

Citizen Participation and Policy Process in a Fragile State: Experience from South - West Nigeria

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The understanding of citizen participation in decision making process is a core factor for the development of a country. The nature of political actors and policy makers in Nigeria has over the years eroded the powers and responsibilities of citizens in decision making process. A number of factors has been attributed for this which include lack of public accountability and transparency, increased cases of corruption, lack of responsiveness of government to the citizenry, favoritism in allocation of resources and more disparities between the federal or state assembly services and community needs among others. This paper therefore examines the effect of citizen participation on policy process in a fragile state like Nigeria. It adopts a qualitative content analysis approach. Data were collected through secondary sources such as journals, magazines and textbooks. Findings reveal that citizens' participation in policy process in the country has not been encouraging given the politics of self-interest which exist in the country coupled with electoral malpractices. Even where political education in mass participation is a key element of development strategy, programs have not increased genuine participation and responsibility among the people. This paper recommends among others, that citizen should be proactive and more aggressive in the policy process involvement drives and political leaders and policy makers should encourage the citizens to participate in the policy process that affect their lives through bottom-top approach. The paper concludes that citizen participation in policy process and governance is a foundation upon which the support, legitimacy and strength of democratic institutions can be based. Therefore, the level of citizen participation in policy making will have a huge impact on the alignment of government priority areas relevant to citizens' demands.

Background to the Study

Engaging citizens in the decision-making process is becoming an important priority for governments in different countries of the world. Citizen participation is seen as the core of democratic governance, and it ensures the legitimacy of the political process (Box, 1998; King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998; Pateman, 1970). Citizen participation in the decisions that affect their lives is an imperative of contemporary society. For the first half of the 20th century, citizens relied on public officials and administrators to make decisions about public policy and its implementation. The latter part of the 20th century saw a shift toward greater direct citizen involvement. This trend is expected to grow as democratic societies become more decentralized, interdependent, networked, linked by new information technologies, and challenged by “wicked problems.” (Eriksson, Reestorff & Stage, 2018).

In the last two decades, a number of discourses on democratic governance and development in the developing countries position citizen participation as a public accountability mechanism. Citizen participation can enhance public accountability in policy making (Bochel, 2006; Devas & Grant, 2003; Sharma, 2009). The involvement of the citizens entails substantive engagement of citizens in decision making, setting policy priorities and actions, and monitoring and evaluation (Van Meter, 1975:805). In such regard, it is considered that citizen participation enhances likelihood of the government to being able to comply with public interests and needs (Beierle & Cayford, 2002:14; Manor, 1999).

In recent years, the issue of citizen participation has received increasingly serious attention from researchers, policy-makers and the international development institutions. In fact, citizen participation in shaping and implementation of public policies is regarded a critical ingredient of participatory democracy (Dean, 2018). This changing context, from rigid bureaucratic process to pro-people approach, has shifted the concept of government to governance, and has introduced many instruments to engage local community in development programs. Many social scientists comprehend that a greater level of participation would improve the decisions and implementation strategies that ensure better outcomes for development programs (Mumpower, 2001). Rahman (2005:1) stated that 'people engagement also increase the level of transparency and accountability and improve the quality of governance'.

Since the introduction of the New Public Management (NPM) system, championed by New Zealand (Ohemeng, 2005), there has been changing trends in the administration and governance systems of states that have and still continue to adopt NPM. This has led to various reforms at governmental levels in both developed and developing countries. To this end, there has been increased citizen participation in governance, easy access to information from government and a toleration of stark criticism against governments. In sub-Saharan Africa, the change is very evident especially when dictatorial rule and military regimes dominated the body politic in the early 1970s and 1980s. The picture now is a steady progress to open governance and increased democratization through which citizens are seen to have a say on government policies. Since the early 1990s there has been a tremendous shift of elite-centered policymaking to participatory approach in government decision making in sub-Saharan Africa (Poto, 2016).

