

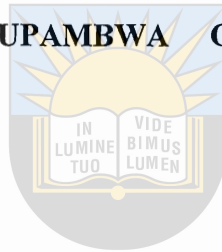


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**Decentralization and poverty alleviation: The case of Nkonkobe  
Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of the Republic of  
South Africa**

**By**

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**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Sociology, University of Fort  
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Master of Social Science in Sociology**

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**SUPERVISOR:**

**DR F H NEKHWEVHA**

## ABSTRACT

In the quest to make local development participatory, inclusive, transparent, responsive, effective and pro-poor, decentralisation has been seen to be a solution. It is these positive virtues of decentralisation in promoting improved governance and better service delivery which contribute to improved livelihoods and poverty alleviation that have made it a major theme in current development arenas. Hence decentralisation has been considered a significant strategy towards pro-poor development. It is in this regard that the current project sought to assess the relationship between decentralisation and poverty alleviation in the Nkonkobe Municipality of the Eastern Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa. This study attempted to establish the relationship or link between decentralisation and effective poverty alleviation stratagems. It also utilized a deductive research methodology, explanatory in nature to assess the role of decentralisation as a pro-poor development policy mechanism. To this end a survey was undertaken using structured questionnaires to elicit the perceptions of the Nkonkobe Municipality public on the effectiveness of decentralisation in addressing poverty. The process was made possible through the use of cluster sampling in generating the targeted respondents for the study. Since deductivism was used, the study was framed within Sen's Capability Approach (CA) which contends that poverty is deprivation, or failure to achieve certain minimal or basic capabilities and that development is a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (Sen, 1993: 1, 41).

The results of the study indicated that decentralisation is positively linked to poverty alleviation. In terms of the data and findings of this study the introduction of decentralisation has led to effective poverty alleviation outcomes. Hence the core argument of this study is that decentralisation contributes to poverty alleviation, notably when poverty is conceptualized from a multi-dimensional perspective. In fact, in the study, poverty was considered to be multi-dimensional and this is in synchrony to the findings of the study that decentralisation has managed to increase and promote the capabilities of the people. The results of the study also showed that the public perceived decentralisation to have contributed to increased participation and more involvement in decision making. Some key elements of decentralisation such as improved infrastructure and capacity building which have been promoted in the process were perceived to have resulted in increased confidence and self esteem amongst the participants. This in turn resulted into increased service delivery outcomes and improved livelihoods. These results thus confirm the supposition by Asante (2003) that effective poverty reduction requires, among other things, increasing the poor's access to basic public and collective services such as health, education, water, sanitation and transport in order to enhance human capital, increase labour productivity and foster access to economic opportunities. In addition, the findings are in harmony with Sen's assertion that poverty reduction occurs only when individuals are given adequate social opportunities to shape their own destiny and help each other (1999: 11). However, despite the results affirming a positive pro-poor function of decentralisation, the study also demonstrate that development within decentralisation is still fraught with problems of accessibility, elite capture, transparency, accountability, inclusion and selectivity in

development. For instance in the formulation of decentralised projects, a significant number of participants indicated that the process was elite driven.



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## DECLARATION

I, Gift Mupambwa (200706033), the undersigned do hereby declare that the content of this dissertation is my original work and has not been previously submitted to any other University for an award of a degree either in part or in its entirety.

Signature.....

Date.....



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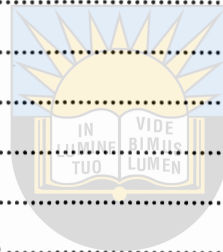
Lastly, I offer my regards and blessings to my fiancée, Ms Talent Muwandi, for being caring and understanding throughout the research process.



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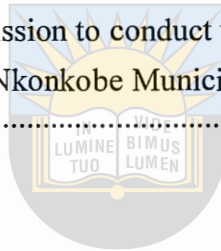


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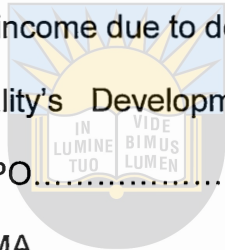
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	African Development Bank
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
BTS	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
CA	Capability Approach
CPRC	Chronic Poverty Research Centre
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
EC	European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HDR	Human Development Report
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPI	Human Poverty Index
HSRC	Human and Social Research Council
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
KMO	Kaiser Meyer-Olkin
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NGO	Non-government organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operative Development
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PERCADMA	Perception of capacity and decision making ability
PERCL	Perception of changes in Life

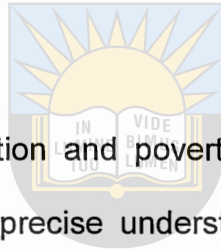
PERCAS	Perception of confidence and acquisition of skills
PERSPO	Perception of responsiveness
PERFRA	Perception of changes in infrastructure
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SASA	South African Social Attitudes
SATMA	Satisfaction with manner of treatment
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank



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## CHAPTER OUTLINE

The first chapter (**Chapter 1**) of this dissertation gives a general introduction and orientation to the study. It presents the core argument of the study that decentralisation contributes to poverty alleviation by enhancing the capabilities and wellbeing of the poor. This part of the dissertation succinctly gives an overview of the research work, it gives the research aims, objectives and questions and at the same time it offers the main reason behind the need for conducting the study on which the dissertation is based.



Since the study is on decentralisation and poverty alleviation, **Chapter 2** offers an extensive scholarly debate on the precise understandings underpinning the concept poverty. Hence in Chapter 2 the researcher has provided a comprehensive argument of the conceptualisation on poverty and has indicated that for the purpose of the study a multi-dimensional definition of poverty will be utilised. Hence multi-dimensional perspective has been utilised in the study as the basis for the conceptualisation and understanding of poverty. Amartya Sen, a key development economist whose ideas have informed the theoretical framework of the study, in line with this view, has developed the Capability Approach (CA) which argues that poverty can only be understood from a multi-dimensional perspective and as entailing not only deprivation in income but also of a lot of capabilities. In Chapter 2 the researcher also offers a general overview of the state and extent of poverty globally, continentally, regionally and locally.

The subsequent chapter (**Chapter 3**) thus builds on this argument by concentrating on decentralisation as a mechanism that is pro-poor and which safeguards and ensures the responsiveness of policies to the poor. The focus is on the overview of the decentralisation process and its linkages with poverty reduction or pro-poor development. The chapter also addresses the role of decentralisation in effective poverty alleviation mechanism by analyzing scholarly work in the area of decentralisation and poverty alleviation. It thus argues that decentralisation contributes to effective service delivery, increased citizen participation, and allocative efficiency, and policy responsiveness, involvement in decision making, accountability, empowerment, social welfarism and improved governance. The chapter ends with general overview of decentralisation in South Africa.



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**Chapter 4** of this dissertation gives the theoretical underpinnings of the study and thus concentrates on the CA which contributes to a better comprehension and conceptualization of poverty reduction. The CA supports and argues in favor of multi-dimensional poverty perspective, thus synthesizing the multi-dimensional aspect of poverty and key aspects of the notion of decentralisation. In this chapter the CA is used to synergize all the aspects of the study, which are the problem definition, purpose of the study, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis. The core argument of this chapter is that, poverty reduction mechanisms can best be evaluated on the basis of the expansion of capabilities and the enhancements of public wellbeing.

Following the theoretical framework of the study is **Chapter 5** which gives a synthesis of the specific methodologies and procedures that the researcher utilized in eliciting data for the study. The main aim of the study as has been argued earlier was to assess whether the populace of Nkonkobe has gained increased capabilities and freedoms by participating in the Municipality project. The chapter outlines the design of the present study, the scope of the population studied, the sample size and the sampling technique employed. It also provides a justification on the choice of method of investigation utilised in the study. Further discussed in this chapter is the procedure used to obtain data from participants and how the data was analyzed to bring a coherent understanding of the subject under study. Lastly, the chapter gives an overview of the Nkonkobe Municipality as the area of study. The next chapter looks at the research findings and analysis.



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The research findings and analysis of the study are found in both **Chapters 6** and **7**. In chapter 6, the study presents the demographic features of the study and critically examines them in relation to changes in capabilities as defined within the CA framework. In addition, this chapter provides the results that highlight the Nkonkobe residents' attestation that decentralisation has resulted in changes in infrastructure and service provision. Chapter 7 looks at other dimensions of capability enhancement such as participation, involvement in decision making, inclusion, confidence, empowerment and capacity building. The core argument of the study, that decentralisation enhanced the capabilities and wellbeing of the Nkonkobe populace, is established and confirmed in these two chapters. The last section of the

research study (**Chapter 8**) gives the conclusion of the work by reinstating the main thesis that decentralisation contributes to pro-poor development or poverty reduction especially when poverty is conceptualized from a Capability perspective. The concluding chapter also highlights the main challenges incurred in conducting the study and further suggests some recommendations for successful poverty reduction mechanisms, such as, the adaption of monitoring and evaluation strategies and audit checks to ensure fruitful implementation of decentralised development praxis.



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# CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

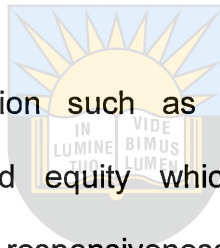
Decentralisation is a pro-poor development and poverty reduction strategy owing to the fact that where it has been utilized increased participation, greater citizen involvement in decision making, empowerment, responsive service delivery, transparency, changes in infrastructure, accountability and overall changes in wellbeing have occurred. Hence the current study has argued that the current push towards decentralisation is favorable to poverty reduction. The idea behind decentralisation stems from the failure of centralized mechanisms of government in making development pro-poor. Against this background, the dire need to reduce poverty has led development institutions, developed and developing countries, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and research institutions to adopt decentralisation as way to ensure that development takes place at the local government level (Devas and Delay, 2006: 678; Thede, 2008: 3). Thus in recent years, it has come to be widely accepted that decentralisation can be conducive to poverty reduction mainly because local governments are assumed to have better information and higher incentives than the central government to design and implement policies that respond to local needs and preferences. Besides, decentralisation is considered a means to achieve good governance as it offers high level of public participation, accountability of public officials and low corruption, which are crucial conditions for poverty alleviation (Steiner, 2007). The major question is whether decentralisation really leads to pro-poor development that is able to expand the freedoms and wellbeing of the poor at large? The findings of this study indicate that

decentralised projects implemented in the Nkonkobe Municipality have contributed immensely to the enhancement of human capabilities and the wellbeing of the populace in addition to the reduction of poverty in the area.

A significant number of scholars (Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2001; Asante, 2003; Azfar et al, 2004; Mehrotra, 2006) believe decentralisation, really does contribute to the reduction of poverty, especially when poverty is seen from a multi-dimensional perspective. This is also supported by the assertion by Asante (2003) that effective poverty reduction requires, among other things, increasing the poor's access to basic public and collective services such as health, education, water, sanitation and transport to enhance human capital in addition to an increase in labour productivity and the fostering of access to economic opportunities. For this reason, the study assessed poverty as a capability deprivation and argues that through the promotion of freedoms and choices poverty is alleviated. As shall be seen in the following chapters poverty reduction has accentuated multi-dimension lenses and hence the best approach to its alleviation would be a theory and framework that incorporates its salient features. Hence the study was framed within the tenets of the CA which takes cognizance of the multi-faceted aspects of poverty.

The debate on decentralisation has been a major focus of development thinking for more than three decades, with a mix of factors and forces shaping the specific decentralization reforms in each country (Ribot, 2000). Most decentralization theorists and policy makers evoke developmentalists arguments contending that the increased

efficiency, equity and inclusion that should arise from decentralization result in better and more sustainable management (Mawhood, 1983; Crook and Manor, 1998; Manor, 1999; Smoke, 2000). Some scholars focus on its political and economic advantages, which have to do with the argument that decentralization plays important roles in democratization and people's participation (Ribot, 1996; Crook and Manor, 1998;), others contend that it increases performance (World Bank, 2000:107) and yet another group of scholars assert that it leads to poverty alleviation (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001:iii) .



It is the virtues of decentralization such as democracy, popular participation, responsiveness, accountability and equity which have led to the belief that decentralization will lead to greater responsiveness to the poor. Since the poor have been excluded from politics and therefore inaccessible to public goods and services, decentralization is seen as offering greater political participation to ordinary citizens whose “voice” is more likely to increase with concomitant relevance and effectiveness of government policies and programmes, especially those concerning poverty reduction (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Crook, 2003). In this regard Sawadogo (2001) is of the view that decentralisation constitutes a justification for treating diverse problems including good governance, development, democracy, poverty alleviation, administrative reform, and privatization, etc. at the same time. If decentralization holds so many promises, why does there seem to be a wide gap between the promised land of democratic local governance and everyday realities?

The study was meant to assess decentralisation as a development policy which is seen as the means to achieve developmental and participative local government that advances the capabilities and enhances the wellbeing of the poor at large, thus enabling socio-economic and political transformation of the poor to take place. The study also sought to investigate decentralisation as a mechanism to address the problem of poverty, to ascertain whether it is pro-poor or it further contributes to poverty. The study draws on the CA in its endeavor to evaluate the effectiveness of decentralised projects and programmes in alleviating poverty. Thus focus was on the responsiveness of decentralisation to local needs and preferences and the extent to which this has enlarged the freedoms and wellbeing of the marginalized and the poor. Hence the need for the empirical investigation of public perceptions and attitudes of the Nkonkobe Municipality populace on whether decentralisation has contributed to capability enhancements and the promotion of wellbeing.

## **1.2. The research problem**

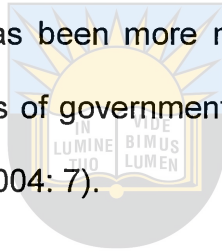
Despite a reasonable body of literature on the subject of decentralisation and poverty alleviation (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Von Braun and Grote, 2002; Crook, 2003; Smoke, 2003; Vedeld, 2003; Asante and Ayee, 2004; Van Dijk, 2008), the lack of local empirical investigation on the linkages of the two variables poses a need for the present study. Decentralisation has been highlighted as a key policy reform that enhances the 'facilitating empowerment', given the potential of decentralisation to both strengthen participation and increase government responsiveness to the poor (World Bank, 2001: 106; Steiner 2007:177). According to Oxford et al (2004:22) the main purpose of

decentralization is to improve democratic governance by facilitating citizen participation. This is because the decisions made at the local level more directly influence people, resulting in more trust, confidence, and responsiveness (Campbell, 2003: 149–50). According to Global Insight (2009), in the Nkonkobe Municipality, an estimated 52 155 (45.9%) people are living in dire poverty, with a human development index of 0.49 which shows that the levels of human development are still very low. Given this background, the study at hand assessed the relationship between decentralisation and poverty reduction from the views of the public in order to gain insight into the perceptions of the public on whether decentralised projects have helped in advancing capabilities and freedoms of ordinary citizens. The findings of the study do corroborate the assertion that decentralisation contributes to citizen participation, trust, confidence and responsiveness (World Bank, 2001: 106; Campbell 2003: 149–50; Oxhorn et al.2004: 22; Steiner, 2007:177). This is also in harmony with the Sennian assertion that development is about increasing the freedoms that people enjoy (Sen, 1999).

Furthermore a number of studies published on decentralisation and poverty reduction, are mostly reviews of secondary literature (Bossuyt and Gould, 2000; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Von Braun and Grote, 2002; Crook, 2003; Vedeld, 2003; Jütting et al., 2004, 2005). Hence there was a need to conduct an empirical study on whether the decentralization of government has helped to address the predicament of poverty and in doing so attempt to assess whether the public perceive decentralization as having led to poverty alleviation. Specifically the researcher wanted to find out whether decentralisation has resulted in advancement of capabilities and wellbeing of the poor.

### 1.3 Preliminary literature review

In recent years scholars and development practitioners and statesmen have sought so many ways to bring governance to the local tiers in a bid to address the problem of poverty. This has seen decentralisation being viewed as a panacea to the problems of local development especially on issues of making service delivery responsive to the local needs and thus addressing the needs of the poor. In this regard, it is argued that decentralisation should lead to a closer congruence between local needs and local service delivery. Decentralization has been more narrowly defined as the transfer of power to different sub-national levels of government by the central government (Crook and Manor, 1998: 6; Oxhorn et al., 2004: 7).



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Many scholars are of the view that decentralisation contributes to democratic governance through the promotion of citizen participation (Von Braun and Grote, 2002:73-70; Oxhorn et al., 2004:22; Jutting et al, 2005:629-630). Decentralisation augments responsiveness of public policies to the specific needs of the citizenry. In this regard scholars are of the view that decentralization helps to improve the channels of citizen participation, political accountability, and that it allows for a more responsive, and thus effective, government allocation of public goods to a regionally diverse citizenry (Manor, 1999; Crook and Severiton, 2001; Johnson, 2001; Sawodogo, 2001; Crook, 2003; Devas, 2002; Bardan and Mookherjee, 2006; Daughters and Harper, 2007).

Literature on the link between decentralisation and poverty reduction is varied. In the Indian states of West Bengal and Kerala as well as Brazil (Abers, 1998, 2000; Heller, 2001; Schneider and Goldfrank, 2002; Souza, 2001; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Jütting et al., 2004; Vedeld, 2003), democratic decentralisation has achieved both greater participation and social justice for marginal groups and localities in addition to being strongly linked to redistributive policies that had pro-poor outcomes (Harris, 2002:15; Heller, 2001:142), helped reduce the capture of processes by elites (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001) and increased the political space within which poor groups could participate (Webster, 2002). In Brazil, it changed investment patterns and increased efficiency in terms of planning and implementation (Schneider and Goldfrank, 2001; Souza, 2001). Jütting et al. (2004:14) argues that South Africa and Ghana have been somewhat successful and are partial exceptions of the failure of decentralisation as they have managed to link decentralisation and poverty alleviation.

Although the potential benefits of decentralization are attractive, numerous studies have shown that they are seldom realized (Crook and Manor, 1998; Moore and Putzel, 1999; Francis and James, 2003; Kiyaga-Nsubuga and Olum, 2009; Kakumba, 2010:17; Molle, 2010). Adamolekun (1999:58) goes as far as to conclude that, while decentralization has been included in public sector reform in many sub-Saharan African countries, “there are no real success stories as far as improved development performance at the local level is concerned.” Jütting et al (2004:7) found that ‘an unambiguous link between decentralisation and poverty reduction cannot be established’. In support of this notion, Vedeld (2003: 194) concludes that there is ‘little convincing evidence that either

democracy or decentralisation will necessarily produce gains for the poor'. Other scholars, state that 'the link between decentralisation and poverty reduction policies is weak' (Bossuyt and Gould, 2000; Dethier, 2004; Scott, 2011). Only Von Braun and Grote (2002:89) deviate slightly from this consensus. Having posed the question "Does decentralisation serve the poor?" Their answer is 'Yes, but it depends'.

In the light of all these arguments all postulating the same relationship, namely that tendencies toward decentralization are preferable because they enhance citizens' empowerment and increase the inclination of local policy-makers to create possibilities for involving citizens in the policy-making process, the study sought to investigate whether these expectations come true in practice. Thus, if decentralization works as predicted, countries (or parts of a country) where it has become most institutionalized and implemented most extensively should be characterized by low poverty rates, empowered citizenry and efficient responsive service delivery. However, is it the case in South Africa that decentralisation is contributing to poverty reduction? Has decentralisation expanded the capabilities and wellbeing of the poor or has it furthered exclusive development? Hence the study seeks to subject the claim on the poverty reduction aspect of decentralisation to an empirical investigation in the Nkonkobe Municipality of the Eastern Cape Province.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

- 1) Do the residents of Nkonkobe Municipality perceive decentralisation to be leading to the advancement of capabilities and freedoms of ordinary citizens?

- 2) Do the public in Nkonkobe perceive decentralised projects to be potentially promoting, protecting and restoring human wellbeing?
- 3) Are there any significant changes in the wellbeing of the residents of Nkonkobe Municipality from their involvement in decentralised projects?

## 1.5 Hypothesis

This study sought to test the hypothesis that decentralised projects are effective in reducing levels of poverty by enhancing freedoms and wellbeing of the public. The hypothesis can be phrased formally as follows:

*Ho: Capability levels amongst the public who participated in the Nkonkobe Municipality projects are lower than for those who never participated in these projects.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: Capability levels amongst the public who participated in the Nkonkobe Municipality projects are higher than for those who never participated*

## 1.6 Research objectives and Aims

The main aim of the study was to establish whether the populaces of the Nkonkobe Municipality area (the words 'Nkonkobe', 'Nkonkobe Municipality' and 'Nkonkobe Municipality area' shall be used interchangeably) have achieved increased capability and freedoms through participation in the Municipality projects. In order to achieve this, the following objectives have been constructed:

1. To ascertain the perceptions of the Nkonkobe Municipality populace with regards to whether decentralisation leads to the advancement of capabilities and freedoms of ordinary citizens.

2. To establish whether the public in the Nkonkobe Municipality perceive decentralised projects as potentially promoting, protecting and restoring human wellbeing.
3. To determine if there have been changes in the wellbeing and agency of the residents of Nkonkobe Municipality from their involvement in decentralised projects.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

There are numerous frameworks that can be employed for this kind of study but the Capability Approach (CA) by Amartya Sen is chosen to underpin this study for reasons to be argued for below. Sen argues for an interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional approach to poverty that sees poverty as the deprivation of basic capabilities (Sen, 1993:41), rather than merely as lowness of incomes which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty (Sen, 1999: 87). Further, the CA has recently been one of the most prominent frameworks used in development thinking (Robeyns, 2005). Robeyns argues that in policy development circles, the approach has laid the foundations of the human development paradigm, even going as far as influencing the World Bank conceptualisation of poverty and cognate concepts. Hence it is such a robust tool that can help in clarifying concepts to be used in the dissertation and in the analysis of the entire study.

According to Sen, development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (1999:1). In his book *Inequality Re-examined*, Sen proposes that social arrangements should be evaluated in terms of a person's capability to achieve functionings that he or she has reason to value (Sen 1992; 5); therefore

development or poverty reduction occurs when people have greater freedoms or capabilities. Sen states that capability is the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. It is thus a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the persons' freedom to lead one type of life or another, to choose from possible livings (Sen, 1992; 40). In other words, Sen argues that functionings are constitutive of a person's being i.e. the various things a person may value doing or being (Sen, 1999: 72-75). In his writings, freedoms are termed as agency which refers to a person's ability to pursue and realize goals that he or she values or has reason to value.



The CA has been criticized for not offering a predefined list of capabilities thus making it difficult for some scholars to operationalise capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000; Alkire, 2002; Robeyns, 2003). Other authors (Sugden, 1993; Roemer, 1996) have challenged Sen to draw up a general list of capabilities, but Sen has refused to do so, claiming that specific lists of capabilities ought to be drawn up for a given study or policy context (Sen, 1993) and, crucially, that the process of choosing capabilities should be left to the individuals (Sen, 1997). Hence Sen's theoretical underpinning of substantive freedoms in evaluation of well being does provide a flexible framework within which to work.

The main reason for utilizing the CA in this study was due to its approach to the multi-dimensionality of poverty and its flexibility and internal pluralism which allows researchers to develop and apply it in many different ways (Alkire, 2002: 8-11, 28-30). Moreover the approach can be used to assess individual advantage in a range of

different spaces. When doing assessment of poverty one might concentrate on a relatively small sub-set of basic capabilities (Sen, 1993:31-2). Therefore the Capabilities Approach can be argued to be the theoretical premise upon which the current study is anchored. Hence the study is framed within the assumptions of the Capabilities Approach with regard to the virtues of decentralisation as a mechanism that augments people's freedoms thus leading to poverty alleviation.

### **1.8 Research Methodology and Design**

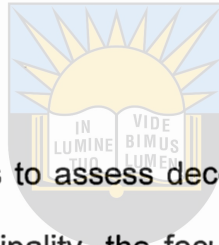
The main aim of the study was to establish if decentralisation does lead to poverty alleviation. The dissertation was meant to assess the perceptions of the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality with regard to the role of their municipality, as one of the decentralized mechanism, in addressing the problem of poverty. To carry out the study, a deductive methodology was adopted. This methodology was operationalised through the use of a quantitative research instrument, and specifically a five-scaled Likert based survey questionnaire, supplemented by an intensive literature review as a secondary research strategy.

Much of the studies on decentralisation and poverty alleviation have utilized various methodological orientations; cross sectional studies based on secondary literature reviews (Bossuyt and Gould, 2000; Bratton,2010; Cabral, 2011; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Crook, 2003; Jütting et al., 2004, 2005; Steiner 2007; UNDP,2002; Von Braun and Grote, 2002; Vedeld, 2003), mixed methods questionnaires and interviews (Alhassan, 2009; Bratton and Sibanyoni 2006; Haug cited in FPG,2006), in-depth

interviews (Yankinson , 2008; Egbenya, 2010) and surveys (Bird and Rodriguez 1999; Crook and Manor 1998; Nel and Binns, 2003; Appiah, 2005; Hereira et al.,2005; Andrianto, 2006; John, 2009). As can be noticed much of the studies in this area have utilized secondary reviews that are not anchored on reliable empirical evidence. Hence this study chose to utilize a quantitative research design to find out about the nature of the relationship between decentralisation and poverty reduction by concentrating on the perceptions of the general public residing in Nkonkobe Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

### **1.8.1 Research instruments**

Since the purpose of this study was to assess decentralization as a poverty reduction mechanism in the Nkonkobe Municipality, the focus was on primary data which was collected using structured questionnaires (Likert-Scaled Survey Questionnaire). The questionnaire consisted of a collection of statements about the attitudinal object in which respondents were asked to rate statements on a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (for a clear description of the research instrument see chapter 5). The questionnaire was self administered by the researcher since the respondents were a mixture of the literate and illiterate. Prior to the final study a pilot study was conducted. The pre-test results were then used to analyze and determine the appropriateness the questionnaire items.



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## 1.8.2 Sampling Technique

The method of sampling used in the study was probability sampling and with cluster sampling as the specific technique that was utilized. The sampling procedure adopted in this study was a compromise between technical efficiency and the nature of the terrain to be studied in addition to the time available. According to Global Insight, in 2008, the Nkonkobe Municipality had an estimated total population of 131 071. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator online (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>), based on the estimated population of the Nkonkobe Municipality area, at a standard error margin of  $\pm 5\%$ , a confidence level of 95%, and a 50% response distribution, a sample size of 384 was electronically calculated. The total sample for the study was therefore 384 respondents (n=384).



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## 1.8.3 Data analysis

Data analysis entails the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. The statistical analysis of the data was done through the utilization of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical methods of descriptive (for example, frequencies, Bar Graphs and Pies) and inferential techniques (for instance, factor analysis, regression, correlation, cross tabulation and chi-square tests) were employed in the understanding of the research findings with regard to the role and effects of decentralisation on poverty alleviation processes. Conceptualization and definition of poverty anchored around the admixture of the multi-dimensional perspective on poverty and the CA determined the themes of the broader analysis of the data collected for the study.

## 1.9 Significance of the study

The importance of the study stems from its significance in showing the nature of relationships that exists between decentralisation as a policy framework and poverty reduction as a result of the policy implementation. This study is significant with regard to both theory and policy. Theoretically, as has been argued earlier, there has been varied arguments on the role of decentralisation in promoting pro-poor development with some scholars asserting there are no linkages between the two (Vedeld, 2003: 194 Jütting et al., 2004:7) and others arguing in favor of such a linkage (Bossuyt and Gould, 2000:5). This dissertation has attempted to test the validity of these assertions. In the process the study has concluded that decentralisation does contribute to poverty alleviation, since poverty is multi-dimensional and involving capability deprivations. The study has also extended the decentralisation and poverty reduction thesis by introducing multi-dimensionalism and capability deprivation. Hence theoretically the study has shown that scholars need to start to conceptualise poverty using multi-dimensional lens and thus shun the obsession with income deprivations as the only indicators of poverty. Practically the thesis is of importance in the policy arena as it has argued that decentralisation as a policy has a role in improving governance, facilitating participation, responsiveness, inclusion, empowerment, infrastructure development and greater changes in well being. Hence the study advocates that it is of paramount importance for the central government to support decentralised mechanism as they are efficiency local development initiatives. Furthermore, theoretically the study also contributes to the

epistemological arguments around studies on decentralisation and poverty reduction, considering that most of the studies on poverty and decentralisation have been concerned with reviews of secondary literature. It is in this regard that the research finds a place in attesting these arguments empirically.

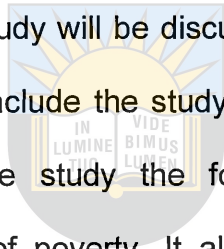
### **1.10 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical behavior is of paramount importance in every study. To ensure this, the rights of respondents were respected. For instance, that is respondents were asked to participate on their own free will. In addition, names of respondents were not sought and this guaranteed the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. The results of the study were also not falsified but analyzed as objectively as possible. In conjunction with this, prior to data collection entry was sought through seeking permission from the Municipal Manager who granted permission for the study to be conducted. Lastly in order to achieve maximum research accountability, communities sampled for the study were promised a copy of the dissertation on completion of the study.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has established the core argument of the dissertation that decentralisation results in poverty reduction. It has thus given a succinct orientation to the study which has shown the objectives and aims of the study. The chapter has as argued earlier on shown that the current thesis contends that decentralisation contributes to poverty reduction especially when poverty is seen from multi-dimensional point of view. Hence this chapter has argued that the local government through

responsive service delivery and the provision of municipal projects has a pro-poor impact on local development. It has been established in this chapter that many countries have decentralised their service delivery strategies in order to reduce poverty. The chapter has briefly given the theoretical framework upon which the study is built and it has been highlighted that the CA by Sen is the anchor upon which the study is based. A discussion of the epistemological underpinnings for the study has also been given in this chapter, which has shown that the study is quantitative in nature and utilizes a self-administered Likert scale survey questionnaire for data collection. However the methodology for the study will be discussed in length in Chapter 5, whilst Chapter 6 to 8 will analyse and conclude the study. However, having discussed and introduced the core issues of the study the following chapter focuses on the conceptualizations and definitions of poverty. It also gives an overview on state of poverty from both the local and the global perspectives.



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## CHAPTER 2: POVERTY MEASUREMENT, CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PREVALENCE

### 2.1. Introduction

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship that exists between decentralisation and poverty reduction processes. What this means is that the public of the Nkonkobe Municipality perceive the implementation of the decentralised projects to have resulted in the promotion of freedoms and the augmentation of capabilities. This highlights the view raised in the first chapter that decentralisation does contribute to poverty alleviation. For this reason, the current chapter builds upon the thesis of the study by engaging scholarly definitions and understanding underlying the conceptualization of poverty. Poverty has been one of the greatest problems facing human kind from times antiquity and in recent years. Owing to this various efforts have been put forward to counteract the challenge posed by poverty. In this regard poverty reduction, as noted by Codallo (2005), has been the perennial promise of politicians and a recurring passion of charitable foundations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It has become a theme in many development praxis arenas as a result of the realization that development entails enlarging the freedoms and wellbeing of the poor (Wolfensohn and Sen, 1991; 1999; Sen, 1999:1; 2009; Clark and Qizilbash, 2005; Crocker, 2006 Schischka, 2006; Nussbaum and Clover, 2007; Schischka et al. 2008). The drive to human development that is premised on the notion of poverty reduction has seen the concept of poverty being redefined. Hence the definition of poverty advanced herein is derived from a multi-dimensional analysis of poverty and Sen's (1999:90)

capability perspective. The resultant framework that combines the two perspectives enhances our understanding of the nature and causes of poverty and deprivation by 'shifting primary attention away from means to ends that people have reason to pursue, and, correspondingly, to the freedoms to be able to satisfy these'( Sen, 1999).

While the questions of the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of poverty reductions remain central themes in development arenas and policy praxis goals, however, there is little consent on the definition of poverty as well as its measurement. It is against this background that the current chapter provides extensive literature review on the concept of poverty. The review concentrates on the scholarly understandings of poverty, its definitions and measurements. The chapter attempts to critically discuss the globally held views on poverty and offer scholarly debates that amount to the redefinition of the term which incorporates its multi-dimensionality. Hence poverty will be reviewed from a macro-level perspective to a micro-level perspective. The chapter will also offer an extensive review of the state of poverty in South Africa. In a nutshell, the current chapter endeavors to highlight the need to view, in line with the position of up-to-date literature, poverty as multi-dimensional and argues in favor of poverty reduction policies that shift from the economic centrism to multi-dimensionality (Sen, 1999; Narayan et al., 1999; UNDP, 2000; World Bank, 2002, McLennan and Ngoma, 2004; Chamber, 2006; Islam, 2005; Shaffer, 2008; Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009).

As an outcome of the current debates on poverty, a proper definition and conceptualization of poverty is warranted. This is due to the proposition by von Braun et

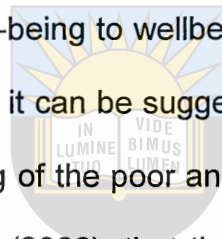
al. (2009 cited in Blake and Quiros, 2010:5) that how poverty is defined and measured determines who is defined as poor, how we think about poverty's causes, and our evaluation of measures to alleviate it. This notion has been reiterated by Adcock's (1993:3;1997:1-2) assertion that many people, including academics, campaigners and politicians, talk about the problem of poverty, and underlying their discussion is the assumption that identifying the problem of poverty provides the basis for action upon which we all agree. Hence the current chapter offers different perspectives on poverty and argues in favor of a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty owing to the fact that the latter approach provides different techniques and methodologies for poverty reduction. These suppositions and assertions by von Braun et al. (2009) and Alcock (1993) imply that the best and most appropriate poverty alleviation strategy and policies for the Nkonkobe Municipality and South Africa at large need to be informed by a proper definition of poverty. Such a definition of poverty will help in the understanding and analysis of whether the local government in South Africa has managed to be pro-poor or whether it has managed to enhance the wellbeing and freedoms of its citizens. But first there is need to state the reasons behind widespread and/or global efforts at poverty alleviation.

## **2.1 Rationale for Poverty Alleviation**

Poverty alleviation has now become a global agenda as it has been argued that poverty has become a perennial theme amongst scholars, governments, religious bodies, non-governmental organisations, civil societies and development institutions. Why are there orchestrated efforts towards poverty alleviation? According to Streeten (1998: 2-3),

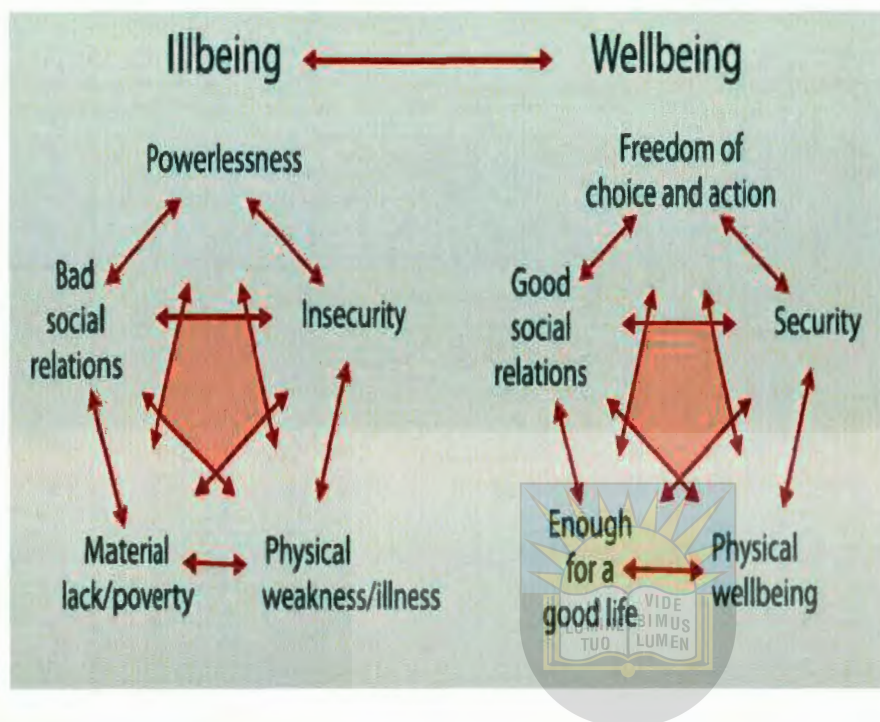
poverty alleviation is done for the following reasons: Firstly, the elimination of poverty leads to increased productivity increases in health, skills, education and mental alertness (which the poor are normally deprived of) which are the best ingredients for a healthy workforce. Secondly, the elimination of poverty would lead to desirably lower family sizes. Thirdly, poverty reduction leads to a healthier environment. Lastly, reduced poverty contributes to a healthy civil society, democracy and greater social stability.

