A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON THE EVALUATION OF CORPORATE FEEDBACK PRACTICES IN MUNICIPALITIES AS A CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PRACTICE

Asst. Prof. Miray ÖZDEN (Ph.D.) iD

ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the 2000s, Internet use has led to an increase in scientific interest in e-participation applications, which are defined as online participation. Feedback applications receive comments from users, listen to complaints, or present suggestions on process design regarding available services. Here, "Write to us", "Online Chat", "Like or Dislike Buttons," and "Comment Sites" are applications designed to obtain feedback. It is important to understand how these applications work and how the obtained data are stored and interpreted in terms of determining the level of interaction between municipalities and citizens. First, citizen participation and e-participation, one of the participation methods, are explained conceptually. In this study, feedback applications on the websites of 11 District Municipalities, including Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality, and communication lines used for feedback will be examined, and interviews will be held with the administrative staff who collect and report the feedback, which will be evaluated in which aspects the feedback is reflected in the applications. In this study, feedback applications were tested, and the work of the information processing units was observed on-site, especially as a participant observer. Accessibility of feedback applications, ease of use, and response times of municipalities were determined, and advantageous aspects for participation were listed.

Key Words: Public Debt Crises, Southern EU Countries, NARX, Competitiveness Problems.

JEL Codes: H41, H70, O20.

1. INTRODUCTION

While citizen participation is based on freedom, equality, and individual values, these values are contradictory for government structures based on routinization, hierarchical authority, expertise, and depersonalization. This contradiction and conflict between the government structure and citizen participation causes difficulties in the implementation and maintenance of meaningful citizen participation. The traditional top-down hierarchical model of public administration limits citizen participation in management and decision-making processes. For this reason, it is necessary to regulate the institutional structure of public administration to promote citizen participation. Since local

governments are considered units closer to citizen participation at this stage, their practices in this process should be well analyzed. Citizens participate in the democratic process, in addition to traditional political participation practices, by voting, campaigning, applying to public officials (complaints/petitions), volunteering in civic activities, civic participation, participation in neighborhood-level practices, participation in social movements in groups, and serving on local government and advisory boards.

The fact that traditional participation methods have been replaced by new applications owing to the development of information and communication technologies has expanded the framework of e-participation applications, which are characterized as online participation. The fact that e-participation applications are designed on a more accessible basis within the framework of an understanding that takes into account the busyness of citizens in daily life has led local governments, which are defined as the closest units to citizens, to turn to these applications in their urban projects. In this sense, online applications have begun to be planned in detail, especially in EU member states and the USA, which have taken important steps in the field of local democracy.

Public institutions must know to what extent citizens benefit from the services provided, how much the services meet the needs of the citizens, and how they affect the quality of life of citizens to improve the services they offer and expand their coverage. This information, which defines how the services provided turn out, what they are good for, or how effective they are, helps both to account for how public resources are used and to measure how well set goals or commitments are achieved. Online applications are much more accessible at this stage, particularly when designing decisions to be made at the local level in accordance with the service. Online feedback applications, which bring citizens closer to the administration, strengthen the hands of municipalities at the point of institutionalization, and allow the reports to be recorded and reported.

For this purpose, first, the importance of citizen participation and the general view of online applications will be mentioned, and the institutional feedback applications of Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality and 11 District Municipalities, which are located in the research area, and the response rates and usability of WhatsApp communication line will be investigated, and the research findings will be discussed.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Cities have become an important political center with the rapid increase in urbanization and the development of urban population density. With the political role of cities, the demands and wishes of the citizens living in the city have started to increase, and they have shown a will to create platforms where they will have a say beyond general municipal services. The desire to be in a position where they can take an active role and be empowered, instead of being evaluated only as the part affected by the decisions, has entered into the urban rights demanded by citizens from administrators.

Participation is a civic practice that influences the functioning and decisions of local governments where people live. The practice of participation is an opportunity for citizens to influence and determine

the decisions to be taken as governed and affected parties. The practice in question has the feature of a right based on an understanding of democratic popular sovereignty and citizenship. Finally, participation aims to subordinate democracy and public administration to the sovereignty of the people by providing the opportunity for citizens living in the local context to have a say and determine the conditions and relationships that determine their daily lives. In this respect, the practice of participation not only allows and strengthens active citizenship as a 'public subject' in the country in which they live, but also offers the right to determine common life through democratic means (Göymen et al., 2014: 25).

