and Feldbaum (1973:68), town meetings record considerable attendance and participation by the residents, with numbers ranging from 100,000 to 250 000 per council members. The town meeting is a government of the people who discuss and decide issues on the spot.

Most of the issues discussed at such meetings include, the allocation of basic services such as the construction of streets, provision of houses, employment and education, as well as budgeting for these. Thus, the agenda centres on issues of basic services such as houses, education, employment, streets and others. Therefore, they make policy decisions.

^[49] It should be noted that some Swiss towns also hold town meetings at the local level.

^[50] Direct legislation expressing the “will of the people” has had a certain legitimacy in America since the 1640s, when all or most of the freemen in New England villages assembled to make laws by which they would be regulated (see Cronin 1989:41).

The citizens of the towns in some states in the USA have the power to ratify amendments to the state constitutions. They make laws that govern their affairs, such as approving amendments to constitutions. These developments are followed by the practice of the recall, initiative and referendum (Cronin 1989:41, 42, 46).

Of particular importance with regard to the town meetings are: the meetings are held periodically, usually annually, or on demand; it involves law-making by assembled voters and it is therefore directly involved in policy decisions - that is taking decisions at the locality where and when it matters. However, attendance fluctuates and are often characterised by an attendee also attending on behalf of other members of the community.

4.3.3 Deliberative democracy

In chapter three, it was mentioned that deliberative democracy is often regarded as a mechanism of direct democracy. Though deliberative democracy is not exactly a public assembly in the sense of the town meetings, deliberative democracy makes provision for forums where public policies may be deliberated.

Although it may sound a recent concept, deliberative democracy bears the hallmark of the traditional mechanisms of direct participation. Deliberative democracy has something in common with the traditional *imbizo*, through critical discussions, which take place to resolve an issue (Matshediso 2008: 2). The recent *imbizo* practice by the South African government, encompasses direct interaction which promotes dialogue when people raise their concerns to the authorities (Hartslief 2005:6).

Thus, deliberative democracy is an attempt to revive the participative democratic tradition of Greece. According to Hague and Harrop (2007:46, 47), citing Habermas (1975) and Cohen (1997), a democratic spirit that prevails in this type of democracy, is accompanied by freedom of speech, equality and being rational in discussing issues. Thus, deliberations are informed by understanding and objectivity when approaching issues. It does not accommodate and appreciate a situation like that of Athens where “good” speakers with oratory skills would convince the masses without putting issues into perspective. In other words, deliberative democracy has no room for acts of demagogues, where participants use their oratory skills to convince the gathering.

The rules used in deliberative democracy are based on openness and equality, in order to encourage a deliberative atmosphere. According to Hague and Harrop (2007:47), deliberative democracy allows for the participation of everybody, irrespective of race, gender, class or status. Matshedisho (2008: 3) citing (Habermas 1974:1) states that all citizens are allowed to participate in the discussions. This is unlike the Greek Assembly and some other African traditional systems: “The participants regard themselves as bound solely by the results and preconditions of the deliberation. They are free from any authority of prior norms or requirements” (Cohen, n.d:2).

In a deliberative democracy, the emphasis is on discussions, which must be informed. It favours steps that would encourage deliberation in an environment where people discuss and debate issues in a panel discussion format. Hague and Harrop (2007:47) further state that deliberations, which are open and straightforward, will be based on understanding and reason.

The participants cannot be skewed when debating and biased to some individual interests at the expense of the collective. “Clearly, however, the theory points in the direction of discussion in small groups, perhaps building on formats such as university seminars and town meetings. In a world of large states, such aspirations may seem utopian” (Hague & Harrop 2007:47).

Matshedisho (2008:3 citing Habermas 1974), refers to the fact that the citizens act as a collective body of the people when deliberating on issues under discussion. The atmosphere at the assembly of the people is positive when people speak about matters of common good. In other words, they discuss matters without fear.

Thus, participants should deliberate on issues until there is a consensus, which is a precursor to a decision, “a consensus should emerge about what is truly in the public interest, with reason triumphing over interests. Even if the deliberation does not yield consensus, voting should follow the debate rather than serving as a substitute for it” (Hague & Harrop 2007:47).

The procedure used in deliberative democracy is similar to the one used by the civic organisations. Participants in the civics meeting discuss issues until they reach a

consensus and by voting, “anyone can put forth proposals, criticise and support measures. There is no substantive hierarchy” (Cohen, n.d:2).

4.3.4 Historical and traditional antecedents of the *imbizo*

The contemporary *imbizo*, as introduced by the South African government, should also be viewed within the context of history and cultural practices. As already alluded to, many scholars and members of the ANC emphasise the traditional cultural nature and history of the *imbizo* (Sono 1993; Hartslief 2009:330-331). President Mandela’s statement during his treason trial in 1962, as a high-profile leader of the ANC suggests that the notion of the government *imbizo* may have been prompted by its traditional counterpart as practiced by the chiefs. The ANC may have seen the wisdom of using the *imbizo* as an instrument of engagement between the people and their leaders, and thought of redesigning it when they come to power. According to Pretorius (2006:753), Mandela who himself comes from ⁵¹royalty (a son of a Chief), praises the significance of the traditional system and its capacity to consult the people, during his trial in 1962:

[T]he constitution of [traditional councils] variously called Imbizo, or Pitso, or Kgotla, which governs the affairs of the tribe...was so completely democratic that all members of the tribe could participate in its deliberations. Chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, all took part and endeavoured to influence its decisions. It was so weighty and influential a body that no step of any importance could ever be taken by the tribe without reference to it.

The above quotation has been detailed in the Nelson Mandela autobiography (Mandela 1995:24, 25; Matshediso 2008:1, 2).

The historical antecedents are the mechanisms used by traditional systems⁵² to engage with the people. However, traditional systems may not necessarily be embedded in

^[51] Chief Albert Luthuli and Mangosuthu Buthelezi were some of the important traditional leaders in the ANC, but Chief Buthelezi left the ANC and led a Zulu cultural organisation which developed into the current Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Note that the earlier African chiefs and Kings were warriors who may have influenced generations of the liberation struggle: Kings Shaka, Makhado, Moshoeshoe, Sekhukhune and others.

^[52] The past kingdoms in Asia and Europe resembled the traditional political systems. Daniel 2 depicts some of these kingdoms which were under the kings, emperors and the popes. These are the Babylonian Kingdom (gold), Medes and Persians (silver), Greek (bronze) and the Roman Empire (iron). The fifth “kingdom” can be termed “freedom” or human rights (iron and clay). For example, King Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar of Babel used to gather the people for assembly for a specific project, like during the

democratic principles. Hague and Harrop (2007:11) cite Weber (1923), that traditional leaders and their authority resembled patriarchy. Their authority cannot be questioned and it is natural to obey them:

Patriarchy means the authority of the father, the husband, the senior of the house, the elder sibling over the members of the household; the rule of the master and patron over the bondsmen, serfs, and freed men; of the lord over the domestic servants and household officials, of the prince over household and court-officials.

Pre-colonial Africa was characterised by such practices and the hallmarks of patriarchy persist to this day. Thus, the traditional system is also evident in the past history of Africa⁵³ and Southern Africa in particular, which is important in relation to this study (Kendall & Louw 1989:36-40). Although the *imbizo* can be used interchangeably to refer to other meetings between the King or Chief and his Council, the original meaning of the word refers to the meeting called by the Chief to meet his people. Generally, although the structure of the traditional *imbizo* (at this level), entails a multi-linear level of decision-making, its approach is mainly unilateral. Moreover, the culture of patriarchy is prevalent in the practice of the traditional *imbizo*. Therefore, the traditional mechanisms of rule need to be taken into account in this study, in order to deepen the analysis of their “modern” counterpart, the government *imbizo*.

Hartslief (2009:330) argues that there are similar practices with regard to traditional political systems among the Basotho, Bapedi, Vhavenda, Batswana and the Nguni people. Under normal circumstances, the traditional *imbizo* is held after a council meeting, “these community gatherings/meetings originated after the (great) tribal council meetings (governing body of the tribe) which was made up of the chief (or *induna*), his private advisors and headsman and some influential locals representing the community” (Hartslief 2009:330). Likewise, the Venda, selected as a focus of this study, is “historical” and some even link it to Mapungubwe, Central Africa and the Middle East (Nemudzivhadi 2001).

construction of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9; 10:8-10) and for a religious purpose respectively (Rampfumedzi 2007).

^[53] The traditional system in Africa is symbolised by its pyramids in Egypt, Mali’s mosques, the ruins of Timgad and Zimbabwe, Benin’s bronzes, Uganda’s stone tools, the hilltop forts of Mapungubwe, the remains of Monomotapa and Timbuktu, and the written documents of African, European, Hindu and Chinese origin...(Shore 1965:380).

Currently, in Botswana, provision is made for gatherings of the people that are quite similar to the “modern” *imbizo* introduced in South Africa. The Botswana system is also currently used to supplement the parliamentary system and likewise, it has historical and traditional antecedents. Historically and traditionally, the Botswana system of “*kgotla*” and “*pitso*” is practiced in the “*lekgotla*” which is an important meeting place. “Their meeting place was generally in the council place (*lekgotla*) which adjoined the chief’s residence” (Sono 1993:52). This is also seen from the practice of the idea of “taking the parliament to the people” in 2004 (Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie 2006).

Sono (1993:52) mentions that the composition of the meetings varied according to the importance of the agenda. They also varied in terms of men residing in the capital where minor issues were discussed with an entire community where major issues were to be resolved. Attendance was sometimes compulsory depending on the nature of the business to be discussed.

Sebudubudu and Osei-Hwedie (2006:44, 46) state that men, women and children could attend the “*kgotla*.” However, according to Sono (1993:52), the traditional practice requires that it is at the level of “*pitso*” where every member of the tribe is allowed to attend. Historically, according to Ashton (1947:237), attendance of “*pitso*” was compulsory with men usually coming armed.

Among the Basuto [sic] these distinctions do not obtain. Every assembly, whether attendance is compulsory or not, is called *pitso* and is held in the chief’s court, the normal place of assembly. In rare cases, a so-called national *pitso* is held, attended by men from all over the country (Ashton 1947:237).

The Botswana system is not carried out without procedures. It is a tradition which respects the customs: “These assemblies, often convened at the whim of the chief, were in some cases held often, ...” (Sono 1993:52). Characteristic of the Botswana system is that of “people going to the traditional leader,” where they will get the purpose of their invitation at the traditional court. It is a male dominated system, with women and children silenced and uncomfortable during the meeting. Sono (1993:52) cites Schapera (1956), as he explains the procedures followed during the traditional popular assembly:

The people generally sat in a big semicircle facing the chief and his senior advisers and relatives. Other prominent men sat in the front. The chief presided over these gatherings. If the matter required discussion, some of the chief's advisers initiated deliberations by stating their views, which they may have bounced off the chief prior to the formal gathering. Usually, these senior men were followed by other important men, after which anyone so desirous might speak or ask questions. The chief then summarised what had been expressed, and announced his decision. Rarely did the assembly raise any topic for discussion. All that it did was to deliberate upon the issues tabled before it, and the meeting generally went on until a decision was reached. There was no special system of voting, however, since the speeches made and the general mood were sufficient to indicate the trend of opinion. But if the discussion raised controversy or disagreement, as among the Bakgatla, the chief grouped the men according to their views, and the relative strength of the different parties became evident.

The Botswana system is almost similar to that of the Basothos. The Chief consults other influential people in the community whom he feels have the level of expertise, which could be helpful to arrive at certain decisions. Other than this avenue open to the Chief, he also relies on the "private advisers, his official advisers, and public councils" (Ashton 1947:235-236). The same practices apply to the Venda system discussed below.

4.3.5 The Venda system

Against the above background, it is important to discuss some of the traditional practices pertaining to the *imbizo* among the Vhavenda briefly.

The Venda system of the "*tshivhidzo*" takes place under normal circumstances, following a "*khoro*"⁵⁴ or council meeting of the chief with his sub-chiefs. However, it cannot be denied that a "*tshivhidzo*" could still be called even before the holding of a council meeting if there was an urgent matter.

The Vhavenda people attend a "*tshivhidzo*" at a "*kharoni*." It is an open space at the precinct of the royal kraal. "*Kharoni*" is a Tshivenda word for a council meeting place. The researcher grew up in a society where men attended a "*tshivhidzo*" such as that of "*dzima*" and "*thevhula*." Ralushai (1982:3; 2003:6, 7), explains that the religious dimension regarding a gathering of Vhavenda people entailed that they would take

^[54] *Khoro* is a Tshivenda word for a traditional council meeting, and is similar to the *lekgotla* in Sesotho. It may also refer to a traditional court when cases are tried.

instructions from the Nwali⁵⁵ or Raluvhimba through a mediator. It would suggest that a gathering of some sort had to be arranged. Such gatherings were of a religious nature encompassing important rituals. Raluvhimba is a supreme being for the Vhavenda people.⁵⁶

“*Khoro*” relates to what Sono (1993:42, 52) refers to when he cites Ali Mazrui’s *palaver* tradition. The tradition is common in most African communities, where elders discuss issues of community importance sitting in the shade under a tree. These sittings are undoubtedly similar to a council meeting held at the chief’s court.

It is at this sitting where elders (important men) and the chief may have deliberated the state of affairs (for strategic reasons), *a priori* to the holding of the *tshivhidzo*. This conduct is in alignment with the Tshivenda language expression of – “*manoni a songo kavhaho mutanda muthihi u fhufha a liana*” – is similar to an English expression “birds of a feather flock together” – that is people with similar tastes, interests, coming together (Oxford dictionary of idioms 2005:25).

Simply, the practice of a “*tshivhidzo*” gathering is aimed at addressing issues affecting the tribe or nation. It involves overarching participation between the traditional leadership and its people. Accordingly, rules and procedures also apply. In addition, the traditional gathering or the *tshivhidzo* of the Vhavenda people, like that of other traditional cultures, is value-laden.

Adult males are allowed to attend the “*tshivhidzo*” if they wish, but there are instances where it is compulsory⁵⁷ to attend. No person other than the chief is allowed to speak

^[55] There is a cultural link between Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe (SABC Radio Current Affairs 2004). Zimbabwe can be traced to the *Nwali* or *Raluvhimba* cult (of the Matopo hills in Zimbabwe), who would visit Makonde in Venda in South Africa with a member from the Magwabeni family being the interpreter. (The *Nwali* cult is also referred to *Ngoma dza Vhadzimu* or the Malombo possession cult). Needless to say, a contradiction emerges, as in Zimbabwe, *Nwali* is God. To the Vhavenda people, the word *Nwali* is associated with ancestors and *malombo* (my own italics) (Ralushai 1982:3).

^[56] Likewise, the chiefs of the Zulu Kingdom also have an important role to play in this regard, “the authority of the *amakhosi* (chiefs) is derived from patronage, ritual and symbolic power rather than from coercive power. Other than managing conflict and resolution, the *amakhosi*, in the main, are responsible for social and ritual aspects of tribal life” (Beall, Mkhize & Vawda 2004:6).

^[57] A Venda expression “*tshivhidzo tshi si na tsaleli*” means that in some instances some of “*tshivhidzo*” gatherings were compulsory.

with a hat on, as a sign of respect. To do the opposite is a sign of disrespect. Moreover, noise will not be tolerated.

The alienating feature of these gatherings is that women and children are not allowed to be part of the gathering. Another striking feature of the “*tshivhidzo*,” is that a man who cannot manage his family well is not allowed to speak during the gathering. The researcher grew up being told that such men cannot solve the affairs of the community, if they are not in control of their own family matters.

Similar to the Botswana system, the procedures of the “*tshivhidzo*” system of Venda is that the people are also summoned to the chief’s court. In addition, they will be informed of the purpose of the call upon their arrival, as there is a similar saying in Tshivenda, namely, “*tshivhidzelwa ri do tshi pfa phanda.*” Furthermore, it is not procedural for a tribe to call the chief.

The Vhavenda *tshivhidzo* system is driven by advisers and other important men of the Chief. They are responsible for advising the Chief in the *Muvhango* drama (SABC 2a). These important men are similar to the advisers of the Botswana system discussed above. Likewise, the seating arrangement in the assembly place “*kharoni*” is almost similar to the Botswana traditional system. There will also be an issue on the “agenda” set by the traditional leadership.

Some of the Tshivenda language expressions still in use today relate to the procedures, which take place during the *tshivhidzo*. In terms of relevant examples, the researcher grew up in a society where expressions were coined with reference to direct participation: “*ndevhe ya tsini i a di-pfela*” (an ear on the spot hears for itself); and “*u amba livhi ndi uri livhuya li wane vhudzulo*” (to express a contrary view is to create room for a positive point of view). Thus, before a person says something or raises a point he will start by saying “*u amba livhi ndi uri livhuya li wane vhudzulo.*” This also helps to avoid being offensive to others. The Chief listens to the points and inputs made at the gathering and based on his understanding and the advice given, he then takes a decision. It rarely happens that the Chief’s decision is opposed by his people.

4.4 DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE MODERN *IMBIZO* AND OTHER SIMILAR SYSTEMS

The similar “mode” of the government *imbizo* and the traditional system deserves some attention. It is against this background that information on the rules and procedures of both systems will be compared in order to identify their similarities and differences. The information on the rules and procedures of the African traditional “*imbizos*,” reveals more similarities than differences. In addition, the *imbizo* shares some similarities with other mechanisms of direct democracy. However, attention will be paid, in particular, to modern and traditional systems, their rules and procedures in order to find out if there are some similarities or differences between the two systems. The similarities within the traditional systems, however, should not be taken at face value, as there might be some differences amongst them.

In Mzimela’s (2005:3) comparison of the traditional *imbizo* with the direct democracy of ancient Greece, he sees no difference between the two systems in the way they operate. The central feature of both systems is direct participation of the assembly of people in discussions. He further compares both systems to Switzerland’s system of direct democracy. Swiss democracy uses devices such as the referendum, initiative and recall; which allows people to vote on matters of national importance.

However, there are some important differences between the traditional and the modern *imbizos*. Firstly, the rules of the modern *imbizo* are not as restrictive as those of its traditional counterparts. The modern *imbizo* may be attended by everyone and participation is encouraged, including women and children. It is not bound by norms and values with regard to attire and looks. The system also forbids noise as it is disturbing when speakers are talking, but there are no strict rules to forbid this. The police are there to monitor and maintain law and order, although the noise continues unabated.

On the other hand, as previously indicated, the rules of the traditional *imbizo* system are value-laden, for example, in the Vhavenda system, people are not allowed to speak with their hats on. It is a male dominated environment, where women and children are not allowed to attend these important gatherings. According to Matshediso (2008:2), with

reference to Mandela (1995), the Great Place is the place for the *imbizo*, which men were allowed to attend and not women. The men who participated were seen as equals. This is however not unlike the situation in ancient Athens. The traditional *imbizo* cannot afford to be noisy because of the level and status of the participants. The participants are mature men who will not make a noise in front of their traditional leaders. There are strict rules that apply such as “*u lifhiswa*,” referring to the payment of a fine such as cattle, a goat or money, depending on the specific situation.

Secondly, there are many procedures associated with the modern *imbizo* that are characterised by bureaucratic tendencies. The procedures pertaining to the government *imbizo* involves a strategy consisting of several steps to be followed before the holding of the *imbizo*, during and after the *imbizo*. It requires a considerable number of officials from the national, provincial and local governments who should be linked with the *imbizo*, namely a task team. Thus, amongst their tasks, would be the task to undertake research, scribe and record the deliberations during the *imbizo*. They should also see to it that the issues raised should be followed up and that feedback is given (RSA 2005:38-46).

The government has to serve as a facilitator during the *imbizo*, although it would be expected to deliver what has been raised by the people during the *imbizo*,

...some critics see lawmaking as a contest between the wealthy few and the ‘general public.’ Government, in this view, is largely a disembodied intermediary that tries to do the right thing in the face of competing pressures, while direct democracy is a corrupting influence that overrides the good intentions of elected officials (Matusaka 2005:204).

The three tiers of government have an impact on the *imbizo*, because issues raised during the *imbizo* will have to be referred to the relevant level of government. Thus, national government cannot practically attend to an issue like problems with water supply without referring the issue to the relevant department in the province, which, in turn, would refer it to the relevant local municipality. It is evident that in form and practice, the government *imbizo* resembles a multi-linear structure.

On the other hand, the procedures pertaining to the traditional *imbizo* differ from those applicable to the modern *imbizo* in this regard. Matshediso (2008:2) again with reference to Mandela (1995), mentions that the discussion at the place of the *imbizo* were lively. They discussed critical issues concerned with the common good. Such discussions led to decisions “on the spot” through consensus, while allowing room for disagreements, where criticism of everyone including the traditional leaders was allowed.

Generally, the traditional *imbizo* as seen in terms of their operational procedures, does not have lengthy procedures. For example, with the traditional systems of chiefs it is a matter of going to a meeting place, where subjects are sometimes called at will to listen to what the senior men of the chief had to say. This will be followed by deliberations, after which a decision will be taken by the chief. Consequently, Sono (1993:41, 45) is of the opinion that a democratic process at the assembly or council meeting of some of the African traditional systems is not possible. This is due to the nature of discussions, which is characterised by persuasions as opposed to the weight of their arguments. Such discussions are also influenced by personality status and prestige of the participants. Arguments are also influenced by the age of a person, with persons in superior positions having the advantage of being able to skew the discussion to their own side of the traditional political spectrum.

Some writers hold a different viewpoint:

The active participation of the people in running the affairs of the community or the state establishes a close relationship between the ruler and the ruled. It can thus be said that the traditional system of governing created no distance between the chief and his subjects, between the government and the government (Gyekye 1997:128).

Thus, Gyekye justifies consensus as an important ingredient of democracy in practice in most traditional⁵⁸ African political systems. Such gatherings are considered to be politically engaging (Gyekye 1997:130).

It is also important to note that the traditional authority, unlike as is the case with the government *imbizo*, has no distinct tiers of government such as national, provincial and

^[58]The Kikuyu democracy which was considered to have practiced pure democracy was founded in 1890 in Kenya, following the revolt by the people against a despotic King Kikuyu (Sono 1993:46, 48).

local tiers. Thus, the very nature of the traditional authority is that it is found at the local level.

In the case of the modern Presidential *imbizo*, the President takes the lead, while the traditional one is led by the Chief. The President cannot easily take decisions immediately during the *imbizo*, as the procedure is that it must first be assessed to consider, amongst others, budgetary challenges. The President can make promises that the matter will be attended. However, there are some instances where he makes decisions.

The situation is different with the traditional *imbizo*, the Chief stands in front of the people with his “full government”; as a result, decisions are made on the spot. The Chief had already consulted with his senior men on the issue at stake; there is no need to delay the decision. The Chief does not work as an intermediary. However, the President does assume the role of intercessor, in that he has to consult his cabinet in the government.

Another difference in procedure is that, basically the government *imbizo* insists on “taking government to the people,” whilst the traditional *imbizo* insists on “the people going to the traditional leader”. This also has an effect on the rules and procedures.

The above differences bring out the aspect of how both institutions are structured. In general, the Southern African community (for example, the Tswanas and Sothos) represented a typical patriarchy, which demonstrated its loyalty to the chiefs and kings. “It was a hereditary institution believed to be coeval with the tribe, and to it was therefore due, and was given, all the support that a conservatively minded people can give to tradition” (Ashton 1947:241).

Therefore, in essence, the traditional system bears the hallmark of a unilinear structure with the Chief at the top, followed by his Council consisting mainly of sub chiefs and senior men, as well as his subjects. Hague and Harrop (1982:31), state that traditional political systems were led by either one man as a centre of power (autocracy) or by feudal lords or noblemen: “Its legitimacy rests upon *custom* and *religious sanction*, not *popular sovereignty* [my italics].”

Although the consensus and democratic nature of the traditional *imbizo* is important, the latter provided no guarantee in this regard, nor did it imply popular sovereignty. The signs of despotic tendencies are clear from Milubi (2004:165), on the Tshivenda expression “*ndi la Makahane*⁵⁹ *a tshi vhambisa vhathu [vhakalaha] mukumba nga mano.*” Translated verbatim: “Chief Makahane used to force people [elders] to stretch out a leather with their teeth.” It is said the elders would bite the leather skin (probably of a cow) with their teeth when making a traditional drum. They were not allowed to use their hands to handle the drum-making exercise. Although some traditional leaders acted in this manner, it cannot be denied that there were others who were popular amongst their people.

Another expression is “*u vhulahwa musanda.*” That can be translated verbatim as: “You are being killed in the royal palace,” meaning that you are called to the palace with the chance that even if you do not return home after being killed (assassinated), it will be justified in traditional rule, as the King has the power and authority to end one’s life. Another expression in a similar vein and a confirmation of the above is, “*iwe u ne wa ri i fai nda fa.*” Translated verbatim it means: “You who say die and I die,” signifies what Sono refers to when he indicates that the chief was often revered and the King sometimes⁶⁰ worshipped in Africa in general. This protocol was also followed by the medicine man “Vho-Mushasha” in the “Muvhango” drama (SABC 2 b), when praising “Chief Mukwevho” regarding family violence directed against his wife “Vho-Mukondeleli.” Therefore, if those *imbizos* were used by traditional leaders and their autocratic or despotic councils, it suggests that those systems may have been used by traditional rulers as a tool to control and enforce authority and power and to exert and strengthen their rule. Significantly, Sono (1993:51, 52) remarks that the Chiefs used the *imbizo* to rule the people. Both the *imbizo* and “*pitso*” of the Basotho discuss matters of public concern. The monarch rules through the Chiefs under him, who take the matter to the people on the ground.

^[59] Chief Makahane of “Thulamela” which is now inside the Kruger Park is also a name for the former Greater Thohoyandou municipality. The Makahanes are one of the descendants of Mapungubwe.

^[60] Asia and the Near East is believed to be the origin of the world’s five major religions. These religions share common characteristics in terms of the assembling or gathering of its members, mainly for religious purposes. The religions referred to are Judaism, Christianity, Moslem, Hinduism and Buddhism. These religions are practised in the assembly or gathering of its people, coupled with respect for authority. The structure of the power relationship is pyramidal, starting from God or a supernatural being.

This scenario explains the centralisation of thoughts that filter down to the *imbizo*. In addition, most if not all traditional political systems were characterised by authoritarian and despotic tendencies which may have instilled fear and lack of freedom of expression in the *imbizo*.

There is a danger of generalising about the traditional *imbizo*, as its usage was widespread. For example, a Vhavenda chief would call a *tshivhidzo*, which would not necessarily be free of contrary views. Unless, if dissent meant violent debate and arguments overarching disrespect, the aspect of dissent surfaced in the conversation. The Tshivenda expression “*u amba livhi ndi uri livhuya li wane vhudzulo,*” accommodates different viewpoints. The expression is still widely in use; during the government *imbizo* it is also used by villagers when introducing the issue they want to raise. “The old maxim *morena ke morena ka batho*-‘the Chief is chief through his people,’ was literally true, as numerous examples in both Sotho and Tswana history show” (Ashton 1947:241). Also, the Venda maxim: “*Khosi ndi khosi nga vhathu*” is similar in both the Sotho and Tswana cultures.

It may feasibly be inferred that the above expressions have some bearing on direct participation, due to their reference to the nature, composition and scope of direct participation, as seen by the Vhavenda people. The expressions can be linked to direct participation at the level of the *tshivhidzo*, where there is participation by everyone in the discussions.

Despite some differences in terms of rules and procedures between the modern and traditional *imbizo* systems, there seem to be some similarities, which centre on participation. Without trying to condone some of the despotic and autocratic tendencies of the traditional political systems pointed above, the *imbizo* tradition of the various systems, which is participatory in nature, is an indication that it displays elements of direct democracy.

Direct participation is the similar “mode” found in both the traditional and the modern *imbizos*. According to Mzimela (2005:2, 3), the *imbizo* shows a similarity with direct democracy in ancient Greece, for both systems involve the people in the running of their own affairs.

The importance of “functionaries” in both the modern and the traditional systems is another similarity. The modern *imbizo* has national and provincial cabinets, including the mayors and councillors that surround the President during the *imbizo*. On the other hand, in the traditional *imbizo*, the Chief is surrounded by his sub-chiefs (important men), elders and other members of the royal council.

Despite some differences, the two systems have something in common, as the modern *imbizo* has developed from its traditional counterpart and both share some similarities with other mechanisms of direct democracy.

4.5 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE *IMBIZO*

There are several advantages and disadvantages of the modern *imbizo*. The most important advantage is the direct participation of the people in the political process. In this sense, the *imbizo* facilitates both allocation and symbolic responsiveness. In addition, it provides opportunities to ordinary people to engage with political leaders who may often seem remote. This may have a positive effect on the legitimacy a government enjoys and may indeed mobilise the people to support government programmes.

Netshitomboni (2007:181-182), also indicates that some of the advantages of the government *imbizo* are the provision of an interpretation services through the mother tongue during the discussions. It helps to engage discussions between the government and the people in an unmediated way. Another advantage is that issues being discussed at the *imbizo*, are recorded, a report is compiled and sent to the relevant people and departments for their reaction. He also indicates that the government has developed a database, which ensures effective follow-up of the issues highlighted (Netshitomboni 2007: 181-182).

However, there are also numerous disadvantages and some of them may result from the advantages. It is often claimed that the system can be abused and turned into opportunities for electioneering and for luring voters to vote for the ruling party. This is particularly important in a country such as South Africa where the dividing lines between party, government and state are vague. Thus, meeting the government officials and officials of the state implies meeting the ANC.

Another important disadvantage at the heart of this discussion is the fact that the problem of intermediaries in a representative government are not resolved by the *imbizo*. Decisions are not taken on the spot and even in the few rare instances where this does happen, they are not executed where they were made as is normally the case with popular assemblies such as those of ancient Athens and the town meetings in the USA. Thus, it is found that in terms of the cybernetics model and the spider web analogy, the *imbizo* does not manage to shorten communication lines. There is a lengthy process involved in compiling the agenda and although the discussions and “decisions” may be direct, there is also a lengthy process regarding the execution of the outcomes of an *imbizo*. Thus, the *imbizo* cannot be policy responsive.

The centralisation of the administration of the *imbizo* gives it an element of authoritarianism, which is quite similar to many of the practices of the traditional *imbizo*. Thus, there is a top-down effect and although communication flows both ways, it is dominated from the top. Furthermore, if the assembly is seen as a medium of communication in a democracy, the administrative nature of the *imbizo* is an obstacle in this regard. Therefore, public officials who compile the agenda, acts as scribes during the proceedings and are responsible for the follow-up, become the new intermediaries between the people and eventual policy-decisions and execution. This operational arrangement also hinders the regulation, which exists in a cybernetics model.

In addition, an *imbizo* is not a regular phenomenon at a specific locality. Thus, there is very little opportunity for continuation or even accountability. This is the situation in public assemblies such as town meetings and ancient Athens. The duration of the *imbizo* is also limiting and not all issues are necessarily dealt with (Netshitomboni 2007:181-183). Therefore, it is not a regular forum, which voters can use to address issues that affect them.

According to Netshitomboni (2007:181-183), there are several drawbacks connected with the *imbizo*. These disadvantages involve time, venues and how the questions being asked during the *imbizo* are perceived. Importantly, the issue pertaining to the duration of the *imbizo* leaves the people with unasked and unanswered questions, as government leaders rush back to their offices. The aspect concerning the venues relates to the fundamental problem of the size of the modern population, which cannot be accommodated at a

designated venue as in the Athenian democracy of a manageable population. This also has an effect on time as it becomes difficult to accommodate the larger populations at the same time and in the same place. It should be added that such crowded meetings have also become unmanageable in terms of South Africa's *imbizos*, with disturbing noise characterising the proceedings. Netshitomboni remarks that there is a negative perception that the *imbizo* is regarded as a mere public relations exercise, leading to a lack of implementation.

Netshitomboni also raises the important issue regarding the possible censoring of some questions before they can be referred to the President. This is because some of the issues raised may be perceived as not representative of what the general population feels or as individual questions. Furthermore, issues raised may not be attended to due to time constraints and bureaucratic problems in the government. This may lead to the President, Premier or the Mayor not having a chance to address the issues (Netshitomboni 2007:181-183; Pretorius 2006: 754). It is also evident from the above that the *imbizo* is not in a position to be policy responsive.

The parallel existence of the modern *imbizo* and the traditional *imbizo* and particularly the position of traditional leaders holds the possibility of harbouring the seeds of future disagreement and even conflict. This may become a problem particularly if political party alignment may move away from the ruling party.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The discussion on the *imbizo* has concentrated on its characteristics, similarities with other public assemblies and particularly its historic and traditional antecedents to appraise the *imbizo* eventually as a mechanism to broaden democracy.

It was found that the mechanisms of the government *imbizo* in South Africa, has not exhibited the full hallmarks of the traditional *imbizo*. This is despite the fact that its inherent nature is found in its traditional counterpart. The modern *imbizo* as it stands in South Africa today has developed from the Congress of the People and the People's Forum as led by the ANC. Earlier traditional leaders who had been members of the ANC since its formation in 1912 could have influenced the idea of the *imbizo*. Thus, it cannot

be stated categorically that the *imbizo* is a traditional African mechanism that could be used to broaden democracy. The truth is that it has been adapted to suit contemporary political conditions in the modern state. As such, the question arises to what extent do the people identify with the *imbizo* and to what extent does it encroach on the traditional *imbizo's* territory? These are questions that will receive attention in the following chapters.

Certain challenges that have to be overcome in order to render the *imbizo* more effective have also been identified. The rules and procedures of the government *imbizo* are in direct contrast with the traditional *imbizo*, although there are some similarities. It encompasses every individual and a long procedure of planning, hosting and following up after the *imbizo*.

Although the government *imbizo* has some challenges in relation to its usability as a mechanism of direct democracy, such as in areas of policy, service responsiveness and allocation responsiveness, in the area of symbolic responsiveness the modern *imbizo* is valuable.

The historical antecedents of the government *imbizo* were also analysed in terms of their rules and procedures. The historical antecedents such as the popular assemblies, town meetings, Botswana and Venda systems; all showed some element of similarities with regard to rules and procedures. Thus, these systems had a tendency to be restrictive and between normative. The differences and similarities between the modern and traditional *imbizo* were seen in the rules and procedures. However, both systems have shown more differences than similarities. The chief difference amongst the two is that the modern *imbizo* is value-free (unrestricted), whilst the traditional *imbizo* is value-laden.

However, what is common between the modern and traditional *imbizo* is the fact that they are both characterised by direct participation of the people in matters of governance. There was some form of a nexus between the people and their leaders. This is notwithstanding whether such a rule was autocratic or dictatorial.

Importantly, the traditional rule conducted its affairs by gathering the people irrespective of the degree of their participation. It is important to note that the central aspect of such

participation was that it was “direct” as opposed to “indirect.” It is an interesting phenomenon to note that despite the autocratic centralisation of the traditional political systems, a linking instrument between the people and the aristocrats existed.

An element of direct participation should not be seen as an end, but as a means to an end. Thus, direct participation has to be followed by decision-making and implementation. The level of decision-making varies depending on the type of *imbizo* system, namely, whether it is the modern or traditional *imbizo*.

The issues raised in this chapter pertaining to the *imbizo* will be surveyed in chapter five and interpreted in chapter six, in order to determine whether there may be a conflict of interest – particularly among the “educated class” as represented by students.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA COLLECTION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the focus is on *how* data was gathered from its different venues and by means of which techniques or instruments.

The methodology and techniques used were discussed briefly in chapter one. According to Welman and Kruger (2001:127), the research design, sampling methods and the data collection techniques are chosen bearing the research problem and the target population in mind. Appropriate techniques such as observations, interviews, literature sources and survey questionnaires were chosen for this study. The relevance of these instruments was measured in terms of their validity and reliability.

5.2 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

As mentioned in chapter one the study was designed in order to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Thus, data collection instruments were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from the sample of the population.

Qualitative data was collected as follows:

- Observations in the villages of Muswodi-Tshisimani, Musunda and Mutale Town (Tshilamba).
- Face-to-face interviews with the village representatives namely civic organisations, traditional leaders and the ward councillors.
- A telephone interview with GCIS officials.
- An overview of documents from the Mutale Municipality.

The data collection methods were in line with the idea that in qualitative research informants (respondents or documents) are selected in order to obtain the best answer to

the research question (Creswell 1994:148). Thus, with regard to the collection of qualitative data, no attempt was made to select informants randomly.