Chambers (2006) posits that the elimination of poverty results in development as good change which entails shifting from ill-being to wellbeing (see Figure 2.1). Hence adding to what Streeten (1998) has argued, it can be suggested that poverty alleviation should be aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of the poor and the public at large. Interestingly it can be argued, following Chambers (2006), that the idea of poverty alleviation should focus on ensuring that the poor (ill-being) be transformed from their current situation to a progressive and advanced state of wellbeing.



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**Figure 2.1:** Development as good change – from ill-being to wellbeing



Source: Chambers (2006:4) **University of Fort Hare**  
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Thus the primary goal of poverty reduction mechanisms is to bring about socio-economic and political transformation. In the same vein, the World Bank (2001:7-8) endorses the shared belief on the motivation behind poverty reduction by arguing that a poverty reduction strategy entails three policy responses to the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, described as 'promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment and enhancing security'. 'Promoting opportunity' encompasses both economic and social deprivation and involves the expansion of opportunities for poor people to increase incomes and to access basic services. 'Facilitating empowerment' addresses the political dimension and focuses both on strengthening the participation of poor people in political processes and on state institutions becoming more responsive and accountable to the poor. 'Enhancing security' pertains to measures aimed at reducing overall

vulnerability, with a particular emphasis on health- and climate-related risks. Hence from the arguments stated above it can be posited that the rationale behind poverty reduction is to bring socio-economic transformation and the enhancement of the wellbeing of the poor. Against this background there is need to put in place policies that are geared towards poverty alleviation.

## **2.2 Concepts and meanings of Poverty**

In the present world today everyone is tasked with the removal one way or the other of poverty, making poverty a widely known phenomenon. However a lot of scholars have noted that when it comes to defining poverty there is a lot of contestation and multifarious arguments (Scott, 1994; Chambers, 2002; Laderchi et al., 2003; Alcock, 2006) as different schools of thought, scholars, non-academics and organizations have all conceptualized the term differently. While the question of poverty today has become the theme of development initiatives in most societies, the central thesis of this study would be on the best and most appropriate definition that can direct policies in a responsive pro-poor direction and that can offer a better evaluative system of poverty that is informed by the accurate definitions that encompass all the dimensions of what poverty entails. Commenting on this, Laderchi et al (2003) contends that different definitions of poverty imply the use of different indicators for measurement as these may lead to the identification of different individuals and groups as poor and requiring different policy solutions for poverty reduction. Hence the need to come up with a widely appraised definition of poverty that is not context fixed but one that can be applied to different localities in a bid to arrest the problem of poverty. Concurring with this is

Razafindrakoto and Roubaud (2003:1) who argue for the multi-dimensionalism of poverty as they note that poverty is a complex and multifaceted (World Bank, 2001; May, 1998) phenomenon. However, they are also of the view that consensus is far from being achieved on this point. Different concepts and indicators exist alongside each other, without the links between them being clearly set out: monetary poverty, penury or extreme poverty of capabilities, social exclusion, absolute and relative poverty and objective and subjective poverty (Mokoena, 2004).

Accordingly Noble et al (2008) is of the view that the concept and definition of poverty in a society is like a mirror-image of the ideals of that society: in conceptualising and defining what is unacceptable in a society we are also saying a great deal about the way we would like things to be. It is therefore of vital importance that the way in which poverty is conceptualized and then defined is not only theoretically robust, but also relevant to the society in question. In support of this assertion, Danida (1996) posits that in an analysis of poverty, it is expedient to appreciate the fact that poverty has many dimensions and as such, the meanings the people attach to poverty has to be defined; in other words how do the people in the locality under study perceive poverty to be. Hence the study adopted the multi-dimensional poverty perspective as it appeared that this really encompasses all of the varieties of what people perceive to be poverty at a collective and individual level as manifest in the South African nation (May, 1998; Qizilbash, 2000; World Bank, 2000; De Jongh, 2002, Donnison, 2001, Bikam, 2004; Mokate, 2004).

However, it is pertinent to note that the conceptual understanding of poverty has evolved over time. In this regard Maxwell (1999) connotes that the conceptualization of poverty has its roots in the codification of poor laws in medieval England. The conceptualization was later affirmed by Booth and Rowntree's study, published in 1901, which was the first to develop poverty standard for individual families based on estimates of nutritional measures and other requirements. Accordingly, Maxwell (1999) posits that the 1960s saw poverty being viewed on the basis of income disparities and the emergence of terms like Gross National Product (GNP) as poverty indicators. Growth was the major indicator of a shift from poverty and this was measured using economic monetary indices. Maxwell (1999) furthermore suggests that Townsend (1974) has helped to redefine poverty by contending that poverty includes subsistence, inequality and externality. Townsend was of the view that poverty meant a failure to meet the prevailing societal standards per given time period. From the 1980s and 1990s a wide number of conceptualizations have been given for poverty. The evolvement as can be seen, has taken recourse from the income based arguments assessed in monetary terms (Rowntree, 1901; Iceland 2003; Wagle 2006) to the broadening of the concept to include, in addition to income, a broad set of non-income basic needs, like primary education, basic health, and access to basic social services. More recently, other elements have been added to the poverty measure, including intangibles such as "capabilities," dignity, autonomy, vulnerability, voice, empowerment and participation (Yao, 2007:13).

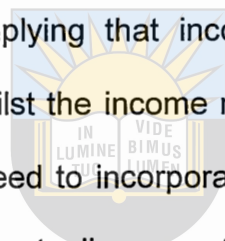
However the major issue is how we operationalise poverty, considering the fact that the definitions are myriad. In this regard Lister (2004:12) contends that defining poverty is critical to political, policy and academic debates as it has implications for solutions. Hence the following sections will offer definitions of poverty and a critical engagement with scholarly work arguments in this area.

### **2.3 Definitions of Poverty**

To reiterate, the meaning and conceptualization of poverty has been the perennial discourse amongst many scholars, non-governmental organisations, governments and different disciplines. This denotes the fact that people have different understanding of the term. To some it is context bound, to others it is based on a given theoretical anchor. The uni-dimensional and multi-dimensional nature of poverty also divides scholars. This is why Alcock (1997) posits that poverty is a contested problem, with the majority of people claiming that their definition is the correct one, basing on logical arguments and/or empiricism. Alcock (in Becker, 1997) further suggests that the issue of definition lies at the heart of the task of understanding poverty and that knowing what poverty is helps in choosing the right measures and policies to alleviate it.

However before we engage and explore the major perspectives in the definitions and conceptualization of poverty it is worth highlighting the multifarious definitions of poverty amongst a number of scholars. As has been argued earlier on in this chapter, many scholars have often argued for poverty as based on income or material things insufficiency when asked to define poverty (Rowntree, 1901; Alcock, 1997; UNDP,

1997; May, 1998; Atkinson and Bourguignon, 1999; World Bank, 2001:16; Blake and Quiros, 2010:5). Poverty in this case entails insufficiency of one's economic resources to the extent that the person cannot acquire enough commodities to meet basic material needs (Lipton, 1997:127) This approach dominated the discourse on poverty studies. However as noted by Alcock (1999), Maxwell (1999), Streeten et al (2001) and Sen (2001), utilizing the income perspectives in defining poverty is not enough as there are many forms and varieties of poverty. However Sen (1999, cited in von Braun et al, 2009) interestingly posits that, "inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life" and thus implying that income has a correlation with other dimensions of poverty. However whilst the income measure of poverty is important for poverty understanding, there is a need to incorporate the other dimensions of poverty when attempting to define and conceptualise poverty. For example in South Africa, as noted by May (1998), there are high disparities between the rich and poor implying that the income approach is viable in articulating poverty in this context. But at the same time one could contend that it is not only income that is noticeable but inequalities, exclusion and capability deprivation. Therefore the need to explore and utilize other definitions and conceptualizations of poverty is warranted.



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Contrary to this supposition of poverty being conceptualized and measured from economic lenses, Streeten (2001:149) argues in favor of basic needs as part of the multi-dimensionalism of poverty. What needs to be understood is that poverty from Streeten's perspective encapsulates the failure to have food, shelter, clothing, medical facilities, education, social security and welfare. To this end it can be argued that the

provision of the basic needs entails poverty reduction. Narayan et al. (2009: 41) who share the same sentiments are of the view that “poor people have needs, but reducing people to just their needs robs them of their aspirations, dreams, ambitions and skills – in short, of their ability to help themselves”.

In this regard, Narayan et al (1999)’s participatory research work list the notable dimensions of poverty and wellbeing as: wellbeing and a good life including material wellbeing (having enough), bodily wellbeing (being and appearing well), many aspects of social wellbeing (e.g. being able to settle children and being able to help others), security, and freedom of choice and action. At the same time Narayan et al. (2000:30) further captured poverty from the perspective of the poor from different countries as follows: poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent, and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when we seek help. He later expresses what one woman in Kenya in 1997 documented to be poverty:

*“.....Don’t ask me what poverty is because you have met it outside my house. Look at the house and count the number of holes. Look at my utensils and the clothes that I am wearing. Look at everything and write what you see. What you see is poverty....”* (Narayan et al, 2000:30)

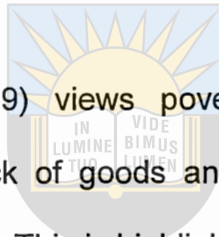
Hence a closer look at what the Kenyan woman perceives to be poverty really reiterates the multi-dimensionalism of poverty. But the major question is does this really offer the best explanation to what entails poverty? In trying to answer this question the World Bank (2001:I-2) defined poverty as a lack of command over commodities that is

essential to constitute a reasonable standard of living in a society, or lack of ability to function in a society. This definition also emphasizes command over resources as well as the lack of participation or voice in governance and civil matters. This corresponds to the World Bank's earlier definition of poverty (World Bank, 1999:10) which stated that from participatory studies it has been proven that the poor perceive poverty in terms of a range of material and non-material things like insecurity, lack of dignity and status or a lack of power or opportunity.

Corroborating the above definition is the UN's (1995) final declaration, during the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) which states that:

*'Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision making in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets. Women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, and children growing up in poverty are often permanently disadvantaged. Older people, people with*

*disabilities, indigenous people, refugees and internally displaced persons are also particularly vulnerable to poverty. Furthermore, poverty in its various forms represents a barrier to communication and access to services, as well as a major health risk, and people living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of disasters and conflicts. Absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services.'*



In this regard Townsend (1979:39) views poverty as a complex phenomenon comprising of both an absolute lack of goods and services and an individual's (or household's) relative place in society. This is highlighted when he commented that:

*'Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved of, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns and activities.'* (Townsend, 1979: 31, cited in Lister, 2004: 21)

According to Schimmel (2009:65), the UNDP equates poverty with disease, high infant mortality, low life expectancy, malnutrition, hunger, lack of access to water, education, knowledge, public and private resources, housing, clothes, and security, in other words,

with lack and deficiency. It concentrates on deficiencies and deprivations. Harris (2004:7) concurs with Schimmel when he notes that, when discussing poverty, the World Bank report goes beyond simple income measures of poverty, to include factors such as “powerlessness, voicelessness, vulnerability, and fear”. A similar definition is noticeable in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) conceptualization of multidimensional poverty as interlinked forms of deprivation in the economic, human, political, socio-cultural and protective spheres (OECD, 2006). Hence one can easily observe that poverty is now perceived not from a one-dimensional perspective but rather from a multi-dimensional perspective.



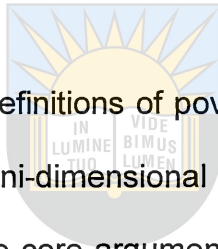
In addition another view of poverty from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) contends that poverty results in discrimination, obstacles and exclusion:

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- “In satisfying the basic necessities of life;
- In the use and development of an individual’s physical and human potential, capacities and creativity;
- In seizing the opportunities and choices for fashioning a fulfilling and dignified life;
- In the realisation of one’s aspirations;
- From participating in the formulation and decision making stages of the social, political and economic transformation process”. (SDC, 2004)

From the foregoing it can be argued that poverty results in social exclusion, vulnerability and discrimination which amount to inequalities. Hence poverty is seen to be

synonymous with social exclusion. The Poverty Group (2001: 20) states that social exclusion refers to social arrangements or structures within a society that systematically exclude disadvantaged groups from economic opportunities for reasons other than their potential productivity. Looking at SDC conceptualization of the results of poverty it can be deduced that poverty implies social exclusion. Poverty can also be argued to result in vulnerability. Vulnerability has two facets, these relate to external exposure to shocks, stress and risk, while the second relates to internal defenselessness and the lack of means to cope without suffering damaging loss (Streeten, 1994).



Having considered the multifarious definitions of poverty given above, it can be argued that poverty has moved from being uni-dimensional (income based) to include a variety of dimensions. This is in line with the core argument of this dissertation that poverty is multi-dimensional. The following section discuss the three major perspectives that have been utilized in explaining what poverty entails, namely, the income, Basic Needs and the Capability perspectives..

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## **2.4 Major Perspectives in Poverty Conceptualization**

Poverty as can be seen and as has been argued earlier in this chapter is a controversial term sparking a variation of debates when people try to analyse and understand it. Accordingly, Mbuli (2008:22) opines that there are many definitions of poverty that have emerged over time. Supporting this assertion is Chambers who clusters poverty definitions into five groups namely:

- “Income poverty (or its common proxy, consumption poverty).

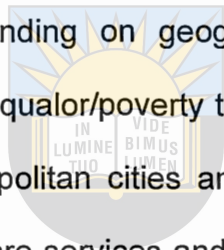
- Material lack or want: besides income, this includes absent, limited or low quality assets (such as, shelter, clothing, furniture, personal means of transport, radio, etc.) It also includes inadequate access to services.
- Capability deprivation, referring to what we can or cannot do, or can or cannot be. This goes well beyond material lack or wants to include human capabilities, such as skills and physical abilities, and also self-respect in society.
- Multidimensional deprivation, with material lack or want as only one of several mutually reinforcing dimensions.
- The multiplicity of the meanings of poverty identified by the poor themselves” (Chamber, 2006:34).



Hettne (2002:2), however, suggests a more advanced or better classification of poverty that is similar to that of Chambers which incorporates some additional and new dimensions of poverty. Hettne (2002:2) is of the view that poverty can be grouped into five distinct areas, as follows:

- absolute poverty that occurs when human beings live in a state of deprivation due to meagre income or lack of access to basic human needs which include food, safe water, sanitation, health, shelter, education and information;
- Relative poverty defines poverty from a comparative point of view, i.e. poverty is not absolute but relative. Relative refers to the position of household or individual compared. It is measured in three ways: through the low income family statistics, income and disposable income;

- Chronic/structural means that poverty is persistent or long term. It causes are more permanent and depend on a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skill for gainful employment, vocational disadvantage or endemic socio-political and cultural factors;
- conjunctural transitory which means poverty is temporary or short term and caused mainly by factors such as natural or man-made disasters – wars and environmental degradation or structural changes induced by policy reforms which result in loss of employment, loss in value of real income assets;
- Spatial/location means depending on geographical or regional spread and incidence. It involves urban squalor/poverty typified by the existence of ghettos, slums and shanties in metropolitan cities and characterized by environmental degradation, inadequate welfare services and social deprivations, low per-capita income, over-crowded accommodation, engagement in informal business, rural poverty characterized by poor conditions of living.

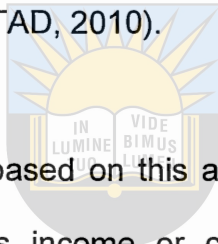


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However, Mbuli (2008) and Banjo (2009:3) suggest a somewhat different cluster of poverty definitions based on the 1997 Human Development Report (HDI) which indicated that the universal knowledge is that poverty has been defined from three different perspectives. These are; the income perspective, the basic needs perspective and the CA. However these are not the only perspectives that have been utilized to conceptualise poverty. Nevertheless the following sections will elaborate on the key elements of the three perspectives as it appears that these seem to cover some of the conceptual classification terrain suggested by Chambers (2006) and Hettne (2002).

## 2.4.1 The Income Perspective

The theoretical underpinnings of the income perspective to poverty contend for a definition that is based on income or material-based poverty (May 1998; Atkinson and Bourguignon, 1999; Grusky and Kanbur, 2006). The income approach equates development with increases in production and wealth, usually measured as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. This implies that growth equals development and in the case of pro-poor development, poverty is conceived as lack of money. Thus poverty reduction or alleviation within this framework therefore means finding ways to deliver increased incomes to the poor (UNCTAD, 2010).



The concept of poverty as defined based on this approach entails that a person or a household is considered poor if its income or consumption falls below a certain threshold, normally defined as a minimum level (Lipton and Ravallion, 1993: 1; Alcock, 1997:77-79; UNDP, 1997:16; World Bank, 2001:16; Blake and Quiros, 2010:5). According to Lipton (1997:127), this approach rightfully suggests that, “a person is poor if and only if his or her access to economic resources is insufficient to acquire enough commodities to make meet basic material needs adequately”. In support of this view is May (1998) who posits that poverty is the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required to satisfy them. This definition as can be noticed has affected much poverty studies in South Africa that use the Minimum Living Level (MLL), the Supplementary Living Level (SLL), and Household Subsistence Level (HSL) as poverty scales.

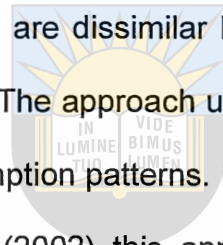
The income approach to poverty analysis goes back to the times of Booth (1892) and Rowntree (1901) who, as has been mentioned earlier, conducted the first empirical scholarly work on poverty. Booth (1892:62) described poverty as “not having sufficient income to meet his minimum needs standards” (cited in Gazeley and Newell 2007:5). At the same time Rowntree (1901:86-87) further argued that poverty entails a level of total earnings insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of physical efficiency and families ‘whose total earnings would be sufficient for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency. were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditures, either useful or wasteful’. From this, can be seen that preoccupation with growth or economic advancement as a proxy for development.



The economic determinism in poverty studies was catapulted by the modernization era when the modernization ideologies were the dominant narratives of development. At this juncture, development was equated with economic growth, economic growth with industrialization and industrialization with investment in physical capital formation (Kabeer, 2003). There was an anticipated multiplier effect which was supposed to ensure that the incomes or consumption pattern of the poor would change due to spill over from economic growth. Growth or access to financial capital was seen as a vehicle of poverty reduction.

Another point to consider is that the economic perspective when it is measuring or determining the poor looks at what is termed the poverty income line. The poverty income line is the level at which households have enough income for a specified

amount of basic consumption needs. According to Woolard and Leibbrandt (1999:8), the poverty line divides the population into two groups on the basis of some measure: below the line a household/individual is considered to be poor, and above the line it is considered non-poor. Clearly, poverty lines are extremely useful for the description of poverty. However the poverty line varies regionally and is adjustable (Davids et al., 2005:37) although institutions like the World Bank adopted US \$1 as the global or universal poverty datum line below which people are perceived to be living in poverty. As noted by Hoeven and Anker (1994:17-19) care should be considered when applying the poverty lines since poverty lines are dissimilar between regions in terms of social culture and economic environment. The approach utilizes data from social surveys and mainly focuses on income or consumption patterns. Due to the ready availability of data as highlighted by the World Bank (2002) this approach has been the dominant in poverty measurements. The usage of income as a criterion for poverty analysis is justifiable to some extent since it is correlated to some other aspects of multi-dimensional poverty. This view is supported by Sen (1999:87) who suggests that “inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life”. However it is a question of whether the income approach offers the best approach to poverty analysis in the Nkonkobe Municipality. It is however questionable whether the economic perspective is suitable for understanding poverty the Nkonkobe Municipality or in the Eastern Cape Province of South. This emanates from the fact that as has been argued earlier the meaning attached to poverty differs amongst persons, groups or communities. This implies that there is need of utilizing a multi-dimensional approach that incorporates all the different aspects of poverty.



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Scholars have come to understand that although the income approach to poverty has been widely appraised and utilized, it does not offer the best measurements of poverty. For this reason, economic growth or income growth is thus not a favorable and reliable measure of poverty. This is affirmed by Sen (2000: 108) when he argues that “policy debates have indeed been distorted by overemphasis on income poverty and income inequality, to the neglect of deprivations that relate to other variables, such as unemployment, ill health, lack of education and social exclusion.” This was also postulated earlier by Wuyts, et al (1992) when they argued that an ‘image of poverty’ based on income indices focuses attention on that which is measurable and deflects attention from less measurable but crucial aspects of poverty such as power relations and control over resources. In further discarding the economic measurements of poverty, Paulo Freire (in Burkey, 1993: 30) provides a structural perspective which indicated that,

*“One must go beyond criteria based on indices of per capita income as well as those which concentrate on the study of gross income. The basic elementary criterion is whether or not the society is a ‘being for itself’, that is, ‘its political, economic and cultural decision-making power is located within.’”*

From the above, it can be deduced that the income perspective to poverty has been a failure due to the fact that it only concentrates on one aspect of poverty to the exclusion of the other dimensions. This brings us to the other two perspectives on poverty, namely, the Basic Needs Approach and the CA.

## 2.4.2 The Basic Needs Perspective

As we have argued from the previous section that poverty measurement utilizing income as a proxy are insufficient and are highly unreliable, Streeten et al (2001:149) are instead of the view that we need to understand poverty as multidimensional and this multi-dimensionalism entails deprivation of basic needs. Income alone cannot define or stipulate who is poor or rich. Rather access to basic needs does help in elucidating the presence of poverty. The provision of basic services like health, housing, water, roads and the general welfare of the poor are poverty reduction mechanisms. According to Banjo (2009), the basic needs approach defines poverty as a deprivation of material requirements for minimally acceptable fulfillment of human needs, including food. This view is later supported by the UNDP (1997:16) and Dessalines (1998) who assert that the concept of deprivation goes beyond the lack of personal income to include access to such necessities as food, shelter, schooling, health, water, sanitation facilities and opportunities for both employment and participation. This reinforces the view that poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. Poverty arises not only from lack of income but also from deprivation of access to social services (UN, 1995: 57). Hence providing basic services is seen as a means by which the problem of poverty can be addressed and in this way the approach seems viable for understanding poverty in South Africa.

When it comes to defining basic needs, Burkey (1993:3) views them as those things an individual must have in order to live as a human being. However, if one would take a critical analysis of what basic needs entails, the result would be a contestation. This is highlighted by Segal and Brzuzy (1998:8) who polemically asked what basic needs depend upon, who is defining them and about the group for whom the resources are intended. One can generate a list of desirable needs, but ranking these needs in terms of their importance or ranking of them is difficult as it becomes a subjective exercise because people have different preferences.



This approach, as can be seen, offers a new insight into the conceptualization of poverty by adding features of multi-dimensionalism that enable one to see that the econometric system to poverty analysis does not provide the whole picture. Some scholars, such as, like Hemmer and Wilhelm (2000:4), have gone to the extent of indicating that basic needs can be sub-divided into private goods and publicly provided services, with private goods entailing the immediate satisfaction needs at the individual level, such as, food, clothing, and shelter and some basic household appliances and furniture. The public sphere of basic needs accordingly has to do with the provision of drinking water, public transport, and access to health care, sanitary and educational facilities.

The advantage of the basic needs approach is that it can be applied to different localities and population and as a relative concept it is not fixed to a given list. The approach allows dynamism and permits different people to define and categorize what

they see as basic needs. It is inclusive of a wide range of poverty dimensions absent in the income approaches like social services, participation and employment.

Nevertheless the major problem with this approach is on the demarcation of being basic or succinctly it does not give a clear cut lists of what is to be considered basic needs or necessities. This poses a challenge to scholars who want to do comparisons because what constitutes a basic need differs from researcher to researcher and indeed from place to place. What is perceived as a basic need differs from one context or locality to another. It is in this vein that Streeten (1982), states that "there is nothing yet that could be described as a fully articulated Basic Needs Strategy, even as an adjunct to other strategies". There is therefore little agreement as to what constitutes both the basic needs and a state of deprivation from basic needs (Mokoena, 2001:10). For this reason, the basic needs approach does not offer a clear cut picture of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, hence the dire need to utilize the CA in defining and understanding poverty.

### **2.4.3 The Capability Perspective**

Does poverty only entail income insufficiency or shortage of basic commodities and services? This has been the central question that developmentalists and policy makers alike have been struggling with. However, as has been argued earlier, poverty definitions and measurements that utilized the income approaches were flawed due to the fact that they did not take into account the idea that poverty is multi-dimensional. For this reason, there is now consensus that the multidimensional measurement of poverty is a more responsible and reliable alternative in most contexts (Hicks and Streeten,

1979, Streeten et al., 1981, Sen, 2000, Bourguignon and Chakravarty, 2003, Sullivan, 2006). The Capability Approach (CA) which was pioneered by Sen's is built on multi-dimensionalism and on the importance of making people as the means and ends of "development" (Sen, 1984, Sen, 1985, Sen, 2000; 2009). According to Lardechi et al (2003), the human capabilities approach proposes that development should be seen as the expansion of human capabilities, not the maximization of utility, or its proxy, money income. Corroborating this view, Hindson et al (2003:3) argue that it is now widely accepted that poverty includes deprivation in a range of capabilities, such as education, health, and human and civil rights.



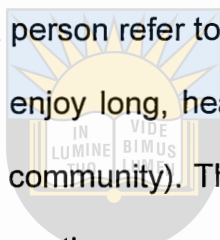
Hence from a CA perspective poverty is defined as deprivation, or failure to achieve certain minimal or basic capabilities, where 'basic capabilities' are 'the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels' (Sen, 1993: 41). From this vantage point it is clear that Sen's human capabilities perspective can enhance our understanding of the nature and causes of deprivation by shifting primary attention away from means, such as income, to ends which give people freedoms to satisfy needs through the exercise of their capabilities (Mubangidzi, 2008:175).

According to Sen (2001), poverty is a complex multifaceted concept that requires a clear analysis in all its dimensions. The CA (Sen,1982) can be distinguished from other economic approaches to poverty and development in that it considers the "means to achieve", "freedom to achieve," and "actual achievement" of goals and individual values

(Zheng, 2009). Thus to Sen (2001) the capabilities of a person and their expansion are the basis for development. As Sen writes, “the process of economic development is best seen as an expansion of people’s capabilities, and development is seen as a process of emancipation from the enforced necessity to live less and be less” (Sen, 1983). In this sense, development becomes the liberatory means by which people escape poverty through the enhancement of human freedoms. Sen utilizes the notion of ‘freedom’ as the basis for his CA, and describes freedom as “central to the process of development” (Sen, 1999:4). Sen indicates that there are five basic freedoms: social opportunity, political freedom, economic facilities, transparency guarantees, and protective security. On the basis of this postulation, Sen asserts that the only way to truly achieve happiness is through addressing the deprivation of capabilities that prevent the individual from engaging in these freedoms. Sen’s CA perspective sees people as poor if they are deprived of freedoms and hence the provision of freedoms entails pro-poor development. The CA has been influential in the human development frameworks to development and this has seen organisations, such as, the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) and World Bank (WB) measuring poverty through the Human Development Index (HDI) in addition to the publication of the Human Development Reports (HDR) which assesses poverty in terms of achievement of or outcomes in wellbeing.

Furthermore, Harris (2004:7) notes that the European Commission's call for poverty analysis focuses on factors such as the “deprivation of basic capabilities and lack of access to education, health, natural resources, employment, land and credit, political

participation, services, and infrastructure”. Following this assertion by the European Union, it can be argued that the latest UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP, 2010) has attempted to address these gaps to some extent by extending its assessment of poverty to include three new measures: an Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index, a Gender Inequality Index, and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (Alkire and Foster, 2009). These measures incorporate capability deprivation as poverty. Hence the CA has been influential in the current drive towards human development. The concept of human development stems from the Sennian notion of “functionings” and “capability.” The functionings of a person refer to the valuable things the person can do or be (such as the opportunity to enjoy long, healthy lives, to be literate and to be able to freely take part in the life of a community). The capability of a person stands for the different combinations of functionings the person can achieve; it reflects the freedom to achieve functionings.



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In terms of poverty reduction it can be argued that enlarging what South Africans can do, or can be, should be the primary objective of government’s actions. In the CA, the core role of governments as well as development actors is to endow citizens with the required conditions for actualizing central human functioning; in other words, to provide them with necessary capacities and opportunities (Gasper and Claire, 2001:4). Decentralisation of services in South Africa can be seen to be a move, as Sen has argued, which is positive in the area of poverty reduction because only when individuals are given adequate social opportunities can they effectively shape their own destiny and help each other (Sen, 1999: 11). For this reason, the freedom to participate in the

Nkonkobe Municipality projects can be argued to offer mechanisms and opportunities that help arrest poverty as a social predicament.

In support of this argument Narayan et al (2009:336) contends that, "poverty is fluid: it is a situation or a condition people find themselves in, not a permanent characteristic. Most people living in poverty do not suffer fatalism or low aspirations; rather, they take initiative to change their conditions, and most are confident that with hard work they will prevail. Poor people value freedom and their social relationships, and they want to use them to improve their wellbeing in a variety of ways. But their initiatives, whether individual or collective, often come up against blocked opportunities, whether in the context of rigged markets or local democracies captured by the elite. The key to poverty reduction lies in the intersection of initiative and opportunity." This calls for development frameworks that offer the public or individuals opportunities to channel all available resources for self-development and the realization of community development.

Accordingly Pressman and Summerfield (2002) are of the view that the CA by Sen allows us to examine the changes that affect a person's wellbeing (as cited in Robeyns, 2001). In this sense attention to strategies that seek to enhance the wellbeing of the poor should focus on what people are able to do and to be, and on the quality of their lives, and on removing the obstacles to freedom and capability augmentation. To paraphrase, the CA covers the full terrain of human wellbeing and focuses on appreciating the social, economic, cultural and political dimensions of life. As a perspective on poverty and its alleviation, it accommodates the notion of human

diversity. This is noticeable in Sen (1992: xi) assertion that, “human diversity is no secondary complication (to be ignored, or to be introduced “later on”); (instead) it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality.”

However, as shall be noted in the fourth chapter, the CA has been criticized for not having a defined list of valuable functionings or capabilities (Doyal and Gough, 1991; Clark, 2002; Nussbaum, 1988; Clark, 2005; Laderchi et al., 2006), thus making operationalisation difficult. In spite of this, the study operationalised the CA through extracting a list of capabilities from the review of studies by Klasen (2000), Anand and van Hees (2006), Clark (2003), Clark and Quilzibash (2005), Alkire (2002) Anand et al (2009), amongst others. The selected capabilities were then integrated to form specific variables or items for the questionnaire. The choice of capabilities seemed to be aligned to the Human Development Index and to Nussbaum’s prescriptive lists of basic capabilities.

Nevertheless, Sen left the CA in apparent incompleteness deliberately, so as to avoid the critique of being theoretically paternalistic. Instead he left each and every person with the freedom to define his/her own set of functionings (Clark, 2005). For this reason, the CA represents a major contribution to poverty analysis because it provides a coherent framework for defining poverty in the context of the lives people live and the freedoms they enjoy. This approach draws attention to a much wider range of causes of poverty and options for policies than the monetary approach. The shift in emphasis to the type of life individuals can live rather than on the private resources to which they

have access to address the neglect of social goods in the monetary approach and its narrow vision of human wellbeing.

Having concentrated on the definitions and major perspectives on poverty, the study find it worthwhile to state that poverty is multi-dimensional and that from the onset the chapter has argued in favor of such a conceptualization of poverty. Thus it is the multidimensional view of poverty that is useful in evaluating the decentralized mechanism the Nkonkobe Municipality utilized in poverty alleviation processes. However we need to find out what the state and extent of poverty in South Africa and the rest of the world is. The following sections provide an overview of poverty in the Africa and in South Africa in particular. The section also explores the causes of poverty.

## **2.5 The extent of poverty in the World and in Africa**

The following section will attempt to give a brief overview of poverty in the world but specifically focus on poverty in Africa and South Africa. Poverty has been a major problem throughout the world, despite efforts to eradicate it. Following the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)'s assessment in 2001 it can be highlighted that the world has approximately over 1200 million absolutely poor human beings who are condemned to short lives and stunted by malnutrition, ill health, and illiteracy. This is argued to be not acceptable from either a moral or a political standpoint (IFAD, 2001; 2006). This has resulted in world leaders agreeing on the reduction of poverty by half by 2015 (UN, 2000, 2005; Simai, 2005). The table below (Table 2.1) indicates the

millennium development goals with a clear demonstration of the high priority given to poverty eradication in terms of the ranking.

**Table 2.1 The Millennium development goals**

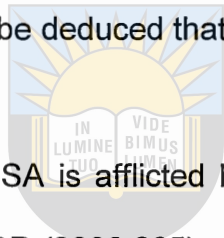
By 2015	
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Reduce by one half the proportions of people living on less than a dollar a day. Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education	Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015.
4. Reduce child mortality	Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rates for infants and children under five.
5. Improve maternal health	Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
	Halt and begin to reverse the spread of malaria and other major diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, reverse the loss of environmental resources.
	Reduce by half the proportion of people - without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
	Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.
8. Develop a global partnership for development	Open trading system, special needs of less developed countries (LDCs), debt, employment, access to medicines, and information and communications technologies (ICTs)

Source: Panos (2002: 10)

A question one would pose after this assertion by world leaders would be, 'has poverty concentration changed, has anything changed or has poverty increased?' Hence a closer look at the prevalence of poverty in the world shows that much needs to be done

to offer pragmatic and responsive policies as well as measures that address the poverty problem. According to the UNDP (2002), Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) accounts for a quarter of the world's 1.2 billion people living on less than \$1 a day. Poverty here is evidently pervasive. Furthermore the UNDP notes that out of the 20 countries classified by UNDP as possessing the lowest human development index, 19 are in Africa. This shows that poverty remains a challenge to the African continent especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. However IFAD (2001) comments that despite the miniature population size of Africa as compared to the world population, Africa accounts for 24 percent of poverty in the world. Therefore it can be deduced that Africa is rife with poverty.

Hantley et al (2009:1) argues that SSA is afflicted by many forms of poverty. This is confirmed by the findings by the UNDP (2006:265) which shows that the HDI scores in most countries of SSA have stagnated or declined since 1990, leaving this region as the poorest in the world. Indeed, 28 of the 31 low human development countries are in SSA. Furthermore, the UNDP reports that from 1990 income poverty has fallen in all regions of the world except in SSA, where there has been an increase both in the incidence and absolute number of people living in income poverty. This sees some 300 million people in SSA – almost half of the region's population – living on less than US\$1 a day (UNDP, 2006: 269). Lamenting on the prevalence of poverty in SSA, the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) suggests that most of the poverty in SSA is chronic rather than transitory, implying that poverty is experienced for most of one's life, and often passed onto one's children (CPRC, 2004: 3). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2007:2), unemployment is high in SSA with the number of the



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unemployed rising by 35.3% within a decade. Furthermore, in trying to spell out the poverty in SSA, Mwabu and Thorbecke (2001) point out that poverty in Africa is predominantly a rural phenomenon, accounting for nearly all of the overall poverty.

