

Public Participation in Urban Governance: Case of Ibadan South-East Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Involvement of the public in governance is an important factor in development of infrastructure in settlements, especially urban areas. In doing this, the scarce fund is spent on the actual and genuine infrastructural needs of the populace rather than those at the helm of affairs “imposing” infrastructure on the populace. This study investigates how much people know those at the helm of affairs which invariably indicates how much they are being contacted or consulted to know their needs and how to meet the needs. 250 respondents were sampled from the six selected wards in Ibadan South East Local Government in Oyo state to make a representation. Findings revealed that the populace does not really know the people at the helm of affairs even the Local Government Councilors that are supposed to be the closest representative of the government to them and work with them. This implied that the developmental projects in such communities are imposed on the populace. Suggestions were made on ways of improving the situation, these include, the elected officers should plan with the people and stop planning for them in order to achieve sustainability of the developmental projects in the communities in Ibadan generally and Nigeria at large and there should be social justice in every formulated policy.

Keywords: Communities, Developmental projects, Governance, Infrastructure, Public participation

1. Introduction

The recent picture of urban governance is no longer viewed as political-systems capable of purposeful action but rather as composed of groups of political decision makers who can coalesce for crises but whose influence is unequal to initiating or implementing solutions to long run problems generated by urban development. (Alexander, 1992). Ever since Local government became institutionalized, public participation has been invoked to give government the quality of “due process” demanded of rational administrative and political decision making (Yves, 2004).

Governance could be said to be the act of governing and relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power or verify performance. (Wikipedia). According to Agbola (2005) three basic conditions have to be met before urban governance could be called good. These include; it should exhibit well decentralized and devolved authority structure, its

decision-making process must be participatory and all-inclusive and its implementation strategies and activities must be transparent and made accountable to the generality of the citizens of the city. Yves (2004) cited the case of Latin America that since many decades ago public participation has highly been contributing to good governance. He then suggested that modern and good urban governance demands sharing for political power that is based on public participation. It is in this context that this paper attempts to assess the level awareness of the populace on participation and their level of participation in governance.

1.1 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to;

- i. examine the concept of public participation
- ii. identify the differences between governance and government
- iii. assess the level of public participation in policy formulation in Ibadan South East Local Government
- iv. identify the problems of participation in governance in the Local Government Area
- v. make recommendations on how to overcome the constraints and ways of involving public in governance.

2. Methodology

Primary data were collected through oral interview and questionnaire administration. The methods of sampling adopted were combination of cluster and systematic random sampling methods. These involved the use of the twelve (12) subdivided political wards in Ibadan South East Local Government area and six of the wards were systematically selected. The twelve wards are numbered one to twelve and the “even” numbered wards were selected.

Within the selected wards, systematic random sampling was used to select the sample size of 250 respondents. The method adopted was selecting one person in every ten buildings.

The sample frame was the National Population Commission register taken in 1991 which is the summation of the selected wards population that is 128,901. This figure was projected to be 359,634 in 2012 as shown in Table 2. Table 1 shows the detail of the wards, the distribution and areas that formed the wards, the secondary data were collected from journal articles, textbooks, statistical records and maps which covered the background information.

For data analysis and presentation, nominal scale of measurement was used. The data were presented in table form and the interpretation of each table followed.

Table 1: List of the Wards in Ibadan South East Local Government

Ward No	Ward Name	Areas that formed the ward	Selected or Not selected
1	Mapo	Oke Dada, Ogunmola, Oleyo, Oja Oba and Oderinlo	Not selected
2	Oja’ba	Oja’ba Kure, Isale Ijebu, Idi Arere,	Selected

