

# The Importance of Community Involvement in Public Management Planning and Decision-Making Processes

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**Abstract.** Public management is an effort to deliver public services, programmes, and projects that are efficient, effective, and equitable for the community. The planning and decision-making processes of public management are two key aspects in achieving this goal. Traditionally, the planning and decision-making processes of public management are mostly carried out by government officials and internal stakeholders without involving active participation from the community. However, in this increasingly complex and diverse era, community involvement is important and cannot be ignored. This research aims to explore the role of the community in public decision-making and its impact on efficiency, effectiveness and fairness in public service delivery. This research is a literature review that adopts a qualitative method approach, which means it will analyse and interpret data by relying on information and text from various sources. The study results show that community involvement in the planning and decision-making process of public management is a key principle in democratic and participation-based governance. Community participation helps to create a government that is more transparent, accountable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people.

**Keywords:** Society, Planning, Decision Making, Public Management

## 1. Introduction

Public management is a systematic endeavour aimed at the provision of public services, initiatives, and projects that exhibit optimal levels of efficiency, effectiveness, and equity for the broader community [1]. The planning and decision-making procedures within the realm of public management are key components in the pursuit of this objective [2]. Historically, the planning and decision-making procedures within public administration have predominantly been conducted by government officials and internal stakeholders, with limited engagement from the population [3]. Nevertheless, in the current era characterised by growing complexity and diversity, the significance of community engagement cannot be disregarded.

Community engagement encompasses the dynamic involvement of individuals, community collectives, and civic entities in the formulation and execution of plans and decision-making procedures that have an impact on their daily existence [4]. Within the realm of public management, community engagement refers to the act of extending invitations to individuals to actively participate in the formulation of policies, the planning of programmes, and the evaluation of the implementation of these policies and programmes. Community participation can occur at several stages, ranging from the initial creation of plans to their subsequent execution and monitoring [5]. The importance of community involvement in public management planning and decision-making processes can be highlighted from several perspectives:

1. **Legitimacy and Accountability:** Community involvement increases the legitimacy of public decisions because the resulting policies and programmes reflect the actual needs, aspirations and interests of the affected communities [6]. In addition, community involvement also provides an opportunity for the government to be directly accountable to its citizens, as the process becomes more transparent and open.
2. **Efficiency and Effectiveness:** By involving communities in planning and decision-making, potential problems and challenges that may go undetected by internal parties can be identified earlier [7]. This prevents wastage of resources and ensures that decisions are better targeted and provide greater benefits to the community.

3. **Innovation and Creativity:** Community involvement brings a variety of ideas and views from diverse backgrounds, resulting in more innovative and creative solutions to public problems [8]. Citizen participation can also trigger the potential of local human resources and build local capabilities to address their own problems.
4. **Community Empowerment:** Through active involvement in planning and decision-making processes, communities become more empowered and feel responsible for development and public services [9]. This can increase community participation in social and political activities, which in turn improves the quality of democracy.
5. **Conflict Reduction and Increased Community Satisfaction:** Community involvement can help identify and resolve potential conflicts that arise due to different views or interests [10]. By considering various perspectives, decisions can reflect greater consensus and can increase the level of public satisfaction with the government.

Recognising the importance of community involvement in the planning and decision-making process of public management, this research aims to delve deeper into community participation in public decision-making and its impact on efficiency, effectiveness and equity in public service delivery. Thus, this research is expected to provide valuable policy recommendations for the government and stakeholders in enhancing active community participation in better public management processes in the future.

### **1.1 Society**

Society is a term used to describe a group of individuals who live together in a certain area and have organised social interactions [11]. Society is made up of diverse individuals with different backgrounds, beliefs, values and norms [12]. They form social structures and bind themselves in different types of relationships that include family, friends, neighbours, co-workers and other communities. Some of the main characteristics of society include:

1. **Social Interaction:** Societies are formed through social interactions between the individuals in them. These interactions can be direct, such as face-to-face conversations, or indirect through social media and long-distance communication.
2. **Culture and Norms:** Societies have value systems, beliefs, languages, customs and norms that are part of their culture. These cultures and norms influence the way members of society think, behave and interact.
3. **Social Structure:** Societies have social structures that organise relationships and social positions between individuals. Social structure can include social class, status, social roles, and social organisation.
4. **Identity and Membership:** Society provides individuals with an identity and a sense of membership. This identity can be ethnic, religious, linguistic, and so on. Membership in society can also be local, regional, or national.
5. **Shared Goals:** Members of a society often have common goals or common interests that include the development and well-being of the society as a whole.

