

3rd Global Conference on Business and Social Science-2015, GCBSS-2015, 16-17 December
015, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Public Participation Efficiency in Traditional Cities of Developing Countries: A Perspective of Urban Development in Bida, Nigeria

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Abstract

Public participation as a process is to incorporate citizens into decision making in developing countries. Despite axiomatic desirability in public participation, there has been insignificant motivation by the citizens. Cities which may involve more redevelopment project, public participation is more complex in developing the urban economy. The study aims at determining factors of public participation efficiency by examining the mechanism of participatory process in Nigeria. 344 questionnaires were administered; using principal component analysis method. These findings suggest areas to improve participation programme in Planning and management of socio-economic activities in cities.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the 3rd GCBSS-2015

Keywords: Information exchange, citizen involvement, participation, urban development.

1. Introduction

Public participation is a process whereby stakeholders and members of public provide input into law making so as to influence the outcome of their decisions (Nabatchi, 2014). However, in contemporary societies, public participation is yet to accomplish its target. The challenge in accomplishing target can be traced to the inefficiency of participatory practices in relation to the mechanisms in facilitating citizens to participate. In this regard, efficiency of the programme refers to the quality of mechanisms or factors of raising awareness, understanding and facilitating

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citizen's participation in urban development. These mechanisms are; information exchange, citizen involvement and engagement in relation to their attributes (Deitz, and Stern, 2008). These mechanisms are not effective to guarantee the efficiency of the programme, especially in the traditional cities of developing countries (Muse, 2014 and Pourjafar, 2014). A traditional city refers to the pattern of urban settlement development that human civilization has built which emerged for many centuries before the development of automobile or railroads (Encyclopaedia, 1975). This implies that, settlements are relatively unplanned and they developed through human colonizing environment with major socio-economic activities surrounded by residential houses. These cities in the development of contemporary societies perform significant role: preservation of cultural heritage, administrative headquarters of rural communities, maintenance of dual city concept, and centre for socio-economic growth and development in rural communities among others (Samuel, and Adagbasa, 2014).

Urban development in traditional cities is more complex due to constraining factors namely; organic settlement pattern, lack of plan, and lack of effective development control among other factors (Ojigi, 2012). Very few studies dealt with the situation of inefficiency of the mechanisms determining accomplishment of public participation target in traditional cities of developing countries (Creighton, 2004; Muse, 2014; 2013; Nabatchi, 2014 and Madumo, 2014). This study examines the current mechanisms to identify factors of public participation efficiency in Bida, Nigeria. The study focuses on information exchange and citizen involvement in examining public participation efficiency. The paper starts with literature, which comprises of introduction, concept of participation in relation to democracy and the legal framework of public participation in Nigeria. The paper also discussed methodology and finally is the results and findings were concluded with suggestion on how to improve public participation efficiency.

2. Democracy and Participation Efficiency

In 1864, Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as 'government of the people, by the people and for the people' (Buckwalter, 2012). This implies that, public participation programme is consistent with the above definition because, it is designed for public, seeking for public input in decision-making process and purposely for the benefit of public at large. Thus, participation being a tool of facilitating and protecting the interest of citizens has mechanisms of its efficiency in developing human communities (Deitz, and Stern, 2008). These mechanisms are information exchange, citizen involvement and engagement. Information exchange is considered as the foundation of public participation exercise because, it is circumscribing on means of awareness and understanding of the propose plan or policy by the citizens. Awareness must be made adequate and effective in motivating citizens to participate in the planning process. This mechanism is strongly supported by its' attributes such as; public meetings, public exhibitions, and media services. This implies that, citizen participation requires effectiveness of information exchange which facilitates awareness and understanding of programme. However, in developing countries, information exchange is not efficient because its attributes are not effective (Samuel, and Adagbasa, 2014). Therefore, there is a need of developing means of promoting efficiency of information exchange to guarantee public participation efficiency in urban development.

Citizen Involvement and Engagement: This is referring to working directly with government in planning process to ensure that, public concern and aspirations are considered (IAP2, 2014). The attributes of involvement are; deliberative polling, workshop, future search conference, online deliberation, use of questionnaire, citizen juries among others. In the case of engagement, its attribute are; policy dialogue, rule-making negotiation, partnership and joint fact findings among others (Dietz, and Stern, 2008). In citizen involvement and engagement, there is usually a predefined group selected to represent diverse public which include individual citizens and group of representatives from concern and interested citizens (Creighton, 2004). However, there are challenges in citizen involvement and engagement, resulted from poor selection of representatives by government without due consultation with the concern citizens and they take decision without considering the interest of public at large (Slavikova and Jilkova, 2011). In this regard, involvement and engagement does not guarantee efficiency of programme because, there is no adequate consultation with concern citizens in adopting the mechanisms which is a great challenge in the practices of public participation programme.

2.1 Legal Framework and Public Participation in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the initial concept of physical planning emerged from the Town and Country planning Ordinance No. 4 of 1946 which incorporates environmental planning and management (Tabiti, and Ayobami, 2011). Environment is a

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