The shift from government to governance involves the provision of means to engage individuals and organizations outside government through 'structures and arrangements which support effective relationships across the public, private and community sectors as they collaborate in decision-making' (Edwards 2005:12). This has been described by Putnam as 'social connectedness, a critical element in the formation of social capital (Putnam 2000). It involves an active role for government in enabling or capacity building in local communities, rather than the more passive role implied in traditional notions of citizen participation. Citizen participation in governance also aims to devolve power and resources away from central control and towards frontline managers, local democratic structures, and local consumers and communities in what Stoker terms 'new localism' (Stoker 2004). This has implications for traditional ideas of representative government with communities moving away from vicarious engagement in democracy towards more direct involvement in decision-making processes.

Citizen participation in policy-making and implementation is an integral part of public administration and an essential ingredient of grassroot development. Nigeria, like many other countries in Africa, made its historic transition from authoritarian rule to democracy with the founding elections in 1999. In the past nineteen years, many changes have occurred, aimed at the institutionalization of formal structures for representation and participation. The introduction of a democratic constitutional dispensation in 1999 replaced the previous selective and undemocratic government. Consequently, it opened up new opportunities for citizen participation in policy-making and implementation. Indeed the central drive behind the introduction of democratic rule was to enhance citizen participation. It is against this background that this research has been focused on citizen participation in public policy-making and policy implementation in a failing state, with specific reference to South West, Nigeria i.e., Lagos State, Oyo State, Ogun State, Ondo State, Osun State and Ekiti State.

Statement of the Problem

Citizen participation has become a very important phenomenon in the world. Although it is necessary for the development of a country, some countries of the world are yet to introduce it in their development policies. Nigeria, like other countries of the world is still struggling to develop. It is noteworthy that it is one of the countries in Africa still having difficulties in achieving sustainable development. After more than fifty eight years of independence, the scenario in the country remains disappointing (De Graaf, 2017). Citizen participation was instituted to enhance government's public accountability in policy and decision making in order to achieve good governance and improve development (Chiweza, 2005; Hussein, 2003). However, a number of research reports over the last decade indicate challenges related to accountability: increased cases of corruption; favouritism in allocation of resources; bureaucrats' misallocation of resources; government's non-compliance with local governance rules and laws; and lack of responsiveness of local governments signaled by more disparities between the local assembly services and community needs (Chinsinga, 2008 & Young, 2016).

The experience with citizens' participation in the country has not been encouraging given the politics of self-interest which exists in the country, coupled with electoral malpractices. Even where development of local participation is an important tool for rural development and where political education in mass participation is a key element of the development strategy, programmes have not increased genuine participation and responsibility among the people. There are political, socio-cultural and bureaucratic constraints to political participation in the country.

The history of the nature of citizen participation in local policy making in Nigeria shows that inadequate citizen participation has previously created development disparities and governance discontent among citizens. It is highly probable that the level of citizen participation in policy making can have a huge impact on the alignment of government priority areas relevant to citizens' demands (Erikssons, 2018). However, without a clear logic on how citizen participation interplays to influence public accountability decentralization will likely continue to bear less effective and relevant development outcomes. This study provides a foundation on how to plan citizen participation to in order to achieve public accountability in decentralization.

Despite the great international support and advocacy for participatory governance where citizen's voice plays a key role in decision making of decentralized service delivery, there is a notable dearth of empirical evidence as to the effect of such participation. Against this background, the main objective of the study is to examine the influence of citizen participation on policy process in a fragile state, Nigeria. Although several scholars like Kweit and Kweit, (1981), Day, (1997), Pateman, 1970, Fitzgerald et al, (2016),Bochel, (2006), Devas and Grant (2003), Gaventa and Valderrama (1999), Cunill, (1997), Arnstein, (1969), Dye (1978), Hogwood & Gunn (1984), Young (2016), Fitzgerald (2016), Poto and Fornabaio (2017), Dean (2018), Eriksson (2018) and Mees (2019). Some of the writers focus on citizen participation, from citizen participation to government participation, participatory rights of indigenous peoples, participatory as the essence of good governance and so on. As laudable as their contributions to the field of public policy in general, it is important to note that few of these studies focus on how citizen participation affect public policy process in a fragile state like Nigeria. The richness and diversity of existing literature make noticeable the gap in knowledge regarding the influence of citizen participation in decision-making process. This is the gap that this study tries to fill.

