DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC POLICY IN KENYA: GIVING VOICE TO CITIZENS

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ABSTRACT

Decision-making in governance is primarily centered on issues that relate to power and people's voice. Citizen participation are essential to democracy and democratic governance in any given country. The study found out that a leader has to manage public relations and carefully dealing with political aspects and stakeholders. Democratic governance occurs in every organization covering private and public organization. Representatives may distort citizens' demands to suit their political preferences as, citizens reported that the recruitment of those participating was not on merit, and need to be connected with political leaders making it unfair. On merit, it may lead to participation in a protest rally to use as an avenue to express (dis-)agreement with government policies. Citizens are confused and alienated by governing voters. Influence over policy is limited, and they become further disenchanted with democracy.

Keywords: Decision-making, Citizen Participation, Democracy, Democratic Governance, Voter

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Democracy has been considered the foundation of change in modern era social and development processes. It is considered the guarantor of responsive and accountable governments and in an unprejudiced society that protects, respects, and fulfills people's human rights, through democratic processes. Democracy can be a system of government in which power is vested in the hands of the citizens. The elements of citizen participation are essential to democracy and democratic governance in any given country. The leader has to manage public relations and carefully dealing with political aspects and stakeholders. A representative and participatory democracy is built on citizen engagement or participation and government responsiveness. Transparent democracies are responsible for monitoring and serving as a precondition for the new mode of e-governance. Public participation is successful where citizens have no options in engaging in a particular activity in service delivery (Alozie et al. 2011).

2.0 DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY

Democratic governance can occur in every organization covering private and public organization. In conventional democracy, the people or the legislature are the primary sources of legitimate political power (Prasad, 2017). Democracy, intrinsically, is not merely an idealized theory on how the government ought to be, its aims or content of the law or government; however, it postulates that the opinions of the majority guide those aims and features. Unlike other systems such as monarchies, totalitarianism, oligarchies, among others, democracy requires constant checks by the people. Democratic, majoritarian, elections are not a guarantee that those elected are competent or good for governance. Different polities, therefore, use the democratic process to achieve different aims, some to achieve liberty,

others to promote values such as egalitarianism, nationalism, among many others. Additionally, democracy offers a peaceful way of decision-making for groups of any size. The idea is that everyone has a say and a commitment to respect the decision that wins (Cornwall, Robbins & Lieres, 2011). The decision does not have to be necessarily a good one, but the democratic process offers legitimacy.

Democracy is an old practice, and the current procedures are only modifications of the methods tested over time. Many cultures have had, at a given time, their leaders chosen and approved by the people; and changed laws after deliberation with the people. Responsible governments consider the needs and aspirations of their citizenship while formulating policies (Sunday, 2010). Modern democracy, although founded on Athenian principles, evolved in Britain and France before advancing to other countries. Although there ought to be discourses on democracy and ideal political leadership, there is relatively low deliberation on democratic citizenship in contemporary society (Amnesty International, 2012). Democracy was developed due to the dissatisfaction of the excesses of the existing power of the time. These excesses include lack of accountability, exploitation, ineptitude, among others. There is a constant push and pull in democracies between the rule of law defending personal liberties and restricting government and the rule of the people being able to override individual liberties. In the monarchies before democracy, for example, the kings were able to engage in needless wars for personal benefits instead of protecting the liberties of citizens. The kings used their powers to repress dissent alternative voices at the expense of enforcing law and justice. In participatory systems, those atrocities by the state are not common (Roberta, 2014). In the new democratic practices that many countries are exercising, including Kenya, is electoral participation. People get the leaders they deserve, For instance, the data collected in Kenya by the authors indicate that the majority of her citizens participate in voting for leaders (85%) of the respondents interviewed accepted and believed that the election process was fairly done (Table 1). Electoral participation is a useful indicator of political participation. High turnout in parliamentary or presidential elections indicates a stronger inclination of people to influence politics in their country. Under a Parliamentary type, leadership is glaring because of the virtue of its legislative collaboration.

