

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES ASSESSMENT IN EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

Andisile Best<sup>\*</sup>, Bhasela Yalezo<sup>\*\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Graduate School of Business & Leadership, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville, South Africa

<sup>\*\*</sup> Corresponding author, Graduate School of Business & Leadership, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville, South Africa  
Contact details: University of KwaZulu-Natal, Varsity Dr, Westville, 3630, South Africa



## Abstract

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South Africa has evolved and defeated a blemished past of apartheid before 1994. Even after 27 years of democracy, South Africa has been struggling to stabilise economic markets with continued control by the white minority that marginalised the black community. The unemployment rate in the Province of the Eastern Cape in South Africa has grown from 28.5% in 1993 to 45.8% in quarter 3 of 2020 (ECSECC, 2020). Set targets have not been met since 2018, with programmes implemented not attractive nor conducive for the targeted youth and persons with disabilities. The study critically evaluated the existence and the extent of stakeholder management strategies in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) within the Eastern Cape Department of Transport and the effects of not meeting the set youth and persons with disabilities targets over the years. To gain lived experiences of beneficiaries, a case study of the household Contractor Programme was used in three districts through group semi-structured interviews with non-probability purposive sampling used to select respondents using a primary data collection instrument. Data received was analysed with themes using a descriptive analysis approach to narrate the lived experiences of participants within EPWP. Results revealed a need for improved stakeholder diversity and inclusion, communication with stakeholders, management oversight, policy guidance, monitoring and evaluation within EPWP projects.

**Keywords:** Public Policy, Transportation, Road Maintenance, Stakeholder Engagement, Expanded Public Works Programme, Eastern Cape, South Africa

**Authors' individual contribution:** Conceptualization — A.B.; Methodology — A.B.; Writing — Original Draft — A.B.; Writing — Review & Editing — B.Y.; Visualization — A.B.; Project Administration — A.B.; Funding Acquisition — B.Y.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa has evolved and defeated a blemished past of apartheid before 1994. It is over 27 years of democracy that South Africa has been struggling to stabilise economic markets from the political circles that were historically controlled by the white minority that marginalised the black community (Rodrik, 2008, p. 770). South Africans tasted the first fruits of freedom by participating in the first democratic elections with their presidential candidate emerging (Lodge, 1995, p. 471). Even though South Africa is categorised as a free country, some challenges indicate that the country is still far from economic independence. These include the pockets of racism, the income gap that widens between the rich and the poor (Rodrik, 2008, p. 770), underdevelopment where there is minimum gross fixed capital formation (The World Bank, 2018, p. 7), the unemployment rate that has grown from 20% in 1994 (Statistics South Africa, 1998, p. 4) to 30.8% in quarter 3 of 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 2). Similarly, the Eastern Cape unemployment rate has also grown from 28.5% in 1993 (Leibbrandt, Woolard, McEwen, & Koep, 2010, p. 12) up to 45.8% (ECSECC, 2020). According to Sugden and Wilson (2002), South Africa's inequality is rather confusing, with good infrastructure erected but the income gap continues to widen and access to public facilities is reduced for the lowest level income groups. A solution to these challenges lies in open engagements with citizens who should be central to their development.

Essential factors in service delivery and implementation of public policies are the promotion of public participation, accountability and transparency. Central to effective implementation and application of good governance is the concept of public managers and politicians exercising their roles with the public interest in mind. According to King, Chilton and Roberts (2010), "The higher order roles and functions the public administrator must consider when carrying out her or his duties include upholding the letter of the law, fulfilling her or his moral compass, and pursuit of the common good, or what we deem the public interest, among others" (p. 955). Public interest within public administration should therefore be at the centre of good governance (Keping, 2018, p. 4). King et al. (2010) present a case that argues for decisions that are taken to be backed by a strong policy and regulatory framework to ensure the protection of public interest in any reform introduced. Sjoberg, Mellon, and Peixoto (as cited in Mansoor, 2021) contend that public interest is heightened in cases where the citizens are participating and expect a quicker response to their queries. This requires transparent dissemination of information, implementation of programmes and publication of information in various media for ease of access by citizens (Lea, Lee-Geillerb, & Leec, 2020).

Guess and Farnham (as cited in King et al., 2010) posit that public managers are entrusted with the responsibility of realising government policies and the ruling party's mandate while ethically considering stakeholders' views with "conflicting values, perceptions, and interests". While (National School of Government, 2020, p. 47) cautions against the executives allowing "political interference" in key

decisions which builds lower morale and confidence of officials while also creating instability and loss of public trust in public services. A "governance-centric approach" that identifies citizens as central to influencing the government's choices is necessary (Branston, Cowling, Tomlinson, & Wilson, 2016). Such broad inclusion in public policy decisions allows not only the consideration of views but also gains the confidence and ownership of the citizens in whatever service is being rendered. Therefore, as government officials coordinate and consolidate the direction of policy implementation, sifting of all the relevant information from various stakeholders and ensuring that such diverging interests and views are considered ensures effective and efficient delivery of services, all in the public interest.

