

Evaluation of Participatory Communication in the Governance of Busia County – Kenya

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Abstract: Public Participation (PP) was inscribed in the Kenya's 2010 constitution to facilitate collaborative dialogue in governance. Inclusive governance was meant to facilitate and sustain citizen's empowerment and developmental wellbeing. Busia County has been on record for high poverty rate. The study explored the communicative challenges that inhibit the performances of Participatory Communication (PC) in governance of the County. The questions comprised: How does Busia County use Public Participation as a tool of communication with the stakeholders? What are the communication benefits of Public Participation in Busia County? What are the communication challenges of using Public Participation in governance at Busia County? Newcomb's communication model was applied to illustrate the role of PP as the communicative tool in governance. The study was carried out through qualitative approach via case study method. Barnlund's Transactional Model, provided the study with functional communication cues inherent in collaborative engagements. Conflict Theory was applied to illustrate the factors that create systematic disorders in organizations. Purposive sampling was used to raise 35 participants from seven sub counties of the county. The participants comprised teachers, traders, farmers, MCAs and County Government staff. The qualitative data was analyzed through thematic technique. The study established apathy and lack of committed goodwill by the leadership as the major setback to PP performance in governance. The knowledge about functions of PC in the performance of PP in governance is significant information to academia. To policy makers, the findings are useful for formulating and sustaining legal and enforceable communication framework to improve inclusive governance. To practice, the proposed ideals would empower PRE's to be the responsible advocates and enforce goodwill for mutual gains of all county stakeholders. The findings would further good governance in CG to facilitate the general publics to have a say in prioritization and implementation of their development wishes. These ideals would liberate citizens from challenges associated with underdevelopment, thus culminating to sustainable livelihood.

Keywords: Participatory Communication, Public Participation, Governance, Challenges, Development

I. Introduction

The Kenya 2010 constitution enshrined citizen's sovereignty through Public Participation (PP) (Uraia, 2010). PP is a communicative function of participatory communication for dialogic engagements. PP was meant to facilitate stakeholders' engagement and empowerments in governance (Omollo, 2011). Developmental performance of County Government (CG) was pegged on the efficacy of stakeholders' collaborative dialogues. Stakeholders feel accepted and strive to sustain the relationship with the leadership when they are involved in participatory governance (Ronoh et al, 2018). PP assists participants in planning to overcome dissonance problems. This is achieved by facilitating oversight functions in governance to limit unnecessary leadership excesses (Nyaranga et al, 2022). The use of participatory and collaborative engagements in problem solving guarantees stakeholders livelihood and wellbeing (Chitere & Ngundo 2015).

Participatory communication was to facilitate PP as the tool for engagement with stakeholders in governance towards universal development across all counties in Kenya. The institution of CG is headed by the governor, and supported by executive management team and employees. County Assembly and Senate roles were established to oversee smooth running of County governance (KLR, 2010). To this extent, devolution has stimulated plausible development in some counties across the nation (Daily Nation February 29, 2019). However, the 2017 comparative developmental performance placed Busia County in the last ten, with poverty rating of about 70% (KNBS, 2017). Resultantly, the study explored the efficacy of PC /PP in CG to determine the communicative challenges leading to such high poverty situation Busia County.

Human endeavours occur within the context of communication. The phenomenon facilitates sharing and understanding of meanings by participants. Payne (2001) avers that the phenomenon is central for human survival and nobody can do without it whatsoever. Gamble, (2002) confer that communication takes place naturally and therefore taken for granted. This omission limits the performance of communication in facilitating effective sharing of meaning between interlocutors. Basing on its ubiquity, Miller, (2005) maintains that communication is a controversial and attracts infinite debates and argument. Nevertheless, it is the only means for enabling relations and engagements to take place (Oloo, 2017).

In its diverse perspectives, communication manifests as a process, intention, interaction and transaction (Craig, 1999). It also facilitates information sharing in social and cultural contexts (Ferrante, 2003). These multiple aspects of the phenomenon render it not only ubiquitous, but also imperative, complex and dynamic. Essentially, whether we communicate or not, we still emit meaningful cues (Gamble, 2002). The ubiquitous nature of communication renders it extremely ambiguous, thus making it gullible for misuse by people with negative attitudes (Miller, 2005). That notwithstanding, communication is a powerful tool that must be applied sensitively and carefully to improve the wellbeing of people (Gamble, 2002).

The study acknowledged that ubiquitous aspect of communication can be mitigated by applying the concept of Communication Competence (CC). CC was considered as deep knowledge about communication, what people do with it and impacts arising from its application. As such, CC was simplified through the cliché of “*doing the right thing- the right way, with the right people, the right time and right place*” (Graham & Bennet, 1998). Gamble, (2002) avers to CC as a sense of reflexivity, Bryant & Heath, (2002) perceives it as consciousness. Jacobson & Storey, (2004) relates CC with ideal speech situation. The study presented CC as the reflexive ability of stakeholders to engage sensitively and carefully towards mutual understanding. Stakeholder’s desire for inclusive governance is invaluable and Chambers (2015) refers to it as “*inclusivity rigor*”.

Assumptions & Research Questions

This study sought to explore the use of PP in governance of Busia County. The study was premised on assumption that citizen’s involvement and participation in governance would empower them in resolving their pressing concerns. Based on this assumption, the study sought answers to three questions;

- 1) How does Busia County use Public Participation as a tool of communication with the stakeholders?
- 2) What are the communicative benefits of using Public Participation in County governance?
- 3) What are the communication challenges of using Public Participation in governance at Busia County?

II. Literature Review

Functionally, the study pegged communicative performance of PP on fundamentals of Participatory Communication (PC). PP is a communicative activity whose mode of engagement to achieve desired goals depends on PC fundamentals (Bingham, 2011). On its part, PC is a collaborative and dialogic phenomenon for stakeholders’ mutual engagement (Rahim, 1994; Ellinor, 2005). A PC fundamental for PP performance comprises; functions, forms, principles, conditions and tenets.

Participatory Communication

The society at large is embracing participatory engagements to meet one another’s expectations. The use of PP by governments to engage citizens on policy and development matters has taken deep root in the recent past (Nyaranga et al, 2022). Citizen’s participation in governance is the pillar of unity and sign of democracy (Holmes, 2011). However, participation is not enough if stakeholders are not cordially united and mutually connected to solve problems (Etang, 2007). Over the years, human beings have strived to retain unique relationships whether, dyadic, family, society or organization (Heath & Bryant, 2002). The common factor in any relationship is what members bring on board and what they expect to get from the membership (Handy, 2016).