This democratic ideal is based on two principles, political participation, and political contestation. Democracy is generally accepted as practically most desired form of rule or governance. There are three systems of democracies: parliamentary, presidential, and mixed. In Parliamentary systems, the power is placed in the hands of the legislative branch. In such systems, the executive is split between the head of state and the head of government. Parliament appoints the head of government and can also remove the head of government through a "vote of no confidence." Presidential systems concentrate power in the hands of the executive, which is not split. The president must establish a relationship of cooperation across both houses. However, his survival in the office does not depend on it. Parliament cannot remove the president unless he or she has committed a criminal offense. A major executive power in this system is that the presidential veto is hard to overturn. Parliamentary democracies have higher levels of representativeness and lower levels of stability. In comparison, presidential democracies have lower levels of representativeness and higher levels of stability. The mixed system combines the characteristics of both the presidential and parliamentary systems. Citizens prefer more parliamentary democracies in the world than presidential (Brill, 2017).

3.0 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Youth engagement in democratic governance processes in Africa could bring with it huge social, political and economic benefits. Africa has the youngest population globally, with people under the age of 35 years accounting for some 65% of the total population. One

perspective is that this young people present an enormous opportunity, not only for enhancing economic growth, but also for addressing Africa's many social, economic and political challenges. Another perspective , is that the youth bulge is a double-edged sword for the continent. While it can spur innovation, creativity and enterprise , all of which enhance development, if not well managed, it can fuel instability and violent conflict. There is therefore a need for effective deployment of policies, structures and processes largely which could largely determines whether the growing number of young people will have a positive or a negative effect. Lauren and Kahuthia (2017). According to kahuthia et al (2017) many African countries, cultural differences, a lack of political will to implement reforms and entrenched postcolonial and dictatorial attitudes result in young people not being able to participate in the development of their countries and even voice their issues. It also means that youth are not involved in the creation of solutions to the socio-cultural and political challenges that often affect them directly. It is therefore importance for governments to meaningfully engage their young people in democratic governance and development processes

Democratic decentralization of power and responsibility to the people's representatives at county levels has resulted in the re-orientation of the administrative outlook in Kenya. Democracy has categorized how it affects the citizens, direct and representative democracy, as in the case of Kenya, places all power in the hands of the citizen. The main aim of participatory democracy is to create opportunities that empower citizens to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes. It enables citizens to have a more direct role in influencing the decisions that affect them. Participatory democracy underscores inclusive processes, which aim at making sure that citizens, especially women and marginalized groups, have greater participation.

An advantage of direct democracy is that it allows people to vote directly on policy initiatives, which is different from representative democracy, where the people elect representatives to handle policy initiatives on their behalf. As local governments are important for good governance, it is paramount for leader to inspire the local spirit by fostering the sense of community. When political decisions are made, all citizens in the society, come together to cast a vote individualy. There are no intermediaries, and each citizen is treated equally and is given a chance to directly influence the policymaking process. Under this democracy, citizens have a better chance of change as they have to instill their trust in their leader. Citizens' will be truly fulfilled, and change that is needed happens. More information is made available since citizens are more informed about the small details of all issues (Heywood, 2004). Therefore, the government must to provide them with information that would otherwise have been unavailable for everyone to view.

Citizens have control of this type of democracy since they have direct power. They can cast votes that will affect the way things run. Direct democracy has been used in referendums where an electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal through a vote, as was the case with Kenya's constitution in August 2010. This is also used in ballot initiatives where a specified minimum number of registered voters petition particular issues or policies. Also, the option to recall elections is a procedure by which voters hve the power to remove elected officials from office through the vote before their term has ended, also known as impreachment. Remembrances are initiated when a sufficient number of voters sign a petition demanding a recall.

