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## **Critical Analysis of Public Participation Influence on Project Implementation in Kenya: A Review of Kajiado District Development Plan 2008 – 2012**

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### **Abstract:**

*The public sector worldwide has been under increasing pressure to improve public service delivery by enhancing outputs and outcomes. Specific targets at the global level have been articulated in the millennium development goals (MDGs), which have been domesticated in the Kenya Vision 2030 and operationalised through the District Development Plans (DDPs) in the rural areas to, inter alia, alleviate poverty. Despite these and previous advancements in rural development approaches the gap between public policy as formulated and implementation remains. This paper analyses the influence of public participation in bridging that persistent gap in Kenya through a case study of sample projects in the Kajiado District Development Plan 2008 - 2012. The assessment has been informed by theories on public policy implementation, public participation, and project management. The research findings show that: (i) only 44% of the projects have been successfully implemented; (ii) there is a strong correlation between public participation and project implementation; (iii) public participation significantly influences project implementation; (iv) merely 24% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed there was public participation during project implementation; (v) 87% of the projects fall under the low-ambiguity low-conflict category of Matland's ambiguity-conflict model; and (vi) some socio-cultural practices have hindered public participation. A further research is required to determine the optimal level of public participation beyond which there would be diminishing returns. That research would need to take cognisance of the administrative top-down implementation approach that Matland advocates for projects with low-ambiguity low-conflict characteristics. Moreover, given that public participation has been anchored in the Kenya Constitution 2010, this should be routinized in the work of government employees by incorporating essential elements in the employee performance contracts system that the government has adopted and implemented as a tool for improved public service delivery and efficiency.*

**Keywords:** *Public Participation; Project Implementation; Policy Implementation; Rural Development; Millennium Development Goals*

### **1. Introduction**

Kenya's development aspirations have been articulated in the long-term development blueprint, Kenya Vision 2030, which was launched in 2008. With linkage to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Kenya Vision 2030 aims to create a 'globally competitive and prosperous country with a high quality of life by 2030', and transforming Kenya into "a newly industrialized, middle-income country" (Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, 2008). It was envisaged that the implementation of Kenya Vision 2030 would be achieved through a series of five-year Medium Term Plans (MTPs) and actualized through the District Development Plans (DDPs) in the rural areas. The first DDPs for the period 2008-2012 were prepared for each of the 148 districts that existed in 2008. The district as a focal point for national development process is not a new concept, having gained eminence with the launch in 1983 of the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) strategy, but can also be traced back to 1970s with the Special Rural Development Programmes (SRDPs) in six districts (Kiigeh, 2003).

The rationale for DFRD and the success or DDPs was to secure community participatory development resulting in superior and sustainable implementation of government initiatives. That approach resulted in designing coordination mechanism between the central government and the devolved or decentralized implementation units. Indeed, the approach has now taken centre-stage with provision of devolved government in the new Constitution of Kenya 2010 whose objects include: to give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making

decisions affecting them; and to recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development (Government of Kenya, 2010).

(Mukui, 2005) argued that some of the reasons why development interventions have not succeeded in achieving their objects include: lack of a legal framework for public participation in planning and implementation; incomplete decentralization that does not empower the beneficiary communities; and non-participatory planning process that makes people not to identify with the projects, resulting in lack of ownership and eventual sustainability.

**2. Statement of the Problem**

There are widespread claims of a public participatory process in formulating and implementing the government’s rural public projects and initiatives to ensure successful implementation and attainment of desired objectives. Nonetheless, successful project implementations are few and far apart. Therefore, this study sets out to investigate the persistent public policy formulation-implementation gap by analysing the influence of public participation on project implementation.

**3. Literature Review**

This section describes and expounds on theoretical and empirical review on public participation, public policy implementation, and project management.

*3.1. Theoretical Review*

The theoretical framework for this study is illustrated in Figure 1 below and as expounded.