Citizen participation started to gain importance with the development of deliberative and participatory democracy models to prevent the crisis of representative democracy and expand the field of participation, which is one of the basic principles of democracy (Kantar, 2020: 2178). While citizen participation generally means participating in elections or influencing decision-making processes in the national sense, it also includes the behavior of finding the power to influence the process related to the services and projects of their own city, which are of interest to them, at the local level. For this reason, the fact that participation can start at the local level is much more effective in spreading the culture and principles of democracy to the people. In modern political societies, beyond the adoption of political participation, the idea that a good citizen is a participatory citizen is widely accepted (Turan 1977: 67).

Citizen participation means that citizens take on a leadership role together with administrators and play an active role in making decisions and developing policies that directly affect their daily lives (Walsh, 1997:4). Citizen participation is the active participation of citizens in decisions to shape their own lives towards what they perceive to be a better situation. The urban planning process improves, management costs decrease, and the legitimacy of decisions taken by the administration increases with well-planned citizen participation mechanisms (Hassan, 2017: 250).

Citizen participation is considered the basic building block of democracy. Increasing citizen participation and expanding its content provides great advantages to administrators in increasing the representation of administrative and political institutions, expanding the political awareness of citizens, and monitoring the decisions of administrators (Thiel et al., 2017: 158). These reasons, emphasizing the importance of citizen participation, also revealed the need for administrators to be more careful while creating participation mechanisms.

Citizen participation emerged from the necessity of citizens not only being involved in a limited participation process during election periods but also taking an active role in the inter-election period. The objectives of citizen participation include communicating information, developing relationships, developing the capacity to take action, and maintaining or changing the conditions. Citizens can use varying amounts of force to handle these ends. Citizen engagement tools included community engagement, government agencies, meetings, questions, actions, and technical assistance. Citizen participation makes the management process transparent and accountable. Questioning and auditing the decisions taken by the administration can be made possible by the participation of citizens in the

participation process (Özden, 2020: 74-80). In this context, civic participation mediates the perception of citizens' influence on decision-making mechanisms by influencing their lives.

Citizen participation is not its own aim. In contrast, it aims to achieve goals that are broadly divided into two main categories. These objectives, on the other hand, are divided into two main headings as 1) targets related to participation in terms of democracy, 2) targets related to participation from a policy implementation perspective (COE, 2005: 13):

Table 1: Objectives of Citizen Participation in terms of Democracy and Policy Implementation

Goals for Democracy	Objectives for Policy Implementation
1. More participation means more democracy. 2. Greater participation is a goal in itself, because participation is positive in nature 3. Greater participation increases equity. 4. The development of an active civil society requires a greater degree of participation. 5. Providing more democratic legitimacy for local government 6. It gives participation a new and responsible brand of local citizenship.	1. Participation will increase the likelihood of implementation or sustainability of a new policy 2. Expanding participation helps to be more responsive to the needs of proposed beneficiaries, thereby increasing service user satisfaction by better aligning needs and policy solutions. 3. Participation increases support, legitimacy, transparency and responsiveness of a given policy 4. Participation enables local services to be of higher quality.

Source: Greer, P. et al. 2005: 13.

A strong democracy can be built with a system in which citizens themselves are at the center. Here, willingness, that is, voluntary willingness,   takes place as an active and continuous function of politics. Citizens are neighbors who offer common solutions to common conflicts and are connected to each other through their common participation (Barber, 1995: 272). A strong democracy is a motif that focuses on citizens in participatory processes and reveals their commitment to participation at this stage.

In a participatory model, citizens hope to be included in decision-making processes and involved in management because the inclusion and participation of citizens is important in terms of transforming the outputs into concrete. Thomas lists the following examples as advantages in his work, noting that citizen participation increases the effectiveness of administrators and makes their decisions more legitimate (Thomas, 1995: 180):

- When citizens and communities are involved in decision-making processes, the legitimacy of decisions is ensured, and it becomes easier to improve decision-making processes.

- The implementation of the decisions is also successful while ensuring the acceptability of the decisions, together with the citizens participating in the decision-making process.

- The fact that citizens both ensure participation and are in a position to help in service delivery ensures efficiency and productivity in services.

- Citizens' understanding of government programs increases; thus, citizens who follow the process and observe how decisions are made take a more objective view on the criticism of institutions and bureaucrats.

Citizen participation is the core of democracy practices, so the existence of citizen participation is characterized as a 'heartbeat' for democracy. Citizen participation, which has been portrayed so strongly, is, of course, a mechanism that needs to be strengthened. It is possible to summarize the importance of strengthening citizen participation as follows (Verba and Nie, 1972: 30-40; Orum and Dale, 2016: 333):

- Participation is a process in which goals are set, priorities are selected, and then resources are allocated to achieve those goals. This process assumes that goals and priorities reflect the needs and interests of the community, thereby maximizing the benefit of everyone in the community. In this way, prioritizing goals and objectives for the community through citizen participation allows members of the community to be governed by and for the people.