Primary data was obtained through all of the above-mentioned primary sources. In the processes of observation and interviews, the researcher took notes of what the respondents from each village had to say. Such notes served as primary data. In addition, data from the municipality documents were also used. The documents were also primary data.

Quantitative data was collected by means of survey questionnaires administered to politics students from the Departments of Political Sciences at Univen and Unisa, to elicit their opinions concerning the effectiveness of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy in South Africa. In addition, the respondents or units of analysis were selected randomly in the case of Univen, for the results to be representative.

5.2.1 Observations

Observations were used in order to understand the context in which some of the qualitative data would be collected. The researcher explored the villages of Muswodi-Tshisimani, Musunda and Mutale Town (Tshilamba) on 5 April 2008, in order to observe and get a clear understanding of the living conditions of the inhabitants.

It is thus important to give a geographical, historical and demographic description of each village. Firstly, as was mentioned briefly in chapter one, the villages of Muswodi-Tshisimani, Musunda and Mutale Town (Tshilamba) were part of the former “independent state” of Venda, later reincorporated into South Africa during the transition to democracy.

Muswodi-Tshisimani is a tiny village typical of rural areas in South Africa. It falls under Mutale Municipality’s ward 7 that has 500 households. Simple observations were carried out regarding the living conditions in the village, which had changed in terms of service delivery even before the holding of the *imbizo*. The researcher was aware of those changes as he used to pass through the village as an SABC local journalist for several years and had witnessed some of the challenges regarding basic services in the area. The

village had access to services such as electricity, water and RDP houses before the *imbizo* was held. However, the researcher found that some houses and sanitation had still not been completed. However, there was a borehole supplying water to street taps with no household connections.

Generally, the fifteen years of democracy brought about some changes in terms of service delivery in the village. Note that Muswodi-Tshisimani had no access to basic services such as water and electricity during the era of apartheid and the homeland governments. After the transition to democracy, the government had provided other important services such as tarring the main road that links the village with Thohoyandou and the Madimbo Corridor adjacent to the north of the Kruger National Park. The benefit of this is that the area pertaining to Muswodi-Tshisimani's local economy is likely to grow as a one-stop centre for tourists visiting the tourist centres in the nearby villages. It will also benefit the residents in that they will have access to improved transport due to the accessible road.

Livestock farming is practised by residents who can afford to own cattle and goats in the area, but livestock theft still poses a challenge to the residents. They are also involved in small-scale farming of vegetables. Some residents and in particular, some of the women work on nearby farms around Folovhodwe and Tshipise, which involves travelling between 20 and 50 kilometres per trip. The village is situated in an area, which has a low rainfall and often suffers from droughts; while most of the land is not arable. While a few residents work as civil servants, most of the residents are unemployed.

The village has both a primary and secondary school. In addition, the inhabitants have access to the Folovhodwe and Shakadza clinics, within a radius of less than five kilometres of it. Thohoyandou town, which is some 50 kilometres away, is the "big city" for the residents with Mutale Town also emerging as a local "town." Furthermore, the distance to the province's capital of Polokwane is about 260 kilometres. The people of Muswodi-Tshisimani speak Tshivenda as their home language, and still practise the Venda culture.

The nearby Musunda village is also a microcosm of poor service delivery and typical of a deep rural village. Its situation is no different from that of Muswodi-Tshisimani. Musunda falls under ward 8, with 77 households where most of its residents are also

unemployed, with only a few working in Gauteng, which is a distance of more than 500 kilometres away. In addition, some of the women work as maidservants in the local towns of Louis Trichardt and Thohoyandou, about 80 and 40 kilometres away respectively or they work in Polokwane about 250 kilometres away.

The residents depend on livestock farming, with a few working on the surrounding farms of Nwanedi and Tshipise, between 20 and 50 kilometres away. A few of the residents work as civil servants, with some still unemployed. The village has a primary school but no secondary school. Learners attend the nearby Mamphodo Secondary School at Gumela near the Nwanedi Resort, some five kilometres away. They depend on the Shakadza and Matavhela clinics, situated within a radius of about five kilometres. There is borehole water, which supplies the village with water. Unlike Muswodi-Tshisimani, water and sanitation (toilets) were provided at Musunda after the holding of the *imbizo* after which, forty toilets had been built. Although, the RDP houses had been built before the holding of the *imbizo*, three houses still had to be erected.

Streets in the village were in a poor condition during the researcher's period of observation, and were not easily accessible. There was no electricity supply to households, except a mainline, which passed through the village. It was only the local business – a café, which benefited from the supply.

The people of Musunda speak the Tshivenda language and also still practise the Venda culture.

Mutale Town (Tshilamba), which is the seat of the municipal offices, is small and surrounded by villages under Chief Nethengwe. Note that there is another second small town called Masisi near the Phafuri gate of the Kruger National Park on the north-eastern side along the Limpopo River bordering Zimbabwe. Mutale Town is situated within a three kilometres radius from the royal palace of Nethengwe.

The town has about one thousand households, boasts a health centre and several government departments, namely, a Home Affairs office, magistrates' offices, a police station, a fire station, a Department of Education office, a Department of Agriculture office and a Department of Public Works office. The municipality provides services to

the town dwellers such as, waste removal, sewerage and water. In addition, the town is supplied with water from a reservoir from the nearby Mutale River. Electricity is also supplied to the town.

Some observations were made concerning the Mutale Municipality in general. It borders on Musina in the west, the Kruger Park in the east and Zimbabwe in the North. The Mutale area was one of the districts that fell under the former Venda homeland. Before it became a municipality, it went through a transitional stage after 1994 and was a local transitional authority. This phase was followed by the establishment of the Mutale Municipality. The municipality is situated within one of the deepest – rural and most poverty- stricken areas in the Limpopo Province, which remains a challenge for the government in terms of service delivery. The municipal area is divided into eleven wards (two of which are the Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda wards) consisting of 150 villages and over 130 thousand residents. Importantly, most of the residents are not employed in the formal sector such as the public service.

The gravel roads in the municipal area are maintained, but are easily damaged by heavy rains due to the type of soil on which they are built, which is sandy, therefore the technical expertise of engineers is required to improve the roads. In addition, the Mutale Municipality has a large number of schools, clinics and one health centre under its jurisdiction. However, the area has no hospitals at all. Furthermore, it can be observed that the municipality faces severe service delivery challenges in terms of the provision of houses and sanitation. In addition, the water shortage problem remains a serious challenge for the municipality as the area is always prone to droughts. However, the municipality is in a position to deliver services with the support of the Vhembe District Municipality.

The municipality is under the control of the ANC, with two councillors from AZAPO and the DA due to the mixed electoral system using proportional representation based on party lists. Although the Mutale Municipality has strategic mining resources, they have not yet been exploited. However, the Tshikondeni coalmine is found within the jurisdiction of the municipality.

5.2.2 Interviews

Several interview tools were used to collect qualitative data. These techniques were selected and designed specifically to suit the nature of the data sources, the population sample and the problem researched in this study.

5.2.2.1 Semi-structured in-depth individual interviews

Semi-structured in-depth individual interviews were used in the study to collect data from the representatives of the residents, namely the civic organisations, traditional leaders of the two villages, as well as the ward councillors.

Accordingly, interviews were conducted with selected individuals from the Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages on 5 October 2008, almost three years after the *imbizo* had been held by the national government on October 10, 2005. After the respondents had been informed on 30 September 2008 of the dates of the interviews, they confirmed their availability. The interview date fell on a Sunday, which is mainly used for holding traditional gatherings like the “*tshivhidzo*.” It should be noted that the amount of time that had elapsed since the *imbizo* could have affected the responses of the interviewees in the sense that later events could have affected their “historic experiences.” This is however, a problem pertaining to interviews in general, but the individual processing of experiences could contribute towards an understanding of the role of the *imbizo*. It is the current perceptions that are important, irrespective of whether individual perceptions had changed over time.

Muswodi-Tshisimani, under Headman Nelutshindwi, was chosen as the venue for the government *imbizo* for the Mutale Municipality. The researcher decided to include the nearby village of Musunda, under Headman Rambuda to consolidate the research. Both headmen serve under Chief Prince Rambuda of the Rambuda Tribal Authority. Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda are small rural villages, which made it cost-effective for the interviews to be conducted within a single day.

The representatives from the villages, namely officials from civic organisations, ward councillors and tribal officials or traditional leaders of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda were interviewed on issues raised during the *imbizo* and how the government

had responded in terms of observations (sensory), decision-making and execution, regarding the provision of services such as water, housing and electricity.

The researcher is Tshivenda-speaking, which made it relatively easy to develop a good relationship between the researcher and the respondents, amongst them, traditional leaders, civic organisations and councillors who were valuable sources of information. The transcription of the interviews also served as field notes.

The civic organisations of the two villages showed a particular interest in the residents, as they displayed courage when expressing challenges in front of the councillors. The civic committee members who were interviewed were in their early forties and showed a good understanding of governance and delivery issues.

The ward councillors were interviewed to determine whether the government depended on the *imbizo* for service delivery in the sense that it legitimised and popularised its plans. Both ward councillors interviewed were representatives of the ANC in the municipality. In fact, with the exception of the DA and AZAPO, which are represented through the PR system, no other political party is represented in the municipality. Thus, support for the ANC is significant in the area, which could affect people's responses.

Local traditional leaders and their inner circle showed a lack of clarity with regard to understanding governance and service delivery issues. Their perception was that the government was undermining their authority and jurisdiction and reducing their role in the community as leaders of the people from time immemorial.

The idea was to talk to the representatives of the residents with the purpose of gathering facts about the *imbizo*, the residents' wishes and interests and whether those wishes and interests were provided for. In addition, it was pertinent to elicit information from the municipality representatives (ward councillors) about the provision of services after the *imbizo* was held, and if not provided what the problems were in this regard?

It was the researcher's aim to gather information, which pertained to the challenges that prompted the holding of the *imbizo* and their impression in the aftermath of the *imbizo*.

The semi-structured in-depth individual interviews and group interviews were conducted face-to-face and on a personal level. Semi-structured questions were used in the interviews; while allowance was made for open-endedness, to avoid restricting the interviewees from discussing issues at length. For full details of the questions, see Addendum 2.

It was an advantageous opportunity to interview the residents' representatives face-to-face to obtain their impressions of the effectiveness of the *imbizo* with regard to addressing the residents' demands or inputs made to the government on issues such as water, housing, electricity, roads / streets and sanitation. In other words, the semi-structured in-depth individual interviews and structured questionnaires appraised the efficacy of the *imbizo* as an instrument, to make democracy more participative and responsive.

The researcher took down field notes when conducting semi-structured in-depth individual interviews with residents' representatives at Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda. These included notes from the traditional leaders, ward councillors and civic representatives in the area.

The further advantage of this data collection instrument was that the researcher could clarify respondents' misunderstanding about the questions on the spot: "When we investigate a group or institution, we often conduct so-called fieldwork, conducting the investigation on the spot under natural circumstances of the specific case" (Welman & Kruger 2001:183). Therefore, the researcher was certain that the interviewees were answering questions that the latter understood clearly.

On the other hand, the instrument does have disadvantages such as the fact that the researcher is unable to control for human errors such as biasness and poor memory of the interviewees, as well as the danger of having different agendas. In addition, the researcher might also fail to control his or her biasness. Another disadvantage is that the instrument is costly and often time-consuming compared to survey questionnaires.

5.2.2.2 Semi-structured open-ended interviews with the GCIS officials

An interview with a GCIS official served to gauge the feeling of the government as the “facilitator” of the *imbizo*. It was advantageous for the study to include the custodian of the *imbizo* because of the nature of his task in relation to the study.

A semi-structured open-ended telephone interview was used to interview a senior government official from the Presidency representing the GCIS at the Union Buildings after it was decided that it was difficult to meet face-to-face due to time constraints. Note that it is the responsibility of the task team to organise the *imbizo*.

One senior official from the Presidency, representing the GCIS, was delegated by the Presidency to be interviewed by the researcher. It was not possible to gain access to specific officials who dealt with the *imbizo* in the GCIS, because this interview took place during the period of the recall from office of President Thabo Mbeki by the ruling party (ANC) and the consequent political uncertainty it brought. In addition, it was not possible to get a team of officials who worked with the *imbizo*, due to the lack of time as mentioned above. Nevertheless, it was helpful to interview the senior official as he displayed a high level of understanding of the *imbizo* in general. It was important to get the perspective of a GCIS official. The researcher took notes when interviewing the GCIS official who was asked about the idea behind the concept of the ‘*imbizo*’ in general, as well as any justification for it in today’s democracy. However, the interview was not conducted face-to-face and on a personal level, the interviewee tried to be accommodative regarding the researcher and displayed a high level of openness. Importantly, the format of the questions asked was open-ended, to avoid restricting the interviewee from discussing issues at length.

The advantage of this tool was that the interview was conducted over a short space of time, compared to the several hours it would have taken the researcher to travel from Thohoyandou to Pretoria. Importantly, the researcher had enough time to brief the respondent even before the start of the interview. Another advantage was that this instrument was not costly compared to survey questionnaires and the fact that travelling would have been expensive. Furthermore, the researcher was certain that the respondent would be answering questions that the latter understood clearly, given his academic

profile and the level of operation in government affairs. A further advantage was that questions were clarified where the respondent sought for clarity.

One disadvantage of the instrument was that telephonic interviews were not conducted "...on the spot and under natural circumstances of the specific case" (Welman & Kruger 2001: 183). It is a fact that the researcher cannot control human errors such as the biasness of the respondents. As is the case with the previous instrument, the researcher might also fail to control his or her biasness. It is impossible to make eye contact during a telephonic interview.

5.2.2.3 Content analysis of Mutale Municipality documents

Several service delivery documents of the Mutale Municipality were perused or analysed with regard to the rendering of service in its area of jurisdiction. The analysis of the content of relevant documents was done qualitatively, as opposed to the quantitative analysis procedures of coding and processing of the data. Documents that were of importance in this regard included those pertaining to all the infrastructural projects in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for the 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 financial years.

For the purpose of this study, documents on Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda were drawn from all the projects in the IDP of the municipality. The analysis of the documents revealed how the projects were allocated to the area. The nature of the projects allocated and implemented after the *imbizo*, were analysed, regarding how they came about, were they budgeted for prior to or after the holding of the *imbizo*. The demands or wishes of the residents of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda were also analysed in terms of the pattern of service delivery in other villages falling under the Mutale Municipality.

The Project Consolidate⁶¹ was also analysed with regard to service delivery at Muswodi-Tshisimani, Musunda and other villages. The idea was to determine if any project had been implemented at the village due to the Project Consolidate at the time and after the holding of the *imbizo*.

^[61] Project consolidate entails mobilising all spheres of government to support municipalities in the delivery of services (see Project Consolidate, n.d:16,17).

5.2.3 Literature sources

The success of the research mainly depended on the documents and books used as secondary sources. The primary sources consisted mainly of documents obtained from the Mutale Municipality and the GCIS manual on the *imbizo*. The following documents were of particular importance in the study:

- Mutale Municipality draft IDP document (March 2007).
- The Minister of Water Affairs, Ronnie Kasrils' speech, 19.09.2000.
- Summary of the *imbizo* confirmation diary 10/10/2005.
- Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework 2007/8.
- Mutale Municipality Mayor Councillor Manyuha's speech, 23.03.2005.
- GCIS Communicator's Handbook on *imbizos* (GCIS 2002; 2005; 2007).

As discussed in chapter one, secondary sources were used in the theoretical part of the study. A selection of sources, books, theses and journal articles, relevant to democracy, the cybernetics model and the *imbizo* were used.

5.2.4 Survey questionnaire

The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire used to gather data from the students. The aim of the survey was to elicit the opinions of students with regard to the *imbizo*. The survey design employs variables such as age, gender, socio-economic status, "subject of study" and "home language" in addition to variables pertaining to the *imbizo*.

For the purpose of this study, a survey was conducted using political science students at Univen and Unisa. The reason for using students of politics was that it was assumed that they had a basic understanding of the fundamental issues pertaining to democracy and service delivery in South Africa. They could also be regarded as potential political leaders and/or opinion makers of the future.

Furthermore, as educated members of society, it was important to gauge their support for a mechanism, which had its roots in traditional cultural practices. Thus, the question needed to be asked whether the *imbizo* enjoyed support beyond the traditional society?

The idea was to approach the surveys from a political perspective. The Unisa students were included in the survey to obtain some provisional indication of whether the opinions of people from a rural, mainly Venda-speaking community were similar to respondents outside a rural and Venda setting.

The survey collected data using a structured questionnaire with mainly close-ended questions (see Addendum 1) for the targeted population of Univen and Unisa political science students. The same questionnaire was used for both settings. At Univen, a representative sample of 100 students, using a lottery technique as a simple random sampling method, was drawn from the register of students (totalling 358 students) supplied by the Department of Political Sciences. Univen students are full time students and attend lectures according to their timetables. They were easily available and could be sampled randomly.

However, their Unisa counterparts were sampled using a convenience sample, due to the difficulty of tracing students as they were not on campus on a full time basis. Questionnaires were handed out to sixty Unisa students who visited the campus to attend group discussions in political science. The twenty-two students who responded were surveyed using the structured questionnaire. The advantage was that the convenience sampling was simple to use with the Unisa students.

As stated above, a quantitative approach with a retrospective design was utilised in this study, to focus on past events in particular, when surveying political science students at both Univen and Unisa. In this study, students had to look at the relationship between the *imbizos* held in the past in some areas and the delivery of basic services in South Africa. Therefore, the survey was used to identify perceptions, opinions and attitudes regarding the *imbizo* and democracy in South Africa. In addition, the students were interviewed to elicit their views on the *imbizo* with regard to service delivery.

As students of politics, it was expected that they would be able to demonstrate their understanding of what people do at the *imbizo*, likely issues that would be raised, what expectations they had, what expectations they would have in future, what actions they were likely to take and communication channels they were likely to use to advance their cause.

5.3 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS

At this point, it is important to note that the nature of the case study and the nature of the samples drawn have implications for the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments. The former is concerned with what the instrument measures and the meaning of the results, while the latter is interested in the accuracy and consistency of the instrument.

The instruments cited earlier were used for data collection, which data were validated through checking the results from the respondents of surveys, observations, interviews and document analysis. The opinion is that the instruments used in the study, measured what is supposed to be measured (validity), and that there is no reason to question its reliability.

The survey instrument used among the Univen students in the study was reliable as the sample was chosen randomly. However, the convenience sampling of Unisa students could raise some questions with regard to validity and reliability. The same could be said of the qualitative instruments used for the Mutale villages and GCIS interviews. However, these are issues with which most research deals and overall, the data obtained through observations, semi-structured in-depth individual interviews, document analysis and surveys could therefore be used to formulate objective conclusions regarding the study (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:130; Welman & Kruger 2001:135,139).

Though the measuring instruments are valid and reliable within the context of the case study, in general, the latter are problematic with regard to external validity or the generalisability of the findings of the study. Whether the findings of the case are valid for other regions of South Africa or for South Africa as a whole, requires further research.

However, the inclusion of the Unisa students provided some indication of whether similar results could be expected elsewhere. It should be taken into account that this study is not solely based on the analysis of the empirical data. The latter is mainly used to supplement the theoretical part of this analysis.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The study used several data collection techniques to gather data from the different research sources. These data collection instruments are inclusive of observations, interviews, document analysis, literature sources and survey techniques.

The validity and reliability of the above techniques were discussed and some limitations to external validity of the research design were identified. In the next chapter, the focus will be on data analysis and interpretation of the results.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the focus is on the analysis of the data and the interpretation of the results of the study on the government *imbizo*. It is in line with the aim of the study to analyse and appraise the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy in South Africa and according to Ratshitanga (2007:28); the *imbizo* merits an objective critical assessment rather than being taken at face value.

In line with Welman and Kruger (2001:208), the analysis of data has to be done by grouping the data and presenting it in the form of tables and graphs. The interpretation was done in terms of the analysed data by presenting various categories (Mc Donald & Crush 2002).

In this study, use was made of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Accordingly, the quantitative data were analysed using graphs and charts, while the bulk of the data that were obtained through qualitative methods, were analysed in the form of a summary.

The interpretation of the quantitative results was done using percentages whilst the qualitative results were interpreted descriptively (Huysamen 1998:4).

6.2 UNIVEN AND UNISA STUDENTS' OVERALL QUANTITATIVE DATA

As mentioned previously, 100 students were selected randomly from the population of 358 politics students at Univen registered for the 2008 academic year. In addition, 60 Unisa politics students registered for the 2008 academic year, were selected by convenience to take part in the survey and 22 responded. The selected participants were issued with a questionnaire containing 16 closed questions; while the last one was an open-ended question. The different categories into which the questions were grouped are the following: biographical, understanding of the government *imbizo*, efficacy of the government *imbizo* and the role of the *imbizo* in public mobilisation.

Sixty- three of the one hundred Univen students selected, agreed to take part and provided responses to the questionnaire. However, it was later determined that one of the Univen respondents was not a politics student. The responses from the 63 Univen students and 22 Unisa students were used in the data analysis process.

The responses to the closed questions were captured using the Microsoft Excel programme. After this, the data were converted into SPSS 16.0 for a detailed analysis. The responses were analysed by constructing simple and cross-tabulated tables, graphs and pie charts. According to Welman and Kruger (2001:2008), to categorise data by representing it in graphs helps to show the frequencies of the scores or the quantity values clearly. The results of the analyses are presented in the following sections under the appropriate categories. For detailed comprehensive results, see the attached findings in addendum 4.

6.2.1 Biographical details of respondents

The biographical data collected from the respondents consisted of data pertaining to gender, age, income, home language and the subject of study (discipline). The data for these variables are presented in the following tables and graphs.

6.2.1.1 Gender

The gender distribution of the sample is shown in table 6.2.1.1 and graphically in figure 6.2.1.1. The data shows that the Univen sample was almost equally distributed in terms of gender, but the Unisa sample was skewed in favour of males. At Univen, 33 out of the 63 responses (52.4%) were from males, while at Unisa, 17 respondents out of 22 (77.3%) were males.

Table 6.2.1.1: Distribution of respondents by gender

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Male	33 (52.4%)	17 (77.3%)	50 (58.8%)
Female	30 (47.6%)	5 (22.7%)	35 (41.2%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

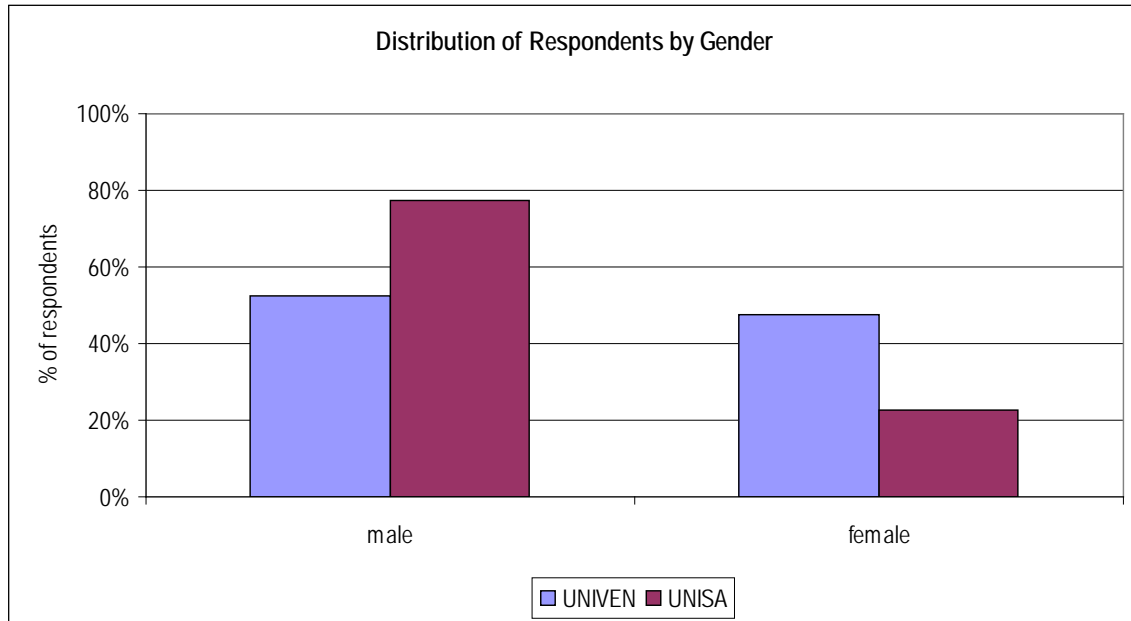


Figure 6.2.1.1: Distribution of respondents by gender

6.2.1.2 Age

Most of the respondents from Univen were young while the respondents from Unisa were spread throughout all the age groups from 18 to 60. As shown in table 6.2.1.2 and figure 6.2.1.2, 96.8% of the respondents from Univen were in the age group 18 to 25 years and the remainder were between 26 and 30 years old. On the other hand, the Unisa students were recorded in every age bracket with percentages ranging from 9.1% in the 51 – 60 age groups, up to 31.8% in the 26 – 30 age groups.

This disparity in age distribution can be attributed to the fact that Univen is an institution for full time study where most of the students are below the age of 30. On the other hand, Unisa is a distance learning institution with students who are part time and scattered in all the age distributions.

Table 6.2.1.2: Distribution of respondents by age.

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
18-25	61 (96.8%)	5 (22.7%)	66 (77.6%)
26-30	2 (3.2%)	7 (31.8%)	9 (10.6%)
31-40	0	5 (22.7%)	5 (5.9%)
41-50	0	3 (13.6%)	3 (3.5%)
51-60	0	2 (9.1%)	2 (2.4%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

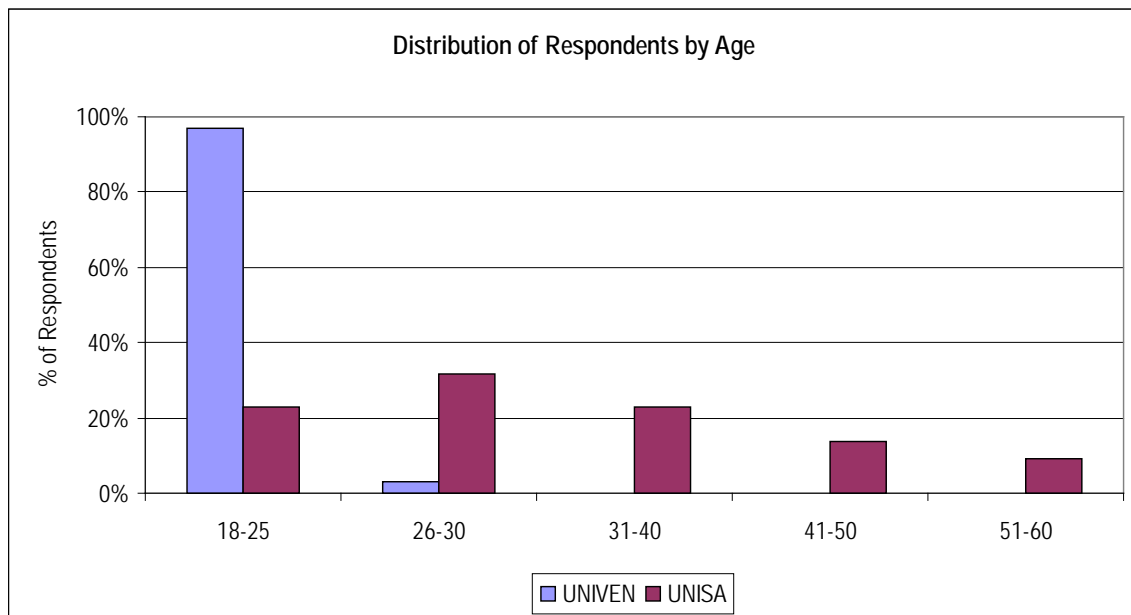


Figure 6.2.1.2: Distribution of respondents by age

6.2.1.3 Income

Table 6.2.1.3 and figure 6.2.1.3 show that all Univen students in the sample were in the “low” and “very low” income groups (60.3% for very low and 39.7% for the low-income groups). Respondents from Unisa had income levels spread over all the defined income groups. Unisa recorded 9 students (40.9%) at “very low,” 5 (22.7%) “low,” 7(31.8%) “middle” and 1 student (4.5%) at the “high income” level.

The difference in income levels between the two institutions can be attributed to the fact that Univen students might still have been unemployed. However, some might have been receiving stipends / income from their guardians. On the contrary, Unisa students might have been employed, as they were part-time and given their ages, which ranged, across the income levels.

Table 6.2.1.3: Biographical details on students’ income

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Very Low	38 (60.3%)	9 (40.9%)	47 (55.3%)
Low	25 (39.7%)	5 (22.7%)	30 (35.3%)
Middle	0	7 (31.8%)	7 (8.2%)
High	0	1 (4.5%)	1 (1.2%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

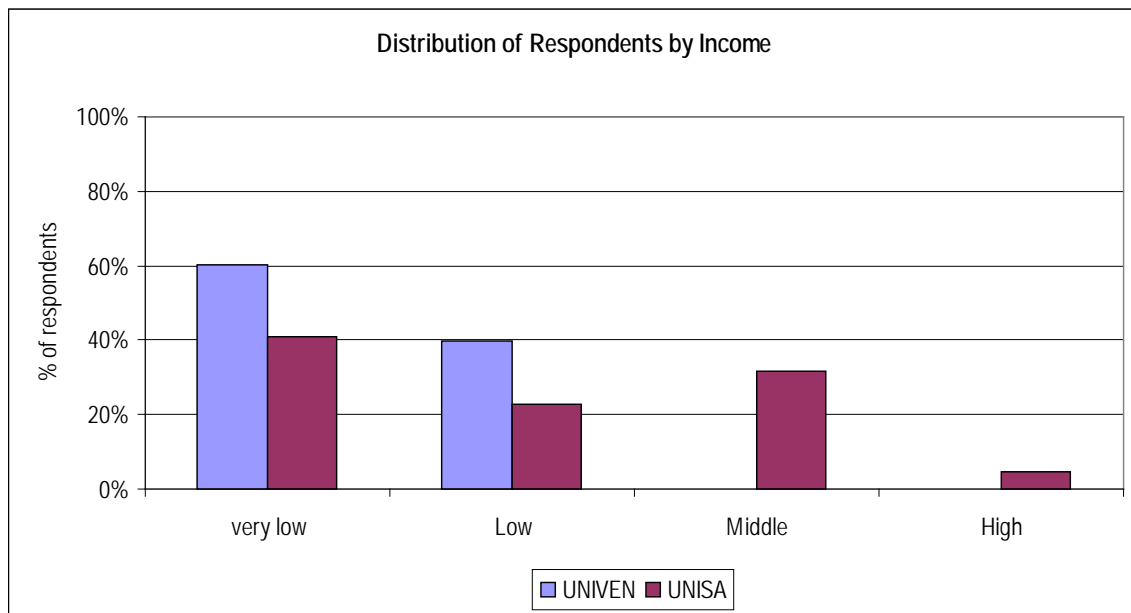


Figure 6.2.1.3: Biographical details on students' income

6.2.1.4 Home language

Table 6.2.1.4 and figure 6.2.1.4 shows the distribution of respondents according to their home language. The Univen students were evenly distributed regarding the languages of the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces. The highest numbers were 33 students (52.4%) who were Tshivenda speaking. The others were Sepedi speaking, namely 13 (20.6%) and 9 (14.3%) were Xitsonga speaking. On the other hand, Unisa recorded 4 (18.2%) for Sepedi, 3 (13.6%) Setswana and Xhosa.

The degree of variation amongst languages may be attributed to the fact that South Africa is heterogeneous. It has 11 official languages, with others like Shona being spoken by speakers in the neighbouring Zimbabwe. The incidence of Shona speaking students at Univen was a recent phenomenon since students from Zimbabwe had recently been registering at Univen, which is geographically close to Zimbabwe. Just as in the case with age and income, Unisa had almost every language represented, except Isindebele and Shona. This situation was normal for Unisa, given the sample used and its size.

Table 6.2.1.4: Distribution of respondents by students' home language

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Isindebele	1 (1.6%)	0	1 (1.2%)
Sepedi	13 (20.6%)	4 (18.2%)	17 (20.0%)
Seswati	1 (1.6%)	1 (4.5%)	2 (2.4%)
Shona	3 (4.8%)	0	3 (3.5%)
Tshivenda	33 (52.4%)	2 (9.1%)	35 (41.2%)
Xitsonga	9 (14.3%)	2 (9.1%)	11 (12.9%)
Setswana	0	3 (13.6%)	3 (3.5%)
Zulu	0	2 (9.1%)	2 (2.4%)
Xhosa	0	3 (13.6%)	3 (3.5%)
Sotho	0	2 (9.1%)	2 (2.4%)
English	0	1 (4.5%)	1 (1.2%)
Other	3 (4.8%)	2 (9.1%)	5 (5.9%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

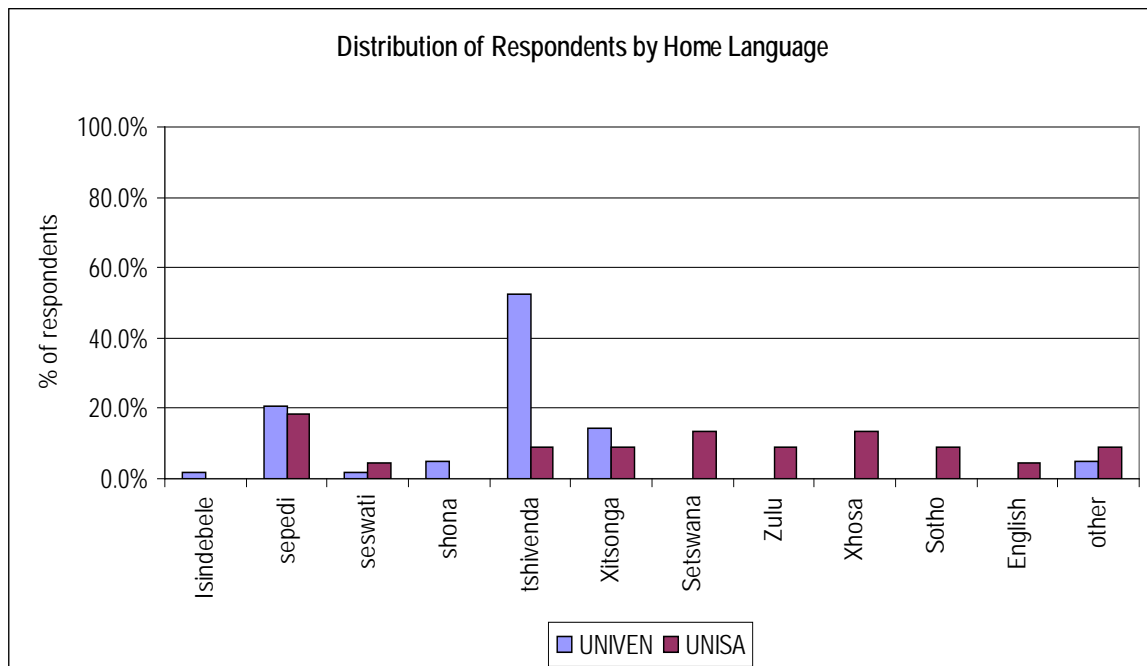


Figure 6.2.1.4: Distribution of respondents by students' home language

6.2.2 Understanding of the government *imbizo*

This category consists of questions, which measured the understanding of students with regard to the government *imbizo*.

6.2.2.1 How respondents rated their knowledge of the current use of the government *imbizo*

Table 6.2.2.1 and figure 6.2.2.1 show the results of the rating of the students' knowledge of the government *imbizo*. Forty-five of the Univen students (72.6%) rated their knowledge of the *imbizo* as "good" and 6 (9.7%) rated their knowledge as "very good." On the other hand, 10 Unisa students (45.5%) rated their knowledge as "good;" while 6 students (27.3%) rated their knowledge as "very good".

This means that most respondents from both institutions had a good knowledge of the government *imbizo*.