Communities can be small, such as a village or neighbourhood, to large, such as a city or country. Communities can also be homogeneous, with members sharing a common culture and identity, or heterogeneous, with members coming from different backgrounds. Communities play an important role in shaping the social, economic and political fabric of a region. They contribute to decision-making, political participation, and the organisation of various social and economic activities. Communities are also pillars in the development and continuity of culture, traditions and values that are passed down from generation to generation.

### **1.2 Planning and Decision Making**

Planning and Decision Making are two important stages in the management process undertaken by organisations or individuals to achieve specific goals. Both are closely related and complementary processes in directing actions and resources to be used efficiently and effectively.

Planning is the process of devising goals, strategies, and steps to achieve a particular objective in the future [13]. It involves identifying the goals to be achieved, evaluating the current situation and conditions, and formulating a plan of action to be taken to achieve those goals. The purpose of planning is to anticipate the future and devise appropriate steps to achieve the desired results [14]. The stages in the planning process include:

1. **Goal identification:** Setting long-term and short-term goals to be achieved.
2. **Situation analysis:** Assessing current conditions, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), and factors that affect the achievement of goals.
3. **Strategy development:** Formulate an approach or strategy to achieve the objectives based on the situation analysis.

4. Development of tactical and operational plans: Developing more detailed action plans to implement the strategy.
5. Implementation and monitoring: Executing the plan and continuously monitoring its progress to ensure goals are achieved.

Decision-making is the process of choosing among various options or alternatives to achieve a predetermined goal [15]. The decision is based on available information and analyses, as well as consideration of various factors that may affect the final outcome [16] [17]. The stages in the decision-making process include:

1. Problem identification: Identifying the problem or challenge that requires a decision.
2. Information gathering: Collecting relevant data and information to support the decision-making process.
3. Evaluation of options: Analyse the different alternatives or options available to solve the problem.
4. Option selection: Choosing one of the options based on analysis and consideration.
5. Decision implementation: Implementing the decision that has been made.
6. Evaluation of results: Evaluating the outcome of the decision and assessing whether the objectives have been achieved.

It is important to note that the planning and decision-making process is a continuously recurring cycle in management. After achieving certain goals, evaluation and reflection are carried out to improve the next process. Effective planning and decision-making are the key to achieving organisational or individual success in achieving goals and facing various challenges in an ever-changing environment.

### **1.3 Public Management**

Public Management is a branch of management science that focuses on the administration, planning, and implementation of public policies and programmes to achieve public goals and interests [18]. Public Management is concerned with the ways in which governments and public sector agencies manage human, financial, technological, and information resources in order to deliver public services that are efficient, effective, equitable, and in the public interest [19]. The main objective of Public Management is to achieve optimal results in providing the public services and programmes needed by society, promoting social welfare, improving infrastructure, and creating an environment conducive to sustainable development [20]. Some of the distinctive features of Public Management include:

1. Public Service Mission: Public Management focuses on public service and meeting the needs of society, including in areas such as education, health, infrastructure, environment, security, and others.
2. Social Responsibility: Governments and public sector institutions are responsible for ensuring that public policies and programmes are implemented with the interests of all communities and groups involved in the process in mind.
3. Transparency and Accountability: Public Management emphasises the importance of transparency in decision-making and management of public resources. In addition, public sector institutions must be accountable in reporting their performance and use of public funds.
4. Community Participation: Public Management recognises the importance of community involvement in planning and decision-making processes, as community participation can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of public policies and programmes.
5. Resource Management: Public Management focuses on managing public resources efficiently and effectively, including the management of finances, human resources, technology, and infrastructure.
6. Long-term Goals: Public Management is orientated towards achieving long-term and sustainable goals, and takes a long-term view in planning and decision-making.

