

**RESEARCH PAPER****Effectiveness of Water Policy of Pakistan in Enabling Stakeholder Participation****¹Saadia Bano Hashmi * and ²Dr. Syed Waqas Ali Kausar**

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***Corresponding Author:** sadia.hashmi@numl.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

This paper studies the level of stakeholder participation in gauging the effectiveness of National Water Policy of Pakistan, 2018. Governance of water resources is dependent upon a proper implementation of the policy and is inherently linked with the stakeholder's inclusivity. There is a need to assess stakeholders' involvement in the governance of water sector in Pakistan. This exploratory research paper utilized qualitative approach; data was obtained using open ended interviews across the study population. Key findings of the paper indicate that although the National Water Policy of 2018 emphasizes stakeholder participation, there have not been any efforts to implement this by the authorities in charge. The study also found a distinct lack of awareness on part of the public, which is detrimental to the water sector. Stakeholder participation needs to be ensured by the water institutions. The populace needs to be educated about their role in water governance.

KEYWORDS Stakeholder Participation, Water Governance, Water Policy**Introduction**

In the arena of public policy formulation, there is a paradigm shift from state centric top-down approach to a more inclusive model; where public sector, private sector and not-for-profit organizations are equal stakeholders, and water sector is no exception to it (OECD, 2015). Water resources are under threat all over the world due to numerous other reasons, but poor water management is at the top of the list. It requires coordinated management strategies at all levels to overcome the challenges faced by the water sector. For effective water governance and smooth implementation of water policies, stakeholders' participation is a prerequisite, it also requires robust public and private institutions to strengthen this participation, to develop coordination among federal and provincial administrations, and to promote ties between public sector, private sector and civil society for the development of the water sector (Maheshwari & Pillai, 2004). In the words of Stoker (1998), governance itself is a participatory process where there is no absolute distinction between public and private sectors and every outcome is the product of various mutually inclusive actors. Adom & Simatele (2022) considered stakeholder participation a primary element of water sector reforms and an inevitable ingredient of comprehensive legislation and policies to manage water resources. According to an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report (OECD, 2015), besides other obvious benefits, stakeholder participation can help in better acceptance of governmental policies and building trust between public sector and the stakeholders.

The never-ending discussion between centralized and decentralized water management systems is still going on, with the proponents of each contesting with the other, whereas the international water frameworks stressed upon the need to take the stakeholders on board at all levels of water management and governance systems. Despite their clear guidelines, many countries across the world rarely take stakeholder participation

into consideration, the gender aspect remains unnoticed along with the inclusion of marginalized groups (Adom & Simatele, 2022).

As water is a public good having an effect on the lives of the stakeholders, they should be allowed to play a direct role in water related decision making. Their engagement in the decision/policy making can facilitate sustainable water supply and better management of water resources (Langsdale & Cardwell, 2022). As noted by Howell et al. (2023) benefits of stakeholder participation are manifold as; it helps managers to identify problems, provide better solutions, and suggest ways to improve participation.

Quick & Bryson (2016) has explained the concept of public participation in governance in great detail. According to them, in the process of governance, relevant stakeholders; directly or through their chosen representatives, get involved into the decision-making process in their field of interest and it is the basic fundamental of modern democracies. Public participation can be in the form of a town hall meeting, citizen survey, public hearings, or any other type of consultation but the main purpose is to engage stakeholders in the management and the type of engagement depends upon the situation, category of stakeholders and objectives of participation. It is an established fact that stakeholder participation assists policy makers to develop policies in line with the requirements of the citizens, resulting into the ownership of the policy by the public and in the context of water policies, stakeholder participation is mentioned in the literature as a factor that may also accelerate the process of policy implementation (Barbosa, et al. 2016). However, for developing countries it remained a challenging task to engage stakeholders into the policy-making process (Salamanca-Cano & Durán-Díaz, 2023). As Pakistan is also struggling to break the shackles of poverty and come out of the league of underdeveloped countries, stakeholder participation in the development as well as implementation of policies is a prerequisite.

The first ever water policy of Pakistan was formulated in 2018. The government claimed the credit for making a policy which was unanimously agreed upon by all the four provinces. On the other hand, the critics of the policy criticize it on the account of being too ambitious, it has around thirty-three objectives but the strategy to achieve these objectives is not given.