PC has the relational fundamentals used to distinguish and unite stakeholders. In regard to PC functions, whether implicit or explicit, the Kenya 2010 constitution entrenched PP to be the engagement tool for inclusive governance. The goal of PP was to be the platform for addressing stakeholder’s empowerment issues and development concerns (Uraia, 201). Involving citizens in governance help in mitigate dissonance factors in the process of addressing common challenges (Wampler, 2011). Functionally, PC is an off shoot of DC. It is used as a collaborative and dialogic tool for stakeholders’ engagement. Whereas the two development approaches are not the same, they both contribute to change and modernization.

DC operates on a top down approach, while PC strives to address holistic changes that benefit target stakeholders (Naidoo, 2010). PC embraces diverse strategies to unite stakeholders into mutual compromises (Freire, 1999; Okwechime, 2015). Based on its roles, PC is seen to facilitate future modernization by solving the current problems (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009). In solving problems, the principles advocate majorly for sovereignty of communication as stipulated under Human Right (Article 19, 2003). Secondly, it embraces the concept of “*last- first*” to champion for the concerns of stakeholders before anything else (Chamber, 2007; Mefalopulos, 2000). Thirdly, is “*dialogic pedagogy*” that is a two way communication strategy for facilitating quick feedbacks for decision making (Freire, 1999).

Fourth is the autonomy of human dignity stipulated in the UNESCO declaration. The statute underscored fulfillment of human dignity through inclusive engagements (Mc Bride, 1980, p. 254). Fifth, PC engagements generate better outcome when interventions target community (common) than individuals (Okwechime, 2015). Apart from principles, PC engages strategic forms to address unique situations. For instance, passive form is least applied but facilitates emergency situations (Naidoo, 2010). Cases where

expertise services are critical, PC is applied as consultancy with the consent of the stakeholders (Servaes, 2015). Collaboration aspect is the mostly applied form for embracing teamwork by all stakeholders (Freire, 1999). Lastly, Empowerment form facilitates stakeholders' education to enlighten their awareness and rights to fair engagements (Okwechime, 2015).

From the CC, context determines the quality of performance in PC intervention. For instance, democratic environment confers unconditional room for stakeholder's mutual compromises (Article 19, 2003; Jacobson & Storey, 2004). Participant's freedom is basic for honest deliberations (Dahl, 1994). Justice is central for mitigating and managing potential conflicts in all PC interventions (Etang, 2007; Cresswell, 2014). In overall, the levels of PC performance in any application depend on the goodwill and competence of facilitators. Facilitators have the power and mandate for interventions (Arnett, 2001; Lowndes & Paxton, 2017). Accordingly, Mindfulness is critical of facilitators in governing stakeholders' engagements (Motley, 1992). Reflexivity facilitates mindfulness through self-awareness (Schwarz, 2002). It also manages ego that often takes control of human emotions during group encounters (Brennan & Schungurensky, 2017).

Previous Studies on PC

PC has been applied successfully in many interventions. In political context, Brennan & Schungurensky, (2017) indicated that President Jefferson applied PC to form the unity of USA. Jefferson linked and inspired Americans through the radio to unite and appreciate ward systems. The wards would be small enough to enable communities assemble and decide how to be governed. This desire was achieved and gave rise to the bonded nationhood of the United States of America. In the early days of industrial revolution, corporation matters were kept secret by management. The corporation owners were greatly powerful to speak to subordinates (Jefkin, 1998).

In the early days of industrial development, Rockefeller's workers were on strike due to unfavorable labor conditions. However, through PC intervention, Rockefeller got inspired to a successful dialogic engagement with the striking railway and coal mining workers (Baines & Jefkins, 2002). In another situation, India is profusely influenced by social caste that has proved hard to crack. However, the society has benefited significantly from PC activities in rural community intervention (Khampa, 2009). In African context, Tsusong initiators of South Africa has successfully applied and benefited from collaborative approach in uniting citizens (Naidoo, 2010). Tsusong in Sesotho means a market place Msibi & Penzhorn, (2010), and therefore PC uniformly facilitate many people with common interest to attain their goals.

The previous studies on PC demonstrated that power holders possess the will to facilitate their obligations or not. However, reflexive engagements of PC with stakeholders facilitate eventful interventions (Brennan & Schungurensky, 2017). Kimeto & Somba, (2017) examined the extent PC principles were integrated in Kenya National Slum Upgrading Program KENSUP in Kibera, Nairobi. Their study established that PC principles were applied in the programs, but citizens were barely involved in upgrading activities. Similar findings have been reported in many studies about unconventional use of PC. Basing on Malan (1998) findings, PC challenges are mostly caused by facilitators engaging PP activities unconventionally through traditional top-down DC fundamentals.

Public Participation in Governance

To participate is to actively contribute personal ideas or resources alongside other stakeholders through mutual understanding (Cresswell, 2014). Participation can take place voluntarily or coerced, depending on situations and context being addressed. PP is a contemporary tool for governance in democratic societies (Nyaranga et al, 2022). Kenya has not been left behind in this form of governance. The Kenya's 2010 constitution placed citizen's sovereignty on public participation (Uraia, 2010; KCA, 2013). PP is the reflection and sign of comprehensive democracy for citizens (Team, 2015). The strategy was intended to get the citizens involved in public debates to compromise on developmental priorities for mutual benefits (Njagi & Kirimi, 2018).

Narayan et al, (2000) point out that PP is motivated primarily to mitigate typical government bureaucracies that limit service delivery to citizens. Holmes, (2011) rekindles administrative theory and practice as increasingly interested in incorporating citizens as actors rather than subjects in political debates. Through PC, *people create people* to entrench democracy and practice governance *by the people and for the people* (Nyaranga et al, 2022). Devas & Grant (2003) points out that citizens know what they want from the government, all they need is involvement and participation to harmonize their priorities

Previous studies on PP

Application of PP and PC are intertwined. The benefits or challenges arising from the use of PP or PC may seem to be the same. However, variations in usage may depend on the knowledge and use of either PP or PC. In the Kenyan context, County Governments were accorded all the necessary traditions, resources and mandate to improve the stakeholder's wellbeing (Ahadi, 2013). The citizens were accorded the rights of empowerment, for instance, through County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP)

and many others. CIDP is a long term developmental plan of action that partly informs the annual budget making process (Chitere & Ngundo, 2015).

PP has been reported as working very well in democratic societies like USA and Europe (Gichuhi et al, 2018). However, African societies are still struggling with this concept. South Africa has at least embraced and benefited from the use of PP/PC. The state engaged Tsusong Services as the means for integrating stakeholders for government services (Naidoo, 2010; Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010). Based on financial and logistical support in CG, Chitere & Ngundo studied the performance of devolution in poverty reduction in selected Counties in Kenya. They established that CGs are adequately established to empower stakeholders, but have done little to attain this objective.

