

Link Between Understanding Policy Making And Participation

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Public Participation and Democratic Policy Making

Better planning, the democratization of social values and satisfaction of the public necessities and needs are abundantly achieved through the implementation and practical application of public participation processes. These processes also play a significant role in education and enlightening society on the various government development initiatives. Mostly, they also hold the potential to influence both personal and social changes among the citizens. Therefore, public participation can be used in the incorporation of a variety of public interests, thus, according to civil rights, to take part in decision-making on matters that affect their daily lives. However, there have been arguments on the relationship between comprehending policy-making and implementation. In this essay, we will explore the relationship between the two.

With the citizens at the heart of any policy, it is unarguably true that understanding policy and participation are linked. One of the primary reasons is democracy. While policymaking may be democratic, participation would assert it further. Public participation is regarded as a democratic process. However, the method may be hindered by a lack of understanding and knowledge of the policies being enacted (Williamson, Imbroscio and Alperovitz, 2002). This indicates that there is a link between the two. Consequently, the general public, by democratic principles, ought to have equal chances to access the decision-making structures of their government (Baccaro and Papadakis, 2008). This means that everyone should be presented with an equal opportunity for decision-making. Most nations hold referendums, which are usually aimed at ensuring that the citizens take part in the formulation and passing of laws, further indicating that understating policy formulation and participation are interlinked.

Referendums and Citizen Participation in Brazil

A case example of a nation signifying the relationship between understanding policy-making processes and participation is Brazil, which has held three countrywide referendums in its history. The first referendum was held in 1963, and the public was asked to decide which government system was fit for them. Initially, a parliamentary government system was adopted, but the people felt it was inadequate. This, therefore, resulted in a referendum in which the majority of people voted for the presidential system (Michel and Cofone, 2017).

Another referendum was held in 1993 regarding the governing system ideal for the citizens. In this

case, the general public was to choose between maintaining the presidential system they had put in place three decades earlier or adopting either the parliamentary monarchy system or the parliamentary republic system. Through the power of the ballots, the citizens opted to retain the presidential system of governance. In 2005, another referendum was held. This was aimed at consulting the citizens on their opinions regarding the possibility of restricting the selling and public possession of weapons and arsenal, especially guns. This was a government initiative as one of the programs geared towards minimizing violence. The action had been coded as project disarmament. After the referendum, most voters were against the move, and therefore, no alterations were made to the policies relating to the ownership and commerce of weapons in the state (Michel and Cofone, 2017). This serves as one example of the relationship between policy-making and participation. While the general public takes to the referendum, they participate in making policies that they understand very well.

In the recent past, significance and vitality have been a critical focus on the quality seen in public governance. This has, therefore, become an essential political concern and a significant variable in the definition of the extent of a community's progress and welfare. This has consequently called for a conceptual and operational assessment of the concept of right leadership, which results in three significant factors marking the second phase of governance and institutional enhancement projected towards enhancing the nation. These concepts are transparency, accountability, and public participation. Accountability and transparency are other ways of explaining policy-making comprehension and participation. They are an indicator of general inclusion and involvement in critical policy-making strategies in political embodiments. Consequently, they act as a bridge among three distinct practitioner societies emerging, which are those whose primary focus is on governance, those focusing on human rights and those focusing on democracy (Bertók, 2002).

Transparency, Legitimacy, and Public Involvement

To ensure transparency, the general public is involved in making the policies. This provides that the systems are transparent and well-understood by the citizens. Participating in enacting them to power, for instance, in referendums, ensures that the public is accountable for the policies and initiatives adopted. This underlines and enhances the political goodwill of any government or the authorities while at the same time improving democracy among the citizens. Direct democracy is an excellent example of transparency and accountability regarding understanding policy-making and participation (Rose-Ackerman, 2005).

A perfect case example of a nation where there is policy-making and public participation is Switzerland. Fundamentally, all citizens in Switzerland are a part of the decision-making and policy-formulating processes, a principle which ensures strong respect and recognition of minorities. To ensure the achievement of more transparency and accountability, the nation, in 1971 and 1991 in the instance of the canton, provided that women were granted voting rights (Kucholl, 2015). The country practices and upholds three tools of direct democracy, which fall under the category of referendum.

These are mandatory, optional and popular initiative instruments. The general public is involved in constitutional amendments through voting, thus enhancing binding referendum. Consent of the majority of the people and that of the canton, generally referred to as a double majority, is required in the amendment of the national constitution. This ensures that there are transparency and accountability (Kucholl, 2015).

Citizens can also launch great programs in demand for changes and amendments to the Constitution. In such cases, any Swiss individual who has acquired voting rights is eligible to sign any popular initiative. Consequently, a group comprising at least seven patriots, typically referred to as the initiative committee, can launch their favourite program. A collection of 100,000 valid signatures is required within eighteen months of the initiative proposition. With this achieved, a vote is then held regarding the effort. The Parliament and the Federal Council are then responsible for recommending the acceptability or rejection of the proposal. For acceptance, the project needs a double majority (Head, 2002). Once it is accepted, amendments to already existing laws or the enacting of new legislation are necessary for the implementation of the new constitutional reviews.

Information Exchange and Collaborative Governance

To a more critical perception, the exchange of information across all the proposed progress's stakeholders, which include the government, the public, and the nongovernment institutions, is stimulated. This further facilitates the mutual relationship and understanding between stakeholders while the proposed development and the government enjoy total support. The government, in the view of the public, creates an aura of acceptance for its citizens by inviting them to participate in policy-making processes (Bertók, 2002). The citizens are impacted by the detailed progress plans under the proposal, and therefore, it is within the interests of the public to facilitate taking part in policy formulation processes right from the initial stages of planning. This encourages and upholds the public's input in planning operations and presenting the opinions of the entire society on particular concerns, thus ensuring the proposed plans reflect their desires and needs (Williamson, Imbroscio and Alperovitz, 2002). From a broader perspective, necessary public involvement is a significant factor in providing sustainable development, taking into account that the proposed development is based on the demands and needs of the stakeholders, including the advantages for the coming generations.

However, there is a difference between the idea of public participation and the implementation of participatory mechanisms. Inconsistencies have been noted among the individuals who take part in policy-making, as well as the profundity of their involvement, which has, therefore, undermined democracy and transparency. Based on history, it is notable that a particular group or groups of people are ignored and left out of such essential rights. This usually happens in instances where this group of people is small, and their spokesperson does not demographically represent the broader population. Consequently, these individuals (spokespersons) may not be serving the desires and

needs of the people for whom the programs and policies are being formulated and thus have little say in what is to be implemented (Baccaro and Papadakis, 2008). Apparently, it appears that the impact of the public on policy-making and participation only takes place when the citizens are from socially constructed positive groups, and their concepts and ideologies match those of the bureaucrats who participate in the process.

Conclusively, understanding policy formulation and participation are related and linked. This is indicated by the concept of democracy, where the general public is allowed, usually through referendums, to take part in passing the proposed bills into legislation. This is also the case when there is a need for the amendment of the already existing laws. Citizens will vote on the rules which they understand. In other instances, there is the practice of direct democracy, which profoundly enhances transparency and accountability, factors which further show a relationship between policy-making and participation. Through proposal initiatives and referendums, the public can exercise and uphold transparency and accountability. However, in some cases, individuals involved in the formulation of policies and the making of decisions are not the ones engaged in implementation, thus subject to the argument since it undermines democracy. In truism, nevertheless, understanding policy-making and participation are directly related and linked.

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