



Examining the contributing factors for the successful implementation of city development strategy in Qazvin City, Iran



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 August 2013

Received in revised form 2 May 2014

Accepted 3 May 2014

Keywords:

City Development Strategy (CDS)

Success factors

CDS implementation

Qazvin

Iran

ABSTRACT

In 2007, Qazvin City in Iran embarked on a program of implementing a city development strategy (CDS) to cope with new urban challenges. Numerous cities in several developing countries have implemented CDSs. However, in several cases, a mismatch was found between the formulated strategies and CDS implementation. The CDS in Qazvin City was instigated in order to address problems in the nation's urban planning system. As the project progressed, the CDS became the primary mechanism through which the city resolved emergent urban development challenges. In light of the city's limited experience with CDS implementation, we thought it prudent to investigate the factors that would facilitate successful CDS implementation in the Iranian context. The predictive factors of successful CDS implementation have previously been identified in the CDS literature. We surveyed all participants during the CDS planning process. Local authorities, central government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local experts comprised the pool of respondents. For this study, we employed the partial least squares – structural equation modeling technique to analyze the data. The results showed a positive relationship between the success factors and the CDS implementation in Qazvin. Consensus building, effective participation, institutionalization, leadership, and capacity building are the determining factors of successful CDS. These factors have a positive and strong effect on CDS implementation. Our findings aid in identifying successful CDS planning system guidelines in the context of Qazvin and Iran.

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Introduction

In response to the issues on the comprehensive urban planning approach, the Urban Upgrading and Housing Reform Program (UUHRP) of Iran, in cooperation with the World Bank and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD), earmarked three cities, namely, Qazvin, Anzali, and Shahrood, in which city development strategies (CDSs) were applied in 2007. The CDSs were formulated to address problems associated with centralized and rigid planning strategies. The CDSs were also undertaken to provide stakeholders with access to local information that would enable them to participate in the planning process and create a more flexible and adaptive plan that would accommodate a rapidly changing urban and global environment (Cities Alliance, 2005b). Monitoring of CDS implementation, especially during the initial stages, is vital because poor implementation has historically been

one of the main constraints of existing urban plans in Iran (Panahandeh Khah, Farhoodi, Gharakhlou-N, & Ghadami, 2009; Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 2003).

CDSs have been applied to Iranian cities due to conflicts arising from current urban planning approaches in the country. The dominant urban planning approach in Iran consists of developing a comprehensive and detailed plan. Several studies have already demonstrated the ineffectiveness of this approach and the need for a more strategic approach to urban planning (Panahandeh Khah et al., 2009; Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 2003). However, implementation remains a major concern, as evidenced by previous urban planning projects in Iran and international CDS experiences (Cities Alliance, 2006b; Alliance, 2011; Terms of References [ToR] of Qazvin CDS, 2007).

Qazvin City was selected as the focal point of this study as it is this city's second attempt at implementing CDS, with a strategy developed by UUHRP in 2007. An earlier CDS was developed by the municipality of Qazvin in 2006, but was not implemented due to a variety of reasons, including limited consensus among key stakeholders, local authorities (i.e., municipality and city council) having insufficient power to apply and approve the urban plans, and an unclear locus of CDS in the overall Iranian urban

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planning system. Therefore, it is imperative for the second Qazvin City CDS implementation that a framework be identified that would facilitate successful CDS implementation.

CDS refers to the preparation of strategic planning methods that enable cities to cope with new and emerging urban challenges (Didier, Morange, & Peyroux, 2013; ECON Analysis & Center for Local Government, University of Technology, Sydney [ECON & CLG, UTS], 2005). More than 200 cities worldwide have adopted the CDS approach (Keivani, 2010). CDS is a participatory approach in which local stakeholders are involved in setting a vision based on an analysis of the city (Lipietz, 2008; Parnell & Robinson, 2006). Stakeholders employ partnership-based approaches to realize the identified vision (Partidário, Paddon, Eggenberger, Chau, & Van Duyen, 2008). CDS emphasizes strategic formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Kim, 2002; Rasoolimanesh, Badarulzaman, & Jaafar, 2013). The formulation of CDS involves a dynamic and flexible process that responds to opportunities, urban challenges, and development (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2004; Partidário et al., 2008).

However, global CDS implementation experiences demonstrate varying levels of success relative to the conditions of the cities involved (Cities Cities Cities Alliance, 2011; Partidário et al., 2008). Despite the implementation focus of CDS (Cities Cities Cities Alliance, 2006b), an inconsistent relationship between CDS formulation and strategy implementation emerged in several cases (Cities Alliance, 2011). Well-formulated strategies are useful and effective only when successfully implemented (Atkinson, 2006; Noble, 1999).

