Proceedings of The 15th European Conference on eGovernment (ECEG 2015)

University of Portsmouth

UK

18 - 19 June, 2015

Edited by

Dr Carl Adams

University of Portsmouth

UK

Electronic Petition and Democratic Participation in Nigeria

Aderonke Oni, Charles Korede Ayo, Samuel Oni and Moses Duruji
Covenant University, Ota Nigeria

aderonke.oni@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
charles.ayo@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
samuel.oni@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
moses.duruji@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract
Citizen's participation in decisions on how the country is governed is crucial in a democratic polity. In Nigeria however, credible platform for citizens input in major policy decisions that affect their lives hardly exist. The Nigerian State is faced with the crisis of democratic legitimacy and accountability. Governance in Nigeria is characterized by corruption, display of contempt and disregard for the people, deteriorating political institutions, disrespect for human dignity and state-society disconnect. Hence, a growing sense of public cynicism and disenchantment towards the government. It is on this premise that this paper proposes e-petition as a simple, convenience, effective, affordable mechanism for citizens' democratic engagement. Using case study design and literature search, this paper reviews e-petition system and practice in advance democracies and develops an e-petition framework for integrating citizens input into public decision making across all levels of government in Nigeria. With the growing acceptance and usage of Internet and mobile technology in Nigeria, this paper argues that e-petition has the potential of reducing barriers to citizens 'participation in the democratic process. The adoption of e-petition will provide wider platform for the masses to raise issues of public concerns with public authorities and as well, a mechanism for resolution of grievances or demonstration of support for popular policy. With e-petitions therefore, political malaise and the crisis of democratic accountability and legitimacy is forestalled in Nigeria.

Keywords: ICT, petition, participation, democracy, decision-making, Nigeria

1. Introduction
Democratic decline caused by citizens-representatives disconnect is a major problem across the globe (Miller, 2009; Wright, 2012, Webb, 2013). The agenda of the elected representatives in many democratic polities often fail to reflect the needs and aspirations of the general public, leading to a feeling of disenfranchisement by many citizens (Stewart, Cuddy and Silongan, 2013).

The level of citizens' involvement in the political process in Africa and particularly, Nigeria do not seem to have improved significantly (Segers, Dessein, Hagberg, Develtere, Haile and Deckers, 2008:109, Abiona and Bello, 2013). There is a growing disengagement from the new institutions of democratic governance as evidenced in lower voter's registration and voter's turnout. Citizens are particularly disenchanted by failed promises of corruptly elected representatives and the limited opportunities to challenge them. Due to the limited opportunities offered by the dominant formal models and institutions of political participation, there has been growing citizens' political engagement in a range of informal activities within villages and communities such as social and protest movements, trade unions, networks, cooperation and variety of civic organizations at the grassroots level which are often

inadequate platform for citizens participation in the mainstream politics (Onazi, 2012). While it is important that citizens, in democratic polity, contribute to decisions on how the country is governed, in Nigeria, credible platform for citizens' input in major policy decisions that affect their lives hardly exist. Integrating public opinion in public decision making is paramount to the success of representative democracy. Contrarily, the legislative institutions of Nigeria, the primary representative organ, are lacking in effective interaction with their constituents, hence, a growing sense of public cynicism and disenchantment towards the government (Edigheji, 2006; Oni and Oni, 2014). The declining rate of political participation in Nigeria therefore, raises the question of what credible, inclusive and transparent channel that can be adopted for citizen's engagement in democratic institutions so as to counter the growing sense of political alienation in the country.

In order to increase accountability of the elected representatives and promote citizen's political participation, world governments have made tremendous efforts to enhance citizens and government relationships through electronic channels. Countries in advanced democracies such as Scottish Parliament, UK House of Lords and House of Commons, US Federal Government and National Assembly of Wales have adopted a range of formal petition systems, combining paper and electronic petition system based on the wide acceptance that a robust petitioning system enable citizens' voice to be heard and in turn, help underpin the legitimacy and functioning of representative institutions (Bochel, 2013; Stewart, Cuddy and Silongan, 2013). Electronic enhanced petitions (e-petitions) is thus at the forefront of official, fully operational participation opportunities provided for citizens, particularly in liberal democratic polities (Miller, 2009; Lindner and Riehm, 2011; Wright, 2012).

