

# Governing with Citizens' Extended Theory in the Practice of Procurement and Public Private Partnerships – A Developing Country's Perspective in the Energy Sector

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## Abstract

*The search for improved value outcomes of procurement and use of PPPs lies in citizen co-production and co-delivery of public services. Applying insight from Agency theory, this study assesses the role of citizens in traditional procurement and PPPs. Based on a review of literature, interviews and focus group discussions, the study acknowledges that while the agency theory has been adopted in guiding theory and practice of procurement and PPPs, it is inadequate in engaging citizen participation. The study reveals that the principal's interests tend to override the interests of citizens, creating a mismatch between service delivery expectations and perceptions. The outcome of this study points to the need for a radical shift in the way in which citizens are engaged in both traditional procurement and PPP routes as service delivery models. This paper is important since it advocates for the extension of the Agency theory to Citizen Principal Agency theory that puts the citizen at the frontline of service delivery design and implementation.*

**Keywords:** procurement, public private partnerships, Agency theory, Principal Agency theory, citizen

## Introduction

Demand for public services is on the rise across the world. While such interest was popular in the developed world (OECD, 2012; Garvin & Bosco, 2008), it is burgeoning in the BRICs countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and now in greater Asia and Africa (World Bank, 2016). Initially, citizens demanded deliverables. Of late, such interest is shifting; citizens now demand to know the processes that develop and deliver public service outcomes. These processes have included traditional procurement and now the later approach commonly known as 'Public Private Partnerships' (PPPs). Existing literature points to the need for public



administrators – that citizens are customers and they need to engage them through co-production and co-delivery of services they consume (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2019; Diyamett & Diyamett, 2019; Boyer & Van Slyke, 2019). Similarly, there exists an outcry from citizens demanding that their voices and interests be heard and incorporating both procurement and PPP processes in the energy and other sectors (Nduhura, 2019).

At the heart of such debate, 'citizen engagement' has become a popular term. The term 'citizen engagement' has also been popular in the context of business and public administration. From a business perspective, citizens are viewed as customers while in the context of public administration, citizens are viewed as consumers of a public service such as roads, electricity and education. According to Overman (2017), the satisfaction of citizens as consumers of service is increasingly becoming a vital aspect of the principal and agency relationship expectations in the delivery of public services. Van de Walle (2017) acknowledges that citizens are likely to develop what is known as 'knowledge-based trust' if the parties to the relationships freely share information. In essence, if information relating to the procurement and PPP projects that are being implemented is not shared, such trust may not be achieved, especially from citizens as customers of service. Reflections on other types of trust reveal that citizens are likely to trust implementers of public services in the existence of identification-based trust. According to van de Galle (2017), such trust is achieved when parties understand and appreciate their needs in the relationship.

While conceptualisation of the citizen and citizen engagement is varied, some attempt has been made to arrive at their universal meanings. Citizen engagement that is also known as public participation is not new but has been part of the evolution of the civil rights movements. Citizen engagement has also been associated with 'representative democracy', a type of democracy that seeks to presuppose that things get done by the people (Urbanti, 2011; Onyango, 2020; Sørensen, *et al.*, 2020). By engaging citizens in actions that affect them, community empowerment can be realised (Revell & Dinnie, 2020).

According to Quick and Bryson (2016) and Quick, Kathryn and Martha (2011), the genesis of public participation in public policy can be traced to the 1960s, while others like Bovaird (2004) note that the popularity of the concept is traceable in the 1970s. It is further alluded to by Bovaird (2004) that in the early years, citizens were engaged in co-production and co-delivery of public services in various forms such as citizen militias, volunteer fire-fighters and jury systems, a view that is consistent with earlier studies (Whitaker, 1980; Ostrom & Ostrom, 1977; Sharp, 1980; Brudney & England, 1983; and Brudney, 1983).

Notably, Sherry Arnstein (1969) is recognised as a key promoter of such a movement in the geography of public policy and governance. It is also noted that while the concept of public participation started in political science, it has grown diversely in the study and practice of procurement and PPP projects. According to Bovaird *et al.* (2004), citizen participation can be traced to the 1970s. In this journey of citizen participation, USA comes out as the geography where the genesis can be traced but it is worth acknowledging that the concept of citizen engagement is growing with unlimited boundaries in OECD countries and now spreading in the developing world.



It is further observed by Bovaird *et al.* (2004) that citizen participation as the 'enabling logic' rather than 'professional logic' enables the development of sustainable services for customers. This is deemed to arise because of the dual role that citizens play as developers and consumers of services by engaging citizens in developing services to be consumed by them, and in doing so, public administrators are likely to attract the innovative character of citizens (Nederhand & Klijn, 2019).

