

In Search for an Alternative Stakeholder-Participation Model

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Abstract

That the success of projects is predicated upon full involvement and prudent management of concerned stakeholders is a reality over which development actors are at a consensus. Project stakeholders are often the source of the much sought after resources and have the ability to positively or negatively influence the outcome of the project. They also wield the ability to determine an organization's survival, and therefore appropriate engagement and management of key stakeholders should be a critical part of any project. Various conventional stakeholder-participation models including top-down, bottom-up, quadripartite project participation, collaborative, contractual, consultative, and collegiate are available for engaging stakeholders in projects. However, literature shows that they have limitations which make projects fail to attain their objectives. This study sought to examine limitations of conventional stakeholder-participation models in the management of projects, and to design a stakeholder-participation model with capacity to address such limitations. A case study design was used to conduct the study which centered on four market stalls projects in Vihiga County of Kenya. Data was collected using document review, observation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions; and content analysis was applied for data analysis. The findings demonstrate that the conventional stakeholder-participation models lack capacity to address limitations that arise out of their application in projects and cannot therefore be relied upon for successful projects. The suggested capacity building stakeholder participation (CBSP) model should be applied as an alternative.

Key words: Stakeholder, Stakeholder-participation, Stakeholder-participation model.

1.0 Background

Projects cannot succeed without dedicated participation from its stakeholders. A stakeholder can be referred to as an individual, group or entity that affect or is affected by an organization's activities. The need for active participation of stakeholders in project planning and implementation as a means of ensuring project success is a subject over which development actors as well as project managers and scholars are at a consensus (Boon, Bawole & Ahenkan, 2013). Moreover, stakeholder participation is inextricably linked to sustainable development and without many actors and approaches, sustainable development cannot be realized (Boon *et al.*, 2013). Other than that, participation is presumed to enable communities to manage their natural resources in an efficient, equitable and sustainable manner, besides increasing democratization processes (Nina, Omoro, Pellikka, & Luukkanen 2009). To further underscore the centrality of stakeholder-participation in development, Boon *et al.* (2013) have termed it as a basic human right which has capacity to increase confidence and enhance self-esteem; while the skills learned through participation enable the participants to act more effectively within the wider society. With reference to participating communities, Boon *et al.* (2013) observe that development should mean the development of local people and their organizations and networks as well as the development of better physical and economic conditions; hence the need to effectively involve the community.

Participatory approaches have also been continually recommended for successful project implementation (Tseng & Penning-Rowse, 2012). Consequently, development agencies across the globe have made a deliberate effort to foster stakeholder-participation in projects as a way of enhancing project performance. With regard to this, Gillespie (2012) observes that, "... In the fields of development and natural resource management, participation is such a widely accepted part of policy that it is rare to find a project or programme that does not exhort the practice of participation and stakeholder engagement..." (p. 254). According to Atkin and Skitmore (2008), enhanced stakeholder involvement can help with managing stakeholder needs, decreasing unanticipated risks as well as reducing unconstructive actions or reactions that may have possible negative impact on project success. This would partly explain why development initiatives in all parts of the world are replete with examples of the effort that has been made by projects to ensure that there is stakeholder-participation. The foregoing is illustrative of why effort is being made all over the world in order to enhance stakeholder participation in projects and this resonates with the normative claims of stakeholder participation in projects that emphasize that meaningful participation can promote fundamental human rights and values such as democracy, procedural justice, citizenship, and equity (Larson & Lach, 2008; Reed, 2008). On the other hand, this effort is also informed by the instrumental (pragmatic) claims of stakeholder-participation that emphasize the benefits which stakeholder engagement could bring to easing implementation and enhancing project performance; in which case, by incorporating local interests and knowledge and even other material resources, policy solutions may be better adapted to local conditions thereby improving the results of any development endeavour (Reed, 2008).

However, it should not be taken for granted that a project would be guaranteed success simply by engaging stakeholders via a particular model (Muronga, 2016). According to Muronga (2016) literature shows that the application of conventional stakeholder-participation models has always encountered challenges that delay, stall or lead to project failure. For instance, it is argued that the convergence of various stakeholders can change the existing power structure (Sultana, Thompson & Green, 2008) leading to unexpected conflicts, rather than a hoped-for consensus; or can reinforce privileged interests, foment resentment and lead to conflicts that derail project implementation. Vedwan (2008) see the participatory processes as being unproductive in finding solutions, and too time-consuming as they can delay decisive action. Besides, participatory approaches (models) have been equated to 'tyranny' by critics who say that these approaches only reinforce the positions of the already powerful stakeholders (Tseng & Penning-rowsell, 2012).

Other than that, stakeholder participation - especially bottom-up - has often been reduced to tokenism and the assumption that communities are always cohesive and can easily organize members to work on projects is not real (Smith, 2008). Moreover, most stakeholders lack financial and material resources with which they can gainfully participate in projects; and besides, most external facilitators do not have the critical facilitator knowledge about the subject communities (Smith, 2008); making the facilitators fail to effectively and efficiently involve the stakeholders in projects. Consequently, care must be taken while applying any of the available stakeholder-participation models because as Boon *et al.* (2013) observe, the nature and process of stakeholder-participation can slow down or impede project implementation. Based on the foregoing, each of the conventional stakeholder-participation models is characterized by merits and limitations. The implication is therefore that project owners and managers should clearly understand whichever model of stakeholder-participation they elect to apply in their projects; for this makes them better prepared to deal with the resultant challenges.

