

Grassroots Participation in Policy Formulation: Gaps and Challenges in the Developing Countries: Case of Malaysia and Zanzibar Grassroots

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Abstract

The debates are still inconclusive on how best the grassroots can be included in policy formulation, and specifically supporting social development in the developing countries. Numerous policy scholars have uncovered that the issue of the grassroots inclusion in policy detailing is paramount and that participatory procedures are needed for better policy formulation process. Notwithstanding, numerous conclusions demonstrate that the endeavors are just won on principles at any rate as opposed to practices on the ground. Still, there is an extraordinary worry about how grassroots are included in term of procedure, platform, framework, methodology and the participatory component. This paper examines and investigates the major issues concerning the grassroots participation in the policy formulation in the developing countries for supporting social improvement. The paper found that the acts of policy detailing and activities are very described by lamentation and additionally pseudo grassroots participation. The procedure is for the most part appeared to be hampered by the absence of appropriate techniques, methodology and platform for taking part in one hand and extremely frail mindfulness and poor mentality and negative state of mind on the other side. Thus, grassroots are exceptionally poor, assuming any, take an interest to raise their voice and concern amid the policy detailing. In the light of this, the paper think of an integrated framework which will empower the basic and structural changes to enhance wide and different contributions in the policy formulation and grassroots participation. Our examination utilizes the various encounters and setting in these cases to investigate how the current platform neglected to get the policy premium and the substance from the grassroots level. The paper in view of information of two diverse qualitative case studies of contextual investigations directed in Malaysia, Kelantan specifically, and Zanzibar Grassroots respectively. The studies included 14 establishments in Malaysia and 34 in Zanzibar where 20 respondents secured in Malaysia study and 41 in Zanzibar.

Keywords: Grassroots Participation, Policy Formulation, Developing Countries, Social Development.

1. Introduction

Debates over the recent 20 years have uncovered the base of the matter in peoples' participation is about strengthening individual power and choices to influence policy formulation proclaimed by participatory ideal models. Rigon (2014) argued that for grassroots living in destitution participating in policy formulation exercises is taken out to be an extraordinary sympathy toward governments and different practitioners. As a result, the grassroots participation idea is all around named as contemporary development specifically towards participatory approach policy making process and social sustainable improvement. The idea has been considered by most activists, policy scholars and experts who try to look into other options of upgrading the policy proprietorship to the general population. The grassroots contribution in policy formulation generally can be aimed at cultivating participation as a procedure of enabling local people to raise their voices and concerns or even attempt to create a public approach for the general population's craving and improvement activities. Invigorating grassroots participation is very much seen as a device for widening inclusion in forming policies and creating the foundation for advancing social advancement on poverty reduction activities (Arond, Abrol, Smith and Ely, 2013). However, the participation of the grassroots individuals in most developing countries still has a long way to go. The policy formulation is facing with a number of challenges such as a constraining participation space, less grassroots

strengthening and inadequacies of support participation enablers (Ghosh, 2014).

This paper was a result of two in-depth qualitative case studies carried from Malaysia and Zanzibar respectively. The paper is based on the problem that despite collective global and national efforts to enhance social wellbeing in the developing countries, yet, there is increasing pathetic grassroots participation in policy formulation which partly results to the mismatch of policy intended outcomes and the social development at the grassroots. Thus, by and large, this paper designed to engage in the discussion on: who take an interest in policy formulation and what are the improved components and mechanisms set up and its related outcomes with respect to participatory methodology at the grassroots level in the developing countries. The paper also aimed at offering any integrated framework to enhance the participatory platform for the grassroots in the policy formulation process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Grassroots

The concept represents as locales where the vast majority of its kin is occupied with horticulture, including animals, cultivating, ranger service, and fisheries. In the broadest sense, it alludes to the most fundamental level where individuals have the recognition of their issues encompassing them (Smith, 2009). Likewise, it can be termed as the neighborhood group with sharing of similar attributes of social life (Smith, Fressoli and Thomas, 2013). The rustic grassroots are those more specifically influenced by development movements and without a doubt they are the key focus of most development strategies (Olofin, Olaniyan, and Folawewo, 2011). Kukar (2008) depicts rural grassroots as a privately based where individuals have the experience to distinguish and uncover their social-economic lives. Most grassroots individuals in the developing countries are occupied with farming exercises and their lives described by destitution. Thus, it denied in income opportunities, access to settle on choices of their own matters and have constrained access to essential goods and services (Gau, Ramirez, Barua, and Gonzalez, 2014).