The lack of stakeholder engagement in the coordination and implementation of public policies such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is considered a contributor to the lack of effective service delivery (Maphanga & Mazenda, 2019). The Eastern Cape Department of Transport has not met the set targets for youth and persons with disabilities since the transfer of the Community Based Programme (CBP) function from the Department of Public Works in the 2018/2019 financial year (Eastern Cape Department of Transport, 2020, p. 68). Not meeting these targets is influenced by the type of programmes implemented which are not "attractive" nor "conducive" for the targeted population (Eastern Cape Department of Transport, 2020, p. 69).

An assessment of the level of engagement of this targeted population is necessary for the department to improve. Stakeholder participation is paramount in building trust, increasing stakeholder awareness and buy-in in order orders to recognise their role and give input towards the achievement of these outcomes. This study seeks to close the literature gap that exists in the implementation of EPWP and the lack of stakeholder engagement within the transportation sector.

This study assessed the stakeholder engagement strategies employed by the EPWP within the Eastern Cape Department of Transport. The overall question that this study seeks to uncover is: *What stakeholder engagement strategies can be employed to ensure effective implementation of public policies in EPWP?* This question is asked with an interest in the implementation of public employment programmes such as EPWP as a public policy intervention in societal challenges.

The objective of this study was to critically assess the factors that influence the successful execution of the stakeholder engagement in such a way that the planned EPWP targets are achieved in the Eastern Cape. This assessment seeks to intervene in societal challenges by bringing public employment programmes as a solution, particularly in the infrastructure sector which the Eastern Cape Department of Transport is a major employment contributor.

The rest of the paper is structured to include Section 2, which introduces the theoretical framework underpinning the study followed by Section 3 which reviews the relevant literature on the Community Work Programme (CWP), Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and stakeholder

engagement strategies. Section 4 presents the procedures and methodology used from the research design, sampling method, sampling size, data collection method, and interviews up to the qualitative data analysis. Section 5 tables the results beginning with the demographic representation of participants, presenting the responses and analysing the responses using themes. Section 6 presents the findings and recommendations followed by Section 7, which concludes the paper.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents two theories as part of the theoretical framework that is relevant to help understand certain constructs relating to this study and the foundation of stakeholder engagement within the context of public policy programmes. These are the stakeholder theory and the principal-agent theory.

### 2.1. Stakeholder theory

The stakeholder theory was introduced by the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in the early 1960s to emphasise the importance of stakeholders in any organization (Freeman, 1984). This theory can be used to examine how an organization employs stakeholder management strategies to achieve organizational performance and maintain ethical behaviour. According to Freeman (1984), the SRI defined the term stakeholder as “a group without whose support the organization would cease to exist” (p. 5). Freeman (1984) conducted further research and published a book titled *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, where he borrowed from other theories such as organizational theory, systems theory, corporate social responsibility, and corporate strategy, and argued that strategic decisions by organizations should always consider the interests of stakeholders.

Donaldson and Preston (1995) cited three aspects that stakeholder theory encompassed: a) descriptive, which described the collaborative and competitive interests of 6 groups; b) instrumental, which linked stakeholder management practice to company performance; and c) normative, which described company behaviour toward stakeholders. Donaldson and Preston (1995) suggested that the normative approach was the fundamental core of stakeholder theory as it is based on ethics, morality, and corporate social responsibility.

The use of stakeholder theory in business practice has not been widely accepted. Some researchers asserted that stakeholder theory could be successfully applied to business practice due to its simplicity (Badewi, as cited in Williams, 2017). In contrast, some critics pointed toward the theory being too vague and ambiguous (Wagner Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2012). Notwithstanding, scholars appeared to agree on some basic premises of the organization entering into relationships with individuals or groups that influence or are influenced by the company's actions (Freeman, 1984), the interests of all stakeholders are intrinsically motivated (Clarkson, 1995), the theory focuses on management decision making (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) and organizational

leaders should attempt to understand and balance the interests of various stakeholders (Friedman & Miles, 2002). Therefore, this study will apply the stakeholder theory to establish the organisation's stakeholders and enhance the relationships with key participants and beneficiaries of the EPWP.

### 2.2. Principal-agent theory

Within the service delivery circle, the principal-agent theory is a principle that is used to explain and resolve issues in the relationship between business principals and their agents (Gauld, 2007). According to Namazi (2013), the basic agency paradigm was developed in the economics literature during the 1960s and 1970s as a way to determine the optimal amount of risk-sharing among different individuals. This is supported by Spence (1971), Ross (1973), Harris and Raviv (1978), and Holmstrom (1979), adding that this theory of agency was proposed independently yet simultaneously by Stephen Ross and Barry M. Mitnick. Ross (1973) focused on the economic theory of agency, while Mitnick (1973) focused on the institutional theory of agency. Both approaches brought similar concepts.