In terms of the health situation it appears that the region has dismal health and appalling health statistics. According to the United Nations Department of Public Information (2007: 2), the under-five mortality rate in 2005 was 166/1000 and this has not improved for nearly two decades. There are problems related to maternity scandals which have seen the rate at which a SSA woman will die from complications during pregnancy and childbirth at 1 in 16 compared with a developed world rate of 1 in 3800. Life expectancy in SSA is today lower than it was three decades ago, with an average life expectancy of about 50 years in 2000-05 (UNDP, 2007: 265). The region is well known for having the highest HIV/AIDS infection, which has reduced life expectancy and has increased the mortality rates. This is highlighted by the increase in the number of people dying from HIV/AIDS to 2 million in 2006 (United Nations Department of Public Information, 2007: 2).

Poverty in SSA has been reported to be manifest in inequalities. Commenting on this, Hickey and Du Toit (2007:9-10) argue that the most notable type of inequality that is prevalent in SSA is ethno-territoriality as wealth and poverty as well as access to resources and political power is determined by ethnicity. This has contributed to the marginalization and poverty trapping of entire peoples and regions (Hickey and Du Toit, 2007: 9-10). In addition, Okojie and Shimeles (2006) contend that SSA is rife with non-

income inequalities dimensions (such as assets, education, health and access to public services and the labour market), particularly between regions and with stark differences between men and women.

## 2.5 Poverty in South Africa

There is widespread understanding that poverty has become one of the immediate problems of modern day South Africa. This has resulted in former President Thabo Mbeki declaring that:

*“Endemic and widespread poverty continues to disfigure the face of our nation. It will always be impossible for us to say that we have fully restored the dignity of all our people as long as this situation persists. For this reason the struggle to eradicate poverty has been and will continue to be a cornerstone of the national effort to build the New South Africa” (SPII, 2007)*

This has not only been the dream and desire of Thabo Mbeki. A closer look at the period before Mbeki’s inauguration as the President of South Africa, into power, one can understand that poverty reduction has been the theme of the African National Congress (ANC). Since the dawn of liberation, the ANC has strongly indicated that it was committed to changing the landscape of the poor in South Africa. The ANC statements to this effect read:

*“No political democracy can survive and flourish if the majority of its people remain in poverty, without land, without their basic needs being met and without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation will, therefore, be the first priority of the democratic Government” (ANC, 1994:5).*

From the above mentioned comments from both the ANC and President Thabo Mbeki, it appears that the idea of eliminating poverty has been shaping much of the development arena in South Africa. However, there is a need to examine this statement of intent in the light of the practical realities of the current situation in South Africa

A close analysis of the situation in South Africa will reveal that poverty still exists and has even been exacerbated, despite the promised ideal of its reduction. According to the Human Science Research Council (HSRC), the proportion of the poor has not changed and the gap between the rich and poor has increased (HSRC, 2004:1; Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). This is also highlighted by Van Der Westhuizen (2012:33) who argues that from 1995–2005 South Africa experienced an average, annualized growth rate of approximately 3.4 percent and improvements in poverty. He notes that the poverty headcount calculated using a poverty line of R322 per month declined. Interestingly at another angle the 2003 report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reveals that about 48.5 percent or 21.9 million of South Africans currently live below the national poverty line placed at R354 per adult equivalent per month (UNDP, 2003: 41; Leibbrandt et al., 2004)). On the contrary research has shown that 'there has been a marked decline in poverty since 2000, from approximately 18,5 million poor people to approximately 15,4 million poor people in 2004' (Statistics South Africa, 2006: 12). However, the disparity between the rich and poor has worsened with the Gini coefficient increasing from 0.64 in 1995 to 0.69 in 2005 (UNDP, 2006; Van der Berg et al, 2007; Seekings, 2007; Van Der Westhuizen,

2012:33). The United Nations Human Development Report (2006) and May et al (2002), thus conclude that South Africa is an extremely unequal society. At the same time the UNDP (2004) argues that the South Africa's Service Deprivation Index (SASDI), which measures the percentage of the population that do not have access to 'good' quality basic services, increased from 63 per cent in 1996 to 65 per cent in 2003. This is confirmed by the 2005 South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS) conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) which concluded that after a decade of majority rule, "black Africans still perceive themselves as lacking enough food and income that will meet all their household needs". Whites on the other hand never experience shortages of food and income and Indians and colored also seldom go without it (Mattes et al., 2002: 14; Adato et al., 2004:1; Hamel et al., 2005: 352; Davids, 2006:16). Thus the mere outlook of poverty in South Africa posits that economic growth is enjoyed only by a few, making poverty reduction a continued perennial theme.

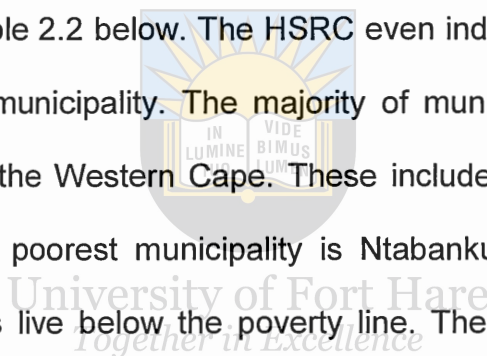
Commenting on this, the Taylor Committee (2002:16) suggest that in the current global economic context, 'the racial divide of the apartheid era, left to its own devices, could be entrenched as a deep class divide in the post 1994 transformation period'. This implies that much has not changed since 1994 as the imprints of the Apartheid era are still present in post-liberation South Africa. This supports the assertion by journalist John Pilger that 'apartheid did not die' (Pilger, 2006). Pilger continuously remarked that affluent spaces in the new South Africa might be populated by black people wearing matching Gucci sunglasses and suits alongside still privileged white people, but the lives of the poor have been unchanged, to the extent that the poor or 'poors', as they

are sometimes called (Desai, 2002) have risen up in protests. There is therefore a need to address the greatest problem of poverty that South Africa is facing through installing equity mechanism and redistributive socio-economic and political policies.

Poverty in South Africa is also manifest in the presence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. AIDS has been claimed to have increased the poor populace in South Africa. In fact the Plus News (2006) alludes to the fact that the devastating effects of the AIDS pandemic, which has claimed nearly two million lives, has added another vulnerable group to South Africa's poor: child-headed households. In addition, Sloth-Nielsen (2003) asserts that there was an estimated 840,000 orphans in 2003. At the same time the Department of Social Development (DSD) (2005) estimated that HIV/AIDS orphans were going to increase to approximately two million by 2010. In fact currently one in eight South African children is an orphan. While the exact number of children living in child-headed households is not known, anecdotal evidence suggests that the phenomenon is widespread (Sloth-Nielsen, 2003). The HIV/AIDS epidemic has furthered the prevalent situation of poverty as orphans and HIV/AIDS sufferers are marginalized in the society and hence lack access to resources and services, proper infrastructure and exclusion from basic societal development initiatives (DSD, 2005: 2).

A closer look at the distribution of poverty in South Africa amongst Provinces shows that poverty disparities do exist. According to Statistics South Africa (2006) at a provincial level, the percentage of the population below the poverty line is more than 50% in 7 out of 9 Provinces in the Republic. In particular, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern

Cape, and Limpopo are Provinces with a large poor population. These Province have been homesteads for Africans and hence poverty has not changed at all. Comparing the poverty incidence of each Province, provincial disparities are quite significant: the poverty headcount ratio in the Eastern Cape is 71% while Gauteng has the smallest ratio at 18%. Corroborating to this is the HSRC (2004) which remarks that in terms of Provinces, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape had the highest proportion of the poor with 77% and 72% of their populations living below the poverty income line, respectively. The Western Cape had the lowest proportion in poverty (32%), followed by Gauteng (42%). This is shown by table 2.2 below. The HSRC even indicates that when it comes to poverty rates for each municipality. The majority of municipalities with the lowest poverty rates are found in the Western Cape. These include Stellenbosch (23%) and Saldanha Bay (25%). The poorest municipality is Ntabankulu in the Eastern Cape, where 85% of its residents live below the poverty line. Therefore there is a need to reduce poverty especially in the Eastern Cape considering the fact that it is one of the Provinces with the highest incidence of poverty.



**Table 2.2 Poverty indicators by Province**

Province	No. of persons (Millions)	% of population in poverty	Poverty Gap (R billion)	Share of poverty Gap
Eastern Cape	4.6	72%	14.8	18.2%
Free State	1.8	68%	5.9	7.2%
Gauteng	3.7	42%	12.1	14.9%
KwaZulu-Natal	5.7	61%	18.3	22.5%
Limpopo	4.1	77%	11.5	14.1%
Mpumalanga	1.8	57%	7.1	8.7%
North West	1.9	52%	6.1	7.5%
Northern Cape	0.5	61%	1.5	1.8%
Western Cape	1.4	32%	4.1	5.0%
South Africa	25,7	57%	81.3	100%

Source HSRC (2004:2)

This section has tried to offer a brief overview of the situation of South African poverty. It has demonstrated that poverty in South is still a dominant problem that needs to be addressed from all different angles (socio-economic and political). It has been also shown and argued that the post-apartheid era seems not to deviate much from the prevailing situation which prevailed during of the apartheid period. This has been demonstrated by the continued presence of disparities between the rich and the poor and the exacerbated disparities between former homelands and the settler Provinces. Hence poverty is still a pervasive phenomenon that the South African government has failed to effectively address despite the rich rhetoric of intent that poverty will be given first priority. The following section discusses factors that have caused the prevalence of poverty in South Africa.

## 2.6 The causes of poverty

There are various ways in which poverty can be attributed. In his pioneering work on perceptions of the causes of poverty amongst the American adults, Feagin (1972:101-129) proposed three ways in which poverty can be attributed:

1. Individualistic: Attributing responsibility for poverty to the poor themselves. Including lack of thrift, effort and loose morals.
2. Structural: Encompassing the external and economic forces, including wages, access to good education, lack of jobs, and discrimination.
3. Fatalistic: Entailing forces beyond individual's control, including: bad luck, illness

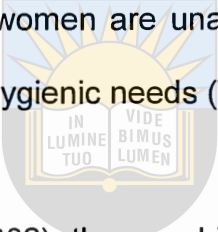
However it is important to note that poverty in South Africa can be attributed to the historical process of apartheid. This falls within the structural attributions of poverty when applying Feagin's framework to the South African context. Apartheid perpetuated income poverty and exacerbated income inequality in very obvious ways. African people were dispossessed of most of their land, faced restricted opportunities for employment or self-employment, were limited to low-quality public education and health care, and were physically confined to impoverished parts of the countryside or cities. At the same time, the white minority benefited from discriminatory public policies. It was hardly surprising that South Africa competed with Brazil and a handful of other countries for the indignity of having the most unequal distribution of income. Poverty did not exist alongside affluence, because segregation kept the rich and poor apart, but they certainly coexisted in the same country (Wilson and Ramphela, 1989; May, 2002; Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). Tutu (quoted in Gumede, 2005:67) commenting on this issue remarks that 'in South Africa we can regard (Black) poverty as the carcass left

from (White) acquisition'. This shows that the current state of poverty in South Africa can be attributed to the past imbalances of the apartheid era as blacks were dispossessed of their land and had to face discriminatory policies that left them pauperized and polarized from the rest of the society.

In some cases poverty has been attributed to deagrarianisation and unemployment. Seeking and Natrass (2005) contend that South Africa's peasantry was slowly destroyed in the course of the Twentieth Century and this has left people who once had livelihoods that were sustained by land living on social welfare. The deagrarianisation of the South African peasantry has left a lot of unemployment and a populace dependent on social provision for livelihood. Moreover, Seekings and Natrass (2005) note that the forced removals from large commercial farms, overcrowding in the 'Bantustans', low-quality schooling, poor links into urban and industrial labour markets, and the growing capital intensity of production in most economic sectors resulted in the growth of unemployment among unskilled workers and mass poverty among them and their dependents. This has been noted to have increased the number of people affected with poverty in South Africa.

Education has also contributed to the scale of poverty in South Africa. Lam (1999) showed that most of South Africa's very high inequality in income distribution could be explained in terms of differential rates of return to education and unequal grade attainment. Although the bulk of the population has already left school, the education and skills of new entrants to the labour force are of great importance in shaping the

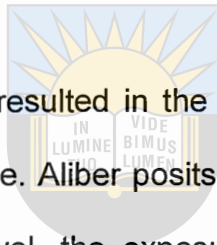
course of future development. In support of this the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2003) states: "the relationship between education and poverty reduction is clear. Education leads to pro-poor sustainable economic growth, social development, and good governance". However the education that has been given to the Black population during the Apartheid era till modern times has been questionable as it has fostered the spirit of over-reliance on being employed than on being self-employed or entrepreneurs. This has seen the growth of the unemployed poor as people could not be absorbed into the working sector. Also to note is the fact that limited or poor quality of education reinforces poverty. Poorly educated women are unable to get formal employment nor are they able to meet nutritional and hygienic needs (Taylor 2002:19).



According to Moutlang and Mears (2002), the very high unemployment rate is the main cause of poverty in South Africa. Similarly, the Special Report on Widening Poverty Gap of November 2003 indicated that although "many black South Africans are now educated, this has not translated into better jobs. While studies have shown that the better educated individuals are the better off they are, in South Africa it is not only those without skills and education who struggle to find employment." In reality part of the poor people are the educated and skilled, which shows that although education can reduce poverty it is the type of qualification or skills one has that determines escape route from the poverty trap.

Globalisation has further contributed to the rise in poverty in South Africa and the rest of the developing world nations; yet, supporters of globalization have attributed growth and

uniform development to be the result. The central question has been whether globalization has accorded benefits to the general poor. In answering to this, Justin Forsyth, Oxfam Policy Director, remarks: "there is plenty of evidence that current patterns of growth and globalization are widening income disparities and hence acting as a brake on poverty reduction" (Letter to the Economist, 2000:6). This view is supported by Bwaghati and Srinivasan (2002:2) when they argue that trade accentuates but not ameliorates and deepens but not diminish poverty in both the rich and the poor countries.



Another factor to consider that has resulted in the incidence of poverty, according to Aliber (2001:24) is crime and violence. Aliber posits that crime and violence contribute to poverty in two levels. At one level, the exposure to crime and violence directly detracts from the quality of life of its victims and those fearful of being victimized. On another level, the high incidence of crime and violence, which is common in South Africa, is symptomatic of a profound social malaise, in which the cycle of poverty and violence are indistinguishable. Hence there is correlation and causal relation between crime and poverty.

Additionally poverty in Africa and South Africa can be attributed to natural disasters. Natural hazards results in risks and vulnerability , and in most cases the poor are not shock resistant to most of the disasters, like hunger, drought, earthquakes, cyclones, economic instability, sudden or prolonged ill health, market failures and volatility (IFAD 2001: 164; CPRC, 2004:45; Grant, 2005). Furthermore non-developmental politics have

also been argued to be a major driver of poverty (Cammack et al, 2006; 2007). This is the norm in African politics where issues of interests override national priorities or interests. An example would be the political scenario in Zimbabwe, where President Mugabe is promoting policies that allow him and only his close allies to appropriate resources and surplus value at the expense of the general public.

The current section has offered some of the few reasons behind the continued incidence of poverty in South Africa. The researcher would like to point out, however, that the given factors are not exhaustive as there are a lot of factors that have resulted in poverty. Nevertheless the study found it worthwhile to provide a brief overview of the most notifiable factors that have contributed to the prevalence of poverty in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa at large.



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## **2.7 Conclusion**

A clear understanding of what poverty entails and its conceptualization is of paramount importance when dealing with poverty alleviation. There is always a great need to understand the rationale behind poverty alleviation, the extent of poverty and the reasons behind poverty in a given area. Hence the current chapter has discussed the underlying meanings and conceptualization of poverty. The chapter has highlighted that poverty is now viewed from a multi-dimensional perspective and has argued in favor of the usage of a multi-dimensional perspective on poverty. Poverty is thus seen as not only about income and consumption, but also covers other dimensions such as shelter, education, health, nutrition, powerlessness, voicelessness, vulnerability, fear, freedom,

agency, capacity building and the like. Against this background the chapter has proven that the CA is the best analytical tool to utilize in the context of dealing with poverty in the Nkonkobe Municipality due to the issue that poverty has different meanings and is mostly seen as deprivation of capabilities in South Africa.

Besides having shown and proven the importance of the CA in the conceptualization of poverty, the study has explored various definitions and conceptualizations of poverty. However, since the whole dissertation looked at the role of decentralization in the alleviation of poverty it was necessary to understand what comprises poverty and the chapter later settled on the capability definition of poverty as this seems to be in harmony with both multi-dimensional nature of poverty and the objectives of the study.

A discussion of the extent of poverty in Africa and South of the Sahara has been given with special emphasis on the state of poverty in South Africa. This has shown that South Africa is still rife with poverty and inequalities. It has also been noted in the chapter that the high incidence of poverty in South Africa can be attributed to the legacy of apartheid, deagrarianisation, globalization, the poor education system and also to crime and violence. The chapter that follows below looks at decentralisation as one of the mechanisms that has been viewed as having a vital role in poverty reduction processes.

## CHAPTER3: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF DECENTRALISATION

### 3.1 Introduction

In recent years much of the global efforts have been orchestrated towards the emphasis on decentralizing the government to local governance. The major drive of this phenomenon is the widely held conventional view that decentralisation can be conducive to poverty reduction mainly because local governments are assumed to have better information and higher incentives than the central government to design and implement policies that are responsive to local needs and preferences. Furthermore, decentralisation is considered a means to achieve good governance in terms of a high level of public participation, accountability of public officials and low corruption, which are crucial conditions for poverty alleviation. Poverty as a problem has long been the central theme at many international forums and policy discussions (Sen, 1999:1; Streeten, 1998; Wolfensohn and Sen, 1999; Narayan et al., 2000; Chambers 2006). Its eradication has been the perennial promise of politicians and is the recurring passion of charitable foundations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Hence with the much expected hope of decentralisation helping in the reduction of poverty many nations have thus decentralized with South Africa having done so in the 1990s. The question however is whether decentralisation in South Africa contributed to changes in the wellbeing of the majority of its citizens who have been living in poverty? The current dissertation argues that indeed through utilizing the CA and viewing poverty from a multi-dimensional approach, the Nkonkobe Municipality has managed to promote pro-

poor development that entails capability promotion and the enhancement of citizens' wellbeing.

In the previous chapter I have discussed issues on poverty and even offered an overview of its extent in Africa and South Africa. The current chapter's focal point is on decentralization as a mechanism that is pro-poor in the sense that it ensures the responsiveness of policies to the poor. Thus the general focus of this chapter is on the overview of the decentralisation process with a specific emphasis on its links with poverty reduction. The chapter addresses the role of decentralisation in poverty reduction by reviewing scholarly work that has been done on decentralisation and poverty reduction. It is worth highlighting from the onset that, as been argued in the previous chapter that the dissertation takes a multi-dimensional view of poverty. Much emphasis in this chapter is on the controversy relating to the role of decentralisation in poverty reduction. The advantages and disadvantages of decentralisation and the challenges and impediments that have been noted to constrain decentralisation in realizing its assumed poverty alleviation capacity are also discussed herein. The chapter thus will offer a general overview of decentralisation in South Africa.

### **3.2. Decentralisation**

There are many kinds of reforms which fall under the banner of decentralisation. This implies that there is no consensus as to the meaning of decentralisation as the term varies from one discipline to the other, amongst nations and in different contexts (Bardhan, 2002:186; Steiner, 2006:20; Visser, 2005:1; Saltman et al, 2007:1). The

continued usage of the term decentralisation in scholarly discourses and policy circles has caused the term to become 'slippery', so that it can mean all things to all people (Oluwu, 2001; Katsiaouni, 2003). However, while contesting the meaning of decentralization; scholars conventionally adopt the definition proposed by Rondinelli (1980), which pinpoints all cornerstone elements of the phenomenon (Rondinelli, 1981:138; Kaufman, 1997:172; UNDP, 1997:16; Bankauskaite and Saltman, 2007: 2; Buthelezi, 2007: 51).

According to Rondinelli (1980:137), decentralization refers to "the transfer or delegation of legal and political authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from the central government and its agencies to field organizations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area wide or regional development authorities, autonomous local governments, or nongovernmental organizations". Utilizing this definition it can be understood that decentralisation involves the transfer of authority and power for planning, management and administration from central government to lower levels of government, or from national to sub-national levels (Blair, 2000: 21; Ribot, 2001:5; Smith, 2001:10; Crawford 2004:4; Rondinelli, 2006:392; Saltman et al 2007: 10; Solomon, 2008).

Decentralisation can be sub-divided into four forms depending on the extent of the authority being transferred or ceded. These are; deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatization (Rondinelli, 1980:137-139; Rondinelli and Nellis, 1986: 610).

### 3.2.1 Deconcentration

This form of decentralisation entails the shift of responsibilities from the central government to lower agencies, which does not entail the ceding of authority. According to Mawhood (1983:4), deconcentration is the sharing of power between members of the same ruling group who have authority respectively in different areas of the state. Hyden (1983:85) asserts that deconcentration is a power relationship within the same organisation. In this regard it can be argued that the principle of deconcentration has to do with the transfer of workload or work related matters from central government bodies to their subordinate lower level sub-national staff, without the relinquishing of power and authority to them (Rondinelli et al 1984; Hutchcroft, 2001: 30; Ahwoi, 2006: 11). In South Africa this means the transfer of workload from the central government to the municipal level. The fundamental goal of this practice is to relieve the central government officials of the administrative onus by transferring some of their load to their colleagues in the periphery as a way of adapting central directives to the local conditions (Rondinelli et al, 1983:14). Deconcentration is regarded the most basic or 'weakest' form of decentralization, as it simply consists of a redistribution of routine administrative functions between offices dependent on the central government. The centre retains the basic decision-making power, although in some instances the lower level tiers are allowed or given mandate to make decisions. There is thus a mere shift of responsibilities from one central government official to those working in regions, Provinces or districts. In this case the central government sees the sub-nationals as representatives of them and hence they are tasked with the day-to-day administration of Provinces and regions, whilst the overall policy formulation and decision making is still

centralized. Deconcentration thus has a more spatial connotation in that it implies a shifting of functions and resources, including personnel, by central government from the metropolis to other locations, but ultimately authority is retained by the centre (Katsiaouni, 2003).

This means in development praxis, either at a provincial or district level, the central government is the one that formulates the policies and the local district officials are tasked with the implementation of these policies. Thus this approach to decentralize ensures that the information flows from top to bottom and the district officials are always at the whim of reporting to the central offices. This means project completion becomes a daunting task. In addition, projects or policies may not necessarily be responsive to the needs of the public. Whilst policy responsiveness is one of the attributes of decentralisation in tackling poverty, deconcentration however has the problem of accountability in the lower echelons due to an over- concentration of power at the top, with inadequate mechanisms available to those in lower positions for demanding accountability from the top (Crawford, 2004). This has been the problem in Ghana , as Crawford (2004) highlights that the appointment of key decision makers in Ghana's decentralization process, like the District Chief Executive and Assembly members, led to a situation in which all the appointees had to be accountable to the appointing authority, but not to the citizens. However, Turner (2002: 354) demonstrated that a great deal of benefits can be harnessed from deconcentration if it is properly implemented and a notable example has been in Columbia where government compared experimentally between devolution and deconcentration.

### 3.2.2 Delegation

This is the redistribution of authority and responsibility from central governments or provincial governments to local units of government or agencies that are not always necessarily branches of local offices of the delegating authority (Rondinelli, 1981:138; Work, 2002:6; Visser, 2005 6). According to Katsiaouni (2002) and Robertson (2002), deconcentration is considered as a transfer of responsibilities for decision-making and management from the central government to sub national levels, while ultimate authority is vested in the centre and the direction of accountability is upward. In most cases delegation is normally done on an administrative basis especially when it comes to project implementation. In this case the parastatal bodies at the local tier are given projects to run and have to take some decisions and report to the central government for the overall evaluation of performance, resource provision and funding.

Delegation has the potential of making service provision fast. However the problem is that since local bodies are allowed to take initiatives there is increased corruption and embezzlement of funds (Smith, 2007). This is a major challenge with delegation. This is compounded by elite capture which is another forestalling issue in delegation as a decentralisation mechanism.

### 3.2.3 Privatization

Privatization as a form of decentralization refers to the transference of power from government to the private sector (Steiner, 2005:9; Rondinelli et al, 1984). This may take the form of transferring production capacities to private enterprises in order to ensure the production of specific goods or services (Rondinelli et al., 1984:23). The most notable form of privatization is what is called divestment (Bennett, 1990; Rondinelli *et al*, 1984). Some authors also refer to privatization as economic decentralization (Finot, 2002 cited in Robino, 2009) whilst Bennett (1994: 11) terms it market decentralization. On the other hand privatization may entail allowing professional bodies to handle issues related to admission into a particular profession, as well as regulating the conduct of its members (Rondinelli et al 1984; Rondinelli 1999 cited in Taabazuing, 2010)

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An example of this is the transference of public provision of services to private individuals or enterprises that was common during the era of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). During SAPs, states had to relinquish the overall provision of some basic services like education and health to private institutions. However, privatization during the period of SAPs was done through compulsion whereas during this era privatization is done on a voluntary basis.

There has been a great controversy as to whether it is safe to categorize privatization as a form of decentralisation. Collins and Green (1994) argue that since decentralisation has to do with intergovernmental transfer of some authority and functions between central governments and their respective sub-national entities, it is thus not practical

and rational to classify privatization which has to do with total relinquishing of functions to a private institution as decentralisation. This is refuted by Smith (2001) and Agrippinah (2006) who argue that the difference lies between partnership and sole ownership as in some forms of decentralisation there is partnership or collaboration whilst privatization entails sole ownership. Hence the difference in the nature of power transference does not obliterate privatization from being a form of decentralisation.

### **3.2.4 Devolution**

This is the most comprehensive form of decentralization which implies the giving up of authority for decision-making, resources and administrative tasks from the central government to lower levels of authority. This is the strongest form of decentralization as it implies transfer of authority for decision making, finance, and management responsibility (Oluwu, 2001; Robertson, 2002). In devolution there is thus a general ceding up of authority, decision making and resource allocation to the local tiers. In this case it is the local government or lower level governments who have the overall responsibility to formulate and implement policies.

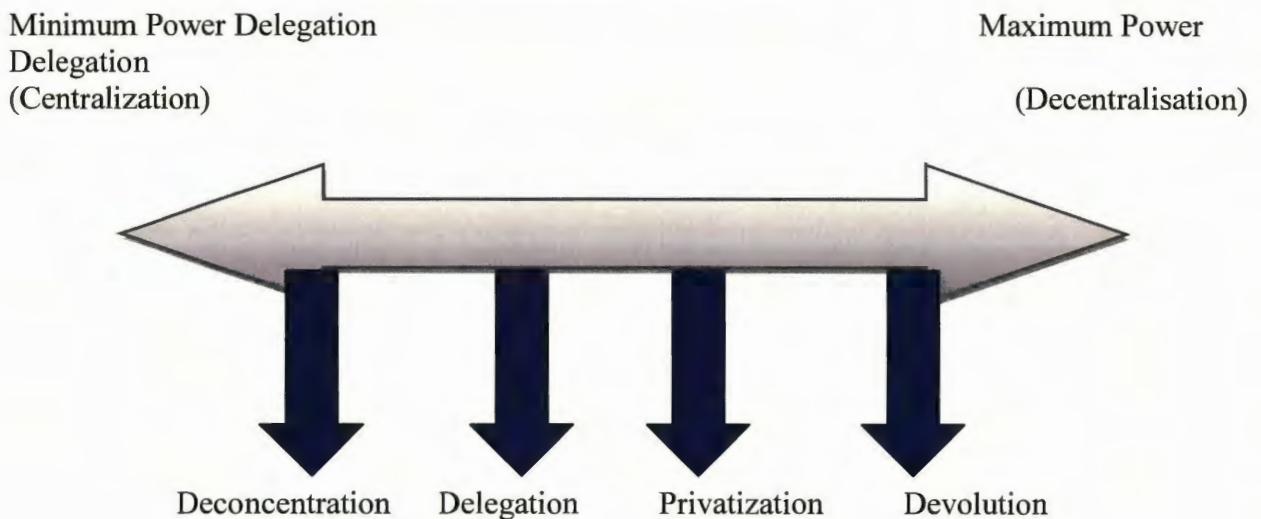
Elaborating on this Fisher (2007) asserts that in real devolution, those to whom responsibilities are devolved should be allowed to make a real input in the setting up of objectives, rather than being expected to meet objectives set by others. He notes that in devolution the local governments have authority over 'real input', and this implies some genuine possibilities of affecting outcomes, as well as a willingness on the part of those devolving authority to modify their objectives. Accordingly, Fisher (2008) further

comments that meaningful devolution relocates not only administrative functions, but also the power to make decisions and set objectives. It can thus be argued that devolution means transfer of authority, functional responsibilities, and resources to all lower level tiers of government. This thus provides a more legitimate, responsive, accountable, transparent, pro-poor and participatory local government.

Taking our cue from the foregoing discussion, decentralization entails all the four distinct forms that have been identified above. To further illustrate what the above definitions of decentralisation have been highlighting, Rondinelli (1981:139), indicates that these forms of decentralization can be seen to in the form of a continuum, depending on the level of power transferred, as well as the nature of the institutional arrangement. This is depicted in Figure 3.1 below.

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**Figure 3.1 Forms of decentralization as a continuum**



Adapted from Rondinelli (1981)

The above diagram shows the power flows that occur in decentralisation and as can be observed decentralisation is a continuum involving minimum and maximum power delegation from the centre to the periphery. In the diagram deconcentration entails minimum power transfers, whilst devolution entails maximum power and responsibility transfers. However it should be argued that since it is a continuum composed of two polar sides that do not exist, there is no case of extremism; extreme devolution would wither away the state, whereas total centralization would make it impossible for the state to function (Fesler 1968: 371, and Hutchcroft 2001: 31). The continuum thus implies that the best form of decentralisation is devolution. This concurs with the view of John and Chathukulam (2003) that only devolution fulfils the normative characteristics commonly associated with decentralisation while delegation and deconcentration are merely empirically rooted. Steiner (2005:5) expands Rondinelli's conceptualization of decentralisation and highlights the type of attributes possessed by each form of decentralisation on the basis of economic, administrative, fiscal and political aspects. The diagram below illustrates the forms of decentralisation in relation to their main attributes.

**Fig 3.2 Forms of decentralisation based on eco-political, administrative and fiscal dimensions**

	Privatization	Delegation	Deconcentration	Devolution
Economic				
Administrative				
Political				
Fiscal				

Adapted from: Steiner (2005:10)

Therefore, decentralization can be argued to be a comprehensive concept that entails all the above mentioned forms. Hence it is imperative, therefore, to explore the relative successes and failures of decentralisation in alleviating poverty and in making developmental initiatives to be pro-poor at the local level, and whether the local democratic governance fostered by decentralisation in South Africa has enabled development that targets the poor at large, is responsive to their needs and brings about improved service delivery.

### **3.3 Decentralisation and Poverty reduction**

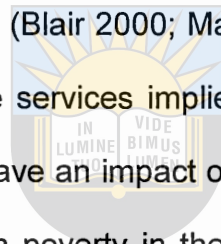
Poverty reduction or alleviation has to do with the designing, implementing and targeting of appropriate methods to ensure that scarce resources are allocated to activities that are likely to yield the greatest impact on the poor, for instance, that of decreasing their levels of deprivation and vulnerability (World Bank, 2001; Sen, 1999). In the same vein, Asante (2003) asserts that effective poverty reduction requires, among other things, increasing the poor's access to basic public and collective services such as health, education, water, sanitation and transport in order to enhance human capital, increase labour productivity and foster access to economic opportunities. Decentralisation has received widespread appraisal from governments, donors, NGOs and theorists as one of the most important and appropriate strategies that will reduce the levels of deprivation and vulnerability of the poor. Following the assertion by the World Bank (2001:7-8) that a poverty reduction strategy entails promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment and enhancing security, there is a need to address the interface between decentralisation and poverty alleviation. In light of the discussion in Chapter 2,

poverty has been posited to be multi-dimensional; hence it can be argued that the promotion of transparency, inclusion, accountability, accountability, responsiveness, participation and service provision are proxies of poverty reduction.

With regard to facilitating empowerment, the assumed contribution of decentralisation is through the increased augmenting of the participation of the population in public decision-making. In centralized government systems, real opportunities for influencing policy are awarded to the few political elite whilst the public at large are marginalized. In this regard, decentralisation can bring about increased opportunities for broad-based participation of the public, and thus makes local policies responsive to the needs and preferences of the poor and the general public' (Crook, 1994: 340; Sharma, 2000: 177; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Azfar et al, 2004: 21-24; Mehrotra, 2006:269). This means that decentralisation allows the poor to have an influence on the policy praxis of development. As a result development can be made effective as it can thus be tailor made to the needs and preferences of the poor. This view is supported by the findings by Mehrotra (2006 cited in Taabazuing, 2010) who notes that the democratic devolution of the primary health care service to locally elected health committees in Guinea, Mali and Benin has expanded access to affordable health services. This has had an effect of increasing immunization rates and reducing infant mortality.

Decentralisation promotes opportunities as local governments are well informed (Informational advantage) about the local conditions and priorities of the citizens. They

are therefore able to achieve an improved correspondence between the demand for and the supply of publicly provided services, which in turn represents a gain in efficiency (World Bank, 2001; von Braun and Grote, 2002; Asante, 2003; Jutting et al., 2005). The provision of basic social and economic services (e.g. primary education, primary health care, drinking water, sanitation, feeder roads, electricity or business support services) are areas for which responsibility is left to the local government level. When decentralisation leads to a more efficient provision of these publicly provided services, there is a scope to achieve poverty reduction, as these services enable the poor to improve their material situation of life (Blair 2000; Manor 1999). In fact, increasing poor people's access to and use of these services implies an eradication of poverty in the human dimension. This in turn can have an impact on people's opportunities to engage in productive activities and hence on poverty in the economic dimension, though this might take effect only in the medium to long run.



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Also to note is that decentralisation can contribute to enhancing security. In fact decentralisation has the potential to affect poverty in that it can be an institutional mechanism to foster political stability and national unity and while it allows for autonomy for potential conflict groups it also brings them into formal, rule-bound processes (Litvack and Seddon, 1999; World Bank, 2000; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001). Through both these ways, decentralisation provides the means to reduce the protective dimension of poverty by decreasing people's vulnerability to political instability and local-level conflicts.

According to De Jong, Loquai and Soiri (1999) decentralization and poverty alleviation can be linked in various ways. Local governments elected by the local population can be considered as more effective in providing basic social services through equitable allocation of internal resources and awareness of the local needs and demands. Sub-national governments may create opportunities for people to participate in the decision-making process so that the population can be heard and influence decision making. Reciprocally, by being involved in the decision-making process, participating in elections of local authorities and having greater control over local statutory structures in general the local population may be motivated to commit more assets to the common good (De Jong, Loquai and Soiri, 1999:3).