2.2 Policy Formulation

In any case, the policy formulation incorporates, notwithstanding, different analytical techniques and procedures for organizing data and giving possibilities and chances for the development of policy alternatives (Howlett, Tan, Migone, Wellstead and Evans, 2014). Generally, the activity incorporates a far reaching extent of roads for policy appraisal, that is, giving information or appeal to policy makers on the several policy inputs. Similarly, Hai (2013) expressed that policy formulation unmistakably is viewed as an essential time of the policy making process designed to incorporate policy decisions and needs and set the policy alternatives for enhancing socioeconomic issues or conditions. Given these points, it is broadly suggested that a compromise must be found on which policy situation or amounts of policy scenario out of different on-screen characters is sensible to fulfill expected policy outcomes. This is because participation of different groups and people should be seen as a basic point for attaining recognized policy goals and decisions (European Union, 2003). Linder and Guy Peter (1990) stressed that the policy itemizing is particularly irreplaceable part of the policy settling on formulation where the policy choices and options are made, clearly, should constitute a bearing component for regulating policy missteps and settling on right vital decisions in the midst of the policy plot. Without a doubt, the policy plan arranges and incorporates policy choices or decisions for managing an issue. Thus thought should be made to accord the support among a several on-screen characters from national to neighborhood levels to wrangle over policy decisions and choices.

2.3 Malaysia and Zanzibar economic profile

Malaysia and Zanzibar are both among the developing countries but with different economic and social development and experiences. Malaysia earns major revenue from manufacturing and tourism, though the country is largely dependent on agricultural and mining activities. The country is one of the largest producers of rubber and palm oil, thus making it the second-largest exporter of palm oil and gas. According to Hatta and Ali, (2013) and the Office of Chief Statistician Malaysia (2015), Malaysia is now an export-oriented economy and supports the multilateral trading system. As among the South/South East Asian countries which made a milestone in poverty reduction initiatives, the trends of poverty reduction show that Malaysia fought poverty from 49.3 percent in 1970s to 8.1 percent in 1999 whereas in 2004 the trend is recorded to be reduced up to 1.2 percent and 0.7 percent in 2009. Despite the remarkable success, there is still a great challenge to the most grassroots poor. The poverty index for the grassroots poor has remained higher, for example,

in Kelantan poverty was recorded as 10.6 percent in 2004, 4.8 percent in 2009 and in 2012 was 2.7 percent (Hatta and Ali, 2013).

On the other hand, Zanzibar is an island nation and a part of the United Republic of Tanzania since 1964 Union with an approximately population of 1.3 million people. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs(2014), the Zanzibar economy is mainly depending on Tourism sector and Agriculture particularly Cloves production. Zanzibar's GDP at market price stands at TZS 878,403 Million equivalent to USD 428.48 Million and the per capita income is estimated to be USD 557 as of 2009 compared with USD 1,500 from other developing countries. It is estimated that the service sector contributed to 44.7 percent in 2014 in general economic growth followed by agricultural sector by 27.9 percent in 2014 as declined from 30.4 to 2013. Zanzibar is still poverty stricken society with only marginal decline in incidence of poverty measured against the food poverty line. The population that falls below the higher 'basic needs' poverty line declined only from 49.1 to 44.4 percent in 2010. Poverty incidence is consistently remaining higher. The inequality in the distribution of per capita expenditure increased significantly, with the Gini coefficient rising from 0.28 to 0.30 in 2010 (Office of Chief Government Statisticians Zanzibar, 2010).