Table 6.2.2.1: Knowledge of the current use of the government *imbizo*

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Very Good	6 (9.7%)	6 (27.3%)	12 (14.3%)
Good	45 (72.6%)	10 (45.5%)	55 (65.5%)
Poor	9 (14.5%)	6 (27.3%)	15 (17.9%)
None	2 (3.2%)	0	2 (2.4%)
Total	62 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	84 (100.0%)

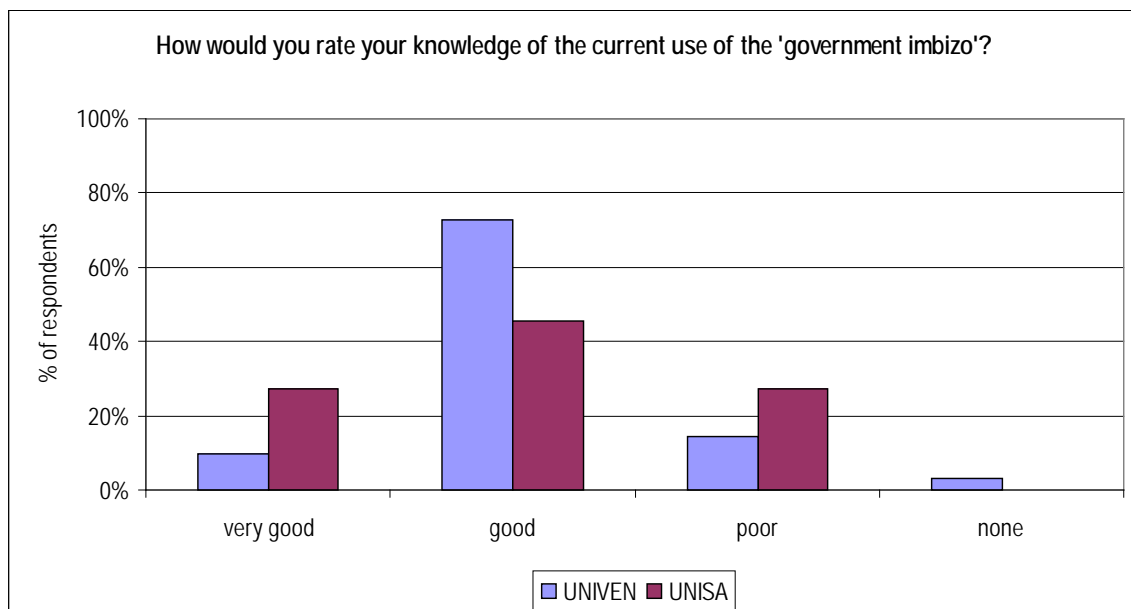


Figure 6.2.2.1: Knowledge of the current use of the government *imbizo*

6.2.2.2 Have you ever attended a government *imbizo*?

Table 6.2.2.2 and figure 6.2.2.2, show that only 15 (24.2%) of the Univen respondents indicated that they had “attended” an *imbizo*, compared to 11 (50.0%) of the Unisa respondents; whereas 47 (75.8%) of the Univen respondents had “not attended” an *imbizo*.

This might be attributed to the fact that Unisa students had better access or were closer to places where most *imbizos* were held due to service delivery needs. This could also explain why a greater percentage of Unisa students rated their knowledge of the *imbizo* as very good. It might possibly be a sign that *imbizos* are not held regularly in the areas where most Univen students resided or found themselves.

Table 6.2.2.2: Attendance record of a government *imbizo*

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Attended	15 (24.2%)	11 (50.0%)	26 (32.9%)
Not Attended	47 (75.8%)	11 (50.0%)	58 (67.1%)
Total	62 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	84 (100.0%)

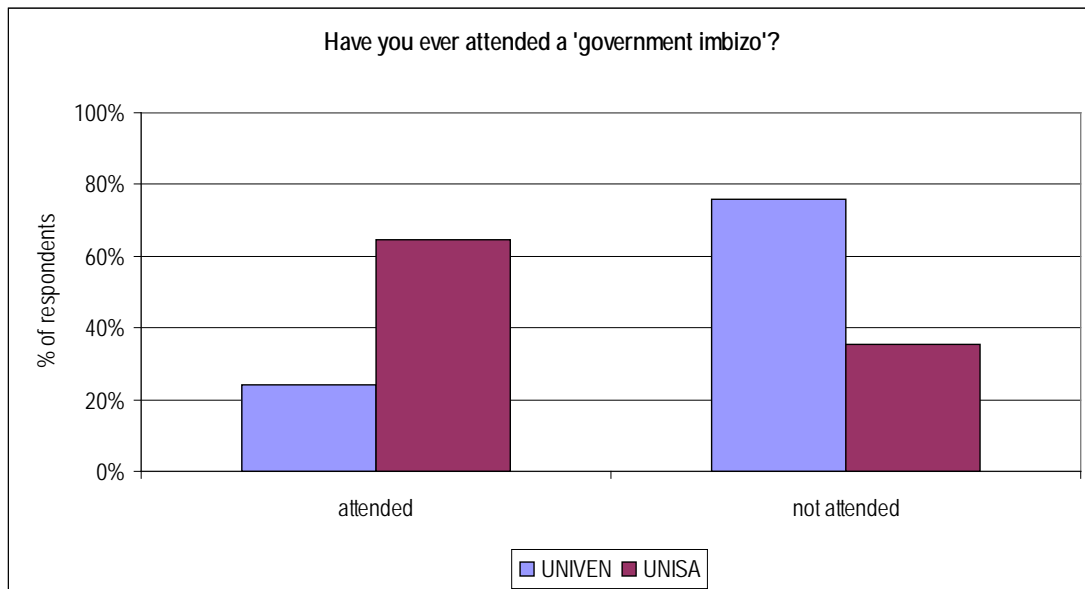


Figure 6.2.2.2: Attendance record of a government *imbizo*

6.2.2.3 Do you see the practice of the government *imbizo* in South Africa as mixing political party and state functions?

Overall, respondents perceived the government *imbizo* as a mixture of political party and state functions. As shown in table 6.2.2.3 and figure 6.2.2.3, 43 (68.3%) respondents from Univen said that “sometimes,” the government *imbizo* was a mixture of political party and state functions. Seven (11.1%) respondents contended that the practice “always” occurs. Regarding the Unisa students’ perceptions, 10 (45.5%) chose “sometimes,” whereas 7 (31.8%) selected “always.”

Responses can be attributed to the lack of clarity concerning the distinction between “the party and the state” in South Africa. This lack of clear distinction was also pointed out in the literature consulted in this research. This has culminated in the “two centres of power” debate, between the ANC’s headquarters’ Luthuli House and the Union Buildings as the seat of government. However, as will be demonstrated by the other findings, this lack of distinction did not dampen respondents’ general perceptions of the role of the *imbizo*. This could perhaps also be a consequence of widespread support for the ruling ANC-alliance as election results demonstrate.

Table 6.2.2.3: Perception on the government *imbizo* as the mixing of political party and state functions

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Always	7 (11.1%)	7 (31.8%)	14 (16.5%)
Sometimes	43 (68.3%)	10 (45.5%)	53 (62.4%)
Seldom	3 (4.8%)	1 (4.5%)	4 (4.7%)
Never	3 (4.8%)	1 (4.5%)	4 (4.7%)
Don't Know	5 (7.9%)	3 (13.6%)	8 (9.4%)
Not Applicable	2 (3.2%)	0	2 (2.4%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

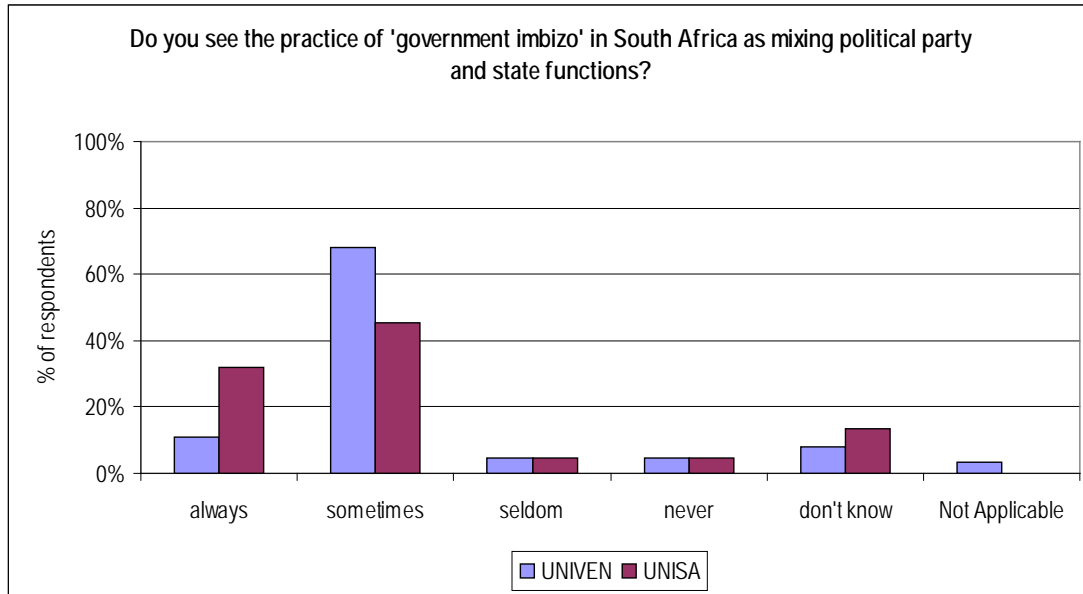


Figure 6.2.2.3: Perception on the government *imbizo* as mixing of political party and state functions

6.2.2.4 The government *imbizo* as a symbolic exercise

Table 6.2.2.4 and figure 6.2.2.4 reveal that 43 (68.3%) respondents from Univen “agreed” that the government *imbizo* was a symbolic exercise, with 6 (9.5%) for “strongly agree.” The results for Unisa showed that 12 (54.5%) “agreed” with 3 (13.6%) for “strongly agree.”

Respondents seemed to feel the presence of the government during the *imbizo* and identified with the leaders. The government itself has admitted that the *imbizo* is partially symbolic in terms of citizens’ identification with their leaders.

Table 6.2.2.4: Impression of respondents on whether a government *imbizo* is a symbolic exercise

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Strongly Agree	6 (9.5%)	3 (13.6%)	9 (10.6%)
Agree	43 (68.3%)	12 (54.5%)	55 (64.7%)
Disagree	6 (9.5%)	3 (13.6%)	9 (10.6%)
Don't Know	6 (9.5%)	4 (18.2%)	10 (11.8%)
Not Applicable	2 (3.2%)	0	2 (2.4%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

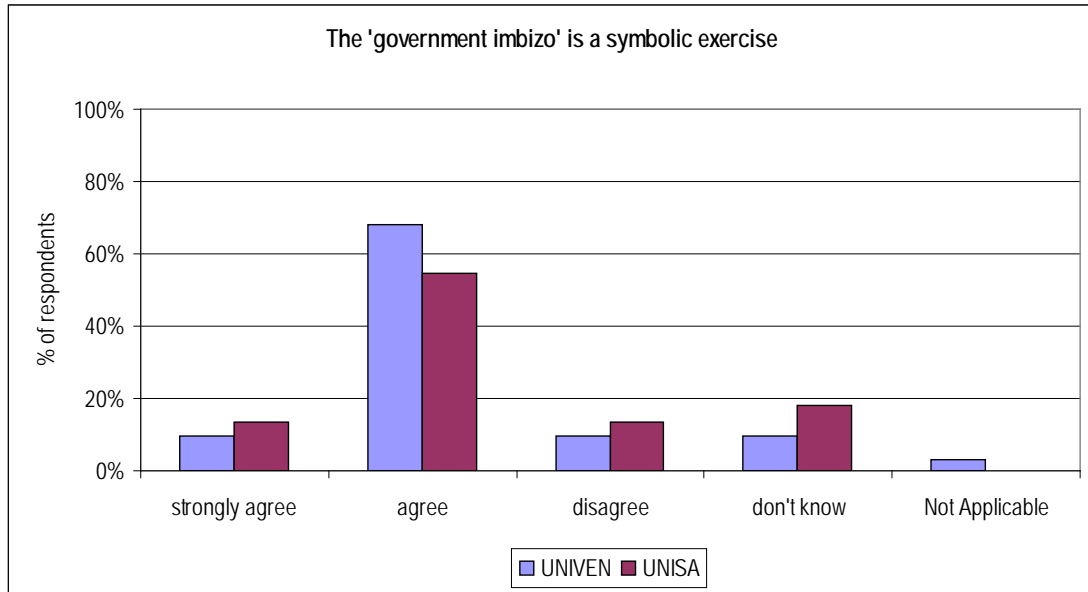


Figure 6.2.2.4: Impression of respondents on whether the government *imbizo* is a symbolic exercise

6.2.3 The efficacy of the government *imbizo*

The three items in this category of questions sought to elicit the respondents' understanding on the effectiveness of the *imbizo* in matters of service delivery.

6.2.3.1 The government *imbizo* as a useful mechanism to gather (collect) information from the public

Table 6.2.3.1 and figure 6.2.3.1 show that 36 (57.1%) Univen students “agreed” that the government *imbizo* was useful to collect information from the public; with 23 (36.5%) for “strongly agree.” On the other hand, 13 (59.1%) of the Unisa students “agreed” and 6 (27.3%) “strongly agreed” with the statement.

The responses indicated that issues raised by citizens during the *imbizo* were followed up in terms of service delivery. The *imbizo* had become a forum where people were free to express their views on service delivery, with those issues not being taken for granted by the government.

Table 6.2.3.1: Feelings of respondents on the usefulness of the government *imbizo* to gather (collect) information from the public

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Strongly Agree	23 (36.5%)	6 (27.3%)	29 (34.1%)
Agree	36 (57.1%)	13 (59.1%)	49 (57.6%)
Disagree	4 (6.3%)	2 (9.1%)	6 (7.1%)
Don't Know	0	1 (4.5%)	1 (1.2%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

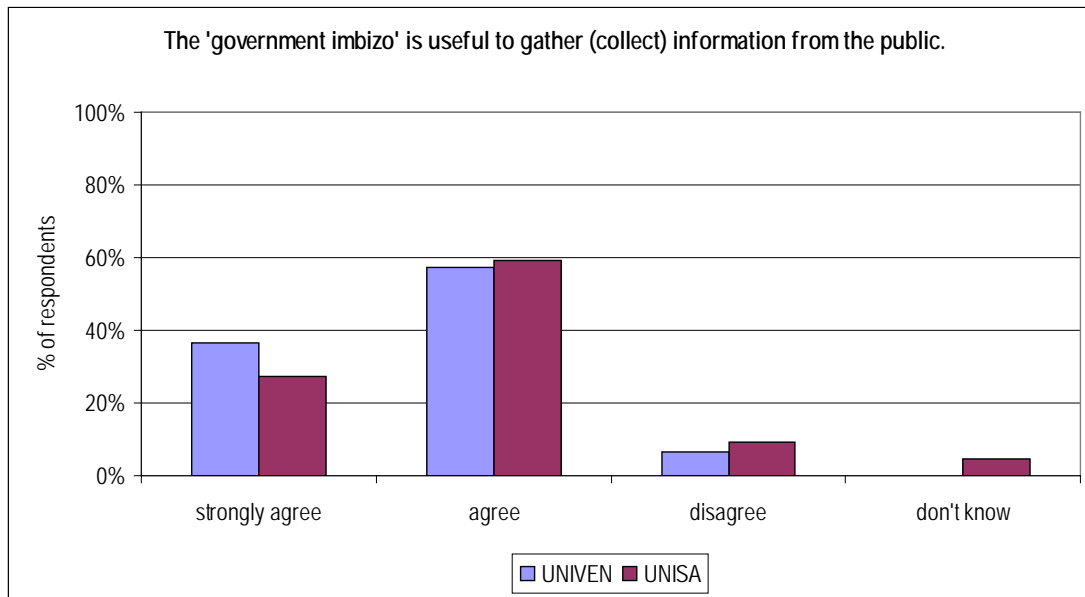


Figure 6.2.3.1: Feelings of respondents on the usefulness of the government *imbizo* to gather (collect) information from the public

6.2.3.2 The government’s uses of information obtained from a government *imbizo* for decision-making purposes

Table 6.2.3.2 and figure 6.2.3.2 show that 6 (9.5%) Univen students thought that the government “always” used the information gathered at *imbizos* for decision-making, with 43 (68.3%) select “sometimes.” On the other hand, 3 (13.6%) Unisa students thought that the government “always” used the information gathered at *imbizos* for decision-making, with 11 (50.0%) choosing “sometimes.” Seven of the Univen respondents, (11.1%) and 3 (13.6%) Unisa students thought that the government “seldom” used the information collected from *imbizos* for decision- making.

Univen respondents therefore felt that issues raised at *imbizos* were addressed by the government and not just left unattended. On the other hand, Unisa respondents believed such inputs were only used partially for decision-making purposes.

Table 6.2.3.2: Respondents’ impression on whether the government uses information from a government *imbizo* for decision-making purposes

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Always	6 (9.5%)	3 (13.6%)	9 (10.6%)
Sometimes	43 (68.3%)	11 (50.0%)	54 (63.5%)
Seldom	7 (11.1%)	3 (13.6%)	10 (11.8%)
Never	4 (6.3%)	2 (9.1%)	6 (7.1%)
Don't Know	2 (3.2%)	3 (13.6%)	5 (5.9%)
Not Applicable	1 (1.6%)	0	1 (1.2%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

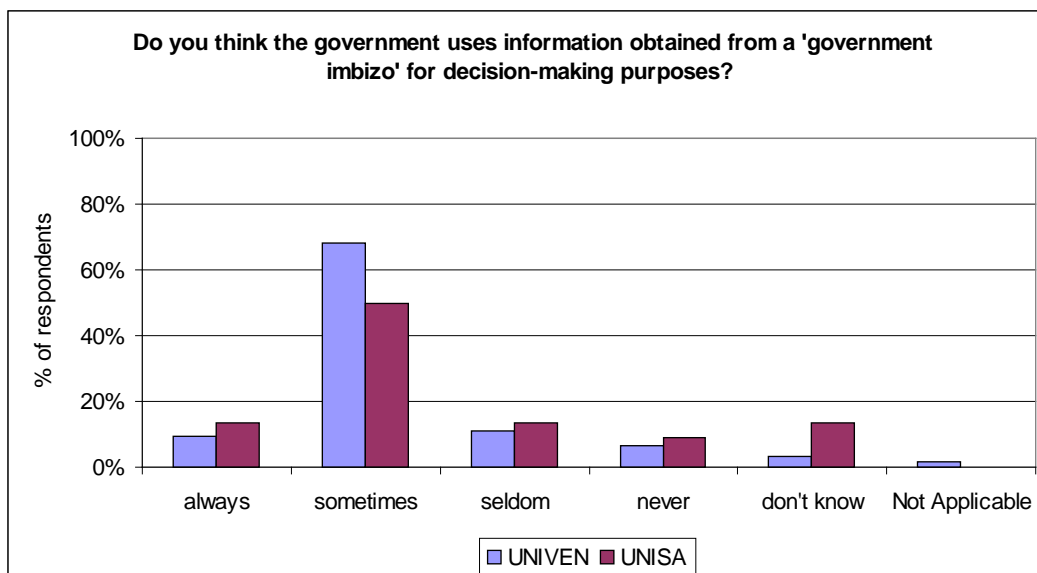


Figure 6.2.3.2: Respondents’ impression on whether the government uses information from a government *imbizo* for decision-making purposes

6.2.3.3 Basic issues such as water, electricity, housing, sanitation, crime, education as the focus of discussion at a government *imbizo*

Table 6.2.3.3 and figure 6.2.3.3, showed that 35 (55.6%) respondents from Univen “strongly agreed,” and 24 (38.1%) “agreed” with the statement that at a government *imbizo*, discussions were mainly about basic issues such as water, electricity and housing. Of the Unisa students, 13 respondents (59.1%) “agreed” and 6 (27.3%) “strongly agreed” with the statement.

Respondents from both institutions seemed to agree that the *imbizo* was mainly about basic issues that affected the population of South Africa. It means that respondents thought that the *imbizo* was about issues of service delivery in the main, rather than other things. The government has also indicated that the *imbizo* was mainly for service delivery.

Table 6.2.3.3: Respondents' understanding on the nature of discussions at a government *imbizo* as mainly about basic infrastructural issues

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Strongly Agree	35 (55.6%)	6 (27.3%)	41 (48.2%)
Agree	24 (38.1%)	13 (59.1%)	37(43.5%)
Disagree	1 (1.6%)	1 (4.5%)	2 (2.4%)
Strongly Disagree	2 (3.2%)	0	2 (2.4%)
Don't Know	1 (1.6%)	2 (9.1%)	3 (3.5%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

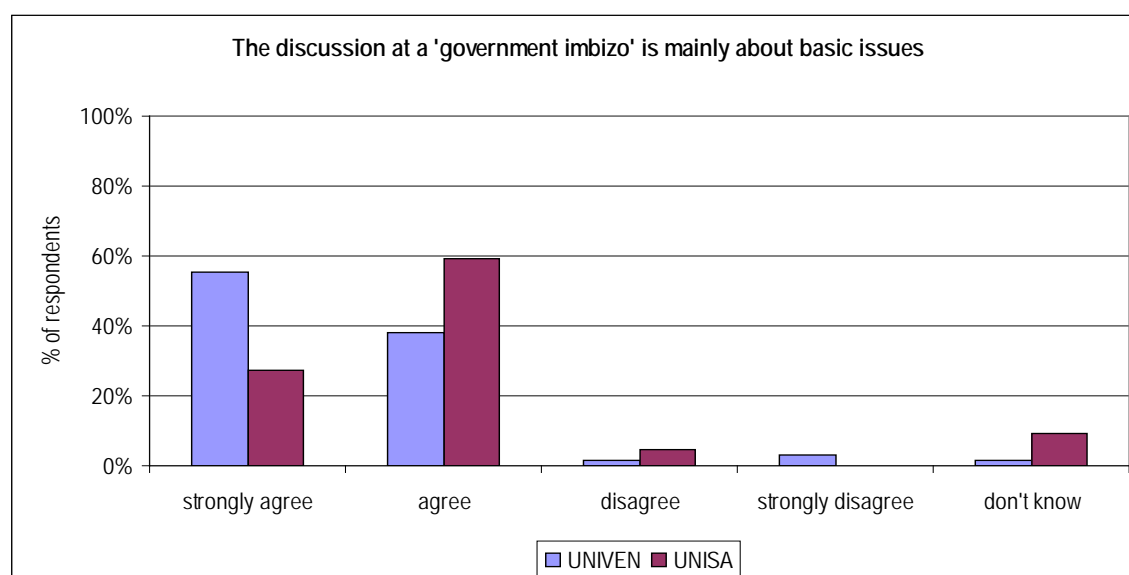


Figure 6.2.3.3: Respondents' understanding on the nature of discussions at a government *imbizo* as mainly about basic infrastructural issues

6.2.4 Public mobilisation

This category of questions asks about respondents' understanding on the strength of the government *imbizo* in mobilising the people, in order to realise service delivery and to gain public support for government programmes.

6.2.4.1 The need for a democratic government like South Africa to consult the public through a government *imbizo* in aspects of service delivery

Table 6.2.4.1 and figure 6.2.4.1 show that 43 (68.3%) Univen respondents felt it was “always” necessary for a democratic government to consult the public through a government *imbizo* in aspects of service delivery. Another 19 (30.2%) believed it must be done “sometimes.” On the other hand, Unisa’s 16 (72.7%) respondents indicated that government *imbizos* should “always” be used for consultation with the people, with 3 (13.6%) saying “sometimes.”

The overwhelming response was that it was necessary for the government to consult citizens through the *imbizos* in all aspects of service delivery. Respondents regarded it necessary for people to be consulted about matters affecting their lives in a democracy (unlike during apartheid). It should be noted that most of the respondents were associated with the political history of the political exclusion of Blacks who had not been consulted by the apartheid government and now they were expressing their right to be consulted in matters of governance and service delivery.

Table 6.2.4.1: Respondents’ understanding on the necessity of the South African government using government *imbizo* to consult the public in aspects of service delivery

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Always	43 (68.3%)	16 (72.7%)	59 (69.4%)
Sometimes	19 (30.2%)	3 (13.6%)	22 (25.9%)
Seldom	1 (1.6%)	1 (4.5%)	2 (2.4%)
Don't Know	0	2 (9.1%)	2 (2.4%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

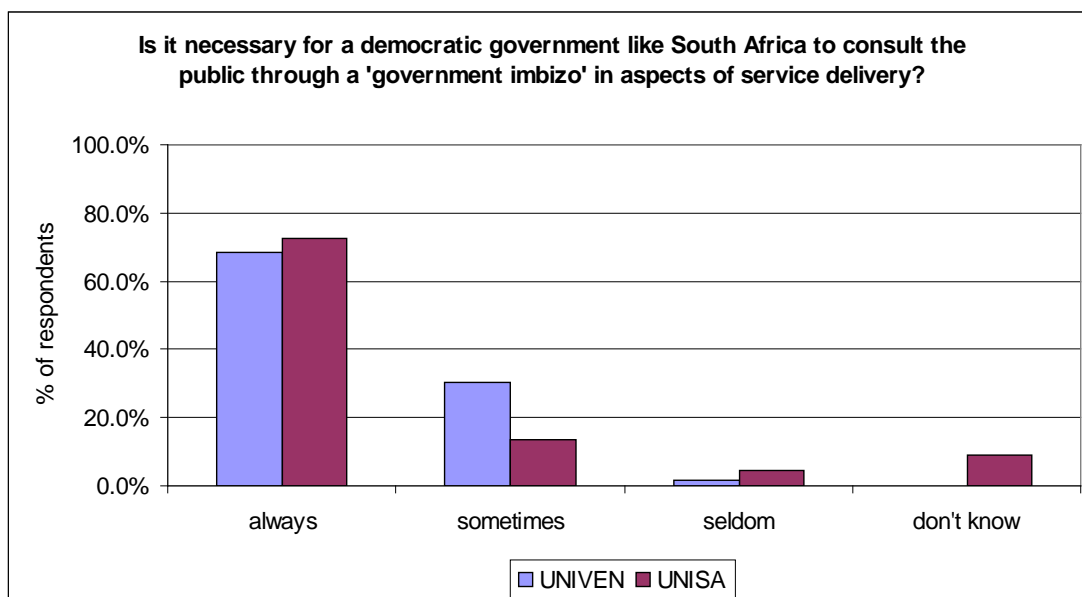


Figure 6.2.4.1: Respondents' understanding on the necessity of the South African government using the government *imbizo* to consult the public in aspects of service delivery

6.2.4.2 The effectiveness of public participation at a government *imbizo*

Table 6.2.4.2 and figure 6.2.4.2 show that 35 (55.6%) respondents from Univen thought that public participation was “effective” at a government *imbizo*, with 11 (17.5%) who said it was “very effective.” On the other hand, Unisa’s respondents 7 (31.8%) indicated that public participation at a government *imbizo* was “very effective” and the other 7 (31.8%) regarded it as “effective.”

The respondents’ scoring can be attributed to the aspect of decision-making already commented upon by the respondents. Thus, it might have to do with how much of the participation results in decision-making. It is obvious that respondents are uncertain whether such participation would bear fruit in terms of decision-making.

Table 6.2.4.2: Understanding on public participation at a government *imbizo*

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Very effective	11 (17.5%)	7 (31.8%)	18 (21.2%)
Effective	35 (55.6%)	7 (31.8%)	42 (49.4%)
Less effective	12 (19.0%)	4 (18.2%)	16 (18.8%)
Don't know	5 (7.9%)	4 (18.2%)	9 (10.6%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

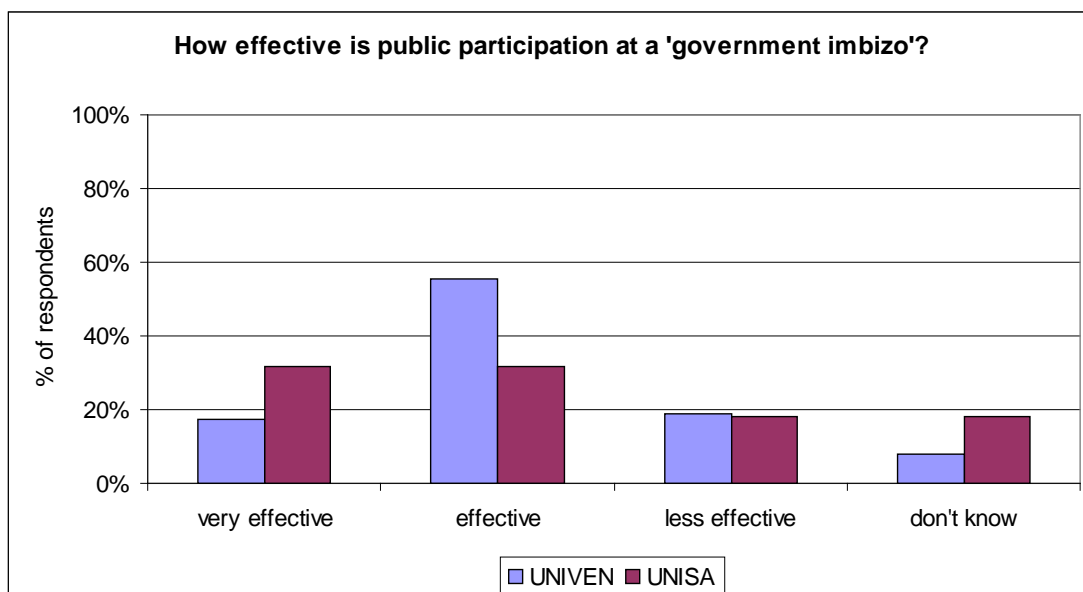


Figure 6.2.4.2: Understanding on public participation at a government *imbizo*

6.2.4.3 The success of the government *imbizo* to get community support for governmental programmes

Table 6.2.4.3 and figure 6.2.4.3 show that 41 (65.1%) respondents from Univen “agreed” and 12 (19.0%) “strongly agreed” that the government *imbizo* was successful in obtaining community support for governmental programmes. Their Unisa counterparts scored 13 (59.1%) for “agree” and four (18.2%) for “strongly agree.”

It shows the respondents were in agreement that the *imbizo* helped the government to inform and promote its plans to the community before they were started. Despite some challenges, the *imbizo* helps the government to involve the people in the realisation of service delivery.

Table 6.2.4.3: Students’ opinions on the success of the government *imbizo* in getting community support for governmental programmes

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Strongly Agree	12 (19.0%)	4 (18.2%)	16 (18.8%)
Agree	41 (65.1%)	13 (59.1%)	54 (63.5%)
Disagree	6 (9.5%)	3 (13.6%)	9 (10.6%)
Strongly Disagree	1 (1.6%)	0	1 (1.2%)
Don't Know	3 (4.8%)	2 (9.1%)	5 (5.9%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

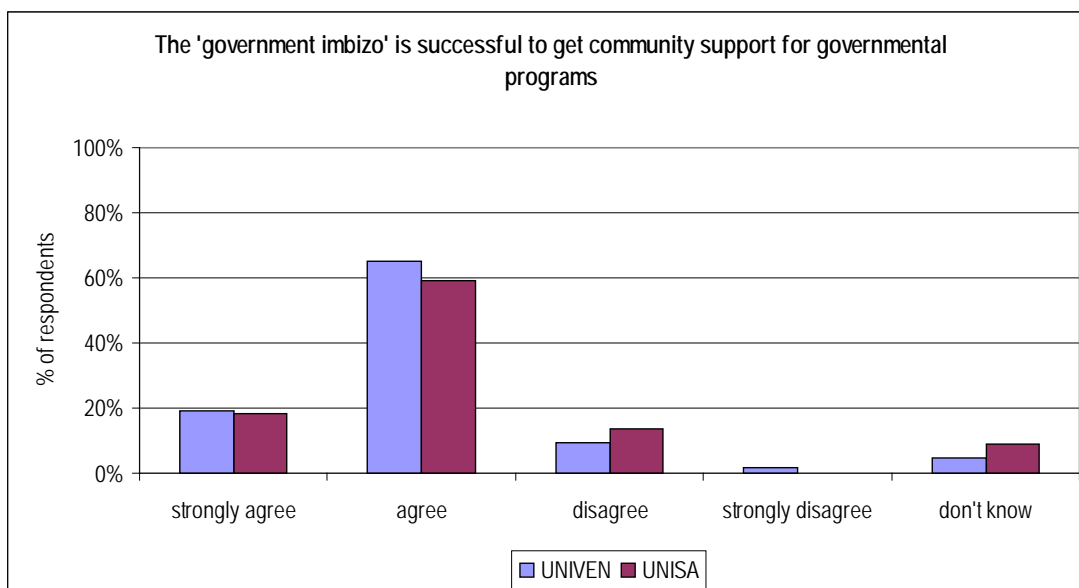


Figure 6.2.4.3: Students' opinions on the success of the government *imbizo* in getting community support for governmental programmes

6.2.4.4 Desire to attend a government *imbizo*

Table 6.2.4.4 and figure 6.2.4.4 show that 53 (84.1%) of the respondents from Univen would have liked to attend a government *imbizo* and 9 (14.3%) for “perhaps.” On the other hand, 17 (77.3%) Unisa students selected “yes” and three (13.6%) selected “perhaps.”

The respondents understood that it was their democratic right to engage freely with the government in its quest to deliver quality service to the people. They also felt that the *imbizo* was a proper forum for the community to express their wishes and interests. This is also supported by the government when it said that the *imbizo* engages people in an unmediated way.

Table 6.2.4.4: Students' feelings on their likelihood to attend a government *imbizo*

	UNIVEN	UNISA	Total
Yes	53 (84.1%)	17 (77.3%)	70 (82.4%)
Perhaps	9 (14.3%)	3 (13.6%)	12 (14.1%)
No	1 (1.6%)	1 (4.5%)	2 (2.4%)
Not Applicable	0	1 (4.5%)	1 (1.2%)
Total	63 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	85 (100.0%)

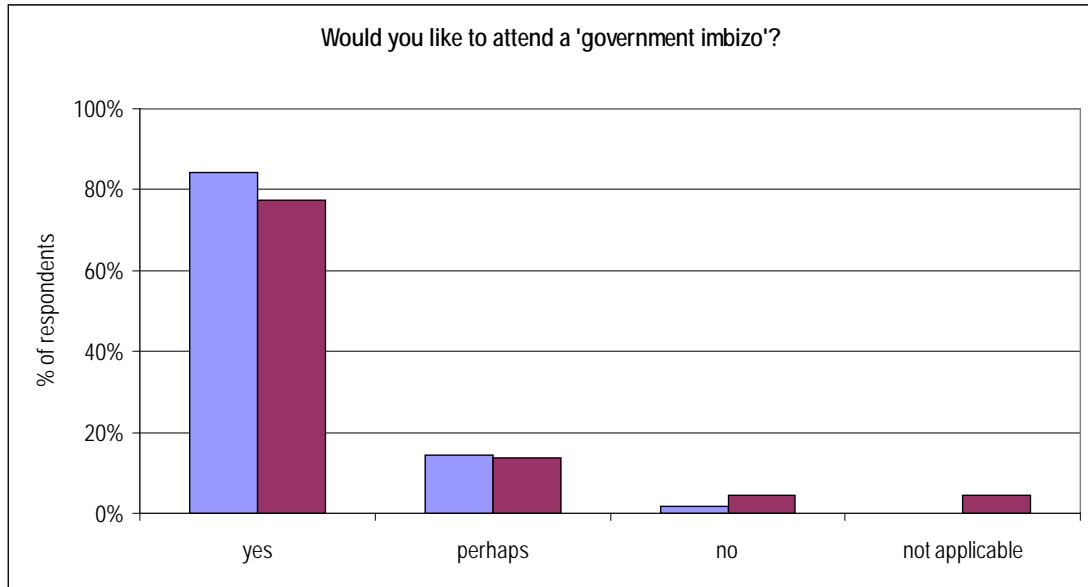


Figure 6.2.4.4: Students’ feelings on their likelihood to attend a government *imbizo*

6.2.5 Respondents’ additional comments on the government *imbizo* as an instrument to enhance service delivery and democracy in South Africa

Most of the respondents were in support of the continuation of the *imbizo*. Fifty of the 63 Univen respondents felt that it must be held more often as it enhanced democracy and accountability. It also served as a point of accountability for government to the people. The respondents further praised the *imbizo* for its consultative and participative nature.

Half of the Unisa respondents were of the opinion that the government *imbizo* should be used to consult the people, with the people also expected to make an input that could guide the government in its endeavour to deliver quality service. Generally, respondents from both institutions cautioned the government against failing to implement the wishes and interests of the people expressed at the *imbizo*. They remarked that these issues should be followed up and that feedback and policy-making to realise service delivery were important. There should also be some mechanisms, other than the *imbizo*, to gauge service delivery trends on a regular basis. The government was also advised not to make unrealistic promises at the *imbizo*, by promising what it was unable to achieve.