1.1 Influence of stakeholder-participation models on projects

Stakeholder participation is a process by which interested parties take part and affect the control of development initiatives and the decisions and resources that influence them. Stakeholder participation in project work could come in the form of identification of problems, planning, implementation, monitoring of results, or evaluation of performance; or a combination of any or all these aspects. On the other hand, a stakeholder-participation model refers to a specific approach by which stakeholders may be engaged to take part in project activities. It may be top-down or bottom-up participation, quadripartite project participation model (QPPM), collaborative, contractual, among others. There are various empirical studies which have considered the influence of stakeholder-participation models on projects are detailed hereafter.

1.1.1 Top-down stakeholder-participation model

In the top-down stakeholder-participation model, decisions about what intervention is to be undertaken and how it should be undertaken are externally made by the highest ranking stakeholders and then the lower ranking stakeholders are brought on board during implementation.

In an empirical study, Tseng and Penning-Rowsell (2012) employed the case study design to examine micro-political and related barriers to stakeholder engagement in flood risk management in the Shuanghsi River basin of Taiwan. The objective of this study was to determine the extent to which conventional stakeholder engagement ideas influence the outputs of the flood risk management (FRM) in the Shuanghsi River Basin. This project took a top-down approach because the whole project was conceived and largely directed by the Taiwan Government while other stakeholders were engaged much later and they participated from a weakened and disadvantaged position. Tseng and Penning-Rowsell (2012) concluded that the use of the top-down model made the project to fail to achieve its objectives. For instance, they report that the government tended to limit stakeholder-participation and there were serious power inequality challenges between the stakeholders whereby the less influential stakeholders were generally ignored and government officials chose to involve people who were perceived to be friendly to the government; leading to resentment and conflicts.

In another study, Dadvar-Khani (2012) who studied top-down rural stakeholders' participation in a rural tourism project in Kan area of Tehran in Iran established that there was lack of meaningful community participation in the development of tourism in the villages; and that the government's top-down planning of rural tourism had alienated the rural communities from the project, which eventually failed to meet its objectives. Dadvar-Khani (2012) who used a mixed method approach in which data was collected by questionnaires and interviews noted that; "... In the view of local people, tourism has had no positive effect on the quality of their life and welfare of the host community..." (p. 274). It is therefore evident that the biggest limitation of the top-down approach to participation is that by largely excluding local people from participating in management discussions and decision-making that concern their local environment, top-down approaches and their management initiatives can be lacking in crucially relevant local realities, perspectives and input (Smith, 2008). As such, Tseng and Penning-Rowsell (2012) caution that stakeholder engagement by top-down approach is not easy because; "...many FRM schemes continue to be strongly opposed or at least disputed by the very people they are intended to protect, causing bewilderment for their promoters" (p. 253).

In a nutshell, it is evident from the foregoing literature that one of the biggest downside of the the top-down approach to stakeholder participation in projects is that it contributes to lack of ownership of projects by local communities, for which the model does not have a remedy. It is also evident that this and other limitations of the top-down participation model have left a gap for alternative stakeholder-participation models; in which case the rise of the bottom-up stakeholder participation model from the mid-20th century (Smith, 2008) represented an effort to address this gap.

1.1.2 The bottom-up participation model

This model lays emphasis on decisions that emanate from the lowest level of stakeholders, and all the other stakeholders come in to provide the support that is required to accomplish these decisions. This model is premised on the assumption that local communities are cohesive and can easily organize themselves to champion and undertake initiatives that are meant to improve their way of life (Smith, 2008). In the mid twentieth century, a shift from top-down to bottom-up stakeholder participation in development projects began shaping up and Smith (2008) notes that this was influenced by a growing backlash against top-down approaches to development. By the late twentieth century, the bottom-up approach had gathered enough support and there was the general belief that sometimes local people can take care of their own problems, using their own resources (Smith, 2008). The popularity of this approach is based on this belief coupled with the fact that recognition of local capacities, knowledge and skills can be extremely empowering for local communities participating in local environmental management projects and programmes (Smith, 2008). According to De Schepper, Dooms and Haezendonck (2014), the strength of this model lies in its ability to give stakeholders the power to influence decisions. They note that although stakeholder power focuses on the nature of the resource relationship, it is not the only attribute that defines influence. De Schepper *et al.* (2014) argue that stakeholders have to possess, besides the access to or control over critical resources, the ability to apply these resources to influence the environmental uncertainty by having access to, for example, political or/and economic power.

Smith (2008) studied bottom-up approach to Punjab Rural Water Supply Project in Pakistan. With funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), this project was launched in 2004. Using participatory action research, the researcher found out that Punjab Rural Water Supply Project was the first bottom-up participatory water management project in Punjab Province, in which the design and construction of wells and water supply distribution systems were completed according to local community input.

According to Smith (2008), other benefits of this project to the community were: Across 335 remote and mostly poor Punjabi villages, community-based organizations (CBOs) were formed to define and organize their specific community needs, wants and aims in relation to local water access and management; a total of 800,000 more people had access to safe water supplies; the project provided capacity-building and empowerment opportunities as local people participated in the initial planning and construction stages, and also the eventual operation and maintenance responsibilities of the project were devolved to the various local participant communities throughout the province; sustainable management was ensured because there was training of the beneficiaries in supervisory skills as well as in tariff collection and financial management, technical operations and water quality monitoring; the average household incomes in the province rose by 24% because women had more time for entrepreneurial pursuits like making clothes and handicrafts to sell for income; and school enrollment increased by up to 80% as more young girls had time to attend school. Thus, Smith (2008) has linked these project outputs to the bottom-up stakeholder-participation model that was applied.

