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## **A Conceptual Model Explaining How Stakeholders' Participation in School Management Enhance Learners' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Uganda**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper analyzed the extent of stakeholders' participation in school management and the enhancement of the learners' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Uganda. The major challenges facing effective participation were; inadequate policy formulation and institutional framework; lackadaisical attitude towards participation; low awareness about the roles and stakeholders' participation policy. These resulted in poor school management and low quality of learners' academic achievement. It was concluded that there was a need to develop a conceptual model explaining how stakeholder participation could be adopted to strengthen the operational capacity of key stakeholders for efficient and effective service delivery. This would impact the quality of learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Uganda. This model has been developed based on findings from a larger study, on stakeholders' participation in school management to enhance the learner's academic achievement in selected public secondary schools in Uganda. Based on this model, it is expected that secondary schools in similar contexts could learn a big deal on how they can explore the key drivers of school management for their benefit.*

**Keywords:** Stakeholder participation, planning, budgeting, coordination, academic achievement

### **1. Introduction**

Stakeholders' participation in school management is one of the education reforms that are aimed at network approaches, coupled with the managerial agenda of corporate governance. This has redefined the roles and extent of various key internal and external in school management (Leisyte & Dee, 2012). With the emergency of the school-Based Management (SBM) model that has been embraced in public school management, stakeholder participation in school management is a viable intervention. This aims at improving the quality of education in public secondary schools to produce functionality literate citizens (Leisyte et al, 2013).

Stakeholders' participation in school management has been increasingly gaining ground as a form that embraces the key values of democracy prevalent for academia on the one hand while incorporating the increasing notion of building trust in society. This includes strengthening the role of key stakeholders such as learners, Parents' Teachers' Association (P.T.A), alumni, Board of Governors (B.O.G), and Ministry of Education officials (M.oES), alongside the school, administrators, and academics who have traditionally been involved in school management (Mutinda, 2013:Great school Partnerships, 2014: Anake et al,2018). Stakeholders' participation in school management is underpinned by the notion of school governance structures and is critical to sustaining education quality on the learner's academic achievement in general (Mncube & Mafora, 2014).

As indicated by Mwesigwa (2017 p 12), there is a noteworthy relationship between stakeholders' participation in school management and the enhancement of the learners' academic achievement holding other variables constant. The enhancement of learners' academic achievement is related to the overall competitiveness of schools in a variety of ranking lists. Quantitative and qualitative indicators in terms of grades attained in national examinations ( (Sikhwari et al, 2017). Stakeholders' participation in school management is reflected in the transformation/ management process. This encompasses the extent of participation in school improvement planning (measured in decision-making processes), the extent of participation in the budgeting process (mobilization and allocation of resources), as well as the degree of participation in coordination of the academic activities (monitoring and evaluation of academic interventions) to achieve

the educational objectives. In school management, the application of educational standards does not guarantee academic achievement in public secondary schools.

Despite stakeholders' participation in school management, there have been major challenges encountered during their participation. This has resulted in ineffective school management and low levels of learners' academic achievement in public secondary schools. The findings revealed; inappropriate regulatory policy framework for public secondary schools, low capacity in participation in school improvement planning, budgeting process and coordination of the academic activities, poor attendance of key stakeholders in meetings due to lackadaisical attitude, and lack of cooperation between school administrators and school community. It was concluded that a conceptual model explaining how stakeholder participation could be adopted to strengthen their operational capacity for efficient and effective service. In Uganda, two categories of stakeholders participate in school-based management (SBM), the internal and external stakeholders. Their extent of participation has often been seen as the main vehicle through which schools can improve the management of the instructional processes. As the Education Act (2008) noted school stakeholders have the responsibility to ensure that there are monitoring and evaluation structures in place, transparency and accountability of management processes, as well as inclusive joint decision-making among others (The Republic of Uganda, 2008).

