



**THE INFLUENCE OF CIVIC EDUCATION ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS: THE CASE OF NAIVASHA SUB COUNTY, NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of civic education on public participation in the devolved government unit of Naivasha Sub-county, Nakuru County. The study used a descriptive research design with a target population of 253,225 residents whereby a sample of 157 respondents was drawn and classified into eight strata based on their wards through stratified random sampling. Each stratum had respondents in the same proportion as that of the ward population in relation to the Sub-county population. Snow ball sampling was used to administer research instruments to the respondents with the start point being the area ward administrator. The study used mainly primary data that was collected using self-administered semi-structured questionnaires. A cronbach's alpha reliability test was used on the instrument whereby a coefficient of 0.7 and above was considered acceptable. The results found the instrument as reliable. Data was analyzed for descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. The analyzed data was presented using tables. The study established that civic education had a positive correlation to public participation. The study found out that civic education levels among the residents was low, majority of them had not received any civic education training and were not familiar with the enactments guiding civic education and public participation in county governance. The study recommended that the county should enact a civic education act as well as have further research of the variable conducted in other counties.*

**Key words:** Civic Education, Public Participation, County Government, Governance

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## INTRODUCTION

Devolved systems are considered as one of the useful approaches of enhancing public participation in governance. In essence, devolution allows the transfer of fundamental government functions, such as the revenue collection and spending from the central government to the lowest level. Devolved governance is closely associated with efficient governance, specifically due to its enhancement of public participation. According to article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976), every citizen has the opportunity and right to participate in the enactment of public affairs both directly and indirectly, through representation by the elected officials. Governments around the world have created and implemented various initiatives with the aim of enhancing the inclusion of their citizens in the decision making processes. Although there are numerous ways in which citizens can participate in governance on an ongoing basis, most citizens interact with the government during elections (Pahad, 2005). Creighton (2005) postulates that public participation is significant in ensuring that the public influences the government in regards to decision making, and especially in the cases whereby the decisions being made have a direct impact on their lives.

Yang (2008), notes that devolved systems framework for public participation must ensure meaningful involvement of citizens in the local affairs. Further, he argues that for public participation to be effective, citizen's participation mechanisms should be matched to the local social-ecological context to which the citizens belong in order to establish the goodness of fit in defining participation. According to Deci and Ryan (2008), the level of public participation is the degree that the public perceives participation as goodness to meet the intended purpose. The citizen's subjective

definition of participation in devolved unit influences the level of their participation in activities within the units. Aref and Redzuan (2009), contend that factors such as cultural norms, education level, gender and social class on decision-making, influence levels of public participation. Andrade and Rhodes (2012), argue that the true forms of public participation must give citizens more direct decision-making control, with a structural system that is fair to enhance the participation. According to Azfar, Kahkonen, Lanyi, Meagher and Rutherford (2001), it is through public engagement that local governments understand well the citizens' preferences enabling them vary services to suit demands.

Decentralizing and providing for more public participation calls for adequate engagement mechanisms (Chadwick, 1971). Kenya has in the past adopted decentralization policies aimed at bringing the government closer to the people by shifting from a centralized government to a decentralized government system. The centralized system was characterized by massive misuse of public funds and resources, inefficient officials and the abandonment of communities in government projects which ultimately led to their failure (Legal Resources Foundation, 2009). According to Oyugi and Kibua (2006), District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) that was operationalized in 1983 was a bottom-up approach to development with the planning based at the district headquarters. It used the district as the unit base of development. In 1996 through the enactment of the Physical Planning Act, participatory development was realized. The statute, unlike DFRD, provided for engagement of the local community in development and implementation of development and physical plans in their areas. However, the critical element of capacity building of the citizens was overlooked by the policy formulators. In 2001, Local Authority Service