- On the condition that the citizen does not participate or is blocked for various reasons, democracy cannot fulfill its functions and its functionality ends.

- Participation is inherently important to democracy because it serves as a mechanism for communicating citizens' needs and aspirations to the state. Therefore, a democracy without participation fails to convey these wishes and demands and causes social tension to be minimized.

- Citizens' participation in the democratic process also contributes to the individual's sense of self-worth because when a person helps influence decisions that directly affect their lives; they gain a sense of self-worth and responsibility learning.

- If civic participation is increased—if political participation is understood—democracy becomes easier to understand, because then it can recognize who is involved and who contributes to the process; can be continued as part of the process.

- People's participation in the running of their public lives is not only good for the functioning of democratic institutions, but also good for the citizens themselves.

- In effect, participation creates citizens who would otherwise remain passive objects.

- Participation in public life provides an important way for people to develop and express their vision on what the nature of government should be.

- Participation provides a chance for people to develop their skills and gain an understanding of the validity of their own abilities.

- Participation can be transformative: it recognizes and activates people's potential abilities, which in turn helps achieve their goals.

- Participation is also a public and visible activity by its nature. It is something that people do together, and therefore the opportunity for people to act together, in harmony.

- Participation offers people the chance to share and test their ideas with others; a chance to receive feedback, including criticism of what they think, to reformulate and reframe them.

- Participation is a public activity that evokes a sense of the common will of the people.

3. ONLINE APPLICATIONS USED FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation is one of the most important building blocks of civil society actions. The effectiveness of democracy depends on the capacity of citizens to influence policy development and implementation processes. The recent enthusiasm of both citizens and administrators for citizen participation has revealed the fact that decision processes cannot be made effective without citizen participation; this enabled the diversification of the ideas put forward in order to ensure or enable a more effective participation.

Participation involves various approaches, processes, and tools. It is not possible to discuss a single method or a single participation tool because the participation process depends on the multiplicity of practices in practice. Different methods may be more appropriate in different situations. A participatory process should be designed so that citizens can express themselves comfortably and communicate directly with decision makers (Berman and Witzner, 1997: 1315). For this reason, principles and methods should be developed to guide the development of effective participatory processes.

Citizens' participation in decision-making processes occurs within the framework of different methods. These can be realized in the form of traditional methods such as participation in elections, party membership or campaigning, public meetings, or new approaches such as participation on the Internet, focus groups, and citizen advisory boards (Çukurçayır, 2012: 130). Transparency of the methods and tools used will increase the effectiveness of participation and ensure that the culture of participation becomes more widespread among citizens.

Various tools are used to ensure citizens' direct participation in decision-making processes. Fung distinguished between these mechanisms according to at least three criteria before determining the methods of participation. The first is the question of who will participate in the participation process and how the participants will be selected because some citizen participation mechanisms, such as public hearings, are open to all relevant stakeholders, and participants have the opportunity to make their own choices. On the other hand, participatory practices, such as focus groups or roundtables, which are selected using a specific sampling method, have fewer participants. The second criterion is related to

informing the participants and influencing decision-making processes. While some participation mechanisms are carried out only in the form of information meetings, which do not allow citizens to question the authorities, participants may have the opportunity to change their opinions. The last criterion is based on the impact of the outcomes obtained as a result of participatory mechanisms on decisions because citizen participation should be defined as a valuable process, regardless of whether it will lead to better public policies (Fung, 2006: 66).

Practices designed for citizen participation may differ according to the separation of the methods used as traditional and contemporary methods as a result of new developments or classification as active and passive participation according to the degree of citizens' ability to influence decision-making mechanisms.

Passive participation methods are the methods in which information is shared with citizens, but the citizens are least likely to influence decisions. Passive participation methods generally emerge when institutions aim to inform a large audience. Institutions generally prefer to use passive methods for the following purposes (Figueredo, 2005: 17-20):

- To support public hearings as part of citizen participation methods.
- To inform and train citizens on issues that the institution attaches importance to
- To increase the awareness of the citizens about certain projects and initiatives
- To transform the image of the institution in the eyes of the citizens into a positive one.