An agency comes to exist when a relationship between two parties in which the agent represents the principal in day-to-day transactions (Gauld, 2007; Higgs, 2018). This theory explains the principle of mutual agreement between two parties to assume risks in the delivery of public services (Lombard & Morris, 2012). Similarly to the relationship between the government and non-profit institutions to provide services to the public or even between the government and a private company to deliver a service on behalf of the government to the citizens. To fulfil its responsibility to citizens, the government enters into agreements via contracts with a company (Patti, 2009). The principal delegates decision-making authority to the agent, including the use of the resources of a principal by hiring the agent to represent the principal in performing a service (Ross, 1973; Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodríguez, & Gómez-Mejía, 2012; Ramirez & Wood, 2018).

When the ownership and management of a firm are separated, the principal-agent theory suggests that the agency problems are incurred to alleviate the principal-agent problems (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Karra, Tracey, & Phillips, 2006; Lee & O'Neill, 2003; Wasserman, 2006). To reduce the agency problems, Eisenhardt (1989) suggests the creation of a governance structure that enables monitoring and assessment of the actual behaviour of the agent. Donaldson and Davis (1991), Anderson and Reeb (2004), and Chrisman, Chua, Kellermanns, and Chang (2007) suggest the use of reporting procedures and additional structures for management or board of directors. Another option is to create a governance structure where the contract is based on the actual outcome of the agent's behaviour by using compensation incentive pay that provides an incentive for high performance (Eisenhardt, 1989; Chrisman et al., 2007).

This study assists in understanding the actions by different actors in an ideal environment, the organisational hierarchies that exist as well as formal and informal contracts that exist for this

principal-agency relationship to be an effective one. Furthermore, it lifts a line where the citizens can hold the government accountable and where services rendered are exactly as the citizens expect.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a synthesis of the literature to understand the foundational concepts and suppositions that influence the implementation of public employment programmes such as the Community Work Programme (CWP) and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and stakeholder engagement strategies.

#### 3.1. Community Works Programme (CWP)

The CWP is a government initiative that was established and led by the Ministry of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs “to fight unemployment and create sustainable jobs to reach people living in marginalised areas where there are few opportunities” (Mtirara, 2016).

Cardoso et al. (2019) share lessons where youth is faced with challenges that end up being solved through programmes of this nature which capacitate youth through development initiatives while contributing to their communities. The CWP targets the young unemployed and underemployed people by offering them stipendiary opportunities that will help them supplement their existing livelihood means which in turn provides a basic level of income security. The CWP recognises the lack of more sustainable and long-term job opportunities and therefore it creates some short-term opportunities to allow for the participants to have a contribution to the economy, contribute to the improvement of public infrastructure, strengthen community-led solutions and development methods and improve the socio-economic conditions of participants through the work opportunities that have been created.

#### 3.2. Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

Globally, governments, ministries and development agencies, and civil society organisations offer interventions that are centred on youth empowerment. According to Dladla and Mutambara (2022), the South African government introduced the EPWP as a short to medium intervention intended to create jobs and economic benefit for the marginalised people. The programme pays stipends to participants who are given work within the community they live in. The majority affected negatively is the youth category which requires programmes such as youth rights, youth engagement and youth participation among other methods of community engagement and decision making. EPWP was introduced as a vehicle to drive poverty away from communities through the creation of short-term job opportunities for youth — “unskilled, unemployed, poor and vulnerable (including the disabled)” allowing them to be capacitated while contributing to infrastructure development so that they receive some income (International Labour Office, 2018, p. 1). The ultimate aim was to empower the youth ensuring that when they leave the programme, they are capable of

sustaining themselves and finding career prospects or starting private enterprises. In the end, 10% of that is still living under the poverty line globally including the youth (The World Bank, 2019). The country’s focus on youth is on a premise that investing in the development of youth builds a country’s future. Furthermore, the skills that are imparted to the youth should assist the country in multiplying the effects towards development and the reduction of this poverty bracket.

Various studies have been done on related public employment programmes within the South African provinces (McCord, 2004; Duclos & Verdier-Chouchane, 2011; Hlatshwayo, 2017; Masondo, 2018; Maphanga & Mazenda, 2019; Monyelo, 2021; Mudau, 2021; Dladla & Mutambara, 2022). However, there is very little focus on the role of stakeholder engagement in the successful implementation of these public employment programmes. Furthermore, there are also even fewer studies that focus on the transport sector. There are also various other studies undertaken on youth empowerment programmes globally, covering topics across skills development, the change of behaviour, academic support, poverty alleviation and livelihood protection while others are aimed at the development of youth within welfare and safety (McHale, 2017).

Stakeholders are essential in any project that is implemented, to play their role in influencing the outcomes of the project (Beringer, Jonas, & Kock, 2013; Kloppenborg, Tesch, & Manolis, 2014; Badewi, 2016; Derakhshan, Turner, & Mancinia, 2019; Abdulla, Alhashimi, & Hamdan, 2019; Khalifeh, Farrell, & Al-edenat, 2020). According to Wagner Mainardes et al. (2012), there is a range of stakeholders that have open engagements with organizational networks forming relationships across internal and external environments. Lack of stakeholder engagement or even if it is not effective may have adverse stakeholder dissatisfaction (Carvalho & Junior, 2015). Moreover, Heravi, Coffey, and Trigunarsyah (2015) found that a lack of commitment by stakeholders is likely to fail projects which can have erratic consequences for an organization. Additionally, Mishra and Mishra (2013) supported by Mir and Pinnington (2014) suggest that organisations recognise the importance of including stakeholders and addressing their concerns and views but there is less willingness to voluntarily open processes such that there is effective management of stakeholders and their views. For any organisation to be successful, including stakeholders in strategizing will lead to the achievement of mutually beneficial goals of any project (Ashaye & Irani, 2019).