2.4 *Global Concerns on Grassroots Participation in Policy Formulation*

The debates are still inconclusive on how best the grassroots can be involved in policy formulation to enhance their social wellbeing in the developing countries. Many literatures have revealed that the crux of the matter in policy formulation is centered on grassroots involvement and that participatory framework is significant only when grassroots are empowered to impact on the decisions that affect their lives. However, the experiences show that the initiatives are only won on theories rather than practices. Still, there is a great concern on how grassroots are involved in term of context, framework, modality and the participatory platform. It is asserted that while the global communities have often been praised to put their efforts to support participatory initiatives as a means to eradicate poverty and enhance social wellbeing, the reality is that many policy-makers at national level are unaware of how decisions taken at the grassroots level (Rigon, 2014). He further concludes that for the most part the global policy debates and their outcomes are often disconnected from national development plans and poverty reduction strategies due to the mismatch of the policy formulation instruments with grassroots realities.

In most cases, participation is appeared not to match with practice and that there is a gap between grassroots inclinations and social policies (Friedman, 2006). Actually, this circumstance came about because of an exceptionally constrained space for grassroots group engagement (Roe, 2013). Thus, various policies fall flat, not on the grounds that they were characteristically terrible thoughts, but rather in light of the fact that they were ineffective formulated (Michael and Raymond, 2012). Engagement contribution to policymaking was low when all is said in done and practically speaking policy is still planned by a picked few (Adekeye, and Niyi, 2013; Enrique and Osborne, 2006). Generally, participation instruments are not available to the grassroots majority (Imraan, 2007).

Various studies indicate the gap that exists between the current organizations and the platform for improving participation support in general, and what really happens on the ground (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). The clear gap between the guarantee of upgrading participation through bottom up approach from one viewpoint, and the ordinary substances of the participatory process of alternate, proposes the need to see all the more completely the boundaries and flow of interest in grassroots governance, and in addition the empowering variables and strategies that can be utilized to defeat them (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999). Around the globe, we can locate various vital activities and mediations which indicate guarantee to have a critical effect in improving citizenship support in popularity based grassroots governance. The challenge as yet remaining is the means by which grassroots individuals can test the beneficial support prepared at their neighborhood level in the policy formulation process. By and large most developing countries demonstrate that the grassroots participation in the policy formulation has been faked at the cost of political intrigue.

Numerous researchers scrutinized the yield of the participation procedure as contended by Robert E & Alexandra P (2007) that the contention for expanding participation, in this way appears to have been won, at any rate on a fundamental level. The participation process in developing countries is extremely restricted and frequently fake subsequently, poor people and the disregarded grassroots are still outside the area of governance and participatory process (Noor, 2010). Adekeye, and Niyi, (2013) maintained that such new contemplating citizenship, participation brings up the issue of how to make new components, spaces and places for local engagement especially in the policy formulation process.

3. Methodology

The study used qualitative research approach and case study design. The data collected using a series of interviews conducted from grassroots community and government institutions. Followed by a detailed overview of relevant current government surveys on policy formulation in order to capture wider findings on the policy formulation process regarding the grassroots. The findings, based on data of two different qualitative case studies conducted in Malaysia and Zanzibar grassroots respectively. The studies involved 14 institutions in Malaysia and 34 in Zanzibar where 20 respondents covered in Malaysia and 41 in Zanzibar. The data analysis was conducted using multiple qualitative techniques such as context and narrative analysis. The data were presented and analyzed using different methods, namely: SPSS, Excel and Nvivo.

4. Findings and Discussion

In the final analysis, in both cases the studies uncovered that there is an immense gap between the suggested participatory approach and the practice on the ground with respect to policy formulation and grassroots participation. The policy formulation procedures are profoundly ruled by a top down approach as opposed to bottom up as differently encountered from developed countries.

Both cases have revealed a failure to inboard grassroots interests and policy inputs during the policy formulation. For the most part both countries have experienced unconvincing grassroots participation in policy formulation particularly on those policies that support their wellbeing and poverty reduction in particular. For Malaysia grassroots the findings indicate that still there is a great gap and challenges concerning how the grassroots are involved in policy formulation particularly those that target their social wellbeing. In the final analysis the findings show that Malaysia grassroots facing several gaps and challenges within STI policy and Poverty reduction strategy paradigm at the grassroots level. In brief, the gaps and challenges found were poor grassroots participation and policy awareness; unclear policy interventions; Lack of policy scenario; Mismatch on expectation, objectives and strategy; Poor policy strategies and Lack of alignment; Lack of support and willingness; Mismatch with social demands; Different in the platform and Lack of commitment. By the same token, Zanzibar has experienced the same syndromes on Poverty reduction policy strategy. In the final analysis findings indicate that the Zanzibar has lacked key enablers to support grassroots participation during the policy formulation particularly that support the social wellbeing. It is found that there is a huge gap and mismatch of the participation process during policy formulation. The participation process lacked framework, platform and modality. For the most part, there was a linkage gap between the grassroots and policy formulation process whereby grassroots are rarely involved. These tendencies results into a serious mismatch of the intended policy outcomes and the enablers batted in as indicated in the figure 4.1 below