Active participation methods are created in order to increase the citizens' dialogue with the authorities, to facilitate the representation of the citizens in the participation process and to improve the interaction between the citizen and the administrator. Active participation methods are among the tools that should be taken into account by institutions that attach importance to citizen participation, aim to increase the legitimacy of the decisions taken, and want to reduce distrust in political processes, because long-term opposition to the decisions to be taken can be prevented since an environment of bilateral dialogue and negotiation is created here; citizen effectiveness can be increased. It is possible to summarize the existing active and passive participation methods in Table 2 (Özden, 2020: 97-113):

Table 2: Participation Methods in Local Governments

Active Participation Methods	Passive Participation Methods
Public Meetings	Official Broadcast Board
Citizen Advisory Boards	Press Release and Press Conferences
Participatory Budgeting	Printed Publication Materials Informing the Citizen
City Councils	Websites
Citizen Report Card	Media Ads

The widespread use of the Internet and the decrease in citizens' interest in traditional (offline) participation forms in this process has led to the emergence of new possibilities in terms of participation

mechanisms. This situation will bring the advantages of reducing information and exchange costs, facilitating collaborative and negotiation processes, and ultimately reviewing the decision-making stages at all levels of government (Lironi, 2006: 10).

E-participation is generally considered as online participation and expresses a process like traditional participation (offline) types. Here, in the decision-making stages; Conducting input research in drafting, information exchange in policy design and providing additional input complementarity, providing training and support in policy adoption and implementation, realizing information exchange in the policy evaluation process also constitute the dynamics of the e-participation process (Habermas, 1996: 17-18). Participation tools used by e-participation applications, unlike traditional participation tools, are considered as information and communication technologies. The use of these tools in the process leads up the activation of citizen participation and facilitates the citizens' access to the administrators (Al-Kodmany, 2000: 224).

The current assumption is that e-participation brings together "citizens with each other and their elected representatives" to create new possibilities for technology to improve public policy. The emergence of e-participation as a process that enables and supports democratic initiatives has brought about the inclusion of many related communication services resulting from the rapid growth and acceptance of the internet. The practice of online participation especially goes beyond traditional participation methods and is called as an attempt to break the silence of citizens in the process between elections (Wirtz, Daiser, and Binkowska, 2018: 2-3).

E-participation initiatives can be discussed over four main objectives in order to ensure citizen participation. These targets are stated as follows (Phang and Kankanhalli, 2008: 4-10):

- Information exchange (where citizens can participate freely and two-way exchange of information): The aim of sharing information of e-participation is to bring together decision-making mechanisms and citizens and to build platforms where ideas, suggestions and concerns can be expressed openly. Such efforts aim to strengthen communication and dialogue, both between the citizen-administrator and among the citizens themselves.

- Training and support development (selection and participation of participants from the target group, maintaining communication with participants over time): Efforts towards the training and support development goals of e-participation aim to inform citizens about the details (why and how) of the government's policy plans and to create a suitable negotiation environment for the implementation of the plans. The aim with this goal is to educate and raise awareness of the citizens about the problems that may arise in the process - budget, resources, etc. - by making use of the perspectives of different views on the process. Here, these techniques can be developed through citizen advisory boards or citizen panels, and citizens' support can be obtained.

- Completing the decision-making process (controlling the participation processes and arranging the decision-making stages of the relevant groups): In this goal of e-participation, it is aimed to create additional input, for example, to consult citizens' suggestions regarding the use of an empty land in the city. The opinions obtained here provide an additional option for the planners in the urban planning process to take these opinions into account (for example, the construction of a park or workplace on the land) to plan accordingly.

- Input research (developing mechanisms for the systematic collection and analysis of citizen inputs and collecting opinions objectively): This goal of e-participation aims to discuss and discuss the views that have not been discussed before and that have been put forward for the first time. As a result of the opinions emerging here, issues such as whether the decisions are appropriate and whether the preparation of the plans will be easier will be decided.

Participation tools used by e-participation applications, unlike traditional participation tools, are considered as information and communication technologies. The use of these tools in the process paves the way for the activation of citizen participation; makes it easier for citizens to reach administrators. These tools and examples are shown in Table 3 below (www.scottishhealthcouncil.org):

Table 3: E-Participation Tools and Usage Examples

E-PARTICIPATION TOOLS	CONTENT	EXAMPLE
Blogs	Informing and expressing personal ideas	Wordpress, Blogger, Tumblr
Micro blogs	A microblogging is a subset of blogs characterized by shorter messages that can be a text sentence, image or link. It includes processes such as informing, complaining, announcing, commenting, etc.	Twitter
Social network	It is one of the most suitable online tools for large member network and regular use. It is used for purposes such as chat, up-to-date information, exchange of ideas and reaching a large number of users..	Facebook, Google, LinkedIn
Digital applications	Apps can provide a means to give feedback or interact with a service in real time With the rapid increase in the use of smartphones.	Appmakr
Wikis and Collaborative Communities	A wiki provides a large number of scattered authors with the ability to create and edit content, normally in the form of web pages. Unlike a blog, wikis often have no defined owner or leader - so the content and structure of information grows organically to meet users' needs.	MediaWiki, Wikia, Wikispaces, PBworks, participedia
Content Communities	Websites for sharing videos, audio and images take advantage of the multimedia features of the internet to make information more interesting. This type of content can be used to deliver the same messages in a more compelling way, to encourage discussion and interpretation, or to campaign for change.	Youtube, Vimeo, Flickr, Instagram, Scoop.it, Pinterest