#### 3.3. Stakeholder engagement strategies

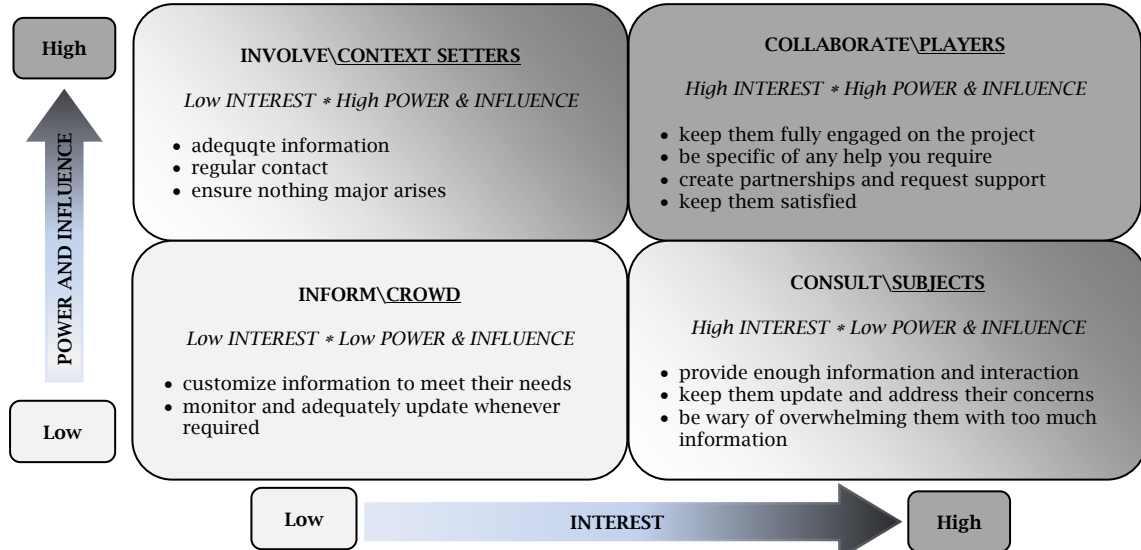
Branston, Sugden, Valdez, and Wilson (2006) have critically analysed the varying levels of development of various countries with a specific focus on the privatisation model where a Mexican reform process in the electricity sector showed the value of balancing between the voice of investors and those of citizens. Branston et al. (2006) introduced the “ownership and control structure” comprised of individuals and groups with the greatest interests that are more than those who are investors. According to Laporšek, Dolenc, Grum, and Stubelj

(2021), there is a positive relationship between the influence made by the stakeholders and the progressive performance of an organisation. There is no need to only look at the financial contribution but more an understanding of the democratic and inclusive processes that have incorporated citizens. Supporting Sugden and Wilson (2002), Branston et al. (2006) argue for effective participation that can only be realised where principles of “democratic engagement” are applied. This is supported by Branston, Sugden, and Valdez (2006), and Raza, Brown, and Pinto (2020) that establishing a “democratic decision-making structure” introduces a new governance approach to influence the development of an economy to achieve the citizens’ interests. The public is therefore easily able to own up to the government’s delivery when all processes had their participation through consultations and open disclosure of information (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). This transparency supports the building of a strong foundation of financial controls and value for money spent on services.

Researchers have expressed the importance of integrating stakeholder interests into organizational decision-making processes (Mishra & Mishra, 2013; Mir & Pinnington, 2014). Organizations are no longer not engaging with stakeholders within their environment and are more actively engaging with both internal and external stakeholders. Bryson

(2018) argues that central to any organisational planning for any strategic intervention is stakeholder analyses so that the organisation does not only understand who its stakeholders are and their yardstick of assessing relevance but also know their view of performance and whether the organisation can even meet such stakeholder expectations. Bryson (2018, p.130) sponsors a typical stakeholder map that can be done, indicating the different categories of stakeholders that government may have. These are specified to include citizens, the financial community, future generations, interest groups, taxpayers, service recipients, unions, employees, media, competitors, suppliers, other government departments, government bodies and political parties. Freeman (1984, p. 8) on the other hand developed the stakeholder model, differentiating between an internal stakeholder (e.g., an employee, or manager) and an external stakeholder (e.g., a supplier, shareholder, government, or society) while adding a view of looking at a stakeholder as a “single and independent actor”. Furthermore, Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) believe that stakeholders bring complexity to interdependent relationships which creates a challenge for organisations to determine which stakeholder should receive the greatest or least attention. While Mishra and Mishra (2013) highlight the importance of stakeholders the same and not relegating external stakeholders to an inferior position.