In spite of this growing recognition of the power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and numerous initiatives to promote political participation, Nigeria is yet to take full advantage of technology to foster citizens and government relationship. In fact, the website of the Nigeria's national parliament merely provides information about paper petitions submitted to its public petition committee while platform for online submission of petitions, citizens' interaction and inclusiveness in the petition process does not exist. The question of a simple, convenience, effective, affordable e-petitions framework for citizens' democratic engagement in Nigeria thus constitutes the thrust of this research. We argue that such e-petitions framework will provide a wider, credible, inclusive and transparent platform for citizens' political engagement and a mechanism for increased public, transparency and responsiveness of the Nigerian representative institutions thereby, countering the growing sense of political alienation in the country.

2. Literature Review: Public Petition and Democratic Participation

Petitioning has long been a popular and the most common means of political participation used by citizens to communicate their views to their elected representative (Corbett, 2011; Bochel, 2013). Petitions is defined by Lindner and Riehm (2009) as a formal request to a public authority, usually a governmental institution with the purpose of changing public policy, calling for an official statement, or evoking certain acts by a public institution. Corbett (2011) conceives petitions as a mechanism for public direct communication with the parliament to inform it of a particular public issue and to seek parliamentary action to remedy it. In this regards, petition is a form of political participation which enables citizens' involvement in decision making process. A robust petitioning system has been seeing as enabling citizens' voice to be heard and in turn, help underpin the legitimacy and functioning of representative institutions. It enhances the relationship between parliament and citizen (Miller, 2009; Stewart, Cuddy and Silongan, 2013).

Parliamentary petitions system is vital to democratic participation because the legislature is the accredited political institution saddled with the responsibility of serving as intermediary between citizens' concerns and government policy (Fish, 2006; Bochel, 2013; Oni and Oni, 2014). Legislature's responsibilities include informing and listening to the public and making inclusive decisions (Goodin, 2004; Brown, 2006). It involves the diverse elements of authorization, accountability, citizens' participation and resemblance (Oni and Oni, 2014). Accordingly, citizens' contribution to political deliberation on complex political questions is part of political representation in that it helps ensure that parliament promotes the interests of the represented and act in accordance with their demands (Brown, 2006). Bochel (2013) identifies the factors underpinning the greater use of parliamentary petitions system for democratic participation. They include the idea of citizen's empowerment, the trend towards encouraging citizen participation by government, the need to address the declining rates of political engagement, the opportunities provided by ICT in enhancing citizens-governments interactions and the emphasis on improving the policy-making process through greater citizen's participation (Bochel, 2013). Similarly, Lindner and Riehm (2009) identify three main features of petitions that distinguish it from other forms of political participation: petitions are initiated bottom-top by citizens, petitions do not go through complex formal requirement and most petitions are addressed to intermediary institutions and usually are lacking in formal power to take action.

Lindner and Riehm (2009) and Hough (2012) identify the different interrelated political and democratic functions of petitions. For Hough (2012), the functions that petitions perform include building linkages between government and the governed thus, enabling ordinary citizens engage with government and its agencies. For Corbett (2011), linkages between citizens and elected representatives enable public participation which gives legitimacy to the decisions of elected representatives thus, strengthens democracy. Another function of petitions is that parliamentary petitions system avails citizens the opportunity of making known their views on the operation and impact of a particular policy. Government, through petitioning, is informed of the impact of a policy. As noted by Lindner and Riehm (2009), petitions can deliver useful information and perform as political indicators which can potentially contribute to the responsiveness of parliament. In this regards, parliamentary petitions system is one mechanism for expanding and deepening democratic participation and tackling citizen's disengagement from formal democratic politics.