Studies have been conducted to determine whether PP works in governance or not by questioning whether PP is a reality or a myth, especially in Kenyan contexts. Findings have established that PP was not performing optimally for lack of legal framework. Njagi & Kirimi, (2018) and Rono et al, (2018) pointed the challenges as; unwillingness of citizens to participate, inept participation, political interference, a call for incentives and loss of time. Other findings comprised lack of engagement channels, misuse of PP for ulterior goals, etc. Lees- Marshment, (2015) established that a lot of energy and resources get spend wrongly in the entire PP system. Yami, (2018) relates these issues as characteristics of participation.

Nyaranga et al, (2022) conducted a study on PP performance in Bungoma County and established minimal impact of its application in governance at the county. The study recommended a mediator of PP functions in governance. Other previous studies pointed the failure of PP to be occasioned by ignorance of citizens (Yami et al, 2018). Leaders ignore citizens in PP roles, hold on and refusing to delegate power to other stakeholders, and use their positions to legitimize unpopular policies (Wampler, 2015). Aulich, (2009) had established lack of PP laws to guide its functions as also contributing to its underperformance.

Previous studies on the use of PP have returned a verdict that stakeholders are often aware about it but the programs conducted without their inputs. For instance, PP programs were advertised in mainstream media that the common stakeholders could not afford. Additionally, for lack of empowerment, the stakeholders did not understand how to participate in PP programs. This challenge rendered them passive in PP programs (Wood, 2007). The study therefore, pointed at the leaders taking advantage of communication ubiquity to run opaque governance. As such, the study identified leadership apathy as majorly constraining the goodwill of good governance.

For these reasons, leaders had a tendency of imposing their ideas on the citizens, thereby causing unnecessary dissonance and unwarranted conflicts. Leadership incompetence also constrained PP performance by ignoring the PC fundamentals. By so doing, the citizens were denied chances to be active participants in their government. On this account, Bessette, (2006) established that leaders are reluctant to delegate responsibilities to stakeholders in perceived fear of losing power. This situation makes room for the leadership to govern outside of the PP norms. Malan, (1998) established that many leaders run PP functions through the traditional DC concepts instead of PC ideals. This omission technically reduces the communicative performance of PC in PP programs.

As such, unilateral governance inhibits the oversight functions of stakeholders (Ayee, 1993). Accordingly, leaders enjoy unchecked governance - since it sets them free to do as they wish. The leadership's negative attitudes to stakeholders got them to make themselves the consultants without seeking stakeholders' authority. In the process, they become moderators of PP in governance. Inversely, PP was meant to rope stakeholders in governance in order to moderate impunity and leadership excesses in governance. As such, PP achieved little in development for stakeholders culminating in high poverty situations witnessed in Busia County.

Review of Relevant Theories

The study presented Busia CG as an organization with multiple functions aiming at strategic goals. PP was considered one of the functional units of governance in the CG. Functions are coordinated and synchronized strategic activities in systems aiming at overall organizational goal (Ferrante, 2003). Organizational systematic failures are caused by conflicting or functional disorders of parts or units.

NewComb Symmetrical model in diagram 2 was looped in the study to illustrate the conceptual framework of PP in governance. Barnlund Transactional Communication Model (BTCM) was set out to isolate the transactional communication elements in PP and governance. By extension, BTCM entrenched the concept of Communication Competence that facilitates PC/PP functions in governance. Functional Theory (FT) was applied to illustrate the factors that sustain organizational systematic performance. Lastly, Conflict Theory (CT) imbued the study with factors that sustain or impede organizational performances. In overall, the study simplified all theoretical concepts in the study as facilitating organization in "doing the right thing, the right way, with the right people, at the right place and right time" courtesy of (Graham & Baines, 2002).

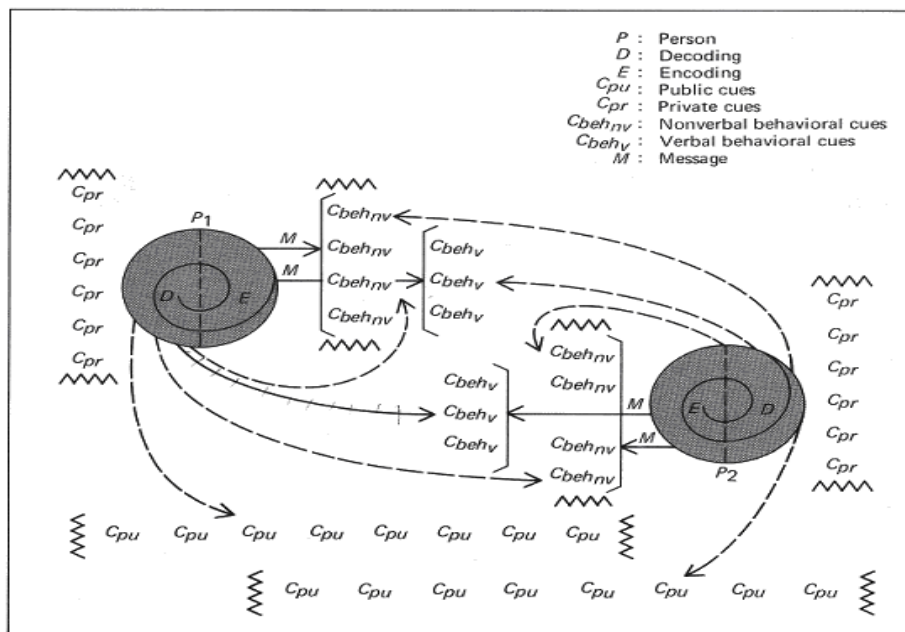
Barnlund Transactional Model

BTCM concept was used to anchor PC/PP in governance to transactional paradigm in governance. Dean Barnlund propounded the model to illustrate reciprocal cues responsible for transactional engagements (Miller, 2005). He raised various issues including actors, internal and external behaviour, public and environment cues inherent in transactional engagements in diagram 1 below. In this study, actors represented the leadership and stakeholders; internal and external cues emanated as behavioural intentions from all actors/stakeholders. The contexts comprised public or environment cues that influence collaborative decisions making.

The model was critical to this study as the basis of applying PP to collaborate governance. The model recognizes communication dynamics and therefore presents the functions of transactional engagements as reciprocal. It also appreciates communication as imperative yet ubiquitous with multiple features. It illustrates transaction as complex owing to stakeholders' unique predispositions and expectations.