**Figure 1.** Classification of stakeholders according to influence and interest, incorporating the Power vs. Interest grid



Note: Adapted by authors from Durham, Baker, Smith, Moore, and Morgan (2014), and Bryson (2018).

An important is the classification of stakeholders taking into consideration their type of influence and interest using “inform, involve, collaborate and consult” (Durham et al., 2014). Bryson (2018) supports this with a similar categorisation in the Power versus Interest Grid using crowd, context setters, subjects and players. You inform a stakeholder through relevant communication by monitoring and keeping them updated as and when required to communicate with them and this category has lower interest and influence in the business of the organisation

(Durham et al., 2014). In terms of involvement, there is more regular contact that will ensure that any “major issues arising” are dealt with through adequate information provided and these stakeholders may have lower interest but higher influence than the first category (Durham et al., 2014). Consulting is important to stakeholders to get enough information to be kept up to date while addressing their concerns just enough to not give them too much information. This category has a rather higher interest but with low influence (Durham et al., 2014). Collaborating is essential to

keep the stakeholders fully engaged in all aspects of your project and this is the strongest category with high interest and influence on the direction and performance (Durham et al., 2014).

Sugden and Wilson (2002) on the other hand introduce a South African picture of a developed and underdeveloped community. A good social infrastructure puts South Africa in a “semi-developed” state that continues to develop whilst on the other hand, it presents a reality of inequality both in the income gap as well as the narrowing access to these facilitates by the lowest population (Sugden & Wilson, 2002). The argument around the “law of uneven development” puts forth the individuals or groups seeking development at the centre of their development as those most affected in the development are the only ones with true concern and sincerity of leading rather than having “external sources” who will push for their “strategic” interventions that will ensure own benefit. Furthermore, Sugden and Wilson (2002) posit “a dual approach to policy” where development is influenced by the capitalist nature of activities while it further allows locals to lead their empowerment through open engagements that allow democratic decisions to be taken.

Bryson (2018, pp. 401–422) introduces a guide with stakeholder techniques that organisations should utilise in ensuring effective stakeholder participation. In undertaking any stakeholder analysis, organisations must be clear of the intended purpose for engaging in order not to could the process and even be clear on who, how and why (Bryson, 2018). There is a continued debate among researchers and practitioners. Consequently, Mishra and Mishra (2013) found that project managers have difficulties analysing and addressing stakeholders’ interests because of a lack of a clear stakeholder definition. Despite Freeman and Mcvea’s (2001) widely used definition that a stakeholder is any individual or group who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization’s objectives, such as employees or managers, Miles (2012) argued that a stakeholder could be anyone in the organization. A clear definition of a stakeholder is therefore essential in developing the use of stakeholder theory and improving its practical application (Mishra & Mishra, 2013). This is dependent on that organisation to ensure an all-inclusive definition that does not err on leaving out any key stakeholder to contribute. In dealing with the question at hand, it is also important to follow through on the strategies that are employed to ensure the effective implementation of EPWP in such a way that no stakeholder is left out.

Bryson (2018) lifts the importance of gauging the extent to which you engage with the stakeholders and argues that each situation is dependent on no clear rules. However, the most important things to consider are the specifics of “when, where, how and why” you include and exclude a particular aspect in your stakeholder engagement agenda (Bryson, 2018, p. 402).

#### 4. PROCEDURES AND METHODS

Researchers use quantitative methods which employ numerical data; qualitative methods which employ non-numeric data; and mixed methods, which

incorporate both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Yin, 2014). The research strategy involved the exploration of stakeholder management strategies used in implementing a public policy for which gaining a deep understanding of business processes, procedures, and lived experiences of beneficiaries was important. Researchers use a qualitative method to gain a deep understanding of the company’s policies, processes, procedures, and individuals’ lived experiences (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). This also allowed a deeper contextual implementation and revealed an individual’s interpretation. The quantitative method was not suitable for the participants due to the majority being less educated and would be more comfortable giving oral responses. This has its challenges that include the possibility of one fearing being victimised (Hlatshwayo, 2017).

##### 4.1. Research design

According to Yin (2014), qualitative research designs include case studies, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology. The most appropriate design to meet the research objectives is a case study. The researcher explored the individuals’ lived experiences through the collection of multiple types of evidence through the oral narration of responses to their view of stakeholder engagement in EPWP. Yin (2014) suggests that a single case study is appropriate for exploring the unique characteristics of a particular case. However, the study was conducted in multiple sites in line with the organisational service delivery model that has six districts.

##### 4.2. Sampling method

The study used a non-probability method, specifically purposive sampling to receive responses using the criteria of relevance and knowledge of the organisation and a policy implementation over some time (Robson, 2002). According to Denscombe (2017), purposive sampling deals with getting the “best information through focusing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected based on their known attributes” and are “hand-picked” to fit a set sampling frame. As long as the sampling frame is “relevant, complete, precise and up-to-date” (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 15–19). According to Denscombe (2017), a sampling frame is:

- relevant when it provides information and elements that are “directly linked to the research topic,
- complete when it covers the entire scope of items,
- precise if it excludes anything that is not relevant to the topic being researched, and
- up to date when it has recent additions that incorporate changes and have eliminated any outdated information.