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However the success of any decentralised mechanism is dependent on various factors. Much of the literature on decentralisation and pro-poor development establishes the fact that the removal of local elites from the institutions of decentralisation can help make these development spaces more inclusive, participatory, responsive and beneficial to the poor (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2000:135; Ribot, 2004:27-8; Galasso and Ravallion, 2005; Smith, 2007). Nonetheless, it can be argued that local elites are important. Olowu (2001: 57) and Mansuri and Rao (2003:42) support this assertion by highlighting the fact that elite capture is not necessarily always negative as local government can often make use of these people's knowledge and resources. Another major factor to be considered in the success of decentralisation is the issue of participation and accountability (Cloete 2002: 282; Grawford 2004: 20). Cloete affirms this view by arguing that in most circumstances decentralisation assumes a 'half baked'

property in such a way that the public are not able to hold the official accountable. Accordingly Pallenburg et al (1996), suggest that the instruments for effective decentralisation include:

- (i) political executive system,
- (ii) nature and extent of devolution of tax authority to the institutions of self-government that matches with the nature and extent of expenditure assignment,
- (iii) nature and type of staffing and HRD initiatives,
- (iv) pro-active inter-government fiscal relationship,
- (v) formal mechanisms for local government accountability, and
- (vi) Participatory initiatives for local government plans, programmes and activities.

However, as shall be noted later in the chapter, there are many obstacles that need to be overcome for the true potential of decentralisation as a poverty reduction mechanism to be unveiled. In relation to the above discussion on the linkages between decentralisation and poverty, the dissertation thus becomes useful in testing the claims empirically so that development policies can be responsive to the needs of the poor.

### **3.4 Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction: Empirical studies**

Decentralisation has been widely conceptualized and agreed to be part of the solution to the problem of poverty. Though decentralisation advocates have asserted likely pro-poor outcomes, such claims have generally not been well supported by academic and/or empirical evidence. It is only recently, in fact, that decentralisation research has specifically focused on the linkages with poverty reduction, with a number of studies published since the turn of the century all reviews of secondary literature (Bossuyt and

Gould, 2000; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Von Braun and Grote, 2002; Crook, 2003; Vedeld, 2003; Jütting et al., 2004, 2005). Decentralization does not have poverty reduction as an explicit objective. However, in theory it is believed that it can affect poverty alleviation through its potential advantages: improved efficiency, governance and equity (Smoke, 2003: 9).

In Uganda, decentralisation has received a lot of appraisal theoretically, but as has been noted the reality on the ground shows mixed results. Uganda's decentralized system of local governance was built on a major assumption that local citizens would participate effectively in making decisions on local development in addition to being able to enforce responsiveness and accountability from their leaders. It was also assumed that elected leaders would serve the best interests of their electorate, but the reality on the ground shows a contrast of results from the promises of decentralisation (Francis and James, 2003; Kiyaga-Nsubuga and Olum, 2009). Kakumba (2010:172) reiterates the same observation that although decentralization in Uganda has indeed enhanced representation on local government councils, especially of the hitherto marginalized sections of the society like women, youth and persons with disabilities; it has not necessarily translated into empowerment schemes for rural development.

In Tanzania, research by Mollel (2010) on decentralisation has revealed that the institutional arrangements in Tanzania are not facilitating decentralisation and participation of the people for local development. Instead there are indications that the current use of the bottom-up planning process is hampering any local initiatives. Mollel

also noted that there is still resistance at the national level to surrender powers to the local level. Van Dijk (2008: 165) came to similar conclusions in his study on the impact of decentralisation on poverty in Tanzania. In this study Van Dijk concluded that it is the usual fear of national level politicians and bureaucrats that they will lose influence if national ministries are no longer fully in command.

A study by Asante and Ayee (2004:21) found out that decentralization has an impact on poverty reduction. Owing to this, they recommended that a process of decentralization that best serves poverty reduction is one that combines the strategies of political empowerment, resource mobilization and enhanced service delivery in a coherent and balanced mix. They also argue that the degree of responsiveness to the poor and the extent to which decentralization impacts on poverty are largely dependent on the relationship between central and local governments and the commitment of the central government to poverty reduction. Furthermore, they contend that removing social barriers and building social institutions for poverty reduction can only be addressed if government has the political commitment and will to pursue decentralization processes.

A survey on citizen participation and decentralisation by Robino (2009) revealed how different dimensions of decentralization and citizen participation operate and intersect. The findings of this survey demonstrated that contrary to common knowledge, citizen participation and decentralization are frequently at odds. Moreover, contrary to frequent statements, Robino's study also shows that opening new spaces for participation in decentralized local government can result in fewer changes and disappointing results at

best, undermining the transformative potential of the concepts of participation and decentralization. In contrast however the current study's relevance is based on its attempt to explain how the linkages between decentralisation and citizen participation can result in the reduction of poverty and the enhancement of well-being.

Some scholarly evidence also shows that there is a positive link between decentralisation and poverty reduction. This is notable in the successful cases of most notably West Bengal in India (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Jütting et al., 2004; Vedeld, 2003), Philippines, Uganda, Mali and Bolivia (Jütting et al., 2004; Vedeld, 2003). In fact Jütting et al. (2004:14) argue that South Africa and Ghana have been somewhat successful and are partial exceptions of the failure of decentralisation as they have managed to link decentralisation to poverty alleviation mechanisms.



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In addition, it can also be argued that there exists a mixed reaction on the link between decentralisation and poverty reduction from different scholars. Jütting et al. (2004: 7) found that 'an unambiguous link between decentralisation and poverty reduction cannot be established'. From his review of literature on democratic decentralisation and poverty reduction, Vedeld (2003: 194) also concludes that there is 'little convincing evidence that either democracy or decentralisation, will necessarily produce gains for the poor'. In line with this position, Bossuyt and Gould (2000: 5) state that 'the link between decentralisation and poverty reduction policies is weak'. However, Von Braun and Grote (2002:89) deviate slightly from this consensus. Having posed the question "Does decentralisation serve the poor?" their answer conclusively indicates that

decentralization serves the need of the poor, as captured by the composite index of human development. Moreover findings of a cross-section analysis to examine the impact of decentralization on HDI by Thurmaier (2002) corroborate the results as this study argues that there is a positive and significant relationship between different measures of fiscal decentralization and basic needs in education and health. In addition, Galasso and Ravallion (2005) used the Bangladesh's Food-for-Education program dataset to argue that the pro-poor program benefits increased with decentralization. Similarly, Bardhan and Mookherjee (2004) reveal that decentralized management enhanced the poverty alleviation goals in West Bengal, India. Hence decentralisation can contribute to poverty alleviation.



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From the above mentioned examples it is imperative to argue that decentralisation is an important mechanism for addressing poverty alleviation, although there is a mixed reaction from different scholars about the relationship of the two. Now if decentralization works as predicted, in countries where it has become institutionalized as indicated in the above-mentioned examples there is a thus need to test its relevance in reducing poverty at a local level in South Africa. Hence the current study seeks to build upon the available scholarly work and to empirically investigate the relationship between decentralisation and poverty alleviation.

### **3.5 Rationale for Decentralisation**

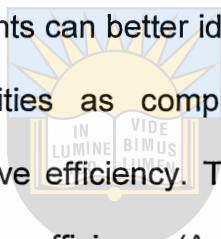
Countries embark on decentralization processes for various reasons. The major drive comes from the benefits of successful decentralization in terms of participation,

responsiveness and accountability (Devas and Delay, 2006: 3; Robinson, 2007: 1; Smith, 2007: 105). Having this assumption as the main argument to pursue decentralization, national governments then consider political, administrative and economic benefits of decentralization. Political motives include renewal or consolidation of ruling party power and influence at the local level or consolidation of an alliance with local elites to undermine state government challenges (Crook, 2003:85). Introduction of decentralization reforms in the post-conflict countries can also be considered as a means for reconstruction of the state especially after ethnic conflicts and the maintenance of social order (Uganda, Cambodia, Sierra Leone, South Africa) (Devas and Delay, 2006:3). Hence there are various reasons for decentralisation of government. In the economic sense, decentralization proponents believe that decentralization makes government more responsive and aware of the people's needs and demands. Smoke (2003:11) emphasizes the fact that decentralization is "commonly treated as an unambiguously desirable phenomenon". Accordingly it is noted that decentralization does not have poverty reduction as an explicit objective. However, in theory it is believed that it can affect poverty alleviation through its potential advantages: improved efficiency, governance and equity (Smoke, 2003: 9).

### **3.5.1 Improved efficiency**

Decentralisation brings government closer to the citizens both spatially and institutionally. This makes the government more knowledgeable about the needs and preferences of the public, thus ensuring responsiveness to the needs of the people (Crook, 2003:77). It can also be argued that the efficiency of decentralisation comes

from allocation processes. Economically decentralisation results in allocative efficiency. This is supported by Oates (1972:55) who argues that the decentralisation theory is based on the notion that 'public service is provided most efficiently by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographical area that would internalize benefits and costs of such provision'. According to this argument, decentralisation results in a match between service provision, local projects and policies with the general needs of the populace. This efficiency is a result of the idea that decentralized governments are said to be closer to the people, have good access to local information and understand local context well. Hence, these governments can better identify the mix and level of services required by their respective localities as compared to centralized government mechanisms, thus improving allocative efficiency. This is seen in the prioritization of budgets, which leads to more allocative efficiency (Arze et al. 2005).



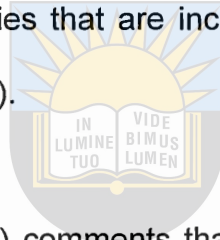
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However, as noted by Steiner (2006), allocative efficiency can only be achieved if mechanisms of accountability are properly established. Citizens should be able to hold elected government representatives accountable for the output of their activities. Proper accountability mechanism will allow the officials to make sure that resources are efficiently utilized since these officials understand that there will be auditing, monitoring, evaluation and reporting to the public and other parties.

### **3.5.2 Promoting responsiveness**

The common theoretical argument for decentralisation is that it provides a means for the level of consumption of public goods to be tailored to the preferences of the society.

For this reason, decentralisation is seen as a mode of administration that promotes economic efficiency by allowing greater differentiation of resource allocations across jurisdictions in response to the needs of consumers. Local governments are closer to the people and are therefore seen to be in a better position than the central government to provide services that match the preferences of the people in their jurisdiction. It is assumed that the lower levels of governments are better informed about the preferences of the population than the central government (Bergh, 2004; Oates, 1972; Azfar *et al.* 2001; Bahl, 1995). As such, local governments are argued to be able to provide services and formulate policies that are inclusive of the needs of its citizenry (Robinson, 2007: 1; Smith, 2007: 102).



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In support of this, Oomen (2000:412) comments that, “the most important rationale of decentralized governance is the provision of certain basic services and infrastructures of standard quality at the local level. No citizen should suffer because of her /his choice of location of residence. To deprive a citizen of adequate level of schooling, drinking water, primary health care and other basic services because of her/his choice of location is an injustice”. Hence it can be argued that by devolving government provision of basic services can be ensured as the centralized government forms have been noted to be vehicles of policies that are not responsive to the needs of the public.

### **3.5.3 Enhancing accountability and innovative efficiency**

Decentralisation is also seen as a mode of governance that improves efficiency by enhancing accountability. Also to note is that accountability is a critical ingredient in

fostering good governance, and decentralizing augments downward accountability which makes officials to be more transparent to the public. This thus contributes to efficiency in service provision. The World Bank (2008) argues that, because the sub-national governments are closer to the citizens, it is assumed that this provides an opportunity for the people to participate, monitor and control the sub national governments. For this reason, the linkages between local people and local governments are perceived to increase innovation over time in response to the competitive pressure by the local people to adapt to most efficient techniques of production (Oates, 1972; Bergh, 2004). Therefore, decentralisation may increase both static and dynamic efficiency in the production of public goods (Oates 1972: 13; Van Dijk 2006: 32).



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Indeed, this is seen to be especially true where the financing of public services are devolved to the local governments. It is also expected that financial autonomy provides incentives, in which clear institutional arrangements, budget constraints, and revenue expectations drive local governments to maximize cost efficiency and constituent service (Qian and Weingast ,1997 as cited in Azfar *et al.* 2001:7). Thus decentralisation requires some financial autonomy to enable the local governments to respond to the local demands

#### **3.5.4 Facilitating cost recovery**

The demand driven development initiatives through decentralisation are thought to enhance the willingness of the local population to participate in realizing them (Bahl 1995; Briscoe and Garn, 1995; Litvack and Seddon, 1999). According to this theory, the

local population is perceived to be more willing to contribute, financially or in kind, for the implementation of development programmes that matches their development preferences. Decentralisation therefore is expected to increase the base of support for governmental action. In this sense a local government is expected to exert greater fiscal effort and raise more revenues, if they can determine how the revenues are used (Azfar, 2001). Hence through decentralisation people find it is rational to pay taxes and also to support development initiatives that seemingly are responsive to their local needs.

### **3.5.5 Improved Social Welfare**

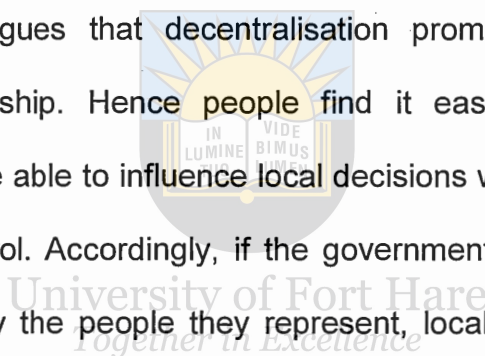
In relation to its allocative efficiency and responsiveness, it can be argued that decentralisation is able to improve welfare mechanisms. This is due to the fact that local government are knowledgeable and have better information sources about the local situation, making them to better tailor resources and funds to those in need. According to Besley and Coate (2003) decentralization enhances welfare in the absence of spillover effect. In addition, they support the idea that decentralisation entails pro-poorness as it provides social welfare mechanism. Another point to consider is that since decentralisation increases efficiency, responsiveness and the provision of social services, a conclusion can thus be made in favour of its role in augmenting social welfare.



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### **3.5.6 Improved governance**

In literature, decentralisation is seen to be equivalent to good governance (White, 2011:1). This may be due to the fact that good governance fosters equity, transparency, accountability, participation, inclusion and empowerment (Meynen and Doornbos, 2006: 227-228). According to Poteete (2004:13, 17), the rationale for good governance is in the achievement of political and economic equity. Political equity implies democratic decision-power and acknowledgment of the various demands of different resource users and economic equity means the equation of costs and benefits. In the same token, Smoke (2003:9) argues that decentralisation promotes the principles and realisation of good citizenship. Hence people find it easy to interact with local government officials and are able to influence local decisions which empower them and give them a sense of control. Accordingly, if the government has meaningful powers and is open to influence by the people they represent, local people are transformed from managed subjects into engaged citizens (Ribot, 2004: 13). Thus decentralisation promotes social transformation as the people find it easy to influence and control policies that affect their lives, which can be argued to be an ingredient for poverty reduction.



### **3.5.7 Promotion of Participation**

Decentralisation is seen as promoting local participation in the development process and the design of policies that are adapted to local needs (Crook 1994: 340; Sharma 2000: 177; Azfar et al 2004: 21-24; Mehrotra 2006: 269). Decentralisation increases the participation of the public in the affairs of governance, which also promotes inclusion.

Hence by promoting participation decentralisation is seen to be enhancing inclusion, by removing constraints and empowering citizens to take control of their own development and to take advantage of existing economic opportunities (Stern et al., 2005). Crook (2003) reiterates the idea that decentralisation contributes to citizen participation, by arguing that in Africa and other developing countries, the achievement of authentic participation of rural people in development depends on the devolution of power to local government structures. Hence decentralisation (devolution) is seen as a mechanism for making local government more participatory.



### **3.6 Obstacles to decentralisation.**

Scholars acknowledge that democratic decentralisation is a complex and multifaceted process (Smoke, 2003:13; Crook, 2003), with prospects for realisation of the anticipated results being affected by a lot of factors. A lot of factors have been seen as constraining the successful implementation of decentralisation processes. These are as follows;

- *“Shortfalls in the legal framework (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004:23). Decentralisation needs institutionalised and included within the constitution.*
- *There needs to be clear division of labour and control amongst the different spheres of government. Without a clear division of responsibilities decentralisation is bound to fail (Smoke, 2003).*
- *Lack of local government capacity impacts on service delivery and the effective functioning of local governments with inadequate financial and human resources being also a challenge (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004: 22; Steiner, 2007: 177);*

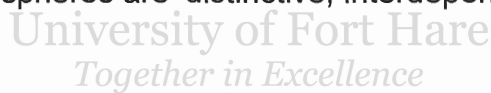
- *Anticipated increase in local political participation may be limited in practice due to insufficient opportunities being provided to citizens by local officials, or a lack of information about opportunities being made available (Steiner, 2007: 179), or a weak organisational set-up of local civil society;*
- *Closely related to the issue of participation is accountability. There is a tendency to assume that 'democratic participation will yield strong mechanisms of accountability' (Johnson, 2003: 8);*
- *The political will of national elites to seriously implement devolution cannot be taken for granted. National elites might have accepted a decentralisation scheme primarily to please donors, while remaining confident that they will be able to maintain control over resources. The veto-power of national elites in blocking the effective implementation of new legal rules, or in perverting them to their own advantage, is a critical constraint to any decentralisation policy (Blair, 2000);*
- *Elite capture of decentralised processes. Within the local arena there is an existing set-up of powerful players who might be negatively affected by decentralisation, such as traditional authorities or local bosses dominating trade and other economic activities (Olivier de Sardan, 1999);*
- *Lack of local democracy and the existence of a local democratic deficit" (Crawford and Hartmann, 2008: 14-16)."*

Thus far, the chapter has argued that decentralisation is generally about the transfer of authority from central government to lower levels of government (local government) and that the rationale for decentralisation is often to democratize governance by promoting participation, inclusion, empowerment, accountability ,

efficiency and responsiveness. It has been argued in this chapter that these mechanisms thus promote pro-poor development which is aimed at arresting poverty. The following sections will provide a general overview of decentralisation legislature in South Africa.

### **3.7 Decentralisation in South Africa**

The South African decentralisation mechanism is entrenched in the 1996 Constitution. The constitutional principles of local governance are further anchored on two comprehensive legislations; the Local Government Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act No. 117 of 1998) and the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000). As a republic, the South African government is constituted of national, provincial and local spheres. All these spheres are 'distinctive, interdependent and interrelated'.



Elaborating on the constituents of governance in South Africa, Picard (2005) argues that there is a national government headed by a president and a national parliament. He also highlights the fact that South Africa has nine provincial governments, each with a provincial parliament and an executive branch headed by a premier, a provincial cabinet and provincial ministries. It also has 46 district level local governments and six metropolitan governments. The district municipalities are further subdivided into 231 local municipalities. South Africa's local authorities primarily function as service delivery mechanisms, though often, given its fiscal limits, they have unfunded mandates that leave vast gaps in coverage (Picard, 2005).

Having given an overview of the spheres of government in South Africa it is worth pointing out that these different facets of government are supposed to work in harmony and cooperatively (intergovernmental). The activities of local government must be aligned to those of the National and Provincial spheres of government. This means that local government must take policies and programmes of other spheres of governments into account, but also that these spheres of government must take into account the policies and programmes of local government. The element of choice entails that the choice and preference exercised at local level must be channeled upwards through the local government unit. This principle requires horizontal and vertical integration of planning so as to achieve bottom-up development (De Visser 2002:39). Accordingly, De Visser et al (2000: 6) further comments that in exercising its powers, provincial government must respect local government's institutional integrity as an independent sphere of government. Hence there is need to ensure that the goals and objectives of the local government are aligned to those of the provincial and also of the national government. Alignment of activities and goals will thus ensure integrated socio-economic and political development in the Province as well as in the country as a whole. In the same vein Smith (2000:9) is of the view that there should be checks and balances between the activities and goals of local government to ensure that priority is given to the basic needs of the community.

In the light of this the South Africa legislature has accorded the provision of mechanisms of developmental local governance which promote local development that is geared towards the satisfaction of local needs. The Constitution of South Africa in

Section 153 defines the role of developmental local government by mentioning two elements, namely, that the municipality must:

- a. "structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of a community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community; and
- b. Participate in national and provincial development programmes".

With regard to this, the White Paper on Local Government (1998:45) argues that the developmental local government is government that is committed to working with its citizens and groups within the community in order to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. Reiterating this is the Department of Provincial and Local Government's (DPLG) Local Economic Development Programme Consolidated Edition, which stipulates that the developmental role of local government encourages municipalities to seek to address poverty, joblessness and redistribution in their local areas (DPLG 2003:2). Therefore, it can be argued that, the South Africa legislation gives the role of poverty reduction and enhancement of the wellbeing of citizens to the local government, notable in Section B (2) of the White Paper (1998) it is suggested that the key outcomes of every local government should involve:

- "Provision of household infrastructure and services.
- Creation of liveable, integrated cities, town and rural areas.
- Local economic development
- Community empowerment and redistribution."

This is further illustrated in the underpinnings of Section 152 (1) of the constitution of South Africa, which further stipulates the goals of local governments with regard to local development as:

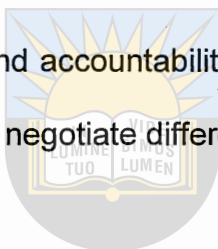
- a. "To provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- b. To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- c. To promote social and economic development;
- d. To promote a safe and healthy environment; and
- e. To encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government."

All municipalities are thus obliged to strive for the achievement of these goals as set out in Section 152 (1). Moreover, Theron (2005:135) posits that the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development of 1994 is a key point of departure because it puts forward a vision for developmental local government that centers on working with local communities to find sustainable ways of meeting their needs and improving their quality of life. In this regard the developmental role of local government is built upon the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and Local Economic Development (LED) mechanisms.

The IDP is a key instrument for ensuring that development in local municipalities is participatory and inclusive of all the inhabitants. The South African government associates public participation in the IDP process with democracy (RSA 1998) and governance (DPLG 2000:14). The process is described by the IDP Guide Pack 1 (DPLG 2001:38) as one of the ways of enabling "interaction between local

government and citizens”. This Guide Pack 1 gives the following reasons for public participation in the IDP process:

- “To ensure that development responds to people’s needs and problems.
- To ensure that municipalities come up with appropriate and sustainable solutions to problems of communities in a municipality. The use of local experience and knowledge in this regard is helpful.
- To entrench a sense of ownership to local communities by making use of local resources and initiatives.
- To promote transparency and accountability of local government, by opening a space for all concerned to negotiate different interests.”



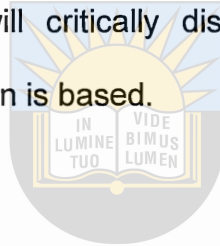
The role of LED is to promote local economic growth, through local initiatives. LED is argued to be part of the development strategies aimed at promoting local approaches that respond to local needs and conditions that focus on encouraging local participation and consensus building in order to determine economic and social welfare initiatives for a given location and community (Blakely 1994:xvi cited in Nel 2001:1005). This definition is supported by Freud and Lootvoet (2004:3,4) who contend that LED are outcomes based local initiatives, which involve identifying and using primarily local resources, ideas and skills to stimulate economic growth and development in order to create employment opportunities for local residents, alleviate poverty and ensure community empowerment. However at this juncture it is important to indicate that the current study utilized only projects that emanated from

the IDP processes of the Nkonkobe Municipality in assessing the role of the municipality in poverty reduction processes.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

To conclude it can be said that the chapter attempted to describe the nature of the conceptualization of decentralisation and its role in bringing about developmental local government. The chapter has tried also to offer a synopsis of the interface between decentralisation and poverty reduction. In this chapter it was established that decentralisation contributes to social, economic and political transformatory development that is aimed at addressing the needs of the poor. In the light of this it has been argued in the chapter that decentralisation attacks multi-dimensional poverty as it promotes participation, efficiency in redistribution and allocation, inclusion, accessibility, pro-poor budget prioritization, social welfare, accountability, transparency and efficient service provision. This is in line with the main narrative of the study that decentralisation leads to poverty reduction by promoting capabilities and enhancing changes in wellbeing and freedoms. However it was also indicated in this chapter that there are several factors that need to be considered for a decentralisation to realize its potential. In addition it has also been highlighted that most studies on decentralisation and poverty have normally utilized comparative studies and had employed secondary data only. For this reason the need to carry out an empirical study on decentralisation and poverty alleviation within a local context become imperative. A general overview of decentralisation in South Africa has also been provided in addition to the indication that and has highlighted that the South African government system is composed of national,

provincial and local spheres. These spheres of government are distinctive, interconnected and work cooperatively. Local government as has been argued earlier deals with the sphere of government that are closest to the people and these are known as decentralised forms of government as have authority socially, economically and politically over a small given area. The chapter has also shown that decentralized mechanisms of government in South Africa are anchored on two policy frameworks, which are the IDP and LED. However the current study only utilized the Nkonkobe Municipality IDP projects in order to evaluate the role of decentralisation in poverty reduction. The following chapter will critically discuss the CA as the theoretical framework upon which this dissertation is based.



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## **CHAPTER 4: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

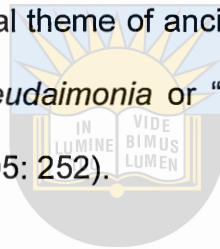
### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study on decentralisation and poverty alleviation. It is within the premises of the Capability Approach that the findings of the study have revealed positive changes in capabilities amongst the public in the Nkonkobe Municipality. This study thus applies the Capability Approach (CA) in an attempt to better comprehend multi-dimensional poverty reduction. In this chapter the CA is used in an attempt to synergize all the aspects of the study, that is, problem definition, purpose, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis. The core argument of this chapter is that poverty reduction mechanisms can best be evaluated on the basis of the expansion of capabilities and the enhancements of public wellbeing. The underlying argument is thus to show how decentralized projects contribute to poverty alleviation through the Sennian lens.

### **4.2 Historical Overview of the Capability Approach**

The development of Capability Approach dates back to the 1980s. The CA was conceived as a response to the failure of the utilitarian approaches to welfare. The CA thus aimed to fill in this gap by taking a multi-dimensional view of wellbeing or poverty in terms of capability deprivation rather than income deprivation (Sen, 2000). Historically it is argued that much of Sen's work on the CA has been influenced by the writing of

Aristotle (Sen 1992: 29; Sen 1993:30, cited from Alexander, 2008: 61; Sen, 2009: 231). According to Crespo (2008:13-19) there is a lot of similarity between the supposition made by Aristotle and Sen. Both of them are said to have their theories based on essentialism, which is an idea that “human life has certain central defining features” (Nussbaum, 1992:205). From this viewpoint the CA is seen as attempting to redefine the course of welfare by looking at the quality of life notions, which Sen argues to be equal to wellbeing or capability enhancement. However a look at the history of philosophy posits that the question of “what is a good life” is not new in philosophical discussions. This has been the central theme of ancient scholarly discussions and from the Greeks it has been known as *eudaimonia* or “the state of having an objectively desirable human life” (Honderich, 1995: 252).



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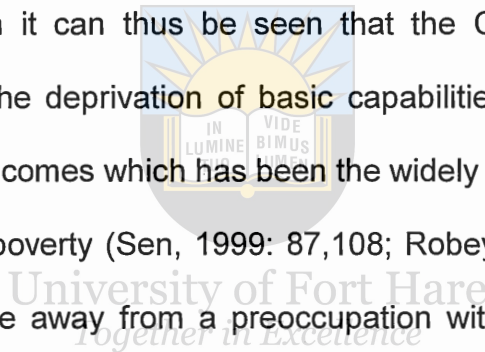
However, in many of the modern dialogues it has been argued that an economic view is the best in understanding wellbeing or progress. In this, the utilitarianism paradigm, with its hub being on income and wealth, has shaped the orthodox understanding and conceptualization of progress and wellbeing in the mainstream of the discourse. Development based on economic growth was argued to be sine equal to poverty reduction. Commenting on this Thomas (2000) suggests that during the 1940s and 1950s development and poverty were largely conceived as antonyms, as it was posited that development would solve poverty, and the absence of it would lead to poverty. An analysis of the outcome of the eco-centric perspective to development showed the continued persistence of poverty, the widening of inequities between and also within countries, and the magnification of deprivations (Schuurman 1993; Escobar 1995;

Thomas 2000; Kothari and Minogue 2002). The whole approach failed to understand the main goal of development. In fact it treated the whole process of development as supposed to result in increases in per capita. Commenting on this, Escobar (1995:44) argued that, “the most important exclusion ... was and continues to be what development was supposed to be all about: people”. Hence it can be argued that the liberal approaches to development failed owing to the fact they concentrated on economic growth than on the means and ends of development, the people. The failure of these policies, led to the conception of the alternative approaches to development, which made Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000, 2006) to contribute to the discourse by arguing that, “the process of economic development is best seen as an expansion of people’s capabilities, and development is seen as a process of emancipation from the enforced necessity to live less and be less” (Sen, 1983). This has made a great turnaround in the understanding of poverty as Sen has contended that we cannot use only monetary indices to understand deprivation. Instead he promotes the use of multi-dimensional indicators.

### **4.3 The Capability Approach**

The CA (CA) is generally a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual wellbeing and social arrangements and the design of policies and proposals about social change in society. It is used in a wide range of fields, most prominently in development studies, welfare economics, social sciences and political philosophy (Alkire, 2002, 2005; Clark, 2002; Comin, 2001; Gasper, 2005; Nussbaum, 2000, 2006; Robeyns, 2001, 2005; Stewart, 2005; Stewart and Deneulin, 2002;

Qizilbash, 2002; Robeyns, 2006; Sen, 1999; Anand, 2007). The CA was initiated by Amartya Sen (1980) and later developed in collaboration with Martha Nussbaum (1988). It views development as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (Sen, 1999:1). The CA has expanded the development discourse by adding the notion of freedom as an additional objective in human development. Sen (1999:3) stipulates that “focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advance, or with social modernization”. In this vein it can thus be seen that the CA perceives poverty as multidimensional denoting the deprivation of basic capabilities (Sen, 1993:41), rather than merely as lowness of incomes which has been the widely accepted liberal standard criterion of identification of poverty (Sen, 1999: 87,108; Robeyns, 2004). In the light of this, Sen argues for a move away from a preoccupation with economic indicators in poverty assessments. In contrast he explores the barriers that prevent individuals from engaging in five basic freedoms: social opportunity, political freedom, economic facilities, transparency guarantees and protective security (Sen, 1999). In this sense Sen’s approach shifts the development agenda from the econometric centrism to a focus on people as the ultimate beneficiaries of real development. Sen does not totally denounce the role played by income. However, it is this view that income on its own cannot predicate wellbeing.



According to Sen, the modern world is rife with a number of societal problems. In developing countries in particular, there are people suffering from hunger, malnutrition,

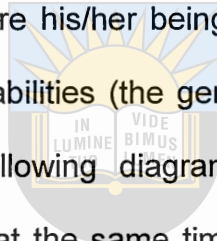
exclusion, lack of education, limited access to health care and sanitary arrangements, lack of gainful employment or economic and social security, inequalities between women and men, people denied political liberty and basic civil rights. According to Sen (1999:33), overcoming these constraints or 'unfreedoms' and removing the major sources of them is a central part of the exercise of development, as "it enhances the choices and opportunities of individuals to exercise their reasoned agency". A closer look at the unfreedoms mentioned is similar to some of the dimensions of poverty that posit multi-dimensionality nature of poverty as argued in chapter 2 of this study. Hence development is about the expansion of freedoms. Accordingly Sen argues that 'development as freedom' requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities and intolerance or over activity of repressive states (Sen, 1999: 3).

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Furthermore the CA, views human beings as ends in themselves and never as only means to other ends (Sen, 1990:41). In support of this position, Khan (2003:1) posits that all development is self-development. Khan argues that this is so since all development must take place through the initiatives of the people. In corroboration Robeyns (2006:351) asserts that the CA pinpoints that assessments of the wellbeing or quality of life of a person, and judgments about equality or justice, or the level of development of a community or country, should not primarily focus on resources, or on people's mental states, but on the effective opportunities that people have to lead the lives they have reason to value. Accordingly Sen (1993:3) suggests that real development initiatives should entail the removal of all forms and sources of

unfreedoms. Against this background, Robeyns (2006:353) posits that the CA is not a theory that can *explain* poverty, inequality or wellbeing but instead, it provides concepts and a framework that can help to *conceptualize* and *evaluate* these phenomena.

Sen proposes that social arrangements should be evaluated in terms of a person's capability to achieve functionings that he or she has reason to value (1992:5). For this reason, development or poverty reduction occurs when people have greater freedoms or capabilities. In this regard Robeyns (2006) mentions that in the CA central concepts are a person's functionings, which are his/her beings and doings (for example, being well-fed or literate), and his/her capabilities (the genuine opportunities or freedoms to realize these functionings). The following diagram will try to highlight the major components of the CA (Figure 4.1) at the same time as linking them to the notion of development.



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## Figure 4.1 Framework for Analysis of Development

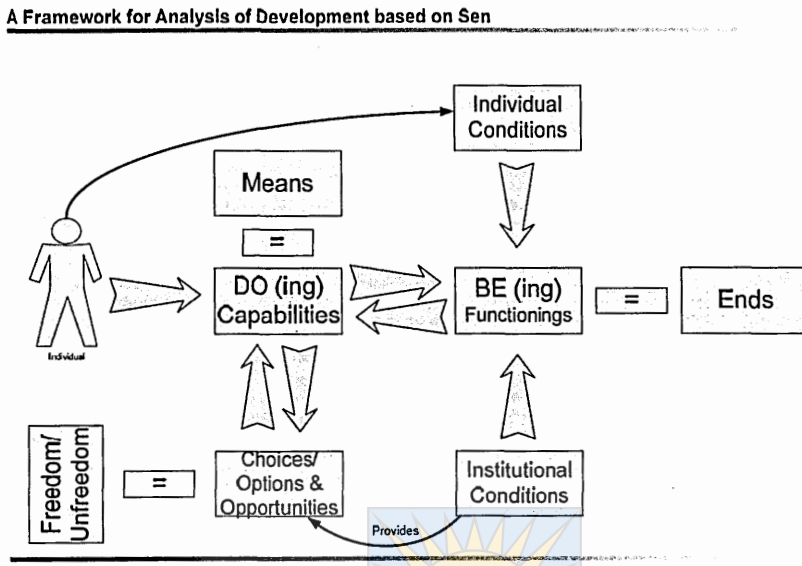


Figure 3.1 A Framework for analysis of development based on Sen

Adopted from Robeyns (2006)

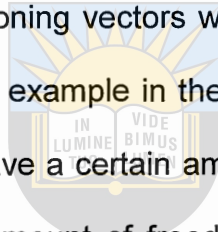
### 4.3.1 Functionings

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Proponents of the CA agree that development is about ensuring that people to live the lives they chose and value. In this regard, the functionings become an important concept in the understanding and conceptualization of human development. According Alkire (2002:5), the focus on functionings sets the CA off from other approaches of wellbeing. Functionings are constitutive of a person's being; implying the various things a person may value doing or being (Sen, 1999:72-75). In the light of this argument, a developed society is thus one where people are able to achieve these valuable functionings (Sen, 1992: 49; 1999:73). Succinctly, functionings are activities or states of being which have been or are being achieved. Examples include: being nourished, being educated, being healthy, working, associating with others and participating in political life. Functionings are dependent on a number of individual and institutional

factors within which potentials can be achieved, such as, age, gender, and access to medical services, nutritional knowledge, education and climatic conditions. For example, the function being healthy is dependent upon income, agriculture production and exercising, amongst others factors.