Smith (2008) does not report about the negative influence of the top-down model on this project. It should not however be taken for granted that the bottom-up participation model is a panacea to all stakeholder-participation challenges. Incidentally, it is Smith (2008) who recommends that problematic aspects of the bottom-up participatory approach need to be "... critically analyzed and appreciated so as not to fall into the trap of romanticizing and essentializing the grassroots movement..." (p. 353). Such limitations include but are not limited to tokenism, the assumption that communities are cohesive, and the critical lack of facilitator knowledge about community participation by those charged with the responsibility for its facilitation Smith (2008). Moreover, the multiplicity of stakeholders in the bottom-up approach creates conflicts among them thereby making project management and progress difficult (Boon *et al.*, 2012). Although the bottom-up stakeholder participation model is sensitive to the critical role of the grassroots people in a project, the model appears to lack capacity to address many of its related challenges that may impede stakeholders from effectively and efficiently taking part in the project. Therefore, the assumption that the bottom-up model is the best and has the capacity to solve the limitations of the top-down model – let alone its own limitations - is not realistic.

1.1.3 The quadripartite project participation model

The QPPM is another conventional model that is used to engage stakeholders in the management of projects. According to Boon *et al.* (2013), the QPPM is a three-tier stakeholder management structure designed to facilitate decision making at the various stakeholder levels in a project. The QPPM comprises of local project management teams (LPMTs), national project management teams (NPMTs), and international project management teams (IPMTs) with a transversal advisory quality assurance team (QAT). The QPPM has been in use in the stakeholder management of many projects; for instance, in Ghana by International Centre for Enterprise and Sustainable Development (ICED) (Boon *et al.* 2013). Having studied ICED projects that applied QPPM in Ghana, Boon *et al.* (2013) have praised the model as being "... most effective in managing her relationships and communication with her partners and stakeholders for the model enables an efficient exchange of information and accords stakeholders the opportunity to input into the project management process ..." (p. 53); and thus, they recommend this model noting that it is "... worth adopting by development actors operating at the community level..." (p. 53). Participatory action research (PAR) was the methodology of choice for Boon *et al.* (2013) for their study.

Nonetheless, the QPPM is characterised by limitations which can make it difficult for a project to be undertaken. Boon *et al.* (2013) point out that by bringing on board many stakeholders, the model had a challenge that related to the management of the varied stakeholder-interests especially in the project design phase and this inevitably led to inter-personal and inter-stakeholder conflicts which slowed down or derailed projects completely. This is supported by Tseng and Penning-Rowsell (2012) who note that engaging many stakeholders can indeed lead to conflict with existing power structures and political cultures. This implies that a project may not achieve much just by the mere fact that it brings on board many stakeholders. Instead, what is critical is the process of how the stakeholders are effectively and efficiently engaged in the undertaking of the various phases of projects. Other than the foregoing, the QPPM has other limitations which Boon *et al.* (2013) have not addressed. These limitations arise out of the weaknesses of the QPPM which Boon *et al.* (2013) have not critically evaluated. The first one is that by assuming that stakeholders can only come in the form of three categories of IPMT, NPMT, and LPMT; the model is rigid because it leaves out other levels in which stakeholders can manifest in a project such as the global stakeholders like the United Nations.

Another limitation of this model is that the LPMT is too generalized because it lumps all stakeholders within a country into one group and labels them as LPMTs; whereas in reality, there are several other levels of stakeholders that can be found within the LPMT. Besides, there is no mechanism in this QPPM for the representation of members of the LPMTs in the NPMT, IPMT, and QAT, where critical decisions that affect the communities are made; thus, interests pertaining to grassroots stakeholders may not be articulated under this structure of management, and this negates core principles of participation which the model is supposed to enhance. The other drawback to this model is that it lacks capacity to address stakeholder-participation challenges that are outside the realm of communication and interpersonal/intergroup relations. Such stakeholder-participation challenges include but are not limited to poverty, geographical dispersion of the project area, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, and lack of resources. These are fundamental limitations which may impede stakeholder participation in projects, yet the model does not have redress mechanisms.

In a nutshell, by QPPMs failure to address challenges that arise from its application in projects; Boon *et al.* (2013) lack a sound basis for their claim that the QPPM is the most effective in managing relationships and thus "...worth adopting by development actors operating at the community level..." (p. 53). Besides, the fact that stakeholders at lower levels of this model are not represented at higher level teams where critical decisions are made can easily make relationships between the teams suspicious and conflict ridden. This makes QPPM to lack capacity to address the challenges that are posed by its limitations. This appears to confirm Smith's (2008) assertion that many studies just gloss over or ignore limitations of various stakeholder-participation models, but are quick to stress their advantages leading to biased viewpoints.

1.1.4 Collaborative stakeholder-participation model

In this model, emphasis is laid on the sharing of decision-making power among different stakeholders in a project; and all stakeholders are deemed equally important and are linked through knowledge sharing (Probst, Hagmann, Fernandez & Ashby, 2003). Thus, the basic feature in this model is that it engenders a collective approach to decision-making which comes along with attendant merits. For instance, collaboration in project management has been shown to not only enhance cooperation and foster belief change among stakeholders; it is also credited for generating funds and support for alternative policy measures when problems are too diffuse or difficult to address through regulation and it increases the implementation success of policies and programmes as well (Scott, 2015). Scott (2015) also records that previous research including Ulibarri (2015) "... has shown that collaborative governance has a positive effect on both intermediate outputs and perceived policy or program effectiveness" (p. 559). The collaborative stakeholder-participation model has also been explored by Koontz and Newig (2014) who studied three watershed management projects in Ohio State (USA) and found that these projects applied a collaborative stakeholder-participation approach which led to improved project results. Heravi *et al.* (2015) also observe that improving effective stakeholder involvement will not only help project stakeholders to efficiently collaborate with each other, it will also play the role of facilitating the possibility of a decrease in negative environmental impacts and increase the economic sustainability and quality of the project.