Delivery Action Plans (LASDAP) was introduced through a ministerial circular with the decision making unit at the ward level. It had three year rolling plans with priority areas in infrastructure, health and education (Oyugi & Kibua, 2006). Its main goal was betterment of local government service delivery through engaging the locals in planning and prioritizing their service delivery needs which were then translated into the local authority's annual LASDAP (Odhiambo & Taifa, 2009). Although the provisions of LASDAP Regulations and Guidelines (1999), required the Local Authorities to engage the public and other stakeholders in project identification, implementation and monitoring, the arrangement was inadequate as the communities and other stakeholders were not engaged beyond projects selection (Kwena, 2013). The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was introduced in 2003 through an Act of Parliament (No. 11) due to the failure of the various developmental decentralization efforts. One of the main objectives of CDF is to promote equitable allocation of government resources for nationwide development through targeting projects at the constituency level and allowing the local communities to have a hand in local development through projects committees. Usually, the members of the CDF Committee and the Project Implementation Committees are made of local stakeholders and are selected by the local Member of Parliament (Odhiambo & Taifa, 2009). The CDF Act of 2013 aimed at ensuring that the laws governing it were aligned to the Constitution of Kenya (CoK) of 2010 that requires adherence to the principles of separation of powers, accountability, transparency and engagement of the public. It also aimed at aligning the operations and allocating funds to the devolved governments. Participation of the people has been given prominence in the CoK (2010). Article 10 (2) (a) of the constitution states that "participation of the

people is one of the values and principles of governance in Kenya." Article 232 (1) (d) highlights the involvement of the citizens in policy making as one of the principle and value of public service. The County Government Act (CGA) 2012, mandates the county governments to facilitate the creation of modalities and structures for public engagement in budget preparation and validation (Section 91). The county assemblies are to develop policies that give effect to the requirement for effective public engagement in development planning and performance management within the counties while ensuring that the policies meet the minimum national requirements (CGA, 2012 section 115(2)). However, despite having legislative requirements, public participation is hampered by issues of access, lack of information, complex legislative process and language, insufficient public education and lack of skills for public participation (South Africa Legislative Sector, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Meaningful public participation is core in facilitating the success of devolution and good governance in the devolved governments based on the positive expectations that it vitally increases service delivery and enhances accountability. However, this can only be achieved if the public has the primary understanding of devolution and a realistic concept of how their leaders should perform. The International Association for Public Participation (2004), lists the core values for the practice of public participation among others that the process should provide the participants with information that they require so as to engage in a meaningful way. The public participation process starts with the government giving clear and understandable information to the public. This can be channeled through various media such as social media, journals, public announcements, radio, television, emails and newspapers (Rowe & Frewer, 2005).

In order to ensure the creation of sound decisions, the participants should have unlimited access to information and resources such as expert analyses, information and other materials prior to the public participation forums (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2015). As such, the government should develop timelines for participation in a way that the exercise is planned and not undertaken as an adhoc event (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2011).

However, despite these legislative requirements, public participation is hampered by issues of access, lack of information, complex legislative process and language, insufficient public education and lack of skills for public participation (South Africa Legislative Sector, 2013). The Naivasha Subcounty public participation reports in the previous years have indicated very low public turnouts of less than 1% attendance in the forums (Medium Term Estimates Forum (MTEF) 2016/17 Report (2016); MTEF 2017/18 Report (2017); CIDP 2018-2022 Report (2018); finance bill forum 2016/17 Report (2016) and finance bill forum 2017/18 Report (2017)). The current study will find out why public engagement is low and how civic education affects public participation exercises in Naivasha Subcounty.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Literature**

#### **Participatory Democratic Theory**

This theory was advanced by Pateman (1970), outlining the relationship between public participation and effective governance. It stipulates that maximizing participation of citizens in the issues that affect them is beneficial to citizens and the government. Participation is described as a

continuous process that entails direct and representative democracy and not merely taking part in elections. The public make proposals and recommendations with the expectation that their leaders will implement them (Aragones, 2008). As such, they are able to monitor, evaluate and rate the government performance by weighing their proposals against what is actually implemented. The degree to which the public engage themselves in governance determines the social priorities and the policies that the government implements.

Participatory democracy as argued by Pateman (1970), means that individual citizens are inseparable with their representative institutional structures which are inadequate for democracy at the national level. Meaningful engagement at the national level is dependent on social development and trainings on the citizens which equip them with the needed skills, attitudes and psychological qualities which ordinarily arise from the process of participation itself. Participating in governance gives citizens experience on democratic procedures and skills in that the more a person participates, the better they become to do so in subsequent participation exercises (Gitegi & Iravo, 2016).

The theory states that the condition for effective governance is having maximum citizen engagement in the lowest feasible units of government. The theory illustrates an effective democracy with a devolved two level government where governance public engagement is undertaken at the lower local level. The local level offers a platform for addressing matters affecting the public as well as an avenue to develop their capacity to participate in the upper level national government. The model is similar to the two tier government system in Kenya which comprises of the national and the devolved governments. It gives a detailed understanding on public participation in devolved governance.