Students also warned that the *imbizo* should not be used for scoring political points by the ruling party to stay in power; otherwise, people would be discouraged from attending.

From the above analysis of the survey results of students it can be concluded that the government *imbizo* can be used to gather information (the sensory function) from the people, to analyse such information with the purpose of using it for decision- making and implementation (execution function). Although these components of the *imbizo* are similar to that of an anti-aircraft system in a cybernetics model, they cannot operate like such a system in a cybernetics model. Thus, the system in a cybernetics model is automatic, self-steering, regulative and responsive. On the other hand, the *imbizo*, which is human driven, cannot be automatic. Still, the respondents' perceptions of the *imbizo* as a mixture of party and state functions might suggest that it could be vulnerable to politicisation rather than seen as a mechanism to steer democratic governance regarding the delivery of basic services.

6.3 DESCRIPTION OF QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED

A qualitative data analysis was carried out systematically by summarising the data in terms of the categories of questions asked of the respondents. "The qualitative analysis of data should be particularly emphasized in the types of research where quantification is difficult, but it should not be forgotten in any type of research, since it constitutes another complementary aspect to quantitative analysis"(Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:143).

The responses to the questions were given by the respondents who were chosen by means of a non-random sampling method. In this study, the analysis included data obtained from selected respondents from the Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages, and from the Mutale Municipality documentation on service delivery and the GCIS. The Mutale Municipality documents were analysed to supplement data gathered from the representatives of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda. Data gathered from the GCIS - Presidency based senior government official - who had an understanding of the government *imbizo* were also analysed qualitatively.

In addition, qualitative data were also interpreted in order to attach meanings to the results of the study. The interpretation was done descriptively.

6.3.1 Muswodi–Tshisimani and Musunda villages

The two villages provided the study with sources of data obtained from representatives of the villages. The respondents from the Muswodi–Tshisimani village consisted of representatives of the local traditional leader, the civic organisation and a ward councillor.

Likewise, Musunda village had respondents representing the local traditional leader, the civic organisation and the ward councillor. The data from these sources were analysed and interpreted descriptively, by comparing each village representative with his counterpart in the other village.

6.3.1.1 Traditional leaders

Biographical data

The biographical data of the representative of the traditional leader of Muswodi-Tshisimani falls within the age bracket of 61 years and above. The respondent was a male within the educational qualification bracket of grades 0 to 7 and his income was between 0 and 1000 rand.

Likewise, the age of the traditional leader's representative from Musunda village fell within the age category of 61 years and above. The respondent was also a male, within the educational qualification bracket of grades 0 to 7. The income bracket of the respondent was between 0 and 1000 rand. The respondents from both villages spoke Tshivenda as a home language.

Understanding of the government *imbizo*

The Muswodi-Tshisimani's respondent's understanding of the government *imbizo* was good regarding what it entailed. This refers specifically to aspects such as the knowledge of the current use of the *imbizo*. The respondent was satisfied with what the *imbizo* had done in terms of service delivery in the area.

Similarly, Musunda's respondent's understanding of the *imbizo* was good and he saw the *imbizo* as a symbolic exercise.

The efficacy of the government *imbizo*

Muswodi-Tshisimani's respondent did not believe in the efficacy of the government *imbizo*, with regard to service delivery. However, when informed about the service delivery in other areas of infrastructure, the respondent admitted its possible value. These include areas such as water, electricity, RDP houses and toilets. However, the respondent maintained that some houses and toilets were not yet completed due to the contractors' incapacity.

Similarly, Musunda's respondent believed that the efficacy of the *imbizo* pertains to important issues regarding service delivery such as electricity, housing and gravelling of streets. The respondent also maintained that the promises made during the *imbizo* were not fulfilled, as they still continued to live without electricity and accessible streets. However, the respondent agreed that the government *imbizo* helped to bring about a better life for the residents, in areas such as water, housing and the building of toilets.

The tribal leader also indicated that there was no reason to use the government *imbizo* to make decisions, which might isolate them, as they think that the "village territorial area falls under the chief." It is important to indicate that, in some circles, the legitimacy of the *imbizo* as a mechanism for broadening democracy could be compromised.

Public mobilisation

The Muswodi-Tshisimani respondent believed that the government *imbizo* was an important exercise for public mobilisation and should continue. The respondent also indicated that there had been full consultation and the attendance was high during the *imbizo*. Therefore, he was also satisfied with the level of participation at the *imbizo*.

Similarly, the Musunda respondent felt that the level of consultation was high during the *imbizo* held at Muswodi-Tshisimani in 2005. In addition, he agreed that residents were consulted prior to and after the *imbizo* by the municipality to give them feedback. The

consultations took the form of public hearings, ward meetings, chief's kraal meetings and civic meetings.

The respondent concluded that it was good to have a government *imbizo*, but cautioned that the *imbizo* should not be used to suppress the people by convincing them to pay property taxes. The respondent, who was also a headman of the village, believed that the imposition of such taxation on the poverty-stricken community would affect them negatively.

The respondent, as a traditional leader, felt that it was not legitimate for his people to pay a property tax when they were poverty-stricken and struggling to make a living. The respondent also spoke on behalf of other traditional leaders that it was probable that traditional leaders were undermined and marginalised. In this regard, there was an underlying fear that traditional leaders were no longer leading their people, as the government (municipality) was in control even in the traditional leaders' areas.

It can be inferred from the above responses of both tribal leaders that there was some mistrust towards the government *imbizo*. This can be attributed to the fact that tribal leaders had practised their own traditional *imbizos*, (in this case the *tshivhidzo*) and they could not readily understand the importance of the government *imbizo*.

6.3.1.2 Civic organisations

Biographical data

The respondent from the Muswodi-Tshisimani civic structure fell in the age range of 31 to 40 years and he was a male. He also fell within the educational qualification bracket of grade 12 (matric) plus three years and above. The respondent's information about his income was not disclosed to the researcher.

Similarly, the civic male respondent from Musunda indicated that his age range fell between 31 and 40 years. The educational qualification of the respondent was in the category of grade 12 plus 3 years and above, with the income level of between 3000 and 5000 rand. The respondents from both villages spoke Tshivenda as a home language.

Understanding of government *imbizo*

Muswodi-Tshisimani's respondent's understanding of the government *imbizo* was good. The respondent believed that the inputs made during the *imbizo* were being attended to by the government. For this reason, the respondent saw the government *imbizo* not only as a symbolic gesture for politicians and officials to meet the people, but as a mechanism for carrying residents' interests to the government.

The respondent from the Musunda civic organisation also had a good understanding of the *imbizo* and believed that the *imbizo* was more of a symbolic gesture, than results orientated.

The efficacy of the government *imbizo*

Regarding the efficacy of the government *imbizo*, the Muswodi-Tshisimani respondent asserted that the *imbizo* was effective, in terms of its usefulness in gathering information from the residents. This helped to bring a better life to the community, as infrastructure like roads were improved, a school was built and crime was curbed by establishing a satellite police station. This took place, despite the fact that the unemployment rate in the community was high. The provision of RDP houses, water and electricity was done before the holding of the *imbizo*.

In contrast, the respondent from Musunda believed that the government *imbizo* was not effective, as most of the promises made by government took time to fulfil and sometimes there was a lack of service delivery. The respondent maintained that the services were of a low standard due to a lack of monitoring the quality of services rendered. The respondent cited the example of RDP houses and toilets that were built and had since developed cracks and were consequently in danger of falling down.

It was alleged that some contractors were leaving the building project with toilets incomplete and had to be traced by the ward councillor. In addition, some houses that had been promised, were not yet built and the streets had not been cleared. Nevertheless, the respondent indicated that some of the basic issues raised during the *imbizo* had been addressed such as water and some RDP toilets finished. The respondent also stated that

electricity was still a problem as mainline electricity was only available to a shop; whereas the residents did not benefit in this regard at all.

Public mobilisation

Concerning the question of public mobilisation, the respondent from Muswodi-Tshisimani believed that the government *imbizo* served to mobilise the local residents. According to the respondent this was because they were fully consulted, which was followed by a high level of participation during the *imbizo* by the residents. The respondent believed that the *imbizo* was a good initiative by government which helped to bring it closer to the people in terms of service delivery.

In the same vein, the Musunda respondent concurred that residents were fully consulted prior to the *imbizo* and that the level of attendance was high. The people were consulted both prior to and after the *imbizo*, at a ward meeting, the chief's kraal meeting and civic meetings.

It appears that the responses of both civic organisations' representatives were almost similar in terms of their good understanding of the government *imbizo*. They also agreed that the *imbizo* served to mobilise the people. However, they did not share similar sentiments with regard to the efficacy of the *imbizo* because of their particular situation in which they found themselves. The reason given by the Musunda civic organisation for this was that the basic infrastructure provided at the village was of a poor quality due to the lack of monitoring by the government. The feeling was that the government was not concerned about the quality of service rendered to the people.

6.3.1.3 Ward councillors

Biographical data

The ward councillor from Muswodi-Tshisimani was a male and fell within the age bracket of 31 to 40 years. The educational level of the respondent was grade 12 plus 3 years and did not want to disclose his income bracket. Similarly, the representative of the ward councillor from Musunda was also between the ages of 31 and 40 years and he was

also a male. The respondent's educational level fell within the range of grade 12 plus 3 years and above, with a monthly income of between 5000 to 7000 rand. The respondents from both wards spoke Tshivenda as a home language; while both also represented the ANC and were elected in terms of the constituency (FPTP) system.

Understanding of government *imbizo*

The understanding of the government *imbizo* by the Muswodi-Tshisimani Ward councillor was very good, prompted by his knowledge of the current use of the device. The respondent believed that the government *imbizo* served as a forum used by the people to express their wishes to the government. The respondent believed that it was good that the government was going to the people and not vice versa.

Importantly, the ward councillor representative from Musunda had a good understanding of the government *imbizo*. The respondent saw the *imbizo* as more than symbolic because it served as a forum for residents to put their demands to the government. In addition, the respondent added that the government received feedback about its level of service to the community at the *imbizo*.

The efficacy of the government *imbizo*

The Muswodi-Tshisimani respondent indicated that he regarded the *imbizo* as a useful mechanism for gathering information from the public. This was because the government was able to fulfil promises made to the residents during the *imbizo*, thereby bringing a better life to the people. Furthermore, according to the respondent, discussions at the *imbizo* were about basic issues concerning service delivery and addressing crime.

Similarly, the respondent from Musunda agreed on the efficacy of the *imbizo* as he felt that it helped to bring a better life to the community. He supported this assertion by referring to the fact that some of the requests expressed by the community had been met, such as the supply of water, RDP toilets and houses and construction of a cell phone tower. This was despite the fact that some of the services such as electricity could not be supplied in the village. The respondent pointed out that Musunda in particular, was still without electricity although the mainline passed through the village. This was because the

Makonde Power Station, which was responsible for the power supply, was being expanded in order to have the necessary capacity to supply Musunda with electricity.

Public mobilisation

Regarding the question of public mobilisation, the ward councillor from Muswodi-Tshisimani believed that there had been various forms of consultation prior to the holding of the *imbizo*, such as ward meetings, chief's kraal meetings and civic meetings. The municipality used the IDP programme to involve the residents with regard to the implementation of projects. The respondent's viewpoint was that the government *imbizo* should continue in order to engage residents with the government in matters of service delivery.

Equally, the ward councillor representative from Musunda indicated that public mobilisation was conducted in various forms. Thus, residents were consulted prior to, during and after the *imbizo* through public hearings, ward meetings, the chief's kraal meetings and civic meetings. The level of attendance at the *imbizo* was high. The respondent believed that the government *imbizo* was a good mechanism for public mobilisation regarding service delivery, although there was a lack of implementation on the side of the government. The respondent added that the government should be given enough time to respond to the demands of residents and residents should be taught to be patient.

It is evident that the ward councillors from both Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda have much in common with regard to the government *imbizo*. They had a common understanding of the government *imbizo*, the efficacy of the *imbizo* and public mobilisation. This can be attributed to the fact that the ward councillors supported the *imbizo* programme, as government representatives. It is also important to point out that both councillors belonged to the ANC.

6.3.2 Mutale Municipality documents on service delivery

The Mutale Municipality IDP Review document for 2008/2009 was compared with the data presented for the Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages. Such a comparison had mainly to do with what the respondents said with regard to the efficacy of the government *imbizo*. Note that the document was a review of the original IDP document adopted in 2006 (Mutale IDP review document 2008).

The IDP Review document consisted of updated information with regard to the backlog in service delivery and showed there was still a huge service delivery backlog in the municipality, specifically, regarding the basic infrastructure in general. However, the municipality had recorded some “steady improvement on service delivery in the areas of electricity, water and sanitation, roads and housing for the past five years.’ Nevertheless, it conceded that “more needs to be done in delivery of sanitation, water and refuse removal in order to meet the national targets” (Mutale IDP review document 2008:3).

It was also shown in the draft IDP document of 2007 that the municipality faced challenges concerning a broad spectrum of basic priority issues concerning service delivery such as “water & sanitation, electricity and street lights, housing and land, roads and storm water drainage” (Mutale revised report – Mutale Municipality draft IDP 2008:6).

The issue of water was also referred to in the speech of the mayor of the municipality:

There is a plenty of groundwater like Folovhodwe, Muswodi Tshisimani and Mukovhawabale... Folovhodwe water project = R3.1 million rands... Muswodi Tshisimani water project = R2.5 million rands...Mukovhawabale water project = R2.1 million rands (Manyuha 2005).

Other than the IDP, which encourages public mobilisation, the Project Consolidate (2007:3) has been designed to strengthen municipalities’ ability to deliver services:

...political accountability for service delivery has been strengthened through Project Consolidate. The Presidential and Ministerial Izimbizo have enabled political principals to interact with communities about issues pertaining to services

and development. The Izimbizo action plans are a commitment of the whole of government on specific areas that communities prioritise through Izimbizo

The past five years under consideration from 2005 to 2009, covers the period of the holding of the *imbizo* at Muswodi-Tshisimani in 2005. The service delivery backlog referred to in the greater municipal area includes the Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages. Briefly, the IDP Review document of 2008/09 confirms the state of service delivery of the municipality in general. However, a distinction must be made between the general picture of the municipality in terms of service delivery and that of the wards and the villages, as the service backlog did not affect all the wards and villages to the same extent in terms of the service backlog (Mutale IDP review document, 2008).

6.3.3 The Presidency's GCIS representative

The male senior government official who represented the GCIS fell in the age group between 51 and 60 years. His educational qualifications fell in the category of grade 12 plus 3 years and above with a monthly income of 40000 rand and above. The respondent spoke English as a home language.

The respondent's level of understanding of the government *imbizo* was very good. He discussed the *imbizo* in an insightful and objective manner. The respondent believed that the government saw the *imbizo* as a partially symbolic exercise that led to citizens engaging with the leaders. The respondent commented that the government generally felt the attendance of *imbizos* was very good. It appeared that there was considerable interest from the people themselves in seeing, meeting and engaging with their leaders.

On the question of the efficacy of the government *imbizo*, the respondent believed that the principle of being responsive to the citizenry determined the venue of the *imbizo*. For that reason, the respondent thought that *imbizos* were aimed at service delivery that would improve the quality of the lives of the people. The government was able to identify important issues that were prioritised for decision-making in order to benefit the community. In addition, people were not restricted in terms of raising issues about serious topics such as crime and the death penalty. However, the respondent remarked that the success of the *imbizo* did not mean that there were no challenges and the government

admitted that there were problems concerning follow-up and implementation with regard to service delivery.

In this regard, the respondent believed that the *imbizo* could be used in the “War on Poverty,” as poverty-ridden areas are usually characterised by a lack of access to basic service delivery issues and unemployment. In addition, he believed the discussions would focus more strongly on industrial policies at urban *imbizos* than at rural *imbizos*. The respondent contended that it was therefore important for the government to obtain information about the environment of the area to be visited, prior to holding the *imbizo*.

The respondent commented that the *imbizo* served to mobilise the public regarding service delivery. He added that the government believed that using the *imbizo* for public consultation and participation made it responsive to the needs of the citizens, thereby enhancing democracy through its unmediated engagement with the citizens. The respondent also believed that the *imbizo* created an opportunity for active citizenship, with government being the “facilitator” that mobilised the people to become active citizens through effective participation. The government also felt that the *imbizo* remained an important device for linking the government with the people. Thus, for the government *imbizo* to be meaningful, it had to encourage and promote the unmediated engagement of the people.

In addition, the respondent pointed out that, in general, the *imbizo* remained largely unpoliticised as is evident in the fact that the President appeared at the gatherings as a leader of the country, as opposed to campaigning for his party. However, important political principals like the President and Deputy-President always had tight schedules, which made it difficult for them to attend most of the *imbizos*. Nevertheless, the respondent believed all the provinces should get equal exposure to the President and the Deputy-President.

It transpired that the respondent had a high level of practical and theoretical understanding of the government *imbizo* and was in favour of the continuation of the *imbizo*. Furthermore, he identified a link between the “government *imbizo*” and the “traditional *imbizo*,” as the latter had been used by traditional political systems to wage wars against enemies, hunger and moral regeneration. In addition, the respondent

indicated that he would like to see the development of some modalities for deepening the understanding of the *imbizo*. The respondent expressed the wish that the *imbizo* would be used for the betterment of people's lives.

The above analysis of the field interviews has shown that some traditional leaders might have lacked adequate understanding of the government *imbizo*, which might have resulted in mistrust of the *imbizo*. In addition, despite its efficacy, some might also have regarded it as a threat to traditional leadership. Importantly, the civic organisations saw the *imbizo* as an important mechanism that could be instrumental in realising service delivery in spite of certain challenges. Furthermore, the ward councillors expressed appreciation for the *imbizo* because of its capacity to gather information from the people and its ability to address some of their concerns.

The responses from the GCIS indicated that the *imbizo* served as a democratic device, through its unmediated engagement with the people. For it to operate like an automatic system, the choice of a venue for the *imbizo* was informed by the responsiveness of the area. However, the GCIS admitted that there were challenges regarding the follow-up processes as well as with service delivery itself. This could compromise the responsiveness of the *imbizo* to the needs of the people.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Both methods were important for supplementing each other in the study. The quantitative and qualitative data were also described, for the purpose of interpretation of the results. Then, the quantitative data obtained from the students' responses, were categorised and captured using Microsoft Excel software, after which it was presented in the form of tables, graphs and charts.

The qualitative data were then summarised and compared to supplement the quantitative data. Such data consisted of responses from the representatives of the Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages, municipal documents on service delivery and responses from the official in the Presidency under which the GCIS falls. In the final

chapter, namely chapter seven, the conclusions and recommendations regarding the study are presented.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings of the research are interpreted in terms of the objectives of the study to determine to what extent and in what way, they were reached and to reach the necessary conclusions in this regard. As Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:146) state, “After interpreting the findings it is useful to summarise the aims of the research, compare them with the findings and draw conclusions on how much and in which manner the goal has been achieved.” Furthermore, recommendations are made pertaining to the findings of the study. These could be used to address problems identified in the research.

At this stage, it is necessary to integrate the findings made in the previous chapters. In this regard, the theory and empirical evidence are considered in a complementary manner. At the same time, the findings made with regard to the empirical evidence as obtained through the various qualitative and quantitative techniques used, are compared in order to note the differences and similarities –thereby triangulating the findings. This serves to enhance the validity of the findings, in particular, the external validity. It also helps to provide additional depth to the understanding of the *imbizo* and the assessment of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy. It should furthermore be borne in mind that the quantitative part of the research was merely for descriptive purposes and was not intended to find correlations between different variables. It merely described the attitudes of those surveyed in a more objective manner, thereby reducing the possibility of research bias.

7.2 FINDINGS

The main aim of the study is to determine whether the *imbizo* could be used as a mechanism to broaden democracy and as such, to determine whether it could serve to:

- Bring the government closer to the people.

- Make the government more responsive to the needs and ideas of the people, particularly with regard to service delivery.
- Promote participation by the people.
- Mobilise a positive attitude towards South Africa's democratic political dispensation, particularly among the population of the traditionally Venda-speaking regions of Limpopo Province.

As formulated in chapter one, the objectives of the study are:

- To understand the reasons why the government introduced the *imbizo*.
- To analyse whether the *imbizo* could be an instrument of democracy to bring government closer to the people, as well as whether it could be an instrument that could make it more responsive to their needs.
- To identify any similarities with other mechanisms of direct or participatory democracy, particularly popular assemblies.
- To determine the attitude of the people towards the *imbizo*, by making use of a case study. For this purpose, the mostly Venda-speaking regions of the Limpopo Province where an *imbizo* was held at Muswodi-Tshisimani in 2005 was selected).
- Because of its perceived role among the people in the Venda-speaking regions, to make some inferences on the role the *imbizo* could play within the context of South Africa's democratic political dispensation.

These objectives will be compared with the findings of the study, which are discussed below.

7.2.1 Reasons for the introduction of the *imbizo*

In an analysis of the *imbizo* as a mechanism to broaden democracy, it is important to look at the government's motivation for introducing the *imbizo*. Likewise, it is important to note how other role players perceive the reasons for introducing the *imbizo*, as well as the overall purpose of the *imbizo*. The following reasons came to light in the research:

- Firstly, the *imbizo* could be used as a mechanism to improve communication between the government and the people and thereby improve the responsiveness of the

government to the needs of the people. If handled correctly, this could lead to better service delivery.

- Secondly, the *imbizo* could be used as a tool for deliberation that would result in better service delivery.
- Thirdly, the *imbizo* could facilitate participation and the involvement of the people in the political process. This could lead to responsible citizens and better accountability of the government to the people.
- Fourthly, the *imbizo* could be used to mobilise the people to gain support for government programmes and thereby facilitate their success. However, this could also be viewed as attempts at electioneering and canvassing support and votes for the ruling party.

From the research, it is evident that there were different interpretations and perceptions of the reasons why the government introduced the *imbizo* as well as of the purpose and role of the *imbizo* within the South African political dispensation. Therefore, it is important to pay some attention to the various interpretations and perceptions in this regard. However, these should be viewed against the background of the overlap between the ruling party (the ANC), the government and the state; the functions of a government and that, in a democracy, good governance would probably imply satisfied citizens who, in turn, might vote for the ruling party.

Theoretical perspectives on the introduction of the *imbizo*

The introduction of the *imbizo* should be seen against the background of a mechanism that could improve communication and responsiveness, as well as participation in an indirect democratic system. This is due to the fact that despite the presence of the electorate, intermediaries, legislatures and the practice of regular elections; indirect democracy has limitations and weaknesses. This is also the situation in South Africa, particularly considering the closed party-list system used in South Africa (see section 3.3).

The party-list electoral system prompts public representatives as intermediaries to be accountable to the party rather than to the constituency. It is in this context that indirect

democracy nurtures party dominance, particularly by the ruling party. The intermediary shows “loyalty” to the party, compromising or neglecting the constituency. It also impacts symbolically on the responsiveness of the government, because people feel excluded from decision-making (see sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 respectively). This leads to problems in terms of limitations on participation and representation. It is precisely these limitations that people feel could be addressed by the *imbizo* and would thus justify its introduction.

In South Africa, there is a lack of participation in both ward meetings and report meetings regarding service delivery issues, as witnessed in the reporting of issues that received high media attention, such as the renaming of the town of Louis Trichardt, Khutsong and other service delivery protests since 2006.

The problem of representation has penetrated the three tiers of government, with party lists being used at both national and provincial levels. The mixed system of proportional representation and FPTP system at the local level, has not helped to limit the problem of party dominance. In addition, the election of the President by the majority party exacerbates the problem of representation. There is a feeling in the ruling party that the President carries the mandate of the party as a deployee in government, representing the party (see section 3.5).

There could be other reasons for the introduction of the *imbizo*, for example, as a forum for cooperative governance. Article 25 of the Constitution Act No.108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a) makes provision for cooperative governance for the three tiers of government. Furthermore, Article 119 of the Constitution Act No.108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a), provides for the local level to work with traditional authorities, through consultation and cooperation. However, problems regarding coordination between the government and traditional authorities affect service delivery.

From the perspective of the cybernetics model, the introduction of the *imbizo* could make the government more responsive to the needs of the people (see section 1.6.2). Hence, the *imbizo* should work like an automatic machine system in a cybernetics model that includes the sensory, analytical, decision-making and execution components. The establishment of such a communication system will help with communications and

deliberations when striving to reach consensus on issues that affect the government and people (see section 2.2.1).

Government

As explained above, the limitations of indirect democracy are important in an analysis of the *imbizo* as a mechanism of democracy. It was stressed on several occasions by members of the government, public officials and ANC spokespersons that the reasons for introducing the *imbizo* are for communication purposes. Thus the government introduced the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy, as was discussed in section 2.1 of chapter two, in order “to bring democracy closer to the people in ways with which they are more familiar” for improved communication. Both Pallo Jordan and Joel Netshitenzhe of the ANC, for example, state that the *imbizo* could serve as a communication tool, which should mobilise the people and foster active engagement when discussing issues affecting their lives, as was discussed in sections 1.1 and 1.5. To be more responsive to the needs of the people, the government sees the *imbizo* as a good forum for deliberations on issues with regard to service delivery, through direct contact (symbolic) with the people.

During the interview, the GCIS representative stated that the idea behind the introduction of the *imbizo* was to mobilise the people to become active participants regarding issues pertaining to service delivery, resulting in unmediated engagement and deliberations. The GCIS also thinks that there are challenges in terms of the coordination and implementation of issues discussed at the *imbizo*, by the national, provincial and local governments. These challenges such as the lack of follow-up regarding the demands made by the people also affect decision-making. Despite these challenges, the official thought the study of the *imbizo* could be deepened by developing some modalities, which could lead to a better understanding of the *imbizo*. Thus, the rationale should also be to involve the *imbizo* in attending to issues pertaining to, amongst others; hunger, poverty and moral regeneration (see section 6.3.3).

Respondents from Muswodi-Tshisimani Village

The various respondents’ responses regarding the reasons for the introduction of the *imbizo* are important. Firstly, the traditional leaders contended that the *imbizo* was used

for gathering information from the public. They also stated that such information was used for decision-making regarding service delivery and that the *imbizo* was used for consultation and participation purposes. The traditional leaders also indicated that the *imbizo* was used for public mobilisation in order to get community support for governmental programmes. Secondly, the ward councillor pointed out that the *imbizo* was used for gathering information from the public for service delivery. In addition, the respondent stated that the *imbizo* was used for discussing issues pertaining to the basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, housing and electricity. The respondent also informed the researcher that the *imbizo* was also used for public consultation and participation. The ward councillor concurred that the *imbizo* was used for public mobilisation. Thirdly, the civic organisation indicated that the *imbizo* was used for gathering information from the residents. The organisation added that the *imbizo* was used as a communication tool for carrying public information on service delivery to and from the government. It explained that the *imbizo* was also used for consultation and participation purposes. In addition, the civic organisation pointed out that the *imbizo* was used for mobilising the public for service delivery.

Respondents from Musunda village

Firstly, the traditional leaders stated that the *imbizo* was used for discussing basic issues pertaining to service delivery, such as water, sanitation, housing, electricity and crime. They added that such discussions of issues did not result in decision-making, as issues and promises made at the *imbizo* remained unfulfilled such as the provision of electricity. The traditional leaders also pointed out that the *imbizo* was used for the mobilisation of the public for consultation and participation. Secondly, the ward councillor representative pointed out that the *imbizo* was used for gathering information from the public to bring about a better life for the people in terms of basic services. The councillor representative also felt that the *imbizo* was used for public mobilisation in order to consult the people for participation purposes. Thirdly, unlike its Muswodi-Tshisimani counterpart, the civic organisation at Musunda did not agree that the *imbizo* was used for gathering information from the public for decision-making purposes. The organisation argued that although people were mobilised to participate in the *imbizo*, it was ineffective as it resulted in poor service delivery regarding houses and sanitation.

From the above, it may be concluded that, overall, in both Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda the perceptions are that the *imbizo* had been introduced for reasons such as communication, consultation and participation in matters pertaining to service delivery.

Documentation from the Mutale Municipality

The IDP document (Mutale IDP Review Document 2008) emphasises the need to involve the residents when rendering services. Such involvement entails consultation through the *imbizo*, ward meetings and traditional leaders meetings. Thus, the *imbizo* was again seen as being a mechanism that could involve residents in issues of service delivery and could therefore promote public support for government programmes and address the service delivery backlog (evident from the documents) in the villages under its jurisdiction such as water, sanitation and housing.

Respondents from Univen

Students' impressions concerning the reasons behind the introduction of the *imbizo* and its effective use largely supported the reasons given by the government. To this effect, 94% (table 6.2.3.1) of the students believed that the *imbizo* was used for gathering information from the public. Another 78% (table 6.2.3.2) stated that such information was used for decision-making regarding service delivery. The majority of students 94% (table 6.2.3.3) believed that the *imbizo* was mainly used for discussing or deliberating about basic issues such as water, electricity, housing, education and crime.

A further analysis shows that nearly all students, namely 99%, (table 6.2.4.1) concurred that the *imbizo* was used for consultation with the people. Another 73%, (table 6.2.4.2), believed that the *imbizo* was used for public participation, through discussions of issues that pertained to service delivery. In addition, there was general agreement amongst students, namely 84% (table 6.2.4.3) that the *imbizo* was used for public mobilisation to solicit community support for governmental service delivery programmes. Furthermore, 84% (table 6.2.4.4) of the students revealed their likelihood of attending the *imbizo*, for the purpose of participation.

Thus, from the perspective of the Univen political science students, the reasons offered by the government for introducing the *imbizo* were legitimate and although party politics were sometimes involved, they still seemed to value the possibilities the *imbizo* offered to enhance public participation.

Respondents from Unisa

The Unisa political science students' responses regarding the reasons for the introduction of the *imbizo* are quite similar to those of the Univen students. Some 86% of the students, (table 6.2.3.1), were of the opinion that the *imbizo* was used for purposes of gathering information from the public; with another 64% (table 6.2.3.2), stating that such information was used for decision-making. Another 86% of the students (table 6.2.3.3), indicated that the *imbizo* was used mainly for discussing (deliberating) basic issues pertaining to service delivery such as water, electricity, housing, education and crime. Furthermore, 86% of the students, (table 6.2.4.1), believed that the *imbizo* was used for consultation purposes. Another 64% of the students (table 6.2.4.2) thought that the *imbizo* was used for public participation. A total of 77% (table 6.2.4.3) of the students believed that the *imbizo* was used for public mobilisation to get community support for governmental service delivery programmes. Another 77% of the students (table 6.2.4.4) indicated that they were likely to attend the *imbizo*, to participate in service delivery issues.

Both the Univen and Unisa Politics students' findings have generally shown that the *imbizo* was introduced with the aim of facilitating communications and deliberations regarding service delivery, which could help to engender feelings of inclusion and participation, for example.

Reservations regarding the government's intentions

The reasons for the introduction of the *imbizo* might also be seen against the background of the government's intention to fuse the party and the state. The government has often been blamed in the media and by opposition parties and some academics, for failing to make a distinction between the party and the state. Senior party members of the ANC, such as Gwede Mantashe, (SAfm d 2008) and Matthews Phosa (2007:13), have

emphasised that the ANC is the ruling party and should not be seen as a separate entity from the government. On the other hand, published articles by amongst others, Booysen (2006: 10) and Murray and Simeon (2008:21), which highlight these problems, stress the need for the separation of these powers and cautions that a party constitution cannot override the constitution of the land. The former GCIS chief and ANC NEC member, Joel Netshitenzhe, added that the ANC should not meddle in matters of government (Brown 2009:1-2). Thus, the *imbizo* might still be perceived in some circles as a propaganda machine to advance party political campaigns. However, the validity of this point was not confirmed by the specific findings of the study (see table 6.2.2.3). Generally, both the students' surveys and the fieldwork findings have shown that the *imbizo* is seen as being used mainly for service delivery purposes. Those that perceived the *imbizo* to be a platform for party politics, were by far in the minority.

Irrespective of the reasons and problems mentioned above, the *imbizo* is a mechanism, which the government clearly prefers to the referendum. This is despite the fact that provision has been made for referenda in the Constitution of South Africa. However, there are other mechanisms such as constituency services, ward meetings, including members of other parties in the government and the ANC party democracy.

7.2.2 The *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy

When considering whether the *imbizo* could serve as an instrument of democracy, two aspects are of importance. Firstly, it is important to determine theoretically whether the *imbizo* is in line with democratic practices and in particular, whether it is similar to other mechanisms of direct democracy. Secondly, it is important to determine whether those that have to make use of the *imbizo*, perceive it to be an instrument that could broaden their participation in a democratic dispensation, irrespective of its limitations. Thus, of particular importance, are the advantages and disadvantages of the *imbizo* within the context of an indirect democracy.

The participative nature and the communication of information of the *imbizo* are important within the context of the democracy and in this regard, the *imbizo* can be seen to have certain inherent advantages within the context of an indirect democracy.

It is however in the area of responsiveness that the value of the *imbizo* may be questioned. Theoretically and judged from the perspective of the cybernetics model, the *imbizo* has been described as being capable of operating like the information systems by responding to information from the environment, through its sensory, analytical, decision making and execution capabilities. In other words, the systems' capabilities make them responsive to the environment.

However, the findings with regard to the practical operations of the *imbizo* are that it cannot work in a similar way, as for example, an anti-aircraft system or a spider-web. The reasons are that the *imbizo* is human-driven and responsiveness is delayed by the role of various officials and procedures. Although vital communication may be conveyed during an *imbizo*, the response is not immediate, nor decided and executed at the particular location. Information first has to be processed and interpreted and weighed in terms of policy and budget constraints. All this takes place at a distant location and even if appropriate responses are possible, the problem of capacity still has to be dealt with. It is possible that the correct and corrective responses may result from an *imbizo*, but that is unfortunately not guaranteed.

An important factor in this regard is that in the current *imbizo* system, communication lines are lengthened, with the added disadvantage of bringing in additional intermediaries, with a greater chance of distorting the information communicated. Furthermore, responses originate far away from the origin of the information. Thus, in terms of policy responsiveness and service responsiveness, the *imbizo* displays some limitations. The *imbizo* is not mainly about policy-making. Thus, decision-making and policy making is centralised in government's professional ambit. Likewise, ongoing service delivery protests provide an indication that the government, in spite of the *imbizos*, faces some challenges with regard to service responsiveness.

It was also found that South Africa's indirect democracy based on proportional representation with a closed party-list system provides opportunities for the success of the *imbizo*. However, the dominant role of political parties and the lack of a clear distinction between the party, the government and the state, results in the *imbizo* being less effective than it could have been. The system shifts the accountability of people's representatives from the constituencies to the party, thereby engendering "loyalty" to parties (Friedman

2010:22). Such representatives will support the policies of their parties, irrespective of whether they are popular.

On the other hand, the government has established an important database on issues discussed at the *imbizos* and which may provide important information from which South Africa, as a whole, could benefit. In this way, the information obtained during the *imbizos* could inform policy decisions at central level.

It is also in this regard that the *imbizo* differs significantly from other mechanisms of direct democracy, except for the plebiscite, whose outcome is not binding on decision-makers. In contrast, the outcome of a referendum, a successful recall and popular initiatives are binding. Likewise, in the case of popular assemblies, final decisions are taken on those issues that fall within their powers.

The centralised planning and coordination of the *imbizo* gives rise to both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it does bring a distant government in contact with the people, but on the other hand, regarding the interpretation and execution of any input from the people, the government remains distant.

It was found in the research, that the *imbizo* could be considered to be allocation responsive, as discussed in chapter four. The “advantage” of allocation responsiveness pertains to “pork-barrel politics,” where representatives allocate resources to their constituencies with the aim of luring voters to vote for them during elections. Therefore, it is precisely for this reason that the ruling ANC is sometimes accused of using the *imbizo* to lure voters. However, in the end some resources are allocated to the people, which in turn may facilitate service delivery and to some extent accountability. In fact, the failure to follow-up on promises may result in the loss of votes.

A further problem of the *imbizo* in its current format is the lack of continuity and the limited duration of the *imbizo*. The *imbizo* does not take place at regular intervals and the allocated time is not always sufficient to deal with all the issues and questions raised.