Conceptual Review

In this section, attempts will be made to explain major concepts in the study. These include: citizen participation, public policy and fragile state.

Citizen Participation

Research on citizen participation produces a complex and untidy literature (Kweit & Kweit, 1981). As a contested concept (Day, 1997), it is not surprising that it is plagued with definitional problems. Citizen participation can refer to a range of different actions by different people (Pateman, 1970). To Fiszgerald, McCarthy, Carton, Connor, Lync &

Adam, (2016) citizen participation is meant as an umbrella term that describes the activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues. It is impossible to establish a universal definition of participation. An understanding of the concept is often assumed; in practice, development actions are often based on differing perceptions of participation and different perceptions of the level and quality of participation being sought, partly because of the lack of experience of effective participation practice. The literature gives a series of definitions of participation ranging from "token involvement of people", to, "autonomous decision making by popular organizations at local level" At its most basic, participation is "to take part" - this is very simplistic and implies that everyone is participating at some level in every action.

Citizen participation, according to Devas and Grant (2003), is the 'ways in which citizens exercise influence and control over the decisions that affect them'. Gaventa and Valderrama (1999 citing Cunill, 1997) refer to it as 'the intervention of citizens with determined social interests in public activities'. This can be directly or indirectly. Direct participation, the focus of this study, occurs where citizens - individually or in various forms of self-organization - are actively engaged in the decision-making processes on matters affecting them. Indirect participation is where citizens express their preferences through their elected and other representatives. It (indirect participation) is also referred to as political participation as the citizens' role is limited to selecting representatives.

Public Policy

There is no universally accepted definition of public policy. Furthermore, according to Hogwood and Gunn (1984), policy is always subjectively defined. A clear identification of the characteristics of a policy can therefore contribute towards clarifying the meaning of the concept 'public policy'. Anderson (1997); see public policy as "a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in dealing with a problem or a matter of concern". Dye (1978) explain it as whatever governments choose to do or not to do ... " (Dye, 1978); while Easton see it as " ... the authoritative allocation of values for the whole society ... " (Easton in Dye 1978). Hanekom define public policy thus: " ... a desired course of action and interaction which is to serve as a guideline in the allocation of resources necessary to realize societal goals and objectives, decided upon and made publicly known by the legislator" (Hanekom 1991). A public policy refers to how the government addresses or doesn't address issues that affect the public and this could be through regulation, legislation, funding priorities or other actions (Hayes, 2001). This definition shows that public policy as a purposive and consistent course of action produced as a response to a perceived problem of a constituency, formulated by a specific political process, and adopted, implemented, and enforced by a public agency.

Fragile State

In order to better understand fragile states, we need to know how states become fragile in the first place. There is no internationally agreed definition of fragility but for the purposes of this study, states are considered fragile when their government cannot or

will not deliver the core functions to its people, including the poor. Our definition of fragile states focuses on weak capacity and/or lack of political will to provide services and to sustain a development partnership with the international community.

In recent years, 'fragile states' has become an important concept for researchers and policymakers. Fragile states are those states which are prone to internal or external instabilities, and are vulnerable to conflicts, probably, as a result of illegitimate governing institutions, religious discrimination, inequality and endemic corruption. State fragility contributes to underdevelopment and forced migration through unprecedented medium. This, in part, contributes to the constant migration of low income countries' intellectuals. Where the governing institution lacks legitimacy, there is a tendency that some group of people, particularly the elites, would siphon the public property, which in turn, could lead to fractionalization and environmental disaster. Fragile states could lead to militarization, the enforcement of child soldiers and abuse; and at the same time, hinder humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians.