## Definitions, dimensions and contextualisation

The terms citizen and citizenship have been used in literature as neighbours. Namvar *et al.* (2016) notes that the word 'citizen' is made up of dual words 'city' that implies humane society and 'zen' as an individual member of the community. Bundled together, the term 'citizen' is opined to imply that citizenship is about a two-way relationship of faithfulness between a person and their society. According to Enayati *et al.* (2013) a citizen is a person that is a member of a given society. The status of being a citizen provides rights and freedoms of an individual coupled with support from government (Namvar *et al.*, 2016). Citizens possess the rights of claims, liberties and immunities (Barnett, 2020; Kurland, 1972). In reciprocity, citizens are required to commit to pay allegiance to their nations, pay taxes, report crime and participate in political activities such as voting in elections.

A 'citizen' is fundamentally a geographic concept and definitions vary from one country to another. It is a statement concerning persons within national boundaries. In Hong Kong, '*citizenship principally is a matter of holding passports and enjoying some degree of civil liberties*' (Shiu-Hing, 2001). Citizenship is the status of a person(s) recognised under the tradition or law as being a legal member of a sovereign state or belonging to a nation (Shiu-Hing, 2001). Various countries have prescribed within their constitution the characteristics that define citizenship or a citizen. Quite importantly, some features are seemingly similar. Popular criteria for defining a citizen includes: person must be born in that nation, born by parents that are citizens in the country of birth, a product of marriage with a national with some years post marriage, by naturalisation and by virtue of investment of economic reasons.

Section 10(a & b) of the Constitution of Uganda (Republic of Uganda, 1995) defines a citizen as "every person born in Uganda one of whose parents or grandparents is or was a member of any of the indigenous communities existing and residing within the borders of Uganda as at the first day of February, 1926, and or every person born in or outside Uganda one of whose parents or grandparents was at the time of birth of that person a citizen of Uganda by birth". A person can also become a citizen by registration if the following characteristics apply:

1. Every person married to a Ugandan citizen upon proof of a legal and subsisting marriage of three years or such other period prescribed by Parliament
2. Every person who has legally and voluntarily migrated to and has been living in Uganda for at least 10 years or such other period prescribed by Parliament
3. Every person who, on the commencement of this constitution, has lived in Uganda for at least 20 years



The Constitution also provides that a person can become a citizen by naturalisation. Countries like Qatar have sought to attract athletes by granting them citizenship on the basis that they profess Islam while countries like Mauritius have granted citizenship to foreigners based on the share of investment in the country. Quite importantly, it is opined that citizens have an obligation to participate and be consulted in matters that affect them. Among such matters includes procurement and more recently, public private partnerships.

The term 'citizenship' is pivotal to ideas of a psychological social contract in which citizenship includes both rights and responsibilities (Rousseau, 1762). It is opined that citizenship that is effective is exercised by holding government accountable for actions that affect citizens. Chen (2013) asserts that citizens engage providers of public services through voice and choice. Voice can be exercised through boycott of consumption of services, for instance, public transport and education services while choice is exercised by use of substitutes to services provided by government and its allies. Applied in citizenship engagement, voices are heard through formal and informal processes. It is opined that a formal process of citizens quite often engaged with providers of public services through voice (making their views heard through representative democracy that involves voting of local leaders or members of Parliament to voice their interest wider for a like Parliament). On the contrary, citizens use their voice (Chen *et al.*, 2013). Informally, citizens relay their voice through lobbying and protests. The sound of citizen voices usually targets elected leaders, public officials, fellow citizens and at times, the Heads of State.

According to Schedler and Marc (1999), citizenship is the exercise of defending one's own rights and holding providers accountable. From voice, citizens move to choice. To effect choice, citizens are involved in making decisions on whether to consume public services or alternative services provided by the private sector. For example, to attend a public school with free tuition or private university and pay tuition, citizens use choice to select from among the range of goods and services available to them. Citizens' voice and choice are largely dependent on availability of information for analysis and arriving at a choice (Chen *et al.*, 2013). Effective citizen engagement requires that citizens have access to information that is relevant, accurate, updated and in a format that is easily understood by citizens so that they can understand and voice concerns at all stages of the project. It is, therefore, imperative that citizens are engaged in all procurement and PPP activities as mediums for delivery of public services. This paper provides some definitions for elaboration of procurement and PPPs in order to secure a deeper understanding in the sourcing processes in which citizens ought to be engaged.

Procurement has been defined as the process of acquiring goods, services and works (Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply, 2006). In Uganda's public sector context, procurement is defined as the process of acquiring goods, services or works by any means (Public Procurement and Disposal Authority, 2003).