Nonetheless, the collaborative model is not problem-free. Indeed, the biggest pitfall in this model is that the constellation of stakeholders often comes with conflicts which may be quite debilitating to the project (Boon *et al.*, 2013). This model does not however have an inbuilt mechanism of addressing this limitation. This then implies that realization of the project life cycle that adopts this model will partly depend on how this model is applied, and how the emergent stakeholder conflicts are resolved. This is corroborated by Berardo, Heikkila and Gerlak (2014) who caution that the performance and effectiveness of collaboratives is tied to their ability to ensure a process of engagement or regular dialogue and discussion among diverse actors.

1.1.5 Contractual stakeholder-participation model

This is a stakeholder-participation model in which an influential stakeholder who is regarded as the project owner or manager has sole decision-making power; and other stakeholders participate in activities defined by this main stakeholder in the sense of being formally or informally contracted to provide goods, services and other kinds of support (Muronga, Nyonje, Onguko & Kyalo, 2016). There is evidence of the application of this model in projects. While studying flood risk management projects in England and Wales, Geaves and Penning-Rowsell (2014) found that stakeholders were engaged in contractual as well as collaborative participation while undertaking these projects which helped to enhance productivity of the project. Geaves and Penning-Rowsell (2014) study did not however explore the limitations which this model had on the subject project. Further research is needed on this aspect.

1.1.6 Consultative stakeholder-participation model

In this model, most of the key decisions are made by one social actor who wields influence in the project (Probst *et al.*, 2003). However, emphasis is laid on consultation and gathering of information from other stakeholders, especially for identifying challenges and opportunities, priority setting, and even risk factors; which information is then applied in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project. There is little literature on the use of this model in project implementation; and this calls for further research.

1.1.7 Collegiate stakeholder-participation model

This is an approach to participation in which various stakeholders work together as colleagues or partners on an initiative, while project ownership and responsibility are equally distributed among the partners, and decisions are made by agreement or consensus among all the stakeholders (Probst *et al.*, 2003). There is little literature on the application of this model in project implementation. However, this does not imply that there are no projects that have been done using this stakeholder-participation model. This calls for research that should be geared at addressing this gap in literature. On the basis of the limitations of the foregoing stakeholder-participation models, this study formulated a guiding proposition.

Proposition: *Conventional stakeholder-participation models have limitations that are likely to make projects fail to achieve their objectives.*

1.1.8 Problem statement

Due to their inherent and non-inherent limitations, literature reveals that the reviewed stakeholder-participation models have been shown to be lacking the capacity to solve stakeholder-participation challenges and this delays or stalls projects. The most problematic element and criticism of the participatory approaches relates to the financial and material resources capacity constraints commonly experienced especially by bottom-up projects; which the models are unable to address (Smith, 2008). Cleaver, (2001) emphasizes this by asserting that whereas it is true that communities may hold valuable knowledge about local environments and contain considerable enthusiasm, motivation and commitment toward the project that they initiate; their lack of material and other resources may delay or stall projects. As such, these stakeholder-participation models lack capacity to deal with not only this major stakeholder-participation limitation; but also with others such as poverty, geographical dispersion, poor infrastructure, illiteracy (Tseng & Penning-Rowell, 2012); lack of information, lack of adequate time for project work, language and cultural barriers (Stauss *et al.*, 2012); and environmental degradation (Dadvar-Khan, 2012). This explains why growing attention has turned to the search for a 'post-participation consensus' (Tseng & Penning-Rowell, 2012) whose focus is on among other issues, the need to search for and shift to more beneficial stakeholder involvement models (Stanghellini, 2010). This means that further studies are required in order to evaluate limitations of conventional stakeholder-participation models and to design other models with capacity to address such limitations.

1.1.9 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to examine limitations of conventional stakeholder-participation models in the management of projects, and to design a stakeholder-participation model with capacity to address such limitations.

2.0 Theoretical framework

Limitations of the various stakeholder-participation models were examined with reference to the stakeholder theory. Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives. However, this definition is narrow in scope considering that a stakeholder is still affected when the organization fails to attain its objectives. Consequently, a stakeholder needs to be broadly defined as an individual, group or entity that affect or is affected by an organization's activities. Stakeholder theory was propounded by Freeman (1984) as a proposal for the strategic management of organizations in the late twentieth century. The thrust of his work was to develop an alternative form of strategic management as a response to rising competitiveness, globalization and the growing complexity of company operations. From an initially strategic perspective, the theory tremendously evolved and has been adopted as a tool of management by many market-based organizations (Mainardes *et al.*, 2011). Stakeholder theory has developed and now has three distinct dimensions namely:

The descriptive which explains how the organization operates in terms of stakeholder management; the instrumental which demonstrates how to attain organizational objectives through stakeholder management; and the normative which defines how businesses should operate, especially in relation to moral principles all of which touch on stakeholders. In brief, stakeholder theory argues that other than just focusing on the owners of an organization, there are other parties involved in the organization including local communities, employees, customers, financiers, suppliers, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, political groups, trade unions, regulatory bodies, and beneficiaries who are equally important. All these should be considered and managed well for the success of the project. Stakeholder theory also considers competitors as stakeholders and this status is derived from their capacity to affect the firm and other stakeholders. Stakeholder-participation in market stalls projects in Vihiga County was viewed mainly through the prism of the instrumental perspective of stakeholder theory. It explains how stakeholders can be managed in a way that helps to attain the performance objectives of an organization, thus, using stakeholder management as a tool for strategic decision making in a project.