Sekhar (2010), asserts that “a state is defined as failed or fragile when it is unable to perform its core functions and displays vulnerability in the social, political, and economic domains.” In addition, he states that “fragile states are highly vulnerable to domestic and international conflicts, and shocks. They are also significantly susceptible to any form of crisis in one or more of their subsystems.” When a state is fragile, things go wrong in the society. Firstly, there is the tendency that the government would neglect the health sector and other sectors entirely. People begin to die from curable and incurable diseases, given that patients no longer receive adequate attention from the health professionals employed by the government – health professionals often stop from rendering their services when their salaries are not paid, or when they are underpaid. Patients also die when the health workers are not qualified to carry out their functions.

Nexus between Citizen Participation and Decision Making Process

Citizen participation is valuable and beneficial to society at the national, community, and personal levels because it has the capacity to bring about improvements in communities and neighborhoods, build relationships and strengthen the social fabric, and create feelings of personal and collective empowerment (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). Meaningful citizen participation infuses policy making processes with the resources and insights of those who are most affected by the policy outputs, and promote decisions that benefit average citizens (Crawford, Kotval, Rauhe & Kotval, 2008). Both practitioners and academics recognize the value of citizen participation in planning decisions for theoretical and practical reasons (Laurian, 2004). Participation benefits democratic processes because it increases government accountability to the public, infuses lay knowledge into decision making, and improves public support for policies. Participation also benefits the planning profession because it increases public awareness of and appreciation for planning (Laurian, 2004).

The need to involve citizens in a meaningful way in public policy-making has been reinforced by increased dialogue about the value of participatory planning and the necessity of understanding cultural dimensions in planning (Crawford, Kotval, Rauhe & Kotval, 2008). This dialogue suggests that empowering citizens through meaningful participation in planning and designing their communities may result in more successful implementation because of citizen “buy-in,” which might actually enhance the “chances and speed of implementation of community projects” (Crawford, Kotval, Rauhe & Kotval, 2008). Renn, Webler & Wiedemann (1995) contend that processes involving conflict resolution and citizen participation may “improve the effectiveness of environmental policies and enhance the potential for affected citizens to become part of the decision making process rather than being the victims of the decisions made by anonymous agencies or institutions.” Goldstein and Butler (2010) agree that decades of research on collaborative planning have shown that plans formulated through stakeholder collaboration “enjoy broad support for implementation.” Likewise, English, Peretz & Manderschied (2004), found the literature supports an “empirical linkage between public participation and program achievements.”

Finally, involving citizens in planning and designing their own communities promotes a transparent, democratic public policy-making process (Crawford, Kotval, Rauhe & Kotval, 2008). Engaging citizens in the decision making process is the fundamental principle of democratic governance. Citizens' participation in societal decision making is the fulcrum of a democracy and a “force for creating a sense of community and a sense of control over our lives and institutions” (Wandersman, Florin, Friedmann, & Meier, 1987). Equal participation by all citizens ideally requires policymakers to consider the needs, experiences, and opinions of these citizens when deciding how to prioritize resources. Access to citizen participation is crucial for the empowerment of disadvantaged and marginalized communities to have a legitimate voice in the crucial decisions policymakers (Gutiérrez, 1990).

The diversity of behaviors and activities on the continuum of participation spans from voting to legislative advocacy. Citizen participation reflects the democratic value of all citizenry's representation in policy decisions (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995) and is a pathway to empowerment for consumers of services (Boehm & Staples, 2004); yet, recent trends suggest that disadvantaged and marginalized citizens are excluded (whether purposefully or inadvertently) from these vital policy-making processes (Lombe & Sherraden, 2008). Thus, understanding the policy process and the role of citizen participation in that process, especially for economically disadvantaged citizens who may have less access to the process, is of the utmost importance in achieving social justice. Citizen participation in decision-making on the issues affecting their lives, collaboration with the local government, participation in the community meetings and discussions can result in a more effective use of the resources by directing them to priority areas and designing more informed, effective and sustainable policies, thereby contributing to the development agenda too. This is particularly relevant, as many of the democracies that sprang in the post-soviet space, also embarked on the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy and struggled for many years to revive their economies and improve the overall well-being of their populations.