Some of the tools and techniques used in Public Management include strategic planning, policy analysis, cost-benefit analysis, programme evaluation, performance management, information technology, and more. Organisations and agencies working in the public and not-for-profit sectors are instrumental in implementing the principles of Public Management in their efforts to achieve their public service missions and goals.

## **2. Method**

This research is a literature review that adopts a qualitative approach, which means it will analyse and interpret data by relying on information and texts from various sources. The main focus of a qualitative literature review is to collate, evaluate and integrate existing knowledge on the topic under study, namely the importance of community involvement in public management planning and decision-making processes. In this research, data will be collected from various sources relevant to the topic under study, such as scientific

journals, books, research reports, and other articles. The data period covers the time from 2000 to 2023, which allows the researcher to see developments, trends, and changes that have occurred during this period.

The qualitative approach in the literature review allows researchers to describe and characterise complex and multidimensional issues in greater depth [21]. In addition, this method makes it possible to involve multiple sources of information and cover a range of different viewpoints, thus enriching the analysis and strengthening the validity of the findings. The data collection process will involve meticulous text analysis, searching for information, and categorising relevant data for the research topic. Subsequently, the author will collate this information in a structured format, compare and synthesise findings from multiple sources, and identify patterns, themes and trends that emerge from the collected data.

One of the advantages of a qualitative literature review is its flexibility in understanding and explaining complex phenomena, as it is not limited by numerical or statistical constraints [22]. This method also allows researchers to gain deep insights into how the topic under study has evolved over time, as well as how concepts and understandings of the topic have changed over the years. In this research, it is important to scrutinise the reliability and credibility of the sources used, as well as critically analyse the information collected. With a qualitative approach, the researcher must be able to present findings objectively and reflectively, provide clear and accurate interpretations, and recognise the limitations of the methods and data used [23]. The conclusion of this research will hopefully provide a comprehensive picture of the development of the topic under study over the 2000 to 2023 time period, and may also provide recommendations for further research that can broaden the understanding of issues related to the topic.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

Community involvement in public management planning and decision-making processes holds significant relevance within the framework of democratic and participatory governance. The fundamental principles of good governance prioritise community engagement as a means to foster a government that is characterised by transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and responsiveness to the desires and goals of its citizens. Within this particular setting, we shall elucidate the significance of community engagement in the planning and decision-making procedures of public administration.

The engagement of the community in public planning and decision-making processes confers legitimacy upon governmental decisions [24]. The inclusion of several stakeholders, including the general public, would facilitate decision-making processes that encompass a wider range of interests and goals, hence avoiding the potential bias towards specific groups. The engagement of the community will additionally enhance government accountability by facilitating the elucidation and justification of decisions to the general public. Communities consist of heterogeneous groups and individuals who possess varied backgrounds, experiences, and requirements. The inclusion of the community in public planning and decision-making processes facilitates the examination of many viewpoints and expertise [25]. The inclusion of many perspectives facilitates the identification and resolution of issues that may be imperceptible or disregarded by the government.

Furthermore, active participation from the community has the potential to enhance the efficacy of policies [26]. By gaining a comprehensive grasp of the community's needs and goals through direct engagement, the government can develop policies that are more aligned with and more readily embraced by the community. The inclusion of the community in the process of policy implementation has the potential to enhance community awareness and comprehension of the policy, hence augmenting its effectiveness in attaining the intended objectives [27]. The engagement of the community also fosters innovation and creativity within the framework of planning and decision-making. Communities frequently possess distinctive expertise pertaining to localised circumstances and issues, which can offer inventive and groundbreaking resolutions to specific challenges. Active participation from community members has the ability to mitigate conflicts that may arise between governmental entities and local communities [28]. Through the active engagement of communities in decision-making processes, governments have the opportunity to cultivate robust and trusted connections with these groups. This approach facilitates the mitigation of conflicts and enhances collaborative efforts in identifying resolutions for intricate issues.