In this sense functionings are an everyday doing. What matters, however, is whether people are achieve them or are deprived of their achievements. Functionings although viewed as interdependent activities, cannot be achieved independently but in clusters or groups. This is what Sen calls functioning vectors which are all dependent on societal opportunities for their realization. For example in the activity of riding a bike, one must be able to possess one, one must have a certain amount of space and physical ability, and one must also have a certain amount of freedom to do the riding freely without constraints.

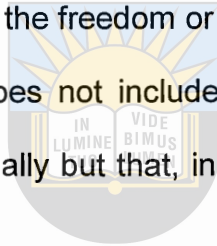


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#### **4.3.2 Capabilities**

According to Alkire (2002:6), functionings themselves cannot completely give a clear picture of the analysis of human development. There is therefore a need to incorporate freedoms into the conceptualization of human development. In trying to conceptualise and define capabilities there has been a lot of contestation amongst philosophers and capability theorists. The controversial question has been on whether capabilities refer to skills and abilities or to various options and opportunities. In an attempt to answer this, Crocker (1995:163) states that in Sen's writings the notion of capability mainly refers to people's opportunities of doing things they have reasons to value.

Contrastingly, Cohen (1993:20-25) suggests that it has to do with various skills and abilities and hardly has any reference to opportunities and conditions that are required to develop capabilities. Nonetheless, a capability is “a person’s ability to do valuable acts or reach valued states of being”, and “represents the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be” (Sen, 1993: 30) and it represents a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the persons freedom to lead one type of life or another, to choose from possible livings (Sen, 1992; 40). Moreover, capabilities can be viewed as “a set of real opportunities that you could use in one way or another, the paths that lie open before you. ‘Real opportunity’ is the freedom or opportunity to accomplish what we value; Sen is very clear that this does not include freedoms or opportunities that a person might hold theoretically or legally but that, in reality, lie well beyond their reach (Alkire 2005:121).



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Within the Sennian approach there are two broad types of capabilities, basic and more complex capabilities. Basic capabilities, or what Sen (1989: 12) refers to as elementary capabilities, includes “the ability to avoid undernourishment and related morbidity and mortality.” Complex capabilities involve “more sophisticated social capabilities such as taking part in the life of the community and achieving self-respect.” The approach is unique as compared to other theories of development or wellbeing in that it suggests the importance of choice in development (Alkire, 2002:5). Thus, the CA emphasizes the fact that social arrangements should be evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value. It is for this reason that this approach differs fundamentally from other theories of justice. The emphasis is moved

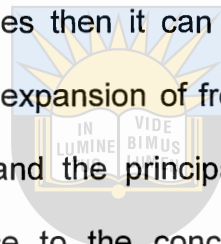
away from what Sen refers to as wellbeing achievement (functionings) to wellbeing freedom. The following section will elucidate more on the notion of freedom.

### 4.3.3 Freedoms

The CA places the central goal of development as the enhancement of freedoms. In addition to placing human beings at the centre of socio-economic processes, the CA with its focus on capabilities rather than functionings for social evaluation brings concern for human freedom to the fore of development initiatives. Hence the concept of freedoms is “central to the process of development” (Sen, 1999:4) and poverty is seen as deprivation of freedom or unfreedoms, whilst development according to Sen has to do with the removal of all sources of unfreedoms (for example, famines, malnourishment, exclusion, limited access to health care and illiteracy) that leave people with little choices and opportunities in exercising their reasoned agency. For example a child who is hungry and a monk who is fasting, both have the same level of functioning, both are undernourished, but one has the freedom to eat if he chooses and the other hasn't. But, what really is freedom from a Sennian perspective? Freedom is defined as “the range of options a person has in deciding what life to lead” (Drèze and Sen 1995:10). The freedom-centered perspective is useful in evaluative processes. Hence the development taking place in Nkonkobe Municipality will be evaluated on the basis of enhanced freedoms.

Freedom as a constituent of real development is affected by economic opportunities, political forces, social structures, and the enabling conditions of good health and

education. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are influenced by the exercise of peoples' freedoms and through their participation in the making of public decisions (Sen 1999). Freedom thus is important in social arrangements and as it has been argued that development entails the enhancement of freedoms, thus public policies on the advancement or enhancement of freedoms can be argued to be part of the efforts to eradicate poverty. Hence, the real freedoms that people enjoy are not only associated with people's own wellbeing, but they must have the freedom to choose between agency freedom and wellbeing freedom. When people are able to choose between a set of freedom guarantees then it can be argued that development has occurred. It is in this sense that the expansion of freedom as both the primary end in enriching human life (substantive) and the principal means (instrumental) for or of development, has given significance to the concept of freedoms in development initiatives. Substantive freedoms entails most of the elementary capabilities, whilst instrumental freedom consist of opportunities that people have for political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, and tend to contribute to the general capability of a person to live more freely. Sen (2001) suggests five types of instrumental freedoms; political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. Table 4.1 below shows the different kinds of freedoms described by Sen (2001: 10).



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**Table 4.1 Types of Freedom**

Types of freedom Description	Description
<i>Political freedoms</i>	The opportunities that people have to determine who should govern and on what principles. Also includes the possibility to scrutinize and criticize authorities, to have freedom of political expression and an uncensored press, and the freedom to choose between different political parties.
<i>Economic facilities</i>	The opportunities that individuals have to enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, or production, or change. This depends on the resources owned or available for use as well as on conditions of exchange.
<i>Social opportunities</i>	Concerns the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so on, which influences the individual's substantive freedom to live better, both in terms of their private lives and public participation in economic and political activities.
<i>Transparency guarantees</i>	Concerns openness that people can expect while dealing with one another under guarantees of disclosure and lucidity. These serve to prevent corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhand dealings.
<i>Protective Security</i>	Serves as a social safety net for preventing the affected population from being reduced to abject misery and death. Protective security includes fixed institutional arrangements such as unemployment benefits and statutory income supplements, as well as <i>ad hoc</i> arrangements such as famine relief or emergency employment to those needy.

Source: Adapted from Sen (1999)

From the information gleaned from the above diagram it can be argued that the main objective of development from a capability perspective is to ensure that there is the realization of enhanced human freedoms amongst the public. The promotion of these freedoms results in changes in the overall wellbeing of the poor. However, as noted by Sen (1999:112), there is no specific dimension of freedom that is more important than

the other. And since all types of freedoms are equally important and impact on each other, the only way development can occur successfully is when all of these freedoms are prioritized in the policy arena. Hence poverty alleviation in the Nkonkobe Municipality can best be understood through the lens of freedom enhancement.

**4.5 Operationalisation of the Capability Approach**

In the above sections the CA has been explained and reasons for its utilization have been given. The remaining issue that has been a major challenge for many scholars has to do with the operationalisation of the CA. Robeyns notes that the CA in practice comes in a variety of forms, in part because of the wide scope of the approach, but also because the approach is “radically underspecified” (Robeyns 2006: 353). Interestingly, Robeyns (2005:193) contends that scholars use the CA for different types of analysis, with different epistemological goals, relying on different methodologies, with different corresponding roles for functionings and capabilities. This is shown in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2 Modes of capability analysis**

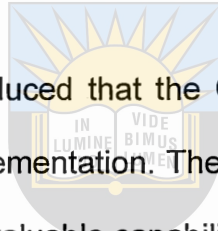
<b>Epistemological goal</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Role of functionings + capabilities</b>
Welfare / quality of life measurement	Quantitative empirical	Social indicators
Normative theories	Philosophical	Part of the philosophical foundations
Thick description / Descriptive analysis	Qualitative empirical	Elements of a narrative

Source: Robeyns (2005: 193)

However, there has been a raging debate on the operationalisation of the CA. Sen himself has even acknowledged the difficulty in the operationalisation of his theory, this

is highlighted when he stipulates that “there are widespread doubts about the possibility of making actual empirical use of this richer but more complex procedure” (cited in Robeyns 2006:353). Other scholars have even argued that the CA is an unworkable idea (Rawls 1999:13). For instance Sudgeen (1993:1953) opines that, “Given the rich array of functionings that Sen takes to be relevant, given the extent of disagreement among reasonable people about the nature of the good life, and given the unresolved problem of how to value sets, it is natural to ask how far Sen’s framework is operational”.

Hence from the above it can be deduced that the CA has faced a major criticism in terms of the methodology for its implementation. The major drawback, according to the critics, was failure to provide a list of valuable capabilities and/or a comprehensive list or classification of valuable functionings or capabilities (Doyal and Gough, 1991; Clark, 2002; Nussbaum, 1988; as cited by Clark, 2005). However, Sen left the CA in apparent incompleteness deliberately, refraining from providing or endorsing a list of fixed or unique capabilities or functionings as ‘objectively correct’. By doing this, “Sen manages to avoid critique of being theoretically paternalistic by leaving each and every person with the freedom to define his/her own set of functionings” (Clark, 2005). Many other scholars have tried to fill this void and prepared a substantial list of functionings or capabilities (Nussbaum, 1995; 2000; Saith, 2001; Alkire, 2002 and Clark, 2002, as cited by Clark, 2005, 2012).



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In Nussbaum's opinion, any capability measurements were supposed to concentrate on the following capabilities: (1) *Life*; (2) *Bodily health*; (3) *Bodily integrity*; (4) *Senses, imagination and thought*; (5) *Emotions*; (6) *Practical reason*; (7) *Affiliation*; (8) *Other species*; (9) *Play*; and (10) *Political and material control over one's environment* (Nussbaum, 2000:77-80; 2003:41-2; 2005:41-422). She asserts that's if the approach is too open-ended, then there is a real possibility that wrong freedoms will be prioritized and expanded. This is noticeable in her comment:

"Capabilities can help us to construct a normative conception of social justice, with critical potential for gender issues, only if we specify a definite set of capabilities as the most important ones to protect. Sen's 'perspective of freedom' is too vague. Some freedoms limit others; some freedoms are important, some trivial, some good, and some positively bad. Before the approach can offer a valuable normative gender perspective, we must make commitments about substance (2003: 33)."

Interestingly, Sen (2004:80) responded by arguing that he had nothing against the listing of capabilities but has to stand up against a grand mausoleum to one fixed list of capabilities. Sen agrees and acknowledges the need of a list of capabilities to make the approach operationalisable. However, his main concern is with the claim for one predetermined canonical list of capabilities, chosen by theorists without any general social discussion or public reasoning (Sen, 2004:77). His objection to having a predetermined list is based on the fact that it forestalls the process of public reasoning. He reiterates his suggestions by arguing that, 'To insist on a fixed forever list of capabilities would deny the possibility of progress in social understanding and also go

against the productive role of public discussion, social agitation, and open debates' (Sen 2004: 80). Moreover Sen is of the view that,

'pure theory cannot "freeze" a list of capabilities for all societies for all time to come, irrespective of what the citizens come to understand and value. That would not only be a denial of the reach of democracy, but also a misunderstanding of what pure theory can do....' (Sen 2004: 78).

Sen also contends that a fixed list is inappropriate in practice in that the lists will be used for a great variance of purposes, often called evaluative exercises (Sen 2004: 79). However, Sen opines that in some cases there is a need for drawing out a list of valuable capabilities;

In the context of some types of social analysis, e.g. in dealing with extreme poverty in developing economies, we may be able to concentrate to a great extent on a relatively small number of centrally important functionings and the corresponding basic capabilities (e.g. the freedom to be well nourished, well sheltered, and in good general health, the capability of escaping avoidable morbidity and premature mortality, the ability to move about freely, and so forth). In other contexts, the list may have to be longer and more diverse (Sen 1996: 57-58).

In short, Sen agrees with other scholars on the need of a list of capabilities, but is totally against the specification of one single authoritative canonical list that is expected to apply at all times. However most scholars who have utilized the CA have either

followed Sen's idea of public discussion or drawn a refined list from Nussbaum's prescription. In this regard, Clark (2002) developed and applied this methodology and used a survey instrument to investigate perceptions of wellbeing among the urban and rural poor in South Africa. From the research results, he found that the most frequently mentioned aspects of a good life in South Africa were jobs, housing, education, income, family and friends, religion, health, food, good clothes, recreations and relaxation, safety and economic security. This was in fact in line with the capabilities that Sen and Nussbaum considered central to human development. Other scholars have adopted a similar strategy. These include, inter alia, Anand and Van Hees (2006), Schokkaert (2007) and Wolff and De-Shalit (2007).



According to Robeyns (2006:358), it is important to stress that not all applications of the CA require *empirical* research techniques. Some applications are based on analytical reasoning or critical analysis. But many applications of the CA do rest on new empirical analysis, and therefore require the use of empirical research techniques. Mostly Robeyns (2006) argues that descriptive statistics (quantitative analysis) have been the theme although it has to be noted that existing databases rather than empirical studies are mostly being utilized. Some studies have used qualitative methods like focus groups and participatory approaches (Alkire, 2002; Schischka et al, 2008). However despite the different techniques being used when applying the CA the study found it worthwhile to take a quantitative approach in order to assess the public perception of capability enhancements due to decentralization in the Nkonkobe Municipality.

In order to operationalise the CA, the research had to do an intensive literature review and this led to the extraction of valuable capabilities from secondary literature. It is these valuable capabilities that the study utilized in the formulation of research items. Studies by Klasen (2000), Anand and van Hees (2006), Clark (2003), Clark and Quilizibash (2005), Alkire (2002) Anand et al (2009), amongst others have shown and indicated that people have a wide range of valuable capabilities. In the operationalisation of the capability approach for the study the researcher had to select capabilities and integrate them to form specific variables or items for the questionnaire. Also some of the capabilities utilized for the current study emanate from the Human Development Index since it is a scale based on a selection of a set of some internationally agreed capabilities. Furthermore a study by Clark and Qizilbash (2006:27) used questionnaires to obtain people's views of basic capabilities in three impoverished areas in South Africa and most of their endorsements on valuable capabilities formed part of the questionnaire items. As shall be noted in the following chapter the capabilities utilized for the study are in line with some of Nussbaum's prescriptive lists of basic capabilities. Studies by Anand and van Hees (2006), Clark (2003), Clark and Quilizibash (2005), Alkire (2002) and Anand et al (2009) utilized questionnaires for the operationalisation of the CA and it is in this regard that the current study also employed questionnaires.

#### **4.6 Objections to the Capability Approach**

As has been mentioned earlier the CA has been criticized on the basis of its incompleteness and in not defining a list of capabilities (Doyal and Gough, 1991; Clark,

2002; Nussbaum, 1988; Clark, 2005). Hence it is viewed as an unworkable idea (Rawls, 1999:13; Sudgen, 1993:1953). The major problem which has been pinpointed relates to the selection of capabilities. Hence there is profound contestation as to what or which capabilities should inform the capability lists for evaluative purposes.

Another objection to the approach concerns its notion of public reasoning in the formulation of capability lists. Philosophers question the validity of people's decisions about basic capabilities and the threshold of each basic capability. Some argue that a list of basic capabilities chosen by people may not amount to a morally justifiable list. (Arneson, 2006; Nussbaum, 2006). A list of basic capabilities is not acceptable merely because people have agreed on it or because it has been chosen. The idea of public reasoning in the generation of capability lists has been questioned considering that most nations in Africa are not democracies. This rebuts the findings on public reasoning as in most instances in Africa public reasoning is void. However, empirical studies show that it is possible to draw up capability lists in Africa (Klasen, 2000: 40; Clark and Qizilbash; 2006:27).

The CA has also been objected to on the basis of the level of excessive focus on the individual at the expense of the community and other social structures. This comes from the argument that there is a wide array of factors within the societal processes and structures that inhibit the enhancement of freedom and capabilities. Stewart and Deneulin (2002:68) suggests an extension of the capability concept to include 'valuable structures of living together', arguing that the inclusion of 'functional families,

cooperative and high-trust societies and social contexts', deserve more attention in terms of how they facilitate and stall development. However, Robeyns (2005) argues that there are a number of studies on capabilities that have incorporated the factors that critics are arguing to be non-existent in the CA. Even Sen (1985:216) considered the role of social arrangements and institutions in the augmentation of individual capabilities.

Again Sen's theory has been criticized on the basis of sufficientarianism. Sufficiency is a concept mostly utilized in the study of social justice. According to Crisp (2003), the principle of sufficiency mandates that everyone is entitled to enough 'X' where X enables people to live and reach a threshold level of sufficiency. From this it is argued that the CA does have some attributes of sufficiency since Sen suggests that some capabilities should be brought up so that everyone can reach a minimum standard of living threshold. However, Arneson (2006) argues that if the role of social policies is to ensure that all being attain a minimum level of living then the problem would be that much in terms of resources will be expended on the vulnerable groups than other groups. The result will be that even those above the threshold will fall below. Arneson (2006) also criticizes the CA because in his view it ignores inequality that exists above the threshold due to giving preference to the poor. However, it can be argued that Sen's theory is concerned with inequality at both levels of the threshold, at the same time as addressing the adequate quality of life for everyone.

In addition, the CA has been refuted on the grounds of being too open in choices, this stems from that all decisions of life are left to the individual, without taking into consideration the effects of community. This is highlighted by Deneulin (2005) who contends that “public actions will often have to be guided by the concern of making people function in one way or another rather than by the concern for giving them the opportunities to function should they choose so”. Hence Sen is criticized for having valued individual freedoms without considering the entire freedoms of the community.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

The CA as an approach for the study incorporates a clear understanding of poverty from a multi-dimensionality perspective. For the CA the central role of development initiatives should be to advance and enhance human freedoms and capabilities. Also highlighted in the chapter is the utility of the CA in dealing with multi-dimensional poverty as it is flexible and exhibits a considerable degree of internal pluralism. This allows researchers to develop and apply it in many different ways (Alkire, 2002: 8-11, 28-30). As I have argued earlier, Sen does not subscribe to a fixed or definitive list of capabilities. Instead he argues that the selection and weighting of capabilities depend on personal value judgments. While Sen often provides examples of intrinsically valuable capabilities, he refuses to endorse a unique list of capabilities as ‘objectively correct’ for practical and strategic reasons (Sen, 1993:47; Clark, 2002:54; Qizilbash, 2002). Furthermore, the approach has influenced poverty policies and in so doing the CA recognizes the need of development to eradicate poverty by according freedoms to the public. Hence the CA as a theoretical framework helps in assessing and evaluating poverty in the Nkonkobe

Municipality and other surrounding areas as it pinpoints that assessments of the wellbeing or quality of life of a person, and judgments about equality or justice, or the level of development of a community or country, should not primarily focus on resources, or on people's mental states, but on the effective opportunities that people have to lead the lives they have reason to value (Robeyns, 2006:351). Thus the current chapter has argued in favor of the CA as the theoretical framework for assessing poverty and changes in wellbeing amongst the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality. Furthermore, the chapter has highlighted on how the secondary studies were utilized in the operationalisation of the capability approach for the study. Hence this study, directed at investigating the virtues and vices of decentralisation as a mechanism and instrument of poverty alleviation and augmentation of people's freedom, was framed within the assumptions of Sen's CA.



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## CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the specific methodologies and procedures that the researcher utilized in eliciting data for the study. The main aim of the study is to establish whether the populace of the Nkonkobe Municipality has realized changes or increased capability and freedoms by participating in the Municipality projects. This has been affirmed by the current study which has shown that participating in decentralised projects has resulted in increases in capabilities and overall changes in the wellbeing of the inhabitants of the Nkonkobe Municipality. Specifically the study investigated the role of decentralized mechanism of government in addressing the problem of poverty through local government or municipal projects. The study thus sought to assess the changes in wellbeing and freedoms amongst the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality. Against this background the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To ascertain the perceptions of the Nkonkobe Municipality populace with regard to whether decentralisation does lead to the advancement of capabilities and freedoms of ordinary citizens.
- To establish whether the public in the Nkonkobe Municipality perceive decentralised projects as resulting in the promotion, protection and restoration of the well being of the ordinary citizens of the Nkonkobe Municipality.

- To determine if there have been changes in the wellbeing and agency of the residents of Nkonkobe Municipality from their involvement in decentralised projects.

To achieve these objectives this section or chapter of the study outlines the design of the study, the scope of the population studied, the sample size and the sampling technique employed. It also provides the justification of the choice of the investigation. In addition, the tools or instruments used to collect data and how such tools were used form part of the section. Further discussed in this chapter is the procedure used to obtain data from participants and how the data was analyzed to bring a coherent understanding of the role of decentralisation in promoting pro-poor development. The chapter also gives a brief overview of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of quantitative research, and highlights the significance of this approach at the same time as providing the reasoning behind choosing this deductive-cum-quantitative research strategy over other methodologies.

The dissertation is more of an assessment study that seeks to explain and test the relationship that exists between decentralization and poverty reduction. The reason why the researcher has chosen an explanatory study is because literature on decentralization and poverty alleviation has shown that most studies have utilized various methodological orientations, such as, cross sectional studies based on secondary literature reviews (Bossuyt and Gould, 2000; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; UNDP, 2002; Von Braun and Grote, 2002; Crook, 2003; Vedeld, 2003; Jütting et al.,

2004, 2005; Steiner 2007; Bratton, 2010; Cabral, 2011) , mixed methods utilizing questionnaires and interviews (Bratton and Sibanyoni 2006; Haug cited in FPG, 2006; Alhassan, 2009), in-depth interviews (Yankinson, 2008; Egbenya, 2010) and surveys (Crook and Manor 1998; Bird and Rodriguez 1999; Nel and Binns, 2003; Appiah, 2005; Hereira et al.,2005; Andrianto, 2006; John, 2009) but without cutting edge success in terms of new empirical evidence. In fact much of the literature on decentralisation and poverty alleviation has been a review of secondary literature that is not anchored on reliable empirical evidence. Thus the study chose to utilize a quantitative research design to establish that decentralisation contributes to poverty reduction by concentrating on the perceptions of the general public residing in the Nkonkobe Municipality of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.



Additionally, it is worth pointing out that since the study utilized the CA as the theoretical framework, there was a need to select the best research approach that would mediate between the concept of decentralisation and capabilities. Following studies utilizing the CA on poverty reduction or wellbeing changes (Anand, 2004; Anand and Hees, 2006; Anand et al., 2009; Clark, 2003), the use of the quantitative research techniques for the study was warranted. As Mikkelsen, (2005:139) has indicated, "It is the substance of the matter - the questions to be answered - that must guide the selection of methods and not vice versa". In light of this assertion my study sought to assess the public perceptions of changes in wellbeing and freedoms as arising from the implementation of decentralized mechanisms in the Nkonkobe Municipality.

## 5. 2. Research Design and Methodology

The aim of the study was to establish if decentralisation does have a pro-poor impact specifically to the Nkonkobe Municipality populace of the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. The research process was thus a compromise between an empirical study and a literature review. Hence the researcher conducted a primary empirical study that was supported by an intensive review of literature as a secondary research strategy. The primary study was conducted through a quantitative survey. Research methodology is defined by Cooper and Schindler (2003:38) as the way in which data is gathered for a research project. Similarly Barbie (1982:32) suggests that a research methodology is the philosophy of the research process which includes the assumptions and values that serve as a rationale for study and the standards or criteria the researcher uses for interpreting data and reaching conclusions. Maree (2007) concurs with Barbie that research methodology refers to all the measuring instruments, techniques and procedures adopted in a research project in order to collect, analyse and interpret research data, so that research findings can be deduced. In this respect Huysamen (1994;10) defines a research design as a plan or blue print according to which data is collected in order to test a research hypothesis or investigate a research question in the most economical manner. Concurring with the given definitions is Kumar (2005) who opines that a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research question or problems. Kumar further asserts that the research design has two main purposes, which are: the identification and development of

procedure and logistical arrangement required to undertake a study. Therefore a research design is a programme which gives guidance to the researcher in collecting, analyzing and interpreting information. The focus of the research design is on the logic of the research. Other scholars contend that the research design sets forth the boundaries of the entire study (De Vos, 2005:132). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) stipulate that the research design has two basic purposes namely, (a) to provide answers to the research to the research question, and (b) to control the variance. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) further assert that the research design enables a researcher to answer specific research questions as validly, objectively and accurately as possible. Thus the research plan is carefully executed so as to provide empirical accuracy on the research problems.



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According to Maxwell (2005:36), one of the critical decisions that a researcher will need to make in designing the study has to do with the paradigm or paradigms within which he or she will locate the study. Maxwell further explains that the term "paradigm" refers to a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology), assumptions that tend to be shared by researchers working in a specific field or tradition. There are various methodological assumptions that underlie different types of research. However two paradigms are worth mentioning in this regard and these are the positivist and the phenomenological (Interpretivist) orientations. A summary of their underlying differences is as follows;

**Table 5.1 Summary of Positivist and Phenomological Paradigms**

	Positivist paradigm	Phenomological paradigm
Basic Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The world is external and objective</li> <li>• The observer is independent</li> <li>• Science is value free</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The world is socially constructed and subjective</li> <li>• the observer is part to what is being observed</li> <li>• Science is driven by human experience</li> </ul>
The researcher should	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on facts</li> <li>• Locate causality between variables</li> <li>• Formulate and test hypothesis (deductive approach)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on meaning</li> <li>• Try to understand what is happening</li> <li>• Construct theories and models from the data (Inductive approach)</li> </ul>
Methods Include	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operationalising concepts so that they can be measured.</li> <li>• Using large samples from which to generalize to the population</li> <li>• Quantitative methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using multiple methods to establish different views of a phenomenon</li> <li>• Using small samples researched in depth or overtime</li> <li>• qualitative methods</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith et al., 1991

The study thus used the positivist ontology following its assumed advantage over the inductive ontology. And since the study sought to test hypothesis mentioned earlier in chapter one and also wanted to ascertain the public perception about decentralization's role in the enhancement of wellbeing and enlarging of freedoms, the deductive methodological orientation was utilized. The research instrument for the study was therefore adapted from existing literature reviews. Utilizing the deductive

methodological approach, a quantitative design was chosen and a survey questionnaire was conducted for data collection.

### **5.3 Quantitative Research design**

In order to achieve the objectives of the study the researcher had utilized a quantitative research design. Struwing (2004:41) is of the view that quantitative research requires that the data collected be expressed in numbers. It should be quantified. Various factors will influence it. The methods used to conduct quantitative research are explanatory, descriptive and experimental. The approach used in the study involved the systematic collection of quantifiable information, meaning that the approach used was quantitative. The data entry and statistical analysis were done using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).



### **5.3. Population of the Study and the study area**

This study assesses decentralisation in South Africa and its role in enabling the reduction of poverty with particular specificity to the Nkonkobe Municipality. The pro-poor results were gauged using the theoretical tenets of the CA by Sen and Nussbaum. In this study poverty was seen as multi-dimensional comprising “pronounced deprivation in wellbeing”, low income, limited access to education and health care, powerlessness, vulnerability and exposure to risk (OECD DAC, 2001; World Bank, 2001; Sen, 1993). For this reason, poverty reduction in the study entailed, ‘promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment and enhancing security’ (World Bank 2001: 7-8). In the same vein Sen stipulates that poverty reduction is a

process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (1999:4). Having understood the dire need to empirically test the rhetoric of intent of decentralization with regard to poverty reduction, the study therefore was conducted in the Nkonkobe Municipality. Hence the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality became the population of the study. Scholars such as Hair, Wolfenbarger, Otinau and Bush (2008:129), suggest that a research population entails the specification of the survey group which will be studied. Concurring with this is Mouton (2002) who describes a population as individuals with common characteristics that the researcher is interested in. The population is thus the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen. The population (N) of the research comprised of all the inhabitants of the Nkonkobe Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Thus the sample population (n) was drawn from the Nkonkobe Municipality.

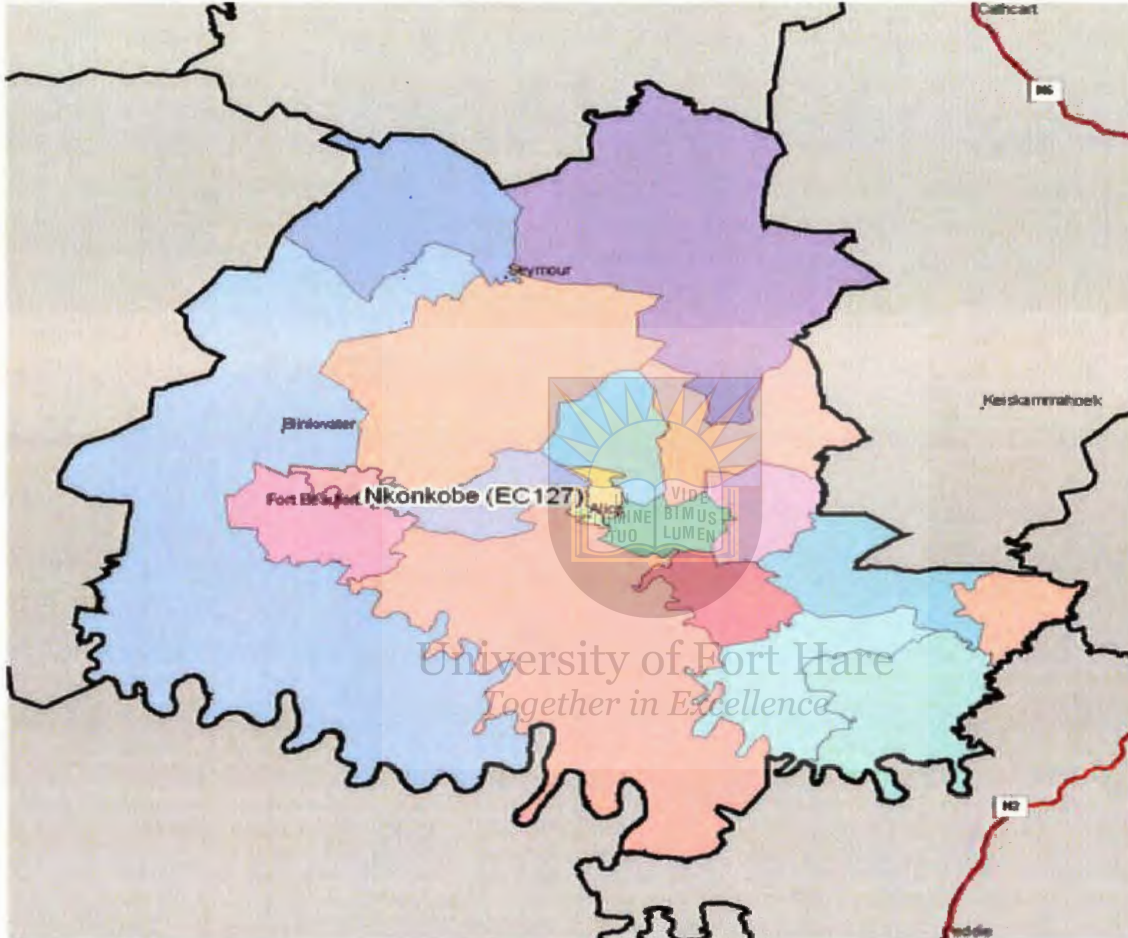


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The Nkonkobe Municipality (NM) falls within the Amathole District Municipality (ADM). It was established in 2000 and is made of the now disestablished Town Local Councils (TLC) namely Alice, Middeldrift, Fort Beaufort, Hogsback and Seymour/Balfour. Alice is a legislative seat and Fort Beaufort is the administrative seat, the latter is situated about 140 km North West of East London on R63 and is approximately 200 km North East of Port Elizabeth (IDP, 2012-2017:14). The municipality is the second largest local municipality covering 3 725 km<sup>2</sup>, and constituting 16% of the surface area of the Amathole District Municipality. The Nkonkobe municipality is a countryside municipality that sits on the foot of the ever

imposing and majestic mountain range of the Winterberg (liNtabazeNkonkobe). The following map shows the regions covered by the Nkonkobe Municipality.

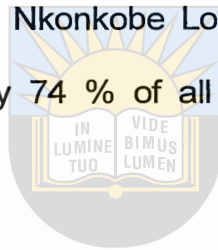
**Figure 5.1 Map of Nkonkobe Municipality**



Source: Nkonkobe Municipality IDP Review 2011/2012

The population of NM has been estimated to be in the region of 135, 660 people with an average household size of 4.0 (Amathole IDP 2006; Nkonkobe IDP 2012-2017:17). The population in the area is rural in nature, with approximately 72% of the population residing in rural areas and farms and 28% residing in urban areas. However, the Nkonkobe Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (2005:11,

12) highlights that urban areas of the Nkonkobe municipality account for the biggest concentrations of its population. The Fort Beaufort area is the most densely populated accounting for a population range of 3 035-6 719 persons per hectare and Alice Town and its immediate surrounding areas accounting for the second highest density with a range of 1 278-3 034 persons per hectare. This shows that urbanity in the Nkonkobe Municipality is concentrated in Alice and Fort Beaufort. In terms of population composition, according to the Amathole IDP (2006), unemployment (68%) and poverty levels (71%) are high and are coupled with development and service backlogs. Sixty nine percent of the Nkonkobe Local Municipality residents do not have an income at all and roughly 74 % of all households have no access to sanitation.



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The Nkonkobe Municipality in terms of population group composition seems to have an estimated 95% of Black African origin, 4% Colored, 1% White whilst the composition of Indians seems to be less than 1%. In terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) the NM is 0.60 which posit low levels of human development. When it comes to general poverty indication the IDP (2012-2017:23) shows declining poverty levels in the Nkonkobe Municipality with an estimated 40% being expected to be living in poverty. However it can be argued that the percentage composition of people in poverty though seemingly low is high. In terms of functional literacy, the municipality is showing a great improvement. The total number of illiterate people as at 2010 is 21 953 and it was sitting at 19 541 in 2009. Literate people are 50 017. In terms of percentage, literacy is at 70.1%. The NM has 64.4%

of its residents occupying formal housing, whilst the remainders are in informal improper housing (IDP, 2012-2017). According to the Global Insight (2010) there are 3 999 households with flush toilets, 2063 households with ventilation improved, 19 827 households with pit toilets, 386 households with bucket system toilets and 1 440 households without any toilet facilities at all. 21.1% percent households have hygienic toilets. There is a backlog of 21 654 of households without hygienic toilets. In terms of water provision the IDP (2012-2017) asserts that 74.3% of the households have access to water and at the same time NM has an unemployment rate of 57.8%.



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Having considered a brief overview of the demographic profile of the Nkonkobe Municipality, it became necessary to ascertain the role of decentralization in enabling capacity enhancement amongst the citizens of the Nkonkobe Municipality. The questions posed were whether decentralisation helps to reduce poverty and what the perception of the public was with regard to the role of decentralisation as a poverty reduction mechanism?" Hence to empirically test these questions the study sampled all the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality.

#### **5.4. Sample size and Sampling procedure**

In attempting to answer the research questions that are outlined in Chapter 1 the researcher, had to draw out a sample from the inhabitants of the Nkonkobe Municipality. In so doing the choice of the sampling procedure was a compromise of time, costs and efficiency. Sampling refers to the process of selecting a subset of the

population for the study. Commenting on this, Bailey (2001:86) suggests that this subset should adequately represent the entire population so that the information gathered from the subset ideally will be just as accurate as the data that we could gather from the entire population. In this vein Burns and Groove (2009: 721) defines sampling as the selection of a subset of the population to participate in the study. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:86) and Bryman (2012:187), the sample is a subset of the population which makes it representative of the whole population being investigated and whose characteristics will be generalized to the entire population. Hence the function of sampling is to allow generalizations about the whole population which are valid in addition to making prediction possible (Huysamen, 1994; Higson and Smith, 2000; Bailey, 2001; Cooper and Schindler, 2003; Bryman, 2012). The basic characteristic of a sample is that it must be representative of the population from which it was taken. A sample is thus selected to represent the population as a whole or a smaller section with specific characteristics. Choosing the best sample frame, according to Goddard and Melville (2001:43), is dependent on the nature of the population and the significance of the study. Compelling reasons for the nature of the sample in this study are: lower cost, greater accuracy of results, greater speed of data collection, and availability of population elements (Bailey, 2001:88).