##### 4.3. Sampling size

The sample size was selected to simplify the outcomes. The sample size is important for “methodological and ethical reasons” and it also considers the physical and financial needs - with an “appropriate sample” with “data generated

reliable, resource investment as limited as possible, while conforming to ethical principles” (Faber & Fonseca, 2014, p. 29). According to Faber and Fonseca (2014), specifying a sample size gives context to the findings of the study and helps with an accurate interpretation of the results. It further helps the researcher select an appropriate sample size to prevent very large samples that will make small differences seem statistically significant differences or even smaller sample sizes that reduce the power of the study and increases the margin of error, which can render the study meaningless (Faber & Fonseca, 2014).

#### 4.4. Data collection

The researcher acted as the primary data collection instrument, administering group interviews. According to Denscombe (2017), interviews provide detailed information; valuable insights; use simple equipment; are flexible through structured and unstructured forms; result in a high participation rate; provide an opportunity for validation of data, and are therapeutic. A guide to lead the questions was used which allowed the respondents to answer giving as much information as they wished. The intention was to look at the implementation of the programme in comparison with the literature and applicable legislative prescripts.

#### 4.5. Face-to-face group interviews

The interviews were conducted in a location selected by the participants to ensure minimum disruption of their environment. Amathole, OR Tambo and Alfred Nzo districts were conveniently selected. The data received was compared with two primary sources: from the group interviews with respondents not more than 10 in each group and data contained within the documentation to gain a deep understanding of the subject under study (Yin, 2014). The study originally targeted 35 participants, however, there was increased interest from participants especially in one district, up to a point of reaching a total of 55 participants from the EPWP projects, working for the Household Contractors programme.

Noting the disadvantages associated with group interviews, according to Denscombe (2017, p. 205), focusing on one person at a time has its limitations to the research. Group interviews, therefore, allow the interviewer to increase the number of respondents in a group to allow for “representativeness” of the data collected as well as

having a broader reach of respondents through receiving more than one response for each question asked (Denscombe, 2017). Denscombe (2017) gives further advantages for group interviews which include the incentive of respondents to listen to other viewpoints as well as getting a reflection on such differing views.

#### 4.6. Qualitative data analysis and presentation

A descriptive analysis of the results was performed. Descriptive research design is a scientific method of investigation where data is collected and analysed to describe the current conditions, terms or relationships concerning a certain specific field problem (Mugenda & Mungenda, 2003). Yin (2014) proposes a 5-step process toward a structured approach to data analysis, which is: 1) compile the data, 2) disassemble the data, 3) reassemble the data, 4) interpret the meaning of the data, and 5) conclude the data.

Data was primarily presented in a narrative format with some relevant data presented using tables, pie charts and bar graphs wherever possible. Any use of graphics, tables and figures was explained to describe what the data presents.

To conclude the data, more critical thinking was done to gain an understanding of the implications of the findings, linking to the conceptual framework, organisational practice, and future research direction. The conclusion raised the findings of the study to a higher conceptual level and captures the broader significance of the study with recommendations, which potentially might benefit the organisation.

### 5. RESULTS

The preliminary questions of the interview focused on biographical details to obtain information on the profile and demographics of the participants as part of the imperial research. The following was part of the biographical questions:

- Age of participants, which is given hereunder.
- Other areas include the district of the project, the gender of participants and the highest level of education.

#### 5.1. Age sample of the study

Table 1 below presents respondents in each district by their age group.

**Table 1.** Respondents by district and age

Age	Amathole	Alfred Nzo	OR Tambo	Total	Percentage
18-24	1	0	0	1	2%
25-35	5	1	1	7	13%
36-50	9	7	5	21	38%
51-59	11	6	5	22	40%
60+	4	0	0	4	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 above presents the total of 55 respondents interviewed in each district by their age group. The biggest proportion of participants belongs to the group of 51-29 years (40%) followed

by 36-50 years (38%). The last three categories that follow belong to 25-35 years (13%), 60+ years (7%) and 18-24 years (2%).

## 5.2. Presentation of responses and analysis of results

This section presents the respondents' views on the stakeholder engagements of the department within EPWP. Emphasis is placed on the participants' role, how they joined the programme, how they understand stakeholder engagement objectives, any known institutions of engagement as well as learning about areas for improvement.

According to Kumar (2014, p. 317), there are three methods by which qualitative data can be effectively analysed, namely: through a narrative to describe a situation, an episode, an event or instances; the prior identification of thematic areas from the questions; and quantifying of themes post responses in terms of their frequency. Yin (2014, p. 135) supports strategizing in the analysis of data as it helps the researcher to find patterns, insights and concepts from the data collected during the research study. Such a strategy must align with the research questions while allowing the interpretation of data to help reach conclusions.