From the data obtained in the surveys, it is clear that there is a need for the *imbizo*. The respondents in the fieldwork, for example, were of the opinion that it was important in

terms of service delivery. Likewise, in the surveys of students from both Univen and Unisa, it was found that a huge percentage of students believed in the importance of the *imbizo*, in terms of its efficacy and public mobilisation. Thus, there were indications that there were positive perceptions with regard to service responsiveness among the respondents, but it is in the area of symbolic responsiveness that the *imbizo* has its greatest advantage. The symbolic advantage of the *imbizo* is that the government goes to the people where there is an unmediated engagement in the mother tongues of the people, between the government and the people. The government leaders ranging from the President to the councillors have been engaging with the people since the introduction of the *imbizo* in 2001. It was found that a large number of such *imbizos* took place in the communities with government leaders interacting with the ordinary community members. Thus, the *imbizo* provides an opportunity for practical interaction between the government and the people, an exercise that is not always possible in an indirect democracy unless specifically provided for by the mechanisms of direct democracy.

Though symbolic responsiveness is important within the context of democracy, it is not necessarily a defining characteristic of democracy. Authoritarian systems may also nurture symbolic responsiveness. Thus, it is important to appraise the *imbizo* within the context of an existing democracy and not as an indicator of democracy. Thus, the success of the *imbizo*, as an instrument of democracy, is dependent on the political context in which it is used. This is quite similar to the different experiences pertaining to the traditional *imbizo* discussed in chapter four. As indicated, it can display characteristics of consensus, patriarchy and even authoritarianism, depending on the political style of the traditional leader.

To sum up, theoretically the *imbizo* could be regarded as an instrument of democracy in a democratic political context. This is largely a result of the *imbizo* being efficient in terms of symbolic responsiveness; facilitating direct contact between the government and the people; facilitating a forum for deliberation; nurturing perceptions of participation, inclusion and self-determination in the political process; and acting as a channel for communication. However, there are some characteristics of the *imbizo* that limit its potential in this regard. These are the centralised nature of the planning of the *imbizo*, limiting the agenda primarily to issues concerned with service delivery; the lengthening of communication channels; delayed execution of actions based on the information

obtained; and particularly the lack of continuity largely because it is not held at regular intervals and due to the distant follow-up on an *imbizo*.

7.2.3 The role of the *imbizo* within South Africa's democratic dispensation

In order to appraise the possibilities of the *imbizo* within the South African political dispensation, it is important to keep the points made in section 7.2.3 above in mind, as well as the attitudes displayed by the people on the *imbizo*. Furthermore, it is important to pay attention to possible "improvements" to the *imbizo*.

It appears to be the perception that the *imbizo* could play a role in South Africa's democratic dispensation, particularly in the light of the problems associated with indirect democracy. The findings derived from the surveys and fieldwork confirmed the likelihood of the success of the *imbizo*.

In terms of the advantages of the *imbizo*, of particular importance are:

- The role of the *imbizo* in facilitating contact between government and the people.
- Its role as both a tool for communication and deliberation.
- The symbolic nature of the *imbizo*.
- Its ability to nurture perceptions regarding inclusion and participation
- Its ability to mobilise involvement of the people and support for government programmes, which could create feelings of self-determination and service delivery.

On the other hand, there are some important disadvantages to the *imbizo* in its current form. The lengthy communication channels, the time allocated, the fact that the *imbizo* is not held at regular intervals and poor follow-up that results in slow delivery, are the main problems that need to be addressed. Therefore, the challenges resulting from indecisiveness and the lack of implementation will be ongoing, until such time that the government deals with aspects such as coordination of demands and the practical implementation of decisions taken. However, these problems can be addressed by the government, in which event, the effectiveness of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy can be enhanced.

Attitudes towards the *imbizo*

Despite some of the limitations of the *imbizo*, the perceptions of the people pertaining to the *imbizo* remain important. Thus, in this discussion of the attitudes pertaining to the *imbizo*, orientations towards the *imbizo*, the level of understanding of the *imbizo*, as well as perceptions regarding the *imbizo* are important. Considering some of the theoretical and practical advantages and disadvantages of the *imbizo*, the real test for the *imbizo* is how it is viewed by the people. Findings from both the fieldwork and the surveys are important in this regard.

GCIS official

The interview conducted with a GCIS senior official in the Union Buildings in Pretoria revealed, as was expected, a high level of understanding of the government *imbizo*. Such an understanding is related to the fact that the government *imbizo* is the offspring of the GCIS. The representative saw the *imbizo* as a partially symbolic exercise wherein the government (politicians and senior government officials) engage with the communities in matters of service delivery. Thus, senior government leaders perceive the *imbizo* as an exercise through which the government can identify with the people.

The GCIS officials have a pragmatic attitude towards the *imbizo*, for they acknowledge the existence of the challenges facing the *imbizo*. Thus, other than the fact that it serves as a forum where people communicate their wishes to the government; they admit to the problems connected with the coordination and implementation of such demands. The government finds it hard to coordinate demands from the local, provincial and national levels. Following up the demands made by the communities, are likewise problematic. However, the GCIS believes the idea of having the *imbizo* to fast-track service delivery should be encouraged.

For purposes of public mobilisation, the GCIS contends that *imbizos* attract large numbers of people. They note that effective public participation in decision-making at an *imbizo* will depend on the nature of the issue and whether the responsibility for that issue is at central, provincial or local government levels. Thus, there is room for direct decision-making, but macro issues would warrant that such decisions be taken at the

national level. It is important to note that the GCIS believes that the public should be mobilised to become active in society and that they should participate in the running of their affairs, thereby becoming self-determined. These positive attitudes clearly identify a role for the *imbizo* as a valuable instrument for democracy in South Africa.

Muswodi-Tshisimani village representatives

With regard to the category of understanding the government *imbizo*, the respondents from Muswodi–Tshisimani shared more similarities than differences.

The civic organisation clearly displayed a positive attitude towards the *imbizo*. They believed that the government *imbizo* held in the area was more than symbolic, because the wishes expressed by the residents on the day were being addressed by the government. Likewise, they believed in the efficacy of the *imbizo*, as it was being used to collect information from the residents. It was seen as a communication portal, which carried public information on basic services from the residents to the government, which then provides feedback to the people. Furthermore, they were of the opinion that they were fully consulted about the holding of the *imbizo*, that the level of participation was high during the *imbizo* and that the government *imbizo* served to mobilise the residents for service delivery.

On the other hand, the court of the local traditional leader displayed a lack of understanding of the government *imbizo*. However, it was agreed that the *imbizo* was a symbolic exercise. Regarding the efficacy of the government *imbizo*, there was some doubt concerning the things that the *imbizo* could do in terms of service delivery issues such as electricity, water and housing. However, they did agree that they were fully consulted about the holding of the *imbizo* and were of the opinion that the level of participation and consultation was good. Thus, it was conceded that the *imbizo* could be used for purposes of public mobilisation.

The ward councillor had a good understanding of the *imbizo* and also displayed a positive attitude towards the *imbizo*. However, he emphasised that the *imbizo* was not a symbolic exercise only; instead, it was more about practical service delivery. Therefore, he supported the *imbizo* on the grounds of its efficacy in service delivery to the community.

Being a local ward councillor, the respondent fully believed in using the *imbizo* for public mobilisation and was of the opinion that the government had consulted the residents extensively before the holding of the *imbizo*. As a result, the public participation was high.

Thus, except for the traditional court, the attitudes towards the *imbizo* were generally positive.

Musunda village representatives

The attitudes in Musunda village were similar to those in its counterpart. However, the Musunda civic organisation saw the government *imbizo* as more of a symbolic exercise. Their understanding was that *imbizo* had more to do with symbolism than producing results.

They did not believe in the efficacy of the *imbizo*, citing a lack of or slow service delivery. Furthermore, the basic services rendered up to that point was of poor quality, in terms of the basic infrastructure such as houses and sanitation. In other words, some of the issues raised at the *imbizo* were addressed but standards were compromised. On the other hand, they were of the opinion that the *imbizo* held in their area was capable of public mobilisation and that residents were fully consulted before the holding of the *imbizo*. The organisation was also satisfied with the level of participation at the *imbizo*, including the attendance, which was high.

In this case, the traditional leaders' understanding of the government *imbizo* was good and although they had a positive opinion of the *imbizo*, they perceived the government *imbizo* mostly as a symbolic exercise. However, the efficacy of the government *imbizo* was important when discussing basic issues of service delivery, but promises made at the *imbizo* were not always fulfilled, for example, electricity was still not supplied at the time this research was conducted. The traditional leaders also felt that the *imbizo* was used for public mobilisation, that they were fully consulted by the authorities before the holding of the *imbizo* and were satisfied with the level of participation. In their opinion, the attendance was also high.

The ward councillor representative had a very good understanding of the government *imbizo*. The representative saw the *imbizo* as a symbolic exercise and it helped the community to engage with the government, but noted that the government was also obliged to fulfil what it had promised to the residents. Furthermore, the government *imbizo* was effective in bringing about a better life to the people. The representative of the ward councillor gave an example of services delivered such as housing and sanitation. With regard to public mobilisation, the representative believed the *imbizo* to be capable of mobilising the public for service delivery. Again, the opinion was that the government consulted the residents in full before the holding of the *imbizo*. The attendance and participation were perceived to be high.

Although there were some reservations, the responses testified of a qualified positive, attitude towards the *imbizo*.

Mutale Municipality documents

Documents such as the IDP, emphasise the need to involve the residents before rendering services in their areas. In other words, mechanisms like the *imbizo* and ward meetings were seen as effective means of mobilising the people to get involved in their living conditions.

Political science students at Univen

The responses from the students reflected an informed and qualified positive attitude towards the *imbizo*. From the data, it can be concluded that the understanding of the *imbizo* by the students was good. The majority of the students (98%), supported the idea that it was necessary for a democratic government such as the one in South Africa to consult the public through a government *imbizo* in aspects of service delivery and 84% also indicated that they would like to attend an *imbizo*. A total of 78% viewed the government *imbizo* as a symbolic exercise capable of playing a role in political dynamics and thus also public mobilisation. Ninety-four percent (94%), of the students regarded the *imbizo* as capable of gathering information from the public and 78% believed that the information gathered at the *imbizo* was used for decision-making purposes. However, 98% of the students held that at a government *imbizo*, basic issues such as water,

electricity, housing, education and crime were discussed mainly, but 74% of the students were of the opinion that public participation at a government *imbizo* was effective and 84% were of the opinion that *imbizos* were able to mobilise community support for governmental programmes.

Thus, the students emphasised the need for continuing with the *imbizo*. However, they cautioned that decisions reached at the *imbizo* should be implemented and the government must not promise beyond its means. Some concerns were also expressed that government was trying to conflate the *imbizo*, either as a party or as a state function.

Political science students from Unisa

The responses from the Unisa students were similar to those at Univen and were generally positive. The students displayed a good understanding of the *imbizo* and 87% were of the opinion that it was necessary for a democratic government like that in South Africa, to consult the public through a government *imbizo* on aspects of service delivery. Unisa students (77%) also revealed that they would like to attend an *imbizo*. It is against this background that 69% saw the government *imbizo* as a symbolic exercise.

Some 86% saw the *imbizo* as capable of gathering information from the public and 64% believed that the information was used for decision-making purposes, but 86% contended that basic issues such as water, electricity, housing, education and crime were mainly discussed at the government *imbizo*. They were of the opinion that the *imbizo* was capable of playing a role in political dynamics and 77% believed that the government *imbizo* was successful in getting community support for governmental programmes. Thus, it is a tool that could be used to mobilise the public. The students had strong feelings on consultation and participation in the *imbizo*, they regarded it as important to discuss issues connected with service delivery and 64% of the students were of the opinion that public participation at an *imbizo* was effective.

The students placed a strong emphasis on the need for continuing with the *imbizo*. However, just as was the case with the students at Univen, they cautioned that decisions reached at the *imbizo* should be implemented and the government should not promise

beyond its means. In addition, they (68%) expressed some concern that the government was trying to conflate the *imbizo*, either as a party or as a state function.

In general, people are interested in attending the *imbizo* in South Africa in order to discuss issues pertaining to service delivery. It is important to note that the findings confirmed the importance of the *imbizo* within the South African political dispensation as an instrument of democracy.

7.2.4 Recommendations for improving the *imbizo*

From the findings of the research, it can be concluded that there are aspects concerning the *imbizo* that could be improved in order to enhance the usability of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy within South Africa. Thus, the recommendations made in this section are aimed at addressing some of the identified problems, particularly concerning the persistent problem of service delivery. With regard to the problems of service delivery, it is important to note that not all the issues pertaining to it can be resolved by the *imbizo*, but the *imbizo* has some potential to steer service delivery, particularly in the setting of priorities. For the *imbizo* to be successful in the latter regard, it is important that the *imbizo* should not be manipulated and used as a talk-shop (Hartslief 2005:17).

Hence, the following recommendations are important to government *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy in South Africa.

7.2.4.1 Enhancing direct participation

As discussed, it is important for democratic governments to engage the people directly in matters of governance in order to bridge the unnecessary gap that exists between the government and the governed and to prevent feelings of marginalisation and exclusion. For a democracy to be deepened, politicians and government leaders should have direct contact with the people. However, such public participation should be characterised by informed deliberations, which lead to decision-making. This would probably also require additional time for particular issues. The *imbizo* could play an important role in this regard, but there is a need to move beyond the *imbizo* as a primarily symbolic exercise. Furthermore, great care should be taken to prevent the manipulation of the *imbizo* by

vested interests, particularly by “demagogues” irrespective of whether they act in the interest of particular political parties, traditional courts, or other interests. In order to improve the *imbizo*, the government could perhaps consider making use of some of the other mechanisms of direct democracy, such as the referendum, popular initiative and recall, to supplement the *imbizo*. In this regard, popular initiatives and referendums at a local setting could be used to set priorities for the *imbizo* agenda and to obtain a preview on the support for particular policies or service delivery issues. This could enhance the nature of the proceedings at an *imbizo* greatly, prevent the GCIS from “censoring” the agenda and prevent the manipulation of discussions at an *imbizo*. Of further importance in this regard is the need for continuation, and holding *imbizos* at more regular intervals - or at least to provide other opportunities for input after an *imbizo*, or between *imbizos*.

7.2.4.2 Improving follow-up and feedback.

Respondents pointed out that, despite successes with regard to participation and input, the main problem areas relate to follow-up and implementation. According to Hartsliel (2005:17):

The monitoring and follow-up on various issues are time consuming and, in some cases, of very sensitive nature. The fact that hope and expectations from communities are growing has the potential of becoming problematic amidst the ever-present challenge of sustainability in the form of continuous feedback to the affected communities.

Therefore, there is a need for the government to find ways to improve follow-up and feedback. Improved communication in which use is made of local radio broadcasts, newspapers and personal communication by local officials and traditional leaders could be important to consider.

7.2.4.3 Making achievable promises

If the *imbizo* is to become more policy and service responsive, it is important that the people are able to see how *imbizo* related decisions are implemented. In this regard, it is advisable that the government makes only achievable promises, and that, agendas and decisions should be limited to what is achievable. Such promises must be informed by the

prevailing socio-economic conditions and capacity rather than by politics and ideology. The symbolic nature of the *imbizo* could lead to it becoming too unpragmatic, which may work against its own symbolism in the long term if the perception takes root that it is merely a talkshop. This issue was raised by both the Univen and Unisa political science students. Thus, it is important to educate people on what can be delivered “by” a democracy (Slabbert, F.van Z. 1992a:9).

7.2.4.4 Improving capacity and workmanship

Part of the problem is that the lack of delivery or the poor quality of delivery is due to a lack of capacity and skilled workmanship. Quality was often compromised for quantity when RDP houses were built, many of them of a poor quality. “The mismatch between expectations, on the one hand, and limited skills, capacity and commitment on the other hand, dented the dream of local democracy” (Booyesen 2006:10; Pillay 2009:152; Sowetan 2009:1,4). The problems associated with capacity and workmanship were raised in this study of the government *imbizo*, during the interviews with respondents in the two villages of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda that fall under the Mutale Municipality. Some of the respondents asserted that there were several houses that had developed cracks after their completion. Other than that, there were some houses and toilets which had not been completed by the construction company. Thus, the sustainability of basic services is hamstrung due to incapacity and poor workmanship. The government has since established an Investigative Unit, to probe the malpractices mentioned. However, it is important that the government should also institute training programmes to improve skills and capacity, as well as consider the introduction of self-help and job-creation programmes at local level. Most issues raised are not macro-issues that need response at the national level. However, monitoring at the national or provincial level is crucially important so that there is a response to complaints.

7.2.4.5 Addressing implementation and service delivery challenges

The respondents indicated that the government should strengthen its management skills and capacity because the lack of implementation is often hampered by bureaucracy in the public service and indecisiveness, particularly at the provincial and local level: “On this continent we suffer from a suffix of good decisions...no implementation” (Mbeki, in

Pahad & Esterhuysen 2002:166; Pillay 2009:148-149). Thus, despite widespread participation at government *imbizos*, the implementation of decisions informed by these forums is not without challenges.

7.2.4.6 Separating the ruling party from the government and the state

The lack of a clear distinction between the ruling party (ANC), the government and the state also affects service delivery. The problems posed by the two centres of power, that is the ANC's Luthuli House and the government in the Union Buildings, have a negative impact on service delivery. Deployment of ANC cadres who often lack the necessary experience and skills, is a specific problem in this regard (SABC 2 d; Mamaila 2008:22). The South African Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Sicelo Siceka, pointed out, that service delivery is challenged by corruption and incapacity of government officials, appointed without merit and skills (e-TV News b). There is thus a need for the increased professionalisation of the public service, because if deployments are not done with the competency and knowledge required for the job; service delivery will remain an ideal and a far-fetched activity (McLennan & Munslow 2009:10).

7.2.4.7 Improving advice and coordination

The *imbizo* system is run from the Presidential office and extends to the provinces and municipalities. This leads to challenges regarding the fast-tracking of inputs made by the public at the *imbizo*. It is therefore important to advise and coordinate the service delivery activities in a manner that is action-orientated and accountable. The "inner circle" has a key role to play in this regard as was the case with the traditional *imbizo*. Its proper role in society should therefore not be undermined, but neither should it be overemphasised. The new Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, established in the Presidency by President Zuma and which would focus in particular, on performance monitoring and evaluation, is an important step in this regard. This should however be linked to improved accountability which should cascade to every level of accountability that involves the community in the evaluation of services being rendered (Powell 2009).

7.2.4.8 Finding new principles to guide governance

The principles of “Batho Pele,” that is, people first, are important in the governance structures and each public servant is expected to uphold these principles which include consultation, setting service standards, increasing access, ensuring courtesy, providing information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money (see Batho Pele principles). However, supplementing these with the principles of “Ubuntu” with the emphasis on serving and treating a fellow human being and even animals with humanity, could also assist in changing the attitudes towards and priorities in terms of policy-making and implementation of the policy. “Ubuntu” is inclusive of every aspect of life and requires that there should be an element of humanity in everything done. Largely rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, this could become a proper guiding principle for service delivery.

7.2.4.9 Improving the involvement of traditional leaders

In areas where there are traditional leaders, it is important to improve the involvement of traditional leaders. Currently, they are “consulted,” but often this is seen as a mere formality, which may lead to a lack of understanding of the “modern” *imbizo* and which may engender mistrust and feelings of exclusion in the long term. This concern was raised by some of the traditional leaders who were interviewed. They displayed a lack of understanding regarding the precise role and place of the “modern” *imbizo vis-à-vis* the traditional *tshivhidzo*. Thus, for the *imbizo* to succeed, in the long term, it should include traditional leaders in a more meaningful way. These leaders could be incorporated better in the setting of the agenda as well as in the implementation of decisions. However, cultural constraints, such as the position of women may be an obstacle. Thus, there is also a need to address these possible areas of conflict with traditional leaders.

7.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This is a case study that has the disadvantages that it lacks external validity and the findings cannot be generalised to a broader context. However, the internal validity of the research is not questioned, although qualitative research is dependent on interpretation in which “errors” may occur. Importantly, the findings based on observations, interviews

and document analysis are accepted as valid. The combination of several data collection instruments such as observations, structured questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions, semi-structured in-depth individual interviews with closed and open-ended questions and the data obtained from the documents on service delivery in Mutale Municipality, contributed to the internal validity of the study.

Care should be taken regarding the external validity of the findings. It may be said that even within the context of the wider Venda-speaking region, one should be cautious about generalising the findings obtained from the villages that were the focus of the study to the wider Venda-speaking region. However, the survey among Univen students provided a sample that was representative of the wider region. Likewise, the sample from Unisa provided some indication of how the *imbizo* was perceived outside the Venda-speaking region. As indicated, the findings were quite similar to those obtained from the fieldwork. Thus, there are indications that such findings may be valid within a wider context, but it is important that such conclusions need to be backed by further research.

A particular limitation identified regarding this study is the fact that the link between political party affiliation and attitudes towards the *imbizo* was not analysed systematically. From the data obtained during the fieldwork, it appears as if this could be a factor that should be taken into account in future studies on the *imbizo*.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

As indicated above, there are some limitations to the generalisability of the findings of the research. Thus, in order to improve our understanding of the role the *imbizo* could play within South Africa's democracy, further research is required.

Firstly, it is important to conduct a study that uses a more representative sample of the South African population. This would facilitate a "deeper" analytical assessment of the *imbizo* as an instrument of democracy. A study of this nature could be generalised to the entire population being researched.

Secondly, additional fieldwork in other settings, both urban and rural needs to be done. Whereas, a more representative survey would give a good indication of the attitudes towards the *imbizo*, fieldwork would provide more information on personalised experiences with the *imbizo*. Such research also needs to include other population groups such as Whites, Coloureds and Indians in addition to the various ethnic groups among the Blacks. It is important to bear in mind that there is no reason why the *imbizo* should follow the “one size fits all” pattern. Variations based on the nature of the location are indeed possible and probably feasible – but these need to be researched. Thirdly, political party affiliation and perceptions concerning the *imbizo* need to be researched systematically. Fourthly, the “management” of the *imbizo* by the GCIS requires thorough research. Important in this regard are:

- The extent of the censoring of issues by the GCIS even before they are raised by the people.
- The handling of service delivery demands gathered during the *imbizo*.
- How the national, provincial and local governments are involved with regard to service delivery.
- Decision making and implementation with regard to service delivery.
- The nature of the follow-up process.
- Whether the needs expressed at *imbizos* by the people are addressed.

Such research should include the GCIS documentation, as well as task team members for the purpose of interviews, as they are considered to have some valuable information on the coordination of issues raised at the *imbizo*.

Fifthly, in rural settings with traditional leadership structures, the interaction between the traditional leaders and officials from the GCIS, before, during and after an *imbizo*, need to be analysed in more detail in order to enhance the serviceability of the *imbizo* within the context of South Africa’s democratic dispensation, for purposes of service delivery. Top-down and authoritarian tendencies need to be researched in order to address them, if and when they exist.

7.5 CONCLUSION

Democratic political dispensations, which are based on representation, are often characterised by experiences and feelings of marginalisation, exclusion, lack of participation and direct involvement in the political process. This is often exacerbated by the type of electoral system, particularly one based on closed party lists, coupled by a majoritarian system where the majority party wins the right to govern. Thus, representative government is often supplemented by mechanisms of direct democracy in order to facilitate greater involvement of the people in the political process.

South Africa is no exception in this regard in its implementation regarding the *imbizo*. The research has indicated that the *imbizo* displays similarities with other accepted mechanisms of direct democracy, particularly popular assemblies. Furthermore, its relatedness with the traditional *imbizo* makes it an instrument with which the people can identify. Thus, the *imbizo* has the potential to be utilised as a successful instrument of democracy in South Africa, which could bring government closer to the people and make it more responsive to the needs of the people. In addition, the people can be mobilised concerning the programmes on service delivery. However, there are some constraints that need to be addressed in order for it to broaden democracy in South Africa effectively. It is in this regard that further research is required.

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ADDENDUM 1: Univen & Unisa questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE:

This questionnaire is part of research on the ‘**government imbizo**’ which is currently being undertaken by a Masters student for purposes of his dissertation. You are **invited** to participate in the research, but please note that participation is **voluntary, anonymous** (no names) and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

The word “**imbizo**” is a Zulu word for a traditional gathering of subjects of the King, to discuss important issues affecting the people. Today, the **concept of the ‘government imbizo’** has come to mean government representatives going to communities to discuss issues of service delivery.

Thank you for your time.

Please complete only once and return questionnaire to Mr R. Mashamba’s office.

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Gender (mark with X):

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Age (mark with X):

18-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 +
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3. Income in rand per month (please specify): R.

4. Home language (please specify):..

5. Are you a politics student?

B. GOVERNMENT *IMBIZO*

6. How would you rate your knowledge of the current use of the ‘government *imbizo*’
(Mark with X)

Very good	Good	Poor	None
-----------	------	------	------

7. Have you ever attended a ‘government *imbizo*?’ (Mark with X)

Have attended	Have not attended
---------------	-------------------

8. Do you see the practice of the ‘government *imbizo*’ in South Africa as mixing political party and state functions? (Mark with X)

Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Don’t know
--------	-----------	--------	-------	------------

9. The ‘government *imbizo*’ is useful to gather (collect) information from the public. (Mark with X)

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don’t know
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------	------------

10. Do you think the government uses information obtained from a ‘government *imbizo*’ for decision-making purposes? (Mark with X)

Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Don’t know
--------	-----------	--------	-------	------------

11. Is it necessary for a democratic government like South Africa to consult the public through a ‘government *imbizo*’ in aspects of service delivery? (Mark with X)

Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Don’t know
--------	-----------	--------	-------	------------

12. How effective is public participation at a ‘government *imbizo*’? (Mark with X)

Very effective	Effective	Less effective	Don’t know
----------------	-----------	----------------	------------

13. The ‘government *imbizo*’ is a symbolic exercise? (Mark with X)

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don’t know
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------	------------

14. The discussion at a ‘government *imbizo*’ is mainly about basic issues such as water, electricity, housing, sanitation, crime, education. (Mark with X)

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don’t know
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------	------------

15. The ‘government *imbizo*’ is successful in terms of getting community support for governmental programmes? (Mark with X)

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don’t know
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------	------------

16. Would you like to attend a 'government *imbizo*'?

Yes	Perhaps	No
-----	---------	----

17. N.B. Is there any thing else you would like to say or add with regard to the 'government *imbizo*' as an instrument to enhance service delivery and democracy in South Africa?

.....

Many thanks for your cooperation and participation.

Mr SF Mathagu.

ADDENDUM 2: Case study- Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda villages

This questionnaire is part of research on the ‘**government imbizo**’ which is currently being undertaken by a masters student in politics for purposes of his dissertation. You are **invited** to participate in the research, but please note that participation is **voluntary, anonymous** (no names) and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

The word “**imbizo**” is a Zulu word for a traditional gathering of subjects of the King to discuss important issues affecting the people. Today, the **concept of the ‘government imbizo’** has come to mean government representatives going to communities to discuss issues of service delivery.

Thank you for your time.

INTERVIEWER’S INFORMATION: Respondents are humbly requested to consider answering all the questions for the success of the study.

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Age (in years) of the respondent:

18-25	
26-30	
31-40	
41-50	
51-60	
61 and above	

2. Gender of the respondent:

Male	
Female	

3. Education of the respondent:

Grade 0-07	
Grade 08-12	
Grade 12 – M3	
M3 and above	

4. Income level of respondent per month (in rand)

0-1000	
1000-3000	
3000-5000	
5000-7000	
10 000-20 000	
20 000-40 000	
40 000 and above	

B. GOVERNMENT *IMBIZO*

5. What would you say was the level of consultation during the 2005 *imbizo* held at Muswodi -Tshisimani?

Fully consulted	
Consulted	
Poorly consulted	
Never consulted	

6. What were the other forms of consultation prior and after the *imbizo* ?

Public hearing	
Government Imbizo	
Ward meeting	
Chief's kraal meeting	
All of the above	
Civic meeting	
None of the above	

7. What would you say was the level of attendance at the *imbizo* at Muswodi-Tshisimani?

High attendance	
Moderate	
Low attendance	

8. Were you satisfied with the level of participation at the *imbizo* ?

Very satisfied	
Satisfied	
Less satisfied	
Never satisfied	

9. Which promises you still remember made by government during the *imbizo* ?

.....

(a) If any, were those promises ever fulfilled? Yes/ No.

10. How much time were you given to raise your concerns?

More time	
Enough time	
Less time	

11. What form of feedback / follow up did you receive from the government after the *imbizo*?

Positive	
Negative	
Uncertain	
None	

(a) Explain the feedback.....

12. Do you think the government *imbizo* is symbolic?

Yes	
No	

(a) Explain.....

13. Did the government *imbizo* bring a better life to the community?

Yes	
No	

(a) Explain how.....

14. Which issues were under discussion during the *imbizo* ?

Water	
Electricity	
Housing	
Unemployment	
Crime	
Roads	
Other, specify.....	

15. Which issues were high on the agenda?

.....

16. Which issues raised were addressed or implemented?

.....

(a) If addressed, how?

(b) If not addressed, what do you think are the reasons for failure?

.....

N.B. Is there anything else you would like to say or raise with regard to government *imbizo* as an instrument to enhance service delivery in South Africa?

.....

.....

Many thanks for your cooperation and participation.

Mr SF Mathagu.

ADDENDUM 3: The Presidency’s GCIS questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE:

This questionnaire is part of research on the ‘**government imbizo**’ which is currently being undertaken by a masters student in politics for the purpose of his dissertation. You are **invited** to participate in the research, but please note that participation is **voluntary, anonymous** (no names) and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

The word “**imbizo**” is a Zulu word for a traditional gathering of subjects of the King, to discuss important issues affecting the people. Today, the **concept of the ‘government imbizo’** has come to mean government representatives going to communities to discuss issues of service delivery.

Thank you for your time.

OPEN – ENDED QUESTIONS

1. What do you want to achieve by introducing the *imbizo* in a democracy?

.....

2. What is the role of government as “facilitator” in the *imbizo*?

.....

3. What informs / determines the agenda of the *imbizo*?

.....

4. What determines the venue of the *imbizo* ?

.....

5. What is your impression about the attendance of the *imbizo* ?

.....

6. What is your feeling about the success of the *imbizo* , if any?

.....

7. How effective is public participation at the *imbizo* in relation to decision making and service delivery?

.....

8. *Imbizos* discuss soft political issues than hard issues such as abortion, your comment?

.....

9. Is the 'government *imbizo* ' a symbolic exercise?

.....

10. What are the present challenges associated with the *imbizo*, if any?

.....

11. Is there anything else you would like to say or add with regard to the 'government *imbizo* ' as an instrument to enhance service delivery and democracy in South Africa?

.....

Many thanks for your cooperation and participation.

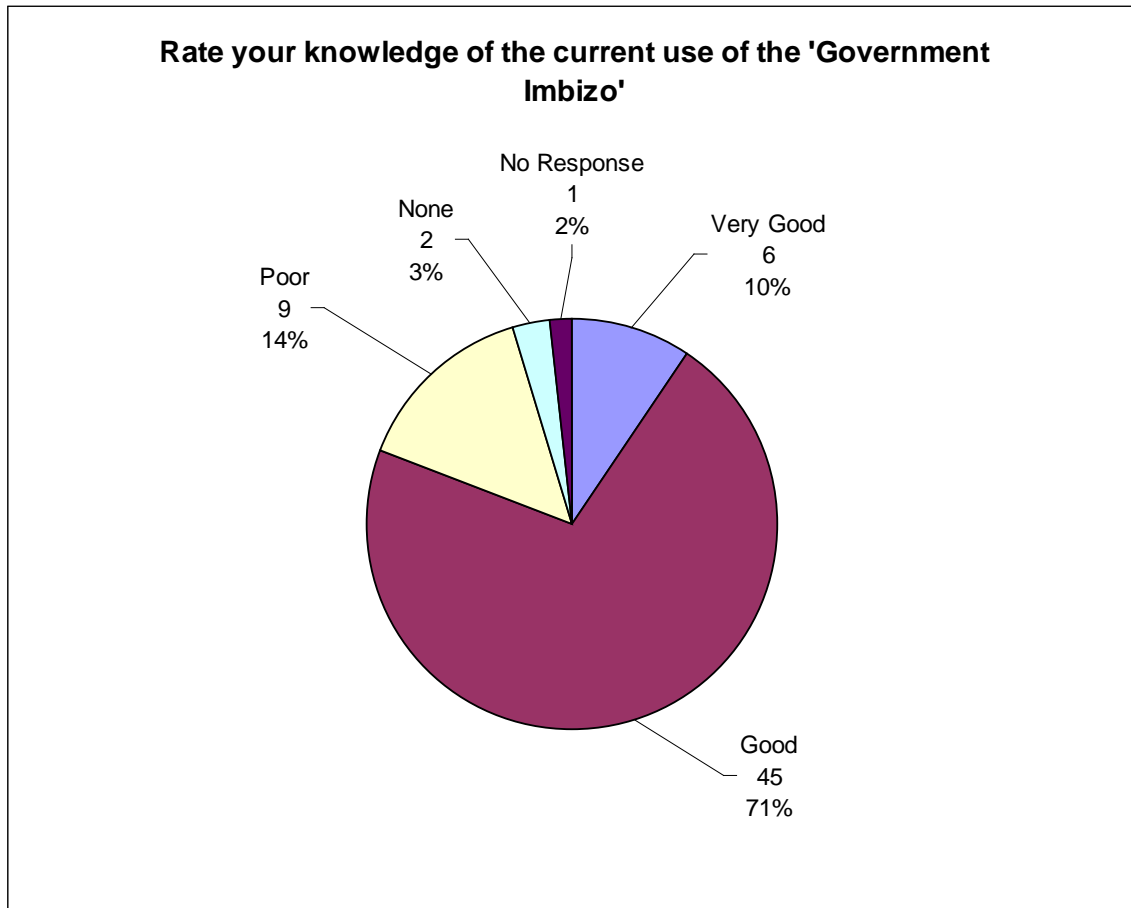
Mr Shandukani.F.Mathagu.



ADDENDUM 4: Aggregate findings of Univen respondents

How would you rate your knowledge of the current use of the 'Government *Imbizo*'?

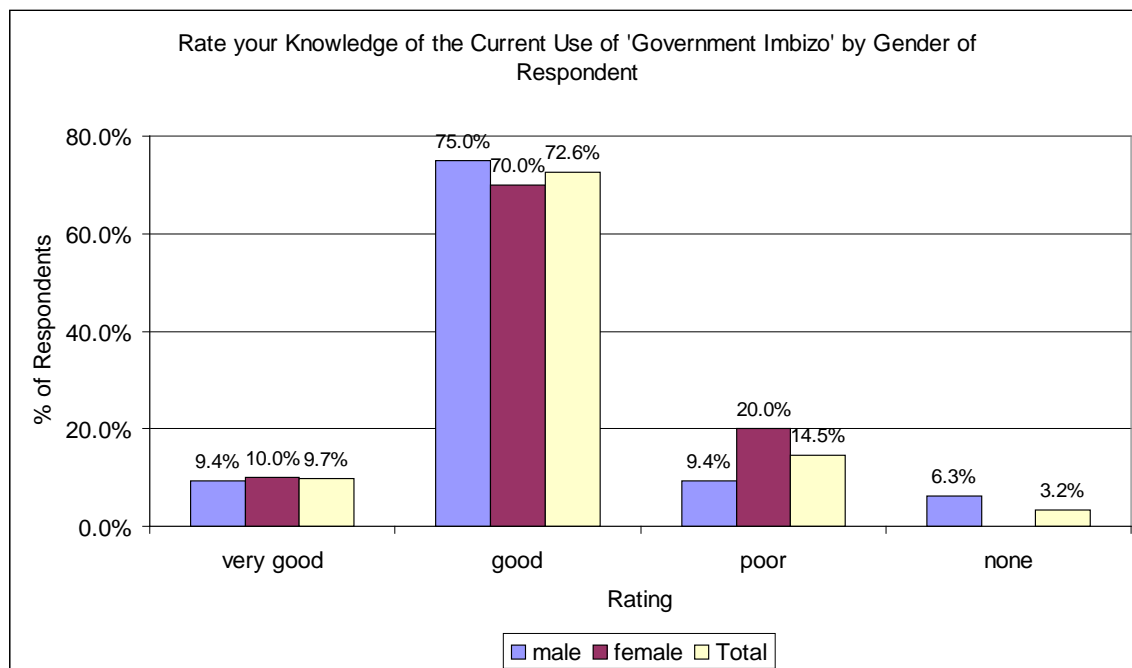
Respondents believed that they had a good knowledge of the current use of government *imbizos*. 45 out of 63 respondents (71%) claimed a 'good' level of knowledge while 6 respondents (10 %) claimed a 'very good' level of knowledge.