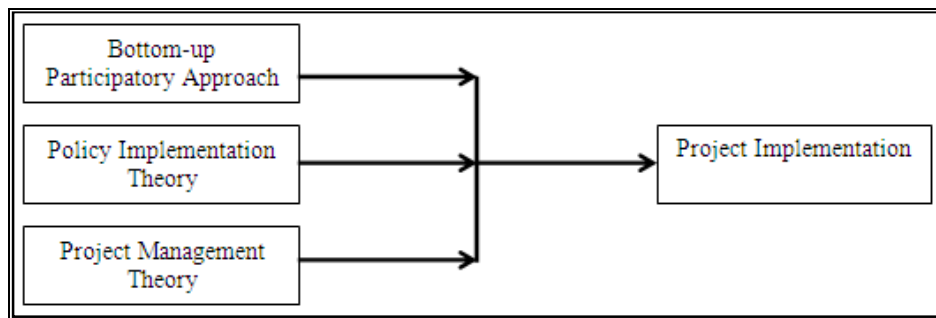


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3.1.1. Participatory Approaches

(Matland, 1995) observed that the field of policy implementation is split into two major models top-down (administrative) and bottom-up (participatory). Bottom-up theorists emphasize target groups and service providers, arguing that policy really is made at the local level. The expectation is that conditions at the micro-level of implementation dominate and should be encouraged to vary (Matland, 1995). According to (Paudel, 2009), critics of the bottom-up models argue that too much emphasis is laid on the autonomy of local implementers whereas policy control needs to be done by actors whose power to formulate policies is derived by virtue of them being elected representatives. (Schofield, 2001) argued that it is possible to influence the goals and strategies of the local actors by determining their institutional structure, resources made available to them and their access to the actual implementation space. On the other hand, top-down theorists see policy designers as the central actors and focus their attention on factors that can be manipulated at the central level. These centrally located actors are seen as most relevant to producing the desired outcomes. In this model, the policy is clear and conflict is low (Matland, 1995). Most reviewers now agree that some convergence of the set models is necessary. It involves linking the macro-level variables of the top-down model to the micro-level variables of the bottom-up model. In this regard, (Matland, 1995) proposed the “Ambiguity-Conflict” model that reconciled the previous models by concentrating on the theoretical significance of ambiguity and conflict for policy implementation. In this model ambiguity is not a flaw in a policy but rather a mechanism that can ease agreement both at the legitimation and formulation stage. According to (Berman, 1980), as cited in (Paudel, 2009), the choice of either approach depends on the context of the policy as depicted in a matrix, below.

FACTOR	APPROACH	
	TOP-DOWN	BOTTOM-UP
Scope of change	Incremental	Radical, large
Validity of technology	Certain	Uncertain
Goal conflict	Low	High
Institutional setting	Tightly coupled	Loosely coupled
Environment stability	Stable	Unstable, dynamic

Table 1: Factors Determining Scope for Participatory Approach

### 3.1.2. Public Policy Implementation Theories

Policy implementation has been defined variously as: “the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but can be in form of important executive orders or court decisions” (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983); and those actions by people that are directed at achievement of objectives set forth in the policy decision (Meter & Horn, 1974). Implementation is said to commence once goals and objectives have been established by policy decisions and funds committed (Meter & Horn, 1974). Implementation involves both organizational systems and processes and actions of members of the organization. Implementation implies processes and ability to convert policy into action by operationalizing the strategy in form of programmes.

### 3.1.3. Project Management Theories

Policy implementation renders itself to project management in that it comprises either a single project, a series of projects (programme), or a series of programmes (Ernø-Kjølhede, 2000). (Koskela & Howell, 2002) assert that project management should reveal how action contributes to the set goals, which include: (i) getting the intended deliverables produced in general; (ii) internal goals, such as cost minimization and level of utilisation; and (iii) external goals related to the needs of the customer, for example, quality, dependability and flexibility.

## *3.2. Empirical Literature*

The empirical literature review examines the sustained efforts globally and locally in Kenya to address the public policy formulation-implementation gap.