To ensure stakeholder participation the National Water Policy of 2018 (NWP 2018) states, *“An enabling environment shall be created for active stakeholders’ consultation and participation at all levels and in all aspects of the water resources including ..., domestic water supply, ..., waste-water treatment and pollution control.”*

Furthermore, objective no. 2.19 of the NWP 2018 is about *“Encouraging beneficiary participation and public private partnerships”*, and regarding the availability of ground water, the policy states, *“The transition of SCARP tube wells in the public sector to the private sector shall be expedited leaving development of fresh groundwater entirely to the private sector, as a local resource.”*

Despite of these policy objectives to engage stakeholders at all levels of decision making in the water sector and to ensure their participation, there is yet to devise a strategy to involve stakeholders in the water governance at all levels.

To address the grave challenges of scarcity, pollution, inefficient allocation, and unequal distribution of water in Pakistan, effective stakeholder participation is mandatory. The main purpose of this study is to assess the level of stakeholder participation in the management of water sector in Pakistan after the National Water Policy of 2018. To attain this objective, this research is focused on the research question: How effective is the water policy of Pakistan in enabling stakeholder participation?

Literature Review

The term “stakeholder” can be defined as any entity having an interest or a role to play in the process of decision making, it could be an institution, an individual or a group of individuals (Hutahaean, 2016). In the words of Maheshwari & Pillai (2004), water stakeholder can be an individual or a group of individuals affected by the project, or decisions related to water resources and who, in turn, has the ability to affect future course of action. Stakeholders can be any entity having an interest in the policy, as different stakeholders may have different interests in the decision-making process, therefore their participation plan should be made according to their relevant interests.

According to Langsdale & Cardwell (2022), stakeholders are the ones who can influence a decision or a course of action. They may be national, regional, and local governing bodies, private sector entities, academic bodies, religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, members of civil society, local communities, and the citizens. An OECD report (2015) listed “governments, citizens, end users, private actors, donors and financial institutions, as well as infrastructure and service providers”, as having stakes in the water policy. The following figure presented the key stakeholders of water governance, identified by United Nation Development Program (UNDP, 1997).

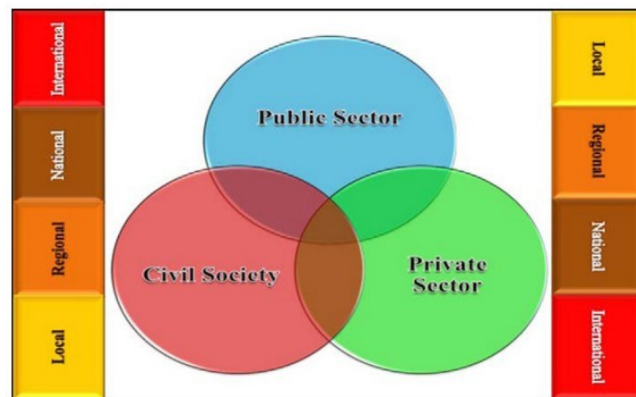


Figure:1 Source: Adom & Simatele (2022)

Going into further detail De Vries (2006) included businesses and chambers of commerce, non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), media, religious bodies, and political parties into the list of stakeholders of a policy. From public sector employees’ federations and parliamentarians can also be considered as stakeholders.

During early 2000s, the notion of public participation had gained popularity and had become a regular attribute of policy making process (Quick & Bryson, 2016). In the beginning, the term “citizen participation” was in practice which was replaced with “public participation”, because the term “citizen” does not include the participants who are outside the realm of formal citizenship status, and it also disregards other categories of participation (Quick & Bryson, 2016). The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) also favored the term “public participation” where public could be any entity outside the realm of the government, several other terms can be used in this regard such as “stakeholder participation”, “stakeholder engagement” etc. (Langsdale & Cardwell, 2022).

The stakeholders' engagement in water governance is a “range of political, institutional and administrative rules, practices, and formal and informal processes designed for decision-making and policy implementation” (Adom & Simatele, 2022). According to Chifamba (2013), stakeholder engagement in water governance enables them to get hold of the projects and decisions in the areas of their interest in the water sector. In return it holds them accountable for the results of their decisions and actions. Stakeholder participation in

water sector can be further categorized into two, normative engagement and functional involvement. Normative engagement flourishes in the conditions of enhanced democracy and fundamental human rights, whereas functional participation involves policy implementation, capacity-building, and learning (Adom & Simatele, 2022).