CDS experiences worldwide have afforded a number of lessons, identifying factors contributing toward successful CDS implementation, and several studies have noted the futility of unimplemented CDS (Cities Alliance 2006b, 2005a, 2009; ECON & CLG, UTS, 2005; GHK Group, 2000; Parnell & Robinson, 2006). In this study, we aim to investigate the factors affecting CDS implementation in Qazvin and to identify those that contribute to its success. In this paper, we explore core CDS concepts, evolution, and success factors; we then examine trends of urbanization and urban planning in Iran and Qazvin. With reference to our study, we describe our research methods, analysis and findings, followed by a discussion of those findings and our conclusions.

City development strategy definitions and concepts

In essence, CDS is a participatory process that focuses on identifying and capitalizing on the urban opportunities available in cities and developing sound strategies to respond to the economic realities based on leveraging competitive advantages (Parnell & Robinson, 2006). CDS aims to improve the capacity of stakeholders in thinking about the future and managing the city more efficiently to attract investments from national and global markets (ADB, 2004). The focus of CDS is on improving urban governance, emphasizing financial responsibility, and identifying priorities for action and investment through comprehensive action plans (Partidário et al., 2008). CDS's are formulated after evaluating the results of economic growth scenarios and are employed to promote competitiveness (Mukhija, 2006; Robinson, 2008). CDS is not a rigidly defined planning methodology; instead, it encompasses a strategic planning approach for cities to nurture and develop value-added characteristics (ECON & CLG, UTS, 2005; Partidário et al., 2008).

Local stakeholders create a vision for their city and formulate CDS through a participatory process (Didier et al., 2013; Lipietz, 2008). The planning process includes analysis of the development perspectives for the city, identification of investment and development priorities, and implementation of the unified vision by using partnership-based approaches (Kim, 2002; Parnell & Robinson, 2006; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2013). Developing cities, especially

those with limited financial and human resources and those that are in a competitive and unpredictable economic environment, have adopted this approach to achieve their objectives (Partidário et al., 2008). Effective CDS can attract capital and result in a more prudent utilization of resources (Cities Cities Cities Alliance., 2006a).

Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and China were among the early adopters of CDS, their projects having been funded by the World Bank. The first phase of CDS was influenced by the World Bank's Urban Strategy and focused on four key themes: "livability," "competitiveness," "bankability," and "good governance and management" (World Bank, 2000). These themes determined CDS through the late 1990s and were supported by the work of Michael Porter on urban competitiveness (1995) as a response to the economic development priorities of the World Bank (Cities Alliance., 2000; Parnell & Robinson, 2006).

The Cities Alliance was established in 1999 by a conglomerate of international agencies to prepare to address globalization and decentralization challenges in cities. Cities Alliance promoted a CDS approach that focused on the poor, with poverty reduction and achieving suitable social and economic conditions for all citizens being the ultimate goal (Cities Alliance, 2000; Parnell & Robinson, 2006; Partidário et al., 2008; Robinson, 2008). Several cities also emphasized improving local governance, sustainable development, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, among others (ECON & CLG, UTS, 2005). A second focus for Cities Alliance (2006a) emerged after the 2004 Hanoi Conference. This new focus promoted city competitiveness in order to spur economic growth. Experience demonstrated that a comprehensive understanding of local economic conditions and the capacity to identify a city's competitive advantages were essential basic steps in the development of effective strategies for the promotion of economic resurgence (Cities Alliance., 2007; Parnell & Robinson, 2006). Consequently, more than 200 cities, predominantly in developing countries, have applied CDS as a means to re-identify themselves.

Globally, CDS implementation projects have enjoyed varying levels of success and have involved a broad array of city conditions (Partidário et al., 2008). Despite the focus on CDS implementation (Cities Alliance, 2006b; Pillay, Tomlinson, & Du Toit, 2006), disparities between CDS formulation and strategy implementation have emerged in several cases (Cities Alliance, 2011). Successful strategy implementation is essential if cities are to apply CDS to confront challenges, achieve goals, and attain success (Partidário et al., 2008).

The review of the CDS literature highlights several success factors that should be considered to improve the level of implementation success. Regardless of the CDS objectives, these success factors facilitate CDS implementation. In the following section, we review the contribution of these factors toward successful CDS implementation.

CDS success factors

Previous experiences with strategic planning and CDS have resulted in a number of lessons having been learned and the success factors facilitating their success identified. These factors are essential in the planning process and can affect the success of future CDS implementations (Partidário et al., 2008). A plan will be successful only if the different success factors are considered during the planning process (Bryson, 2004). Achieving a balanced relationship between the objectives and what is practically feasible, with the participation of key stakeholders, is essential for success (Graaf & Dewulf, 2010). The participation of key stakeholders is critical because they possess the necessary resources for effective CDS implementation (Lipietz, 2008; Partidário et al., 2008).

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