PPP are also considered as a strategic procurement route that is adopted to procure high-value, complex infrastructural projects. In a typical PPP, private players are usually involved in financing, owning and operating public infrastructure that delivers public services. Procurement,



on the other hand, usually involves the transfer of operations to private players by a public party or the provision of services or works without pre-financing ownership of public assets. PPPs, also denoted as 3PPPs, are viewed as a cooperation between governments and private sector players for the co-creation and delivery of goods and services while sharing risks, costs and resources associated with the delivery of such goods and services (van Ham & Koppenjan, 2001). In a narrower sense, it is observed by Vives, *et al.* (2010) that since all public infrastructure projects involve both parties, the public and private partners, then all engagements between the former and latter are PPPs. At the centre of defining what PPPs ought to be has arisen some complexity since the 1960s when the PPP conversation was first had (Bovaird, 2010).

Despite the complexity, the definition of PPP is set to arrive at mutuality like it has done for other concepts such as procurement and now citizen participation in the fields of public management and governance.

Procurement and PPP operations involve decision-making processes by stakeholders who have a vested interest and varying levels of influence. In this article, we acknowledge the citizens as the most important stakeholders in the process that involves the acquisition of public services.

## **Citizen/public participation in service delivery**

At the narrowest level, recent studies have acknowledged and recognised that citizen participation is a vital element in the practice of procurement and PPPs (Ng *et al.*, 2013; Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011; Boyer *et al.*, 2016; and Kurniasih *et al.*, 2020).

Rooted in sociology, the concept of citizen participation has spread to the field of science (Galbraith *et al.*, 2016). In a much broader sense, citizen participation is viewed as group co-production (Brinkerhoff *et al.*, 2011). According to Nabatchi and Sancino (2019), citizen participation is categorised as group co-production. It is further opined that citizen participation refers to a situation where “one or more state actors work directly and simultaneously with a specific cluster or category of lay actors who share common characteristics or interests in a community (for example, users of a service, residents of a specific neighbourhood, or patients with a specific disease)”. While personal benefits of the cluster may be gained on behalf of the greater group, it is argued that the coproduction between this small cluster may breed inequitable distribution of benefits, leading to blurred interests (Bovaird, 2007). Ultimately, the community bears the cost and becomes vulnerable to risks (Bovaird, 2007; Ostrom, 1996). On the contrary, however, it is maintained that involving citizens in the delivery of public services is vital. To reiterate the benefits of engaging citizens in the production of services consumed by them, Kauziya (2019) notes that the society of citizens is creative and provides solutions that may not be known to public servants. It is further observed by Yanow and Dvora (2004) that by engaging citizens, public administrators can tap into local knowledge that is necessary for tailoring service design to local conditions and developing services delivered to citizens by the State and its agents. Consistent in this view, it is further argued that by engaging citizens to participate in matters that affect them, public authorities can benefit from citizens’ trust (Tyler & Degoe, 1996). Other proponents of



citizen participation argue that by involving citizens in design and delivery, public service delivery outcomes can be improved (Brix *et al.*, 2020; Allen *et al.*, 2020; Reddick *et al.*, 2020). Despite the value of citizen participation in the delivery of services using conventional procurement and PPP, it is asserted that the acts and process of engaging citizens can constrain service delivery (Irvin & Stanbury, 2004; Boyer *et al.*, 2016; Brix *et al.*, 2020). Despite the limitations of citizen engagement in service delivery, citizen engagement has remained a popular theme in the theory and practice of PPP projects. This study commenced to gain a deeper understanding of how the agency theory affects citizens' participation in the context of traditional procurement and PPPs in the energy sector.

## Problem statement

Citizen engagement has been a popular element in the practice of procurement and PPPs. In practice, the engagement of citizens in government acquisition processes such as procurement and PPPs is evident but limitations have been implemented. Existing literature suggests that several approaches have been deployed to engage citizens in procurement and PPP over the years (Bovaird, 2007; Ostrom, 1996; Nduhura, 2019; Tan *et al.*, 2020). Li (2020) opines that citizen participation ought to be enhanced with transparent and open communication. It is further asserted that by establishing communication between citizens and public organisations, information asymmetry can be reduced while enabling success in coproduction (Li, 2020).

Communications among public organisations and citizens play a critical role in reducing the degree of information asymmetry and ensuring successful co-production and co-delivery of services. Graber (2004:545) stated that 'A well-functioning modern democracy requires that bureaucrats listen sympathetically and respectfully to citizens and vice versa'. However, effective communication is necessary to maintain a healthy relationship and build mutual trust that facilitates co-production.