Thurston, et al. (2005) were of the view that public participation can be both, a one-time event or a time bound technique, for example, focus group discussions, citizen juries, task force or town hall meetings, but it should be considered as an ongoing process that starts before the application of the technique and continues during and after that technique is applied. In the developed world, due to their befitting organizations and support systems, stakeholder participation is a common norm, whereas in many developing countries it is still in its initial phase. However, the international organizations like UNICEF, World Bank, World Health Organization, and others, are helping these countries to promote stakeholder participation. Moreover, non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have also been very active in promoting stakeholders' engagement. Now a few countries have devised their own indigenous stakeholder participation models (Bdour, et al., 2008).

As governance is about the management of processes; formal as well as informal, concerning the whole community, it takes place through wide networks of stakeholders. The conventional boundaries of government are merged with the networks of public sector, private sector, nonprofits, businesses, civil society, and others (Quick & Bryson, 2016). The presence of multiple actors and a variety of interests in the field of public policy has complicated the process. The conventional democratic theory claims that when a citizen casts his vote in elections, he delegated his right of decision making to his nominated representative in the parliament. Whereas the theory of modern democracy states that the citizens' rights cannot be delegated entirely to their representatives, and they still possess the right to influence a policy decision as a stakeholder (Hutahaeen, 2016).

According to Langsdale & Cardwell (2022) the concept of stakeholder participation, since its inception some 50 years ago, has passed through many phases. In the beginning efforts to include stakeholders backfired because it was not clear that how they could be engaged in a meaningful manner. It was also not clear whether to take participation as an initiative or an intervention, where the former is a means to an end and the latter as an end itself. However, in both the cases emphasis is on how to engage stakeholders in the best possible manner in decision making that ultimately has a bearing on their own lives (Thurston, et al. 2005).

The Ladder of Citizen Participation by Arnstein (1969) has discussed, for the very first time, the number of ways in which citizens can participate in decision making, it ranges from "no power" (manipulation) to "citizen control". Rest of the six stages lie between these two extremes. Later on, the International Association for Public Participation Spectrum of Engagement (IAP2, 2018) presented five levels of stakeholder engagement; "inform" to 'empower". This tool is very useful in planning engagement strategies and has been used by numerous international organizations.

The "Power Grid" of stakeholders by Hutahaeen (2016), also classified stakeholders according to their level of interest in a specific policy and the power they hold.

		Interest	
		Low	High
Power	Low	Satisfied	Managed
	High	Monitored	Known

Figure 2: Power/Interest Grid Source: Hutahaeen (2016)

According to this grid, stakeholders with high interest but little power can be managed and could be a good source for lobbying. Contrary to that, stakeholders possessing great power, but little interest can be made patron or supporter of the policy. This power/interest grid analysis can be helpful in categorizing the stakeholders as cooperative, influential, engaged, receptive, and stubborn etc.

Stakeholder mapping and management matrix by Johnson et al. (2005) is quite similar to this power/interest grid of Hutahaean (2016), according to them stakeholders with high level of both interest and power are actually the main players, whereas minimal effort is required to be invested on the stakeholders with low interest and low power. Rest of the two categories lie in between the two extremes. Maheshwari & Pillai (2004) also suggested a four-level stakeholder relationship model, their four stages are uninformed, compliant, responsive, and engaged. Through stakeholder analysis, varied interests of the stakeholders can be analyzed in relation to the specific policy and the most influential stakeholders can be identified (Hutahaean, 2016).

Material and Methods

Study Design

To bridge the gap between stakeholders and the management, and to enhance participation in the public policy making process, Bdour et al. (2008) presented a framework of participation. That study was conducted to analyze public participation in air pollution assessment in Jordan. The framework suggested that civil society and public sector should align their knowledge and skills for the sustainable development of a country. The main focus of the framework was on the development of human resource of organizations, strong organizational architecture for implementation of policies, formulation of policy processes to enhance legislation, building of knowledge by education and training, and creating demand for public participation through public awareness.