3.0 Methodology

This study was undertaken between April and May of 2016. It was based on four purposively selected economic stimulus program (ESP) market stalls projects in Vihiga County (Kenya) namely Jeptul, Chavakali, Majengo and Wemilabi. This research applied case study design to examine the four market stalls projects. A case study is an in-depth examination of a single instance of a phenomenon such as a person, a family, an institution or a project. Thus, the four market stalls projects were the cases that the researcher investigated. Because case study requires an in-depth investigation and elaborate presentation, the study used thick descriptions and explanations. This study employed a multiple-case study approach because the study entailed four cases, i.e., and the four markets stalls projects in Vihiga County. Since the four projects had varying levels of implementation at the time of the study, there was need for in-depth investigation of each of the market stalls projects in order to understand the challenges that the projects faced and how this influenced their varying implementation levels. There was a heterogeneous target population of about 559 respondents across the four projects. This population comprised of the various project stakeholders namely: Ten (10) officers who were in charge of the market stalls projects at national level, seven (7) Vihiga County Government staff directly in charge of the projects, seven (7) area political and administrative leaders per project, one (1) project contractor per project, one (1) project supplier per project, twenty (20) project workers per project, one hundred (100) prospective market stalls vendors per project, six (6) Constituency Development Fund (CDF) committee members per project, one (1) officer of the defunct Vihiga Municipal Council, one (1) officer of the defunct Vihiga County Council, and one (1) market management committee (MMC) member per project.

Several sampling strategies were applied to select 134 respondents as a sample for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select the following categories of respondents: One (1) officer in charge of the ESP market stalls projects at national level, seven (7) Vihiga County Government staff in charge of the projects, two (2) area political and administrative leaders per project, two (2) project contractors (one contractor did 3 projects while another one did one), one (1) project supplier per project, two (2) project workers per project, one (1) CDF committee member per project, one (1) officer of the defunct Vihiga Municipal Council, one (1) officer of the defunct Vihiga County Council, and one (1) MMC chairman per project. On the other hand, snowball sampling was used to get twenty-four (24) prospective market stalls vendors per project. Out of the 134 respondents, 38 of them were interviewed while 96 were taken through focus group discussions (FGDs). The study conducted a total of 8 FGDs (2 FGDs per project) involving prospective market stalls vendors. Data was collected using document review, observation, interviews and FGDs. Data analysis commenced in the field and continued concurrently with data collection. Data that was collected for this study was in the form of interview transcripts, and extensive field notes from open-ended exploratory interviews. It was also in the form of recorded observations (schedules and photographs), recorded focus groups discussions, texts and documents, project drawings, bills of quantities (BQs), minutes, reports and project plans. This study employed qualitative techniques of data analysis called content analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001), within-case analysis (Cresswell, 2012) and cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009).

4.0 Results

The study found out that all the four ESP market stalls projects applied the top-down, contractual and consultative stakeholder-participation models.

The study also established that these models influenced the implementation of the projects positively; but had fundamental limitations on the projects as well.

4.1 The applied stakeholder-participation models and their influence on the projects

The stakeholder-participation models that were found to have been applied in the implementation of the four ESP market stalls projects in Vihiga County have been considered in this section together with their attendant influence on the subject projects.

4.1.1 Top-down stakeholder-participation model

The study found out that in all the four projects, the top-down stakeholder-participation approach was applied to engage some of the stakeholders in the implementation of the project. These stakeholders included the local political and administrative leaders, and various government officers who worked at levels lower than the national level in the client ministry as well as other participating ministries. The project was just handed over to the lower level stakeholders for implementation after having been planned by top government officials who were based in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. Various respondents explained that the choice of the top-down model by the Government of Kenya in these projects was deliberate since it was the one funding all the projects and wanted to have a firm grip on how the projects were going to be implemented. This model therefore guaranteed the top government officers the capacity to make all the major decisions concerning the projects, as was seen during planning and implementation of the projects.

The study established that the top-down model was advantageous to the project because the client (the then Ministry of Local Government) had the financial capacity to provide ten million Kenya shillings for each of the four projects. This was positive for it would not have been feasible for the Vihiga local authority to provide this amount of money. The study also found out that it was easy for the client to allocate the projects space for their implementation because it is the client who managed land in the towns where the projects were located. It would have been difficult, or it would have taken a long period to get this space had it been under another government agency other than the client.

On the other hand, the top-down model had its demerits on the projects as the land space that was unilaterally allocated for Jeptul, Chavakali and Majengo projects was not suitable. Respondents argued that the three projects were put up in a very small place and this will make it difficult for the vendors and buyers of fresh agricultural products to conduct business. The Chavakali site was also said to be unsafe and far away from the town's central business district. This goes to confirm that top-down approaches and their management initiatives can be lacking in crucially relevant local realities, perspectives and input (Smith, 2008). As a result, top-down managers can develop management policies, projects or programs that are locally unsuitable, unsustainable and unaccepted often leading to conflicts and wastage of scarce resources (Tseng & Penning-Rowse, 2012). It is for such reasons that the top-down stakeholder-participation has been considered to have lost appeal. However, there is the question of why the government of Kenya chose to use this model when its limitations are well documented. Studies have shown that many governments prefer top-down approaches because this gives them leverage to resist sharing decision-making power with other stakeholders (Davar-Khani, 2012; Nina *et al.*, 2009; Tseng & Penning-Rowse, 2012) by refusing to integrate local skills and knowledge into their plans, deliberately delaying engagement with stakeholders, supporting the provision of only one-way information flow, and holding superficial public meetings. This eventually undermines the value of stakeholder participation as was the case in the four ESP market stalls projects in Vihiga County.