Internet forums and online communities	They are online platforms that cover various topics such as hobbies, lifestyles, cases, geographic locations. Allows registered members to start new conversations or reply to existing threads. It is used to create a negotiation environment.	Live Chat
Feedback Sites	They are areas of receiving comments from users, listening to complaints or presenting their suggestions on process design regarding existing services.	Write to us, Online Chat, Like or Dislike Buttons, comment sites

Source: www.scottishhealtcouncil.org, 2014: 12-37.

4. EVALUATING MUNICIPIAL FEEDBACK APPLICATIONS AS AN E-PARTICIPATION TOOL

Starting the public policy making process without citizen participation is considered as an incomplete step in today's modern world. Especially when it is considered in the context of local governments, the creation of urban plans and the development of projects related to environmental problems are developed depending on the existence of democratic practices -starting from the bottom-up, in which citizens will be included. Willingness and determination in these practices, in which citizens will be included, will increase trust in the administration in the eyes of the citizens, while providing the legitimacy of the decisions taken and increasing transparency.

Since local governments are the closest units where citizens can express their demands, they play a key role in placing the participation process on a successful basis. With the plans and programs they will prepare for participation, they can encourage citizens to the process, and they can also cause a decrease in the level of interest of citizens by avoiding encouraging practices. Therefore, local governments can facilitate the implementation of decisions by taking on various roles at different stages of the process. Of course, the existence or success of these practices may vary depending on the duties and authorities of local governments, their resources or the support to be given by the central government.

Local governments should have platforms and a mindset where citizens from all parts of the society can easily express themselves, be open to coalitions and different ideas, manage the negotiation environment between different competing ideas and have a conciliatory / mediator attitude when necessary in order for the participation process to be successful. In addition, they should be able to decide which decisions require full deliberation as a result of the accession processes or which decisions will be limited to information only; should be able to analyze all inputs and outputs related to the process well (Karyakov and Sisk, 2003: 30-31).

4.1. Aim and Purpose of the Research

The aim of the field study is to investigate whether the feedback methods used in ensuring the participation phenomenon, which is one of the important building blocks of democracy, are used at the local level in Tekirdağ province. In addition to the existing literature and research, it has been tried to measure whether dialogue environments with citizens are created in the decision-making process in Tekirdağ province and whether the methods related to e-participation in municipalities work effectively. The study covers Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality and 11 District Municipalities. In addition, the working area is limited to the feedback applications on the municipalities' website and the Whatsapp communication line.

4.2. Research Method

In the theoretical framework of the research, a literature review on citizen participation and e-participation was conducted by using secondary sources. In the second phase of the research, observation and case study, one of the qualitative research methods, were conducted. The feedback applications on the websites used by the municipalities and the Whatsapp communication line were used as complaints/requests and suggestions, and the process was followed up. On-site observations were made for the White Table Practices, which are used as a classical complaint mechanism in municipalities, and the results of the observations were noted and transferred to the study. In addition, information about how the process is followed up and how it is reflected in the decisions was obtained from 12 IT personnel responsible for the web feedback application, and the steps of the implementation were transferred to the study. The selection of IT personnel involved individuals who play a significant role in transmitting data from the feedback and suggestions sections, as well as the complaint section, to decision-makers. In particular, the sample was chosen with careful consideration of whether the issues raised by citizens using the application are being effectively conveyed to the higher-level decision-making authorities. The chosen IT personnel comprise individuals holding managerial positions or those authorized by the manager to oversee this process.
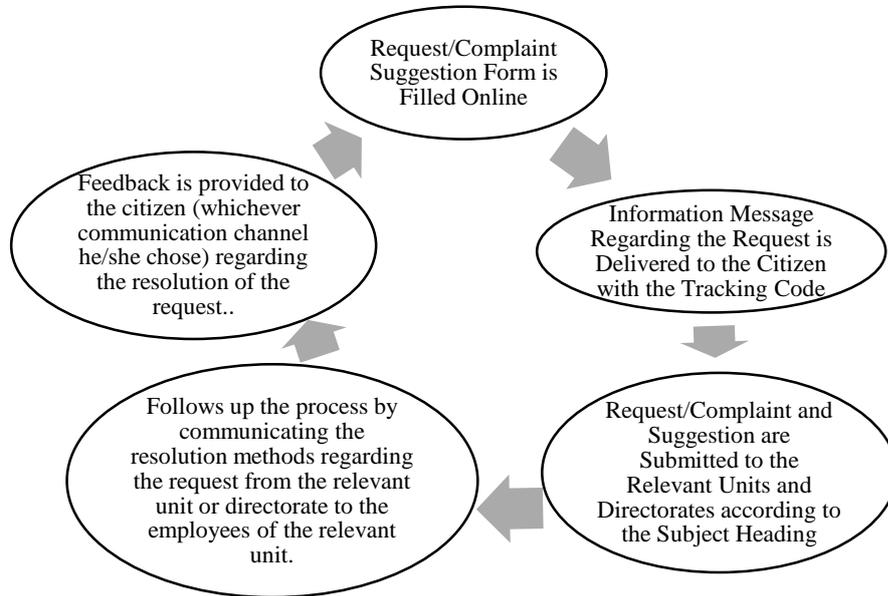
4.3. Research Findings

