Chapter 13
Youth Participation and Representation in Community Governance at Cato Manor Township, Durban

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ABSTRACT

This chapter deliberates on youth participation and (mis)representation in community governance structures at South African townships. Youth participation entails active participation of youth in the policymaking procedures happening and problems disturbing their lives. Youth have the opportunity to influence their community governance structures. A study found that the current generation of youth are not aligned to the community governance structures. Youth participation and representation in community governance structures such as ward committees and community policing forums (CPFs) are essential as they could help youth fight issues such as teenage pregnancy, drug use, crime, unemployment, school dropout, etc. because they spend time in socially meaningful activities such as volunteering at different community structures.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth participation entails actively participation of youth in the policymaking procedures happening and problems disturbing their lives (Farthing, 2012, p. 5). This chapter focuses on youth participation in community governance structures at Cato Manor Township. According to Shepherd (2010, p. 8), the government structures of communities in South Africa, show poor performance from youth generations especially when it comes to participating in the decision making of the local government. It is essential that youth participate in the decision making processes of the community structures, mainly because society remains supported once young people develop knowledgeable and considerate ideas in the community (Shepherd, 2010, p. 15). The assumption is that if youth at Cato Manor become full members of their community by fully participating in decision making, their community can perform better in terms of services and other factors that influence the development in rural areas (Chanza, 2014, p. 46).

Youth engaging in community governance structures could influence the development of the environment within the community. Engagement helps cultivate the youth and youth associations that act as the core where peace can be promoted (Zeidin et al. 2007, p. 3). Youth are the partners and change operators in groups and associations, thus they pass on points of view, information and connections that prompt enhanced choices and more gainful activity. Young people in governance could be instrumental in promoting positive outcomes amongst young people. Participation in community governance provides youth with skills of active citizenship which include understanding how decisions are made and how to organise, plan and communicate (Navraciscis 2015, p. 5). Youth participation in community governance is essential since it helps youth fight issues such as teenage pregnancy, drug use, crime, unemployment and school dropout (Zeidine et al. 2007, p. 56). Youth affected by socio-economic challenges at Cato Manor made some of the young people not to want to participate in community governance structures (Mubau 2015, p. 55). Some youth have no time to be involved because they are privileged. The other challenge that is encountered by the youth is the communication barriers in semi-urban areas such as Cato Manor where useful information does not reach them. Most youth are not aware that they can take part in the decision making process, they believe that the decisions can only be taken by the traditional leader and councillors. They are often excluded by those who have authority. They still believe that ‘certain things are made for certain people’ (Kothari, 2009, p. 55). In most cases, young people’s participation in community governance structures is limited and one of the reasons given being that these structures are voluntary. The voluntary nature of community-based structures do not benefit them economically or financially unemployed and economically marginalised (Zeidine et al., 2007,
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