On the negative score as well, the study established that as a result of the top-down model, some of the lower level stakeholders like the local community, and local political and administrative leaders did not participate in the implementation of the Jeptul, Chavakali, Majengo and Wemilabi market stalls projects. The reason given by the project team for the non-inclusion of all stakeholders in the implementation of the project was that since this was an economic stimulus project, there was no time for proper planning and inclusion of all stakeholders (interviewee 7). However, the affected stakeholders responded by saying that this reason was not convincing; explaining that it was just an excuse for excluding some stakeholders from such important projects, because the authorities feared that stakeholders would have demanded that the projects be implemented in an organized manner and with their full input; yet the government of Kenya was not ready for this. This study found the non-inclusion of some stakeholders in key project activities to have violated the Constitution of Kenya which makes it mandatory for all public projects to engage the relevant stakeholders (GoK, 2010).

Non-inclusion of some of the stakeholders also went against project success criteria which identify key project stakeholders' satisfaction and their incorporation into the project - other than aspects of cost, time and quality - as critical project success parameters (PMI, 2013). If the disenchanted stakeholders in the four projects continue insisting on rejecting the market stalls as they did during the time of the study, there will be no other remedy because the millions of Kenya shillings invested in the projects will go to waste.

Due to the top-down model that excluded the participation of some of the key stakeholders, the study also found out that the market stalls have a limited scope; for they do not meet space, design and selling-position requirements of the prospective vendors. Except for the Wemilabi project, the other three projects were squeezed into very small space making it difficult for easy movement of both humans and vehicles around the market. The projects are limited in scope as well owing to the small number of vendors (24) who can be accommodated in the stalls. It is due to such negative top-down outcomes that Beringer, Jonas and Kock (2012) caution that stakeholders and their interests may be affected by projects or project outcomes and therefore, from an ethics and sustainable management view, stakeholders must not be ignored in project management.

Other than the foregoing, the study found out that the top-down model led to the delay in the implementation of the projects. Initially, each of the projects was scheduled to take 6 months. However, over six and a half years later, the projects have not achieved their objectives. This means that the projects have failed to meet their objectives within set time-lines and are therefore failed projects. This is measured against the definition of a successful project which is one that meets its objective(s) within specified scope, cost, time and quality aspects. The challenge of delay in projects that apply the top-down model is common as established also by Tseng and Penning-Rowse (2012) in a study they conducted on a community project in Taiwan; which faced similar delay-related limitations.

Moreover, the study established that delay in project implementation led to project cost escalation as a result of increase in the cost of material, transport and labor. Cost escalation on the other hand led to the stalling of the projects because the contractors felt financially constrained and had not for example connected electricity to the markets, although they had completed the wiring and fixed the bulbs. This aspect of the projects overshooting their budgets also made them become unsuccessful projects because operating within project cost is a critical success factor in any project (PMI, 2013).

The study further noted that the escalation in the cost of the projects was partially responsible for the low quality of the structures that were put up within each of the projects. Across all the four projects, the floors and walls of the structures were already peeling off implying either the use of low quality of materials, low quantity of materials, or a combination thereof. Although, some of the respondents who were interviewed openly denied that the structures were of low quality, others via FGDs A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, D1 and D2 confirmed that the structures were indeed of low quality. This was triangulated by researcher's observations that clearly indicated that the surfaces of the walls and floors were indeed peeling off.

As a result, this study established that the lower level stakeholders were not impressed by the manner in which the ESP projects were planned and implemented; and thus rejected the projects. This was emphasized by interviewees 4, 5, 8, 10 and FGDs A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, D1 and D2. This eventuality is not unprecedented because it is on record that although it is characteristic of top-down participation to structure itself around the use of professional leadership that is provided by external resources that plan, implement, and evaluate development projects or programs (Macdonald, 1995); literature has shown that it leads to failed projects. Examples include the one studied by Nina *et al.* (2009), Dadvar-Khani (2012), and Tseng and Penning-Rowse (2012) which failed to achieve their objectives due to the limitations of the top-down model that was applied.

The study concluded as well that because of the top-down model, the prospective market stalls vendors had shunned the projects because they clearly indicated that they were not willing to occupy the stalls if no improvement was going to be done. There were common main reasons as to why this was the case. In all the four projects, the prospective market stalls vendors cited lack of their involvement in project planning and implementation, poor design of the main structure and the stalls, and the limited number of vendors set to be accommodated in the stalls. However, some of the projects had unique reasons as to why the prospective market stalls vendors had shunned the projects. For the Majengo project, the prospective market stalls vendors observed that the market is far away from the reach of many of the would-be customers. For the Chavakali project, the prospective market stalls vendors observed that the current market is not necessary (as a similar and bigger market exists), isolated, and insecure.

As such, generally, the respondents reported that the projects did not meet the expectations of some of the key stakeholders and as Tseng and Penning-Rowsell (2012) established, this always leads to distrust, conflicts, blame, and frustration in the project planning and implementation processes. The bottom-up stakeholder participation model which this study reviewed is one that has potential to address some of the limitations that befell the four ESP market stalls projects; had it been adopted.

Literature has indeed shown that the bottom-up approach encourages projects to seek for, appreciate and apply local knowledge, and to consider local people themselves as the appropriate experts about their local environments (Chambers, 1997). This has been confirmed by later studies like that of Smith (2008) who studied the Punjab Rural Water Supply Project. According to Smith (2008), this was the first bottom-up participatory water management project in Punjab Province of Pakistan in which the design and construction of wells and water supply distribution systems were completed according to local community input, besides other benefits of this project to the community; which were attributable to the bottom-up model. Thus, both top-down and bottom-up models can be applied in one project, each coming in to address the limitations of the other.