According to Xiong *et al.* (2020), citizen participation has been sourced through participative forms such as online technologies, social media and neighbourhood meetings. Gordon & Mugar (2020) acknowledge that the use of digital platforms to engage citizens in matters that affect is on the rise. Recently, using e-channels such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp has been noted (Tan *et al.*, 2020). While citizen participation has been acknowledged, it has stayed in limbo (Bovaird, 2004, Ostrom & Ostrom, 1996; 1977). However, as tensions arise, increased democratisation of service delivery, citizen awareness of rights with the massive impact of non-government organisation movements and quality defects emerge in public service delivery, citizen engagement has ushered in the vogue of citizen participation both in theory and practice of procurement and PPPs as a sourcing methods for public services. In spite of this uprising, there has been limited literature in the context of developing countries like Uganda in assessing how citizens are and can be engaged due to existing barriers to engagement and the lack of appropriate theory to guide this engagement.

Notwithstanding, citizen participation in procurement, PPPs and generally service delivery across all sectors, have received sufficient but not adequate attention., There has been an



emphasis that central government gives greater autonomy to local government administration in decision making through devolved decentralised governance. Decentralisation was aimed at increasing citizen participation at the grassroots. Similarly, demand for citizen participation in design, production and delivery of public services processes such as procurement and PPPs are on the rise (Strokosch & Osborne, 2020).

Existing studies on PPPs in the energy sector acknowledge that citizens, as a primary stakeholders and consumers of public services, are vital (Ruostetsaari, 2020). Like elsewhere, citizens have participated in procurement and PPP projects through community-led discussions over land compensation and other processes usually relating to feasibility studies and social impact assessments before procurement activities commence and during the implementation of PPPs. In other instances, citizens affected by procurement and PPP projects commonly referred to as project affected persons (PAPs) have lent their voices through representation either by local council chairpersons or lobby groups and or Members of Parliament. A review of existing literature on themes such as procurement and PPPs in energy indicates that the latter approach has not been different from the Agency theory, which has been adopted to a great extent to inform the relationship engagements between citizens, government public administrators and the private sector. Traditionally, citizen participation was participatory but has, over the years, changed to representative participation evidenced in the adoption of Agency theory. Based on this trend, Agency theory has gained prominence in this context and reflections on it suggest that while citizens may have been engaged and their interests catered for in decision-making processes, the limitations of representative democracy have not enabled optimal citizen engagement (Liang *et al.*, 2019).

Under the auspices of representative democracy, citizens' voices and engagement happens through their representatives (Samanta, 2020), for instance, at the various stages of procurement and PPPs. PAPs have been involved in matters such as compensation, resettlement, and to some extent, processes pertaining to feasibility through participation. The rest of the matters have been a reserve for representative participation, a view that was earlier echoed by Ruostetsaari (2020) that opines that energy matters are considered a domain for businessmen and technocrats. This has rendered the outcomes of citizen participation in the procurement and PPPs process deficient, giving rise to tension, mistrust and resentment. The outcome has brought negative effects to procurement and PPPs' processes in the production, transmission and distribution of electricity, especially to the most vulnerable (Kabanda, 2014; Nsasira *et al.*, 2013; Nduhura, 2019). In this context, the limitations of representative participation further render the agency theory inadequate in informing the desired citizen participation framework in procurement and PPPs' processes in the energy sector.

This study, therefore, sought to identify sustainable approaches for engaging citizens while making a contribution to existing theory and a framework for citizen participation in the execution of procurement and PPPs.



## Data and methods

The study is anchored in Uganda, a developing country, and in her energy sector. The study adopted a qualitative research design. Using this approach, the focus was to secure concrete views from the ground. According to Ames et al (2019) qualitative evidence synthesis, requires thorough analysis. It is asserted that too much data can cause obstruction (Cherry, *et al*, 2019). The study purposively selected 32 participants, who were policymakers, users of electricity or who worked with an electricity utility corporation either in regulation, transmission, distribution or rural electrification. The study participants included members from the Private Sector Federation, Umeme (major electricity distributor) and Uganda Manufacturers Association that feature as bulk users of electricity, members of the Institute of Procurement Professionals of Uganda, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Private Partnerships Unit) and Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Authority, a body that regulates public procurement activities in Uganda and academicians who either specialise in procurement, PPPs or energy studies. The study was anchored in Uganda that formed a unit of analysis. The choice of Uganda in the study was informed by the country's investment in energy coupled with success stories of co-production in the energy sector with Bujagali Hydro Power Project (HPP) and Umeme Concession (listed as successful model projects in sub-Sahara that involved good and bad citizen encounters). Views from study participants were retrieved through holding face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The approach was adopted in order to gain deeper insights into stakeholder experiences in the energy sector and their involvement in decisions that affect them. Interviews were conducted in a flexible way with open-ended questions while allowing participants the freedom to ask for clarification, which enabled us to ask questions arising from stories emerging from the dialogue. This approach also enabled us to ask questions that were not initially considered but which further enriched the study. Corbetta (2003), Berg (2009), Ryan et al. (2009) & Griffiee (2005) note that by using open-ended questions, such trends are likely to emerge. As we heard and listened to in-depth experiences, we sought to capture emotional experiences through tone, facial expressions and the pace of participants. The study was enhanced by the review of documents and scholarly literature review, which enabled the development of questions that guided both interviews and focus group discussions. Findings were then analysed in themes within which content generated was analysed.