When the feedback menus on the websites of Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality and 11 District Municipalities are examined, it is seen that the Feedback applications are generally included in the "Request-Complaint Processes" menu. Here, some municipalities require user membership. Some municipalities have a message form in the Communication tab, and users are asked to fill out this form and share their requests and complaints. The fields to be filled in the feedback applications are as follows:

- Personal Information: Name-Surname, TR ID number, date of birth, etc.

- Address Information: District, neighborhood, street, road, building, etc.

- Contact Information: Email address, phone number, etc.

- Type: Information, request, complaint, suggestion or acknowledgment

- Upload photos

- File upload

- Privacy status: Whether the request is hidden or the request is open, etc.

- Method of receiving feedback: E-mail, SMS, telephone, written or in person hand delivery.

After the request/complaint or suggestion is made in the feedback applications of the municipalities, a tracking number is given to the users by the system, and users can inquire about their follow-up from the "Tracking Inquiry" section, and can monitor the status from this tab. At the same time, the following message is sent to users by both SMS and e-mail: "Your request has been processed to be forwarded to the relevant unit. You can track your request with your tracking number in the Tracking Inquiry section. The result of your request will be notified to you as soon as possible." When the process regarding the user request is concluded, the process is terminated by informing about the selected communication type. The feedback loop for this process is given in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Feedback Implementation Cycle on Municipal Websites

Municipalities prefer Whatsapp communication line with digitalization apart from the classic Request/Complaint and Suggestion menus. Beyond traditional feedback applications, the chat application makes communication between citizens and local governments more frequent, provides accessibility and provides instant feedback. Messages sent to the Whatsapp communication line are

answered from the first minute to be forwarded to the relevant units, and are recorded and finalized. The communication line, which is easier and more accessible for citizens, is also preferable in terms of getting an immediate reaction for returns. The problem here is that the requests and suggestions are difficult in terms of filtering and due to the inability to set up the parsing system correctly, the notifications to the relevant units are delayed and the result stages are prolonged.

Apart from these methods, "White Desk" practices continue for citizens who find traditional methods easier and safer, complaints, requests and suggestions are collected with a written petition, forwarded to the relevant units and documents are followed up. Here, an information message is sent to the phone numbers of the citizens, or the result of the process is conveyed by calling them.

In Tekirdağ, the processes of municipalities regarding feedback practices are given in table 5 below:

Table 5: Feedback Practices and Response Methods of Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality and 11 District Municipalities

Municipalities	Feedback Applications They Use on Their Web Sites	Do they use Whatsapp Contact Line?	Methods of Informing Citizens in Feedback Applications on the Web Site	Are Citizens Given Feedback via Whatsapp Contact Line?	Process Concluding Time	
					Feedback App.	Whtsp.
Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality	Request-Complaint Record	Yes	SMS (Request Inquiry)	Yes	1-3 workday	Instant
Süleymanpaşa[1] Municipality	Private Secretary e-mail address	Yes	Mail and SMS	Yes	1-3 workday	Instant
Çorlu Municipality [2]	Request and Complaint Processes	Yes	Mail and SMS	Yes	1-4 workday	Instant
Çerkezköy Municipality	Request and Suggestion Transactions	Yes	Mail	Yes	1-5 workday	Instant

---

[1] Süleymanpaşa Municipality records requests and complaints via Ak Resolution Center via written petitions and telephones and forwards them to the relevant units similar to the White Table Application.
[2] Çorlu Municipality requires membership for users.