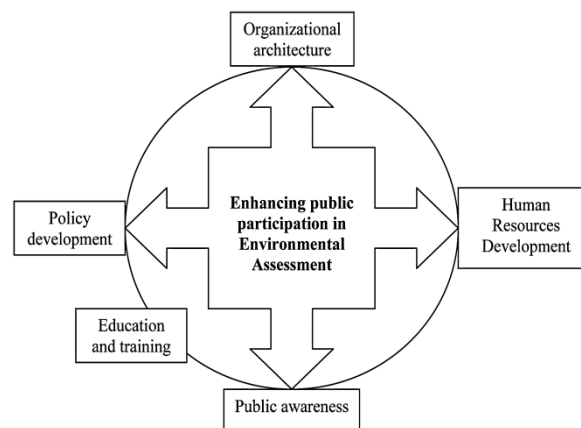


Figure 3: Conceptual framework for the enhancement of public participation. Source: Bdour et al. (2008)

This exploratory research employed this framework by Bdour et al. (2008) to suggest ways to enhance public participation in the water sector of Pakistan. The study used qualitative technique based on primary as well as secondary data. The primary data was gathered through in-depth interviews of the prominent stakeholders of the water sector in Pakistan and a focus group discussion with common citizens. This method was used to investigate respondent's perception and knowledge about stakeholder participation during and after the process of policy making and its implementation. The secondary data consists of review of available literature in the form of book chapters, journals, articles, government gazettes, print and electronic media and previous studies on the research theme.

Data Collection

To collect the qualitative data, open ended interview guide was prepared to gather information about:

- Stakeholders involved in the formulation and implementation of National Water Policy 2018 of Pakistan.
- The participation level of water users in policy making and its implementation.
- The role of water policy in ensuring stakeholder participation in the governance of water sector.

Fourteen in depth interviews were conducted, the interviewees included parliamentarian, government officials of the Ministry of Water Resources, WAPDA, PCRWR, water experts, members of civil society and NGOs, and a representative of international donor agency. Interviews were recorded with the prior consent of the respondents and then transcribed in the written form. A focus group discussion with twenty participants from the general public was also held to record their point of view on the subject matter. The respondents for interviews were selected by using snowball technique; one participant referred the next on the basis of their relevance with the research topic, whereas participants of focus group discussion were selected by random sampling.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using NVivo software. Major themes were identified from the responses of the informants regarding the stakeholders involved in policy making and its implementation, the participation level of water users in policy making and its implementation process and the role of water policy in ensuring stakeholder participation in the governance of water sector. The findings are presented in the following sections based on the themes of the study. Figure 4 depicts themes and sub themes of the study.

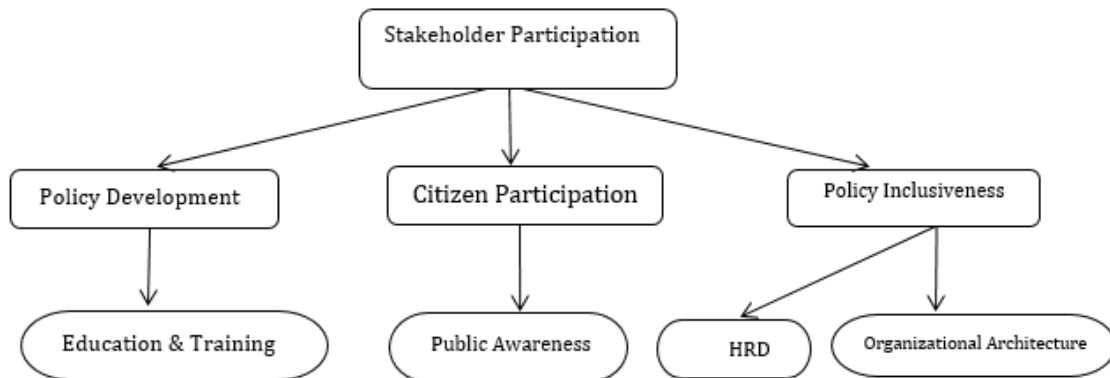


Figure 4: Thematic framework of the study

Results and Discussion

The world is stressing upon the need to include all the relevant stakeholders of water sector in the decision making and implementation process, unfortunately there are no formal user committees, policy committees or community boards in Pakistan to safeguard the interests of the end users, therefore other than the public sector, stakeholders include water users (citizens), water experts, members of civil society and academia and non-profit organizations.