By gender of respondent

There did not appear to be any differences between males and females regarding how they responded to this question. Three out of 32 males (9.4%) claimed a very good level of knowledge compared to 3 out of 30 females (10%). 75% of the males and 70% of the females claimed a good level of knowledge about the use of government *imbizos*.

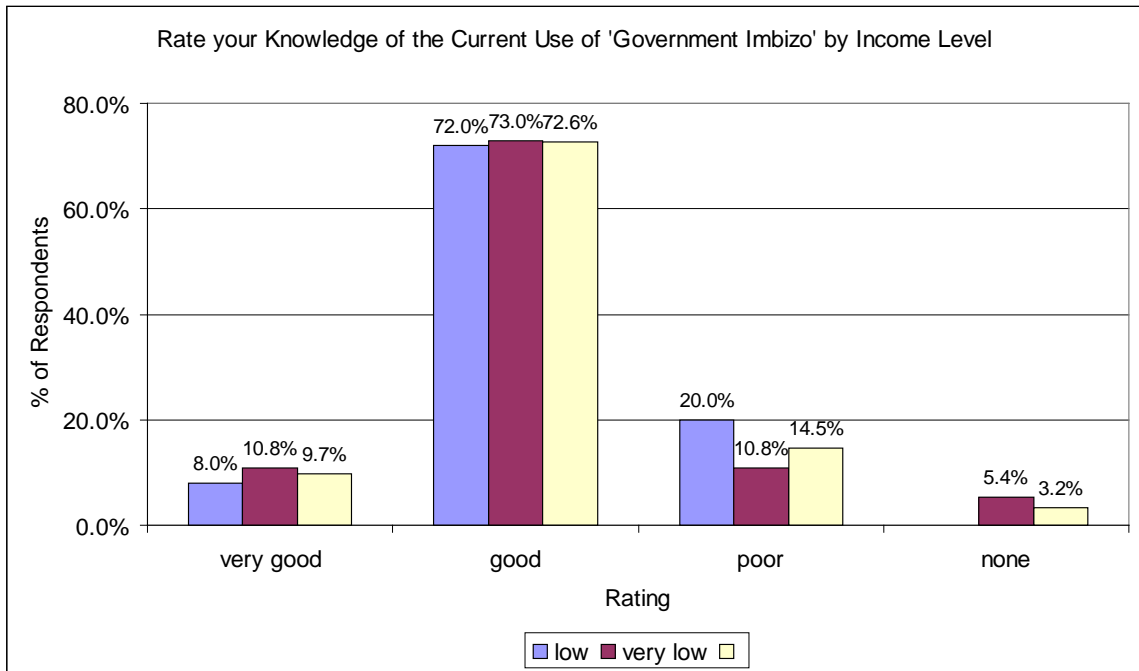
Rating	Gender of respondent		
	Male	Female	Total
Very Good	3 (9.4%)	3 (10.0%)	6 (9.7%)
Good	24 (75.0%)	21 (70.0%)	45 (72.6%)
Poor	3 (9.4%)	6 (20.0%)	9 (14.5%)
None	2 (6.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.2%)
Total	32 (100%)	30 (100%)	62 (100%)



By monthly income level

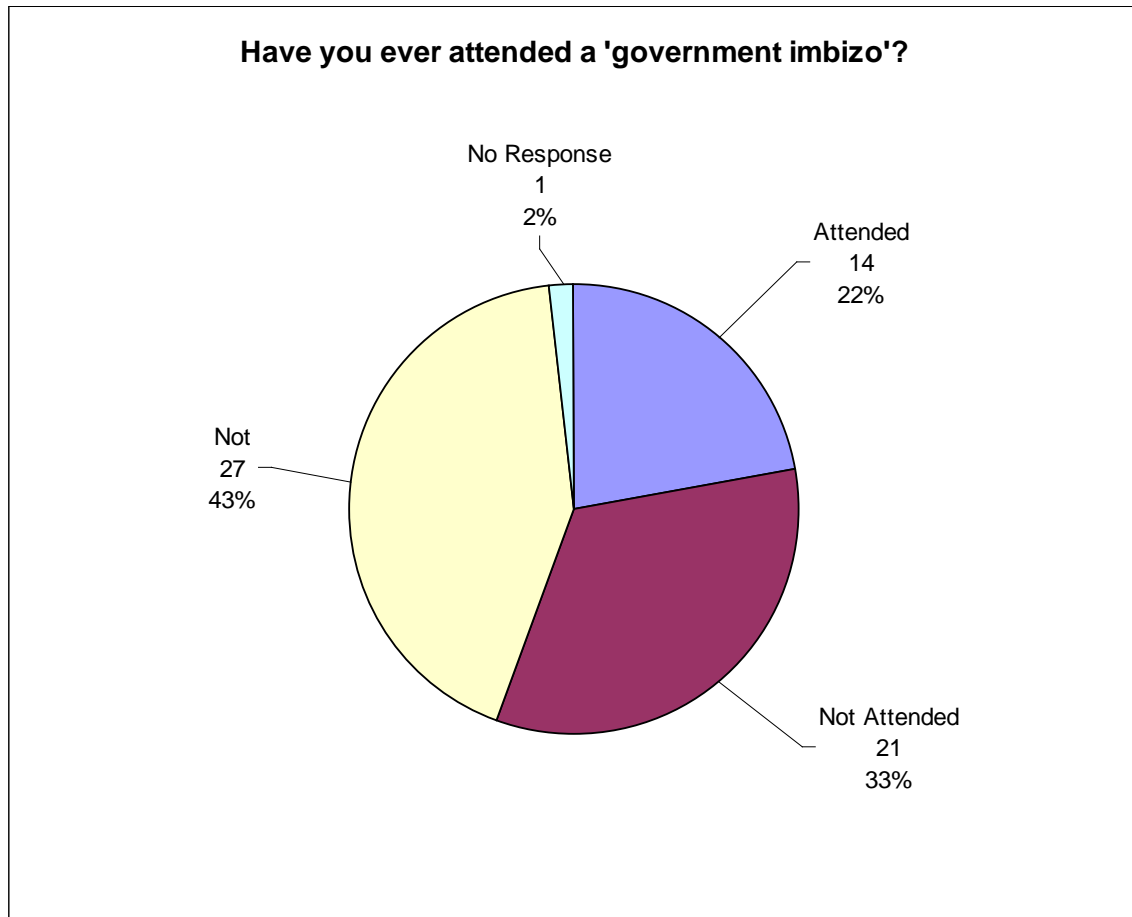
Rating	Monthly Income Level		
	Low	Very low	Total
Very Good	2 (8.0%)	4 (10.8%)	6 (9.7%)
Good	18 (72.0%)	27 (73.0%)	45 (72.6%)
Poor	5 (20.0%)	4 (10.8%)	9 (14.5%)
None	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.4%)	2 (3.2%)
Total	25 (100%)	37 (100%)	62 (100%)

Predominantly, the respondents fell into the 'low' and 'very low' income levels. Two out of 25 respondents (8.0%) with a 'low' income claimed a 'very good' knowledge of the *imbizo*, while 4 out of 37 respondents (10.8%) with a 'very low' income also claimed a 'very good' knowledge. 72% of the respondents with a low income claimed good knowledge compared to 73% with a very low income.



Have you ever attended a 'government imbizo'?

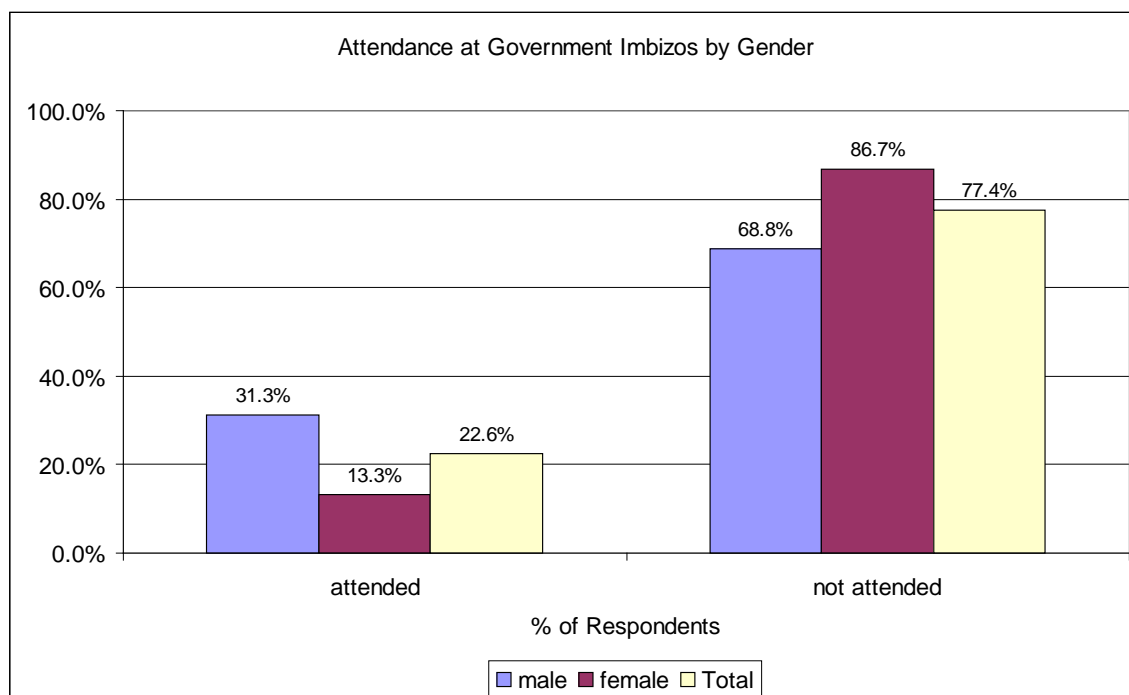
A few of the respondents confirmed that they had attended the 'government *imbizo*;' while 14 out of the 63 respondents (22%) had attended an *imbizo*.



By gender of respondents

There appeared to be difference between males and females regarding the attendance of the *imbizo*. 10 out 32 males (31.3%) had attended the *imbizo* compared to 4 out of 30 females (13.3%)

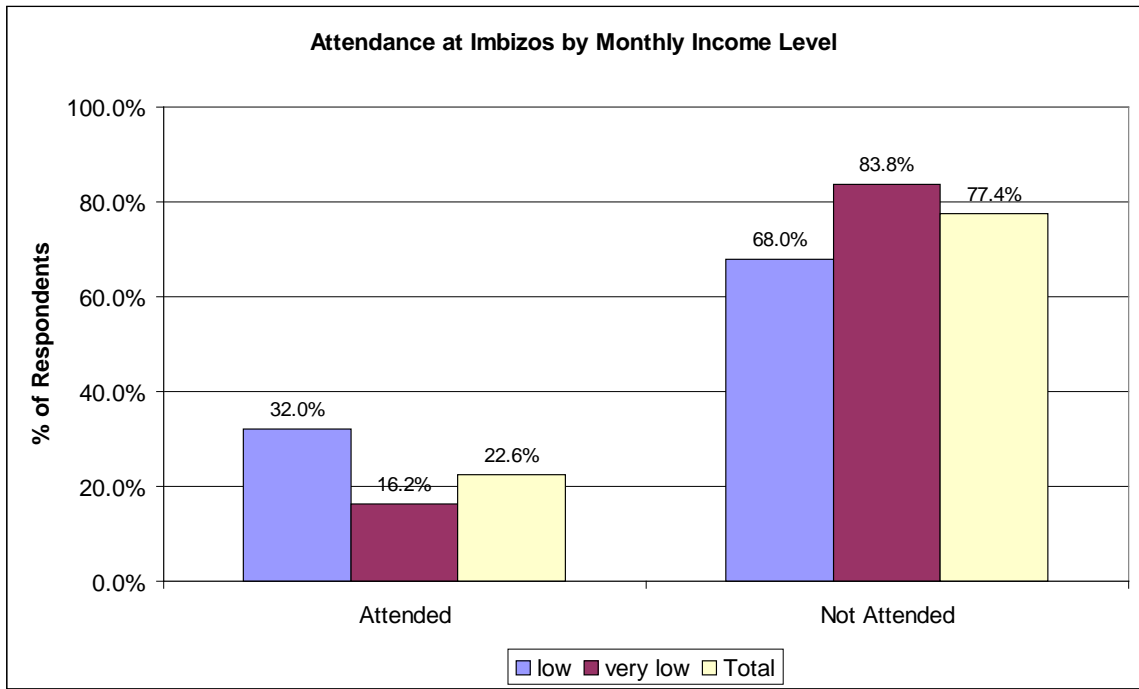
	Q1. Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Attended	10 (31.3%)	4 (13.3%)	14 (22.6%)
Not attended	22 (68.8%)	27 (86.7%)	48 (77.4%)
Total	32 (100%)	30 (100%)	62 (100%)



By monthly income level

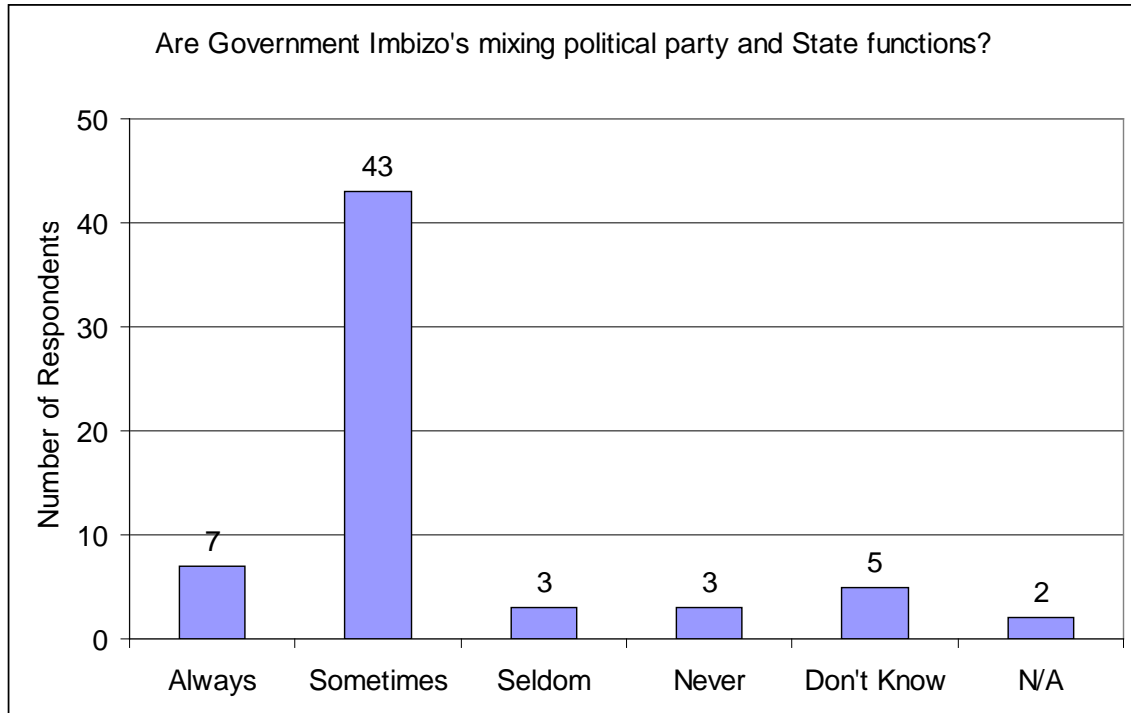
There appeared to be little difference in the attendance of the *imbizo* in terms of income level. Eight out of the 25 respondents (32.0%) with a 'low' income had attended the *imbizo*, compared to 6 out of 37 respondents (16.2%) with a 'very low' income. 68% of the respondents with 'low' income had not attended, compared to 84% with a 'very low' income.

	Q3. Monthly income level		
	Low	V. Low	Total
Attended	8 (32.0%)	6 (16.2%)	14 (22.6%)
Not attended	17 (68.0%)	31 (83.8%)	48 (77.4%)
Total	25 (100%)	37 (100%)	62 (100%)



Are government *imbizos* mixing political party and state functions?

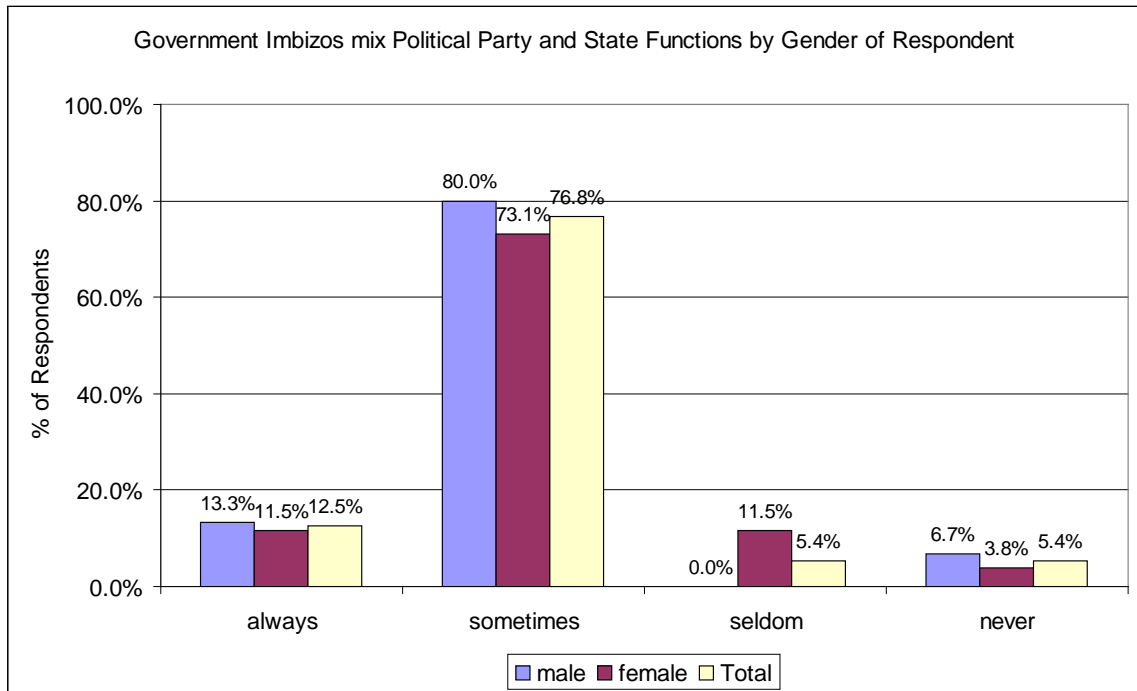
Respondents claimed that the ‘government *imbizo*’ ‘sometimes’ entailed the mixing of political party and state functions; while 43 out of 63 respondents (68.3%) believed the *imbizo* entailed a mixing of the political party and state functions, whereas 7 respondents (11.1%) believed that the government *imbizo* ‘always’ entailed a mixing of political party and state functions.



By gender of respondents

There appeared to be little difference between males and females in their responses regarding the mixing of political party and state functions. 4 out of 30 male respondents (13.3%) claimed that the *imbizo* ‘always’ entailed a mixing of political party and state functions, compared to 3 out of 26 female respondents (11.5%). In addition, 80% of the males believed that the *imbizo* was ‘sometimes’ a mixing of the political party and state functions, as compared to 73% of the females.

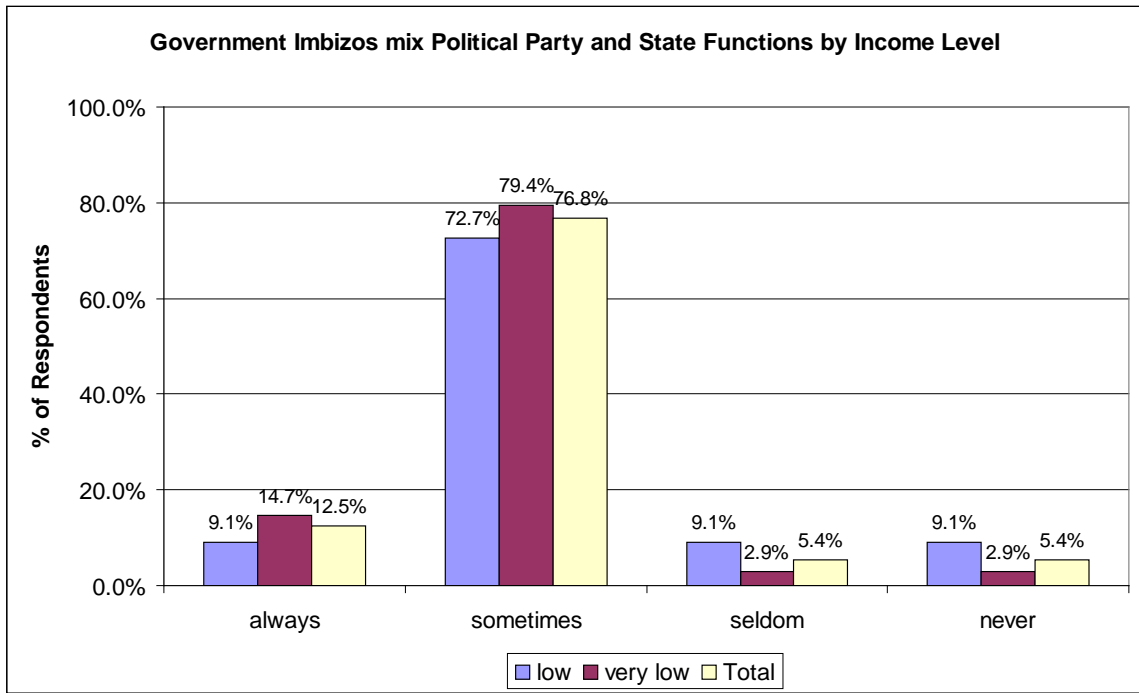
	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Always	4 (13.3%)	3 (11.5%)	7 (12.5%)
Sometimes	24 (80.0%)	19 (73.1%)	43 (76.8%)
Seldom	0 (0.0%)	3 (11.5%)	3 (5.4%)
Never	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.8%)	3 (5.4%)
Total	30 (100%)	26 (100%)	56 (100%)



By monthly income level

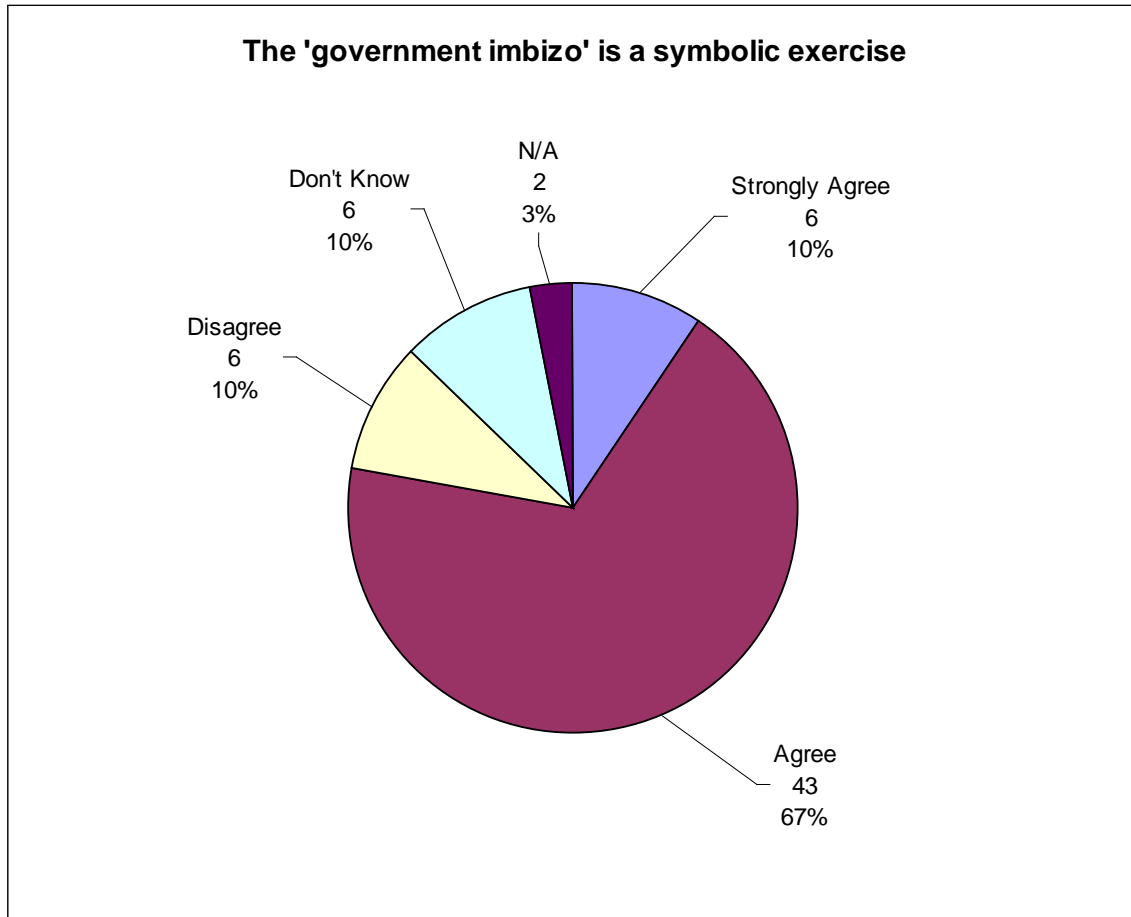
There appeared to be a difference in terms of level of income with regard to the government *imbizo* as a political party or state functions. Two out of the 22 respondents (9.1%) with 'low' income believed the government *imbizo* was 'always' a mixture of the political party and state functions, compared to 5 out of 34 respondents (14.7%) within the 'very low' income level. In addition, 72% of respondents within the 'low' income level believed that 'sometimes' the government *imbizo* was a mixture of political party and state functions, compared to 79% in the 'very low' category.

	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very Low	Total
Always	2 (9.1%)	5 (14.7%)	7 (12.5%)
Sometimes	16 (72.7%)	27 (79.4%)	43 (76.8%)
Seldom	2 (9.1%)	1 (2.9%)	3 (5.4%)
Never	2 (9.1%)	1 (2.9%)	3 (5.4%)
Total	22 (100%)	34 (100%)	56 (100%)



The 'government imbizo' is a symbolic exercise

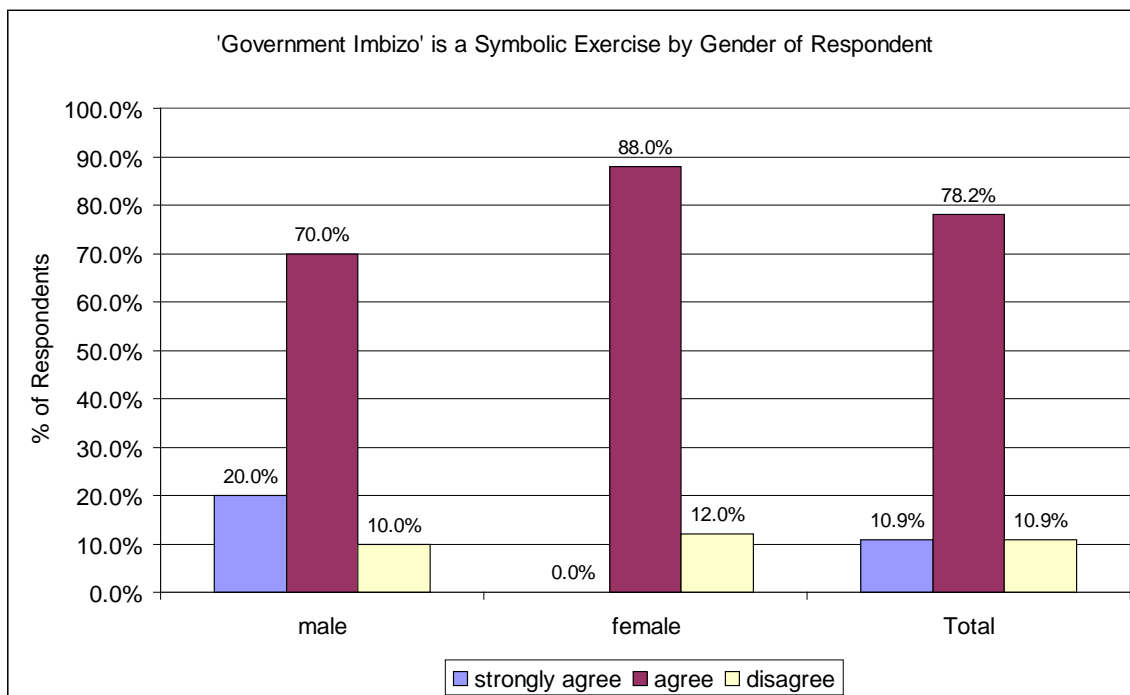
Respondents believed that government *imbizo* was a symbolic exercise. 43 out of 63 respondents (67%) 'agreed' to the statement, while 6 respondents (10%) 'strongly agreed.'



By gender of respondents

There seemed to be little difference between the male and female respondents in terms of whether the government *imbizo* was a symbolic exercise or not. Six out of 30 male respondents (20.0%) 'strongly agreed,' while female respondents were 0 out of 25 (0.0%). Interestingly, 70% of the male respondents 'agreed,' compared to 88% female respondents.

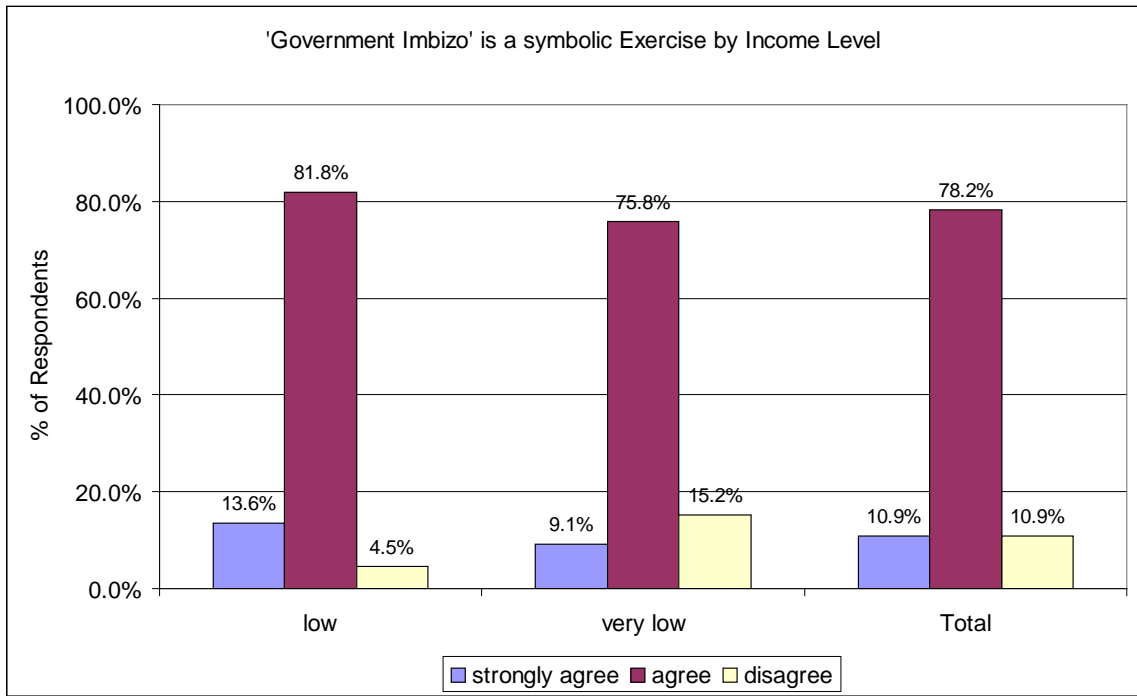
	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Strongly agree	6 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (10.9%)
Agree	21 (70.0%)	22 (88.0%)	43 (78.2%)
Disagree	3 (10.0%)	3 (12.0%)	6 (10.9%)
Total	30 (100%)	25 (100%)	55 (100%)



By monthly income level

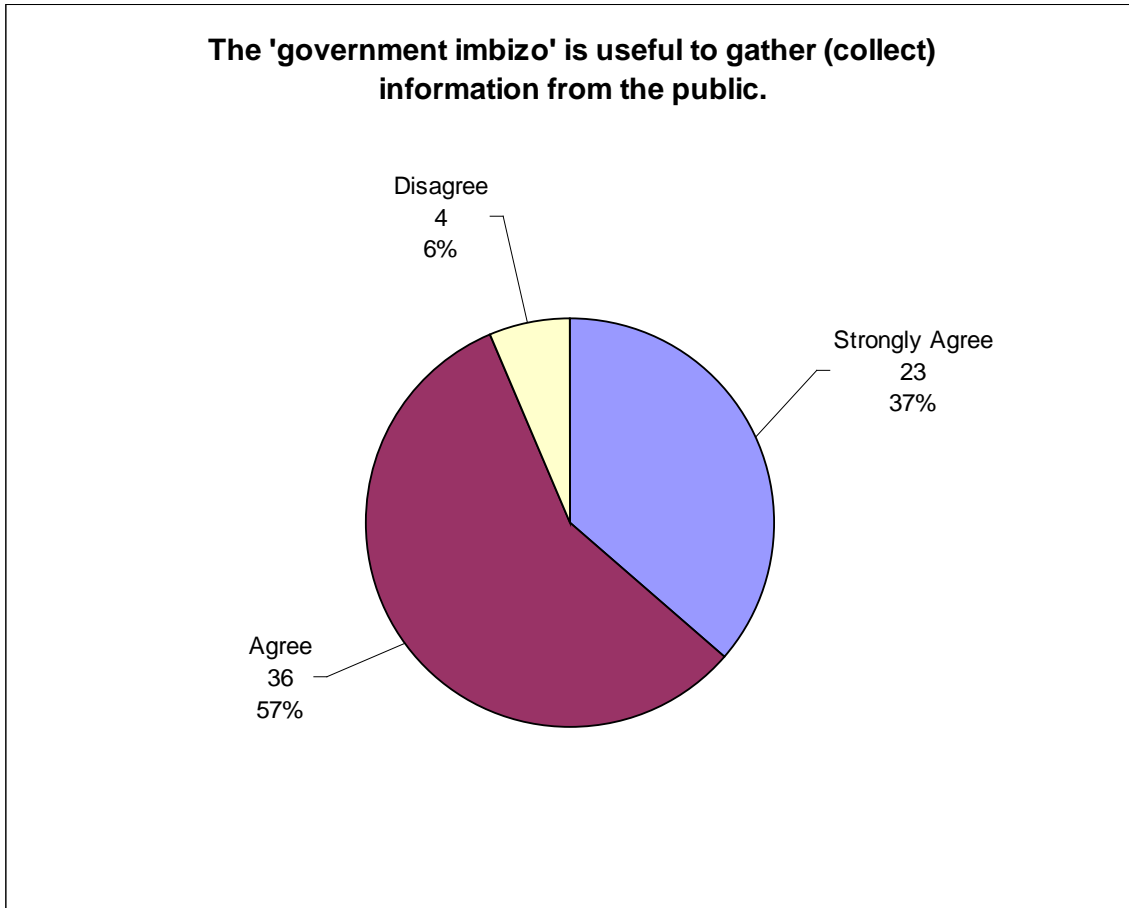
Three out of 22 respondents (13.6%) with a 'low' income 'strongly agreed,' while 3 out of 33 respondents (9.1%) within 'very low' income level did the same. 82% of the respondents in the 'low' income 'agreed,' compared to 76% within the 'very low' income group.