In this study stakeholders' participation in school management embraces all activities that are directed specifically toward the improvement, and maintenance of instructional processes in schools. This improvement often occurs informal interactions in the context of school improvement planning, budgeting process, and coordination of academic activities. Stakeholders' participation in Uganda's government-aided secondary schools is entrusted to the Ministry of Education under the provision of the Education Act 2008 in The Republic of Uganda (2008) which empowers the stakeholders to participate in the education process. The main purpose of such a legal provision is to enable the Ministry of Education and Sports as a representative of the government and the Ugandan people to satisfy themselves that educational standards are being maintained.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by the stakeholders' theoretical framework. In his seminal work, Freeman (1984) introduced the Stakeholders' Theory of participation. This Theory states that the stakeholder ecosystem comprises anybody that either affects or is affected by the organization. Freeman (2010) defines a stakeholder as '*any individual or group of people who have an interest in a particular issue and whose interests are believed to affect or be affected by the achievement of the organization*' (p. 25). It was assumed that the Stakeholder Theory with its principles and assumptions provided a suitable framework for analyzing stakeholder participation in school management to enhance the learners' academic achievement in government-aided secondary schools in Uganda. The application of this theory in education management maintains that Education for All is the obligation of all. The theory clarifies the responsibility for all education stakeholders to carry out their obligations in the attainment of the objectives of education (Harrison, 2019).

The Theory suggests that for organizations to remain sustainable, they need to involve various stakeholders in management (Freeman, 1984). Institutional stakeholders are categorized into two groups, internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are primary with legal contracts to the institution, while the external stakeholders are secondary who have an interest in the institution but without a contract (Stuud, 2002; Leung 2010). Therefore, internal stakeholders have powers that either affect or can be affected by the institution, while external stakeholders are considered secondary in that their influence is indirectly experienced. Without the support of these stakeholders, the institution's existence would crumple over the long haul (Freeman, 2010; Harrison, 2019).

In examining the essential premises of Freeman's (1984) seminal works on the Stakeholder Theory, it was assumed that institutions like schools have multiple stakeholders that either affect or are affected by the stakeholder participation policy in school management (Uganda Government, 2008; Hong, 2019). Below is Table 1.1 showing the contextualization and categorization of internal and external stakeholders who implement the stakeholder participation policy in school management.

Category	Specific Stakeholder	Areas of Participation
Internal	Headteachers	Legal powers to implement stakeholder policy. Influence the teaching and learning process.
	Teachers	Ensuring accountability of service delivery.
	Learners	Consumers of the teaching and learning process.
	Parents	Support the teaching and learning process
External	B.O.G/PTA	Legal powers to regulate the policy implementation.
	MoES Officials	Monitor and evaluate the policy implementation.
	'	Inspect the implementation of the policy.
	'	Ensure accountability of management.

Table 1: Key Stakeholders Participating in Secondary School Management in Uganda  
Source: Developed by the Researcher Using Existing Policy Documents and Literature.(2020)

Given the key stakeholders' participating in school management, the MoES officials, B.O.G the external stakeholders have the principal powers to regulate the implementation of the stakeholder participation policy in school management and ensure accountability processes of the policy. While the internal stakeholders have varying interests driving them into the policy implementation with minimal influence in implementing the policy.

Freeman (1984) argued that although the Stakeholders' Theory has customarily underscored the people in the relationships, and not simply the relationships themselves, the connections created between stakeholders may explain as much regarding how the actor's characters will interact as the individual traits of the actors (cited by Bonnsfous and Rendtorff (2016). In this context, the unit of analysis for the Stakeholders' Theory is not the school itself but the relationships between the school and its stakeholders. These relationships aim to comprehend the cause of the establishment of the relationships. The aim is to improve the teaching and learning process whose result is reflected in the evaluation of learners' academic achievement at the end of an education cycle. Academic achievement can be attained when the stakeholders blend well in school management.

There are various actions undertaken by school management that incorporates selected groups of stakeholders to participate in a range of management activities. Ayeni and Ibukum,( 2013) opine that quality educational outcomes necessitate continuous improvement in the instructional processes and activities of the school. This argument is based on the principle of Deming's cycle of continuous improvement, which is fundamentally based upon The Plan, Do, Check, and Act (PDCA) cycle. The goal is to improve on each improvement in an ongoing process of learning. This calls for the collective effort of all school stakeholders to strategically orient the educational programs; collective budgeting process, coordinating the academic activities critically monitor and evaluate the instructional processes in line with the set standards (Deming, 1986).