The continuous recognition of the potential capacity of public petitions system to enhance democratic participation has led to an explosive interest in petitions in recent years. Many legislatures now establish mechanisms for public petitioning system (Hough, 2012). Electronic petition (e-petition) is in the forefront among the numerous online participation tools used by government to engage the citizens (Lindner and Riehm, 2009). The impressive uptake of e-petitions by many public entities has made it to advance more than other forms of formal or institutionalized political participation via the internet (Lindner and Riehm, 2009). Mosca and Santucci (2009) identified two type of e-petition; informal and formal. Informal e-petitioning channels are selected from the bottom-up, that is, those channels owned and managed by non-governmental organization and formal e-petitioning channels are institutionalized systems operated by public institutions provided top-down (Lindner and Riehm, 2009). The formal e-petition is a mechanism for enhancing civic engagement across levels of government (Mosca and Santucci, 2009). Formal e-petition is operated by government and usually linked to representative bodies. Formal e-petition can be further categorized into three types: petitions submitted electronically through web interface or email. The second is public e-petitions, that is, a petition in which its text and all information regarding the issue are published on the Internet irrespective of its mode of submission. The third is public e-petitions with additional participatory elements (Lindner and Riehm, 2009). Among the reasons for its gaining much ground is that e-petition empowers and encourages citizens' political

participation. It is also borne out of the need to address decline in political participation, facilitate online interaction between citizens and government and greater participation of citizens in policy-making process (Bochel, 2013).

The Scottish parliament in 2000 established the first e-petition system. This was with the intention of using new technologies to influence policy and streamline institutional communication and processes, improve public understanding and awareness of the Parliament's work (Miller, 2009). In 2002, the regional Parliament of Queensland implemented its own e-petition system. In 2005, Germany's Federal Parliament - the Bundestag, started operating e-petitions system. Over a dozen of Norwegian municipalities have been operating e-petitions system since 2005. UK coalition government, Scottish Parliament and Wales National Assembly have implemented e-petition system. The popularity of e-petitions among these countries is based on attempts by government to close the gap between citizens and institutions, using new technologies (Miller, 2009).

In English local government, petitioning has been a common agenda-setting exercise where citizens sign requests to the authority on a variety of local matters such as traffic, parking, libraries, housing, or transportation (Panagiotopoulos, Moody and Elliman, 2012). English local authorities have since 2004 started experimenting with e-petition with Bristol and Kingston-upon-Thames taking the lead (Whyte, Renton, & Macintosh, 2005; Panagiotopoulos, Moody and Elliman, 2012). As at the time of this study, about 337 English Local Governments have operational e-petitions system. The high rate of e-petition adoption among the local authorities was as a result of the 2009 legislation which mandated all LGAs to provide an online petitioning facility hosted within their council web site and design a formal response process for both paper and online petitions (Lindner and Riehm, 2011).

Parliamentary petitioning, though an established tradition in Nigeria's legislative institutions, its full potential to deepen citizen's democratic participation and tackle the perceived citizens' political alienation has not been realized (Abiona and Bello, 2013). The national and states legislative assemblies of Nigeria, like many other legislatures in the world, maintain committees on public petitions. For instance, the National Assembly which comprises the Senate and House of Representatives maintain Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges & Public Petitions and House Committee on Public Petitions respectively. These various legislative assemblies, through their committees on public petitions are to consider and investigate all petitions from aggrieved or oppressed members of the public and make recommendations on the proper action to take in resolving the matters (Omoleye, 2011).

An analysis of the website of the Senate chamber of the Nigerian Parliament shows that the legislative institutions have an established committee on public petition but the oversight of the committee, activities and their interaction with the citizens are not provided for. The lower chamber (the House of Representatives) also has an established committee on the public petition with the photograph and names of the committee displayed on the institutions' web site. The committee has since 2004 received paper submission of petitions and the same merely published on the website with names of the petitioner, the sponsor and date. It is obvious therefore, that parliamentary institutions in Nigeria still lack efficient and effective online mechanism for interacting with their constituents and there is hardly any credible platform for citizens input in major policy decisions (Edigheji, 2006; Oni and Oni, 2014). The limited opportunities offered by the dominant formal models and institutions of political participation are often inadequate platform for citizens participation in the mainstream politics (Onazi, 2012).

3. Methodology of Research
This exploratory research is based on case studies of e-petition systems at different levels of government institution ranging from local government to federal government. The sample is made of

Nine (9) e-petition systems: three local government e-petition systems (Bristol, Nottingham and Manchester), two regional e-petition systems (Wales Parliament, Scotland parliament, Queensland Parliament and Tasmania Parliament) and two federal e-petition systems (UK Parliament and US Federal Government). These cases were carefully selected to have a complete view of e-petition implementation across the various levels of government. From the case studies, we identified the design procedures, technical and institutional features that constitute good practice in e-petitions implementation. Case study approach is most suitable for this type of exploratory research because it enables in-depth study of a small number of samples, it give flexibility, prepare the investigator to deal with unexpected findings and help to generate findings of relevance beyond the individual cases (Fidel, 1984; Burnham, 2008). Organizations website and literature search through academic databases and search engines serves as the source of information for the case study organizations. Web content analysis of the e-petition web sites was used to document the design features, operational procedures and guideline for petitioner. The analysis and literature findings were the starting point in developing the proposed e-petition implementation framework for democratic engagement in Nigeria.