		Omiyale, Ita Koto and Lako	
3	Oranyan	Ita Agbaakin, Kobomoje, Oranyan, Kobiowu and EsuAwele.	Not selected
4	Kobomoje	Kobomoje, Odo Okun, and Ogundepo Area	Selected
5	Idi Aro	Labo, Eleta Olukoyi, Ita Ege. Idi Aro and Agbongbon	Not selected
6	Elekuro	Labo, Elekuro, Asanike, Ayedaade and Modina	Selected
7	Orita Aperin	Orita Aperin, Oniyere, Adesola and Tafa Adeoye Area	Not selected
8	Odinjo	Odinjo, Eleta, Olomi and Oyapidan	Selected
9	Kudeti	Oke Odo, Kudeti, Olunloyo, Adelabu Adebipon and Anirin	Not selected
10	Oke Oluokun	Oluokun, Oke Ola, Owode, Olomi, Odo Oba and Sanyo	Selected
11	Molete	Oke Odo, Molete, Idi Arere, Kudeti, Yejide, Bode, Odo Oba, Elere, Osungbade, Kereru and Sanyo	Not selected
12	Felele	Felele, Orita Challenge, Olorunsogo, Scout Camp Falana Petrol Station and Adelabu Shopping Complex Area	Selected

Source: Ibadan South-East Local Government Council, 2012

Table 2: Selected Wards and Sample

	Ward Name	Areas that formed the ward	1991 population	Projected population to 2012	Sample size distribution	%
2	Oja'ba	Oja'ba Kure, Isale Ijebu, Idi Arere, Omiyale, Ita Koto and Lako	9,994	43,156	30	12.0
4	Kobomoje	Kobomoje, Odo Okun, and Ogundepo Area	6,887	35,963	25	10.0
6	Elekuro	Labo, Elekuro, Asanike, Ayedaade and Modina	16,019	50,349	35	14.0
8	Odinjo	Odinjo, Eleta,	26,609	64734	45	18.0

		Olomi and Oyapidan				
10	Oke Oluokun	Oluokun, Oke Ola, Owode, Olomi, Odo Oba and Sanyo	36,581	86,312	60	24.0
12	Felele	Felele, Orita Challenge, Olorunsogo, Scout Camp Falana Petrol Station and Adelabu Shopping Complex Area	32,811	79,120	55	22.0
			128,901	359,634	250	100.00

Source: Adapted from National Population Commission (I.S.E.L.G), Census Ibadan South-East Local Government, PR&S and CDI Units, 1997

3. Concept of Public Participation

Yacoob (2006) suggested that the partnership approach that works best for cities is for their decision-makers to provide a planning framework which reduces risk, negative external effects and uncertainty. It is noted from this definition that the impacts of participation on citizens' attitudes would be slight on the government, while its costs would be felt in the form of less efficient policy and increase conflict. Nze (2008) opined that public participation in its overall context is a widely used one spanning to politics, community development, rural area planning and development, environmental sanitation, social activities, provision of infrastructure and relevantly, to physical planning and plan implementation.

Agbola (2005) viewed public participation as a continuing process through which conflicting or adverse interests of citizens are accommodated and cooperative action in their resolutions actively promoted. Participation may be direct or indirect. The direct participation means, every citizen is entitled to participate directly in assemblies, meeting and in governance. Yves (2004) observed that the Brazilian cities acknowledged this because one's right to participate individually and directly and not necessarily through representative of communities, unions, parties, or other associations was promoted. The second form of participations is indirect. Discussion and decisions making are out through delegates and leaders like councilors, senators, commissions and so on. Therefore, public participation could be defined as a means of increasing people's trust in government and their identification with the resulting decisions. This should be so because they contributed to the process.

Adeyeye (2010) quoted section 13 of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law of 1992 that, though does not mention public participation but defines what its all about. It stated that;

“for the purpose of securing integration, consistency and coherence within and between all levels of the physical development plans in Nigeria, the Commission shall during the preparation of the National Physical Development Plan call for submissions from all relevant government, organizations, non-governmental organizations and interested members of the public whose contribution shall serve as part of the input towards the preparation of a draft National Physical Development Plan”.

The above quotation reflects that the input of the public in governance is recognized by even the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning law.

3.1 How to Participate In Urban Governance

The techniques to realize public participation according to Alexander (1992) include; meetings, hearings, citizen boards, advisory councils or task force, citizen surveys, characters, games and simulations. Mba Uchegbu, Muoghalu and Okeke (2001) argued that there can be ungenue participation without partnership, delegated power and effective citizen control over a range of issues affecting their lives. Odugbemi (1993) opined that citizen can participate through moral support and in area of supervision before and during the implementation stages of the policies. He went further to mention dialogue and consultation as means of making public to participate.