Theme #1: Policy Development

Policy development requires creation of such systems that lead to improvement in present policies (Bdour et al. 2008). In the context of public policy participation, that improvement means taking all the stakeholders on board while taking policy decisions.

During the process of data collection for this research, it was learnt from the informants that during the formulation process of NWP 2018, all the provinces (their irrigation departments and additional chief secretaries), IRSA, WAPDA, PCRWR, Pakistan Engineering Council and one or two local bodies were consulted, however, representatives of CDA complained that MoWR consulted CDA when making policies but did not include CDA projects into the final draft.

Responding to the query about stakeholder involvement in the policy making process, an informant recalled that during his tenure at NDMA, it was decided that local communities, CBOs, NGOs, and civil society should be involved in the projects and structures. During the floods of 2010, small groups with CBOs and NGOs were created to resolve the issues of local effected communities but that was the only incident. He was of the view that government does not want to involve non-governmental stakeholders in policy making or even in implementing the policies as the government cannot pressurize them. Many NGOs were forced to leave, and many have left the country due to non-cooperation of the public sector, on the other hand civil society also does not want to be involved because of the stringent attitude of the public sector.

Sub Theme: Education and Training

For an all-inclusive policy process, literature (Bdour et al. 2008) suggests that tools and techniques involved in the process needs overhauling. In the context of Pakistan, major tool that needs polishing is the participation of relevant stakeholders, which is a missing link at the moment.

Informants stressed upon the need to educate policy makers on the importance of stakeholder participation, policy should be inclusive of gender aspect also. An informant added that academia has done remarkable job in the field of water related research and they have plenty of data ready at hand, but the government never utilized that data in the decision-making process, particularly in the case of arsenic and fluoride in the underground water. This mindset of government officials can be altered by imparting them with current education and training techniques which revolve around the ways to include stakeholders in the policy formulation process.

Theme#2: Citizen Participation

During the United Nations Water Conference in Mar de Plata in 1997, it was recommended to the countries to involve water users in the affairs of water sector; citizens should be allowed to participate in the management as well (Salamanca-Cano & Durán-Díaz, 2023). Likewise, responding to the question of citizen's participation, an informant also agreed that policies need to represent the people of Pakistan uniformly, people affected need to be the part of the process, but he confessed that unfortunately domestic users had no representation at the level of policy making, however, some famous writers or public figures and representatives of the farmer association were invited but it was just for show-off purposes, they were also not taken fully onboard.

Sub Theme: Public Awareness

By public awareness Bdour et al. (2008) meant that public should be trained in such a manner that they can put forward their demands in front of the people involved in policy

making, so that the resultant policy addresses their concerns. In this way, they can also participate in the policy affairs.

Findings of the focus group discussion revealed that citizens or end users of water were not aware of any community participation taking place during the policy making process. They even complained that the authorities do not listen to their water related grievances and have never addressed their concerns. In Pakistan, unfortunately people are not aware of their water rights and the role they can play in the formulation of policies, which is evident from the responses of interviewees and the participants of focus group discussion.

To demonstrate different levels of participation of citizens in decision making process, Arnstein's (1969) presented a ladder of citizen participation. The analysis of this ladder shows that in Pakistan we are still in between the stage of "Non-participation" and "Degrees of tokenism". To enhance the participation, a system based on devolution of power is required to involve grass root level in the decision-making process as well as implementation of those decisions.

Theme # 3: Policy Inclusiveness

From the interviews of the people related to the water sector and review of available documents, it is revealed that the NWP itself has stressed upon the need of stakeholder participation in the decision-making process as well as the implementation of these decisions, but its real time application is little to none.

The literature is cognizant of the fact that keeping people out of decision-making process creates tensions in the whole process of governance. But at the same time, it is a great challenge to include a wide range of interests of the marginalized segments in the decision-making process. That is why, public participation sometimes is just "consulting" with the stakeholders to gather their input and giving them an opportunity to express themselves (Quick & Bryson, 2016).