Community engagement plays a vital role in enhancing transparency within planning and decision-making processes, hence fostering increased responsiveness. It is imperative that communities are provided with access to information pertaining to public policies and programmes that hold the potential to impact their livelihoods. Through the engagement of communities, governments have the opportunity to elucidate the underlying goals, objectives, and ramifications of their actions, while concurrently obtaining valuable input from these groups [29]. Consequently, this interactive process enables governments to enhance their responsiveness to the diverse

demands and interests of the community. By engaging in planning and decision-making processes, communities have the opportunity to enhance their comprehension and capacity to address issues within their localities [30]. This has the potential to enhance the community's ability to address difficulties and actively participate in the creation and governance of public resources. Finally, it is worth noting that the engagement of the community in public planning and decision-making processes represents a tangible manifestation of the entitlement to participation and freedom of expression within the framework of human rights. Within the framework of a democratic society, the recognition of community participation is acknowledged as an intrinsic entitlement that necessitates safeguarding by the governing authorities.

To optimise the advantages derived from community engagement in the planning and decision-making procedures of public management, it is imperative for the government to establish a conducive atmosphere and implement efficient participatory mechanisms. There is a need to improve public education and raise awareness regarding the significance of engaging in governance. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that information is readily accessible and transparent, enabling individuals to actively and meaningfully participate in policy-making and decision-making processes that contribute to the overall well-being and advancement of society.

The following are some concrete steps that can be taken to increase community involvement in public management planning and decision-making processes:

1. **Public Education and Awareness:** Increase the level of public education and awareness about the importance of participation in public planning and decision-making processes. This can be done through information campaigns, seminars, workshops and other activities aimed at providing an understanding of the rights of participation, the procedures by which government decisions are made, and the consequences of these decisions on people's lives.
2. **Public Consultation and Dialogue:** The government should encourage public consultation and dialogue before making important decisions. These consultations should involve various groups of people, including minority groups and vulnerable communities, to ensure that their voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process.
3. **Participatory Mechanisms:** Establishing and operating effective participatory mechanisms is an important step to enhance community engagement. This may include establishing advocacy groups, discussion forums, working groups, or committees that represent different aspects of the community.
4. **Access to Information and Transparency:** The government should ensure that information related to public policies and projects is widely available and easily accessible to the public. In the public policy sphere, the adoption of transparency policies can ensure that relevant and important information is available to the public.
5. **Digital Participation:** Enhancing digital participation is a progressive step that can be taken to include more people in planning and decision-making processes. Governments can utilise information and communication technologies to facilitate online consultations, electronic surveys, and online discussion forums that engage more people without being limited by geographical boundaries.
6. **Engagement of Community Organisations:** Community institutions, such as non-profit organisations, community groups, and non-governmental organisations, can be important partners in facilitating community participation in planning and decision-making processes. The government can collaborate with these institutions to create broader and more sustainable participation opportunities.
7. **Community Capacity Building:** Empowering communities with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in planning and decision-making processes. This can be done through relevant training, education and guidance to enable communities to actively contribute to formulating policy solutions and implementation.
8. **Participatory Evaluation:** After a policy or programme is implemented, involving the community in the evaluation process can provide valuable feedback for further improvement. Participatory evaluation helps people feel ownership of the policy or programme and increases government accountability.

Integrating community engagement in public management planning and decision-making processes is no easy task, but by doing so, governments can achieve more effective policies, more innovative solutions, and more empowered communities. Community participation not only builds a strong democracy, but also creates opportunities for prosperity and inclusive development for the entire society.

Continuing from the previous point, here are some concrete examples and benefits of community involvement in public management planning and decision-making processes:

1. **Natural Disaster Management:** When facing natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes or droughts, involving communities in planning and response can save lives and reduce damage. By involving communities in the location of evacuation shelters, the development of evacuation plans, and the

distribution of aid, governments can take into account the unique conditions and needs of affected communities [31].