4. A Framework for E-petition Systems in Nigeria

The analysis of e-petition guideline, operational procedure and design features literature findings were the starting point in developing the proposed e-petition implementation framework. The proposed framework summarizes the e-petition implementation process of the countries and legislative institutions studied. The findings are presented below.

4.1 Motivation/Objective

This is the motivation for implementing e-petition. The motivation for implementing e-petition by United Kingdom is to provide an easy way for the public to engage with politics in this country. For Wales's National Assembly, a petition is a way of asking the institution to consider any issue, problem or proposal that it has the power to do something about. In the case of Scottish Parliament, petition is a direct way for people to raise a 'national issue' with their Parliament.

4.2 Main Institutional Procedure of E-Petition

i Clerical Office: This is usually the first contact office of any electronically submitted petition. The secretarial is usually responsible for checking e-petitions against the terms and conditions defined in the institution's standing order for e-petitions. The office would also contact the petitioner when necessary and is responsible for post e-petitions on the web site. The functions of the clerical office however, vary depending on the institutional procedure guiding e-petition process. In institutions where petitions are submitted directly to the clerical office, there is the possibility of an e-petition to be rejected at this office for nonconformance with the specified terms and conditions. In institutions such as Queensland Parliament where the Principal petitioner needs to contact a Member of Parliament or Clerk of Parliament for sponsorship before submitting the e-petition, there is little or no chances of the e-petition being rejected before it is displayed on the e-petition web site. The MP of the Clerk before accepting to sponsor an e-petition would have made necessary correction(s) and contribution on it before its submission. Once an e-petition satisfies the terms and conditions, it is made available on the organisation's web site for supporters to add their signature. An e-petition which its petitioner failed to make amendment and resubmit within the stipulated period is published under rejected petition with reason(s) for its rejection stated.

ii. Guideline and Admissibility Criteria: Petitions must satisfy some conditions. First, it must be submitted in good faith and free of false or offensive words or promoting personal interest. Other reasons that may warrant e-petition being rejected include similarity or overlap with an existing petition

within the last 12 months. An e-petition asking for things outside the remit or powers of the respective legislative body may also be rejected. In addition, e-petitions containing statements that amount to advertisements or addressing issues for which petition system is not the appropriate channel (for example, correspondence about a personal issue) or freedom of information requests (Wales Parliament) may be rejected. All the e-petition systems studied have established terms and conditions or guideline. Establishing a comprehensive guideline prompts petitioners and supporters to what is expected of them and the possible outcome of the e-petition. The e-petition guideline should also inform petitioners and the public about the possible outcomes of petitions.

iii. Petition Committee: The petition committee is a group of members of parliament saddled with the responsibility of determining possible actions to take regarding petitions. The Wales Assembly has a Petitions Committee who considers admissible petitions and decides what action should be taken. The Assembly's rule states that any petition that the Presiding Officer decides is admissible must be considered by the Assembly. The Scottish Public Petitions Committee (PPC) is responsible for considering the admissibility of petitions and the issue raised and for deciding what action to take in respect of each admissible petition (Scottish Parliament, 2012). In the UK parliament and European Parliament, the Committee on petitions is responsible for deciding whether to allocate a debate on the subject of an e-petition. It is also responsible for informing the petitioner on the decision reached.
iv. Signature: Signature is the evidence of support for e-petitions by fellow citizens. Any signatory to an e-petition must provide his/her names, home and email addresses. Based on the institutional procedure, the numbers of signatures on a petition determine its possible outcome as to whether it will get to the petition committee or given consideration in the legislative house. In the case of White House e-petition, a petition must secure a minimum of 150 signatories within 30 days to be searchable on the e-petition website and 100,000 signatories within 30 days to receive a response from the US Federal Government. Table 1 (Appendix A) shows the required number of signatory in sampled legislative bodies.