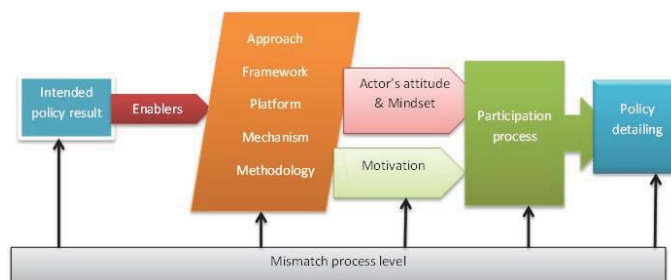


Figure 4.1: The level of Mismatch on the Participation Process during Policy Formulation

Source: Salum, Ali and Aini Suzana Ariffin, 2016

As it has been noted above in mismatch level the participation process has also been hampered by several gaps that led to ineffectiveness of participation engagement and policy formulation at large. The studies found that there is a lack of understanding among government actors on how the policy formulation process should consider the grassroots, consequently, the attempt lack harmonization of the procedures and hence result to weak grassroots participation. Lack of scenario and the mismatch of planes policy interventions and expected result were highly noticed. The figure 4.2 below indicates the summary of gaps and its implication.

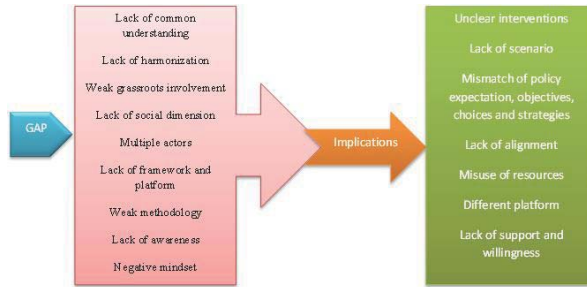


Figure 4.2: Summary of the Process Gaps and its Implications.

Source: Salum, Ali and Aini Suzana Ariffin, 2016

In generally, the studies revealed that the acts of the policy formulation process in Malaysia and Zanzibar are exceedingly contradicted with the participatory methodology standards. In the most cases the procedures are overwhelmed by a top down approach rather than bottom up platform. The figure 4.3 below indicates the percentages of grassroots participation in policy formulation.

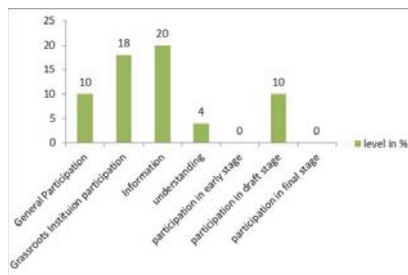


Figure 4.3: The Level of Grassroots Engagement in Policy Formulation

Source: Salum, Ali and Aini Suzana Ariffin, 2016

Correspondingly, the findings show that the participation process that mentioned by the interviewees is mostly passive and manipulative type which account for 74 percent. It was also revealed that the level of grassroots access to engagement with official policy makers is only 36 percent, although the readiness of engagement was 72 percent. In the light of this, the process is highly viewed as ineffective where by only 18 percent indicate that the current situation is effective and thus, only 32 percent indicates the willingness to participate in policy making process as shown in figure 4 below