When making policies or carrying out any programme, government should let the public know the matters it proposed to deal with in the policy or programme and provide an opportunity for making representation before they finish drafting the programme /policy. Mba, et al (2001) in trying to define public participation presented the difference between public relation and public participation; “if participation is left to the final stages, rather than at the beginning stage of identifying available choices, participation becomes public relations”. This was supported by Agbola (2006) as he said that public participation is a bottom-up policy implementation and management process that involves significant local input at every stage.

3.2 Advantages of Public Participation In Government

The advantages of allowing public to participate in government include the following;

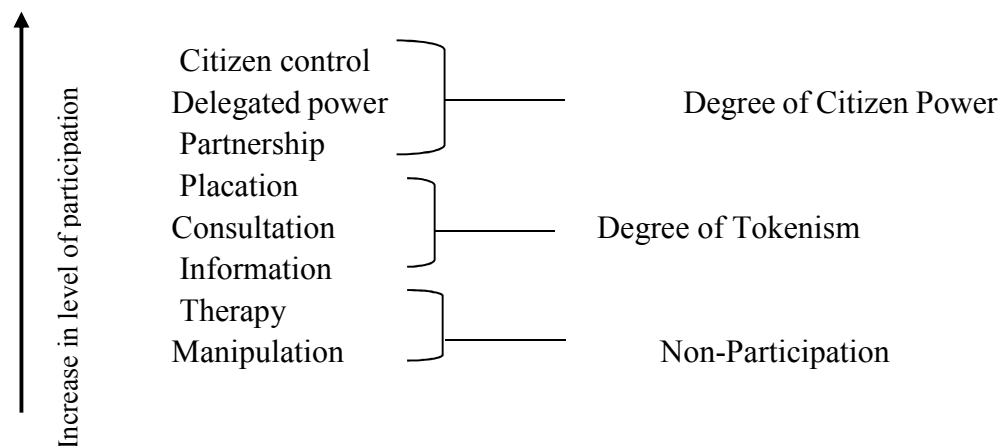
- It gives opportunity for acceptable policies and programmes
- It broadens the basis for an acceptable programmes supported to achieving societal goals and objectives
- It is a way of generating awareness in people about government programmes/policies
- It is a way of manipulating people to prevent power obstruction
- It helps in achieving successful implementation of government programmes
- It helps government to elicit some information which might have not surfaced through scientific analysis of raw data
- It provides opportunity for the government to achieve its main goals, so as to know the public priority at a particular time
- It helps in achieving sustainability of public developmental projects.

3.3 The Levels of Public Participation In Governance

In the ideal democratic government setting, citizen supposes not to have any limit in participating in government programmes and policy making. It is only that they can not make decision on their own but can influence decision making.

The eight rungs on a ladder of public participation presented by Arnstein (1969) as shown below tries to analyse the extent or degree to which the public can participate in Governance.

Figure 1: Eight rungs on a ladder of public participation



Source: Arnstein S.R (1969)

3.3.1 Manipulation: Using clever or unfair means of making the public to succumb to the maker's ideas, through, skillful control and influence. This looks like the "top-bottom" of governance

3.3.2 Therapy: If the public are made to feel what they want by giving them the chance to talk or make suggestions which of course would not eventually affect decision making process of the policy makers. That means the public are made to identify their problems and contribute only to the mean of curing those problems. This has no impact on decision making

3.3.3 Information: This involved exhibition, news, letters and so on as means of letting the public know what the government has in stock for them. This looks like something intangible but very important. This deals with hearing only

3.3.4 Consultation: This may be used in an area where the Governance wants to imitate improvement. In this regard, explanatory leaflet, public meeting and so on may be used. This means, meeting held to exchange opinions and ideas.

3.3.5 Placation: This means some kind of participation that is made to suit or pacify one side to the detriment of others. In most cases, the policy makers satisfy only their whims and caprices and they gain tremendously in the proposed project, whereas, the people rarely benefit from it.