v. Sponsor: A sponsor is a Member of Parliament or Clerk in support of an e-petition. In cases where an e-petition requires a sponsor, a petitioner must first contact an MP or Clerk for support before submitting the petition. In Queensland Parliament for instance, the sponsoring MP or Clerk has the right to request changes to the wording of a petition before submission. The Principal Petitioner, together with the sponsoring MP or the Clerk, decides the length of time an e-petition will be open for other supporters to append their signatures. Sponsoring is however, not a common practice. It is only Queensland and England Parliaments that request a petitioner to secure a sponsor

4.3 Design Features of E-petition System
All our case studies allow online submission of petitions except Queensland Parliament. Petitions can be submitted by completing the online petition form. A petition, once submitted, is scrutinized in the clerical office to ascertain its compliance with terms and conditions before such petition is displayed online for signature collection.

Personal information supplied by the petitioner includes name, email address, residential address, postcode and telephone number. E-petitions are checked for conformity to grand rules before they are published on the Web. The petitioner is given the privilege to specify duration for the petition. The guiding rule however, recommends four to eight weeks. The status, committee meeting data and decision on the petition are published on the web.

Typically, every petition available for signature also displays the name and address of the principal/lead petitioner, the subject and information on the petition, the date created, proposed closing date and

number of signatories. In cases, such as Queensland Parliament, Scottish Parliament and German parliament, where additional participatory channels are provided, petitioners or supporters can discuss on the subject of the petition, email the petition or link it to social media sites such as facebook or Twitter.

In Scottish Parliament's e-petitions system, a petition can either be open, lodged or closed. An open petition continues to gather signatures from supporters till the closing date for its publicity. A lodged petition is ready to be considered or is under active consideration by the Public Petitions Committee while a closed petition is no longer being considered. Every lodged or closed petition has detailed summary of actions taken on the petition with dates, video (where available) and portable document format of all submissions on the petition published on the web. Total number of signature with names and short address of the supporter is also available for viewing. Wales's e-petitions system, in addition to these, displays the date each supporter signed the petition.

Another important characteristic of e-petitions system which promotes openness and responsiveness to the public and demonstrates the power of Internet for efficient information dissemination is the array of information displayed about petitions after they are closed for signature collection. For every closed petition in Queensland Parliament and Tasmania Parliament, the web site displays the petition's reference number, the subject and closed date, number of signatures collected, the date tabled in the house, the referred minister(s) and the date referred, response due date and the date response is tabled. In several other cases such as Scotland Parliament and Manchester city council of e-petition system, details of legislative actions with corresponding documents are published and are downloadable.

5. Conclusion

Parliamentary e-petitioning system has been adopted as a vital tool for democratic participation in many advanced democracies. The Nigerian National Assembly lacks such efficient and effective online mechanism for interacting with the public and for citizens' involvement in major policy decisions of the institution. A parliamentary e-petitions system for democratic participation is thus imperative for the country. The proposed framework for e-petition system is derived from case study analysis of e-petition systems of advanced democracies. With the unprecedented growth and increasing acceptance and usage of internet and mobile technologies in the country (UNP and IPU, 2012), the proposed framework has the potential to make public petitions more visible, convenient, affordable, accessible and a wider form of political participation by the ordinary citizens. In this way, barriers to citizens' participation in the nation's democratic process are reduced. In addition, such e-petitions framework will provide a credible and inclusive platform for citizens' greater participation in policy process thereby exerting public influence on policy outcomes. As averred by thereby Wright (2012), where citizens are able to influence the decisions of elected representatives, the risks of weakening existing democratic institutions diminish. With the e-petitions framework, citizens have more access to information about the activities of government and are provided with credible platform for expression of their grievances and aspirations, through elected representatives. They have additional platform to voice their opinion or complaints and monitor the actions of the legislature. The e-petition framework has the potential of enhancing citizens' access and interaction with their representatives. The framework thus, has the potential to move e-petitions system in Nigeria from the information provisioning stage to a transparent inclusive process and discursive stage thus increasing public trust in their representative institutions of governance in the country. The e-petitions framework therefore, has the potential of enhancing the publicness, accessibility, transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the Nigerian representative institutions. As noted by Mistry and Jalal (2012 and Hasani & Beleraj (2013), inclusiveness, transparency and accountability of government reduce corruption. With e-petition therefore, the growing sense of

political alienation, public cynicism and disenchantment towards the government in the country are abated and with more credible platforms for engaging the elected representatives, political malaise and the crisis of democratic legitimacy and accountability is forestalled.