Responses are presented below using themes that emerged during the interviews with the EPWP participants assessing the views on the stakeholder engagements of the department within EPWP as well as highlighting any indirect factors for consideration in improving the programme.

### 5.2.1. Diversity and inclusion in recruitment

The biggest proportion of participants belongs to the group of 51–29 years (40%) followed by 36–50 years (38%). The last three categories that follow belong to 25–35 years (13%), 60+ years (7%) and 18–24 years (2%). These results show that the majority of participants are above the youth category of 18 to 35 years in terms of the South African laws. Youth are more unemployed and in need of work opportunities such as these. This is supported by President Cyril Ramaphosa in the inaugural speech for June 16, 2021, noting that youth unemployment sitting at 63.3% for 15 to 24-year-olds and 41.3% for 25 to 34-year-olds<sup>1</sup>.

Noting a great picture of women representation with 78% of the population, however, no persons with disabilities were recorded during the study. This is a concerning picture that goes against the mandating function where the Expanded Public Works Programme for the representation, diversity and inclusion that a minimum of 60% women, 55% youth and 2% persons with disabilities (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure [DPWI], 2019, p. 24)<sup>2</sup>. This is indicative of diversity and inclusion being one of the areas of improvement for this programme, especially with the consideration of the South African population and unemployment statistics. It further makes the situation worse when the 2% of persons with disabilities is not met as it is an outdated country target of 7% in line with the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Department of Social Development

[DSD], 2016)<sup>3</sup>. This is a confirmation of the previous performance reports with less representation of youth and persons with disabilities in engagements, which results in such targets not being met.

While the performance of inclusion of women is impressive, care should be taken with existing stereotypes and segregation that is influenced by historic domestication of roles where cleaning and sweeping are associated with women while the use of spades and digging is associated with men.

### 5.2.2. Management oversight

The workers are in support of the intended improvement of conditions with the help of the programme in line with the South African Constitution and labour legislation (Bendix, 2010). They view the programme to have assisted them to improve their lives and addressing social and economic challenges. However, the aspect of inadequate payment method creates frustration with the queues they find themselves in while collecting their stipends from the service provider, the South African Post Office. This negative aspect needs to be addressed as they believe it may affect the retention of participants within the programme of the department. Donaldson and Preston (1995) put responsibility on the company to ensure that it maintains its ethical and moral responsibility when dealing with its stakeholders. The interests and participation of stakeholders and even workers are motivated by the actions and decisions that management takes for the benefit of the programme (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This should be a senior aspect that the department looks into and ensure key operational support activities are handled with the greatest care.

### 5.2.3. Communication with stakeholders

With only a few participants have been aware of EPWP before they joined, this should be the greatest concern for the programme. It shows a lack of engaging the stakeholders for them to be part of the planning stages and decision-making. As argued by Bryson (2018, p. 127), no organisation should undertake its operations without having identified who its stakeholders are and helping align themselves with what they intend to bring. The community members who do not know of the programme even though it provides intervention to them should be improved.

The entire population of respondents was never aware of any stakeholder engagement objective of the project or EPWP. Even the participants that indicated to have had an idea of EPWP did not know about these objectives. In the end, it is the citizens who must come back to assess whether the government has met their objectives (Bryson, 2018). When those citizens are in the dark, this shows the gap that needs to be filled by improving stakeholder engagement — particularly awareness, information sharing and marketing of existing projects implemented. This follows the thread that began with the principal-

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/newsletters/virtual-address-president-cyril-ramaphosa-occasion-youth-day-16-june-2021>

<sup>2</sup> Business Plan for the EPWP by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI).

<sup>3</sup> Issued by the Department of Social Development, this White Paper was issued for implementation by all public bodies, to ensure that at least 7% employment and procurement opportunities are reserved for persons with disabilities.



agency relationship which does not seem to function properly in this programme with an expected understanding of community interests that can be included in the delivery agenda (Friedman & Miles, 2002).

There is a need for workshops, training, awareness and any type of publicity from the programme to the community — both the leadership and general to ensure that there is clear messaging and empowerment of citizens. Such a programme should demystify these power struggles and any knowledge vacuum within the community. It is also a moral duty as well as contributing to social responsibility in line with the stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

#### 5.2.4. Institutional arrangements and relationships

Community leadership is important to the work of EPWP, including the support expected from such decisions from this structure. The study uncovered elements of some participants being selected because they were known which raises not only an unfairness but potential favouritism and nepotism by community leaders. The complaints about possible interference by the community, lack of clearly defined roles for various stakeholders, lack of clarified interfaces and demarcation of relationships are a byproduct of a lack of policy environment that defines institutional arrangements. As Freeman (1984) posits, the existence of an organisation puts a challenge on an organisation to be aware of its stakeholders. It is clear that such a lack of definition and specification of their role not only affects their participation but also affects the delivery of services. This happens through service delivery protests, stalling of projects and community leaders demanding certain activities to be undertaken by the programme.