Representative democracy creates intermediary political actors between the citizens and the policy outputs of the state through the electoral of the elected and assigned with the task of making decisions on behalf of the citizens they represent. Deliberative democracy emphasizes the imperative for conducting thorough and in-depth discussions concerning

decision-making processes (Kyohairwe, 2014). It sees this as a fundamental source of legitimacy for law-making processes as opposed to voting. Voting, as a process, can be susceptible to the tendency of powerful representatives misusing the voting as a process by focusing on the collection of votes for particular proposals. This distracts them from focusing on the merits or detriments of the underlying proposal. Representatives can educate the citizens on political issues where the representatives ensure the interests of all sections of society, including the minority, are taken into account and can be held accountable for their decisions.

They can aggregate the differing demands of the citizens into a more coherent and political logical program. In many African countries, representative democracy has been heavily criticized for its inability to protect citizens' interests. Representatives may distort citizens' demands to suit their political preferences. For instance, in table 2, citizens reported that the recruitment of those participating was not on merit, as they need to be connected with political leaders. They may not make themselves accountable enough hindering a much-needed understanding of the very different kinds of state-citizen interactions prevailing in many postcolonial states (Robins 2008; Cornwall et al. 2011), encouraging misuse of office by the leaders and affecting the democratic practices that could promote good governance in the country. Lesson learned in table 2 impies that if the recruitment of citizens to participate in various projects in their county government was not fair. On merit, it may lead to participation in a protest rally to use as an avenue to express (dis-) agreement with government policies. In contrast, for others, a demonstration is an opportunity to prove allegiance to the political leader who called for the rally.

4.0 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Democratic governance is the adoption of democratic rules and democratic culture in managing a society, which allows citizens to participate fully in democratic processes. One of such processes is how public policy decisions are made and implemented. The involvement of citizens in making and implementation policy decisions is a crucial component of democratic governance. This facilitates the management of a nation's affairs by organs of government and other key non-state actors at both national and county levels of the state (Matlosa 2005).

Decision-making in governance is primarily centered on issues that relate to power and people's voice. Essentially, it is focused on how power is exercised regarding who decides on policy issues. The people's voice concerns the influence and participation of citizen's in promoting accountability in governance. Democracy is a system that forces leaders and officials to talk directly to citizens and more citizens involved in decision making. They are well informed, less fearful, and violent hence destabilizing external forces because of the respect for difference and rights. When democracy is embraced, then there is more ethical leadership leading to citizens that are more organized, stable economic resources, and opportunities because of respect for sovereignty.

5.0 CITIZENS AS THE DRIVERS OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy guarantees the right to take part in governance processes. It implies the right to receive state-supplied services. The access to these rights is definitively considered citizenship of a country. Citizenship can be obtained in different ways, but the most fundamental ones are the association of parents and the place of birth. Citizens ought to display trust and obedience. Some believe that ordinary people lack sufficient judgment and knowledge and should, therefore, rely on their leaders to solve problems. It is argued that the individual, as an active citizen, is rapidly disappearing and is being replaced. Promoting

active citizens among politically marginalized groups can be a daunting task. It necessitates understanding that citizenship is more than voting and the fulfillment of public obligation (Goetz, 2006).

Democracy involves more than only electing officials; it involves making laws and rules and developing structures in which the government is run for the benefit of the majority. In counties emerging from conflicts or wars, for example, citizens actively participate in peace-making and reconciliation. Voter apathy has been witnessed in older democracies which have the most educated societies and also the wealthiest. Many citizens fail to participate in democratic activities such as voting; however, they express their citizenship though engaging in activities community policing, neighbourhood clean-up, charity, among others (Alozie et al., 2011). Active citizenship may include being well-informed about the society and world, encouraging accountability from the government, solving problems, respecting dissent and differences, education, volunteering, motivating, and organizing others. In modern democracies, citizens play important roles in governance as a whole as governing has become a collective activity through public participation. Decision-making today requires the input of the citizens. The fundamental political and civil rights that make basic freedoms may not be the most important to ensure people have equal rights as people are not equal in reality. For effectiveness, it important to be empowered in each area according to the need, at an individual level or at the community. By use of knowledge, information and culture, citizens can mobilize and advocate to develop lasting citizen-based organizations.