3.3.6 Partnership: This is a situation whereby the policy makers work hand-in-hand with the citizens of the community. It may also be defined as the association that exists between the citizen and the government. Under partnership, decisions are jointly made.

3.3.7 Delegated power: Here, authority is given to some people like councilors, senators and so on to represent the citizen governance and to defend their interests.

3.3.8 Citizen control: The public is in control and direct the policy makers to carry out responsibilities.

From the bottom of the ladder, the first two rungs (manipulation and therapy) could not be regarded as participation at all, while in the next three rungs (information, consultation and placation), there is what can be termed a relative degree of compensative participation. The last three rungs of the ladder (partnership, delegated power and citizen control) also implies a degree of citizen power, citizen control and citizen involvement.

3.4 Government and Governance

Governance, according to Agbola (2005), is a concept that is both overused and misunderstood. It is overused in the sense that it is often used interchangeably with Governing or Government; while its meaning is often understood in a number of contradictory ways, he concluded that whatever way it is viewed, Governance connotes horizontal interactive relationship between governance and other sectors of society[both private and public]. Therefore, governance lays emphasis on process of achieving one's aim and recognizes that power exists both inside and outside formal and constituted authorities. One may now say that governance is the cooperative efforts in the management of the urban affairs.

Government on the other hand may be defined as the constituted authority put in place to control and exercise control over political decision-making. Their function is to enforce laws and arbitrate conflicts (Wikipedia, 2012). There are various types of Government. These include; unitary, federalism among others. Nigeria is operating federation system with three tiers of Government. She had witnessed the military rule and presently experiencing democratic government.

3.4.1 Major Features of Democratic Government

The features include the following among others;

- a. There is more than one political party or individual for power
- b. The elections comes up at periodic interval so, no one holds office for life. Elections are usually conducted by secret balloting
- c. The competition in elections is open free and fair. There is no attempt to victimize anybody
- d. There are fundamental freedom, civil liberties, freedom of speech, religion and so on
- e. Decisions are arrived at by majority rule

- f. There is freedom of choice of candidate for elections and support for any political party.

Decisions are not taken quickly which may affect the policies or programmes that concern the populace.

3.4.2 Major Features of Military Government

As a result of the fact that Nigeria witnessed military government rule for a long period, it is essential to examine the features of military government. History reveals that Nigeria has had about 26 years of military rule, leaving the remaining to the civilian.

The features of the military government among others include.

- a. It is characterized by united command. The order is always from one person above.
- b. Authority is concentrated in one place. All the 3 arms of government are more or less concentrated in one single authority
- c. The actions of the government at times are unquestionable and unchallengeable
- d. The era is usually characterized by various human right abuses and absence of expression.
- e. Decision taken is not debatable or subject to public opinion in most cases.
- f. At times, the government is insensitive to public plight. The government can be inhuman in dealing with the populace. The major features of democratic government showed the ideal situation of public participation.

In order to know how public participation in governance is being practiced in Nigeria, Wards 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 of Ibadan South East Local Government Area were picked as cases for this study.

4. Summary of Findings of the Study

For the purpose of diagnosing how public participation in governance is being practiced in Nigeria. Two hundred and fifty respondents were sampled purposively and interviewed. The tables below reveal the outcome of the survey.

Table 4.1: Years of Residence in the Ward

S/No	Responses	Frequency	%
1	Below 5 years	50	20
2	6-10 years	40	16
3	11-15	60	24
4	Above 15 years	100	40
	Total	250	100

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

The table 4.1 above shows that 40% of the respondents have been living in the ward for more than fifteen years. This reveals that they should know much about what had and is happening within the ward.

Table 4.2: The Involvement of the Respondents in Politics.

S/No	Responses	Frequency	%
1	Yes	60	24
2	No	190	76
	Total	250	100

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

Table 4.2 revealed that majority (76%) of the respondents is not politicians. That means, that their responses are not likely to bias because they are neutral.

Table 4.3: Participation in Policy made by their Local Government

S/No	Responses	Frequency	%
1	Yes	40	16
2	No	210	84
	Total	250	100

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

From Table 4.3, it could be inferred that minority are involved in policy making in the wards under study as only 16% of the respondents said they had been involved in the policy formulation in the study area while majority of the citizens of the ward are left behind while making policies in Ibadan South East Government.