The department needs to improve this aspect, aligning it with the lack of communication with stakeholders and lack of awareness as well as clarifying the roles of participants in terms of interfaces that exist. If these roles were identified and clarified, the department could benefit from eliminating most of the problems that include ineffective implementation, poor coordination, poor management and reporting, unfair recruitment, inadequate funding and poor working (Mogagabe, 2016). The programme needs to not only recognise the role that the community plays but believe that such roles should be regulated so that everyone is aware of what their role is and where it ends. The department needs to introduce these interfaces in a policy that specifies and regulates these relationships. The department further needs to not only publish such a guiding document but also create awareness sessions throughout the province, particularly for some of the community members who may not have access to electronic media.

#### 5.2.5. Monitoring and evaluation of the programme

The programme has dedicated a dedicated community of participants who are knowledgeable of what they are supposed to do. They are even clear about the impact the projects are supposed to make — both on the department and their lives. There is however lack of monitoring and evaluation of

the programme to the point of participants not having the provision of necessary working tools of the trade, including the safety clothing personal protective equipment, dignity services and materials to be used in EPWP projects. This may negatively affect the department's reputation and may also pose a risk of litigation should anything happen to a participant that has not been protected. Within the implementation value chain of the programme, participants are not aware at what intervals such provision should be made and this is a factor that affects the interest of the younger generation to not want to join the projects that are implemented by the department due to potential risks associated with not having the tools of the trade and thereby continuing in the trend on not being able to meet the targets for designated groups such as youth and persons with disabilities.

The department needs to not only focus on the delivery results of the EPWP through roads constructed, and work opportunities created but should also look at the conditions in which workers work as well as ensure the provision of necessary support (Chakwizira, 2010).

## 6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations made for improvement:

- *Finding 1: Lack of diversity and inclusion in the recruitment process.* The recruitment process needs to be clarified within the policy guidance to ensure that any set targets are met. All participants in the recruitment process should receive the necessary training for them to understand all aspects and requirements of the process.

- *Finding 2: Lack of communication with stakeholders.* The department needs to undertake social facilitation that encompasses awareness, information sharing and marketing of existing projects as well as conducting specific workshops and training for any emerging issues within the programme. A clear communication plan must be designed to help all officials to know what kind of information is communicated with who and using what medium.

- *Finding 3: Lack of policy that guides stakeholder engagement.* The lack of stakeholder identification and analysis leaves the department not knowing who the stakeholders are, what their interests are and how they can help the department. The development of a stakeholder engagement and social facilitation policy with a detailed guide to assist with a standardised implementation of strategies across all implementation points is key.

- *Finding 4: Lack of management oversight.* A review of working conditions and payment methods for the EPWP stipend needs to be undertaken for the department to enjoy having the younger generation and maintain anyone that is recruited in the programme. Tools of trade need to be adequately budgeted for.

- *Finding 5: Lack of monitoring and evaluation of EPWP projects.* The department should ensure the strengthening of the monitoring by officials that are knowledgeable of the programme. Such monitoring processes must be supported by resources to ensure planned monitoring does happen.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study has successfully evaluated the stakeholder engagement process employed by the EPWP using the case of the Eastern Cape Department of Transport. Answering the question of what could potentially contribute to the successful implementation of effective stakeholder engagement strategies, the review of literature managed to lift practical answers while being reinforced by the respondents with the practical view of their own experiences from the implementation of EPWP.

Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) like EPWP are critical to the contribution of better socio-economic conditions for citizens and therefore studies of this nature will serve as a reference in ensuring effective engagement with stakeholders and also improve the conditions to attract and retain youth and persons with disabilities. PEPs being funded by the government require effective utilisation of financial resources while ensuring the achievement of targets in the delivery of the programme.

The implementation of public policies requires the promotion of public participation, accountability and transparency. This study is important to future research as it lifted important aspects through formalised engagements that are planned for, documented as well as facilitated uniformly across the departmental delivery nodes. It has also assisted in understanding that transformation in service delivery is mostly dependent on the officials employed to do the work. The power given to

citizens to influence public services is mostly dependent on those officials to enable such implementation in line with good governance principles.

The study revealed a need for more studies to evaluate the entire EPWP, its resourcing and understanding of the employees' perspective of the implementation of the programme. A more specific need for studying the recruitment process from the perspective of designated groups such as youth, women and persons with disabilities. Exploring the stakeholders' views of EPWP, evaluating working conditions, evaluating the payment method used for stipends and an assessment of the provision of adequate tools of the trade are also key focus areas of need that the research has revealed.

The study had a limited scope that focused on the Household Contractor Programme implemented in Amathole, Alfred Nzo and OR Tambo districts within the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study may not reflect the complete picture of EPWP in general, however, it presents sufficient data to assist in understanding direct and indirect factors that influence stakeholders to effectively participate in the programme. The use of English was noted as a challenge in most areas as the targeted groups were from poor and mostly rural communities where their home language was primarily IsiXhosa. The study created an opportunity for an evaluation of public employment programmes, especially EPWP. It has however focused on a specific aspect of stakeholder engagement within the programme.

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