## Findings and discussions

It is clear from this study that while effort has been made to conceptualise good governance of PPPs, some lessons can be learnt from Uganda to enhance PPPs' performance.

Findings from the study revealed that a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) from Umeme Limited has implemented voluntary governance practices such as a requirement to float shares or dispose of some level of equity. This requirement should be configured in national laws and regulations for PPPs. For instance, there should be a requirement that during the tenure of PPP concessions, some percentage of equity should be offloaded to national pension funds.



It is also evident from a majority of study respondents that citizens, as stakeholders in procurement, and PPPs' processes are left out, especially from the design stage, but brought on board at later stages. While PAPs are involved in matters associated with compensation, feasibility studies and to some extent, social impact assessments for projects, some vital concerns of PAPs are not heard and prioritised. For example, a PAP notes:

“I would have initially [be] allowed to relocate but could not since initial plans did not cater for co-resettlement with my relatives in the same area.”

*(Project Affected Person in the Jinja District, March 2020)*

While representative participation is the new norm in democracy of governance, revelations from PAPs suggest that the approach to participation is limited. In this case, it can be noted that perhaps the interests of the concerned PAP might have not been catered for by the agents with agent's interests overriding the interests of those being represented, as postulated in earlier studies in the energy sector (Liu, 2020). A majority of respondents of the study further suggest that such gaps in engagement are common with PPP project conceptualisation. There is a feeling among PAPs that the interests of the citizens (as the principal – elected government representing interests of citizens) may not be truly represented by government (to whom the citizens delegate their power and interests through elections and votes) and other tiered representative governance structures like positions of members of parliament and local council leaders' interests of citizens. While the agency theory has been adopted to guide procurement and PPPs, this study confirms that the Agency theory has proved inadequate as it highlights the challenge of representative democracy (Waterman & Meiyer, 1998). This finding is consistent with earlier studies that suggest that representative democracy is vulnerable to conflicting interests between the citizens and the holders of their delegated interests (principal-state, public administrators). The Agency theory presupposes that managers, as agents, are expected to serve the interests of the principal. However, findings reveal that the conflicting interests that are occurring as deeply held interests such as the need for incorporating social cohesion in resettlement plans, have not been catered for in the resettlements. Existing literature indicates that the conflict of interest emanating in the context of principal-agency relationships occurs due to greed and information asymmetry between the principal and agent (Waterman *et al.*, 1998). Hill & Jones (1998) propose for investment in monitoring actions of agent to avoid the agent's divergent trait.

The assumptions of the Agency theory are that managers in an organisation are agents whose interests may diverge from those of the principal. Applied to the public sector context, citizens are the principal but delegate their role to government and its agencies to act for and represent citizens' interests in matters that affect them.



## Critique of the Agency Model and a rationale for extension of theory – citizens as customers

Based on a review of literature and empirical findings, this study joins earlier studies in confirming gaps in the agency theory, a position that anchors recommendations for an extension of the theory alongside the adoption of Stakeholder theory in execution of procurement and PPP projects.

The Agency theory in the study context has been characterised by the challenge of representative democracy. This has resulted in lower citizen engagement in procurement and PPP projects in the energy sector. Perhaps this trend could be responsible for the increased uptake of off-grid energy solutions in Uganda and other countries and low uptake of available hydropower, causing surplus with only 1.5 million grid connection customers in a country with a population of about 43 million people, an indication that citizens may be silently making the choice to boycott services offered by the government. Consistent with such critique, the Agency theory is further critiqued by Denhardt and Denhardt (2003), Jones and Needha (2008), Jensen and Meckling (1979) for extending the burden of agency failure on the principal due to their interest that may have selfishly derived the mistakes without input from the 'ground'-citizens. In line with this study, users of electricity are bothered by low uptake of electricity whereby the principal ends up paying for power generated but not used under power purchase agreements that guarantee minimum uptake of electricity generated, resulting in 'nugatory expenditure' – spend without outcomes and impact.