The model aided the study in laying out the necessary communication factors for participatory engagement. The model implied that effective transactional communication takes cognizance of diversity for mutual understanding. Based on the model, the study established that the leadership applied communication unconventionally to limit stakeholders understanding and ability of PP/governance. The gap aided the leadership in imposing estimates of development programs in county budget. The problem with this action is that stakeholders would not be able to track or raise issues with projects.

Diagram 1: Barnlund's Transactional Communication Model



(Source: Home Communication)

Functional Theory

Barnlund Transactional Communication Model became the overarching framework for PP functions in participatory governance. A function is the working performance of parts and units in organized systems (Chitnis, 2007). Emile Durkheim propagated this theory to explore how the society survives the storms of competition from elite's verses ordinary members (Ferrante, 2003). In contributing to this theory, Marxist was concerned about social order and how stability is maintained in the society amid dynamics of domination and alienation between the haves and have -nots (Miller, 2005).

The Function Theory (FT) informed the study on the role of synchronization and collaborative engagement between all publics in organizational system. The study perceived CG as an organized system to incorporate stakeholders in generating common goals for sustainable development. The study acknowledged the role of FT in mitigating organizational disorders that result to conflict. The findings from the study however, established that the leadership encouraged systematic disorder and confusion to create opaque environments that facilitate imposition of unsolicited development priorities. Whereas FT are meant to facilitate organizational performance for common good of all publics, the study established that it was used to create disorders that limit the stakeholders ability to participate. In this, case it was used mostly to empower the leadership and associates objectives.

Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory (CT) is at the center of systematic performance. Optimal systematic performance is assign of mitigated conflicts. The reverse is true that systematic dysfunctions/ disorder is a sign of unmitigated conflicts in parts/ unit (Ferrante, 2003; Miller, 2005). CT explains critical issues that create organizational tension disorder and heightened emotional energy (Gamble, 2002). The organizational strains occur within inter-relational and interdependence contexts. The major aspects of conflict include competition, unfulfilled expectations and incompatible interests (Luthans, 2005; Handy, 2016). Competition creates conflict if the actions of one part frustrate the ability of the other (Valentine, 1995). Conflict is

“Creative confrontation, a struggle between persons who are engaged in a dispute or controversy, and who remain together, face to face, until acceptance, respect for difference, and love emerge; even though the persons may be at odds with the issue, they are no longer at odds with each other” (Moustakis, 1974; 2.12).

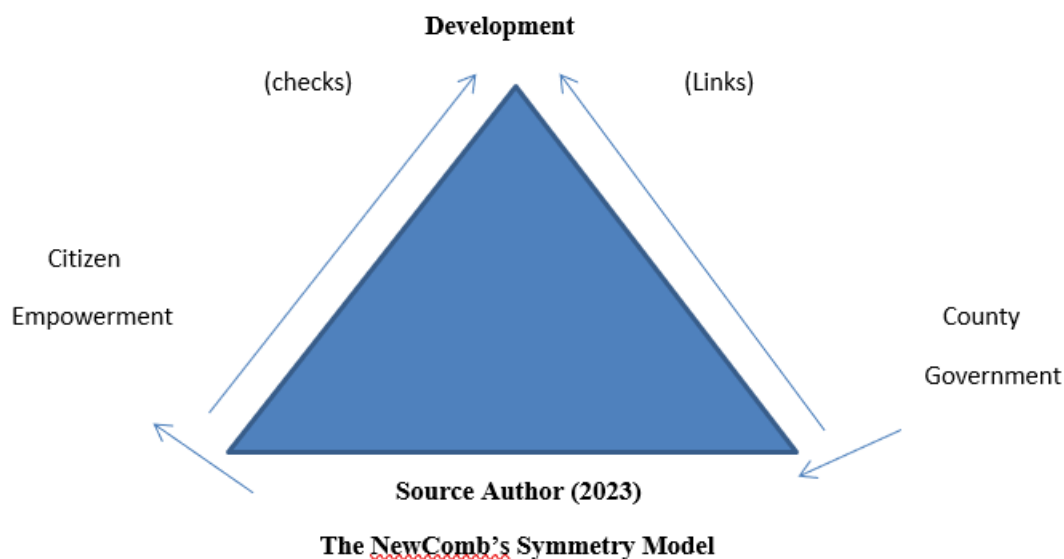
The elements of conflict comprise; beliefs and assumptions, organizational structures, processes, motivation, etc. (Luthans, 2005). Leadership’s incompetence and egocentrism, power imbalance, and ethnocentrism also create organizational conflict. Politically, conflict elements are corruption and hegemony (Hogg, 2003). Philosophically conflict is considered bad, inevitable and necessary. It is bad for disrupting status quo of predictability; inevitable due to communication ubiquity; and necessary to entrench desirable change in organizations. However, bearing in mind its devastating effects, the Catholic Church established the concept of devil’s advocate to mitigate it (Miller, 2005)

The devil’s advocate was to mitigate conflict triggers as a way of sustaining organizational balance and positive change (Etang, 2007). In the study, PP would do the devil’s advocate role by moderating leadership impunity and excesses in governance. The findings in the study established that leadership succumbed to their competing interests with stakeholders. In the process, leaders used their veto power to deny stakeholders the chance of inclusive governance. The leadership took over the devil’s advocate role of moderating PP by engaging associates, thus defeating the very functions of PP in governance. In the process, the stakeholders’ views and wishes were excluded from strategic development programs. This action limited oversight roles in governance, hence facilitating unchecked performances that resulted in underdevelopment and poverty situation in the county.

Conceptual Framework

In reflection of the general PP challenges, the study presented Newcomb Orientation Model to illustrate the gaps in communicative performance of PP in governance of Busia County. Firstly, the model presents the CG as having the mandate and funds to engage stakeholders through PP. secondly, devolution delegated sovereign powers to citizens through PP. Thirdly, PP provided the citizens with a voice for mutual engagement with leadership in prioritization of solutions to their pressing concerns (KLR, 2010; Uraia, 2010). Fifth, the leadership was to empower and steward the stakeholders through developmental functions.

The model established a communicative gap on the 2010 constitution. The existing statutes failed to capture the mode of enforcing the citizen’s prioritized resolutions, especially if the leadership failed to act in good faith. This communicative gap exposed the stakeholders to the mercy of leadership. Diagram 2 below illustrates the role PP.