Kapaklı Municipality	Contact Us	Yes	Mail and SMS (Request Inquiry)	Yes	1-7 workday	Instant
Ergene Municipality	E-Municipality Complaint and Suggestion	Yes	Mail, SMS, Written	Yes	1-7 workday	Instant
Saray Municipality	Request form in the contact menu	Yes	No feedback	Yes	-	Instant
M.Ereğlisi Municipality	Contact form in the contact menu	Yes	Message indicating that the message displayed on the information screen is taken into account.	Yes	1-7 workday	Instant
Hayrabolu Municipality	Online Consultation Menu	Yes	SMS and Mail	Yes	1-5 workday	Instant
Muratlı Municipality	The contact form in the contact menu	Yes	No feedback because form submissions failed	Yes	-	Instant
Malkara Municipality	Online Transactions Request and Complaint Notification	Yes	SMS, Mail or Written	Yes	1-7 workday	Instant
Şarköy Municipality [3]	Online Request-Issue Tracking	Yes	SMS, Mail and (Request Inquiry)	Yes	1-5 workday	Instant

* Both observation, case study and interview results were compiled and tabulated.

When Table 5 is evaluated, websites as institutional feedback applications are available in both metropolitan and district municipalities. Among these, Çorlu Municipality and Şarköy Municipality request private user membership and store data regarding their registered users. The fact that municipalities also have institutional applications is considered an advantage in facilitating direct access to citizens. Defined communication processes are followed by the relevant personnel and the mayor is informed about these issues and necessary solutions are created. In corporate feedback applications, the completion time of the work is usually in the range of 1-7 days, while in the Whatsapp application, feedback is received and the process is concluded within the same day.

---

[3] Şarköy Municipality also requires membership for users.

5. CONCLUSION

The fact that digitalization brings democracy and politics to electronic platforms makes it easier for citizens to access information and have a say in the process. Managers and citizens who want to save time in daily life in the modern world consider the creation of facilitating practices in this regard much more effectively. The fact that e-participation is now more actively implemented in management processes has revealed the necessity of creating mechanisms called content pages in a way that will increase the motivation of citizens.

Online applications are a process that should be evaluated and planned together with their advantages and disadvantages. Managers should always be careful about the obstacles that may arise in this process and take measures to remove these obstacles because saving time as a beneficial aspect of online participation provides a significant advantage to both administrators and citizens (in their daily routines) in online applications, rather than traditional participation methods. Evaluation of this advantage depends on the citizens' ability to clear the question marks about the process and feel safe. For this, each state, in order to prevent possible difficulties in front of e-participation should take steps to improve policy performance, such as engaging the general public, developing effective assessment tools, using powerful technologies, and developing participatory web applications and adopting sound principles to support implementation.

The feedback applications of the municipalities generally feature a digital form defined on the web system. Users share their personal information as well as their requests/complaints and suggestions with the relevant units of the municipalities by filling in the specified fields. Here, municipalities' design of feedback applications in a way that all users can understand, and their clearness and clarity will enable citizens to access the application easily. For this, municipalities can prepare a visual template of how the process works or by listing the usage stages; they can encourage citizens to interact on digital forms.

When the feedback applications of Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality and 11 District Municipality websites are evaluated together with the Whatsapp communication line, it has been observed that the notifications written on the Whatsapp communication line are answered more easily and instantly. In feedback applications, filtering stages of messages are carried out more easily because the relevant units are defined. Requests and complaints are forwarded to the relevant units and the follow-up of the process becomes easier. When the general use of the feedbacks of the municipalities is evaluated together with the opinions of the relevant personnel, all municipalities actively use the feedback applications on the website and follow the process. Apart from this, methods such as getting information by phone and writing a petition are frequently used.

In conclusion, the feedback applications utilized on municipal websites contribute to enhancing citizen participation, supporting a more democratic, transparent, and citizen-centered approach to governance. These applications strengthen communication between local governments and citizens,

ultimately contributing to more effective urban management. There are several key reasons why the feedback applications used on municipal websites hold significance in terms of citizen participation. Here are some important points:

- *Increased Citizen Engagement:* Feedback applications enable citizens to easily and quickly express their opinions, suggestions, and complaints. This encourages citizens to actively participate in local governance processes.

- *Enhanced Equality in Participation:* Digital feedback applications overcome physical participation barriers, encompassing a wider demographic. This ensures that seniors, individuals with disabilities, or those with busy schedules can equally benefit from participation opportunities.

- *Effective Communication:* Web-based feedback applications provide citizens with the capability to instantly convey their expectations and needs. This aids municipalities in responding promptly, thereby enhancing citizen satisfaction.

