Strengthening monitoring and evaluation of public participation in county governments in Kenya using the Strategic and Progressive Engagement (SPE) model

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Introduction

**Definition:**
Public participation is a process where individual citizens are accorded the opportunity to contribute to and influence governance decisions.

**Benefits:**
- Provides consensus support
- Minimizes conflicts and surprises among the citizens
- Makes public servants accountable to the people
- Identifying development problems,
- Setting priorities and goals for development
- Evaluation of development programs
Problems with public participation in county governance

Studies have indicated negative perceptions from the public on county governments due to the following:

- Initiation of development projects without proper consultations
- Incomplete projects
- Overpriced projects
- Lack of clear mechanisms for public participation in development
- Lack of evidence of public opinion in decision making
- Lack of adequate information

These could be manifested in lack of timely feedback, lack of ownership of decisions, apathy, protests, perception of bias in benefits, lack of understanding on non-tangible benefits
SPE Model

SPE is a method for action research proposed by Jacques M. Chevalier and Daniel J. Buckles (Chevalier and Buckles, 2008).

It is model of collaborative inquiry for participatory action research. The public engages with the government, strategically through “communities of interest”, then progressively the larger public is involved.

The central purpose of the guide is to develop the skills among grass root stakeholders, to inquire into situations that affect their livelihood, that outsiders may not understand as well.
SPE Model

Strategic and progressive engagement

- Identify stakeholders
- Structure the team
- Empowering the team
- Interaction and influencing
- Feedback
Objectives of the paper

The main objective is to propose an M&E system to enhance citizen participation in county governments in Kenya using the SPE model

Specific objectives:

1. to compare the monitoring and evaluation process of public participation in selected counties to the strategic and progressive engagement model and demonstrate the gaps,

2. To make recommendations for adopting the model to improve the monitoring and evaluation of public participation in county governments in Kenya.
Methods

County Public Participation Acts for four counties were selected conveniently for the study.

Content analysis was used to compare SPE model and the provisions of the Acts on the 5-point criteria of the model. These are:

1. Identification of stakeholders
2. Structuring of the team for engaging with county government
3. Empowerment of the team
4. Interaction with the wider public
5. Feedback mechanisms
Findings

1. All the Acts provide for inclusivity in the stakeholders for public participation Just like SPE. Meru County has listed an advisory Committee from government side

2. Structuring of the team. The Acts presume the same team to participate in matters for all sectors. SPE proposes specific teams for specific sectors. The team is structured according to power and influence

3. In the Acts, there is no mechanism of involvement of the wider public apart from through mass media communication. SPE provides for progressive engagement of the public, till the grassroots public is covered
Findings

4. On Empowerment, Machakos County and Nairobi County provide for civic education and access to information for informed participation. The SPE model proposes empowerment through information access and flow to the grassroots.

5. All the counties have provisions for interaction of the public and county government through citizen forums. The model goes further to include interactions among the different groups of the public in a progressive manner.

6. Feedback mechanisms are included in all the Acts. This will be done through reporting frameworks. Machakos County specifically states that public to be informed on how their input was used. The SPE model perceives this feedback mechanism as an important part of public participation, that will increase support for county governments.
## Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPE Model</th>
<th>Machakos</th>
<th>Meru</th>
<th>Elgeyo-Marakwet</th>
<th>Nairobi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification of key stakeholders:</strong> Stakeholders should not be beneficiaries only but should also include service providers, investors, oversight authorities, resource managers and government representatives</td>
<td>Public participation activities to ensure they are representative of the broad spectrum of the Public</td>
<td>Participation to reflect all the stakeholders of the county</td>
<td>Ensuring inclusivity of participation activities:</td>
<td>Facilitate involvement of communities, organisations and individual citizens from all levels in decision making in governments</td>
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<td><strong>Structuring the community of interest:</strong> The identified members vetted on power, influence and interest and structured into specific sectors as ‘communities of interest’</td>
<td>Does not provide for structuring</td>
<td>Does not provide for structuring</td>
<td>To establish public participation structures:</td>
<td>Does not provide for structuring</td>
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<td>Interaction and empowerment (Information access and communication flow): civic education provided; Accurate and up to date information shared with the communities of interest. The communities are then facilitated to have forums at grassroots level</td>
<td>Provision for civic education programs to promote public participation in public affairs Public consultative meetings within the county assembly and county executive. Annual county citizen forums</td>
<td>Citizen participation forum convened by the governor every 4 months. Informing the public on participation processes Publicise and organise a citizen participation forum every 3 months at sub county level and city urban areas.</td>
<td>Recognising and communicating needs and interests of all participants including decision makers. Public shall have access to information to enable meaningful participation.</td>
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<td>Effective feedback mechanisms: Adequate data is collected from the general public, analysed and documented, and shared back to authorities and other communities.</td>
<td>ensuring reasonable time for public to input and comment on any proposals establish a feedback mechanism to the public including opportunities for the public to forward additional comments or input to the decision</td>
<td>County executive receives public petition</td>
<td>Establishing a feedback mechanism: Create reporting frameworks, provide annual reports, feedback to the public by the PPO, provisions for citizen petition.</td>
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<td>Communicate back to the public on how their input was used</td>
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</table>
Citizen petition to be received by the county executive and assembly.

Annual reporting of citizen participation activities ensure that the public, affected groups, and stakeholders are informed of the results of the public participation process and how their input was used in the decision taken;
Conclusions

• Better structuring of the monitoring and evaluation system would correct some of the negative perceptions on devolution and encourage more participation by the public

• The strategic and progressive engagement model, if well-structured will give accurate data on the priorities, implementation mechanism and satisfaction levels on development issues

• Since the proposals of the model are in line with the Public participation Acts, based on those reviewed, no change in legislation is required to institute the SPE model

• **Limitation:** In implementation, the Acts are complemented by the public participation guidelines from the Ministry of devolution and also there may be specific guidelines in the counties that have not been made public. Therefore a pilot study may be required.
Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

(i) a pilot study to test the model in one of the counties to determine its potential as an alternative way to assess public participation and identify and correct its shortcomings; and

(ii) guidelines to be developed on monitoring and evaluation of public participation in county governments in Kenya for adoption by other counties