The citizens know their concerns but need CG empowerment to be functional

The CG is the agent of NG & Steward of stakeholders towards empowerment

However

- The CG impose development ideas on passive stakeholders
- The CG is holding citizen’s funds on trust - spends it unilaterally
- The development expenditure on opaque projects blurs oversight
- The leadership actions cause confusion and conflict to stakeholders

Table 1: Outline of Challenges in using PP in Governance

Researcher	Problems in using PP	Proposals
Ayee	1993	-Leaders like unchecked governance
Malan	1998	-Leadership incompetence about PC -leaders using DC techniques on PC interventions
Bessette	2006	-Leaders fear delegating power -Leaders believe PC is a waste of time
Aulich Maria	2009 2012	-Lack of legal framework for regulating PP activities
Lees-Marshment Wampler	2015 2015	-PP considered only a means for spending wrongly -Legitimacy tool of spending on unresolved priorities
Ronoh, Yami	2018 2018	-Citizens ignorance -Leadership Apathy
Njagi & Krimi	2018	-Opaque communicative channels in PP
Nyaranga et al	2022	-Citizens unwillingness to engage in PP -Citizens seeking incentives to engage in PP -Inept PP practices – confusion -Political interference- power relations/ resources

Source: Literature Review (2023)

III. Methodology

Research Design

The study applied qualitative approach and instrumental case study. Busia County was instrumental as the platform to explore the communicative efficacy of PP in governance. Qualitative approach appreciates all situations and contexts surrounding a reality (Mason, 2007). Case study facilitates detailed inquiry of specifics and supports the researcher as the instrument of inquiry (Jwan & Ong’ondo, 2011). The study applied extreme variance technique to sample 35 participants. The participants were drawn from diverse social stratum of the seven sub-counties of Busia County in table 2. Data analysis was pegged on relativity (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Lucey & Luff, 2001). Upon transcription, the study applied thematic techniques to analyze and interpret the data. The thematic strategies comprised; open and axial coding, and winnowing (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Study Area and Target Participants

The study was conducted at Busia County in response to underdevelopment performance reflected through high poverty rating of about 70% in 2017 (KNBS, 2017). The county has strategic resources capable of mitigating development challenges. The resources comprise the two major international border-posts, long frontage to Lake Victoria, and rivers and many others. The study sampled participants from all the seven sub-counties comprising Budalangi, Funyula and Matayos. Others were Butula, Nambale, Teso South and Teso North in table 2. The participants were drawn from residents of the county age 18 years and above. They comprised teachers, traders and farmers. Others were Members of County Assembly (MCA), County Executive Committee (CEC) and county officials. The purpose for participants’ diversity was to imbue the study with objectivity.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Extreme Variation Sampling technique was pegged on qualitative ideals (Flick, 2009). The varied sampling focuses on participant’s demographics including gender, occupation and locations. 35 participants were identified and took part in the study in table 2.

Table 2: Sampled Participants for the Study

	Teachers	Traders	Farmers	MCAs	CEC	SCA
Butula	1	1	1	1	protected	protected
Nambale	1	2	1			
Matayos	1	1	1	1		
T.South	1	1	1	-		
T.North	1	1	2	1		
Funyula	1	1	1	1		
Budalangi	1	2	1	-		

Types of Data, Sources & Collection Tools

Table 3 below illustrates the varied forms of data collection tools. Based on Clandin & Connelly, (2000) approach on interviews, narrative data was tape recorded during interactions with various participants. Observation data were drawn from nonverbal cues comprising vocalization (paralanguage), facial expressions (oculesics), body gestures (kinesics), touch (haptic) etc. The non-verbal cues expresses natural emotional outputs. The cues reinforce, emphasize, or complement narratives. They also contradict or replace the verbal communication (Hall, 2007). Observation techniques were also applied to interpret development along natural and built environment. The data was used to determine level of development arising from inclusive governance. Media was largely used to record interview narratives from participants.

Table 3: Observation Data & Generation Techniques

Researcher	Interviews	Observations	Document	V/Aids	Informal
Interview	question narratives	Listing n/verbal	analysis	Tape recording	participant observer
Observation	participant	cues	analysis	recording	assorted
Document	review	review	analysis	researcher	assorted
V/Aids	recording	assorted	images	recording	recording
Groups	relative	assorted	analysis	recording	researcher

Source: Author (2023)

Data Analysis

The narrative data from interviews and observation attributions were organized and transcribed into thick data/ document for familiarization and analysis (Lewis, 2009). Subsequently, literature review data facilitated the study during open coding to relate complementing themes in the document. Axial coding was applied further to generate patterns from small themes (Cresswell, 2014). Finally, the grand theme emerged after winnowing and concentrating the data on the basis of research questions and literature review (Braun Clarke, 2022).

Study Findings

The findings presented in table 4 from the three research questions revealed that leadership was apathetic to PP role in governance. The leadership’s negative attitude constrained commitment of goodwill to meaningful PP functions, thereby limiting the communicative performance of PP in governance in Busia County. In essence, the leadership withheld communicative empowerment and logistics that rendered stakeholders mute and passive in PP engagements in table 4. Resultantly, stakeholder’s rights and oversight functions were curtailed leading to opaqueness and unchecked governance in table 5. This study however, did not aim at investigating leadership of Busia County, but to determine the PP performance in governance of the county. The study was triggered by the high poverty situations at the county in spite of annual budget funding.

Table 4: Thematic Summary of Communication Use in Busia County

Communication	PC	Strategy	Issue	Problem	Effect	Impact
Intention	Passive Citizens	Selective and Withholding Information	Irrational & Petty Decisions	Uninformed & Ignorant Citizens	Lack of Standards to Decide	Status quo of Ignorance & Poverty
Interaction	Consultants for Citizens	Divide & Rule Selective Engagements	Disharmony among Citizens	Sustain Citizen's ignorance	Camps & Instability	Status quo of ignorance & Poverty
Transaction	Collaborative engagements Citizens	Selective Un-procedural Practices	Disorganized Society &	Prejudice between Citizens	Unsolicited un- Prioritized Development	Status quo of ignorance & Poverty
Social	Empowerment of Citizens	Selective empowerment Resources	Hegemony	Apathy among Citizens	Skewed development	Status quo ignorance & Poverty
Culture	Ethnic identity among Citizens	Whip ethnic Emotions	Resource Embezzlement	Deceitful & confusing citizens	Distrust non Accountability	Status quo & Poverty

Source: Author (2023)

Analysis of Communication uses at Busia County

- As *intention*: to limit critical information and *mute the citizens to passive* participants
- As *interaction*: to abet unsolicited *consultancy*, cause confusion, *exclude* citizens from PP
- As *collaboration*, *transact* with associates to *escape oversight* & enjoy unchecked governance
- As *social* for selective empowerments, divide and rule, and cause confusion over PP functions
- As *culture* for ethnic hegemony & shielding culpable individuals from their irresponsible actions
- Overall theme is leadership is their apathy and lack of goodwill to commit PP activities in good faith