However, mechanisms of exclusion can limit the celebration and access to the rights guaranteed by democracy. One of these is the exclusionary systems in a society that relegate particular groups to the confines of lesser citizens. For instance, some societies consign women to household activities and subordinate their rights to those of men. This, in effect, denies women the right to enjoy the privileges of democracy. The effect of such exclusion is vices, such as engendered discrimination and exploitation. The inability of particular groups in society to enjoy democracy may limit the influence of their voices and their representation in political processes. It may also affect the influence of such groups in society, especially their views on participatory or representative decision-making. Influence in an ideal democracy concerns getting the opportunity to give views and the views being taken into consideration.

Very often, the limited practice of democracy creates powerful and strong factions of leaders who make influence or make all government decisions such as budgets, laws, and institutional policies. Their decisions are subsequently imposed on citizens, an act that denies the people the opportunity to air their voices (Amnesty International, 2012). The participation of citizens in decision-making and the political process is paramount in strengthening democracy and governance in the society. This is especially imperative where minorities and women, who are critical pillars of the citizenry that drives democracy. Having a clear focus on the role of women in governance is important to democracy. Allowing women to air their concerns and accommodating their participation can result in desirable outcomes not only for their agendas but also for the democratic process as a whole.

6.0 DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN GOVERNANCE

Whenever the public is left out of decision-making, there emanates for example tensions regarding inclusion in and exclusion from governance. A key challenge in participation is ensuring an appropriate range of interests is engaged in the process, including those normally excluded from decision making by institutionalized inequities Schlozman and Brady (2012). All too often, supposedly participatory processes end up including the "usual suspects," people who are easily recruited, articulate in the language and logics being used to make decisions, and reasonably comfortable in public arenas. Indeed, most public participation is not inclusive: it does not involve deliberation and creating new understandings together but rather is oriented to "consulting" with the public to gather input (International Association for Public Participation 2014) or just allowing people to express different perspectives (Innes and Booher 2004).

Stakeholder analysis and the active management of conflict and power are thus needed to ensure that under-represented and marginalized groups are at least considered and may have a place at the table (Bryson 2004). Practitioners and scholars raise questions, however, about the impact for inclusion and diversity of the recent valorization of deliberative, collaborative and consensus-oriented approaches to public participation (Innes 2004). Depending on how conflict and power are managed, participation may enhance marginalized groups' influence and provide a robust container for negotiation among differences (Crosby and Bryson 2005; Forester 2009). Conversely, dissent may be silenced even while the sponsors of a process claim legitimacy through adopting the veneer of a participatory approach (Young 2000; Bulkeley and Mol 2003).

Inclusion and exclusion are often used in reference to the ethnic, racial, gender or socioeconomic diversity of the people taking part in public participation. This locates the focus of diversity on the status of the people taking part in a participation process. It may also be associated with concerns about the representativeness of the people participating, for example in terms of their socioeconomic diversity, relative to the people who have a stake in the policy decision. A complementary theoretical lens re-conceptualizes inclusion as practices of engaging a diversity of perspectives to discover new understandings of problems, resources and options (Quick and Feldman 2011). In this view, inclusion involves active negotiation among differences in perspectives, identities, institutional boundaries or issue definitions (Quick and Feldman 2014). Policy implementation in governments or organization the inclusion and exclusion should be spelt out and implemented appropriately.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In modern history, democratic governance has resulted in two competing forms of democracy. One form emphasizes the role of the whole although its atheistic tendencies has seen the form encourage dictatorship by allowing the clampdown of individual liberty. The

other form underscores individual liberty characterized by social integration rooted in Christian beliefs. The Party system caused by proportional representation contributes to the non-democratic outcome. When there is the destruction of the party system, there are too many small parties for democratic representation and effective government, and Citizens are confused and alienated by governing voters. Influence over policy is limited, and they become further disenchanted with democracy. With so many small parties governing coalitions can be held hostage to the wishes of very parties.

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