Total sample size for survey was calculated using the Raosoft online sample size calculator (@<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>). The estimated population of the Nkonkobe Municipality based on Census 2001 is 131 071. Using the *Raosoft*

sample size calculator online (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>) and based on the estimated population of the Nkonkobe Municipality, at a standard error margin of 5%, a confidence level of 95%, and a 50% response distribution, a sample size of 384 was derived.

Since the Nkonkobe Municipality is composed of five different Town Local Councils (TLCs) namely Alice, Fort Beaufort, Seymour, Hogback and Middledrift, as has been already indicated in this chapter the actual population of NM is known whilst that of the TLCs and their surroundings localities is unknown. Hence a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was adopted for the study to solve this challenge. Mendenhall et al. (1971:121 cited in Bailey, 2001) define a cluster sample as a simple random sample in which each sampling unit is a collection, or cluster, of elements. The study thus selected a sample from the list of these towns and took a 20% (n=76) sample of respondents from each TLC and its surrounding localities. Within this sampling frame of 76 that was chosen from each of the five towns and their surrounding areas, 50% (n=38) was chosen from the general public who were not currently engaged in any municipals project and the other 50% from those participating in projects. The researcher had to list all municipal projects that were in these given areas and then select the projects that had been operating for a period of between a year and five years. From these projects and per each respective town the researcher had to select a random sample of respondents and for those who were not in current projects stratified sampling was applied and a random sample was later utilized for their selection. This was done in all the towns until a total of 384 respondents were

selected. However it is important to note that the sample for this study included only residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality who were 18 years and above.

### **5.5. Data collection**

To elicit data for answering the research questions and for the achievement of the research objectives, the study used a Likert-scaled questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was self administered, and the researcher and his assistants had to translate, read out the questions and the choice of responses to the respondents who would make a selection which researcher had to enter on the questionnaire. However some of the questionnaires were self-completed by the respondents in the presence of the researcher. Structured standardized questionnaires which asked every respondent the same questions were used. In fact the questionnaire was formulated using a combination of fixed alternative questions and Likert scale questions, thus making it easier to comprehend. Since the purpose of the study was to collect data about the perceptions of the public on the role decentralization plays in the reduction of poverty, some questions had to be framed in a Likert format. Likert scale type of questions asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements provided in order to make it easy for the researcher to analyze the data statistically. According to Hair et al (2008), a Likert questionnaire is a document consisting of a set of questions and scales to gather primary data. Standardized questions, according to Bailey (1994:187; 2001: 123), allow comparison of answers from all respondents and facilitate the computation of

summary statistics such as percentages of respondents who answer yes or no. The researcher chose the questionnaire as the ideal instrument for the study because it is inexpensive, saves time and labour and offers great anonymity (Kumar, 1999). The questionnaires were thus closed-ended thus making it easy for the researcher to be able to compare results and to analyze the results from the study.

The researcher self-administered 383 questionnaires to the respondents from the Nkonkobe Municipality using multi-stage cluster sampling technique. The questionnaires collected from the respondents had a 15% fault rate. This was due to the fact that some questionnaires were not fully completed and others had more than one choice of answer selected. The researcher ended up having only 327 questionnaires that were eligible for analysis purposes.



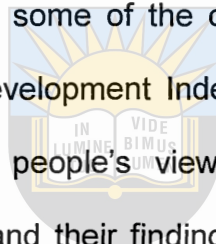
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## **5.6. Description of the Instrument**

As has been mentioned above the instrument used for the study was a questionnaire. Section A of the questionnaire was composed of questions that sought to elicit social demographic data about the respondents (covering items including, inter alia, gender, age, education and marital status). The second part of the questionnaire (Section B) was meant to extract data on the respondents' knowledge of Municipal projects or development projects. In addition, this section was meant to obtain from respondents data on their perception of satisfaction with decentralized government projects. Within this part of the questionnaire the study sought to assess the level of service delivery and local development by evaluating the conditions of projects in terms of whether

there has been completion, abandonment, and or the services are still in progress. Involvement and frequency of participation in the municipal projects was also elicited in this section. The questionnaire also sought to ascertain the perception of changes in life that have occurred due to the Municipality's role in community development and service delivery. This was done through rating items on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1=changed significantly and 5=did not change at all). The third part of the questionnaire (Section C) sought to obtain data relating to changes in the capability of participation and respondents were expected to rate statements on the perception of the realization of the capability of participation on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). The fourth part of the questionnaire was meant to elicit data on whether participation in the decentralized projects or municipal initiatives is resulting in the enhancement of skills and confidence and inclusion. Hence respondents had to show their degree of agreement with given statements on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1=strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). The fifth part of the questionnaire required the respondents to answer questions that were meant to trace the role of local government's decentralization strategy in the provision of local infrastructure. The sixth part of the questionnaire (Section F) required the respondents to rate the performance and responsiveness of the Nkonkobe Municipality on a five point Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree. The last part of the questionnaire sought to obtain data on the perceptions of the public about whether they felt satisfied with the manner of treatment they received at the Municipality offices or when they communicated with officials even telephonically.

In this study the selection of capabilities to include in the question followed an extraction from the capabilities that emanated from the works of different scholars. In studies on valuable capabilities (Klasen, 2000; Drèze, 2002; Clark, 2003; Anand and van Hees, 2006; Clark and Qizilbash, 2006:27; Anand et al., 2009), the public have always endorsed different capabilities (See table 5.2). The operationalisation of the CA was done through an intensive literature review which led to the extraction of valuable capabilities. It is these valuable capabilities that the study utilized in the formulation of the questionnaire items. Additionally, some of the capabilities utilized for the current study emanated from the Human Development Index. Clark and Qizilbash (2006:27) employed questionnaires to obtain people's views of basic capabilities in three impoverished areas in South Africa and their findings on valuable capabilities formed part of the questionnaire items. In addition, capabilities utilized for the study are in line with some of Nussbaum's prescriptive lists of basic capabilities. Studies by Anand and van Hees (2006), Clark (2003), Clark and Quilizibash (2006), Alkire (2002) and Anand et al (2009) utilized questionnaires for the operationalisation of the CA and it is in this regard that the current study also employed questionnaires.



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**Table 5.2 List of valuable Capabilities**

1 Housing	16 Respect and confidence
2 Food	17 Own Business
3 Water	18 Control
4 Health	19 Happiness and Peace of Mind
5 Income	20 Participation
6 Clothes	21 Decision making
7 Furniture	22 Respect
8 Land and Livestock	23 Sexuality
9 Work	24 Electricity/ Energy
10 Education/Schools	25 Knowledge understanding and skills
11 Community Development	26 Gender Equality
12 Freedom/Independence	27 Transport
13 Sanitation	28 Better Life
14 Leisure	29 Safety and Security
15 Infrastructure	30 Love

Extracted from Klasen (2000), Drèze (2000), Clark and Qizilbash (2006), Anand (2009)

For the purpose of data analysis of the researcher had to categorize the aspects of the questionnaire into the following variables:

- Perception of changes in life (PERCL)
- Perception of capacity and decision making ability (PERCADMA)
- Perception of confidence and acquisition of skills (PERCAS)

- Perception of changes in livelihood (PERFRA)
- Perception of responsiveness (PERSPO)
- Satisfaction with manner of treatment (SATMA)

These variables were computed for analysis after the process of factor reduction and are part of the analysis of the study. This made it possible for the computation of the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) for each of these variables (see Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 KMO and BTS for all variables**

Variable	KMO	BTS	df	Sig
PERCL	0.49	860.581	91	0.000
PERCADMA	0.51	69.669	15	0.000
PERCAS	0.45	405.897	55	0.000
SATMA	0.50	140.311	15	0.000
PERCIFRA	0.48	826.227	78	0.000
PERSPO	0.45	127.951	10	0.000

p < 0.01 (2-tailed)

Source: Computer printout derived from the data and findings of this study

### 5.7. Pilot study

Prior to conducting the main study the questionnaire for data collection for this project was pre-tested at the study site, that is, in the Nkonkobe Municipality between January and February 2012. This was to enhance the process of adaptation and development of the research instrument in order to make it suitable for the purpose it was to achieve,

and to enhance the researcher's familiarity with his tools and tactics same time while at the making appropriate adjustments before the actual survey was conducted (Oppenheimer, 1992). The need for a pilot study is emphasized by Strydom (2002:210) who argues that when embarking on a scientific study on a specific research problem, the researcher needs to have thorough background knowledge about the research to be focused on. In this study the researcher used a pilot study to test the rate of response and the willingness of respondents to answer the questionnaire. In addition the pilot was used to establish limitations of the draft questionnaire so that the final research instrument will be a valid and reliable tool.



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In conducting the pre-testing a sixty six (66) question items survey questionnaire (see Annexure 5) was administered to a sample of 50 respondents (N=50). The selected sample size was taken as an approximated 10% of the total sample size to be used in actual survey. The total sample size for the survey was calculated using the *Raosoft* sample size calculator online (@<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>). The estimated population of the Nkonkobe Municipality based on Census 2001 is 131 071. Using the *Raosoft* online sample size calculator (@<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>) and on the basis of the estimated population of the Nkonkobe Municipality, at a standard error margin of 5%, a confidence level of 95%, and a 50% response distribution, a sample size of 384 was derived. It was on this basis that a sample of 50 was used for the pre- test. The pilot test led to the restructuring of the questionnaire so that it could incorporate a lot of variables that are specific to the multi-dimensionality of poverty.

## 5.8 Data Analysis

The Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Version 20) was utilized for the statistical analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires. Upon collection of data, raw figures were collated using the Microsoft Excel software and were subsequently analyzed using SPSS. The researcher had to use frequency tables, bar charts and pie charts as descriptive data analysis techniques. In addition, the study adopted inferential statistics and utilized factor analysis, bivariate correlation, the chi-square and ANOVA as basic tools to elicit simple correlations and differences in means.



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A theoretical framework derived from the combination Sen's CA and the multi-dimensional perspective on poverty, which initially informed the process of constructing the research questions, determined the key themes that drove the data analysis and interpretation method.

## 5.9. Limitations of the study

The study was limited due to the limited scope of the research study, time constraints and language issues. Respondents in the research study area were mainly from areas from the Nkonkobe Municipality who communicate through their isiXhosa vernacular language and most of them were illiterate. Since the researcher was not an isiXhosa speaker, an interpreter had to be used. Moreover the researcher faced other difficulties when requesting the research subjects to complete questionnaires,

since much of the data was collected at the time when the respondents were carrying out tasks relating to their projects and daily chores. For this reason, some of the respondents took the questionnaires home to complete and this consequently resulted in a number of the research subjects not finishing the process of filling in the questionnaire.

### **5.10. Ethical Considerations**

According to Strydom (2000:24), ethics are a set of moral principles which are suggested by an individual or group. Consent was requested from all the respondents of the study to ensure that they participated. Before commencement of the data collection process, the researcher sought permission for entry into the research site from the Municipality Manager (see Appendices 2 and 3). Once permission was granted the researcher had to guarantee subjects the confidentiality of their responses in addition to assuring them anonymity. The questionnaire employed for data collection never sought for the respondents' names and in this way anonymity was assured. The researcher had to inform the participants that no harm of any nature would occur to them during and after the research process. Hence the study followed the research ethics on privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and anonymity. Respondents were informed that the information to be collected was solely for academic purposes. In this sense, it can be argued that the study conformed to all the ethical consideration to be observed by all researchers from the University of Fort Hare.

## 5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a general overview of the methodological strategy that was adopted when conducting the study. The need to test the assumed pro-poor arguments in favor of decentralized mechanisms of the South African government led to the need for an empirical study. Hence a deductive-cum-quantitative research strategy supplemented by a secondary literature approach was adopted. The study being deductive in nature had to use a quantitative research design traditionally closely linked to the positivist paradigm. As already indicated the main objective of the study was to assess the perceptions of the public regarding the role of decentralisation in poverty alleviation, hence the quantitative approach was the best suited for eliciting the perceptions of the public about decentralisation. The chapter also presented the research design adopted for the study, the intent of the inquiry, the sample and sampling procedure, the research strategy and the justification for carrying out the study. The pilot study conducted prior to the actual study ensured that the instrument was able to elicit the required information. The use of the Likert scale survey questionnaire enabled the researcher to have a standardized instrument that can be easily compared and analyzed statistically. Let me hasten to say at this point that the research results which will be presented in the next chapters will serve as the means by which the research questions for this study will be answered. The results generated from the survey as shall be shown in the following chapters indicate that decentralisation has contributed to poverty alleviation in the Nkonkobe Municipality due to the fact that the respondents of this study are of the

view the operationalisation of decentralized projects has resulted in qualitative changes in well being and capabilities.



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## CHAPTER 6: LIVING CONDITIONS AND ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

### 6.1 Introduction

The current chapter presents the results on decentralisation and service provision. From the findings, it can be deduced that decentralisation in Nkonkobe Municipality area has managed to improve infrastructure and has been more efficient and responsive in service provision. In this regard the provision of social services like health, education and sanitation, amongst others, is vital to poverty reduction. This is supported by Sen (1999:63) assertion that “social and economic factors like elementary health care and basic education are important not only in their own right, but also for the role they can play in giving people the opportunity to “approach the world with courage and freedom.”

The previous chapters (2, 3 and 4) have all attempted to give a synopsis of the discourse on poverty, decentralisation and capabilities. Chapters 2 and 3 have offered the conceptualization of poverty in this study and the rationale behind the decentralisation of governance. It has been argued in these chapters that governments are decentralizing as a way to situate the whole processes of governance and the presumed benefits near the public. Argued also in the previous chapters was the notion that decentralisation attacks multi-dimensional poverty owing to its ability to promotes participation, efficiency in redistribution and allocation, inclusion, accessibility, pro-poor budget prioritization, social welfare, accountability, transparency and efficient service provision. Chapter 4 gave a synopsis of the theoretical framework that underpins the whole study. It was established in Chapter 4 that the CA is the best theoretical framework to utilize when studying poverty alleviation, due to the fact that the CA is

flexible and exhibits a considerable degree of internal pluralism, which allows researchers to develop and apply it in many different ways (Alkire, 2002: 8-11, 28-30).

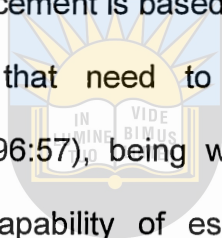
The preceding chapter (Chapter 5) dealt with the methodological issues of the study. It has shown how the study was conducted in order to assist in the generation of empirical findings that corroborate the argument of the dissertation. The core objective of the study is to demonstrate that decentralisation contributes to poverty reduction mostly when poverty is understood from a multi-dimensional perspective. This chapter broadens the arguments put forward in the previous chapters through the empirical results generated from the perception survey conducted in the Nkonkobe. The chapter thus provides the demographic features of the respondents of the study. Development is about increasing freedoms and freedoms constitute the priori building blocks for development, together with *'the expansion of "capabilities" of persons to lead the kinds of lives they value - and have reason to value'* (Sen, 2001:18). Hence it is in this vein that the empirical results of this study teases out the issue of whether decentralisation as a mechanism for pro-poor development has accorded the public the means by which to realize of their freedoms and enjoyment of social services.

## **6.2 Decentralisation and Service provision in the Nkonkobe Municipality**

Some scholars argue that decentralisation results in the provision of efficient social services (Crook, 2003:77) whilst others contend that it results in responsive service delivery (Oates, 1972:55; Arze et al. 2005). Both these groups of scholars believe that decentralisation brings government closer to the citizens and makes government more

knowledgeable about the needs and preferences of the public. This encourages allocative efficiency as the government is able provide social services that are in line with the needs and preferences of the people.

The study sought to assess the level at which the Nkonkobe Municipality is providing its residents with social services. This was done to ensure that a better comprehension could be acquired with regard to the level at which the municipality has managed to provide elementary capabilities to its citizenry. The idea that the level of social services provision can lead to capability enhancement is based on Sen's (2001:10) conception of social opportunities as freedoms that need to be furthered by development mechanisms. According to Sen (1996:57), being well, well sheltered, and in good general health coupled with the capability of escaping avoidable morbidity and premature mortality, the ability to move about freely, and so forth, are parts of the basic capabilities. Hence the need to investigate the role of decentralisation in providing these basic service or capabilities became apparent. The following table (Table6.1) shows the results from the questions on the public perceptions of the provision of social services in the Nkonkobe Municipality.



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**Table 6.1 Public perceptions of the provision of social services**

Project/Service	Completed	Abandoned	In progress
a)School Construction projects	323 (98%)	4 (1.2%)	
b)Health Clinic construction projects	300 (91.7%)	27 (8.3%)	
c)Electricity provision	253 (79.2%)	33 (10.1%)	35 (10.7%)
d)Housing projects	209 (63.9%)	118 (36.1%)	
e)Agriculture projects	167 (51.1%)	87 (26.6%)	73 (22.3%)
f)Road construction projects	205 (62.7%)	78 (23.9%)	44 (13.5%)
g)Water Infrastructure projects	284 (86.8%)	10 (3.1%)	33 (10.1%)
h)Sanitation and waste management projects	130 (39.8%)	97 (29.7%)	100 (30.5%)

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

As the results from the present study indicate, social services provision in the Nkonkobe Municipality is at a better level. Most of the respondents of the study indicate that the Local government has managed to provide them with schools (98%), clinics or health facilities (91.7%), electricity (79.2%), housing (63.9%), agriculture projects (51.1%), road construction projects (62.7%) and water infrastructure projects (86%). At the same time when it comes to sanitation and waste management mechanisms, the municipality seems to be staggering. With regard to health and education, the results confirm the findings of the study by Elhiraika (2007:16) which indicated that the percentage share of education and health in Eastern Cape on the provincial budget were 37.76% and 18.4% respectively. Corroborating these findings is the South African Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) which noted that the proportion of households with access to clean water increased from 60 per cent in 1996 to 85 per cent in 2001 (PCAS 2004:

24). This translates into around 9 million citizens or about 3.7 million additional households gaining access to water in the eight-year period between 1995 and 2003.

The findings on the provision of social services are in harmony with those of the South African Social Attitudes (SASA) reports. Confirmation of the research findings is also provided by SASA report (2010: 59) which contends that citizens in South Africa have reported that access to basic services does relate to satisfaction with these services. Also in terms of perceived national priorities, education, housing and poverty reduction all featured on the list (SASA, 2010:21). This shows that the Nkonkobe Municipality has managed to prioritize social service provision, which, in turn, clearly indicates that the Municipality is creating an environment conducive to capability enhancement. Therefore, it can be deduced that the decentralized mechanisms of governance have contributed to another dimension of poverty reduction mainly by furthering the social opportunities freedoms.

However, the findings do also show that some respondents are still experiencing poverty. This is notable in that whilst 39.8% reported that there were completed sanitation and waste management projects in place, 29.7% reported abandonment of sanitation projects and 36.1% reported the abandonment of housing construction projects. According to Scott et al (2003), poor sanitation is a key link in the cycle of disease and poverty that affects the world's poorest. Hence provision of sanitation can help in the alleviation of poverty.

### 6.3 Perception of changes in Infrastructure

The previous section highlighted the perceptions of the public with regard to the provision of social services. The study additionally asked the respondents to rate the role of the decentralized government in the provision of development infrastructure. This was done to demonstrate the level at which the provision of proper infrastructure can enhance the capabilities for the Nkonkobe Municipality populace. Respondents were then asked to rate statements and questions about infrastructure development in the Nkonkobe Municipality. This type of data increases our understanding of wellbeing and poverty alleviation in the Nkonkobe Municipality areas, since the CA which is the theoretical framework and literature review on poverty have argued that poverty is multi-dimensional (Narayan et al., 1999; UNDP, 2000; World Bank, 2002; Sen, 2004; Chamber, 2006; Shaffer, 2008).

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Thirteen questionnaire items were used to elicit the respondents' perceptions of changes in infrastructure. In order to determine the mean rating of these items and the extent of the individual item's contribution to extracted factor, factor reduction was conducted using Principal Component Analysis on the thirteen items. The result thereof showed that PCA was appropriate for the items given  $KMO = .48$ ,  $BTS$ ,  $X^2 = 826.227$  ( $df = 78$ ),  $p \leq 0.01$ . One factor, PERCIFRA accounting for 15.5% % of variance in the outcome was extracted (see table 6.2) by-passing rotation.

**Table 6.2 Total Variance explanation for PERCIFRA**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.010	15.461	15.461	2.010	15.461	15.461
2	1.874	14.417	29.877			
3	1.773	13.642	43.519			
4	1.473	11.329	54.848			
5	1.196	9.201	64.049			
6	.923	7.099	71.148			
7	.882	6.787	77.935			
8	.775	5.964	83.899			
9	.571	4.392	88.291			
10	.502	3.860	92.150			
11	.443	3.410	95.560			
12	.339	2.610	98.171			
13	.238	1.829	100.000			

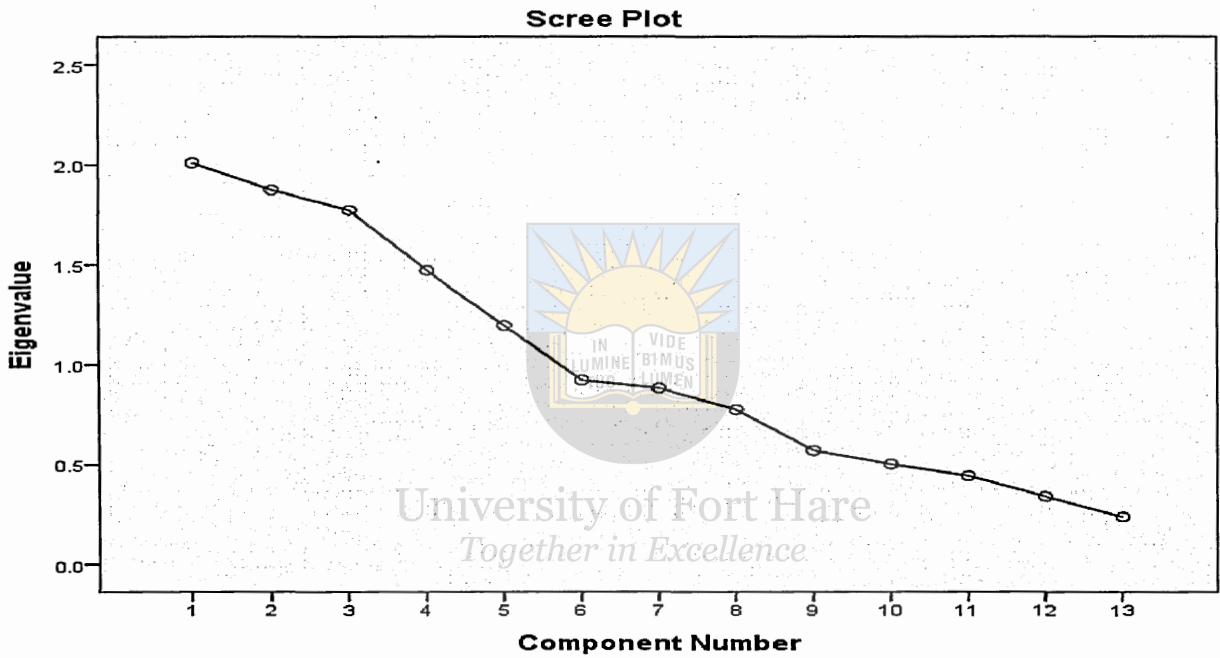
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

The scree plot (see Figure 6.1) further illustrates the relationship that exists between the variables. It is shown from the scree plot that the contribution of other items diminishes once PERCIFRA was extracted. However a look at the distribution of the mean and standard deviation of PERCIFRA (Table 6.3) shows that whilst the item 'how suitable or unsuitable is your accommodation for your current needs', mean =2.78, SD=0.910, is the most significant item in describing respondents perception's of wellbeing changes due to infrastructure, the item 'have you received any form of housing aid in the last 12 months' is the least, mean=1.32, SD=0.466. The responses, however, show that in terms of ease of access to education facilities, 55.4% reported that it was very difficult but possible to reach them, whilst 28% respondents highlighted that schools were of easy reach. At the same time, when asked about the proximity of

healthy facilities, 14.4% mentioned difficulty and 55% reported that they were difficult but possible to reach, whilst 30% pinpointed that clinics are easy to reach. In terms of quality of medical facilities like clinics and hospitals, 19% argued that they were of poor condition and 58% argued that they were in a reasonable condition.

**Figure 6.1 Scree Plot for PERCIFRA**



Source: Computer printout of a line graph derived from the data and findings of this study.

**Table 6.3 The mean and Standard deviation for PERCIFRA items**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
How difficult is it to get to the nearest school?	2.12	.659	327
Do you have any school/college aged children in your household who receive scholarships or subsidies?	2.28	.546	327
How difficult is it to get to the nearest health facility?	2.16	.652	327
How good are the healthcare facilities in your community where you go for treatment?	2.02	.646	327
Has any training or courses been held in your community in the last 12 months?	1.40	.516	327
In what condition are the roads leading to the sub-district town?	2.25	.436	327
How difficult is it to get to the nearest market?	1.98	.737	327
How suitable or unsuitable is your accommodation for your current needs?	2.72	.910	327
Have you received any form of housing aid in the last 12 months?	1.32	.466	327
In terms of quality and quantity, how have government support programmes been in your area?	1.50	.501	327
In terms of quality and quantity, how has been non government support programmes in your area?	1.33	.470	327
How is your access to communication facilities?	2.37	.484	327
Are there any sports facilities or tourist objects or other places considered suitable for recreation in your community?	1.95	.210	327

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

#### **6.4 Socio-demographic features of the Nkonkobe Municipality respondents**

The current section thus considers the biographical components of the respondents of the study. It is argued in this section that since the Nkonkobe Municipality is within the Eastern Cape Province that is noted for its high poverty rate the spread of demographics within the study subjects is thus helpful for providing a clear cut assessment of the role of decentralisation in poverty reduction.

### 6.4.1 Gender in Decentralised Projects

The results of the study as depicted in Table.1 below show that 59.3% (n=194) of the respondents were females and that 40.7% (n=133) were men. This indicates that the majority of the people participating in the Decentralized projects are women. The results are thus in harmony with the statistical findings from South African Census 2000, which states that women in the Nkonkobe Municipality are 60% of the total population. The high prevalence of women in the study might also be due to the increase of unemployment especially considering the fact that most of the respondents' low level of education seems to be a backlog towards employment. Unemployment seems also to be a reason for the significant involvement of men in the implementation of decentralized projects, since the rate of unemployment is high in South Africa.

**Table 6.4 Gender in Distribution**

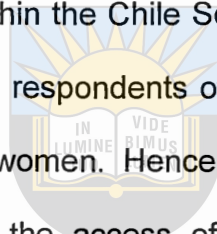
		Gender		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	133	40.7	40.7
	Female	194	59.3	59.3
	Total	327	100.0	100.0

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

There is corroboration between the present findings and those of Todes et al (2007:114) who noted and argued that women are often more present in projects than initially expected. This implies that most development projects seek women to be beneficiaries, as it has been noted that decentralization is beneficial to women (Nanda, 1998: 415; Beall, 2005:1). However, despite the notion that women have been posited to be the assumed beneficiaries and participants of local development projects, it is strongly

argued that in reality the presence of women in these development spaces does very little to advance the envisaged goal of women empowerment (Cornwall, 2003:1329; Manor, 2004; Hicks, 2007). In fact patriarchal values still prevail in many societies, especially in rural areas, which inhibit women from participating in social structures and processes other than the gendered role responsibilities in the family.

Barrientos (2010:588) used the CA in his work on social protection and poverty eradication. In this work the CA was used as a conceptual basis for evaluating social protection and poverty eradication within the Chile Solidario project. From the research results, Barrientos found out from the respondents of the study that the majority of the recipients of income transfer were women. Hence the argument that decentralized projects have managed to improve the access of women to the spheres of local development projects.



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Even a cross tabulation of gender and frequency of participation in decentralized mechanisms shows that it is women who participate a lot. For instance on this issue, 24% reported frequency of participation, 78% often participated, 9% men mentioned frequently participated and 45% of women stated that they seldom participated. This is depicted in Table 6.5 below.

**Table 6.5 Cross tabulation of gender and frequency of participation.**

Gender \* How often have you participated in the projects Cross tabulation

Count		How often have you participated in the projects					Total
		Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
Gender	Male	9	35	38	27	24	133
	Female	24	78	45	25	22	194
Total		33	113	83	52	46	327

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

### 6.4.2 Age of respondents



**Table 6.7 Distribution of respondents by Age**

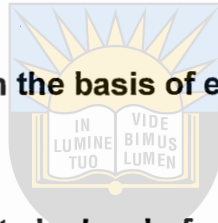
		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21-30	31	9.5	9.5	9.5
	31-40	78	23.9	23.9	33.3
	41-50	155	47.4	47.4	80.7
	51-60	50	15.3	15.3	96.0
	61+	13	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	327	100.0	100.0	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

As noticeable in Table.6.7 above five age groups were used in the study. The results show that most of the respondents 47.4% (n=155) were in the age range of 41-50, whilst 23.9% (n=78) proportion of the respondents were in the age group of 31-40. The study recorded few respondents (about 9.5%) from the age groups 21-30 and 4% from the group of the aged (those from and above 61 years old) The results

demonstrate that most members of the economically active group of the population are forced by unemployment to engage in community development initiatives as a means of survival. For this reason it can be argued that decentralisation has managed to create employment amongst the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality. By providing employment the decentralized municipal projects are contributing to poverty reduction. This is due to the fact that an increase in the capabilities for gainful employment and income generation create more possibilities for the realization/ achievement of other capabilities.

#### 6.4.3 Distribution of respondents on the basis of education



**Table 6.8 Distribution of respondents by level of education**

		Level of education			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	No Formal Education	4	1.2	1.2	1.2
	Primary Education	162	49.5	49.5	50.8
Valid	Secondary (Matric)	104	31.8	31.8	82.6
	Diploma/Degree and above	57	17.4	17.4	100.0
	Total	327	100.0	100.0	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

From Table 6.8, it is apparent that the majority of respondents (49.5%) attended school up to the primary level. This might be as a result of lack of funds to continue their education or due to other socio-economic factors. A small proportion of about 1.2% has never been to school, which might be a reflection of their socio-economic poor background or due to discriminatory apartheid era policies. In addition 31.8% had a

matric qualification and 17.4%% (n=9) held either a degree or a diploma. According to Motlounge and Mears (2002), the poorest sector of the population is likely to be less educated than the wealthier sector. Motlounge and Mears (2002) indicate that the lack of both education and exposure to the labour market are factors which have contributed to the increase in poverty. In fact these factors are responsible for the wide presence of the highly uneducated in Municipality projects. However even though the study does confirm the presence of the illiterate in development projects, on contrary, many studies are of the view that decentralized projects and processes have been captured by local elites (Crenson and Ginsberg, 2002; Hemson, 2002; Cornwall, 2003; 2004; Gaventa, 2003; Shortfall, 2008). In contrast in this study decentralization has been inclusive of the illiterate, which is a positive step towards poverty alleviation.

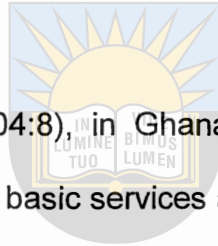
#### **6.4.4 Distribution of respondents by Occupation**

The findings of this study have also revealed that the municipal projects have come to be a source of occupation for many residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality. It can be deciphered from the findings of the study that 62.4% of the respondents are employed in different projects of the municipality. In addition 26% specifically engage in self employment within the decentralized projects of the participating cooperatives (such as those in agriculture, cleaning and sanitation and brick making). Hence it is noticeable from the study that the respondents feel that the decentralized projects have helped in providing employment to them. In terms of occupation, therefore, it can be argued that decentralization does help the poor since it is normally the unemployed who end up participating in decentralized projects.

**Table 6.9 Distribution of respondents by Occupation**

Occupation				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Employed	204	62.4	62.4	62.4
Self-Employed	85	26.0	26.0	88.4
Valid Unemployed	28	8.6	8.6	96.9
Pensioner	10	3.1	3.1	100.0
Total	327	100.0	100.0	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.



As noted by Asante and Ayee (2004:8), in Ghana, devolution of power to district assemblies has improved provision of basic services and infrastructure in rural areas as a result of the construction of more feeder roads, clinics, public toilets, classrooms. In the process employment creation took place as it has been the unemployed who have been participating in these projects. Provision of employment it can be argued plays an important role in the process of eradicating poverty. As argued by Samson et al (2003), there is a close relation between poverty levels and unemployment. For example in South Africa the poorest experience unemployment rates of more than 70%. Research conducted by Clark (2000) has demonstrated that job creation is one of the priority demands that people are making to the state. Hence the provision of employment by local governments through development projects can be argued to be a solution to the problem of poverty.

#### **6.4.5 Distribution of Respondents by income**

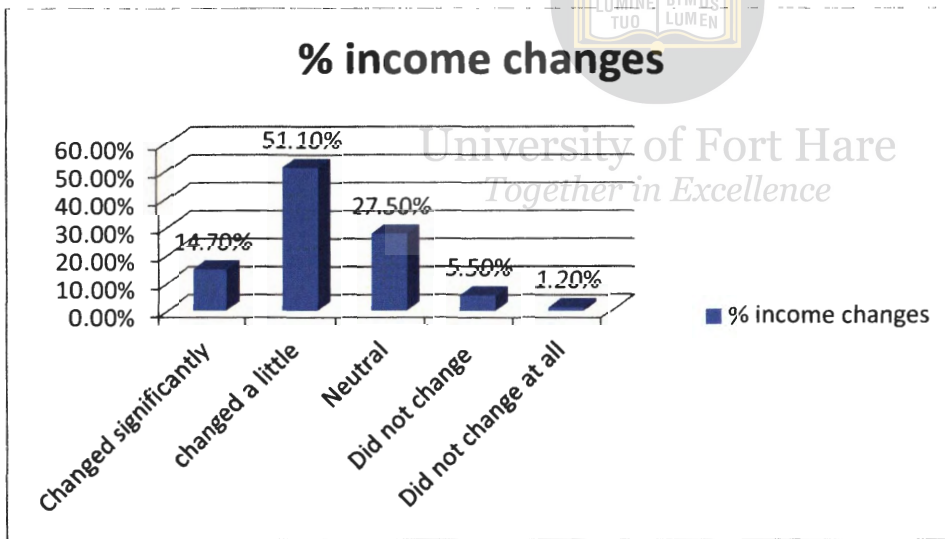
The previous sections have demonstrated that poverty in the Nkonkobe Municipality can be seen from a multi-dimensional view of marginalization in terms of social service provision, exclusion of women and unemployment. The current section adds to the multi-dimensional analysis of poverty by looking at the level of income or income poverty in the Nkonkobe Municipality. As argued earlier in Chapter 2, Sen (1999, cited in von Braun et al, 2009) argues that “inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life”. This thus calls for the need to investigate the level of income poverty amongst the participants in the Nkonkobe Municipality projects. From the study it can be argued that most of the participants in decentralized programmes are mainly the poor (about 57.8%) who earn below R1000. In fact it is only a small proportion (9.2%) of the respondents reflecting the officials who earn a higher income of about R6000 and above. This is further explained by the results of Figure 6.2, which denotes that there is a significant perception amongst the public that decentralization’s role in community development has contributed to changes in income. This is shown by 14.7% respondents reporting significant changes in income, 51.1% stating that it changed little while a small group of participants 5.5% indicate no changes and 1.2% reported no changes at all in income (see Figure 6.2). Thus it can be argued from the results that the decentralized projects have been a source of unemployment to most of the respondents despite that the return from them are low.