Table 5 Challenges in Use of PP in Governance in Busia County

Nature of Communication	Leadership	Stakeholders	Officials	Senate/MCAs
Communication process as Intention Passive	-Apathetic to citizens -Insensitive -Dishonest -Selfish -Limit PP performance -Withheld logistics -Withheld goodwill -Withheld commitment	-Desperate -Ignorant -Impatient -Doubts leadership -Frustrated -Unwilling to attend PP -Ask for incentives -Hostile	-Disempowered	-Senators -Selfish -Ambitious for office -Keep loopholes in devolution -MCAs- Keep stakeholders Passive
Communication Process as Interaction consultancy	-Incompetent -Not team player -Dictate terms -Keep power/ Fear delegating power -Selective association	-Scattered -Muted -Passive -Ignored -Disadvantaged -Status-quo of poverty	-Stooges	-Senators return home for important events/ election -MCAs incompetent

	-Lack legal framework -Cut & Paste priorities	-Exploited upon		- Retain power by disempowering stakeholders
Communication Process as Transaction Collaborative	-Inept use of PP -transact with agents -Exploit PP -Unchecked oversight -joy ride on stakeholders	-Disempowered -Excluded -Vulnerable -Misused	-Satisfy the law	- MCAs - abdicated duty -selective empowerment -Trades with executive
Communication Process as Social Vehicle Empowerment	-Selective Empowerment -Divide & rule -Cause confusion -Legitimize wrong priorities	-Victims -Stagnant/Inequality -Captive/ -Confused	-Limited	-Giving handout -Confusing stakeholders
Communication Process as Cultural Vehicle; Hegemonic	-Ethnic empowerment -Ethnic protection from accountability	-Injustice -Inequality -Impunity	-Ethnic empowerment -Ethnic protection from accountability	-Ethnic prejudice -Ethnic empowerment -Ethnic protection from accountability

Source: Author (2023)

NG - Reactive after activities

- Bureaucratic nature
- Separation of Powers in Presidency and Devolution

IV. Discussion and Conclusion

Theoretical Discussion of Findings

Public Participation was the communicative tool for initiating dialogue and engagements for stakeholders to flourish their livelihood. The major role of PP in governance was to ensure citizens exercise their constitutional rights of inclusive governance (Uraia, 2010; 11; 174). The constitution empowered the leadership to initiate and include stakeholders in the participatory governance (11; 174; C). The role of stakeholders in collaborative governance was to have them generate ideas on policy issues and developmental preferences about their lives (Ahadi, 2013). Inclusion and participation of citizens in governance meant they owned the governments in their private capacities to warrant them carry out oversight roles of all the collaborative initiatives (KCA, 2013).

Theoretically, the study applied BTCM, conflict and Functional theories to align the study. The Barnlunds Transactional Communication Model entrenched the critical factors that influence transactional engagements such as PP. The study established that the leadership succumbed to their egocentric attitudinal emotions instead of being objective to serve the citizens. By so doing, the leadership became careless and insensitive about 174; C, thus, failing to commit the goodwill of engaging the stakeholders meaningfully through PP. The negative attitudes represented the leaderships' private cues on the basis of BTCM.

Had the stewardship been meaningfully functional, there could have been conducive working relations towards inclusive governance. The good relations would have translated into mutual consideration of each. The trust from good relations would have warranted collaborative planning to improve food and health security in the county, better the education standards and living standards, and boost industrialization to sustain jobs and livelihood. However, this was not the case for Busia County on the face of the 70% poverty index.

On the other hand, from the conflict perspective, the leadership became victims of their negative competition. Conflicts occur as a result of competition interests, incompatibility of issues, unmet needs and unfulfilled goals (Kinnicki, 2004; Luthan, 2005). Conflict is inevitable, but can be mitigated to avert negative impacts. In this case, the leadership was torn between acting in good faith to serve the citizens or yield to their personal ego and do the contrast. However, the communicative gap of committing the goodwill to serve the stakeholders first before anything else abated the leadership to be in considerate of PP ideals as per the diagram 2. From

the findings, the leadership succumbed to negative competition by limiting the essence of meaningful PP with stakeholders. In the process, the leadership administered the incompatible cut and paste programs, instead of participatory and dialogic pedagogy model (Freire, 1994).

The leadership unilateral cut and paste decisions did not meet the stakeholders' developmental expectations. The action also failed to fulfill the devolution tenets in (11; 174). Cumulatively, the leadership failed to protect, facilitate or empower the devolution goals. Inclusive governance would have facilitated in evaluation of governance implementations and devolution success (KCA, 2013). Furthermore, had good governance taken place in Busia County, there would have been satisfactory development in the form of flawless communication between governance participants. This engagement would enhance informed knowledge, promptness, accountability and trust between stakeholders.

Lastly on organization sustainability, Function Theory reflects on the systematic performance and congruence of all the organizational units. The theory implies that any inconsistency or malfunctioned unit in the system affects the performance of the entire organization negatively (Ferrante, 2003). The study findings established systematic opaqueness and disorder in the circuit of PP in governance. This systematic disorder was occasioned by the leadership lethargy to support PP programs. The leadership engaged the role of power distance to strain themselves from staff and stakeholders.

As such, they engaged communication strategically to exclude the stakeholders from PP programs. This action made the stakeholders technically muted and passive participants in PP programs. The stakeholders became bystanders only to rubber stamp cut and paste decision of the leadership. Accordingly, PP became dysfunctional in the governance of Busia County. The malfunction of the communicative unit in governance stifled stakeholders' developmental orderliness in the county.

The failures of participatory governance created a series of challenges including hegemonic attitudes in resource and empowerment areas. The other issues were lack of stewardship and direction, stakeholders' ignorance of PP roles and governance functions, lack of public participation and civility, and stakeholders' poverty and hopelessness. Additionally, poor health care, food insecurity, lack of planning and market for sustainable products amongst other featured. Luckily, the study had indicated that conflict is not absolutely bad for disrupting status quos. Based on the notion of positive conflict, the study came up with a raft of communicative factors capable of plugging the devolution gap in PP to mitigate stakeholders' challenges.

General Discussion of Findings

In its letter and spirit, the Kenya's 2010 constitution delegated citizens' sovereignty through inclusive governance and PP (Uraia, 2010). PP was to be the legitimate tool for citizen's engagement with leadership on matters concerning their wellbeing (Nyaranga et al, 2022). The PC fundamentals were meant to facilitate PP functions in linking and uniting citizens to make them devolution stakeholders. This would also mean that stakeholders had a stake in governance to warrant their unconditional involvement in the governance and development programs in the county. However, the leadership applied PP contrary to PC functions to scatter and ignore the citizens from governance.