Table 4.4: Means by which Councilors Identify the People's Needs

S/No	Responses	Frequency	%
1	Through group/committee	30	12
2	Through individual complaints	-	-
3	Through ward meetings	10	4
4	Through observation	50	20
5	Don't Know	160	64
	Total	250	100

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

Table 4.4 shows that 64% of the people interviewed did not know how their councilors identify their needs. 20% said through observation while just 10 persons (4%) said through ward meetings. This means their level of participation in governance is very low.

Table 4.5: Various Committees People may Belong in the Wards

S/No	Responses	Frequency	%
1	Steering Committee	40	16
2	Project Committee	10	4
3	Finance Committee	-	-
4	Social Committee	20	8
5	None	180	72
	Total	250	100

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

Under ideal public participation every citizen should be involved (directly or indirectly) in governance. They should be in one committee or the other. Table 4.5 shows that 72% of the respondents do not belong to any committee in the ward. This means the level of participation of the public in governance is very low.

Table 4.6: Assessment of Councillor's Level of Performance in Meeting the Community Needs

S/No	Responses	Frequency	%
1	Excellent	10	4
2	Good	40	16
3	Poor	180	72
4	No response	20	8
	Total	250	100

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

Majority (72%) assessed the level of performance of their councillors to be poor. This is because they are not being carried along in government policies and programmes. It can then be inferred that the councillors are not good representatives of the wards.

The survey also revealed some constraints faced by the public in the course of participating in governance. These include;

i) Wrongly scheduled public meeting: Public meetings are scheduled at periods that are not convenient for community members to attend thereby restraining them from attending crucial meetings. Example is scheduling a meeting on Sunday morning, Friday or before 2:00 pm on working days.

ii) Break in communication: This was mentioned as one of the constraints: Many meetings were held thinking everybody in the wards were aware but they were not. This according to them hindered them from contributing because they were not at the meetings. Therefore, without proper communication or break in communication, public participation cannot be effective.

iii) Ignorance: This was another constraint revealed. Many of the respondents said they did not know they have the right to participate in decision making in their ward. This may be due to their low level of education and awareness.

iv) Bad influence of pressure group within their communities: Some respondents said there are some selfish pressure groups within their communities who want some initiatives to be credited to them. They then discourage other members of public from participating; this may be because they do not belong to the ruling party. They would not do and will discourage others that wanted to do.

v) Neglect of some interest group or social segregation .The respondents viewed this constraint from social, religion, and economic perspectives. According to them, in many situations the high income earners or the rich people are privileged to participate in governance. Their opinion is that the poor people have no new idea even if they have idea(s), they have no means of achieving these idea(s). So, where the rich people are, the poor should not talk. Also, the non natives are not counted as part of the community. This issue of segregation serves as a constraint to public participation.

5. Recommendation and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendation

The following recommendations are suggested to be able to achieve what can be referred to as ‘Good Governance’ in the local government, state and Nigeria as a whole:

- i. The populace should be made to identify the required developmental projects in their communities in order of priorities and these should be the projects that will be embarked upon in the community instead of imposing any project on the community
- ii. Every citizen irrespective of their tribe, racial group, religion, social status or geographical location should be involved in whichever policy that will affect their community
- iii. There should be proper enlightenment for the citizens on what is about to be done as this guides against conflicts.
- iv. Every citizen should be given directly or indirectly one responsibility or the other by way of belonging to different committees
- v. Meetings should be rightly scheduled so that no one or group shall be left out.
- vi. The elected representatives should see themselves as “servants” of their people, part of them and try to be transparent.

5.2 Conclusion

Many people have been disturbed in the past due to the ways in which government policies are being taken, and many families have been plunged into total suffering due to various government policies which failed to carry people along. The populace are suppose to have

input in Government policies. This is because they understand themselves and their communities.

We need to change our orientation from “as usual” government as usual, thinking as usual, acting as usual, to another concept that will change our societies for better (Onibokun, 1999). Public participation as one of the administrative techniques should be ideally employed for the purpose of good governance in Nigeria.

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