## Empirical Literature Review

### Civic Education

According to Pharr and Putnam (2000), the demand for high-level public participation in public affairs is often influenced by more educated, well elaborate and expressive citizenry who portray reducing levels of confidence in the politicians and the political institutions. This leads to meaningful engagement forums between the public and the government beyond the traditional democratic election years cycle (Siala, 2015). For meaningful public engagement to thrive, the public must first be aware of their roles. Then, they require the know-how and capacity on how to undertake the roles (Omolo, 2010). Awareness without knowledge on participation does have an effect on public engagement as it hinders the capacity of public to meaningfully participate. Stakeholders who understand well and have knowledge of policy making institutions and processes are often more likely to participate. John (2009), observes that the level of education of the citizens is significantly correlated with their level of public engagement. Primarily, education builds the publics' knowledge on government programs, institutions and mechanisms to participate in the system (Ahmad, Devarajan, Khemani & Shah, 2005).

A nation's democracy is entrenched when its citizens actively participate in its democratic processes. This realization has been described as the driving force for democratic nations, in the implementation of civic education programs to inform the citizens on civic issues in order to enhance their democratic participation (Niworo, Gasu & Achanso, 2016). Civic education adds the know-how on state frameworks, programs and processes. Participation in activities of community organizations increases the understanding and knowledge of policy making. The correlation

between participation and knowledge is that knowledge helps and motivates stakeholders while participation increases the public's know-how and experience of policy making processes and organizations (Siala, 2015). Civic education helps the public comprehend how their opinions will be incorporated in decision making. The efficiency and effectiveness of citizen engagement is affected by challenges encountered by the public in comprehending technical experts reports (Jenkins, 1993). This will then lead to inability to understand the processes involved to arrive at the decisions.

Part X Section 100 of the CGA (2012), obligates every county to execute a working appropriate civic education program. The program is described as a critical tool of empowering and promoting public participation in democratic governance as it equips the public, both as individuals and collectively. Hence, if the citizens do not comprehend well the dynamics and contents of participation, then they will not engage with county governments meaningfully (CEDGG, 2015). Galston (2001), argues that it is particularly difficult for the citizens to understand the political events or integrate additional information into the prevalent framework, unless the citizens hold a considerable level of civic knowledge, especially on political institutions and processes. Intuitively, the more knowledgeable the citizens are, the higher likely they are to participate in public issues.

A review of the status of public participation and county information dissemination frameworks by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in 2015, recommended that public participation in devolved governments can be enhanced through awareness creation, capacity building, regular reporting by county governments, establishment of institutions for further decentralization and strengthening civic education capacity and programs. According to the Society for International Development (2015), the

frameworks established for effective public engagement in counties should entail the use of county consultative forums, digital platforms, project sites and public proposal boxes. In addition, Nakuru County Public Participation Act (NCPA) of 2015 includes report back to community forums, consultative sessions with recognized community organizations and where appropriate with traditional authorities as well as petitions, complaints and suggestions lodged by members of the public.

Muchunu (2015), conducted a study on the influence of stakeholders' participation in the budgetary process implementation of government funded projects in Isiolo, Kenya. The research focused on civil society organizations, individual citizens, community group participation and funding agencies and donors as the stakeholders. The study found that citizens did not have knowledge about the county budgeting process although a sizeable number attended county budget forums. Mwenda (2010), however argues that merely seating in forums, does not constitute participation.

Kaseya and Kihonge (2016), carried out a study in Nairobi County on the factors affecting the effectiveness of public participation in county governance with their main objective being to find out how civic education affects public participation. The study recommended that the County government should intensify civic education especially among the poorer section of the community to ensure that their priorities were to be addressed. According to a study conducted by Institute of Economic Affairs and Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2006), citizen awareness involves two aspects; that is, the awareness on participation opportunities and the knowledge on the ways of participating. Nevertheless, information on the opportunities at

the expense of the necessary participatory skills may not be useful in facilitating citizen engagement.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), as cited by Njoroge, Muathe and Bula (2016), descriptive research entails producing of holistic data, contextual and with rich details to test hypotheses concerning the status of the study subject. The current study sought to collect and identify data on the influence of civic education on public participation in the devolved government system of Naivasha Subcounty and derive probable recommendations from the findings.