Secondly, PP was to be the communicative platform for empowering stakeholders to be effective in "*naming the world*" in governance. Again, the leadership strategically withheld the PC platform to disempower the stakeholders from meaningful involvement in county governance. Exclusion of stakeholders stifled their inherent oversight roles in the participatory governance.

Thirdly, meaningful PP would have ensured the stakeholders are involved in implementation process of resolved preferences. The action facilitates compliance of transforming the stakeholders' aims into goals to mitigate dissonance challenges. Based on Wampler, (2015) argument, for lack of stakeholders' inputs in the naming the world, the leadership imposed cut and paste decision as a legitimacy tool of spending on unresolved priorities. These negative attitudes by the leadership rendered the role of PC/ PP obsolete in devolution functions at the county and sustaining poverty ranked at 70 %.

In contrast to negative application of PC fundamentals in governance, Chitnis, (2005) refers to participatory collaboration as "*duality of development*", acknowledges its potential in facilitating attainment of sustainable livelihood. Mezzana, (1996) refers to PP as grass root empowerment. Chamber, (1986) and Mefalopulos, (2009) calls it "*last first*" in the sense that stakeholders' wishes form the purpose of PP in collaborative engagement. McBride, (2004) looked at participatory governance as "*many voices- one world*". Many voices mean collaborative engagement with a view to a common goal. In linking meaningful PP to "*one voice*", participants of Homa Bay County contented with being involved in PP activities for the first time.

"...we are glad that our voices are being heard for the first time in the villages. We are able to decide on key priorities in water, roads, agriculture and health among several projects." Daily Nation December 23, 2022.

The study noted that leaderships elected to public positions are assumed to have commitment of goodwill to initiate stakeholders into inclusive governance. However, the study established that leaders succumbed to their negative attitudes and ignored their duty of working with the stakeholders who elected them to office. Exclusion of stakeholders from PP roles increased their ignorance and

confusion about governance functions. This omission prompted the prevailing poverty situations associated with underdevelopment at the county. A trader participant argued out

“Quite many citizens here are so ignorant and confused about what they want. For such reasons, there is no amount of information or participation to help them change their mindset any time soon. You see, nearly all men and half the women are addicted to changaa, and cannot think usefully. These so called husbands and modern young men are so naïve and baseless and have no ideas for reasoning. So for now the county government should decide everything for them, at least until they reform.” **TrP6**

Changaa is locally brewed liquor in Kenya equivalent to whisky

The confusion replicated itself in county assembly. For instance, a county assembly official bragged about bills they have enacted.

“Our county is on record as having enacted the most bills compared to all counties in Kenya during the first devolution term.” Asked further

How does these many bills support PP towards citizens’ prosperity?

Response

“all these bills are good enough for all the citizens.”

This study demonstrated that functional performance of PP depends entirely on PC fundamentals. The performance of PC is the prerogative of leaders in power. The study established that the PC/PP performance depends on the leaderships’ communicative competence and the goodwill to work appropriately with stakeholders. The study established that the leadership of Busia County was insensitive to stakeholders’ developmental wellbeing. For that reason, the leadership was committed to counter mandate objectives of devolution in 11; 174 (Uraia, 2010). This goal was committed through strategic communication by withholding basic PP empowerment logistics from stakeholders. The commission rendered stakeholders unproductive partners in participatory governance. Table 5 illustrates a summary of challenges in using PP in governance of Busia County, reinforced with participants’ responses from interviews.

Teacher Participant on views on CG

Devolution brought a lot of money and tribal ethnicity in our county. It is a political tool for political leaders and elites of the society. They use it to reduce friends but increase their wealth.....nothing common to show for it.....do you see any” **TP1**

Farmer participant on views of leadership

“Hawa watu wa serikali ya Kanjo hawatujui baada ya kura, wametuamulia kila kitu. Hawajui tunakula nini na tunalala wapi ama vipi. Kazi yao ni kupita hapa kwetu wakifunga madirisha ya magari yao..... Hiyo mali ni yetu na wata rudi tu kwetu tena...” **FP1**

Translated- “these County leaders we elected ignored us upon election; they decide everything for us. They have no mercy over our plight whatsoever, and care less about how we feed, or where we sleep. Instead, they resent and despise us and wind up their car windows whenever they approach us. They use our resources but their tenure of service will end and return to us.”

County Executive Committee Participant on their roles in CG

“...We have an imaginary portfolio that we cannot execute...we simply go to the office to sit and fulfill the law. We are hardly assigned meaningful duties and if any, they are largely political to raise money than to assist in any development. We are held captive we do not receive funds to run CIDP programs captured in the annual budgets....” **CECP1**

CIDP is the county's integrated development program that captures both short and long-term strategic development plans of action.

Sub-County Coordinator on their roles in CG

“...We are here to be seen and not be heard....we do not have specific duty except to represent the governor in local functions....We thought we had a development rolebut that was taken over by MCAs and senior brokers who pull the shorts. The brokers have a say on what is done where ...and not us...too bad for now, what to do!” **SCCP1**

When **SCAP2** was asked how stakeholders are involved in participatory governance

“The wanainchi do not attend the forums if they are not assured of (kitu kidogo). They demand payment because they feel these forums are a waste of their time. They also lack true knowledge about PP. They have never understood what brings them to such meetings...” SCAP2

When **SCAP 2** was asked if they have a clear understanding about their roles in CG

“What roles?”

The study further established that the PP communicative performance failed to attain its objectives. The challenge was occasioned by the leadership engaging the traditional DC on PP functions. Many studies so far conducted on PP have benchmarked its performance on governance standards. This action limited establishment of communicative challenges that limit PP performance in governance. Christopher, (2018) and Marzuki, (2015) underscore the essence of committing goodwill to governance in pursuit of sustainable development.

In ideal participatory governance, PP facilitates linkage for uniting the stakeholders’ engagements. Servaes & Malikhao, (2005) avers that PC assists in preparing efficient framework of actions as a result of stakeholders’ better understanding of their situations, needs, and wants. It makes provision for effective resource planning and management (Lowndes & Paxton, 2018). In pegging PC ideals by Durose & Richardson, (2016), the findings form a basis for affirming the potent of committed goodwill in structuring and prioritizing stakeholders’ development plans.

Team, (2015) points out that PP promotes transparency within its interventions processes to addresses inequality and power relations. To a greater extent also, it stimulate information exchange between the development stakeholders (Servaes, 2015). From the study, the performance of PP in Busia County was limited by many challenges as reported by participants.