A successful implementation of e-petition system is however greatly dependent on the political will of the ruling elite to adopt and implement it. The government must therefore be fully ready to embrace e-petitioning system and ensure that e-petitions received are acted upon. In addition, ICT is prone to manipulation and thus a proper safeguard mechanism must be put in place to prevent the system from being manipulated for selfish political ambitions.

References

Abiona, Adekeye and Bello, Niyi W. (2013) Grassroots Participation in Decision-Making Process and Development Programmes as Correlate of Sustainability of Community Development Programmes in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development*; Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 47-57.

Bochel, C. (2013), Petitions Systems: Contributing to Representative Democracy? Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 66, pp. 798-815. doi: 10.1093/pa/gss005.

Brown, Mark B. (2006), "Survey Article: Citizen Panels and the Concept of Representation." *The Journal of Political Philosophy*. Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 203–225

Burnham, P., Lutz, K., Grant, W. and Layton-Henry, Z. (2008), Research Methods in Politics, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Corbett, Niamh (2011) "Parliamentary petitions: an untapped Library Resource." *The Australian Library Journal.* Vol. 60 No. 3.pp: 218 - 230

DEMO.net (2006). D5.1: Report on Current ICTs to enable Participation, *DEMO-net – The eparticipation Network.*

Edigheji, O. (2006) "Political Representation in Africa: Towards a Conceptual Framework." Africa Development, Vol. XXXI, No. 3. pp: 93–119.

Edinburgh, Submitting a petition http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20029/have_your_say/260/ petitions

Fidel, R. (1984), "The case study method: a case study", *Library & Information Science Research,* Vol. 6, pp. 273-288.

Fish, Steven M. (2006), "Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies." *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 17, N. 1. pp. 6-20

Goodin, Robert E (2004), Representing diversity. British Journal of Political Science, Vol.34, pp: 453–68.

Hough, Richard (2012) "Do Legislative Petitions Systems Enhance the Relationship between Parliament and Citizen?" *The Journal of Legislative Studies*. Vol. 18. Nos. 3-4, pp. 479-495.

Linder, Ralf and Riehm (2011) "Broadening Participation through E-petitions? An Empirical Study of Petitions to the German Parliament."*Policy and Internet*. Vol. 3, Issue 1. Article 4

Lindner, Ralf and Riehm, Ulrich (2011) Broadening Participation through E-Petition? An Empirical Study of Petitions to the German Parliament. *Policy and Internet*. Vol. 3, Iss.1, Art, 4. pp: 1-23.

Medaglia, R. (2007), "The Challenged Identity of a Field: The State of the Art of eParticipation Research". *Information Polity* vol. 12, pg 169–181 169 IOS Press Miller, L. (2009), e-Petitions at Westminster: the Way Forward for Democracy?, *Parliamentary Affairs* Vol. 62 No. 1, pp. 162–177

Miller, Laura (2009) e-Petition at Westminster: the Way Forward for Democracy? *Parliamentary Affairs.* Vol.62. No. 1 pp: 162 -177

Nottingham City Council – Petitions Scheme, Available at: http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ CHttpHandler.ashx?id=19146&p=0, Accessed 12th January, 2015.

OECD (2003a), "Engaging Citizens Online for Better Policy-making" [Online], Retrieved Dec., 2010, [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/62/23/2501856.pdf]

Omoleye, Oludotun A. (2011) Lagos Legislative Fact Finder. Lagos: Straight Path Communications.

Onazi, Oche (2012) Legal Empowerment Of The Poor: Does Political Participation Matter? *Journal of Jurisprudence*. Vol. 14. Pp. 201 – 223.