**Table 6.10 Income distribution amongst respondents**

Income				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
R1000 and Below	189	57.8	57.8	57.8
R1000-R2000	99	30.3	30.3	88.1
Valid R2500-R5000	9	2.8	2.8	90.8
R6000 and above	30	9.2	9.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	100.0	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

**Figure 6.2 Perception of changes in income due decentralisation**



Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

### 6.5 Knowledge of Decentralized Projects

The current section sought to decipher respondents' knowledge about decentralized projects. This stems from the idea that some of the participants in the study were

selected from projects whilst others were chosen on randomized criteria after multi-stage clustering was applied during the sampling process. Table 6.11 shows the results generated from the empirical study about the participants knowledge of decentralized projects.

**Table 6.11 Knowledge of decentralized projects**

Knowledge of Municipal projects				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	250	76.5	76.5
	No	77	23.5	100.0
	Total	327	100.0	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

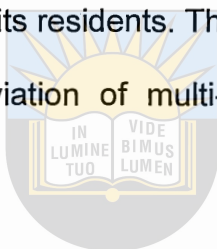
The results from Table 6.11 show that 76.5% of respondents were fully knowledgeable of decentralized projects. At the same time 23,5% of the participants stated that they were unaware of the existence of any decentralized projects. The research findings highlight the need to constantly inform the public about these projects, as failure to do so might result in the Municipality being said to exclusive and lacking in transparency.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion it can be argued that the findings from the chapter have shown that poverty reduction has occurred in the Nkonkobe Municipality. To a large extent this has been due to the role of the municipality in the provision of social services, development infrastructure and the creation employment generating projects. It has also been established in this chapter that respondents perceive decentralisation as contributing to the provision of health facilities, housing, water infrastructure, electricity, schools, roads

and employment. In turn these processes and programmes have impacted positively on the wellbeing of the Nkonkobe Municipality populace.

The Nkonkobe Municipality as a locality within the Eastern Cape has high levels of poverty and any study conducted in areas within the Nkonkobe Municipality is supposed to highlight the levels of poverty that exist in this area. However it has been demonstrated and argued in this chapter that poverty levels are seemingly becoming low as a result of the Municipality's role in socio-economic transformation through the provision of development initiatives to its residents. The next chapter will assess the role of decentralisation in both the alleviation of multi-dimensional poverty and in the promotion of wellbeing.



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## CHAPTER 7: DECENTRALISATION AND MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY REDUCTION ANALYSIS

### 7.1 Introduction

Many studies on poverty have always understood it from an eco-centric view. However, current discourses on poverty conceptualization emphasize the move to a definition and understanding that can capture all the facets of what it means to be poor. Scholarly debates thus concentrate on explaining and assessing poverty reduction from a multi-dimensional perspective (Narayan et al., 1999; UNDP, 2000; World Bank, 2002, McLennan and Ngoma, 2004; Sen, 2004; Chamber, 2006). In this sense poverty can be argued to be constitutive of a deprivation of capabilities.

  
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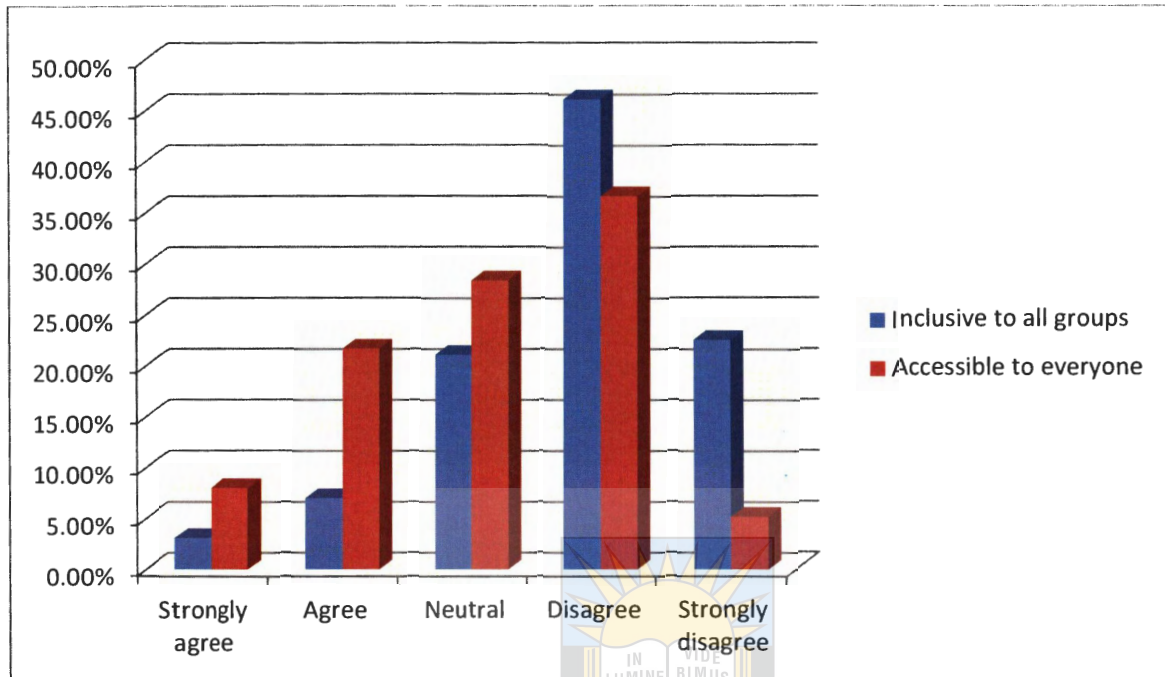
As has been argued in earlier chapters, the income centered perception of poverty reduction is not a good framework to utilize in the assessment and evaluation of poverty reduction mechanisms. This emanates from the fact that it falls short of a wide number of dimensions of poverty and hence does not give a true reflection of poverty alleviation in a given area. Thus the study has argued from the onset that poverty needs to be conceptualized from multi-dimensional lenses as this allows for the generation of a true reflection of poverty that can be applicable from one context to the other. In so doing, the dissertation offers a synthesis of the CA and the notion of decentralisation in order to explain changes in the wellbeing of the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality. The core argument of the chapter is that if poverty is analyzed from multi-dimensional lenses

rather than from a uni-dimensional eco-centered perspective, it is highly possible to ascertain poverty reduction. This is due to the robustness of a multi-dimensional measure owing to the fact that it incorporates all the dimensions and facets of poverty in a given time and context. Utilizing the insights of the CA, this chapter analyses and assesses poverty reduction and changes in wellbeing in the Nkonkobe Municipality area.

## **7.2 Decentralisation and Inclusion**

Sen (2007) argues that human development should be understood from the perspective of freedom enhancement. Freedom from a Senian perspective entails all the range of options a person has, concerning the kind desirable life one wishes to live. Accordingly Sen (1999:4) contends that deprivation of freedom or unfreedoms and development has to do with the removal of all sources of unfreedoms (famines, malnourishment, exclusion, limited access to health care and illiteracy) that leave people with little choices and opportunities in exercising their reasoned agency. In this regard exclusion is one such form of unfreedom, hence the need to assess whether decentralisation has resulted in inclusionary processes that guarantee everyone access to all socio-economic services. Figure 7.1 gives the results on decentralization's role in promoting inclusion.

**Figure 7.1 Inclusion in the Municipality's Development Projects**

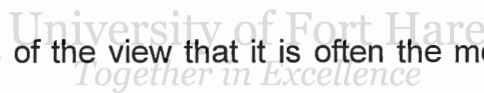


Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

From the graph, it can be deduced that a large proportion of respondents perceive the decentralized projects to be exclusive 46.2% and inaccessible to everyone 36.7%. At the same time the chart shows that a small number of respondents agree that decentralisation is accessible, 8% strongly agree and 21% agree that decentralized projects are inclusive of all the residents. Hence the study posits that decentralized service provision and development have been provided to selective recipients.

This confirms the results by Caldeira (2011), that the problem with decentralization is that it tends to increase inequality between communities in terms of access, although he notes that decentralization in Benin has contributed successfully to the reduction of poverty by improving the average access to poverty-related services. At the same time

Ngwane et al (2002) are of the view that, on average, decentralization is successful: it increases access to basic public services, but the problem is that its impact is also heterogeneous between poor and non-poor communities. Its effect on access to poverty-related services is positive for sufficiently wealthy communities and negative for the poorest ones. Most of the decentralized projects and initiatives have been negatively appraised due to the issue of unequal access with the main reason being that they benefit the elite (elite capture) and/or the wealthy more than the poor ( Litvack et al.1998; Botes, 1999; Manor, 1999; Blair, 2000; Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2000; Crook and Sverrison, 2001; Loquai, 2001; Alsop et al. 2002; Crenson and Ginsberg ,2002; Hadenius, 2003; Crawford and Hartmann, 2008; Platteau, 2008; Dutta, 2009; Scott, 2009; Pal and Roy, 2010;Pan, 2011; Varraich, 2012).



Similarly, Botes (1999:72) is of the view that it is often the most visible and vocal, the wealthiest and more articulate and educated groups that are allowed to be partners in development, without serious and ongoing attempts to identify less obvious partners. In addition, decentralized mechanisms have been noted to be highly exclusive of women as they are said to be androcentric (patriarchal) which has obvious consequences for women's participation (Goetz and Hassim, 2002; Mohanty, 2002; Mukhopadhyay, 2005; Todes et al 2007; Shortfall ,2008). Hence there is need to make the mechanisms of decentralization inclusive of all groups of the society irrespective of gender, language, ethnicity, class and education, amongst other demographic indicators.

### 7.3 Perception of Responsiveness (PERRESPO)

Responsiveness, according to Crook and Manor (1998:18), entails the degree of congruence between policies, outputs and popular preferences. In order to assess the level of the responsiveness of decentralisation, the PERRESPO scale was computed from five items that were meant to gauge the responsiveness of municipal officials in helping the public. Hence from the PCA factor reduction of the five items, the results produced a slightly low KMO = 0.45, and BTS,  $X^2 = 127.951$  (df = 10),  $p < 0.05$ . The results imply that the factor analysis procedure is not acceptable for the sample. Table 7.1 shows that the item 'municipality responds to public requests quickly and efficiently', with mean = 3.17, SD = 0.968 was the most highly rated item in the PERRESPO category. This item is followed by another which reads the 'the municipality responds to public criticism and suggestions for improvement' with mean=3.01, SD = 867.

**Table 7.1 Descriptive statistics of PERRESPO**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Consulting others before making decisions	1.62	.873
Using revenues for public, not private gain	2.40	.844
The municipality responds to public criticism and suggestions for improvement	3.01	.867
The municipality responds to public requests quickly and efficiently	3.17	.968
The municipality is making sincere effort to support those in need	2.85	.866

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

The PCA later extracted one factor, PERRESPO for further analysis. This factor as can be shown in Table 7.2 accounted for 29.4% in the variance of the variable being analyzed. Factor contribution of other items diminish significantly after the extraction of

the variable PERRESPO, hence there was no need to do further extraction amongst the items.

**Table 7.2 Total Variance explained for PERRESPO**

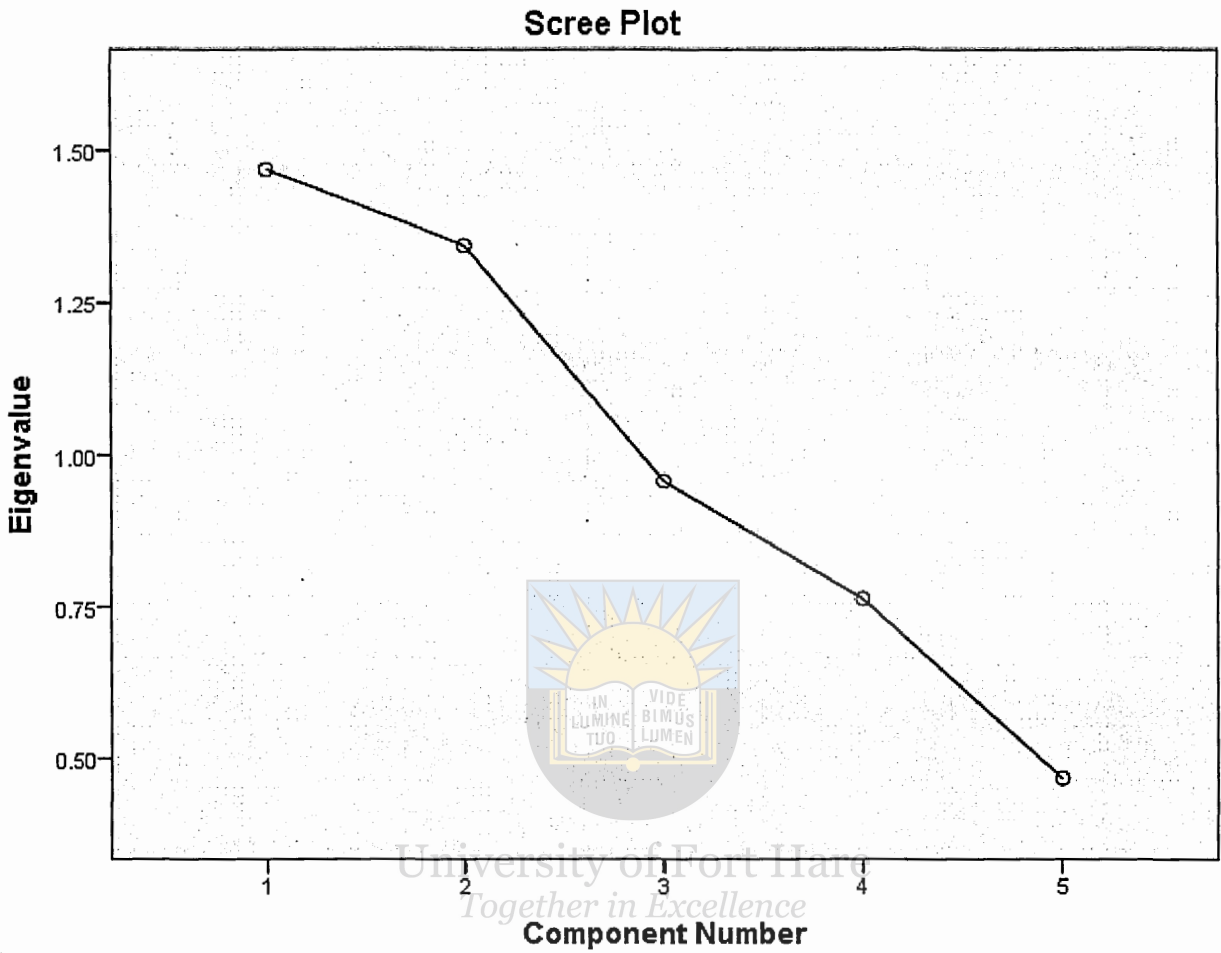
Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.469	29.377	29.377	1.469	29.377	29.377
2	1.344	26.881	56.257			
3	.957	19.135	75.393			
4	.763	15.268	90.661			
5	.467	9.339	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

**Figure 7.2 Scree Plot for PERRESPO**

As the diagram shows the slope of the curve diminishes once component 1 is extracted. The next possible factor will thus account for approximately 20% additional variance. This thus allows the study to retain the single factor PERRSPO for the analysis of findings.



Source: Computer printout of a line graph derived from the data and findings of this study.

With regards to the responsiveness of the Nkonkobe Municipality to the needs and preferences of respondents the study further asked the respondents some questions which sought to test whether they perceived the municipality to have really targeted their needs. The results are shown in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3 Perception of responsiveness as a result of targeting local needs**

Do the decentralised Municipality projects really target your needs				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot	32	9.8	9.8	9.8
To some extent	150	45.9	45.9	55.7
Valid No, not at all	75	22.9	22.9	78.6
Don't know	70	21.4	21.4	100.0
Total	327	100.0	100.0	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

As can be deduced from the table above, 9.8% of the respondents are of the view that the decentralised projects of the Nkonkobe Municipality, target their needs a lot. At the same time 45.9% of respondents argue that to some extent there has been responsiveness. A smaller fraction of the respondents (21.4%) of the respondents state that the decentralised mechanisms in the Nkonkobe Municipality have not been responsive.

The findings of the study are similar to those of the case study conducted by Crook and Manor (1998) which concluded that there was congruence between the District Council development projects and the needs of the poor. Manor and Crook's results further showed that most of the respondents were very or fairly 'satisfied' with both the projects and the general record of the councils. However, in contrast with the results of their study also indicated that responsiveness to the specific needs of the poor and the vulnerable was quite low, which was attributed to poor participation and accountability mechanisms.

This is supported by Faguet (2004) who conducted a study on whether decentralization increases the responsiveness of public investment to local needs or not using a unique database from Bolivia. The results from Faguet's study demonstrate that investment patterns in human capital and social services changed significantly after decentralization in correspondence to the needs of the poor. Reiterating the same sentiments is the World Bank's (1996:140) Colombian case study and Rondinelli et al. (1983s) Papua New Guinea study. Both these studies indicate that decentralisation mechanisms in the allocation of resources and service provision are in accord with community preferences and needs. Similarly, Alderman (1998) found that decentralisation had a positive impact on social assistance targeting in Albania. However, these results are in contrast with Crook and Manor (1998)'s findings from the Cote d'Ivoire study which concluded that the local government preferred development strategy of constructing town halls and secondary schools had little congruence with respondents' preferences for roads, social facilities and water supplies.

Harris (2010) corroborates Crook and Manor's findings by asserting that decentralisation and other mechanism of participation have yielded quite limited successes in improving responsiveness and efficient service delivery. This is also confirmed by Samoff (1990) who argues that there is a negative relationship between decentralisation and responsiveness. Hence the findings of the current study demonstrate that the decentralised mechanisms in the Nkonkobe Municipality have relatively managed to be responsive (for instance, 9.8% of the respondents indicated

that decentralised Municipal projects targets their needs a lot and 45.9% saying these projects are to some extent responsive to their needs). In other words, the findings demonstrate that by being relatively responsive the Nkonkobe Municipality has managed to address the problem of poverty as some projects have been tailor- made to the needs of the poor.

#### 7.4 Perception of Capacitation and Decision Making Ability (PERCADMA)

The study also sought to find out about the level at which decentralisation was promoting capabilities in terms of capacity building and decision making. A variable known as PERCADMA was computed electronically through PCA from a list of five items. The PCA revealed KMO = 0.51, BTS,  $X^2 = 69.669$ , (df = 15),  $p < 0.05$  indicating that the sample was at least adequate for factor reduction. PCA extracted only one factor named PERCADMA, which accounts for 24.4% of variance (shown in table 7.5). The scree plot (see figure 7.3), depicts that other factors becomes irrelevant for extraction purposes once the variable PERCADMA has been extracted.

**Table 7.4 Descriptive statistics for PERCADMA**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
The decentralized projects have increased control over decisions that affect my life	2.40	.841	327
I am able to express my political views	2.26	.784	327
I am now able to participate in the political activities that affect my life	2.34	.820	327
I am now able to influence all the decisions that affect my life	2.33	.931	327
Public persuaded to implement projects that do not target their local needs	2.28	.933	327
I am now able to participate in local decision making	2.46	.899	327

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

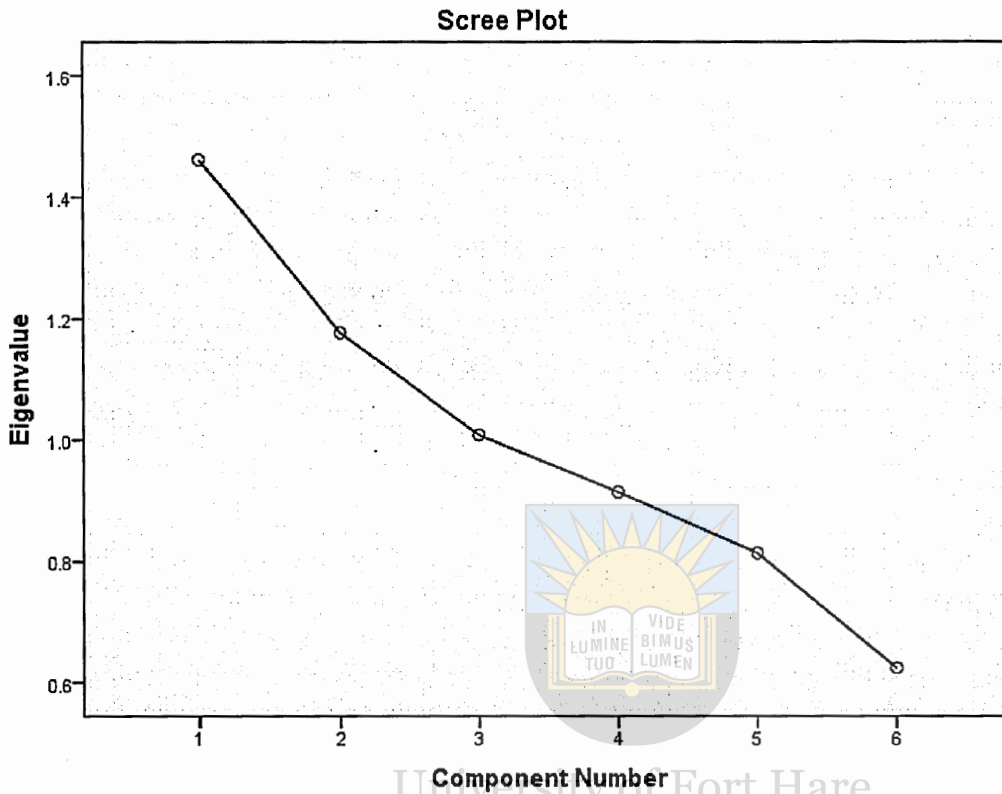
As can be shown from the above diagram the most important factor in the descriptive values of PERCADMA is 'I am now able to participate in local decision making', mean=2.46, SD=0.899. Fig 7.3 shows the scree plot distribution of PERCADMA which connotes that other variables become irrelevant in extraction once the variable PERCADMA is extracted

**Table 7.5 Total variance explained for PERCADMA**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.462	24.366	24.366	1.462	24.366	24.366
2	1.177	19.618	43.985			
3	1.009	16.810	60.795			
4	.914	15.241	76.036			
5	.814	13.564	89.600			
6	.624	10.400	100.000			

Source: Computer printout derived from the data and findings of this study.

Figure 7.3 Scree plot for PERCADMA



Source: Computer printout of a line graph derived from the data and findings of this study.

From the results on the variable PERCADMA, it can be deduced that an average number of respondents have stated that the decentralised mechanisms have helped in augmenting their capability for decision making. As can be observed from the results on Table 7.6 below, 54.1% agreed and 7.6% strongly agreed with the statement 'I am now able to participate in local decision making' and 51.1% agreed and 15.9% strongly agreed with the statement 'I am now able to influence all the decisions that affect my life' and 48% agreed and 13.5% strongly agreed with the statement 'I am now able to participate in the political activities that affect my life'.

**Table 7.6 Perception of Participation and decision making**

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	I perceive the decentralized Municipality projects to have increased control over decisions that affects their lives	14.1%	40.7%	36.1%	9.2%	
b)	I am free to express my political views	15.9%	47.7%	31.2%	5.2%	
c)	I am able to participate in the political activities that affect my life if I want to	13.5%	48%	29.7%	8.9%	
d)	I now am able to influence most of the decisions that affect my life	15.9%	51.1%	16.8%	16.2%	
e)	The public are persuaded to implement Municipal projects (devolved , delegated) that are not responsive to their local needs	16.5%	53.5%	18%	9.5%	2.4%
f)	I am now able to participate in local decision making	7.6%	54.1%	26.6%	7.3%	4.3%

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

The results gleamed from the tables and graph above indicate that the decentralised development projects have empowered the citizens of the Nkonkobe Municipality with the ability to make and influence decisions that affect their lives. This is in harmony with Crook and Sverrison (1999:6)'s view that since poverty now entails more than material deprivation, allowing citizens to make decisions necessitates empowerment and ownership thus making development policies to be responsive. Hence the Nkonkobe Municipality's decentralised projects have empowered the respondents through involving them in decision making processes and project ownership. As argued by De Jong, Loquai and Soiri (1999) the creation and provision of opportunities of involvement

and participation in decision making to the local residents is one way in which decentralisation can be linked to poverty alleviation. The results of this study are also in agreement with those of Crawford's (2009) study which indicate that in Ghana decentralisation has contributed to increased participation and decision making in local development amongst the public despite the challenge which still remain which relate to accountability.

These above-mentioned findings are supported by Sen's CA which argues that choices are important in the promotion of local development (Alkire, 2002:5). In the light of this, Sen further contends that development is about freedoms and makes the concept of freedom central to the thesis of development. According to him allowing the citizens to participate in decision makes their freedom guaranteed and in so doing poverty is reduced. This is so because freedom entails "the range of options a person has in deciding what life to lead" (Drèze and Sen, 1995:10) and accordingly Sen (1999) stipulates that the institutional arrangements for these opportunities are influenced by the exercise of people's freedoms and through their participation in the making of public decisions (Sen 1999). Hence empowering the citizens to participate in decision making results in the reduction of poverty as the provision of freedom to make choices is important to Sen's notion of poverty alleviation as the removal of all sources of unfreedoms. In this regard it can be argued that the Nkonkobe Municipality has helped in the process of reducing poverty amongst its citizens through allowing them to be involved in decision making. In fact the gains of this empowerment have spread to the

social spheres as the respondents have indicated that positives changes in their decision making both at home and in the society.

### **7.5 Perception of Confidence and skills Acquisition (PERCAS)**

In order to understand whether decentralization is resulting in skills improvisation and augmenting confidence in the public, the researcher had to ask respondents to rate their perception to a set of Likert statements. Eleven items were selected for a better articulation of the level at which decentralisation was promoting the instilling of skills and the increase in confidence amongst the respondents. A principal component analysis was conducted and the results led to the computation of the variable PERCAS. The PCA revealed  $KMO = 0.45$  BTS,  $X^2 = 405,897$  (df = 55),  $p < 0.05$  indicating that the sample was at least adequate for factor reduction. PCA extracted only one factor named PERCAS, which accounts for 15.4% of variance (shown in table 7.7). As shown in the scree plot, (see figure 7.4), other factors become relatively insignificant after PERCAS was extracted thus diminishing the need to create additional sub-dimensions.

## 7.7 Total variance explained for PERCAS

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.694	15.396	15.396	1.694	15.396	15.396
2	1.651	15.005	30.401			
3	1.442	13.112	43.513			
4	1.178	10.713	54.227			
5	1.118	10.160	64.387			
6	1.065	9.682	74.069			
7	.854	7.763	81.832			
8	.599	5.443	87.275			
9	.550	5.002	92.277			
10	.476	4.323	96.601			
11	.374	3.399	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

As can be seen from the above diagram the most important factor in the descriptive values of PERCAS is 'the devolved projects have managed to be inclusive of all different groups that exists in the society', mean=3.78, SD=0.974. Fig 7.4 shows the scree plot distribution of PERCAS which connotes that other variables become irrelevant in extraction once the variable PERCAS is extracted

## 7.8 Descriptive statistics for PERCAS

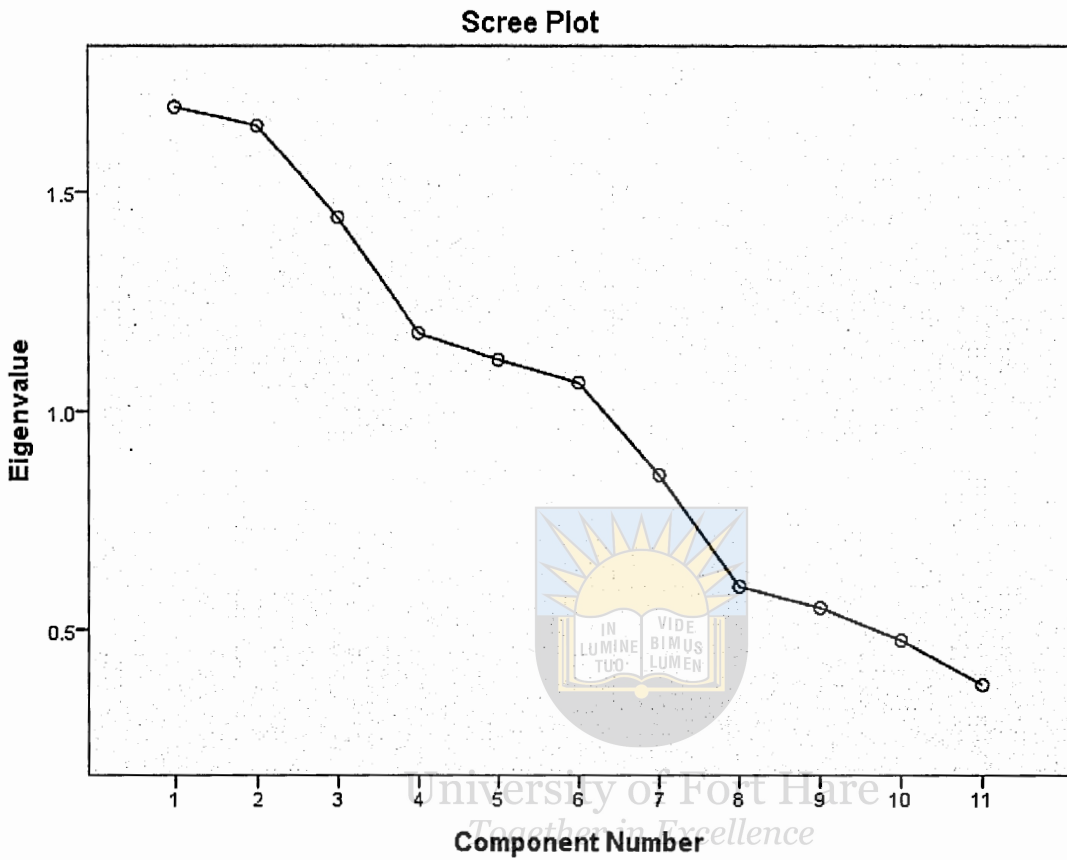
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
The decentralised projects allow the public to initiate, control and have the overall role in implementing projects	2.32	.903	327
The decentralised projects have increased self esteem	2.51	.659	327
The decentralised projects have made me to be confident	2.24	.825	327
The decentralised projects resources and information are accessible to everyone	3.09	1.051	327
Participation in the local government projects has increased my skills at home and in the community	2.40	.804	327
The public are given training on how to carry out the projects	2.62	.813	327
Participants are able to manage the projects on their own after participating in the decentralised projects	2.45	.796	327
Participants are able to sustain projects after resources have been exhausted	2.51	.821	327
Participants gain planning, implementation and monitoring skills in the decentralised projects	2.55	.797	327
I feel that I can generally change things in my community I want to	2.91	.803	327
The devolved projects have managed to be inclusive of all different groups that exists in the society	3.78	.974	327

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Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

Figure 7.5 Scree Plot for PERCAS



Source: Computer printout of a line graph derived from the data and findings of this study.

As mentioned earlier respondents were asked to rate the degree of confidence, access and skills acquired during the implementation of the Local Government decentralized projects, to indicate the level at which the projects are enhancing these capabilities. The following diagram (Table 7.9) shows the findings in terms of percentages.

**Table 7.9 Perception of Capacity building and Skills**

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	The Municipality entrusted projects allow the public to initiate, control and have the overall role to implement projects	18.3%	42.2%	28.1%	11.3%	
b)	The public perceive the decentralized Municipality projects to have increased their self esteem	1.3%	52.9%	38.5%	6.7%	0.3%
c)	The Local Government allocated projects have made me to be confident	19.3%	42.8%	32.4%	5.5%	
d)	The decentralised projects resources and information are accessible to everyone	8%	21.7%	28.4%	36.7%	5.2%
e)	Participation in the Municipality handed over projects and programmes has increased my skills both at home and in the community	11%	47.1%	32.7%	9.2%	
f)	The public are given training on how to carry out the projects	2.8%	49.5%	32.4%	13.8%	1.5%
g)	Participants are able to manage their own projects after participating in the decentralised projects	8.9%	48%	32.7%	10.4%	
h)	Participants are able to sustain projects and problems by themselves after the projects resources have been exhausted.	8.6%	44.3%	34.6%	12.5%	
i)	Participants gain planning, implementation and monitoring skills in the decentralised Local Government projects	3.1%	53.5%	30.3%	11.6%	1.5%
j)	I feel that I can generally change things in my community if I want to		36.1%	38.5%	24.2%	1.2%
k)	The devolved Municipality projects have managed to be inclusive of different groups that exists in the society	3.1%	7%	21.1%	46.2%	22.6%

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

It can be deduced from Table 7.9 with regards to the Municipality allowing the local residents and/or participants to initiate, control and implement decentralised development projects that 18.3% of the respondents strongly agreed, 42.2% agreed and 11.3% disagreed. A slight majority of the respondents generally agreed that decentralised projects transfer skills (58.1%) and boost their self esteem (52.9%). In addition 52.3% of the respondents were of the view that the decentralised projects offer training for the local population. This contradicts findings by Samoff (1990) which state that decentralisation mechanisms have neither enhanced local capacities nor improved local programs.



The results of the study further show that the decentralised mechanisms are not inclusive of all citizens, only 7% agreed that decentralisation is inclusive, whilst 46.2% disagreed and 22.6 strongly disagreed. This contradicts Sanni (2010) and Kakumba (2010)'s findings which indicated that in Nigeria and Uganda decentralisation has managed to reduce 'marginalisation'. However the current research findings do show that there need to be orchestrated efforts towards ensuring the inclusion of all the people, and in particular, the poor in rural areas. As argued by Kakumba (2010) there is a need to ensure that empowerment schemes for development target the poor.

Having looked at the five variables PERCL, PERCAS, PERCADMA, PERCIFRA and PERRESPO the study turns to the analysis of these variables with regard to how decentralisation as a mechanism addresses capability deprivations.

## 7.6 Decentralisation and the promotion of Participation.

It has been argued earlier that decentralisation promotes participation in the development processes and the design of policies that are adapted to local needs (Crook 1994:340; Sharma 2000:177; Azfar et al 2004:21-24; Mehrotra 2006:269). Decentralisation increases the participation of the public in the affairs of governance, which also promotes inclusion. From CA it can be argued that the process of development required agency and public deliberation, and in this view, there is great importance given to participation in the realization of freedoms. According to Sen (2002:282), the notion of *society* itself, “as people who live together in a broad sense implies a responsibility to participate which is vital for people’s wellbeing”. This indicates that participation plays a crucial role in the promotion and realization of freedoms. Furthermore, Sen argues that the people themselves have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved or afforded the opportunity to shape their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs (Sen, 2000:55).

The findings of the study on decentralization’s role in the promotion of participation as a capability has demonstrated that in the Nkonkobe Municipality the citizens are of the view that decentralisation contributes to poverty alleviation through citizen participation. As has been shown in Table 7.6 earlier in this chapter on the variables PERCADMA , 54.1% of the respondents agreed and 7.6% strongly agreed with the statement ‘I am now able to participate in local decision making’ and 51.1% agreed and 15.9% strongly agreed with the statement ‘I am now able to influence all the decisions that affect my

life' in addition to 48% who agreed and 13.5% who strongly agreed with the statement 'I am now able to participate in the political activities that affect my life'. The results indicate that decentralisation has promoted participation.