Farmer Participant had this to say about PP in governance

... “Tunasikia kwa maredio maneno ya participation ...wanainchi kwende kuambiwa miradi ile imepangwa kwa maendeleo ya ma-contractors na wenye kupanga.” FP2

Translated- we hear about PP through the radio as announcing development plans that benefit the contractors and the project initiators.

Teacher Participant opinion on PP in CG

“Maneno ya public participation ni PR ya abnuasi kutufunga macho yetu na ili wakubwa watekeleze mipango yao wenyewe....moreover; politicians are not genuine, they engage sideshows, and whip ethnic emotions to confuse every one whenever they are subjected to accountability. This action helps them to escape from any responsibilitiesmost of these leaders are shameless and protect looters- you know!” TP2

Translated- in fact these leaders are never honest with us; they use PP deceitfully as a PR decoy to achieve their selfish ends.

Trader Participants response

... “PP forums in this county are used to stamp the ready-made plans, yet with no room for citizens’ input whatsoever. It is used to create a false sense of compliance with the law.” TrP1

In true sense, Participation gives stakeholders a voice to transform their challenges into opportunities (Bingham, 2011). PP is instrumental in governance to guard against abuse of public office owing to excessive power vested in civil servants and in public procedures (Agunga, 1996; Omolo, 2011; Team, 2015). Accordingly, the joint efforts through participatory governance place a buffer against power misuse by leadership (Mefalopulos, 2000). Ultimately, a PP function guarantees service delivery by protecting organizational systems from unnecessary political interferences (Aye, 1993). It also mitigates abuse of professionalism and meritocracy in the society (Servae & Milkhao, 2005).

A Sub County Administration participant opinion about good governance

“Planning clear roles and placing the responsibility on each sub-county administrator make their work more meaningful. Secondly, officials should be trusted with their duties and not micro-managed if they were to be responsible for their actions.”SCAP3

Question

Could you explain the meaning of micro-management?

Response

“We need empowerment to organize sub-county forums which would bring wanainchi together, educate them and stimulate creativity and innovations. Today the leaders condone several brokers and cartels that divert good ideas from our people.”

Effective use of PC enhances trust and mutuality between participants (Glass 1979). The trust promotes strong and supportive relationships between stakeholders (Pareek, 1986; Cavric, 2011). From the public’s point of view, the act of the leadership inviting stakeholders to joint dialogue is a sign of acceptance (Ronoh et al, 2015). However, effective public participation is difficult to achieve if the facilitators engage stakeholders outside the conventional standards of practice (Lowndes & Paxton, 2018).

Farmer Participants’ comments on PP challenges

“...Hii serikali ya county ni ya mafisi tupu, kazi yao ni kukula chakula yote na kutubakishia mafupa peke yake. Bahati yetu mbaya ni kwamba walijiweka huko peke yao bila idhini yetu. Tutakufa hapa na umasikini....” FP2

Translated; this CG is full of hyenas...their work is to eat all steak in meat but leaves for us bones only. We are unfortunate here for they installed themselves to office without our consent. We shall languish in our poverty.

Ultimately, PP that was meant to address leadership excesses got to be moderated by the very leadership. From the study, therefore, failure by leadership to commit the goodwill of inclusive governance forfeited the trust and development guaranteed through PP. Resultantly, the citizens of Busia County got tired of expecting empowerment from the leadership and gave up on the CG. As such, the stakeholders became openly critical of leadership of CG for abandoning them and empowering themselves against the devolution goals.

Views of trader participant on PP challenges in governance in Busia County

“Most of these so-called new developments in the county today belong to MCAs, County employees, or their cartels and not us. The MCAs take most of the contracts from the county. Apart from the MCAs, the most visible development belongs to county employees- especially those in the finance sectors. Above all - there is this notorious contractor ‘Y’ who takes ninety percent of the total development contracts in the county. He shares his loot with the boss ‘Z’, and these behaviours are undermining fairness and accountability of development in this county.” TrP3

Essentially, the CC cliché of doing the right thing, the right way, with the right people, at the right place and right time, informed the study that no amount of coercion can push an apathetic leadership to *do the right thing the right way*. However, enforceable communication structures can facilitate practical and pragmatic inclusive governance. Moustakas, (1974) alluded PC to *‘finding yourself, finding others’*, while Langer, (1989) refers to PC inclusivity as *mindfulness*. From the study therefore, it is clear that intentions and attitudes are abstract but perceivable through communication lenses.

Contributions of the Study

The findings from the study are crucial for academia in furthering knowledge on communication factors that stand between stakeholders in governance. Secondly, the findings are essential for policy makers for amendment of devolution statutes to accommodate communication strategists in senior leadership positions. The amendments would expedite establishment of cordial relations for mutual and common good of governance. Thirdly to the practitioners, the proposed legal provisions would condition PR practitioners to re-package and rebrand PR standards. This action would enable Public Relations Experts (PREs’) take formal responsibility for their administrative actions, and by default increase the reliability of organizational services.

The study therefore, suggests that the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) and Communication Management distinguish PR from other communication disciplines. The distinction would promote clarity of PREs as responsible advocates. The PR roles would not only ensure sustenance of organizational conscience, but also see PREs become proactive oversight directors at their relative workplaces. Ultimately, this change would redeem the perception of PR practices in the professional market, than largely perceived as propagandist and deceitful spin-doctors.

Fourth, to the economy and subsequent development, the practice would promote resource management to ensure timely delivery of planned programs. Re-engineered governance would create annual calendars to celebrate PP accomplishments as a way of evaluating and certifying preferred attainments. The development failures would be evaluated and rated appropriately. In overall PREs would commit goodwill of *doing the right things the right way, with the right people, and at the right time and place*. This would advance the citizens’ well-being envisioned through devolution objectives.

Fifth, to the general citizens of Busia County and Kenyans at large, the proposed communication provisions for improving PP would entrench effective and sensitive leadership. This would also help in boosting sustainability of stakeholder’s empowerment for

supporting their livelihood and wellbeing. In essence, proactive and strategic communication measures would have far-reaching gains for counties, rather than waiting to prosecute individuals for resource misallocations.

Suggestions for Further Study

The study was necessary to determine the communicative challenges that impede performance of PP in governance. The study was conducted through qualitative research approach that is subjective in nature. A survey study is therefore necessary in other counties to verify the commitment of leadership goodwill to the efficacy of PP performance towards good governance. The outcome from a realist's perspective would validate and justify the essence of engaging PREs to sustain good communication in governance across counties in Kenya.

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