More specifically, understanding the way access to policy development processes vary for economically disadvantaged citizens is particularly important considering that income inequality in the U.S. is at the highest levels in decades (Mishel, Bernstein, & Allegretto, 2007). Disparities in access, wealth (measured most frequently by assets), and income (measured most frequently by household dollars) decrease the “political interest, discussion of politics, and participation in elections among all but the most affluent” (Solt, 2008:8). Equal citizen participation in a democratic society ensures that all voices are heard in decisions impacting their lives. However, unequal distribution of political power in a society could result in the exclusion of citizens with less political power in policy development processes (Kaufman, 1969). Ideally, the purpose of participation by non-elected citizens in policy development activities and behaviors, such as voting, public meetings, and providing feedback on local issues to state legislators, is to afford opportunity for all citizens to have a voice in the policy development process. However, if voices are heard unequally or access to processes through which individuals can exert their voice (i.e., entrance into the abovementioned phases of policy development) is limited for certain segments of society, then the main tenets of a democratic society are violated and the legitimacy is questioned when the marginalized and disadvantaged in society are denied democratic participation.

The literature shows that participation is valuable because it provides citizens with opportunities to influence public policy making in ways that improve conditions in their lives and communities. Participation can improve the quality and legitimacy of public policy making by imbedding the knowledge and experiences of local citizens within the policy outputs. But imbalances in power relations and resources can render citizen participation less effective.

Mechanisms of Citizen Participation

Mechanisms are the instruments or channels that are used to achieve an intended objective. Mechanisms⁵ of citizen participation can largely be categorized into vote and voice (Kauzya, 2007). Vote is the means through which citizens select their representatives at the local level. Decentralization facilitates this by putting in place structures that allow citizens to exercise their voting power with limited 'hindrance or interference from the central government'. Voting can be limiting as participation is only interpreted as elections, which in many countries happens once in every three to five years. Participation in terms of voice is where citizens have the power to influence 'the making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions that concern their socio-politico-economic wellbeing and to demand accountability from their local leadership'. Kauzya (2007:76) posits that voice is facilitated by decentralization 'when there is a transfer of power and authority for making socio-politico-economic decisions from the central government to local government and communities'.

On a similar note, Cheema (2007:170) advances that, 'citizens are more likely to actively participate in the local political process where local government is perceived to be sufficiently autonomous in making political decisions affecting them'. Theory suggests

that the benefits of citizen participation are optimized when both vote and voice mechanisms are institutionalized in decentralized systems (Azfar, Kähkönen, Lanyi, Meagher, and Rutherford, 1999). These, as Brinkerhoff, et al., (2007:189) observe is in appreciation that 'citizen participation and responsiveness to citizens' needs and preferences are important components of democratic governance'.

Some of the commonly used mechanisms (Azfar, Kähkönen, Lanyi, Meagher, and Rutherford, 1999) are here discussed as follows:

- (a) Elections are a basic mechanism through which citizens express their policy preferences. This is by voting for the candidate (political party) that offers the promise that matches the expectations of citizens. However, electoral practice has shown that in many countries, promises made during elections are rarely kept. Further, few political party manifestos express clear policy programmes that they intend to pursue once in office.
- (b) Surveys can be used by local governments to establish the expectations and satisfaction of citizens with service delivery. The concern with surveys has to do with sampling of respondents. Where it is poorly done then the views may not be representative of the citizens' preferences and may lead to ineffective policy choices.
- (c) Town meetings/public hearings/hotlines can be used to provide a direct platform where citizens articulate their preferences, disappointments and other proposals on improving service delivery
- (d) Direct community involvement in service delivery takes the shape of service implementation and management committees. It also involves citizen's contribution in kind (such as providing materials, expertise and labour), and in cash in the delivery of public goods.
- (e) Exit has been called 'voting with your feet' (Azfar, Kähkönen, Lanyi, Meagher, and Rutherford, 1999 citing Hirschman, 1970). This is where the citizens can either move to another jurisdiction that is more responsive to their needs or simply switch the service provider. This means that there have to be an alternative which depend on the nature of the service. For instance in health and education, citizens can shift to private providers of the said services. However for regulatory services where only government is the provider, the switching option is unviable.
- (f) Participatory planning and budgeting is where citizens participate in formal platforms where plans and budgets for service delivery are made. This depends on the willingness of the local government to create such forums and to seek mobilize the citizens to participate. The awareness and capacity of the citizens is thus a key factor in this mechanism of participation.
- (g) Monitoring and Evaluation is the last, yet important, opportunity for citizen participation. Citizens can engage in closely following the implementation of services to ensure that it is according to the plans and that resources are put to their rightful use. This presupposes that the citizens have correct information of the project/service being provided. In evaluation the citizens participate in the whole project/service review to ascertain if it is accomplishing its intended objectives.