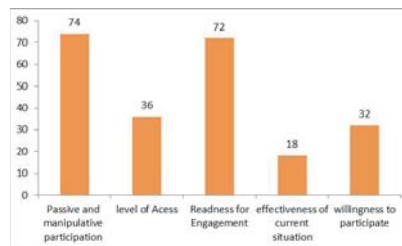


Figure 4.4: The Common Participation Type and Level of Engagement

Source : Salum, Ali and Aini Suzana Ariffin, 2016

Comparatively, the studies found that there are same common problems of the participation process at the grassroots level between Malaysia, Kelantan as a case study and Zanzibar. Both cases indicate the lowest level of policy issue understanding, low level of awareness and negative mindset and attitudes. However, there is a significant difference in the involvement of grassroots institutions in the policy formulation, government support and political willingness. Malaysia

shows the convincing results on the political willingness of 90 percent, while Zanzibar is only 30 percent. The grassroots institution indicates 70 percent to Malaysia against 18 percent of Zanzibar and the government efforts to support the grassroots Malaysia show 80 percent against 20 percent of Zanzibar as indicated in Figure 5 below. These differences by and large are mostly influenced by the level of economic development and the different development perspective that are embarked by these two developing countries.

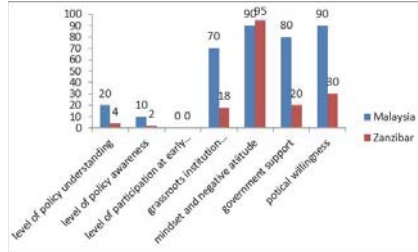


Figure 4.5: The Malaysia and Zanzibar Grassroots Participation Experience
Source: Salum, Ali and Aini Suzana Ariffin, 2016

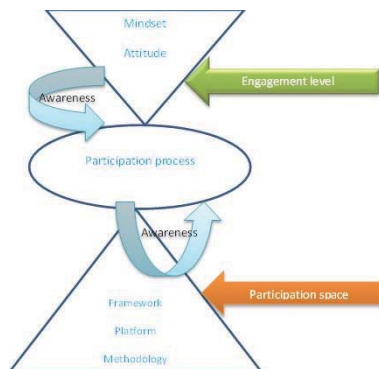
5. Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

The proposals drawn from these studies intend to support, to rethink, rearrange and convey a transformative change of policy formulation practices for the grassroots in view of their needs, and desires, and the sort of development they need to find in their own lives. It is very much seen that participation in policy formulation by the grassroots has numerous potential positive effects, for example, supporting the development activities contributing towards more compelling intercessions, and itemizing the interventions. This implies get ready for a move from a top down to a bottom up approach that bolsters grassroots level discussion to participate in the policy formulation. In the light of this, the accompanying intercessions are this paper proposing to:

- + Creating an integrated framework to allow basic interaction from the lowest level and consider the different factors on engagement practices
- + Creating more participation space to push for wider and visible engagement
- + Creating an institutional platform to support the engagement process
- + Define methodology and mechanism according to societal context
- + Embark more efforts on awareness creation to facilitate mindset and positive attitudes
- + Introduce policy feedback to enhance public confidence
- + Enact the law to recognize the grassroots role in policy formulation

Based on the above, the following integrated framework is proposed



Source : Salum, Ali and Aini Suzana Ariffin, 2016

The above framework suggests that the participation framework, platform and methodology are the key and foundations for upgrading participation process at the grassroots to occur. It is additionally recommended that as the reason for participation, has a tendency to characterize the participation space to permit more intuitive engagement to partake. In any case, to understand that there ought to be solid support of mindfulness among the general population to distinguish and perceive the space and the instruments set up. Then again, the outlook and disposition are likewise expected to affect the process and the participation level. Both authorities and non-authorities, policy performing actors should have a positive outlook and disposition with a specific end goal to accord and offer a positive engagement amid the policy detailing.

5.2 Conclusion

Grassroots participation in the policy formulation has significantly affected on making implementable and result based public policy. In this way, campaign on participatory processes as a contemporary development approach is a fundamental stride in working up pathways to alternative grassroots involvement in their own development. In the meantime, dealing with practical challenges, difficulties and issues confronting the participation process at the grassroots level have experienced similarly, noteworthy changes to upgrade appropriate measures in participation process. Simultaneously, the policy formulation honed in view of either utilized or underlined structure for policy detailing ought to significantly move to new standpoint. Globally, numerous policy scholars are calling more prominent policy, responsibility and interface between the grassroots and the local government. The intrigue is developing to banter for changes to guarantee feasible social development and bolster poverty reduction initiatives.

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