### 3. Methodology

This paper is part of a larger study undertaken for two years in Uganda. The study examined the extent of stakeholder participation in school management and the enhancement of the learners' academic achievement in government-aided secondary schools. Based on the pragmatic paradigm, the researchers adopted a concurrent parallel triangulation strategy to guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Data were collected using, semi-structured in-depth interviews and a survey questionnaire. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to collect data from 18 key respondents from school management committees while the survey questionnaire collected data from 217 teachers in the study area. For the interviews, a tape recorder was used during data collection which enabled the researchers to transcribe the data for analysis. While for surveys, questionnaires were used to collect data from the teachers. All quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS version 20.0 software.

On the other hand, all qualitative data collected were analyzed based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model. According to the authors, thematic analysis is more flexible and compatible with many other analytical methods to generate findings from the data based on themes. The analysis began with a thorough reading of the transcripts to familiarize with the data. The researchers then generated initial codes which were then categorized to help in searching for themes that were later reviewed and a final list of themes that answered the research questions. The final themes were then written up in a report. The standards of the research findings were guaranteed based on Patton's (2015) research quality criteria. According to the author, the quality and trustworthiness of research findings rest on: the philosophical belief in the value of the inquiry; the credibility of the inquirer; the systematic in-depth fieldwork that yields high-quality data, and; systematic and meticulous analysis of data.

### 4. The Conceptual Model

A survey of the literature reveals that stakeholder participation in decision-making in school management can influence the quality of education. Therefore, their participation can be further optimized to enhance learners' academic achievement. Several writers like Barrera-Osorio et al, (2009)); Cabardo (2016), and many others have written a lot on this link. All of them agree to the fact that stakeholder participation in education management is an important part of the decision-making process and can play a key role in enhancing learners' academic achievement in terms of sustainable development goal 4

A review of the literature on the extent of stakeholder participation in school management in secondary schools indicated low participation of PTA, and learners due to the policy guidelines for participation in secondary schools; lack of cooperation from the school community, and; ineffective school management. Ayeni and Ibukum, (2013) developed a conceptual model for school-based management that could be adopted to strengthen the operational and quality assurance in Nigerian secondary schools. This would enhance efficient service delivery and quality learning outcomes in secondary schools.

The conceptual model provides the critical variables that are key in integrating sustainability aspects for quality education in secondary schools. This demands school management to organize the human and material resources to meet the various needs and challenges facing school administration in the curriculum implementation. The aim is to attain the educational objectives. The variables were categorized into four: quality assurance in resource input(infrastructure, learning resources, parental contribution, and financial support), transformational processes(learners' potential development, teachers' instructional tasks, and Head teachers' leadership task), output variable (technically skilled, vocationally skilled, good virtues and effective citizens). These contributed to school-based management tasks (mobilizing resources for infrastructural development, reviewing the performance of learners in both internal and external examinations, setting performance targets for the teachers as well as regulating the school-based policies, procedures, and practices). The authors argue that these are key for stakeholders' participation in school management in their quest for enhancing quality education sustainability.

However, based on the key findings from this study, the researcher found the conceptual model inadequate to a certain extent in terms of supporting stakeholders' participation in school management to enhance the learners' academic

achievement in government-aided secondary schools. First, it was developed focusing on school management improvement in practice in pursuit of education quality assurance. Secondly, the model focused on the learning and training functions of secondary schools. It ignored the extent of the collaboration between the internal and external stakeholders in management to enhance the learner's academic achievement. Thirdly, the model does not consider how the instructional processes are managed to influence the academic achievement in terms of quality and quantity of grades attained in national examinations, the key institutional factors that drive school programs given the context.

Therefore, based on these deficiencies and the key findings of the study, the researcher has come up with a conceptual model explaining how stakeholders' participation in school management enhances the learner's academic achievement within the government-aided secondary schools in the Ugandan context.

The conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1 provides a graphical link between the extent of stakeholders' participation in school management and the enhancement of learners' academic achievement. The extent of participation in school management has been dubbed the institutional tasks, school improvement planning, and budgeting processes and coordination of the academic activities this contributes to the enhancement of service delivery in terms of learners' outcomes in government-aided secondary schools. The model links the stakeholders, policy guidelines framework, institutional tasks, and managerial functions to contribute to the outcome, academic achievement in terms of quality and quantity of grades attained in the national examination.

The conceptual model explains how stakeholders' participation can be implemented in public secondary schools in. The double-headed arrows show the interrelationship between the variables, and how the stakeholders' perceptions can either affect or be affected by the implementation of the stakeholders' participation policy to deliver on the learners' academic achievement. The single direction arrow indicates the roles of stakeholders' mapping in the implementation of the policy in school-based management to enhance the learners' academic achievement in the selected government-aided secondary schools in the Kampala district

The Stakeholders' participation in school management is the central focus in the enhancement of learners' academic achievement. This is ensured by the secondary school stakeholders' participation policy guidelines. These guidelines provide provisions for institutional tasks that have to be fulfilled by both the internal and external stakeholders. These include; engaging national education policies, managing school-based policies, setting performance indicators, implementing evaluation reports, reviewing academic analysis reports, resource mobilization, and allocation. Both the external and internal stakeholders need to jointly participate in decision

The enhancement of the instructional processes is supervised by both the internal and external stakeholders through generating joint decision-making about infrastructural development, resource mobilization and allocation, monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning process as well as taking corrective actions towards the enhancement of the learners' academic achievement

The operational structure and ingredients of the stakeholders' participation model are explained diagrammatically below in Figure 1.

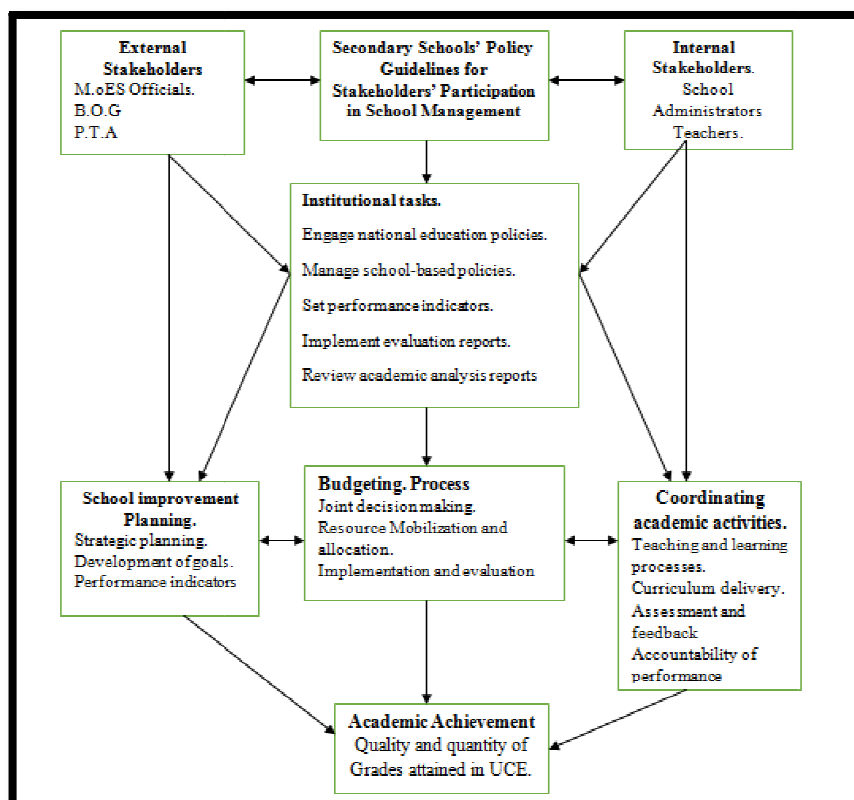


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model for Stakeholders' Participation in School Management  
Source: Developed by the Researcher from the Primary Data and Literature Reviewed (2020)

The stakeholders meet periodically to deliberate on effective strategies that improve the learners' academic achievement. Through the stakeholder engagements, they can determine the internal capabilities in the form of strengths and weaknesses, and map them with the external requirements in terms of opportunities and threats to wave off the schools' potential threats in form of quality and quantity of grades achieved in the national assessment.