The theory further presupposes that the owners act in the best interests of the principals. Applied in procurement and PPPs in the energy sector, it is assumed that government and utility agencies act in the best interest of citizens. While this is the ideal situation, this study identifies that citizens decry such arrangements on the following premises: electricity is deemed unaffordable, resettlements have been forceful in some instances, while in some cases the social capital aspects have not been considered in resettlement decisions made and implemented by or on behalf of the public electricity utility agencies.

Earlier studies by Wiseman *et al.*, (2012) and Berger *et al.* (2017) have critiqued the Agency theory by acknowledging gaps such as information asymmetry. Information asymmetry is viewed as a situation where information parity exists between the principal and agent in a relationship. It is noted in this study that PAPs are not privileged to access all information relating to procurement and PPPs on assumption of confidential content. The absence of such information may render PAPs ineffective in making uninformed choices in the context of procurement and PPP projects that affect them.

It is against this backdrop that the study recommends for the integration of Agency and Stakeholder theory, advanced Freeman (1984) to give rise to an extension of the Agency theory. The extension of theory seeks to put the interests of the citizen as a customer at the foreground of engagement in public procurement and PPP project operations.

To this effect, the study proposes an extension of Agency theory resulting in the formation of a new theory – '*Citizen Principal Agency (CPA)*'. The proposed theory is extended to position the

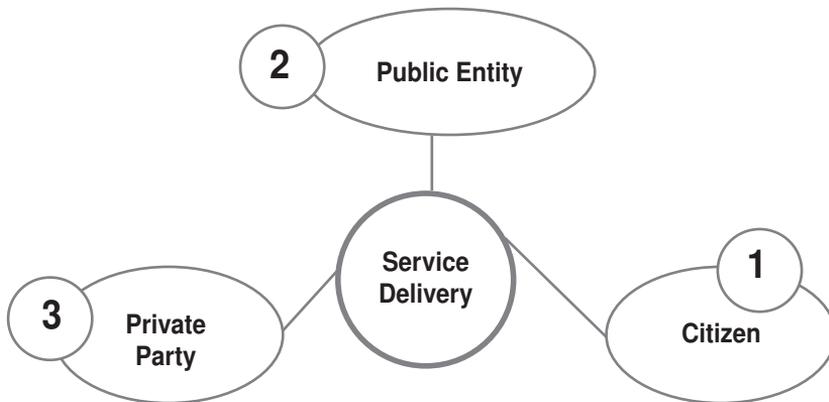


citizen as the customer at the heart of traditional procurement and PPP governance framework design, and implementation of procurement mechanisms for such PPPs.

The revised theory is further aligned with the tenets of local efficiency as advanced by Smoke (2015). By empowering citizens at the grassroots level in the governance of procurement and PPP projects, this study posits that there can be improved welfare and accountability of actions where citizens are involved.

The theory is different from Agency theory in that it provides a holistic approach to engaging citizens. Agency theory is marred by the limits of representative democracy. By positing the citizen at the forefront of co-production and delivery of service, the principal and agents would be reminded of their delegated role in governance of matters that affect the citizens as the 'core principal' in the relationship. This would assist to reduce or eliminate the limitations of conflicting interests that arise in representative democracy. This calls for the design of a new framework that accommodates the interests of citizens.

**Figure 1: Citizen-Principal-Citizen**



Source: Developed researchers

In Figure 1, the study also acknowledges that while the Agency theory has been adopted in the governance of PPPs, it provided guidance in the management of PPPs, and this study found it inadequate to resolve challenges existent in the governance and practice of PPPs in times where citizens felt that the principal has not ably represented their interests.

## **Citizen Principal and Agency Theory**

The proposed Citizen Principal Agency Theory has its roots in sociology. In this theory, we argue that citizens, as social actors, would benefit from actions they participate in, as advocated by scholars such as Vigoda (2002) and Bovaird (2004). In the Citizen Principal Agency theory, the model of engagement is based on the view that by engaging citizens in the governance of

procurement process and collectivistic behaviours, greater satisfaction is experienced than dual and perceived discriminatory relationships between the State agencies (principals) and suppliers (SPVs). Discrimination is deemed to exist in relationships that are self-serving and do not necessarily represent the interests of the citizens as the consumers of services procured using traditional methods. This view is upheld by McClelland (1991) who argues that an achieving society is one where its members are involved in decisions for actions that affect its society. In public policy, it is argued that active participation of citizens results in success of public programmes (Vigoda, 2002; Vigoda-Gadot & Mizrahi, 2008). The process of public participation in the community is to strengthen their input in the government programme.

The theory is underpinned by other theories such as the public participation theory in which “public participation in governance involves the direct or indirect involvement of stakeholders in decision-making about policies, plans or programs in which they have an interest” (Series, 2018). While citizen participation has traditionally been guaranteed through collective elected leaders, it is still a divergent viewpoint. For instance, Quick *et al.* (2016) and Torbing *et al.* (2016) assert that public participation does not only exist through broad networks that often include public agencies but it should not be exclusive to them.