An informant, while discussing the reasons for a weak service sector in Pakistan, mentioned that provision of services is not the duty of public sector. The government just needs to regulate the water sector; government can issue licenses for water supply and establish the framework of the rules of business which specify the quality, quantity, source of water etc., the responsibility to supply water can rest with the private sector. Although there is public service model in water supply in some advanced countries where the government is managing everything by itself, but those governments work with responsibility and make sure that things run efficiently, unfortunately that is not the case in Pakistan. The rest of the world is moving towards public-private partnership; private sector provides the service and public sector just regulates it. Ironically, a sitting minister, in an interview, while putting all the responsibility on private sector to engage in social welfare programs, was reluctant to discuss the efforts made by the government to engage private sector in the delivery of services.

Sub Theme: Organizational Architecture

Organizational architecture implies transformation of policy implementation bodies by adopting modern practices of inclusive implementation (Bdour et al. 2008). Policy Implementation structure in Pakistan also needs to move towards all-inclusive patterns of implementation because at present they are trapped in times old rigid practices and are not ready to accept private sector or the stakeholders as an equal partner. An informant, while discussing the reasons for not involving stakeholders, said that the government does not want to lose its power, it wants to keep law and policy making power and their implementation with itself and keep the private sector and other stakeholders out of it.

Whereas water should be considered as a business proposition and important stakeholders should be taken onboard because investment, development and management etc. need private involvement/investment. The private sector is an emerging sector and can provide resources and the requisite technology to better manage the water sector.

Furthermore, it was blamed by an informant that policies are made by simply picking up any policy of a developed country and tailoring it a little bit according to our requirements. Whereas, for sustainability of the processes, stakeholders are required to be taken on board right from the beginning. On the other hand, commenting on the integrity of stakeholders in Pakistan, he further added that the stakeholders in Pakistan have been diluted now a days, line between the government and civil society are blurred. When an official retires from the government, he becomes member of the civil society just because he knows how the government works, how to get funds or to get their plans approved. The stakeholders are no more genuine, the mindset is to perpetuate the elite capture, nobody is committed to their cause or ideology. That is also suggested by Weber (1958) that too much deliberation with influential stakeholders, such as industry and financial institutions will make the management vulnerable (Quick & Bryson, 2016).

Sub Theme: Human Resource Development

Skill development of administrators of water organizations is another prerequisite of public participation. Beside time and money, participation requires skilled management so that they can indulge in meaningful participation (Quick & Bryson, 2016).

In addition to that, members of the civil society also require understanding of the subject matter because they have to indulge in technical discussion with the stakeholders and lack of qualification on their part can hinder water policy implementation. 'Stakeholder engagement' for just getting information and 'stakeholder participation' where they contribute to the decision-making process are two different concepts (Barbosa et al. 2016).

Responses of the informants of this study revealed that inflexible attitude of the water sector managers in Pakistan keeps the valuable stakeholders at bay and this gap can be filled by bringing in international best practices.

Realizing the importance of stakeholder participation, it is proposed by an informant to bring development partners like UN Women, UNDP, UNESCO, UN Habitat, UNICEF etc., together under MoWR, they should be briefed about NWP 2018, its implementation framework, national water conservationist strategy, and its long, short, and medium term targets and given an opportunity to select any area of their choice and collaborate on it. It can solve many problems of the poor and also bring in more funding. In addition, there should be community-level engagement also because without involvement of the community, water cannot be managed. But this suggestion did not materialize due to stubborn attitude of the officials.

The NWP 2018 did mention about the involvement of private sector in the water service delivery, but it is not yet practiced. According to the NWP, a national water council was meant to be formed which was required to have five members from the private sector but so far, they have not been decided. The reasons quoted for such lapses is the hardline behavior of the public sector.

Analysis of the data revealed that if we want to promote stakeholders' participation in the water sector, there is a dire need to work on all the five dimensions of the Bdour et al. (2008) framework. First and foremost, is the capacity building of the managers of the water organizations so that they can facilitate the stakeholders in the policy formulation as well as its implementation process. At present, it is evident from the responses of the interviewees that government officials and policy makers in Pakistan are reluctant to involve

stakeholders in the process because they do not want to share their power. Second is the transformation of networks involved in policy implementation, which is called as enhancement of organizational architecture by Bdour et al (2008). The networks responsible for policy implementation, often called as street level bureaucrats, share the same mind set as of policy makers, and are not ready to share their authority with others. Third is improving the mechanism of policy making process, because at present policies are made without taking other stakeholders on board, as disclosed by the informants of the study. Fourth, creation of knowledge through training for improved policy tools. Last but not the least, creating public awareness to promote public participation for the sustainable development of the water sector. It is quite clear from the data that public is not aware of their rights and their role in the policy making process. David Easton (1965) in his famous system theory of policy making suggested that public demand ultimately turns out into the proposed policy but in case of Pakistan public remain oblivious to the process and even hesitate to put their demands in front of the policy makers.