### 3.2.1. Public Participation in Rural Development

The need for community participatory development has been recognised as imperative to achieve superior and sustainable implementation of government initiatives. (OECD, 2001) states that successful policy formulation and implementation approaches at a country level are built on appropriate participation and thereby are able to: (i) set priorities and establish a long-term vision; (ii) promote convergence between already existing planning frameworks; (iii) promote ownership; and (iv) demonstrate national commitment.

In Kenya the concept of participatory development has underpinned national development strategies with districts as focal points. These strategies include: (i) the Special Rural Development Programmes (SRDPs) in six districts in 1970s; (ii) the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) launched in 1983; and (iii) the District Development Plans launched in 2008. Some critics of these rural development strategies have described them as populist (Kügeh, 2003), attributing shortcomings to lack of devolution of power and decision-making necessary for effective public participation.

A number of government initiatives specifically demand citizenry participation. For example, the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) process in Kenya requires local authorities to hold consultative meetings with civil society organizations to agree on the broad allocation of the budget. However, the extent of real citizen involvement remains slow and ineffective. The methods for community mobilization (e.g. word of mouth, chiefs' *barazas*, or through advertisement in the media) and mere attendance to meetings should not be misconstrued to mean public participation. Indeed a previous review of the Kajiado District Development Plan (Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, 2009) identified several impediments to policy implementation success that included non-participation by sections of the community, notably women and youth.

### 3.2.2. Policy Implementation and Project Management

According to (Meter & Horn, 1974), as cited in (Paudel, 2009), challenges in policy implementation have persisted for several reasons: (i) an easy assumption that once policy is formulated then implementation will occur; (ii) the growth of planning, programming, and budgeting systems led to neglect of implementation; (iii) the difficulty of the task has discouraged study in view of serious boundary problems, the multiple approaches and large number of conceptual and empirical variables that are difficult to measure, and the need for attention to multiple actions over an extended period of time; and (iv) studies are hampered by an inadequate theoretical framework within which policy implementation can be critically examined (Policy Implementation Thesis, 2012).

## *3.3. Research Gap*

Previous studies and construction of rural development approaches have attempted to identify the causes of the public policy formulation-implementation gap, especially in the context of alleviating rural poverty. Despite knowledge advances, that formulation-implementation gap still persists. Hence, the need for more research. This study examines the extent to which public participation has affected the success of project implementation under Kenya government's rural development strategies, taking Kajiado District Development Plan 2008-2012 as a case study.

## *3.4. Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 2 below.

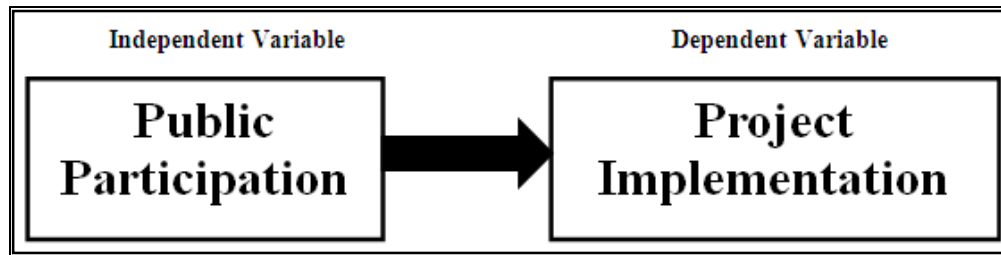


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

#### 4. Research Methodology

This section describes the research design, research site, the target population, sample size, sampling technique, data collection method, and data analysis.

##### 4.1. Research Design

This research was conducted using a descriptive research design (Kothari, 2004). It involved assessing how public participation (independent variable) affects project implementation (dependent variable). Tests have been performed on the research hypotheses articulated. For each variable, several indicators (measurements) were identified and compiled into a questionnaire format (a structured instrument) guided by issues obtained from the pertinent theories and empirical review. These measurements took categorical values based on a Likert Scale of 1-5 (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A mean value of those measurements was calculated to give a continuous value for the independent variable. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated on the measurements to assess the reliability of the research instrument. Primary data was obtained from respondents comprising a stratified random sample of projects according to defined sectors of the political economy. Respondents included heads of departments or projects at the district headquarters. The data was encoded onto a computer. The resultant sample data was analysed using STATA (Version MP 11.2) software package, for co-relational statistics between the project implementation (dependent variable) and public participation (independent variable). Linear regression model was developed showing project implementation and public participation. The regression coefficients were tested for statistical significance. Conclusions have been drawn from the results of the data.