Empirical Review

In this section, attempt is made to studies relevant to the subject matter of the study. Bake Baker, Addams and Davis (2005) surveyed city managers to examine factors that led to effective engagement. The authors found that properly advertising forthcoming engagement events, ensuring that citizens' comments are taken seriously, and developing effective follow-up mechanisms made the process of participation more meaningful. Yet municipalities often only include citizens after decisions have already been made (Yang & Callahan, 2007). Kasymova and Schachter (2014) illustrated that this phenomenon occurs even in the context of municipalities outside/beyond the United States.

Ebdon and Franklin (2006: 444) argued that participation “can be very useful in educating the public about key tradeoffs and gaining valuable input from citizens about their priorities.” However, they suggested that participation outcomes depend on: (a) the participation environment, such as the structure and forms of government, the political culture, and the provisions for participation; (b) the participation process design, such as timing, the participation agenda, and participant selection methods; (c) participation mechanisms; and (d) expected outcomes. Yang and Pandey (2011) found that participation was an important factor for strengthening democratic governance. The authors found that effective participation depended on LG characteristics and citizen characteristics. Moreover, Fung (2006) and Yang and Pandey (2011) found that the level of representativeness of citizens was critical in ensuring inclusive and democratic participation. John (2009) and McKenna (2011) found that the degree of knowledge and skills of the participants often determined the process and the outcomes of participation.

Laurian & Shaw, (2008) observed that citizen participation influences public accountability in policy making, which in turn leads to successful democratic governance and poverty reduction. In practice there are a number of factors that interplay for the success and failure of citizen participation. Some of the factors are: who and what brings about the beginning of participation, reliability and nature of information, representativeness of the participants, participation interactions and processes, power dynamics, participation outcomes and distribution of knowledge of the issues of deliberation (Golubovic, 2010; Wang, 2001). Therefore in conceptualizing citizen participation these factors should be critically analyzed and considered in relation to the intended objective of citizen participation and the associate governance context (Yang & Callahan, 2011).

Theoretical Review

The paper is premised on new institutionalism theory and the non-decision making and decisional approach power models (Hall & Taylor, 2006) Institutionalism. The institutional approach to the economy had its genesis in the work of Thorstein Veblen, whose *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) introduced the term conspicuous consumption into popular lexicon. ... The terms institutionalism and institutional economics were coined in 1919 by Walton Hamilton. Powell and DiMaggio (1991) define

an emerging perspective in organization theory and sociology, which they term the 'new institutionalism', as rejecting the rational-actor models of Classical economics. The key institutions engaged in the local assembly system are the elected local government officers, the citizens and the administrative government officers. The institutional arrangements among these institutions influence the level of public accountability in policy making and implementation (Shah, 2006).