2. **Infrastructure Development:** In infrastructure projects such as the construction of roads, bridges, or other public facilities, community involvement can help the government identify potential problems that may not be apparent at first. Involving the community in the planning and design stages can also lead to solutions that are better suited to local needs and preferences [32].
3. **Natural Resource Management:** In the context of natural resource management, community involvement is crucial. Local communities often possess valuable traditional knowledge about their ecosystems and environment. Involving them in planning and decision-making about the use and conservation of natural resources can help prevent environmental damage and ensure long-term sustainability.
4. **Rural and Agricultural Development:** In rural areas, community involvement in planning and decision-making regarding infrastructure development, health services, and agriculture is critical. By listening to the needs of the community, the government can design policies and programmes that support economic growth and improved quality of life in the area [33].
5. **Education and Health:** Involving communities in planning and decision-making about education and health systems can help improve accessibility and quality of services. Communities often have insight into the problems faced in these areas and can provide valuable feedback for improvements and upgrades [34].
6. **Urban Planning and Regional Development:** In urban and regional development, community involvement can help plan more inclusive and sustainable spatial arrangements [35]. By listening to community aspirations on neighbourhoods, housing, and infrastructure, governments can create cities that are more citizen-friendly and take into account social, economic, and environmental concerns.
7. **Public Budget Participation:** Involving communities in public budgeting allows them to contribute to determining the allocation of funds for various government programmes and projects. This helps people understand how public funds are being utilised and improves transparency and accountability of public financial management.
8. **Law Enforcement and Security:** Community engagement is also important in law enforcement and security. Communities can be important partners in providing information on potential security threats and assisting the government in the prevention and resolution of security issues at the local level.

The point to be underlined is that community involvement in public management planning and decision-making processes is the foundation of democratic and participation-based governance. Involving communities in this process brings many benefits, including legitimisation of decisions, diversification of perspectives, policy effectiveness, innovation, conflict reduction, transparency and strengthening community capacity. By strengthening community participation, the government can create policies and programmes that are more in line with people's needs and aspirations, thereby creating a more inclusive, empowered and sustainable society.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The active participation of the community in the planning and decision-making processes of public management is a fundamental element of governance that is rooted in democracy and emphasises the importance of citizen engagement. Public engagement plays a crucial role in fostering a government characterised by enhanced transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and responsiveness to the diverse needs and aspirations of its citizenry. In the present context, the involvement of diverse societal groups and individuals yields numerous advantages. These include the legitimization of decisions, the broadening of perspectives, the enhancement of policy effectiveness, the promotion of innovation, the reduction of conflicts, the fostering of transparency, the reinforcement of community capacity, and the safeguarding of human rights. Therefore, below are some suggestions that can be made in order to involve the community in the planning and decision-making process of public management:

1. **Encourage Active Participation:** The government should encourage active participation of communities in public planning and decision-making processes through consultations, public dialogue, and participatory forums. This can be achieved by facilitating access to information and raising public awareness about their participation rights.
2. **Establish Participatory Mechanisms:** The government needs to establish and operate effective participatory mechanisms, such as advocacy groups, discussion forums, and working groups that represent different segments of society. These mechanisms should be open and inclusive to all segments of society.

3. Tailoring Policies to Local Needs: The government should listen to the aspirations and local needs of communities in designing policies and programmes. By involving the community, the government can come up with solutions that better suit local needs and preferences.
4. Integrate Technology: The utilisation of information and communication technology can enhance community participation. The government can utilise digital platforms to conduct online consultations, electronic surveys, and online discussion forums.
5. Education and Training: Improve public education and training on participation rights and knowledge related to public planning and decision-making processes. Increased public understanding will encourage more active and meaningful participation.
6. Participatory Evaluation: Involving communities in policy and programme evaluation processes helps to improve accountability and the quality of implementation. Participatory evaluation allows communities to provide valuable feedback for further improvement.
7. Commitment to Good Governance Principles: Governments should commit themselves to the principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability and participation. By applying these principles, governments can build trust with the public and achieve better outcomes in public decision-making.

By implementing the above suggestions, the government can strengthen community participation in the planning and decision-making process of public management. Involving the public will result in policies and programmes that are more impactful, sustainable, and in line with the needs and aspirations of the people. This will lead to a more inclusive, effective and empowered government, and a society that is more involved in the process of development and public resource management.

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