##### 4.2. Research Site

The study was conducted at the Kajiado North District headquarters. It covered projects articulated in the Kajiado District Development Plan 2008–2012 that were within the jurisdiction of the new administrative unit following sub-division of the hitherto larger district.

##### 4.3. Target Population

The target population consisted of the Kajiado DDP implementation actors, being the heads of departments or projects at the District level, in all the 9 developmental sectors under the DDP. A summary of the project under each sector is shown in Table 2 below.

	DDP Sector	No. of Projects	Sample Size
1.	Agriculture and Rural Development	16	3
2.	Trade, Tourism and Industry	8	2
3.	Physical Infrastructure*	48	10
4.	Environment, Water and Sanitation	21	4
5.	Human Resources Development	37	7
6.	Research, Innovation and Technology	4	1
7.	Governance, Justice, Law and Order	18	4
8.	Public Administration	3	1
9.	Special Programmes	20	4
	Totals	175	36
*Included 46 road projects			

Table 2: Target Projects

Source: Kajiado DDP 2008 – 2012

##### 4.4. Sample Size

(Saunders, Lewis, & Hornhill, 2007) state that the larger the absolute sample size, the closer it is to the normal distribution, even if the population is not normally distributed. It has been observed that mean values of sample size of 30 is usually very close to the

mean values of a larger sample. Thus, as a rule of the thumb a minimum sample size of 30 is acceptable for statistic analysis (Roscoe, 1975; Fisher, 2007). For this study, that sample size translates to about 17% of the population (projects). However, the percentage was increased to 20% to allow for non-responsive cases.

#### 4.5. Sampling Technique

A stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample to ensure all developmental sectors are represented (see Table 2 above), in proportion to the number of projects therein.

#### 4.6. Data Collection

Questionnaires were used as the primary data collection instrument. These were distributed before hand to the respondents and where requested one-on-one sessions to clarify any queries raised by the respondents. Responses were captured using a 5-point Likert scale, which was adopted as the most commonly used rating scale (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The items therein were in declarative form. Provision was also made for additional comments that would help to corroborate or clarify a response.

#### 4.7. Pre-Testing

The questionnaire was pilot tested to check the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was computed to determine how items correlate among themselves. That way it was possible to determine whether items on the questionnaire would yield consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

### 5. Data Analysis and Presentation

Co-relational statistics has been used to show the nature and magnitude of relationships between the dependent variable and the independent variables. A linear regression model has been developed between the dependent variable and independent variable. Data has been manipulated using a statistics software package, Stata Version MP 11.2.

#### 5.1. Hypotheses Testing

Since the coefficient of determination,  $r^2 = 0.75$  (Table 3) then it shows that 75% of variations in project implementation is explained by public participation. It is only 25% of the variations in project implementation that remains unexplained and hence absorbed by the error or a parameter not introduced in the model. Therefore, this indicates a strong correlation between project implementation and public participation.

The result of linear regression analysis (Table 3) is expressed as an equation follows:

$$Y = 0.753 + 0.849X$$

Since the statistic  $F = 77.86$ , then at 5% level of significance we reject the null hypothesis regarding both the coefficient on public participation ( $P = 0.000$ ) and the y-intercept ( $P = 0.055$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis that the coefficient of public participation is statistically significant as is that of y-intercept. Thus, from the data collected it can be concluded public participation has a significant influence on project implementation.