- *Data Collection and Analysis:* The data collected through these applications provides municipalities with a valuable resource to understand citizens' priorities, opinions, and complaints. This data can be utilized for policy-making and service improvement.

- *Transparency and Accountability: Feedback* applications allow citizens to gain closer insights into the operations of municipalities. Citizens can track the feedback provided and observe how decision-makers respond to these inputs.

- *Involvement in Decision-Making Processes:* Citizens' opinions and suggestions can be integrated into project and policy decisions by municipalities. This fosters more democratic and inclusive decision-making processes.

- Citizens' feedback empowers municipalities to gain insights into how they can improve their services. This facilitates the provision of more effective and citizen-centric services.

REFERENCES

Al-Kodmany, K. (2000) ''Public Participation: Technology and Democracy'', Journal of Architectural Education, 53(4): 220-228.

Barber, B. (1995) ''Strong Democracy'', M. Beşikçi (trans.) İstanbul: Ayrıntı Press.

Berman, J. and Witzner, D. J. (1997) ''Technology and Democracy'', Social Research. 64(3): 1313-1319.

COE (2005) ''Code Of Good Practıce For Cıvıl Partıcıpatıon In The Decısıon-Makıng Process'', Conference of INGOs, p. 9-14.

Çukurçayır, M. A. (2012) ''Political Participation and Local Democracy'', Konya: Çizgi Press.

Fıgueredo, J. C. (2005) ''Publıc Partıcıpatıon In Transportatıon: An Emperıcal Test For Authentıc Partıcıpatıon in the Department of Public Affairs in the College of Health and Public Affairs at the University of Central Florida Orlando'', Florida, 17-20.

Fung, A. (2006) ''Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance'', Public Administration Review, Vol. 66, Special Issue: Collaborative Public Management, p.66-75.

Göymen, K. (2014) ''Preface'', İ. İzci (Ed.). Participatory Local Government in., İstanbul: Sosyal Demokrasi Vakfı Press, p.11-19.

Greer, P., Murphy, A. and Ogard, M. (2005) ''Guide to Participatory Democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovine and in Serbia an Montenegro'', Belgium: Council of Europe Publishing.

Habermas, J. (1996) ''Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy'', Trans. William Rehg, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Hassan, L. (2017) "Governments should Play Games: towards A Framework for The Gamification of Civic Engagement Platforms", Journals of Sage Pub, Volume: 48 İssue: 2: 249-267.

Kantar, G. (2020) '' Effects of Consumption Culture on Lifestyles:Globalization, Media and Consumption Culture in TheContext of "A Bite and A Cardigan Philosophy'', OPUS Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi, vol. 15: 2178-2199.

Karyakov, I. and Sisk, T.D. (2003) ''Participatory Democracy'', Karyakov, I. ve Sisk, T. D. (Ed.). Democracy at the Local Level: a Guide for the South Caucasus içinde, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, p.25-35.

Lironi, E. (2006) ''Potentıal and Challenges of E-Partıcıpatıon in The European Unıon'', European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament B-1047 Brussels.

Orum, A. M. and Dale, J. (2016) ''Political Sociology: Power and Participation in Today's World'', İ. Kaya (trans.) İstanbul: Say Press.

Özden, M. (2020) ''Participatory Democracy and Participation in Local Governments: The Case of Thrace'', Marmara University Institute of Social Sciences Published Doctoral Thesis, İstanbul.

Phang, C. and Kankanhalli, A. (2008) ''A Framwork of ICT Exploitation For E-Participation Initiatives'', Department of Information Systems, School of Computing National University of Singapore 3 Science Drive 2, Singapore.

Scottish Health Council (2014) ''E-Participation Toolkit Using Online Technology to İnvolve Patients'', Carers And Communities, Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

Thiel, S.K.; Ertiö, T. ve Baldauf, M. (2017) "Why So Serious? The Role of Gamification on Motivation And Engagement in E-Participation", Interaction Design And Architecture(S) Journal- Ixd&A, N.35, s: 158-181.

Thomas, J. C. (1995) ''Public Participation in Public Decisions: New Skills and Strategies For Public Managers'', San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing.

Turan, İ. (1977) ''Political System and Political Behavior'', İstanbul: Güryay Press.

Verba, S. ve Nie, N. (1972) ''Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality'', Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Walsh, M. L. (1977) ''Building Citizen Involvement: Strategies for Local Government'', Washington, Dc. National League of Cities and The International City/County Management Association.

Wirtz, B. et al. (2018) ''E-Participation: A Strategic Framework'', International Journal of Public Administration, 41(1): 1-12.