At the core of the Citizen Principal Agency theory is the idea that the principal is the citizen while the agent is the state and agencies that are mandated to deliver services to citizens who are also customers of public services.

The theory promotes citizen-centric governance. This is consistent with views of Alford, (2002); deLeon, Linda & Denhardt (2000); Denhardt & Denhardt (2000); Richter, & Cornford (2008); Mizrahi, Vigoda-Gadot & Cohen (2009); and Needham (2006) who asserts that citizens enjoy greater use from public goods and services where they are consulted and involved as participants in democratic collective decision-making on matters that affect their welfare.

It is also further argued by Alford (2002) that new state reformers like Reagan, Thatcher, Blair and his ‘Third Way’, Clinton’s ‘Reinventing Government’ have championed the view that the citizen should be positioned as the sovereign actor in all actions of government. By involving the citizen in the State’s co-production and co-service delivery agenda, governments can promote active citizenship as citizens are arguably increasingly concerned less with the consumption of material public goods and services values but rather the realisation of social, symbolic and normative ones as castigated by Alford (2002) and others such as Ahmed and Ali (2006).

Broadly, citizens should be recognised as the ultimate determinant voice about what the government and its agencies should do, expressed through processes, including governance, if the failure rates of PPPs are to be reduced in developing countries.

## **Barriers to citizen participation in public services delivery decision-making**

While existing studies and findings of the study recommend greater citizen participation in



processes for procurement and PPPs, a review of literature and empirical findings posit some barriers that may explain deficiency in citizen participation.

Most participants reveal that communications tend to be tailored to the interests of government acquisition processes and not the citizens' interest. However, some minority voices acknowledge that PAPs have been involved in processes such as explaining the scope and implications of energy projects on their livelihoods. Other participants indicate that they have been informed by project managers about criteria used for compensation, compensation procedures, timing for resettlement and geographical location for resettlements, where applicable.

Participants of the study further reveal that engagements with project managers of procurement and PPPs enable them to know what such administrators want to do at project implementation; things are different at times. For example, one PAPs by PPP project in the Eastern part of Uganda noted, "We know what they always want to do now but we cannot predict what they will do when the acquisition and development of energy project starts!"

From a project implementer's perspective, it is noted that while citizen engagement is vital, energy development projects require expertise that limits the extent to which citizens can be engaged. This view points to varying capacities of knowledge and experience. In theory, this development is confirmed by a critique of the Agency theory that presupposes the problem of information asymmetry relating to information imbalances between parties to relationships, as postulated in other studies by Ruostetsaari (2020). Applied in this context, public administrators that steer in the design and implementation of procurement and PPPs processes are more informed than the PAPs.

**Table 1: Disadvantages of Citizen Participation in Government Decision-making**

Disadvantages to Citizen Participants		Disadvantages to Government
Decision Process	Time-consuming (even dull) Pointless if decision is ignored	Time consuming
		Costly
		May backfire, create more hostility towards government
Outcomes	Worse policy decision if heavily influenced by opposing interest groups	Loss of decision-making control Possibility of bad decision that is politically impossible to ignore Less budget for implementation of actual projects

Source: Irvin & Stanbury (2004)

From Table 1, it can be deduced that while citizen engagement is justified in the public decision-making process, there exists some restraints for the citizen and government. Quite importantly, it can be deduced from studies by Irvin *et al.* (2004) that the process is time-consuming for citizen, government and opposing interests. Based on empirical findings, the study revealed that when the competence of citizens is deficient, it restrains the process of engagement.



A policymaker from a Ministry notes:

“You – referring to the researcher, come from a village, how many people out there understand PPPs? If you involve them in issues that they don’t understand, you will not get responses and end up delaying service delivery. The President is already complaining of low absorption of budget due to delay of procurement and PPPs. Do you want us to delay more through consultation?”

This view is consistent with earlier studies of Irvin *et al.* (2004) that argue that when citizens are engaged as participants in the decision-making process, execution of public service tasks may be delayed and also decision-making is dull as citizens’ competencies may be deficient for participation.

The study reveals that the bureaucrats in public agencies are usually more knowledgeable on legal, regulatory frameworks and exhibit higher technical competencies than the citizens. This finding is consistent with earlier studies of Ruostetsaari (2020) that acknowledge parity in knowledge and information bases between the principal and agent.

While citizen engagement is required within such frameworks, approaches to engage citizens have remained slim in such frameworks and thus citizen engagement to some extent has remained in documentary limbo.