4.1.2 Contractual stakeholder-participation model

The study established that the contractual engagements were also applied in the implementation of the four market stalls projects that were undertaken in Vihiga County. This model was used to engage the client and contractor on the one hand; and the contractor, the workers, and the suppliers on the other. The contract between the client and contractor was formal while the ones between the contractor versus the workers and the suppliers were informal. As for the influence of the contractual model, the study established that it ensured that contractors stuck to the design and number of structures that were to be put up in every project. Each project is supposed to have the main structure, an office block, a toilet block, a water tank and a concrete waste bin. Thus, except for the Jeptul project where space is still being sought for the toilet block, the model ensured that the scope of the project in terms of the stated project components was attained.

The model also ensured that each party in the contract played their role in the project. This helped in the attainment of the current afore-stated implementation outputs of the four market stalls projects. In the wake of project cost escalation that characterized these projects, it is possible that the contractors would not have honored their obligations were it not for the legal contracts in which they had entered to deliver the projects. One of the limitations of this model was that it aided the client to delay all the four projects and escalate their cost without the client being made to bear any responsibility or penalties because the contract did not provide for such remedies to the contractors. The model also allowed the client to pass over extra project cost to the contractors regardless of who caused the extra costs. The contractors were then compelled to cover all the extra project costs within the available budget and by doing so, the model led to the lowering of the quality of the structures; because the contractors resorted to low quality or quantities of materials or both. It can be argued that by design, the contract was skewed in favor of the client who in this case was a government agency in the name of the then Ministry of Local Government.

4.1.3 Consultative stakeholder-participation model

The study established that this model was used to conduct project activities between some of the major project stakeholders who included the client, the Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Health and the constituency tender committees. Other than that, the study found out that consultative stakeholder-participation model was credited for bringing together independent government agencies (the client, the Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Health and the constituency tender committees) to work on the project while at the same time recognizing their status as independent government agencies. This fostered mutual respect which contributed to the achievement of the current project outputs across the four projects. The model was also able to bring together various staff with varying skills from different ministries which enabled the projects to attain their outputs that were evident at the time of this study.

However, this model negatively affected the projects as well. The study established that there were no structured coordination and communication mechanisms between the four major groups of stakeholders. Consequently, this manner of applying the model was responsible for delays not only in decision making, but also in communicating the decisions made and the eventual implementation of these decisions to other project stakeholders. The result was an increase in the time taken to undertake the project, which led to cost escalation and the two in turn led to the deterioration of the quality of work done on the various project structures.

This would have been averted if the project team had applied the basic rule in consultative participation. According to Probst *et al.*, (2003), emphasis in this model should be laid on consultation and gathering of information from other stakeholders; which information should then be applied in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluating the project. This aspect of this model was not followed in the implementation of the four ESP market stalls projects in Vihiga County; and this caused delays and cost escalation.

In a nutshell, the study found out that all the four ESP market stalls projects applied the top-down, contractual and consultative stakeholder-participation models; and these models influenced the implementation of the projects positively as well as negatively. Another general finding was that although the three models that were applied in the four market stalls projects had both positive and negative effects, it was evident that the negative effects of the models on the projects outweigh the positive ones. The negative effects were largely attributed not only to inherent limitations of the models, but also due to lack of proper application of the models during the implementation of the projects as detailed above. This situation is underscored in literature by Sherman and Ford (2014) who established in their study that, "... participatory methods can fail to build local capacity and also fail to empower communities by constraining the openness of participation and limiting the contribution of participant input in project implementation ..." (p. 433). It is therefore prudent that project teams should always be aware of this bottleneck so as to avoid it.

The study also established that the negative effects of the applied models in the implementation of the four market stalls projects were responsible for the stalling of the projects for over six and a half years after the scheduled completion time, with cost overrun and low quality structures. To illustrate the lack of decisive action about the stalled projects, none of the study respondents - who included key government officers in charge of the projects - knew what should be done about the projects as at the time of this study. Given also that the prospective market stalls vendors had already rejected the projects, the study concluded as well that the four projects can be categorized as failed projects based on critical success factors (Osorio, Quelhas, Zotes, Shimoda, & França, 2014) for measuring development projects.

Consequently, the study established that the top-down, bottom-up, QPPM, collaborative, contractual, consultative, and collegiate stakeholder-participation models lack capacity to deliver successful projects mainly as a result of their inherent limitations. The top-down model for instance does not value the inclusion of all stakeholders at every level of decision making and this was evident in the implementation of the four ESP market stalls projects in Vihiga County. The bottom-up model assumes that local communities always have the capacity to organize themselves to deliver successful projects; yet this is not always the case. The contractual model has the tendency to bind stakeholders to undertake activities which may not be in the best interests of the project or some of the stakeholders, as it happened in the four projects where the contractors were forced to take on extra costs caused by the client without any remedial avenue for the contractors. The consultative model can only work well in cases where there are proper coordination and communication channels (Probst *et al.*, 2003), but this was missing in the four market stalls projects. This implies that it is difficult to rely on the conventional stakeholder-participation models for a successful project. These models are characterized by many limitations some of which emanate from their unrealistic assumptions. This position has been corroborated by this study which has presented empirical findings that show that even the top-down, contractual and consultative stakeholder-participation models that were applied in the four market stalls projects in Vihiga County had negative influence on these projects; eventually leading to their incessant completion delays and total stalling. They are now categorized as failed projects. It is this kind of frustration with the conventional stakeholder-participation models that explains why growing attention has now been focused on the search for what Tseng and Penning-Rowsell (2012) have termed as a 'post-participation consensus' whose focus is on among other issues, the need to search for and shift to more beneficial stakeholder involvement models (Stanghellini, 2010). As a step towards this goal, this study has developed a new stakeholder-participation model and suggests that it should be tested and subsequently be adopted in the management of projects.