In other words, the promotion of participation in decentralised mechanisms is viewed as a means by which enhancement of inclusion and the empowerment of citizens are ensured. This process makes it possible for them to control their own development and to take advantage of existing economic opportunities (Stern et al. 2005). Crook (2003) reiterates this contribution of decentralisation to citizen participation by arguing that in Africa and other developing countries, the achievement of authentic participation of rural people in development depends on the devolution of power to local government structures. Hence participation as a capability needs to be promoted amongst the public to ensure the realization of changes in wellbeing. However, scholars argue that participation does not imply that voices of the poor are heard or listened to (Goetz and Gaventa 2001).

The researcher's hypotheses were directed at teasing out the role of participation in the enhancement of capabilities. The section below restates and discusses the hypotheses of the study in the light of the empirical evidence gathered.

## **7.7 Testing of Hypotheses**

To reiterate this study was conducted to investigate the role of decentralisation in the Nkonkobe Municipality in the alleviation of poverty and poverty as has been argued in

the dissertation was conceptualized as multi-dimensional. The formulation of the research hypothesis and objectives was based on the CA.

*Ho: Capability levels amongst the public who participated in the Nkonkobe Municipality projects are lower than for those who never participated in these projects.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: Capability levels amongst the public who participated in the Nkonkobe Municipality projects are higher than for those who never participated*

In testing these hypotheses, the researcher had to test correlation between two variables, participation in municipal projects and changes in capability levels. A chi-square test of association was performed by cross-tabulating the two variables. This yielded the results on table 7.10 below which reads as follows, a Pearson Chi-square value of 0.645 and 1 degree of freedom with a probability, p-value 0.05. On the basis of these results, the null hypotheses should be rejected in favour of the research hypothesis.



**Table 7.10 Chi-square results for correlation between participation and changes in capabilities.**

Correlations		
	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN PROJECTS	PERCEPTION OF CHANGE IN CAPABILITY
How often have you participated in the projects	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.026
	N	.645
PERCEPTION OF REALIZATION OF CAPACITY	Pearson Correlation	327
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.026
	N	.645
		327

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

This is further confirmed by the percentage distribution of participants' perceptions of changes in life due to the local government's role in community development. This is shown by the preceding table that attempts to highlight changes in wellbeing as a result

of the Municipality's role in socio-economic and political development. Table 7.11 below depicts the perceptions of changes in life due to decentralisation. The variable PERCL was constructed in order to best comprehend and understand the changes in wellbeing that have occurred due to the role of decentralisation in poverty alleviation, the researcher had to compute the variable PERCL which had a list of fourteen items. The researcher asked respondents to rate their perception of changes in wellbeing or life due to decentralization's role in community development. The question helps in elucidating the capability changes that have occurred as a result of decentralisation. PCA of PERCL revealed  $KMO = 0.049$ ,  $BTS$ ,  $X^2 = 860.581$ , ( $df = 91$ ),  $p < 0.05$  indicating that the sample was not adequate for factor reduction. The PCA extracted only one factor named PERCL, which accounts for 15% of variance (shown in table 7.12). As indicated by the scree plot (figure 7.5), other factors become relatively insignificant after PERCL was extracted.

**Table 7.11 Descriptive Statistics for PERCL**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Has your income changed due to Local Government's role in your life	2.28	.824
Has there been a change to your skills due to the Municipality's role in your life	2.33	.777
Has there been a change to your participation due to the Municipality's role in your life	2.46	.801
Has there been a change to your health due to the Municipality's role in your life	2.35	.804
Has there been a change to your housing structure due to the Municipality's role in your life	2.33	.800
Has there been a change to your household property due to the Local Government's role in Community development in your area	2.75	1.207
Has there been a change to your clothing due to the Local Government's role in Community development in your area	2.98	1.102
Has there been a change to your household food access due to the Local Government's role in Community development in your area	2.44	1.154
Has there been a change to your decision making role due to the Municipality's role in your life	2.71	1.099
Has there been change to water and sanitation provision due to the Municipality's role in your life	2.23	.611
Has there been a change to your employment due to the Local Government's role in Community development in your area	3.50	1.056
Has there been a change to your social relationships due to the Local Government's role in Community development in your area	2.87	.981
Has there been a change to your political relations due to the Local Government's role in Community development in your area	2.73	.775
Has there been a change to your community's infrastructure due to the Local Government's role in Community development in your area	2.66	.730

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

As can be deduced from the Table above the most import factor in the descriptive values of PERCL is on changes on employment due to the local government's role in community development in your area, mean=3.50, SD=1.056. Fig 7.5 shows the scree plot distribution of PERCL which reflects that other factors become irrelevant in extraction once the variable PERCL is extracted.

**Table 7.12 Total Variance explained for PERCL**

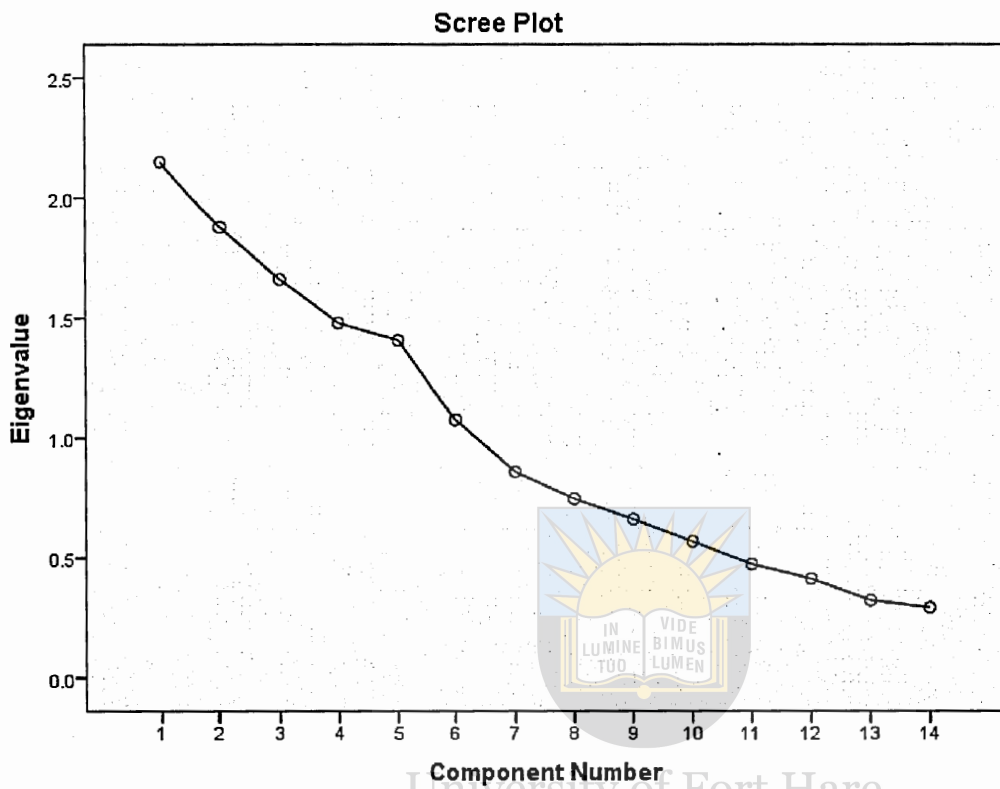
**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.150	15.357	15.357	2.150	15.357	15.357
2	1.879	13.419	28.775			
3	1.662	11.869	40.644			
4	1.480	10.572	51.216			
5	1.408	10.058	61.274			
6	1.077	7.691	68.965			
7	.859	6.139	75.104			
8	.747	5.337	80.441			
9	.663	4.733	85.174			
10	.569	4.065	89.240			
11	.475	3.390	92.630			
12	.414	2.959	95.589			
13	.324	2.315	97.904			
14	.293	2.096	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

Figure 7.5 Scree Plot for PERCL



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Source: Computer printout of a line graph derived from the data and findings of this study.

**Table 7.13 Perceptions of changes in Life (PERCL)**

	Changed significantly	Changed little	Don't know	Did not change	Did not change at all
a)Income	14.7%	51.1%	27.5%	5.5%	1.2%
b)Skills	12.5%	48%	33%	6.4%	
c) Participation	9.2%	46.5%	33.9%	10.4%	
d)Health	11.3%	51.7%	27.5%	9.5%	
e)Housing	12.5%	49.8%	29.4%	8.3%	
f)Property	15.9%	28.4%	32.1%	11.6%	11.9%
g)Clothes	2.4%	40.7%	26.6%	16.8%	13.5%
h)food	23.9%	33.3%	23.5%	13.5%	5.5%
i)Decision making	8.6%	45.6%	19.9%	18.3%	7.6%
j)Water and Sanitation	5.5%	70.3%		19%	4.3%
k) Employment	22.3%		26.6%	30.3%	20.8%
l)Social relations	4.3%	36.1%	33.6%	19.9%	6.1%
m)Political relations	2.8%	37%	45.9%	12.8%	1.5%
n)Infrastructure	49.5%		35.2%	15.3%	

Source: Computer printout of a table derived from the data and findings of this study.

From this diagram, it can be deduced that many of the respondents who were involved in the Municipal projects have indicated that there were changes in their wellbeing which took place as a result of participating in decentralised development praxis. A number of respondents (represented in terms of percentages) highlight low levels of changes in wellbeing; income changed a little (51.1%), infrastructure changed significantly (49.5%), water and sanitation changed little (70.3%), health changed little (51.7%) and housing changed little (49.8%). The findings from the study show that decentralisation has managed to promote the growth in human wellbeing and enhancement. However, as can be noted from the results, decentralisation has not fully contributed to significant changes in the wellbeing of the residents of the Nkonkobe Municipality.

The study corroborates the findings of Mahal et al (2000), which indicate that decentralization of public service delivery in primary health care and education services is positively correlated with improved child mortality and school enrolment. The findings of the current study also show that the idea that decentralization can lead to improved wellbeing and specifically positive changes in the life of the poor is embraced by most of the respondents. The results of the study also concur with Mehrotra (2006) who notes that the expansion of affordable access of primary health care service to locally elected health committees in Guinea, Mali and Benin after devolution was implemented. Hence it can be concluded that the public seem to support the view that decentralization contributes to the betterment of their lives. This coincides with Haug's (2007:25) view that the implementation of decentralisation in Kutai Barat has resulted in the increased provision and betterment of health facilities, knowledge, income and infrastructure.

In this sense it can be argued that the changes in the lives of the population of the Nkonkobe Municipality are in harmony with Sen's (1987:36) assertion that human life is a set of doing and functionings and thus the changes in the lives of the masses denote achieved functionings. As a demonstration of the consensus between the insights of Sen's CA and the empirical evidence of the study, most of the respondents gave 'changed significantly' and 'changed little' as their responses to whether there have changes in their lives due to the implementation of decentralisation in their locality. Hence being able to achieve a change in life posits an achieved function within the

populace, thus indicating that decentralisation had contributed positively to poverty alleviation in the Nkonkobe Municipality.

Furthermore the findings of this study are in agreement with those of Schischka et al (2008:230) who conducted a study applying the CA to two development projects in Brazil and found out that the participants in the two programs were able to describe significant changes in their capabilities, not only as a result of learning new skills but also as a result of discovering capabilities they already had that could be valuable in creating new opportunities for themselves. Hence it can be deduced that decentralisation does to some extent contribute to capability enhancement. Contrary to the findings of this study, Sanni (2010) in a study carried out in Nigeria on people's perceived impacts of local governments found that in terms of employment opportunities, industrialization and access to basic facilities and amenities, people perceived the local government to have performed below average.

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## **7.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated that decentralisation as a strategy has helped to eradicate poverty although there is a lot that needs to be done as the levels of capability enhancement show diverging results. At the level of social service provision, decentralisation has been argued to be efficient as the findings have reported increased provision of these services. With regards to changes in wellbeing the findings of the study have indicated that decentralisation has to a certain extent improved the life of the poor. Since the study was meant to ascertain the role decentralisation plays in the

poverty alleviation process from a Capability perspective, it can be concluded that decentralisation has both contributed to changes in wellbeing and increased capabilities. This is line with the argument of Sen that, “development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy” (Sen, 1999:14).

The current study having been framed using the CA has assisted us into understanding the role that decentralization plays as an integral part of the poverty reduction mechanisms. It has utilized a framework centered on the multidimensionality of poverty rather than the widely known uni-dimensional view of income poverty. One of the key findings of this study is that the research respondents are of the perception that there poverty levels have been reduced due to the enhancement of their capabilities through decentralized projects. This finding is in concurrence with Sen’s assertion that development efforts should focus on creating opportunities and institutional conditions, which enhance the individual’s capabilities and freedoms, rather than the commonly held view with a narrow economic focus on enhancing personal income and wealth (Sen, 1999). Gasper and Claire (2001:4) thus in support of this contend that in the capabilities approach, the core role of governments as well as development actors is to endow citizens with the required conditions for actualizing central human functioning. In other words, to provide them with necessary capacities and opportunities. In *Voices of the Poor* Narayan et al. (2000:180-184) highlights the poor’s passionate plea for responsive, accountable, fair and effective institutions as important pre-requisites for any level of poverty alleviation. It can thus be argued that decentralized mechanisms

have helped to create opportunities for wellbeing enhancement through involvement of the Nkonkobe Municipality citizens in decentralised and/or development projects.

The study also found out that the public perceive decentralization to have increased their agency and wellbeing through enhancing the capability of decision making and participation. This is in harmony with Sen's (1999) view that poverty reduction has to do with policy formulation and implementation that is directed at reducing the levels of deprivation. The study also noted the public perception of positive change in service provision due to decentralization (Haug, 2007) and we can deduce from the findings that service provision results in changes in wellbeing. Decentralization has also been viewed as a process which results in skill acquisition (Schischka et al, 2008:230; Todes, 2007), one ideal capability needed for ensuring sustainability after the decentralized projects are exhausted. However it has been argued in the study that the projects being provided by the Municipality or local government are not responsive to the needs of the populace and the study has also highlighted that respondents perceive that access or participation in decentralized projects is not inclusive and accessible to all people. In fact the respondents have clearly indicated that the policy praxis of decentralised projects is selective in nature. In addition, they also perceived the decentralized government to have followed the syndrome of centralized government which is characterized by poor accountability mechanisms and lack of transparency. In a nutshell the major findings this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between participating in decentralized projects and changes in wellbeing.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the main arguments of the study on decentralisation and poverty alleviation in Nkonkobe Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study's main aim was to establish whether the populace of Nkonkobe has benefited from the decentralisation process and whether there have been increased capability and freedoms through participating in the Municipality projects. It has been argued and reiterated in the study that due to the globalisation process of the world, many countries have incorporated or put in place policies that attempt to address poverty reduction. In an era where central governments have failed to tailor their service provision to the needs of the public, there has been renewed call for good governance as a means of ensuring better service provision, poverty reduction and democratization. As a result of this call, many countries' national agenda have adopted decentralisation as mechanism to address the dire need for local democracy. In addition, the major drive towards decentralisation has been due to the fact that decentralisation results in increased citizen participation, allocative efficiency, responsiveness, accountability, transparency and increases citizen trust of local governments. Countries of both the North and South have all put in place decentralisation as a measure to ensure that there is democracy and poverty reduction at the local tiers as local government are assumed to have knowledge and information about the needs and preferences of the public in their respective areas. However it is worth to highlight that the study took a CA (CA) anchored in a multi-dimensional perspective to poverty alleviation. The utilization of the

CA in the study helped in widening the scope of the meaning of development and poverty reduction. This is noted in Asante's (2003) assertion that effective poverty reduction requires, among other things, increasing the poor's access to basic public and collective services such as health, education, water, sanitation and transport in order to enhance human capital, increase labour productivity and foster access to economic opportunities. This view is in harmony with the CA's definition of poverty and development, in that development is seen as the advancement of people's freedom and contrastingly poverty is seen as deprivation of capabilities or in simple poverty refers to unfreedoms. The theoretical framework arising out of the combination of the two has been of paramount importance in the understanding and conceptualization of poverty. Thus based on this theoretical framework, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To ascertain the perceptions of Nkonkobe Municipality populace with regards to whether decentralisation has resulted in the advancement of capabilities and freedoms of ordinary citizens.
- To establish whether the public in Nkonkobe Municipality perceive decentralised projects to be potentially promoting, protecting and restoring human wellbeing.
- To determine if there have been changes in the wellbeing and agency of the residents of Nkonkobe Municipality from their involvement in decentralised projects.

In the assessment of the role of decentralisation in poverty reduction, the study utilized a positivist ontology that was operationalised through a survey. The data was collected

through a five-scale Likert questionnaire that sought to ask respondents about their perceptions of changes in wellbeing due to the role of the local government in the Nkonkobe Municipality area. The questionnaire was composed of seven sections as indicated below as follows:

- Section A of the questionnaire was composed of questions that sought to elicit socio-demographic data about the respondents
- Section B was meant to extract data on the respondents' knowledge of Municipal projects, level of changes in wellbeing, provision of social services and frequencies of participation
- Section C sought to obtain data relating to the improvement in their ability to participate meaningfully in the projects.
- Section D elicited data on whether participation in the decentralized projects or municipal initiatives was resulting in the enhancement of skills and confidence and promotion of inclusion processes.
- Section E attempted to answer multiple questions that were meant to trace the role of local government in decentralisation in the provision of local infrastructure.
- Section F required the respondents to rate the performance and responsiveness of the Nkonkobe Municipality
- Section G sought to obtain data on the perceptions of the public on whether they felt satisfied with the manner of treatment they received at the Municipality offices or when they communicated with municipal officials.

The sampling was done through a multi-stage cluster technique. Data analysis was conducted through the SPSS software package used for statistical analysis in Social

Sciences. Principal Component Analysis, Correlations, Regression Analysis and Cross tabulations were utilized in the analysis of the research findings.

## 8.2 Core argument of the study

It has been argued in the study that decentralisation increases the perception of poverty alleviation amongst the public. Contrary to many scholarly findings (Francis and James, 2003; Steiner, 2006; Van Dijk, 2008; Kiyaga-Nsubuga and Olum, 2009; Kakumba, 2010; Sato and Imai, 2010) the current study supports the assertion that there is a link between decentralisation and poverty reduction. The results of this study further indicate that there have been changes in the provision of services, infrastructure, and participation, and decision making, capacitation and in skilling due to decentralisation. This study has shown that decentralisation as a strategy has helped to eradicate poverty although there appears to be a need for effective regulatory mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the processes as they have been argued to be benefiting few individuals. At the level of social service provision decentralisation has been argued to be efficient as the findings have reported an increase in the provision of these services. At the same time responses to the question on changes in wellbeing show that decentralisation has managed to reduce poverty in the Municipality area. Since the study was meant to ascertain the role of decentralisation in poverty alleviation from a Capability perspective, it can be therefore argued that decentralisation has contributed to changes in wellbeing in addition to increasing capabilities of the participants. This follows the core argument of Sen that, "development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy" (Sen, 1999:14).

The current study having been framed using the CA, has helped in unraveling and understanding the role of decentralization as a poverty reduction mechanism. It has applied the multidimensionality of poverty rather than the widely known uni-dimensional view of income poverty. As has been noted from the study, the public are of the perception that the poverty levels have been reduced due to the enhancement of their capabilities through decentralized projects. This in harmony with Sen's assertion that development efforts should focus on creating opportunities and institutional conditions which enhance individual's capabilities and freedoms rather than the commonly placed economic focus on enhancing personal income and wealth (Sen,1999). In support of this view Gasper and Claire (2001:4) contend that in the capabilities approach, the core role of governments as well as development actors is to endow citizens with the required conditions for actualizing central human functioning; in other words, to provide them with necessary capacities and opportunities. In *Voices of the Poor*, Narayan et al (2000:180-184) highlights the fact that the poor make a passionate plea for responsive, accountable, fair and effective institutions as important pre-requisites for any level of poverty alleviation. It can thus be argued that decentralized mechanisms have helped to produce opportunities for wellbeing advancement through giving the public opportunities to participate in development projects.

The study also found an increased perception of the role of decentralization in the promotion agency and wellbeing through enhancing the capability of involvement in decision making and participation. The study also noted the public perception of positive change in service provision due to decentralization (Haug, 2007) and we can thus conclude from the findings that service provision results in changes in wellbeing.

Decentralization has been noted also to be resulting in skill acquisition (Schischka et al 2008:230) which is an ideal capability that is needed in ensuring sustainability after the decentralized projects are exhausted. Cited in the study of the fault lines of the Nkonkobe Municipality decentralisation programme is the selectivity or exclusivity of the whole process. It has been argued that in most cases not all people are able to participate in the decentralised processes as the mechanism has been argued to be highly selective. However, on the contrary, it can also be argued that the decentralised policy framework of Nkonkobe Municipality and their antecedent programmes are accessible and inclusive as the findings in the demographic aspects show that most of the respondents and participants of these development initiatives are women. The Local government has been reported to be not responsive to the needs of the populace and the study has also highlighted that respondents perceive that access or participation in decentralized projects is not inclusive as the mechanisms appear to be not accessible and not inclusive to all people. The respondents have highlighted that the policy praxis of decentralised projects are selective in nature. In terms of accountability mechanisms the study has revealed that respondents have questioned the relevance of accountability and transparency within these processes. Succinctly the major findings of the study highlight the fact that there is a correlation between participation in decentralised projects and capability enhancement and poverty reduction.

### **8.3 Recommendations**

This section will offer recommendations and suggestions to enhance the pro-poorness of decentralised mechanisms:

- There is need of proper situational analysis before a given project is allowed to commence. This stems from the fact that most of the respondents when asked whether decentralised projects target their nearly half seemed to be not sure whilst some stated they don't know at all that decentralisation has been responsive to the community's needs (see Fig 7.3). Situational analysis will thus allow the policy makers and funders to have a clear picture of the requisite projects that are best suited to the priorities and needs of the populace.
- It is also recommended that there is need for audits and the monitoring and evaluation of the projects. This emanates from the notion that in the provision of these development projects respondents have highlighted that some of the projects have been carried out to completion whilst some have been abandoned. The promotion of evaluation strategies will help to ensure the success of all the projects. It will also foster the proper utilization of development funds.
- Municipality officials need to work with communities and groups made up of those among whom poverty is predominant. This will help in guaranteeing that projects aimed at addressing poverty are accessible only to the poor. Much of the scholarly work on development policies like decentralisation has been argued to be challenged by capture from elites. In this regard working with the poor and visiting the poverty stricken areas will help to reduce elite capture and selectivity in development policy spaces.
- The study also recommends that there should be proper channels of communication and use of a wide array of communication techniques in order to ensure that the

community is aware of the Municipality's developmental initiatives. This stems from the results of the study that many of the respondents are not knowledgeable of the existence of decentralised projects. Hence the more the public know about the projects and other municipality development initiatives, the greater the participation and involvement of the public in the decentralised processes.

#### **8.4. Limitations of the study**

The study was limited since only the quantitative method was employed, it could have been better if triangulation was utilized for the study. Since most of the studies in this area have utilized various methodologies, such as, cross sectional studies based on secondary literature reviews (Crook, 2003; Vedeld, 2003 ;Faguet, 2004; Jütting et al., 2004, 2005; Steiner 2007; Bratton,2010; Cabral, 2011), mixed methods (Alhassan, 2009; Masoi and Norman, 2009), in-depth interviews (Yankinson, 2008; Egbenya, 2010) and surveys (Crook and Manor 1998; Smoke, 2001; Nel and Binns, 2003; Appiah, 2005; Andrianto, 2006;; Hereira et al.,2005; John, 2009;) but without cutting edge success in terms of new empirical evidence. As a result an empirical study was warranted since a review of literature indicates that much of the studies on decentralisation and poverty alleviation have been reviews of secondary literature that is not anchored on reliable empirical evidence. Hence the study chose to utilize a quantitative research design to establish that decentralisation contributes to poverty reduction by concentrating on the perceptions of the general public residing in the Nkonkobe Municipality of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Furthermore since the study concentrated on perceptions a quantitative study was the best option.

However, the usage of the quantitative methodology can be argued to be a limitation on its own. In addition, the usage of IsiXhosa language was also a limitation for the study as the researcher had to make use of interpreters during the process of data collection.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

The chapter has presented the major findings of the study. It was shown in this chapter that the core argument of the study is that decentralisation has a potential to affect poverty, especially within the context of multi-dimensional poverty. In this regard the study argues that local government through its decentralised projects and service delivery initiatives supports pro-poor development. This has been established by the findings of the current study which suggest that the residents of Nkonkobe Municipality believe that decentralisation has resulted in changes in wellbeing. Noticeable from the study is the notion that decentralisation promotes responsive service delivery which in turn results in poverty reduction. Participation, decision making, skills and capacity building have all been argued to have increased as a result of decentralisation. However, the study has also highlighted the fact that there is need to ensure that the development policy spaces of decentralisation are accessible and inclusive to all. Moreover the findings have indicated that the multi-dimensional perspective of poverty offered by the CA is best suited for evaluating and assessing developmental policies that are meant to bring about social, economic and political transformation of the public.

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## APPENDIX 1: Survey Questionnaire on decentralisation and poverty alleviation in the Nkonkobe Municipality

This questionnaire is meant for obtaining information **on the role of decentralisation as a poverty reduction mechanism in the Nkonkobe Municipality**. The study is part of the requirement for the Master of Social Science in Sociology qualification I am undertaking at the University of Fort Hare. I therefore request your cooperation in completing the questionnaire. All information you provide will be utilized for academic purposes only. I assure you of the confidentiality of your responses and your anonymity as a respondent. Thank You

### Section A: Demographic Profile

Please indicate your response by marking with an X where appropriate.

1. Respondent's Gender:

Male		Female	
------	--	--------	--

2. How old are you?

20-and Below		21-30		31-40		41-50		51-60		61+	
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3.

What is your level of education?

No formal education	Primary education	Secondary education(Matric)	Degree/ Diploma and above

4. Marital status.

Single		Widowed		Divorced		Married	
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5. Which of the following is your language?

Afrikaans		English		Xhosa		Zulu		Other	
-----------	--	---------	--	-------	--	------	--	-------	--

6. What is your occupation?

Employed	Self-employed	Unemployed	Pensioner	Other (Specify)

7. Income

R1000 and Below	R1000-R2000	R2500-R5000	R6000 and above

8. Where were you born?

This district	Different District in the Province	Another Province	Outside South Africa

### Section B: Knowledge and Perception of Satisfaction with Decentralized Government Projects

Please indicate your response by marking with an X where appropriate.

9. Do you know of any ongoing or completed Municipality entrusted or Local government led community projects?

Yes	
No	

10. Can you tell me about any decentralized Municipality projects or services which have been provided for your locality during the past 5 or 6 years, even those that have been completed or abandoned?

Project/Service	Completed	Abandoned	In progress
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a)School Construction			
b)Health Clinic			
c)Electricity			
d)Housing projects			
e)Agriculture projects			
f)Road construction			
g)Water Infrastructure projects			
h)Sanitation and waste management projects			

11. Are you or has any member of your family been involved in the implementation of the Nkonkobe Municipality decentralised projects?

Yes	
No	



12. How often have you participated in these projects?

Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all

13. Did your participation in these decentralised government projects bring about sustainability (income, skills, etc.) to your family?

Yes	
No	

14. Would you say that your life as an individual, family or community has changed with the implementation of entrusted local government projects in your area?

Changed significantly	Changed little	Don't know	Did not change	Did not change at all

15. In your opinion, do these decentralised Municipality projects really target your needs and preferences or satisfy your community needs with its projects?

A lot	To some extent	No, not at all	Don't know
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16. The following table tries to trace the changes in your life that have been brought as a result of the Municipality or local government's role in community development (delegated or devolved government projects or services) . Please tick the correct response that best describes you.

	Changed significantly	Changed little	Don't know	Did not change	Did not change at all
a)Income					
b)Skills					
c) Participation					
d)Health					
e)Housing					
f)Property					
g)Clothes					
h)food					
i)Decision making					
j)Water and Sanitation					
k) Employment					
l)Social relations					
m)Political relations					
n)Infrastructure					

17. Taking everything into account, in terms of your wellbeing as result of the local government's role which of the following best describes you?

Poor /Unhappy	Intermediate	Prosperous

**Section C: Participation and Decision Making in Devolved Local Government Projects.**

18. The following statements try to measure how the decentralized Nkonkobe Municipality programmes and projects have enabled the realisation of the capability of participation and decision making amongst the public. Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement. (Please rank these statements, where 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree.)

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	I perceive the decentralized Municipality projects to have increased control over decisions that affects my life					
b)	I am free to express my political views					
c)	I am able to participate in the political activities that affect my life if I want to					
d)	I now am able to influence most of the decisions that affect my life					
e)	The public are persuaded to implement Municipal projects (devolved or delegated) that are not responsive to their local needs					
f)	I am now able to participate in local decision making					

**Section D: Skills, confidence and access within decentralised local government projects and services**

19. The following statements show the degree of confidence, access and skills acquired during the implementation of the Local Government decentralized projects, to indicate the level at which the projects are enhancing these capabilities. (Please mark with an X to indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with these statements, where 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree.)

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	The Municipality entrusted projects allow the public to initiate, control and have the overall role to implement projects					
b)	The public perceive the decentralized Municipality projects to have increased					

	their self esteem					
c)	The Local Government allocated projects have made me to be confident					
d)	The decentralised projects' resources and information are accessible to everyone					
e)	Participation in the Municipality handed over projects and programmes has increased my skills both at home and in the community					
f)	The public are given training on how to carry out the projects					
g)	Participants are able to manage their own projects after participating in the decentralised projects					
h)	Participants are able to sustain projects and problems by themselves after the projects resources have been exhausted.					
i)	Participants gain planning, implementation and monitoring skills in the decentralised local government projects					
j)	I feel that I can generally change things in my community if I want to					
k)	The devolved Municipality projects have managed to be inclusive of different groups that exists in the society					

**Section E: Public perceptions of changes in infrastructure provision due to decentralised local government's role** (*Please tick or circle the correct response*).

20. How difficult is it to get to the nearest secondary school?

- 1 Very difficult / impossible
- 2 Difficult, but usually possible
- 3 Easy

21. Do you have any school or college going children in your household who receive scholarships/subsidized education from any source?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes
- 3 No children aged between 6 and 24

22. How difficult is it to get to the nearest health facility (dispensary, community health centre, village clinic, hospital, village midwife, etc.)?

- 1 Very difficult / impossible
- 2 Difficult, but usually possible

3 Easy

23. How good are the healthcare services where villagers in your community usually go for treatment?

1 Poor

2 Reasonable

3 Good

24. Have any training, agricultural extension, courses or enterprise assistance activities been held in your village over the past 12 months?

1 No

2 Yes

25. In what condition are the roads and bridges leading to the sub-district town or community?

1 There are none

2 In bad repair

3 In good condition

26. How difficult is it to get to the nearest market?

1 Very difficult/impossible

2 Difficult, but usually possible

3 Easy

27. How suitable or unsuitable is your accommodation for your current needs?

Very suitable	Fairly suitable	Neither suitable nor unsuitable	Fairly unsuitable	Very unsuitable

28. Have you received any form of aid for housing in the last 12 months?

1 No

2 Yes

29. In terms of quality and quantity, how have government support programmes been in your community over the last 12 months?

1 Poor

2 Reasonable

3 Good

30. In terms of quality and quantity, how have non-government support programmes from companies, organisations, etc. been in your community over the last 12 months?

1 Poor

2 Reasonable

3 Good

31. How is your access to communication facilities: telephone, cellular phone, internet, television or radio?

1 Very difficult / impossible

2 Difficult, but usually possible

3 Easy

32. Are there any sports facilities, tourist objects or other places considered suitable for recreation in your community?

1 No

2 Yes

**Section F: Public Perception of Performance and Responsiveness of Decentralised Local Government**

33) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement which try to measure the responsiveness of devolved local government of Nkonkobe Municipality to your needs. Indicate your level of agreement with an X (where 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree.)

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	The municipality seriously responds to public criticism and suggestions for improvement'					
b)	The municipality responds to public requests quickly and efficiently'					
c)	The municipality is making a sincere effort to support those residents who need help					
d)	The municipality consults the public before making decisions					
e)	The local government uses revenues for public , not private gain					

**Section G: Public Perceptions on the Delegated Operations of Local Government in the Nkonkobe Municipality.**

34) The following questions try to measure your degree of satisfaction with the manner of treatment you received either when you personally arrived at the Municipality departments or contacted them by phone. Indicate your level of agreement with an X (where 1 = very satisfied; 2 = satisfied; 3 = neither satisfied nor satisfied; 4 = dissatisfied; 5 = very dissatisfied)

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	How satisfied are you with employees' courtesy and kindness?					
b)	How satisfied are you about the time required to handle your request?					
c)	How satisfied are you with the efficiency of public servants?					
d)	How satisfied are you with the physical conditions in the					

	reception hall?					
e)	How satisfied are you with the willingness to help you over and above formal requirements?					
f)	How satisfied are you with the attendance of Municipal employees to their work (I mean people like health clinic staff, market inspectors, revenue collectors, teachers, councilor, etc.)					

Thank you.



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## APPENDIX 2: Formal request for permission to conduct the study

University of Fort Hare

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Department of Sociology

P/Bag X1314, Alice 5700

25 November 2011

The Manager

Nkonkobe Municipality

8 Somerset Street, Fort Beaufort

Dear Sir/Madam



### FORMAL REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FOR MASTERS CANDIDATE MR G MUPAMBWA (200706033) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY

Mr Mupambwa is a student registered with the University of Fort Hare for a Masters Degree in Sociology. His research topic reads "Decentralization and poverty alleviation: The case of Nkonkobe Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa". This study is based on the assumption that decentralisation as a development policy can be a means to achieve developmental and participative local government that advances the capabilities and enhances the well being of the poor at large, thus enabling socio-economic and political transformation of the poor. The study is an investigation of decentralisation as a mechanism to address the problematic of poverty in order to ascertain whether it is pro-poor or whether it further contributes to poverty


The research thus tries to evaluate decentralisation as a tool to help reduce poverty. The focus shall be on the provision of services and in municipal projects and especially whether these have helped address the problematic of poverty amongst the residents of Nkonkobe. The research will focus mainly on the Nkonkobe Municipality.

It is therefore against this background that I hereby kindly request permission that the student be allowed to undertake the research in your institutions and localities. A questionnaire based survey will be administered within the Nkonkobe Municipality for this purpose. Note that this research will be guided by strict ethical principles and respondents and participants will be guaranteed their right to anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. In addition, a research report will be made available to your Municipality upon request on completion of study.

Hoping that this request will be favourably considered.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours Sincerely

  
D F H Nekhwevha (Supervisor)

Bhisho Campus:

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**APPENDIX 3: Formal response by the Nkonkobe Municipal manager to the request to conduct the study**

U Masipala Wase Nkonkobe

8 Somerset Street  
FORT BEAUFORT  
5720  
Eastern Cape-RSA



Municipality of Nkonkobe

P.O. Box 36  
FORT BEAUFORT 5720  
Tel: (046) 645 7400  
Fax: (046) 6451775  
admin@nkonkobe.gov.za

Mr. ~~C~~ Mupambwa  
University of Fort Hare  
Private Bag X 1314  
Alice  
5700



**Re: Request to conduct research**

This serves to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence dated 25 November 2011. Kindly be informed that you have been granted permission to conduct research in our institution, Nkonkobe Municipality.

Hoping the outcome of the research will provide a favourable outcome in your studies.

Hoping the above is in order.

K. C. Maneli  
Municipal Manager