Oni A.A. and Oni S. (2014) "E-parliament and Democratic Representation in African States: Prospects and Challenges" *International Journal of Computers & Technology*. Vol. 13. No. 6

Panagiotopoulos, P., Moody, C. and Elliman, T. (2012), Institutional Diffusion of eParticipation in the English Local Government: Is Central Policy the Way Forward? *Information Systems Management*, 29:295–304

Scottish Parliament (2010) Petitioning the Scottish Parliament: Making Your Voice Heard. Available from: www.scottish.parliament.uk/PublicInformationdocuments/Petitioning-Eng-250712.pdf (Accessed January 8, 2015)

Scottish Parliament (2012), How to Submit a Public petition. Available at: http://www.scottish. parliament.uk/ gettinginvolved/petitions/HowToPetition.aspx, Accessed 31th December, 2014.

Segers, Kaatje, Dessein, Joost. Hagberg, Sten, Develtere, Patrick, Hale, Mitiku and Deckers, Jozef (2008) Be Like Bees – The Politics of Mobilizing Farmers for Development in Tigray, Ethiopia. *African Affairs*. 108/430, 91–109

Stewart, Kennedy, Cuddy, Andrew and Silongan, Michelle (2013) "Electronic Petitions: A Proposal to Enhance Democratic Participation." *Canadian Parliamentary Review/Autumn* .pp: 9 – 13

UNDP and IPU (2012) The 2012 World e-parliament Report. Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Parliament

United Nations & the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2014) Technological Options for Capturing and Reporting Parliamentary Proceedings. Rome: Global Centre for ICT in Parliament Webb, Paul (2013) "Who is willing to participate? Dissatisfied Democrats, Stealth Democrats and Populists in the United Kingdom." *European Journal of Political Research* 52 pp: 747–772.

Whyte, A., Renton, A., & Macintosh, A. (2005).*E-petitioning in Kingston and Bristol: Evaluation of e-petitioning in the local e-Democracy national project*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Napier University Accessed: 9th Dec., 2014.

Wright, Scott (2012) Assessing (e-) 'Democratic Innovations: "Democratic Goods" and Downing Street E-Petitions.' *Journal of Information Technology and Politics.* Vol. 9. pp: 453 - 470

Zissis, D, Lekkas, D, and Papadopoulou, A.E (2009), "Competent Electronic Participation Channels in Electronic Democracy." *Electronic Journal of e-government* Vol. 7 Issue 2, pp. 195 – 208.

Appendix A

Table 1: Sampled Legislative Bodies and Required Signature

	Legislative Bodies	Required number of Signature
1	Scottish Parliament	1 minimum
2	Queensland Parliament	Not specified
3	England Parliament	10,000 Response from the responsible department 100, 000 debate by the backbench committee
4	Wales National Assembly	10
5	US White House	100,000
6	Tasmania Parliament	Not specified

7	Manchester City Council	A minimum of 100 is considered by the council
8	Nottingham City Council	5000 debate at full Council debate; 2,500 summon a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting
9	Bristol City Council	20 minimum; 3,500 attracts council debate

Source: Authors Compilation

Table 2: Main Features of E-petition System

	Petition Submission	Other Participatory Element	Previous Action	Signature Collection and Duration	petition Status	Display of Signatories	Display of Legislative Action
Scottish Parliament	Online	Discussion Forum, email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn	yes	Online	- Open - Lodged - Closed	yes	Comprehensive details with corresponding video(s) and document(s)
Queensland Parliament	submission published	Email	no	Online (6months max.)	- Current - Closed	no	Date Tabled, referred minister response due date, response tabled
England Parliament	**Online**	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn	no	Online (1 year max.)	- Open - Closed - Rejected	no	no
Wales National Assembly	Online	non	no	Online, as specified by the Petitioner	- Open - Lodged - Closed – Inadmi-ssible	yes	no
US White House	Online	Twitter, Facebook	no	30 days	- Open - Closed	yes	Response from the concerned department and White House
Tasmania Parliament	submission published	Email	no	Online 6months maximum	- Open - Closed	no	Date Tabled, Referred minister, Response due date, and Response tabled date
Manchester City Council	Online	Email	no	Online 12 months maximum	Current Closed	yes	Detailed action with attached document
Nottingham City Council	Online	non	no	12 months maximum	open close, rejected	yes	no
Bristol City Council	Online	email, Newsgroups, Discussion boards	no	Online 6 month, (could be longer or shorter)	- open, - closed -Lodged -Rejected	yes	no

Source: Authors Compilation