Goodness of Fit Analysis				
Sample Size	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	F	P
28	0.75	0.74	77.86	0.000

Individual Significance Test (t-Test)				
Item	Coefficient	Std Error	t-Value	(p-Value)
(Constant)	0.753	0.376	8.82	0.000
Public Participation	0.849	0.096	2.0	0.055

*Table 3: Linear Regression Results*  
*Source: Research Data*

#### 5.2. The Case for Public Participation

The following Figure 3 categorizes the DDP projects according to the Matland's Ambiguity-Conflict model to assess the case for applying public participation towards successful project implementations. The mapping uses mean scores derived from data elements in the questionnaire that were meant for this purpose. The mean scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). On the graph those means appear as a mark ("dot"). The actual number of projects under each mark is shown in the frequencies tabulated in Table 4. For example there are 5 observations at the ambiguity-conflict mean scores intersection (1, 1), while there are 6 observations at intersection (2, 2).

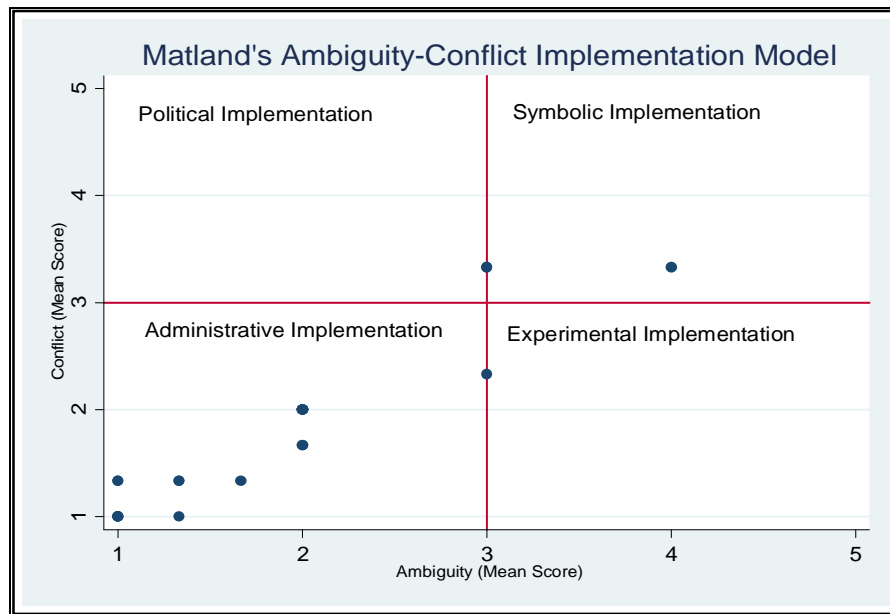


Figure 3: Scope for Public Participation (Matland’s Ambiguity-Conflict Model)

. tab2 conflict ambigui ty		Mean Scores						
-> tabulation of conflict by ambigui ty								
conflict		1	1. 333333	1. 666667	2	3	4	Total
1	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	6
1. 333333	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
1. 666667	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
2	2	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
2. 333333	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
3. 333333	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Total		7	3	1	8	3	1	23

Table 3: Frequencies of Ambiguity and Conflict Ratings

5.3. Discussion

This section provides a discussion of the comments provided by the respondents alongside the scores in the questionnaires to clarify those scores, as well as assessing the scope for applying public participation under Matland’s Ambiguity-Conflict model.

5.3.1. Public Participation Qualitative Data

The concept of public participation has often been exercised through representatives such as committees or stakeholders forums (e.g. Roads Committee, Security Committee, Project Management Committee (PMC), School Management Committee, Parents Teachers Associations (PTA), Agricultural Stakeholders Forum, and District Health Stakeholders Forum). Although consultative meetings are reported to have been held whereby men, women and youth attended, comments by the respondents suggest that experts and policy-formulation bureaucrats have had more influence in decision-making over the communities.

The use of such techniques as Rapid Rural Appraisal has been recognised as promoting involvement of communities. Also, respondents acknowledged that an explanation of the benefits from a project contributes towards minimizing resistance by a community to a project, as widely expected. Knowledge about the need for effective community participation abounds. For example, this is well captured in the objectives for a stakeholder’s forum under the Community Empowerment and Institutional Support Project (CEISP). But there is still a problem of implementation, which is the object of this research.