Conclusion

The literature supports the fact that stakeholder participation is a prerequisite to address all the serious challenges of water sector. It can be helpful in building stakeholder's trust on the public sector and create an atmosphere where citizens can better accept the governmental policies. It also helps managers in identification of problems and to provide their solutions.

After a long seventy-one years of its independence, the government of Pakistan finally succeeded in formulating the National Water Policy of Pakistan in 2018. Besides many other ambitious objectives of the policy, promoting stakeholder participation in all aspects of the water sector is one of them. This study was intended to explore the efficacy of NWP in promoting stakeholder participation in water related decision making and implementation. In this qualitative study, fourteen semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the prominent stakeholders of the water sector. The interviewees included government officials from policy making and water distribution and managing organizations, water experts, members of academia, non-governmental organizations, the civil society, a parliamentarian and a representative of an international donor agency. A focus group discussion with common citizens was also held to record their point of view on the subject matter.

It was observed during the course of this study that the authorities failed to implement the National Water Policy 2018 of Pakistan in its true letter and spirit because of non-acceptance of the stakeholder approach. Despite the fact that the national water policy encourages stakeholder participation, the interpretation of the responses of the interviewees disclosed that the government is not ready to engage stakeholders in the whole process of policy making and its implementation, whatever consultation made during the formulation phase is not fully incorporated in the final policy draft. Hence the study has achieved its objective of assessing the level of stakeholder participation after the NWP 2018 and have obtained the answers to the research question.

It was also revealed that common people are not aware of any public participation at any level in the water related decision making. They only know where to complain when there is no water supply at their homes, this is the most they can do, they are oblivious to the concept of public participation in water management. There is a need to take stakeholders on board, otherwise the claims to inclusiveness and transformation in the water sector will remain slogans only.

This paper lays the groundwork in studying stakeholder participation in effective implementation of the water policy. However, the extent and the time frame of said participation needs to be researched further. Further research is also required to be carried

out to assess Who, How, and When of the participation process. “Who” question relates with the nature of stakeholders; as it is already discussed in the article that there are multiple stakeholders of water sector and inclusion of all could be detrimental, for example big landlords, agriculturists and even industrialists have their own vested interests and they would like the policy to serve their interests. “How” is concerned with the type of participation and it depends upon the answer to “Who” question, because the nature of interaction varies with different stakeholders. In this context De Vries (2006) quoted an example from Netherlands where municipalities often initiate participation in the form of city-talks with citizens, think tanks comprising of the experts of the field, quality panels with multiple stakeholders on board, citizen advice circles, political consultations, council meetings in the city hall, or on the location meetings, and sometimes right to put items on the agenda is given to the citizens. Answer to “When” needs to identify the time frame; whether it would be a consultation prior to the policy making process or practical involvement of the stakeholders throughout the policy making process.

Recommendations

As it is evident from the findings of this study that the NWP 2018 has not been fully implemented on ground, it is recommended that the policy should be executed by taking all the concerned stakeholders on board. The stakeholder participation should be ensured in making any amendments in the policy or drafting a new policy in the future. For effective stakeholder participation, they need to be educated about their role in the policy process.

The government may follow the international best practices to engage the stakeholders in policy debate. The International Association for Public Participation Spectrum of Engagement (IAP2, 2018) has presented five levels of stakeholder engagement; “inform” to ‘empower”. This tool is very useful in planning engagement strategies and has been used by numerous international organizations. This spectrum can also be used by the government to devise a strategy to engage particular stakeholders.

The participation technique should be evolved according to the nature of the participants, for example focus group discussions, citizen juries, task force or town hall meetings, but it should be considered as an ongoing process that starts before the application of the technique and continues during and after that technique is applied.

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