The new institutionalism theory has three schools of thought, namely: sociological, rational and historical (Hall & Taylor, 2006). Sociological institutionalism informs that the establishment of some government institutions such as the local assemblies is based on the obligation of government to establish its social legitimacy. In regards to the interactions among the involved institutions at the local assembly, the rational choice approach informs that the involved institutions have fixed preferences that may compromise the common public interests (Hall & Taylor, 2006). As part of addressing this challenge of fixed preferences, the rational choice and sociological institutionalism approaches suggest that to increase accountability on public needs, the institution has to establish mechanisms to shape and enforce behaviour of the involved institutions for increased potential to achieve social outcomes. Such mechanisms include the establishment of norms, provision of information, procedures and rules (Hall & Taylor, 1996). In regards to these established mechanisms, the historical institutionalism approach suggests that past socio-economic and political factors influence the nature of norms, procedures and rules (Barzelay & Gallego, 2005).

In relation to different preferences among actors in an institution, Leftwich (2007) suggests that institutions are never neutral but can be influenced to be neutral through power distribution. Power distribution in institutions can be explained by the non-decision making and decisional approach power models. Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1970) first introduced the concept of non decision-making, contesting the dominant explanation of the use of power in decision-making by asking how issues are suppressed and the scope of decision-making restricted. The non-decision making and decisional approach power models suggest that the extent of power is reflected by the issues considered for decision making, the exact decisions made and tangible behaviours of the involved institutions (Leftwich, 2007; Lukes, 1993). In this context, power refers to the ability of one institution to make another institution do what it would not otherwise do (Ham & Hill, 1993). These models indicate that if citizens have power then their issues become policy issues and the responsible institution behaves accordingly to address these issues as public policy.

The institutions are established by government to perform certain functions. The institutionalism theory as it relates to citizen participation and policy process in fragile states states that institution and citizen involvement in decision making process are inseparable. Therefore, institutions are not neutral but institutionalized purposely to serve the interest of the citizens in such a manner that it would influence the decisions that affects their lives positively. There is no way in which a citizen can exclude him/herself from the jurisdiction of public policy.

Conclusion

A climate conducive to citizen participation in governance is an imperative for Nigeria's democracy. Citizen participation in governance is a foundation upon which the support, legitimacy and strength of democratic institutions can be based. However, the socio-economic, political and historical conditions of the country have a significant influence on the context of public participation and governance. The strong link between public participation and a healthy, robust democracy is undeniable. Citizen participation offers a channel through which the public can give inputs into decision-making in terms of the making and implementation of policy. In order to reinforce democratic principles in public institutions; public participation in the field of public administration should therefore be encouraged.

Recommendations

1. In considering citizen participation for the objective of advancing public accountability in the policy making, a successful citizen participation programme should be well organized, constructive, systematic and legally binding to have chances of achieving positive impact (Golubovic, 2010). Well-organized citizen participation entails facilitation of information sharing between the institutions and actors involved in decision making. The information should be objective, reliable, and up to date and user friendly to those involved (OECD, 2001). For example, when dealing with local citizens who can barely read, it is inappropriate to design leaflets or pamphlets as information dissemination tool since it bars their chances of learning.
2. In addition, there should also be clear goals and rules that govern the interactions and processes in the exercise of participation (Yang & Callahan, 2005). These goals and rules should define the bounds and exact intents of the participation exercise to ascertain a concrete potential base of accountability and transparency in the decision making processes (Malena et al., 2004). The processes of citizen participation should be open to public scrutiny to ensure transparency (Phillips & Orsini, 2002:9). At the same-time, the results of a citizen participation process should demonstrate the strength of citizens' voice (Arnstein, 1969).
3. However, often in democratic politics the dependent factors of citizen participation don't play out quite like this due to unlevelled interplay of power factors and policy making interest among involved actors or institutions. For example, many governments in developing countries despite being democratic are reported to have imbalances on information sharing, setting participatory structures and mechanisms of accountability (World Bank, 2004; Laurian & Shaw, 2008).
4. Most of these governments release generic information on citizen participation that is not user friendly to the task at hand (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999). They also don't set supporting legal sanctions of ensuring public accountability in order to still maintain control of things over the citizens, and also avert local accountability (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999). Also, due to limited time of office, many democratic governments are interested in achieving substantive policy objectives which overrides citizen participation in achieving the substantive policies. Hence, this paper supports a continuum approach to analyzing citizen participation.

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