	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very Low	Total
Strongly agree	3 (13.6%)	3 (9.1%)	6 (10.9%)
Agree	18 (81.8%)	25 (75.8%)	43 (78.2%)
Disagree	1 (4.5%)	5 (15.2%)	6 (10.9%)
Total	22 (100%)	33 (100%)	55 (100%)



The government *imbizo* is useful to gather (collect) information from the public

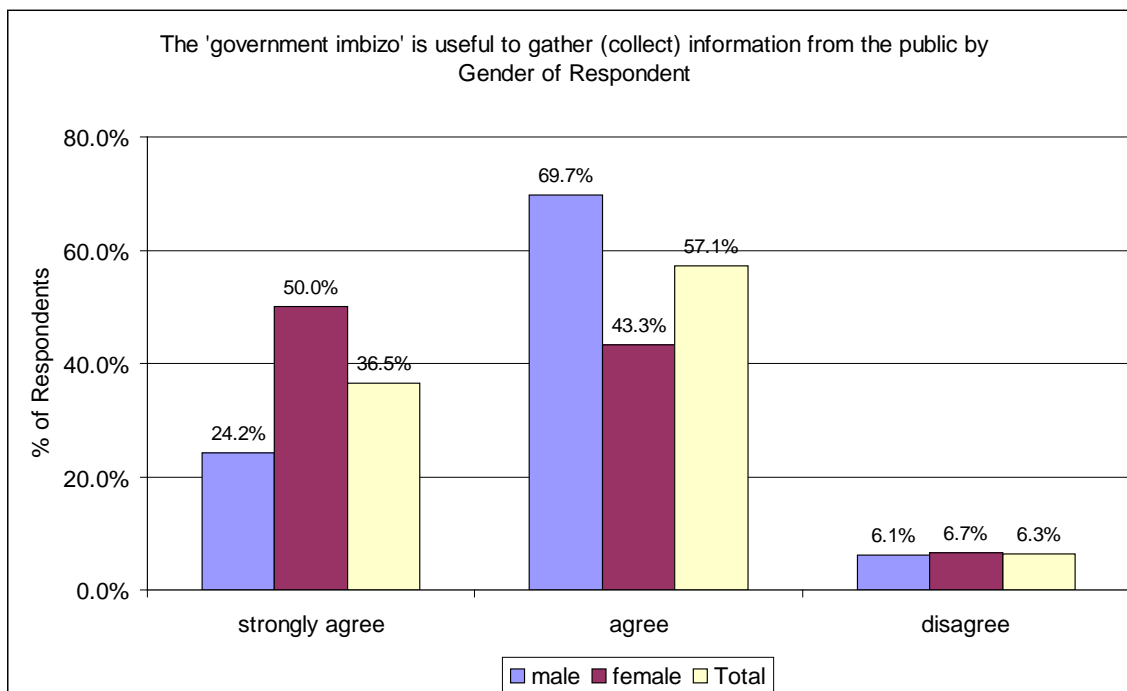
Respondents agreed that the government *imbizo* was useful to gather (collect) information from the public. 36 out of 63 respondents (57%) ‘agreed,’ while 23 respondents (37%) ‘strongly agreed.’



By gender of respondents

There was a difference between males and females concerning how they responded to this question. In addition, 23 out of 33 males (69.7%) ‘agreed’ that government *imbizo* was useful in terms of collecting information from the public, compared to 13 out of 30 females (43.3%). 24.2% of males and 50.0% of females ‘strongly agreed.’

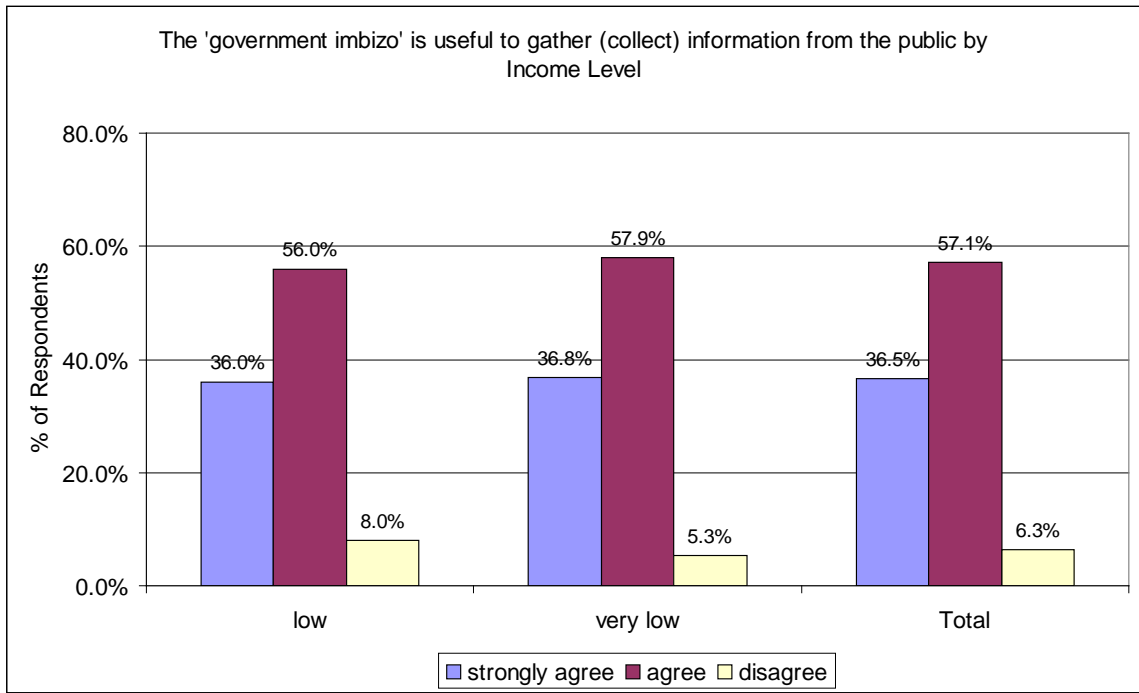
	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Strongly agree	8 (24.2%)	15 (50.0%)	23 (36.5%)
Agree	23 (69.7%)	13 (43.3%)	36 (57.1%)
Disagree	2 (6.1%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (6.3%)
Total	33 (100%)	30 (100%)	63 (100%)



By monthly income level

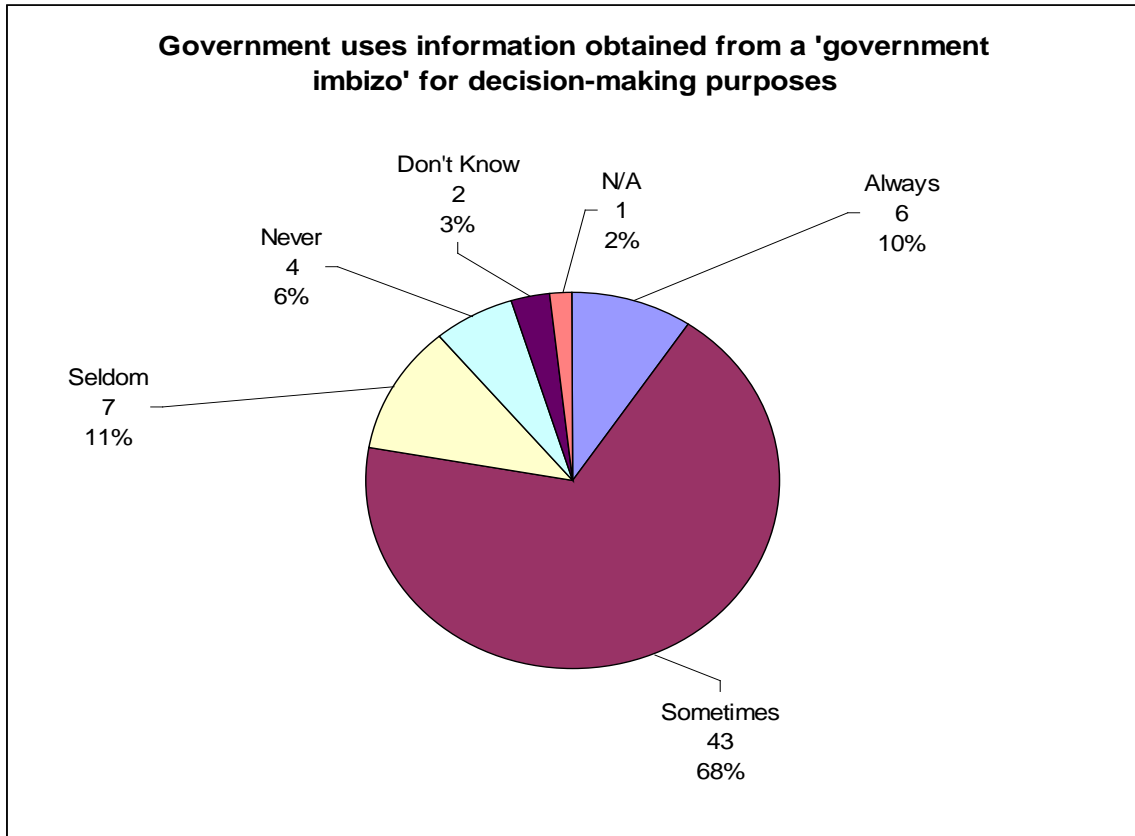
The respondents were mostly concentrated in both the 'low' and 'very low' income levels. In this regard, 14 out of 25 respondents (56.0%) with a 'low income' agreed that the government *imbizo* was useful for gathering information from the public, while 22 out of 38 respondents (57.9%) with a 'very low' income also 'agreed.' Only 36% of the respondents with a 'low' income 'strongly agreed,' compared to 37% with a 'very low' income.

	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very Low	Total
Strongly agree	9 (36.0%)	14 (36.8%)	23 (36.5%)
Agree	14 (56.0%)	22 (57.9%)	36 (57.1%)
Disagree	2 (8.0%)	2 (5.3%)	4 (6.3%)
Total	25 (100%)	38 (100%)	63 (100%)



The government uses information obtained from the government *imbizo* for decision- making purposes

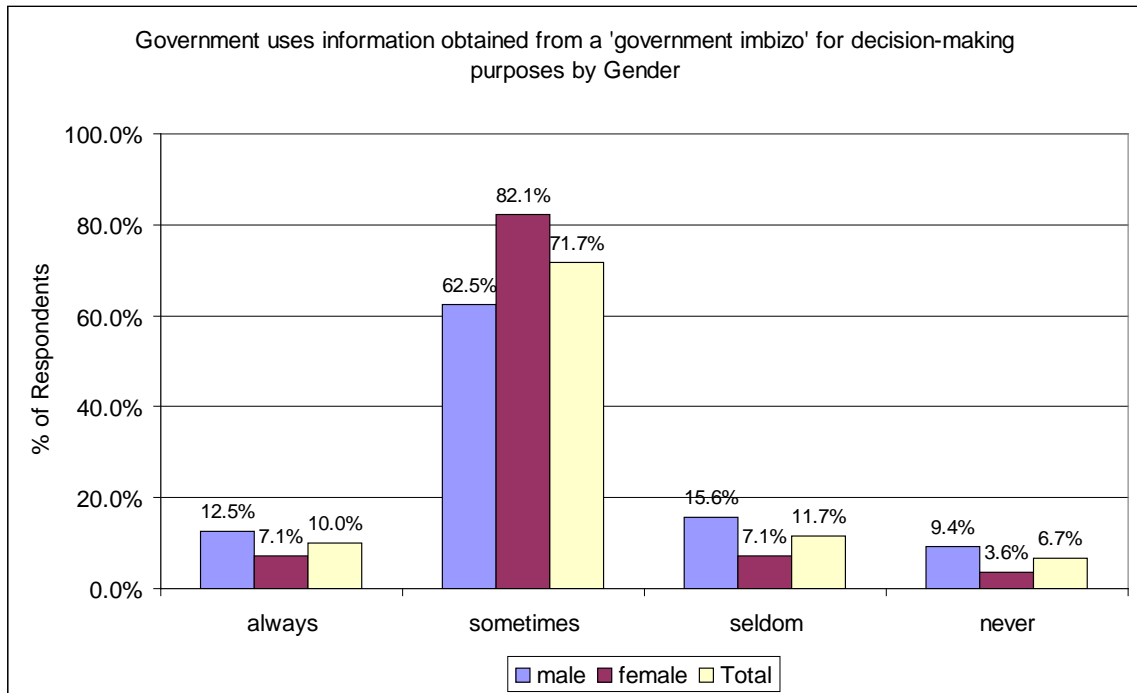
Importantly, 43 out of the 63 respondents (68%) claimed that the government sometimes used information from the *imbizo* for decision-making purposes, while 6 respondents (10%) ‘sometimes’ claimed it was ‘always.’



By gender of respondents

There was a difference between males and females in terms of the *imbizo* and decision-making. 20 out of 32 males (62.5%) believed the government ‘sometimes’ used information from the *imbizo* for decision-making purposes; compared to 23 out of 28 females (82.1%). 13% of male and 7% female respondents believed this ‘always’ happened.

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Always	4 (12.5%)	2 (7.1%)	6 (10.0%)
Sometimes	20 (62.5%)	23 (82.1%)	43 (71.7%)
Seldom	5 (15.6%)	2 (7.1%)	7 (11.7%)
Never	3 (9.4%)	1 (3.6%)	4 (6.7%)
Total	32 (100%)	28 (100%)	60 (100%)

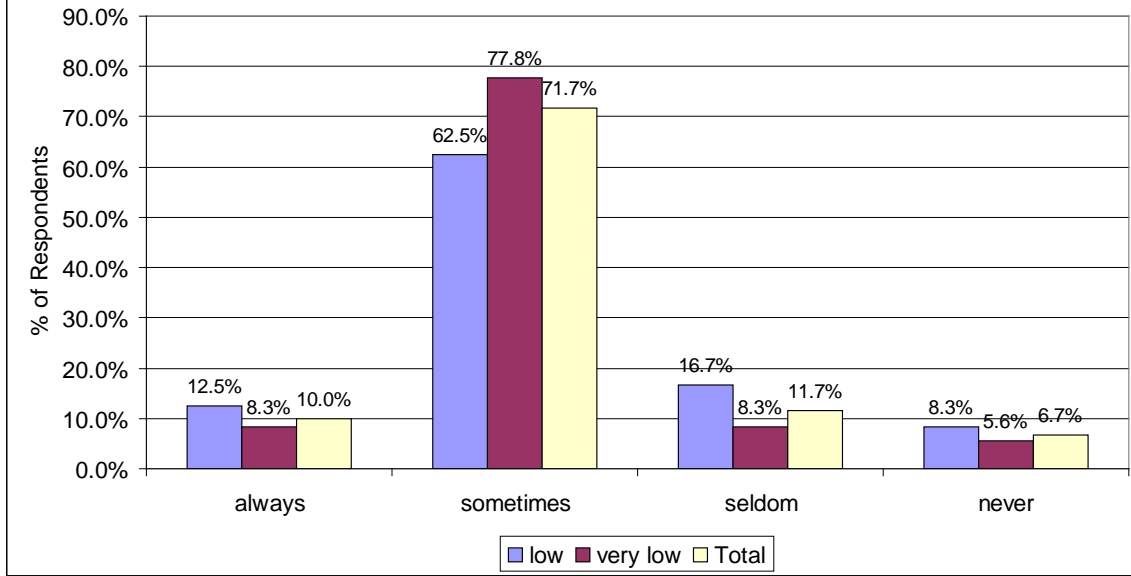


By monthly income level

There was not much difference in the responses regarding the 'low' and 'very low' income levels. Three out of 24 respondents (12.5%) within the 'low' income group claimed the government 'always' used the *imbizo* for information for decision-making, compared purposes to 3 out of 36 respondents (8.3%) from the 'very low' income group. Interestingly, 63% of the males and 78% of the female respondents believed such information was 'sometimes' used for decision-making.

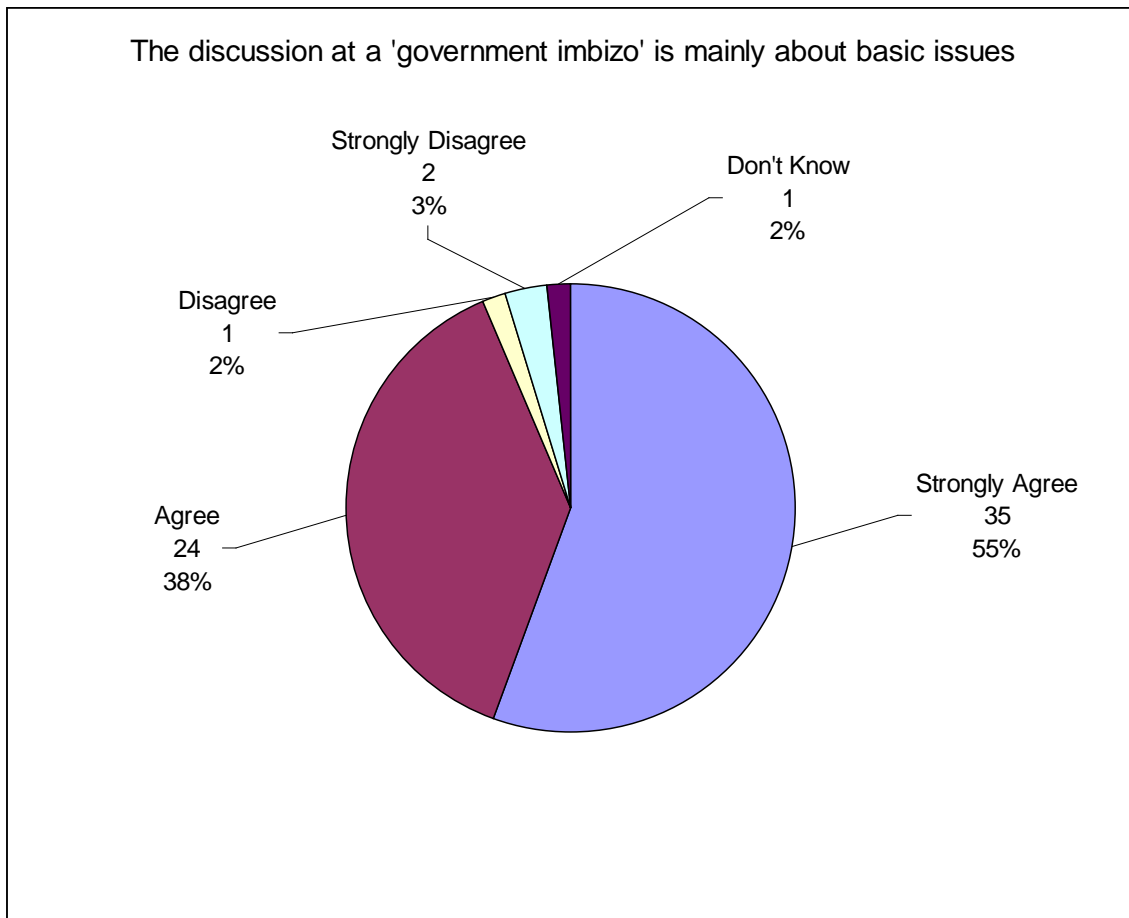
	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very low	Total
Always	3 (12.5%)	3 (8.3%)	6 (10.0%)
Sometimes	15 (62.5%)	28 (77.8%)	43 (71.7%)
Seldom	4 (16.7%)	3 (8.3%)	7 (11.7%)
Never	2 (8.3%)	2 (5.6%)	4 (6.7%)
Total	24 (100%)	36 (100%)	60 (100%)

Government uses information obtained from a 'government imbizo' for decision-making purposes by Income Level



The discussion at a 'government *imbizo*' was mainly about basic issues

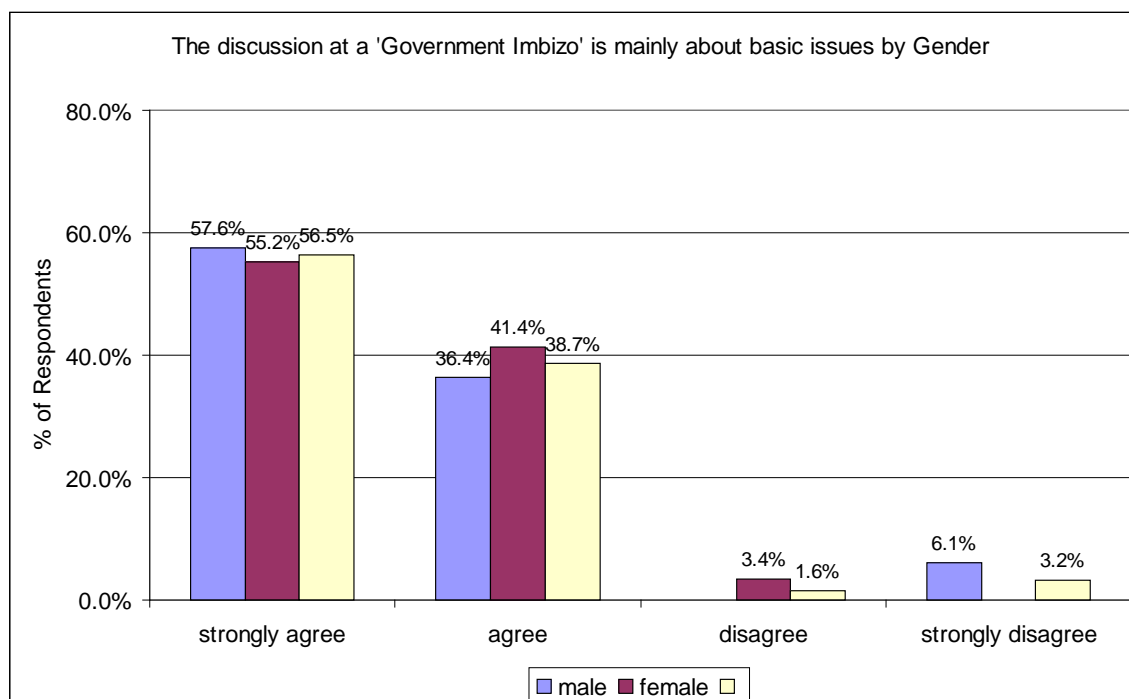
Out of the 63 respondents, 35 'strongly agreed' that the discussion at the *imbizo* was mainly about basic issues, while 38% 'agreed'.



By gender of respondents

There was not much difference between the responses of males and females on the nature of discussions taking place at the *imbizo*. Nineteen out of 33 males (57.6%) 'strongly agreed,' compared to 16 out of 29 (55.2%). Thirty-six per cent of the males 'agreed,' while 41% of the females also 'agreed'.

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Strongly agree	19 (57.6%)	16 (55.2%)	35 (56.5%)
Agree	12 (36.4%)	12 (41.4%)	24 (38.7%)
Disagree	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.4%)	1 ()
Strongly disagree	2 (6.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.2%)
Total	33 (100%)	29 (100%)	62 (100%)

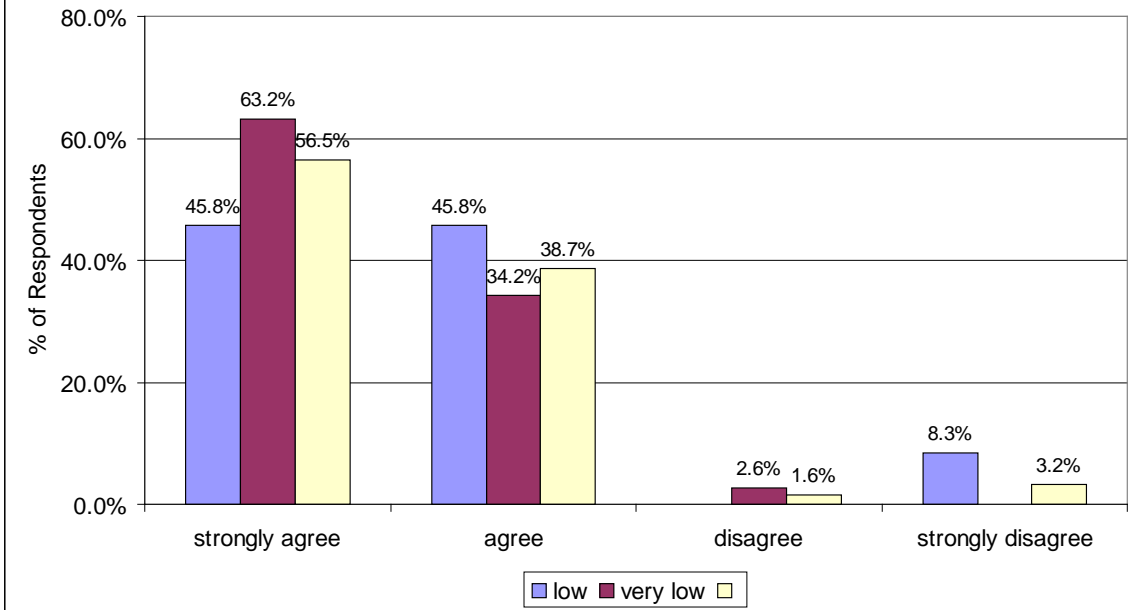


By monthly income level

There was a difference of responses in terms of level of income, with regard to discussions at the *imbizo*, which were mainly about basic issues of service delivery. 11 out of 24 respondents (45.8%) within the 'low' income 'strongly agreed' compared to 24 out of 38 respondents (63.2%) in the 'very low' income. Forty-six per cent (46%) of the respondents in the 'low' income group 'agreed' compared to 34% in the 'very low' income group.

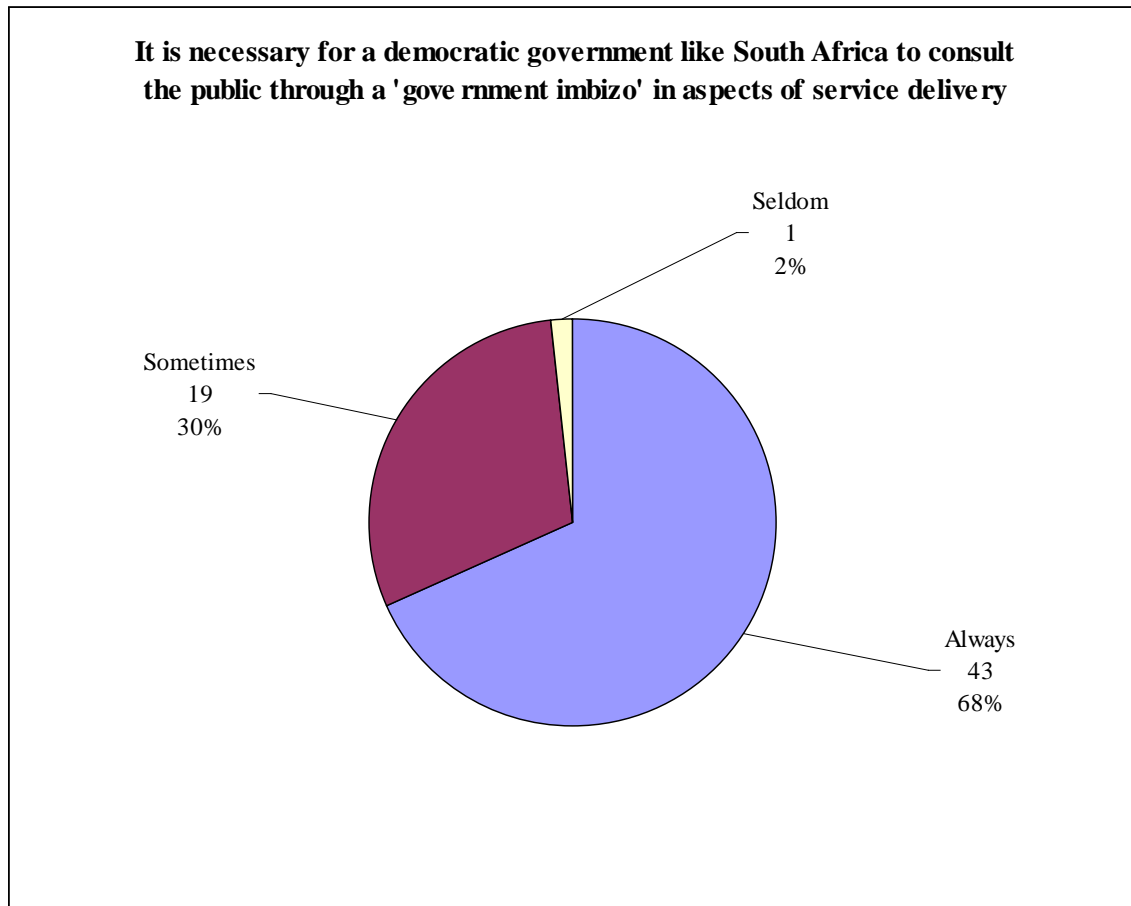
	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very low	Total
Strongly agree	11 (45.8%)	24 (63.2%)	35 (56.5%)
Agree	11 (45.8%)	13 (34.2%)	24 (38.7%)
Disagree	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.6%)	1 (1.6%)
Strongly disagree	2 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.2%)
Total	24 (100%)	38 (100%)	62 (100%)

The discussion at a 'Government Imbizo' is mainly about basic issues by Income Level



It is necessary for a democratic government like South Africa to consult the public through a 'government *imbizo*' regarding aspects of service delivery.

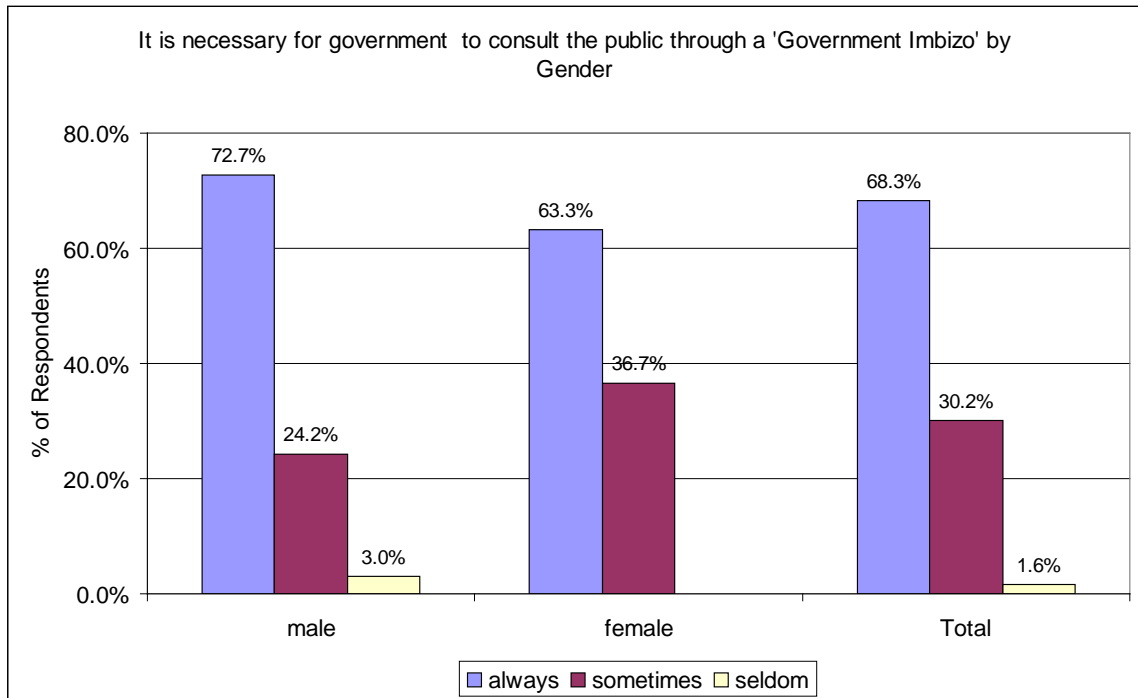
Respondents believed that a democratic government should always consult the public through a 'government *imbizo*,' regarding aspects of service delivery. Forty-three (43) out of 63 respondents (68%) believed that a democratic government should 'always' consult the public; while 19 respondents (30%) selected 'sometimes.'



By gender of respondents

There was a difference between the males and females regarding the *imbizo* and consultation. Twenty-four (24) out of 33 male respondents (72.7%) believed the *imbizo* should 'always' be used to consult, compared to 19 out of 30 females respondents (63.3%). Twenty-four per cent (24%) of the males selected 'sometimes,' compared to 37% of the females.

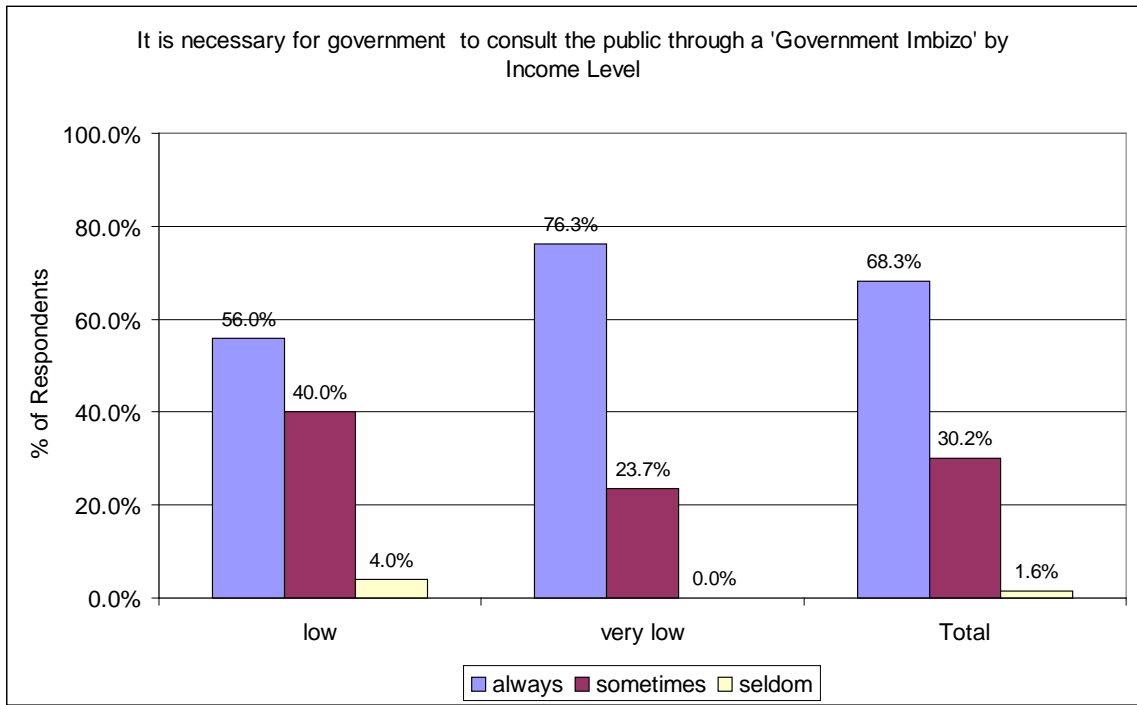
	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Always	24 (72.7%)	19 (63.3%)	43 (68.3%)
Sometimes	8 (24.2%)	11 (36.7%)	19 (30.2%)
Seldom	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Total	33 (100%)	30 (100%)	63 (100%)



By monthly income level

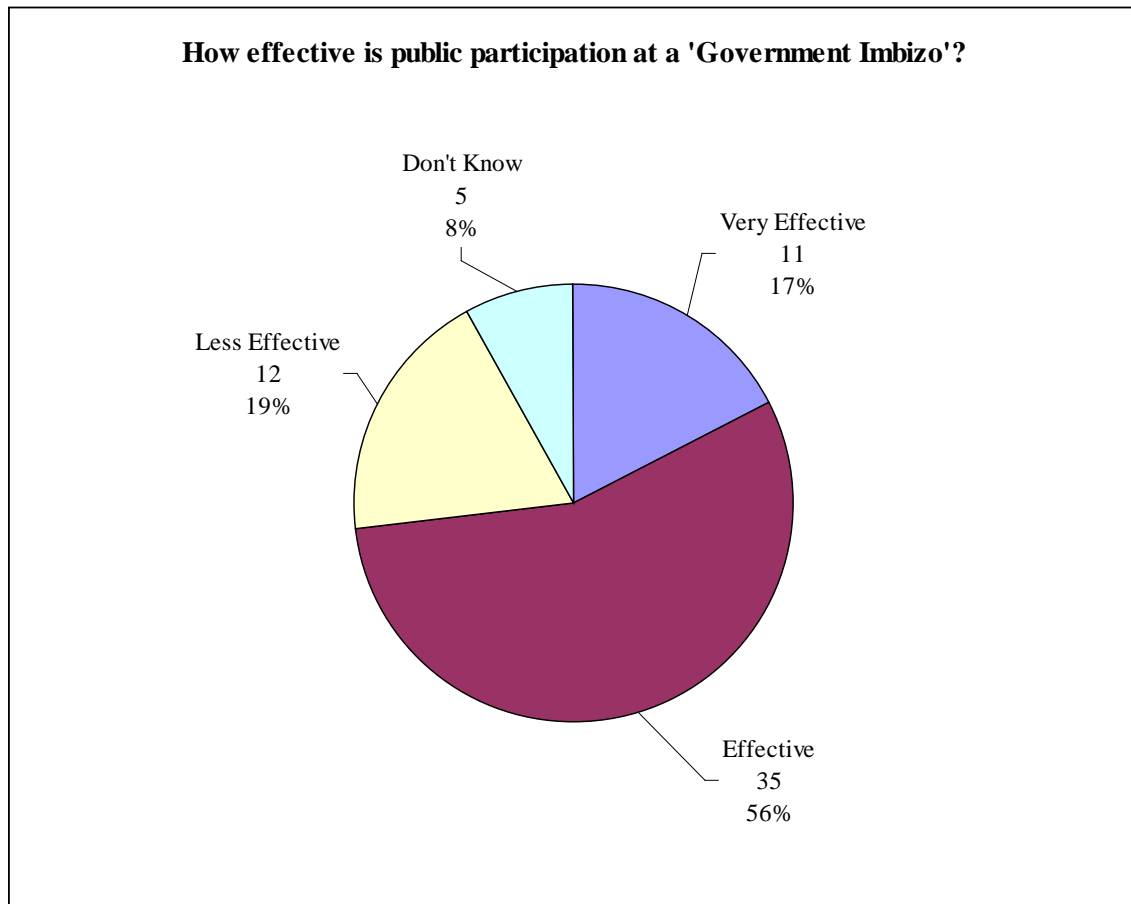
There was a difference between respondents in the 'low' and 'very low' income levels. Fourteen (14) out of 25 respondents (56.0%) in the 'low' income believed the *imbizo* should 'always' be used to consult the public, compared to 29 out of 38 respondents (76.3%) in the 'very low' income group. Forty per cent (40%) of the 'low' income respondents selected 'sometimes,' compared to 24% in the 'very low' income level.