The study adopted a linear regression model to assess the influence of the independent variable civic education on the dependent variable public participation. The model was presented in a linear equation from where the values of the constant coefficient  $B_0$  and the slope coefficient  $B$  was calculated. The model to analyze the relationship between the variables was;

$$Y = B_0 + BX + e$$

Where;

$Y$  = Public participation,  $B_0$  = Constant; the value of  $Y$  when  $X=0$ ,

$B$  = Coefficient of estimate of Civic Education,  $X$  = Civic Education

And  $e$  is the estimated error of the model

The study location, Naivasha is one of the Sub-counties in Nakuru County and is located 91.4 km north-west of Nairobi city. It has a population of 253,225 inhabitants (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). It is located at an altitude of 1915m above the sea level and located on 0043' 0.0120"S and 36026' 9.2760"E GPS coordinates. It has eight administrative wards namely Viwandani,

Lakeview, Biashara, Naivasha East, Maiella, Olkalia, Hellsgate and Maai Mahiu wards. The main urban centers are Naivasha town and Mai Mahiu. It has three large informal settlements namely Kihoto, Kamere and Karagita. The main economic activities are hospitality, geothermal, floriculture, farming and fishing. Naivasha has an area of 1685.80 km<sup>2</sup> of which 139 km<sup>2</sup> is covered by Lake Naivasha, 68.25 km<sup>2</sup> by Hellsgate National Park and 52 km<sup>2</sup> by Mount Longonot National Park. It borders Kiambu County to the north east, Nyandarua County to the north, Kajiado County to the east, Narok County to the south and Gilgil constituency to the west.

According to Kothari (2006), target population is described as all people who bear similar characteristics and whom the researcher intends to study. CGA (2012) articulates that public refers to the residents a particular county, tax payers or those who use the facilities or services provided by the county. The target population for the study was all the 253,225 people who reside in Naivasha Subcounty.

From a population of 253,225 people, sample size was calculated using Nassiuma's formulae, (Nassiuma, 2000) with  $C = 25\%$ ,  $e = 0.02$  and  $N = 253,225$  giving a sample size of 157.

The study used stratified random sampling method that involved classification of the sample into eight strata, which are the eight wards in the Sub-county. The method was preferred as the study population could be classified into eight wards, the population was largely homogeneous and the method ensured all wards had respondents. The number of respondents in each ward was proportional to the size of the specific ward in relation to the Subcounty population. In each ward, snow ball sampling was undertaken whereby the initial subjects were the ward administrators who under

the CGA (2012), section 52 are mandated to coordinate and facilitate public participation.

The study utilized semi-structured questionnaires that contained both open and close-ended questions as well as secondary data from journals, books, government records and publications.

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used to describe, summarize and present the data using percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistic was carried out using linear regression model to determine how the variable influenced the dependent variable and the nature of influence. The adjusted coefficient of determination (R-squared) was used to indicate the percentage of variability of the variables that was accounted for by the study factor under study. This was followed by determination of standardization beta coefficient which indicated the nature of direction and the magnitude of the influence.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

A total of 157 questionnaires were administered and 127 were correctly filled and returned. This represented 80.9% of the total administered questionnaires meaning that the return response rate was adequate for the study as it was more than 50% as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), who noted that a response rate of more than 50% is appropriate for analysis and reporting; a response rate of 60% is good and that of 70% and over is excellent. Based on the assertion, the response rate was excellent and as such acceptable for drawing conclusions on the study.

### **Descriptive Analysis: Access to Information**

The descriptive results shown in table 1 were in relation to the respondents' responses on civic education and public participation exercises.



**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Civic Education**

	N	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
		%	%	%	%	%		
Respondent understands the concept of public participation in counties.	127	10.2	18.1	5.5	44.9	21.3	3.488	1.290
Past training influences how a person participates.	127	13.4	21.3	22.8	32.3	10.2	3.047	1.221
Respondent is conversant and understands laws on public participation.	127	18.9	18.9	27.6	22.0	12.6	2.906	1.294
Civic education trainings affect degree of participation.	127	7.9	11.8	26.0	32.3	22.0	3.488	1.188
Sensitizations made by counties and NGO's is effective.	127	22.8	18.9	20.5	22.8	15.0	2.882	1.389
Facilitators of public participation forums are well versed in topic areas.	127	19.7	15.0	32.3	28.3	4.7	2.835	1.180