The nomadic and pastoral lifestyle of a significant target beneficiary community has affected implementation of some projects, for example education, whereby children miss classes during drought periods. In the semi-arid areas the planned use of local labour to undertake projects (e.g. building classrooms) has not been forthcoming.

Notwithstanding problems elsewhere, there have been some notable positive initiatives towards promoting community participation. For example, in an education project, the children were allowed on some specific days to engage in religion, songs, dances, attire and drama. Local leaders and communities have also contributed funding towards education.

The promotion of gender parity and youth inclusion has been noted (for example 30% male representation in the women enterprise fund). Also, in the management of projects (e.g. water projects), women who have hitherto been without leadership role have come to be accepted as equally good candidate managers, besides the need to comply with constitutional requirements of the

one-third gender representation. There are, nonetheless, some projects where equitable representation falls short (e.g. school management committees).

Additional indicators of public participation and consequently ownership have been noted beyond the ones the questionnaire contemplated. Examples include: the uptake and loan repayment under the women enterprise fund project; the increased enrolment in schools as a result of an education project; persistent enquiries by community members at the offices of the implementing agents about the progress made (e.g. completion of Ngong Stadium); communities providing security over assets in the projects (e.g. water boreholes and distribution networks); the community lobbying local leaders and the government for certain services (e.g. Chiefs offices and Administration Police Lines); ceremonies to mark achievements (e.g. distribution of cattle in a restocking project); embracing new practices over old ones (e.g. use of maternity facilities instead of traditional birth attendants); communities turning up to receive services (e.g. children immunization).

Sensitivity to some socio-cultural practices has been observed in some projects to ensure acceptance and success (e.g. incorporation of existing community leadership structures; the role and importance of age groups as a unit of community mobilization; vesting the ownership of cattle, and the decision-making thereto, in men regardless of who purchased the animals).

Nonetheless, challenges remain. For example, in the research site with a significant Maasai community, men continue to be the decision makers even on matters where the implementers are women (e.g. in soil and water conservation initiatives). Getting common interest groups that can work together cohesively has also been a challenge (e.g. in an agricultural project) due to, in some cases, the diversity of some subtle interests at an individual level. This is compounded by attempts to change the lifestyles of people, for example pastoral communities into farmers.

To minimize resistance to projects, it is notable in some projects the communities have been offered alternative approaches commensurate with their resources and capability (e.g. different methods for soil and water conservation). Elsewhere at a meeting of Ngong Agricultural Stakeholders Forum (NASF), which is one of such initiatives supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, it was observed that whereas such forums serve to voice the needs and priorities of stakeholders, they are nonetheless too weak to effectively engage and influence the action plans of the policy makers.

### 5.3.2. Scope for Public Participation Among Projects

A majority of the projects (87%), as depicted in, are within the Matland's low-ambiguity low-conflict quadrangle. In this quadrangle, Matland advocates for an "administrative" top-down implementation approach, whereby the focus is about articulating instructions on what needs to be done, providing the necessary resources to undertake the task, and monitoring performance. Nonetheless, several projects (13%) fall under other quadrangles, thereby rendering themselves to the other implementation approaches advocated by Matland.

## **6. Conclusion**

The rate of successful project implementations remains low (44%). If this trend is to be reversed then remedial actions would have to be directed towards aspects that enhance successful project implementation, and elimination of those ones that hinder project implementation.

Public participation influences the success of project implementations. The diverse nature of projects and socio-cultural practices calls for different implementation approaches rather than a uniform approach that has hitherto tended to inform the government's project planning and management practices. Arguably, multiple approaches would have to be weighed against benefits that accrue from standardised approaches such as resource control, enforcement of quality standards, accountability and delivery timeframes.

Given that only 24% of the respondents agreed there was public participation it could be argued that if public participation was increased, other factors equal, it would increase the success of project implementation.

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