4.2 The capacity building stakeholder-participation model

In order to address the limitations that are associated with the conventional stakeholder-participation models, this study designed the capacity building stakeholder-participation (CBSP) model. The CBSP has been designed to address the shortfalls that characterize the reviewed stakeholder-participation models as detailed in this paper. The CBSP is premised on the need to empower all project stakeholders as the only means of enabling them to deliver on their project mandates. This model is built on the following assumptions:

- i. All stakeholders require financial resources with which to gainfully engage in development projects.
- ii. All stakeholders require technical information with which they can gainfully engage in development projects.
- iii. All stakeholders require socio-cultural information about the project environment to enable them gainfully participate in development projects.
- iv. All stakeholders require equipment that may be necessary for them to gainfully participate in development projects that require such equipment.
- v. The level of participation and influence of a stakeholder in a project is determined by the economic, political or social status of the subject stakeholder.
- vi. Enhanced economic, political, socio-cultural or technical capacity gives a stakeholder a higher status in society.
- vii. Low economic, political, socio-cultural or technical capacity gives a stakeholder low status in society.
- viii. Project stakeholders do not have the same status in society.

These assumptions imply that in the proposed CBSP model, stakeholders can be ranked in terms of their status in society. We can therefore have stakeholders in various levels depending on their status and influence on the project. The lowest level is level 1 and the levels can be as many as there are groups of stakeholders with varied status; unlike in the QPPM (Boon *et al.*, 2013) where there are only 3 levels of stakeholders. Apart from making provision for flexible levels of stakeholders, the biggest contribution of the CBSP model in our view, is the ability to build stakeholder capacity as the basis of effective participation in any project. This model therefore proposes that with regard to the various stakeholder-participation challenges (eg. poverty, lack of resources, language and cultural barriers, illiteracy, lack of information, wrong information, suspicion, and unequal power relations); the project team should first build the capacity of the stakeholders to address the existent challenges and thereafter proceed with the project. For instance, providing information where there is none, correcting distorted information, starting a self-help income generating activity, introducing a translator where there are communication barriers, and stakeholder familiarization with each other. The necessity for capacity-building is supported by Yalagama, Chileshe and Ma (2016) who observe that lack of capacity with regard to development projects has been a challenge in the past and they have cited the World Bank's social fund programs and projects which they note have previously been criticized for lack of capacity-building, especially the building of organizational skills at community level, as well as a lack of a sense of ownership of the projects by the beneficiary groups.

In applying the CBSP, project managers will be able to address challenges that are associated with the conventional stakeholder-participation models. It should be noted that the proposed CBSP model is quite versatile since it is designed to be used either alone or alongside any other conventional stakeholder-participation model be it top-down, bottom-up, contractual, consultative, collegiate or any other model. The CBSP model is represented graphically as shown in figure 1

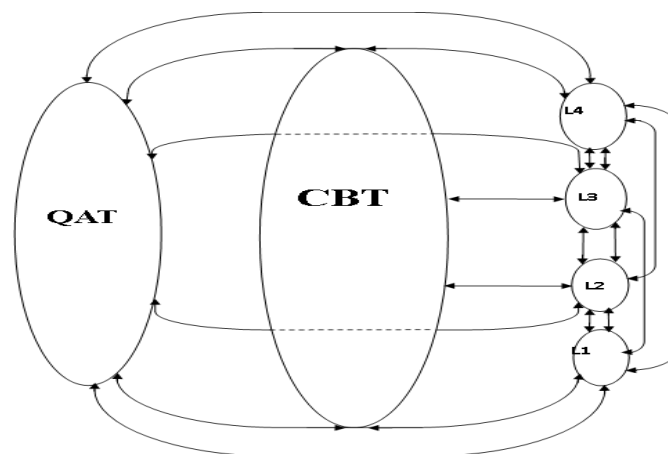


Figure 1: Capacity building stakeholder participation model

Key:

- L1** - Level 1 stakeholder
- L2** - Level 2 stakeholders
- L3** - Level 3 stakeholders
- L4** - Level 4 stakeholders
- CBT** - Capacity Building Team
- QAT** - Quality Assurance Team

In the CBSP model, various groups of stakeholders have to be identified and ranked according to their status and influence in society; giving as many levels of stakeholders as possible depending on the level of complexity in the subject project. These stakeholders have to be empowered to interact freely amongst themselves as shown by the arrows. The arrows show that in this model, each group of stakeholders has the opportunity to contact or interact with any other group when there is need to do so. This helps to break communication barriers between the various stakeholders. This model also provides for a capacity building team (CBT) that is charged with the responsibility of enabling the various stakeholders to perform their functions by providing information, guidance, material resources, training, translation services, technical support, moral support and any other capacity-building support. The model also provides for a quality assurance team (QAT) that should ensure that relevant high quality project outputs are realized, thereby minimizing the use of funds on goods and services that either do not meet project quality requirements; or are not required by the project at all. Once a project chooses to apply this model, it should ensure that the model is applied in line with this framework.

5.0 Conclusion

This study concluded that the top-down, bottom-up, QPPM, collaborative, contractual, consultative, and collegiate stakeholder-participation models are constrained by their inherent as well as non-inherent limitations. This was evident in the implementation of the ESP market stalls projects in Vihiga County which are now categorized as failed projects owing to the limitations posed by the stakeholder-participation models that were applied. This confirms this study's proposition that conventional stakeholder-participation models have limitations that are likely to make projects fail to achieve their objectives. As such, the conventional models can not be relied upon - individually or severally - to deliver successful projects. The CBSP model has been designed to address these limitations and it is a versatile stakeholder-participation model for it can be applied alone or can be used alongside any other conventional model(s).

6.0 Suggestions for further studies

This study suggests that empirical studies should be conducted to test the application of CBSP model in the management of projects since it is a new stakeholder-participation model.

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