	Monthly Income Level		
	Low	Very Low	Total
Always	14 (56.0%)	29 (76.3%)	43 (68.3%)
Sometimes	10 (40.0%)	9 (23.7%)	19 (30.2%)
Seldom	1 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Total	25 (100%)	38 (100%)	63 (100%)



How effective is public participation at a 'government *imbizo* '?

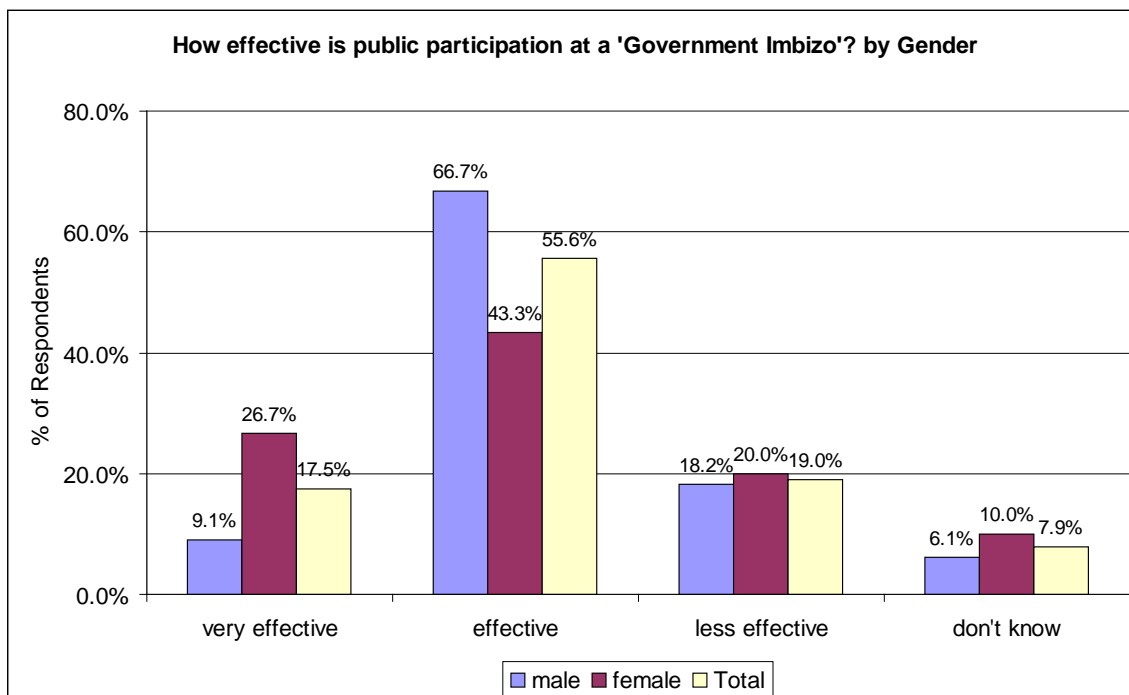
Respondents believed that public participation at a 'government *imbizo*' was effective. Thirty-five (35) out of 63 respondents (56%) claimed there was 'effective' public participation, while 11 respondents (17%) claimed 'very effective' participation.



By gender of respondents

There appeared to be a difference between male and female respondents on the effectiveness of public participation at a 'government *imbizo*.' Three (3) out of 33 males (9.1%) claimed it was 'very effective' compared to 8 out of 30 females (26.7%). Sixty-seven per cent (67%) of the males claimed it was 'effective,' compared to 43% of the females.

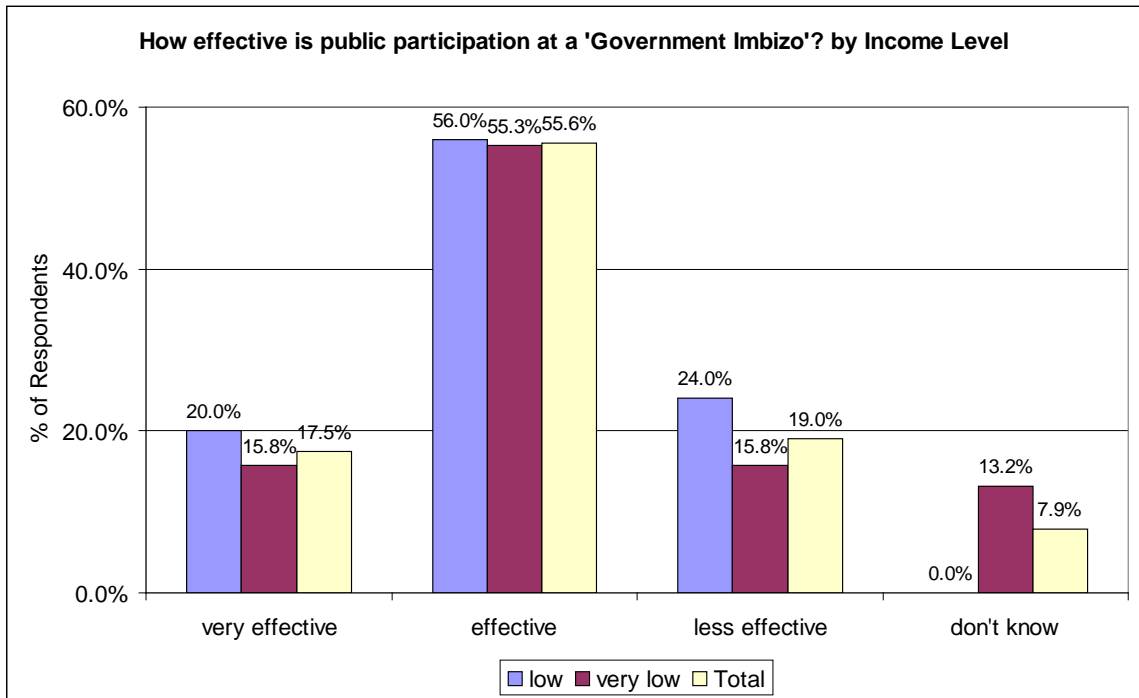
	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Very effective	3 (9.1%)	8 (26.7%)	11 (17.5%)
Effective	22 (66.7%)	13 (43.3%)	35 (55.6%)
Less effective	6 (18.2%)	6 (20.0%)	12 (19.0%)
Don't know	2 (6.1%)	3 (10.0%)	5 (7.9%)
Total	33 (100%)	30 (100%)	63 (100%)



By monthly income level

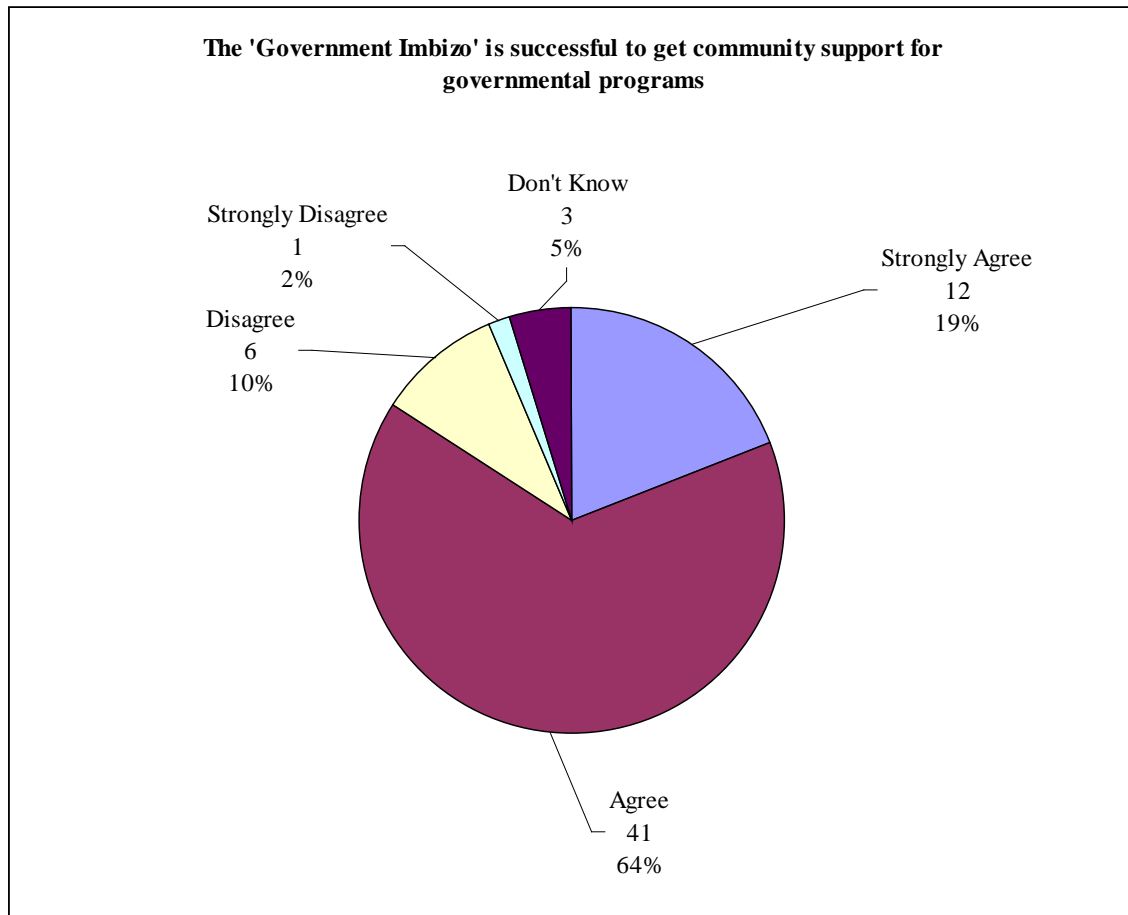
There did not appear to be much difference regarding the responses on the effectiveness of public participation in the *imbizo*, in terms of income. Five (5) out of 25 respondents (20.0%) with a low income chose 'very effective' compared to 6 out of 38 respondents (15.8%) with a very low income. Fifty-six per cent (56%) of the respondents in the low income indicated that it was 'effective,' compared to 55% in the 'very low' income level.

	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very low	Total
Very effective	5 (20.0%)	6 (15.8%)	11 (17.5%)
Effective	14 (56.0%)	21 (55.3%)	35 (55.6%)
Less effective	6 (24.0%)	6 (15.8%)	12 (19.0%)
Don't know	0 (0.0%)	5 (13.2%)	5 (7.9%)
Total	25 (100%)	38 (100%)	63 (100%)



The 'government *imbizo*' is successful in getting community support for governmental programmes

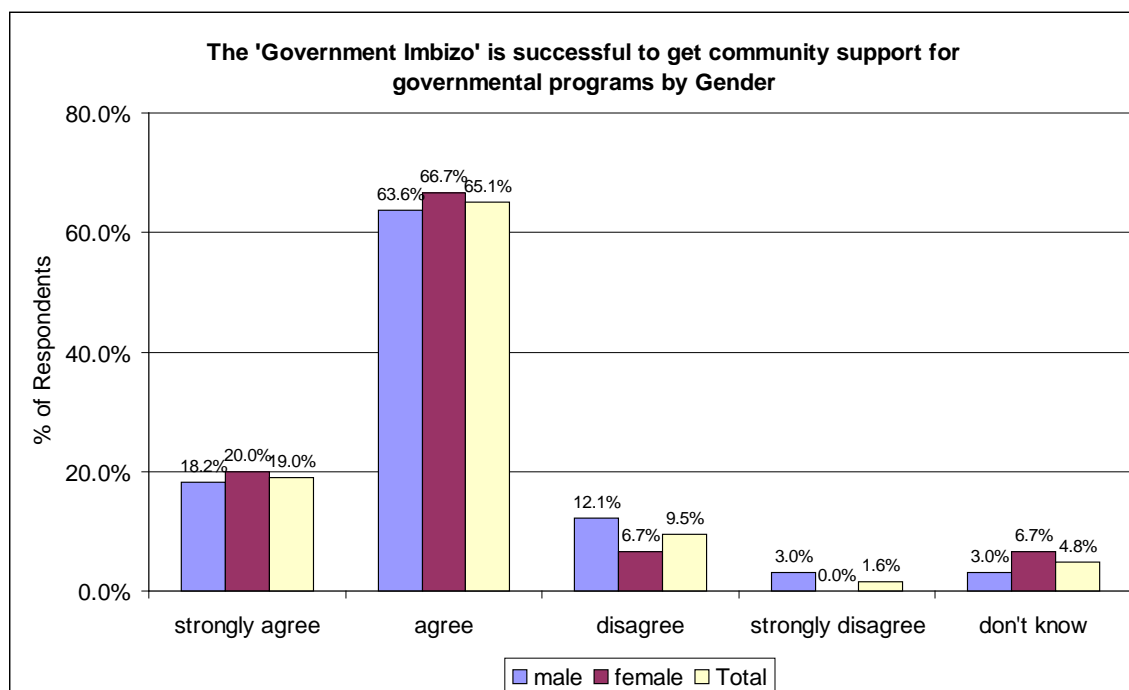
Respondents agreed that the *imbizo* was successful in terms of getting community support for governmental programmes. Forty-one (41) out of 63 respondents (64%) 'agreed' on the *imbizo*'s capacity to obtain community support; while 12 respondents (19%) 'strongly agreed.'



By gender of respondents

There did not appear to be much difference between males and females concerning the *imbizo*'s capacity to elicit community support. Six (6) out of 33 males (18.2%) 'strongly agreed' compared to 6 out of 30 females. Sixty-four per cent (64%) of the males and 67% of the females 'agreed' on the *imbizo*'s strength to elicit support for programmes.

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Strongly agree	6 (18.2%)	6 (20.0%)	12 (19.0%)
Agree	21 (63.6%)	20 (66.7%)	41 (65.1%)
Disagree	4 (12.1%)	2 (6.7%)	6 (9.5%)
Strongly disagree	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Don't know	1 (3.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (4.8%)
Total	33 (100%)	30 (100%)	63 (100%)

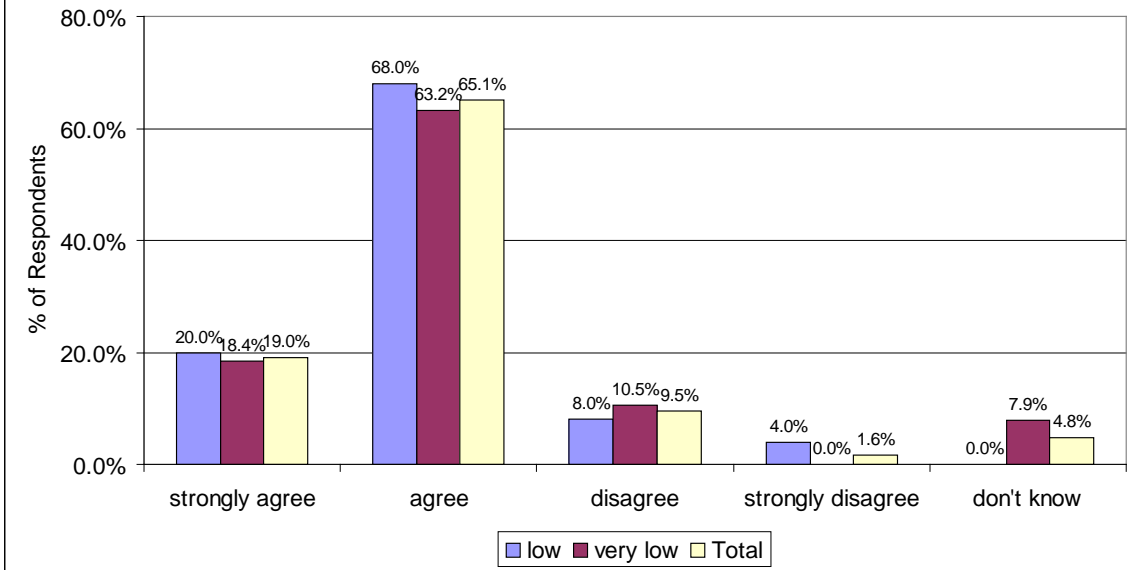


By monthly income level

There did not appear to be much difference concerning the *imbizo's* capacity to obtain support for governmental programmes, in terms of income levels. Five (5) out of the 25 low income group respondents 'strongly agreed' compared to 7 out of the 38 respondents (18.4%) in the very low income group. Sixty-eight per cent (68%) of the low income respondents 'agreed' compared to 63% in the very low income level.

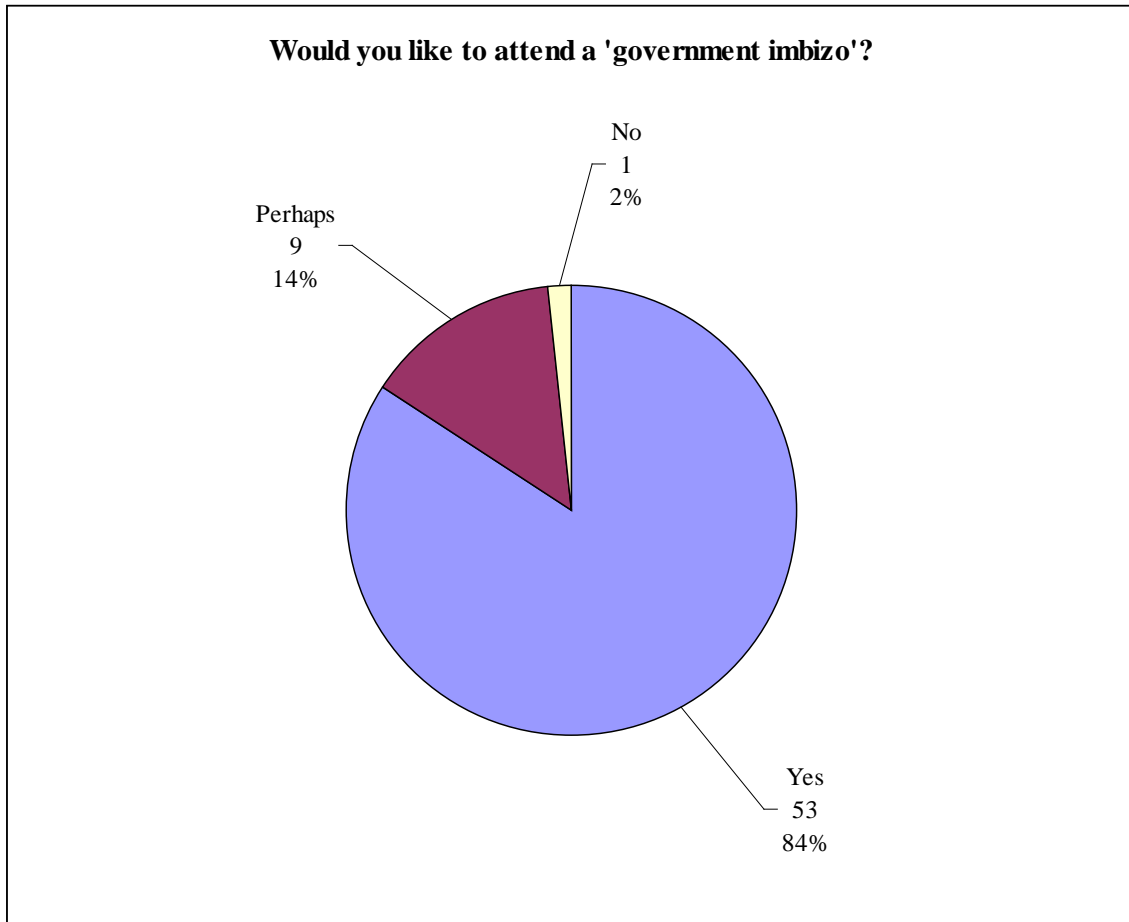
	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very Low	Total
Strongly agree	5 (20.0%)	7 (18.4%)	12 (19.0%)
Agree	17 (68.0%)	24 (63.2%)	41 (65.1%)
Disagree	2 (8.0%)	4 (10.5%)	6 (9.5%)
Strongly disagree	1 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Don't Know	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.9%)	3 (4.8%)
Total	25 (100%)	38 (100%)	63 (100%)

The 'Government Imbizo' is successful to get community support for governmental programs by Income Level



Would you like to attend a 'government *imbizo*'?

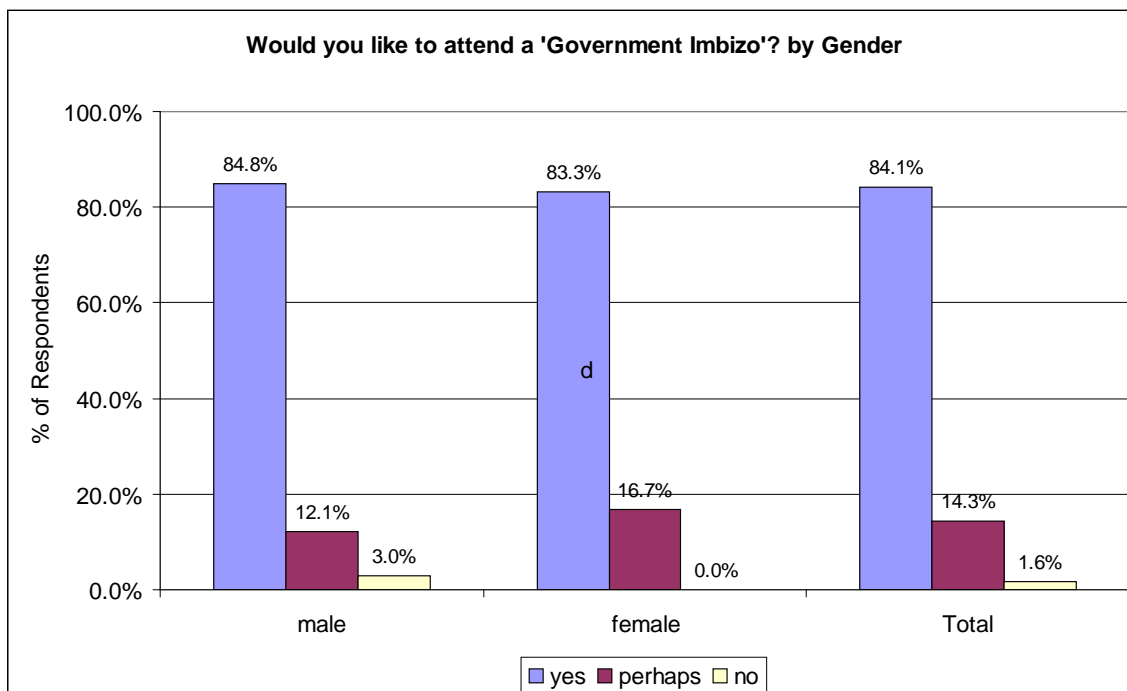
Respondents indicated that they would like to attend a 'government *imbizo*.' Fifty –three (53) out of the 63 respondents (84%) said 'yes' to the question regarding whether they would like to attend the *imbizo*, while 9 (14%) would 'perhaps' like to attend.



By gender of respondents

There did not appear to be much difference between males and females on their likelihood of attending a 'government *imbizo*.' Twenty-eight (28) out of the 33 males (84.8%) selected 'yes' thereby indicating that they would like to attend compared to 25 out of the 30 females (83.3%). Twelve per cent (12%) of the males and 17% of the females indicated they would 'perhaps' attend a 'government *imbizo*.'

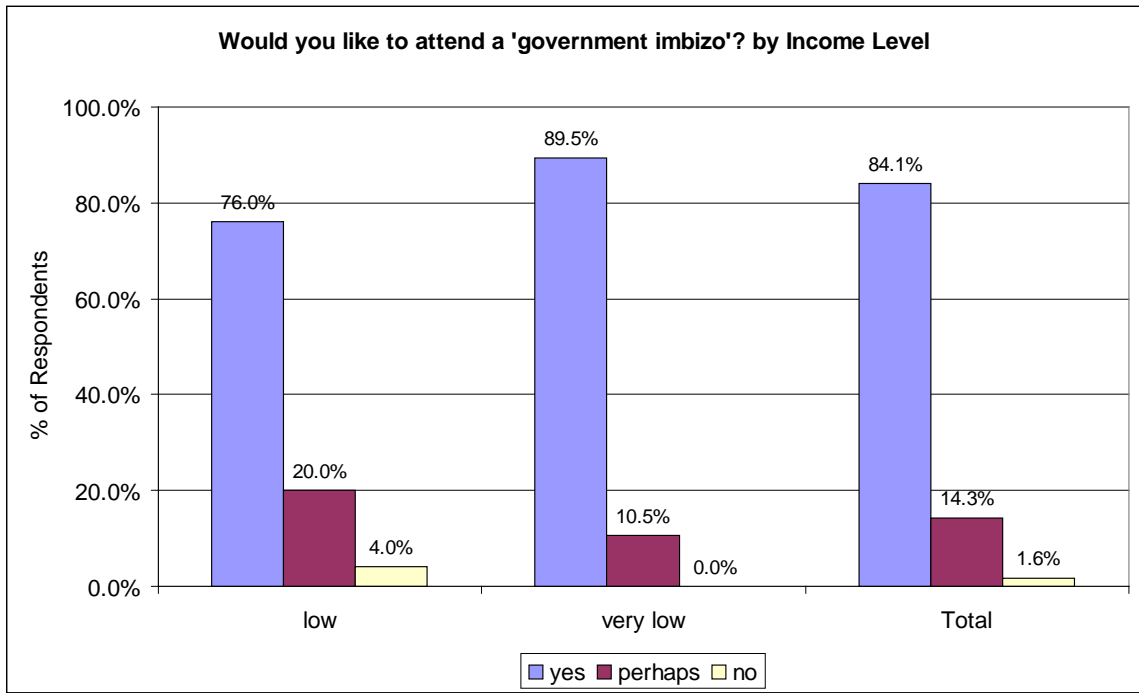
	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Yes	28 (84.8%)	25 (83.3%)	53 (84.1%)
Perhaps	4 (12.1%)	5 (16.7%)	9 (14.3%)
No	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Total	33 (100%)	30 (100%)	63 (100%)



By monthly income level

There appeared to be a large difference regarding the likelihood to attend a 'government imbizo,' in terms of income level. Nineteen (19) out of 25 low income respondents (76.0%) chose 'yes' indicating that they would like to attend, compared to 34 out of 38 very low income respondents (89.5%). Twenty per cent (20%) of the low income and 11% of the very low income respondents selected 'perhaps' that indicated that they would like to attend a 'government imbizo.'

	Monthly income level		
	Low	Very low	Total
Yes	19 (76.0%)	34 (89.5%)	53 (84.1%)
Perhaps	5 (20.0%)	4 (10.5%)	9 (14.3%)
No	1 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Total	25 (100%)	38 (100%)	63 (100%)



ADDENDUM 5: Approval letters to conduct the study

GCIS

From: Botha, Susan
Sent: 29 August 2008 10:13
To: 'alanh@po.gov.za'
Subject: MA student: Mr S F Mathagu

Dear Mr Hirsch

Mr Mathagu requested me to confirm his registration details with you.

He is currently registered for an MA-degree in the Department of Political Sciences at Unisa. The topic of his research is the Imbizo as an instrument of democracy. I am his supervisor and Dr Phil Mtimkulu is his co-supervisor.

It would be appreciated if Mr Mathagu could be assisted in his research on the topic.

Should you have any further enquiries you are welcome to phone me at 012 429 6449, or you may contact me at the above e-mail address.

Thanking you

Susan Botha (D Litt & Phil)

Department of Political Sciences

Unisa

UNIVEN

Dear Prof Ngobeli

Mr Mathagu is currently registered for a research MA in Politics at Unisa. The focus of his research is the "government Imbizo". He is currently busy with field work with regard to people's knowledge of, and attitudes towards the "Imbizo".

It would be appreciated if he could be allowed to distribute a questionnaire on the government Imbizo, among Univen students and particularly students studying Politics or Political Science.

Your co-operation would be appreciated.

Susan Botha

Supervisor

Department of Political Sciences

Mutale Municipality

TO: The Mayor's Office
Mutale Municipality
Tshilamba
Mutale
0956

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT – MA in Politics

Mr SF Mathagu is currently registered for a research MA in Politics at UNISA. The focus of his study is the “government Imbizo.” He is currently busy with fieldwork with regard to people’s knowledge of, and attitudes towards the “*imbizo*.”

It would be appreciated if he could be allowed to conduct interviews with leaders or representatives of the residential areas of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda, including the Mutale municipality. These are the residential areas where the researcher intends to conduct a case study.

The participation in the research is **voluntary, anonymous** and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

Your cooperation would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr Susan Botha
Research Supervisor
Department of Political Sciences – UNISA.

Chief Thovhele P.Rambuda

Dear: Thovhele Khosi Vho-Rambuda
Rambuda Territorial Council
Dzimauli
Mutale

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT – MA in Politics

Mr SF Mathagu is currently registered for a research MA in Politics at UNISA. The focus of his study is the “government *imbizo*.” He is currently busy with field work with regard to people’s knowledge of, and attitudes towards the “*imbizo* ”

It would be appreciated if he could be allowed to conduct interviews with leadership or representatives of the residential areas of Muswodi-Tshisimani and Musunda. These are the residential areas where the researcher intends to conduct a case study.

The participation in the research is **voluntary, anonymous** and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

Your cooperation would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr Susan Botha
Research Supervisor
Department of Political Sciences – UNISA.

The traditional leader of Musunda residential area

Dear: Vhamusanda vho-Rambuda
Musunda
Mutale
0956

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT – MA in Politics

Mr SF Mathagu is currently registered for a research MA in Politics at UNISA. The focus of his study is the “government imbizo.” He is currently busy with field work with regard to people’s knowledge of, and attitudes towards the “Imbizo.”

It would be appreciated if he could be allowed to conduct interviews with leadership or representatives of the residential area of Musunda. This is the area where the researcher intends to conduct a case study.

The participation in the research is **voluntary, anonymous** and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

Your cooperation would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr Susan Botha
Research Supervisor
Department of Political Sciences – UNISA.

The traditional leader of Muswodi-Tshisimani residential area

Dear: Vhamusanda vho-Nelutshindwi
Muswodi-Tshisimani
Mutale
0956

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT – MA in Politics

Mr SF Mathagu is currently registered for a research MA in Politics at UNISA. The focus of his study is the “government Imbizo”. He is currently busy with field work with regard to people’s knowledge of, and attitudes towards the “Imbizo”.

It would be appreciated if he could be allowed to conduct interviews with leadership or representatives of the residential area of Muswodi-Tshisimani. This is the area where the researcher intends to conduct a case study.

The participation in the research is **voluntary, anonymous** and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

Your cooperation would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr Susan Botha
Research Supervisor
Department of Political Sciences – UNISA.

Musunda Civic Organisation

TO: Musunda Civic Organisation
Musunda (Ha Rambuda)
Mutale
0956

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT – MA in Politics

Mr SF Mathagu is currently registered for a research MA in Politics at UNISA. The focus of his study is the “government Imbizo”. He is currently busy with field work with regard to people’s knowledge of, and attitudes towards the “Imbizo”.

It would be appreciated if he could be allowed to conduct interviews with leadership or representatives of the residential area of Musunda. This is the area where the researcher intends to conduct a case study.

The participation in the research is **voluntary, anonymous** and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

Your cooperation would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr Susan Botha
Research Supervisor
Department of Political Sciences – UNISA.

Muswodi-Tshisimani Civic Organisation

TO: Muswodi-Tshisimani Civic Organisation
Muswodi
Mutale
0956

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT – MA in Politics

Mr SF Mathagu is currently registered for a research MA in Politics at UNISA. The focus of his study is the “government Imbizo”. He is currently busy with field work with regard to people’s knowledge of, and attitudes towards the “Imbizo”.

It would be appreciated if he could be allowed to conduct interviews with leadership or representatives of the residential area of Muswodi-Tshisimani. This is the area where the researcher intends to conduct a case study.

The participation in the research is **voluntary, anonymous** and if it is possible to identify a particular respondent, all responses will be treated with the utmost **confidentiality**.

Your cooperation would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr Susan Botha
Research Supervisor
Department of Political Sciences – UNISA.

ADDENDUM 6: 2005 National *imbizo* programme (also the Mutale Municipality)

Date	Principal	Local Municipality	District	Province
10/7/2005	Dep Min Madlala-Routledge	Kwa Sani Local Municipality	Sisonke	KZN
10/7/2005	Dep Min Madlala-Routledge	Greater Kokstad Local Municipality	Sisonke	KZN
10/7/2005	Min Labour	Blouberg Local Municipality	Capricorn	Limpopo
10/7/2005	Min Labour	Makhado Local Municipality	Vhembe	Limpopo
10/7/2005	Dep Min Thabethe	Ga-Segonyana Local Municipality	Kgalagadi	Northern Cape
10/7/2005	Dep Min Hangana	Witzenberg Local Municipality	Boland (Cape Winelands)	Western Cape
10/8/2005	Dep Min Mabudhafari	Elundini Local Municipality	Ukhahlamba	Eastern Cape
10/8/2005	Min Water Affairs & Forestry	Nongoma Local Municipality	Zululand	KZN
10/8/2005	Dep Min Xingwana	Richmond Local Municipality	Umgungundlovu	KZN
10/8/2005	Min Health	Nkandla Local Municipality	Uthungulu	KZN
10/8/2005	Dep Min Madlala-Routledge	Ubuhlebezwe Local Municipality	Sisonke	KZN
10/8/2005	Dep Min Gillwald	Matzikama Local Municipality	West Coast	Western Cape
10/8/2005	Min Arts & Culture	Matzikama Local Municipality	West Coast	Western Cape
10/8/2005	Min Finance	Matzikama Local Municipality	West Coast	Western Cape
10/9/2005	Min Prov & Local Govt	City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality	Metro Gauteng	Gauteng
10/9/2005	Min Science & Technology	Merafong City Local Municipality	West Rand	Gauteng
10/9/2005	Dep Min Oosthuizen	Merafong Local Municipality		Gauteng
10/9/2005	Min Agric & Land Affairs	Jozini Local Municipality	Umkhanyakude	KZN
10/9/2005	Min Intelligence	Mbonambi Local Municipality	Uthungulu	KZN
10/9/2005	Min Defence	Ntambanana Local Municipality	Uthungulu	KZN
10/9/2005	Dep Min Shabangu	Mthonjaneni Local Municipality	Uthungulu	KZN
10/9/2005	Dep Min Hanekom	Nkandla Local Municipality	Uthungulu	KZN
10/9/2005	Dep Min Shabangu	Ntambanana Local Municipality	Uthungulu	KZN
10/9/2005	Dep Min vd Merwe	Theewaterskloof Local Municipality	Silverberg	Western Cape
10/10/2005	Min Labour	Thabazimbi Local Municipality	Waterberg	Limpopo
10/10/2005	Min Water Affairs & Forestry	Mutale Local Municipality	Vhembe	Limpopo
10/14/2005	Dep Min Gigaba	Mkhambathini Local Municipality	Umgungundlovu	KZN
10/14/2005	Dep Min Xingwana	Ingwe Local Municipality	Sisonke	KZN
10/18/2005	Dep Min Botha	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality	Metro EC	Eastern Cape

ADDENDUM 7: An example of a scribe form used at a presidential *imbizo*

An example of a scribe form used at a Presidential imbizo

Stakeholder meeting

Issues raised	Action already taken	Proposed plan of action

State-of-the-district presentation

Issue raised	Action already taken	Response	Proposed plan of action

Community imbizo

Issues raised	Action already taken	Proposed plan of action