From a private sector perspective, citizen engagement is a costly venture as it requires enormous investment. The media, at times, is also destructive, publishing negative stories to confuse the public with the objective of attracting business in the form of private sector players – what is referred to by a participant as ‘image cleansing’.

Based on this finding, it can be deduced that while it is the role of the state to engage citizens, private sector players are willing to voluntarily engage citizens in decisions that affect them but are constrained by the environment in which they operate.

It was also found out that some citizens are politically biased to initiatives of co-production and co-delivery of services through such procurement processes and PPPs. A pool of academics suggests that public administrators are to blame for this trend. Administrators are doomed to fail to deploy strategies to change this mindset. A policymaker notes that the government has put some channels in place such as the Uganda Media Centre, and sent politicians and administrators on radio and television talk shows to explain issues to citizens and seek views on such projects.

However, the respondent notes that while administrators have done a great job, their focus has turned political when they combine with politicians in such talk shows, recommending a shift in this approach from dual to single representation of interests when engaging citizens in such fora.

It is also further noted that the elected representatives (Members of Parliament) who should build competencies through awareness are not knowledgeable on some technical aspects and matters on which citizens should be consulted.

This assertion is consistent with view of the need to adopt enabling logic by Bovaird (2004)



and the view that citizens possess innovative ideas that can support improvement in service delivery (Kauzia, 2019: unpublished).

## Conclusions and implications for procurement and PPP policy and Practice

The study concludes by recognising that while the Agency Theory has guided the theory and practice of procurement and PPPs, it is insufficient to address the needs of citizens. We also note that making citizens' voices heard can result in better choice and public service delivery outcomes. This paper, therefore, advocates for the need to structure the voice of the citizen in procurement and PPP operations by adopting a proposed Citizen Principal Agency (CPA) model that brings the 'people first' principle in the acquisition process for nations. The model advocates for increased citizen participation in processes that deliver public services.

The success of the CPA model depends on the holistic approach to citizen involvement. To make this happen, we argue that while similar studies have advocated for a series of interventions on ingredients of success, we choose to adopt 9 Cs out of the 10Cs advocated for public participation by Steel et al (2019) in procurement and PPPs. While the 9Cs are cited as ingredients of success, we choose to adopt these Cs as principles that should guide citizen participation while implementing the Citizen Principal Agency model:

- Co-thinking (to identify the challenges and prospects of projects)
- Co-working (to achieve synergy effects in distributed teams)
- Co-learning (to adapt what worked in one place to another place)
- Co-creation (to create added value, developed together across the projects)
- Combinatorial innovation (to combine existing solutions in new ways)
- Co-ordination (to harmonise local and global initiatives)
- Co-operation (to overcome the limitations of a purely competitive economy and society)
- Co-evolution (to mutually catalyse activities and reach sufficient coherence and integration)
- Collective intelligence (to enable the wisdom of the crowd's effect)

We also recommend dynamic approaches to bring citizens to the core of the public participation process. While various varieties of participation have been championed and adopted, we propose the adoption of more dynamic approaches for citizen engagement:

Making public places centres of gravity for citizen participation activities. Public places are squares, churches, schools, football pitches, parks and triangles usually common in urban places. Experience shows that failure to utilise such public places to engage citizens has shifted their purpose to a place where revolutions to overthrow governments for maladministration. The evidence of such scenarios in Africa has been witnessed in countries such as South Sudan, Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, while in the Middle East, Syria and Lebanon have faced this shift. Reversing this trend is vital and this can be done by making public places gravity centres for citizen engagement.



Plugging into cyber space or digital spaces like social media platforms such as interactive websites, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp. This view is consistent with other scholars who have identified digitalisation as a 'game changer' (Seele & Lock, 2017). Various studies and surveys note that the pace of digital uptake is rising and becoming more diverse than ever. For instance, in transitioning and developing economies, constituted of youths aged below 35, are well conversant with the use of such digital platforms. Since PPPs are long-term investments that last 20-40 years, targetting such a population segment would be more appropriate since worldwide, this category of the population is spending at least 12 hours on a diverse social media mix. The approach has also been recommended by a number of scholars, as it is deemed to be more openly democratic and provides diverse opportunities for citizens to participate in decisions that affect them (Mann & Helbing 2017). The approach is further recommended as a building on the diversity of 'digital sustainability stakeholders' (Lock & Seele, 2017) and the promotion of participation in democracy (Khadzali, & Md Zan, 2019).

Putting Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at the frontier of citizen engagement. This study confirms that when NGOs, CSOs and press communicate, they tend to put the citizens' interests and welfare first.

Building competence of citizens for engagement will require that the PPP unit develops a programme to sensitive citizens as incompetent citizens may not engage on matters they do not understand and neither have competence in to engage.

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The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship or publication of this article.

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