*Source: (Survey data, 2018)*

The study as shown in table 1, revealed that the respondents were generally uncertain if they understood the concept of public participation in county governance (Mean = 3.488), were generally uncertain if past training affected how a person participated (Mean = 3.047) and were uncertain if civic education trainings affected the degree of participation (Mean = 3.488). The study also found out that the respondents were not conversant with the laws on public participation (Mean = 2.906), respondents found the public participation sensitization made by the county and NGO's as

ineffective (Mean = 2.882) and they generally found the facilitators of the public participation forums not well versed in the topic areas (Mean = 2.835). There was significant variation in the views of the respondents regarding all the variables (Standard variation > 1.000).

The results confirmed the conclusion that civic education builds the publics' knowledge and know how on government programs, institutions and available mechanisms to participate in the system (Ahmad, et al, 2005; Omolo, 2010; Wamalwa 2013; Kaseya & Kihonge, 2016).

**Inferential Findings**

**Table 2: Analysis of Variance**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	130.506	1	130.506	265.415	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	61.463	125	.492		
	Total	191.969	126			

a. Predictors: (Constant), The influence of civic education on public participation

b. Dependent Variable: Public participation in governance of devolved governments

*Source: (Survey data, 2018)*

The results of analysis of variance depicted in Table 2 illustrated that the regression model shown was statistically significant ( $F = 265.415$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) to explain the relationship since the p-value was below 0.05. The results justified the suitability of the model in analyzing the independent variable.

$$Y = B_0 + BX + e$$

**Table 3: Regression Coefficients**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.452	.162		-2.789	.006
The influence of civic education on public participation	.785	.048	.825	16.292	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Public participation in governance of devolved governments

**Source:** (Survey data, 2018)

The results of regression analysis as shown in Table 3 were used to interpret the regression model as follows

$$Y = B_0 + BX + e$$

$$Y = -0.452 + 0.785X + e$$

**Regression Analysis**

**Table 4: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.825 <sup>a</sup>	.680	.677	.701

a. Predictors: (Constant), The influence of civic education on public participation

**Source:** (Survey data, 2018)

The study as shown in Table 4, established that there existed a positive and strong relationship between the Civic Education and Public Participation in governance ( $R = 0.825$ ). In addition, it was revealed that Civic Education could explain 68.0% variance in public participation in governance

Where;  $Y$ = Public participation,  $B_0$  = Constant; the value of  $Y$  when  $X=0$

$B$  = Coefficient of estimate of Civic Education,  $X$  = Civic Education

And  $e$  is the estimated error of the model

It was revealed that in order to increase public participation by one unit, the county government ought to ensure that it effects 0.785 unit changes in access to information while holding other factors which were not part of the this study constant ( $B_0 = -0.452$ ).

of devolved government system of Naivasha Subcounty in Nakuru County ( $R^2 = 0.680$ ). This further implies that there is a variance of 32.0% on public participation in governance that cannot be explained by Civic Education.

The above findings correspond to those of Kaseya and Kihonge (2016), Wamalwa (2013) and Omolo (2009), who indicated that civic education plays a critical role on the effectiveness of public

## **SUMMARY**

The findings on the effect of Civic Education on public participation in governance established that civic education levels were low, an observation that could partly be attributed to the inconvenience and inefficiency of the channels used by the county government when disseminating information. Most of the residents weren't aware of their roles in public participation forums, few had received civic education training and a large proportion of the residents were not conversant with any law or policy guiding public participation. Therefore, civic education significantly and positively affect the public's ability to effectively participate in devolved governance.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study found out that public participation in the devolved governance of Nakuru County was affected by Civic Education. The level of Civic

participation in the County Governments in that when citizens are enlightened on their rights of participation in governance, they participate more and demand more for their rights.

Education was low among the county residents as majority of them indicated not having received any training on public participation and weren't familiar with the laws and policies guiding public participation in devolved governance. Civic education positively affects public participation in governance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends that the County Government of Nakuru should enact a County Civic Education Act. This will ensure that the county will conduct trainings to capacity build the residents on public participation so that they can give valuable opinions that can be considered during decision making.

Studies needs to be conducted on the determinants of public participation in governance in other counties in Kenya as this study covered Nakuru County.

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