The participation of stakeholders in school management to enhance learners' academic achievement in the national examinations ensures a sustainable inter-dependent relationship between the school administration and the school community. This cultivates a sense of collective social responsibility, and commitment to the implementation of the school's strategy in terms of intervention programs, development of physical infrastructures, and availing instructional facilities. In addition, promotes quality in the educational management processes. Hence contributes to quality human capital development in knowledge, technical and vocational skills, and character for sustainable self-reliance of the individuals and the overall national development

## 5. Implication to Policy and Practice

The opportunities that are within stakeholders' participation that are of importance within school management are highlighted below;

- The extent of participation has often been seen as the main vehicle through which schools can improve the management of the instructional processes. Key stakeholders have the responsibility to ensure the implementation of monitoring and evaluation of the academic interventions, promotion of transparency and accountability structures in the management processes, and participate in joint decision making that generates effective strategies for the enhancement of academic achievement.
- Effective stakeholders' participation is a viable intervention for school management and the enhancement of learners' academic achievement. The participation enables stakeholders to generate effective strategies that affect service delivery in terms of the institutional task, school improvement planning, budgeting process, and coordination of the academic activities hence deliver quality academic achievement.
- It is envisaged that the extent of stakeholders' participation in school management will influence the generation of effective decision-making hence encourage internal stakeholders to pay special attention to the implementation of decisions made concerning school improvement planning, budgeting process, and coordination of academic activities. This will promote holding respective officers accountable for their respective roles in school management
- An effective stakeholders' participation will enable stakeholders to evaluate the schools' interventions and promote result-based monitoring and evaluation systematic approaches. These aim at tracking results and performance based on a transparent and reflective logical results framework approach that measures impact through evaluation. This fosters financial support for academic intervention and helps to build a solid knowledge base for the enhancement of learners' academic achievement.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper concludes that effective stakeholders' participation is critical to the enhancement of learners' academic achievement, while the challenges that hinder the extent of participation are due to the implementation of the policy guidelines for their participation. This requires capacity building that will stimulate goal-oriented collaborations between key stakeholders. This requires optimal engagement to enhance the instructional processes thus improve the quality of learners' outcomes in public secondary schools in Uganda.

## 7. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made to mitigate the challenges of effective stakeholders' participation in school management to enhance the learners' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Uganda.

- The Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports should formulate an operational policy guideline for secondary schools. This will give legal backing and create an enabling environment for effective participation for all key stakeholders who directly enhance the learners' academic achievement hence promote sustainable improvement in the quality of learning outcomes in public secondary schools.
- The Ministry of Education and sports needs to carry out capacity building on the stakeholders' policy framework, content, structure, and composition of the stakeholders right from the Ministry level to the school level as part of in-service training to last for one week in a period of one calendar using experts in the field of policy intervention in the education sector.
- The Ministry of Education and Sports needs to promote awareness of the stakeholders' participation policy in secondary schools, its purpose, its implementation, and the roles of all key stakeholders. The masses should be enlightened about the education policies through media so that education matters reach every stakeholder in education. This will help them to appreciate the education matters as well as know-how to contribute towards the success. The creation of awareness is not a one-time agenda.
- To realize the goals of educational policies and educational outcomes, politicization in school management should be enrooted out of the education system. Key stakeholders (parents, learners, teachers, founder members, alumni, BOG) should be involved in decision-making for the betterment of school management as well as the enhancement of the learners' academic achievement.

- Parents and teachers should realize that among the education stakeholders, they are the most important, and their participation aims at enhancing the learners' academic achievement in case there are any differences between the two, they should resolve such conflicts through conflict resolution mechanisms at the school level.
- Parents should desist from the lackadaisical attitude towards participation in school activities for their children, as well as decision making in school management so that they can arrive at a definite conclusion on issues about their children's academic achievement

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