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Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in Development Projects: A Framework for Stakeholder Analysis and Participation

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Abstract:
The review of various stakeholder techniques shows that using one tool may not show conclusive results in stakeholder engagement. Each tool reveals different aspects and levels of stakeholder participation. While several stakeholder techniques are meant to improve and facilitate project management, the proposed framework highlights other factors to be included in the analysis for maximum impact.
The framework attempts to demonstrate that stakeholder participation and improving coordination between the various players is a vital linkage to enhancing the impact on the project. This can be done adequately by the effective involvement of stakeholders and defining who they are, assessing their level of interaction, the risks they pose to the project, their concerns and interests, and stating their various roles in the implementation and management of projects. Building knowledge of the stakeholder expectations through the proposed framework could facilitate their participation and subsequent involvement in project activities and management. However, this participation has to be balanced between the stakeholders and the project needs for maximum positive impact and success.
Though the study is inconclusive, empirical data can be collected for this model/participation framework.

Keywords: *Stakeholders, development, management, and participation*

1. Introduction

Stakeholder management has become a buzzing word for most organizations that have embraced the concept, even though most seem to have very little information and understanding of their roles and activities (Freeman, 1984; Rolof, 2008). Ireland and Cleland (2006) define stakeholders as 'project team members, high-level managers and outside organizational entities such as contractors, sub-contractors, customers, regulators, financial institutions and other claimants who have or believe they have vested rights in the project'. The most cited definition of a stakeholder is that offered by Freeman (1984). According to him, stakeholders are a group of individuals who can affect or are affected by the achievements of the firm's objectives. Other writers agree that there is no standard approach to stakeholder management but concede that stakeholder analysis is the key step toward successful participatory spatial planning (Nastran, 2013). Stakeholder management is directly linked to the project's success and the organization (Riahi, 2017, Ramakrishnan, 2019). Most IFAD-supported projects deal with eight key groups:

- Local people,
- People's organizations,
- Project management teams,
- Implementing partners,
- Cooperating institutions,
- Responsible government departments,
- Consultants and
- IFAD staff (IFAD, 2003)

Several corporate activities reported could be described as public relations stunts that are meant to inform the public about what is happening rather than engaging with them. Multi-stakeholder dialogue in which several stakeholder groups are present (workers, unions, investors, suppliers) are only one form of stakeholder dialogue.

Stakeholder engagement is defined as the process that institutions or organizations use to engage individuals, groups, or organizations to understand their expectations about governance, strategies, policies, and practices (Riahi, 2017; Harrison et al., 2010; Ramakrishnan, 2019). The process involves accounting to stakeholders on performance by developing innovative responses to issues that matter.

The stakeholder engagement process involves:

- Stakeholder identification, mapping, and prioritization
- Stakeholder risk assessment
- Engagement strategy development

- Planning, preparing, and engaging stakeholders
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Communications and reporting

The process also includes developing a stakeholder engagement plan, a component of the project management plan that identifies the strategies and actions required to promote the productive involvement of affected parties in projects' decision-making. (PMBOK, 6th edition). In essence, stakeholders are individuals, groups, or institutions who are directly or indirectly involved in the intervention and/or those who are affected either positively or negatively as a result of the outcome or the implementation of the venture (Sooli, 2009,c). They may be within the vicinity of the project or outside. Schategger et al. (2017) note that a business case has to be co-created in the exchange between and with contributions from various stakeholders. They are in a position to influence or affect the success or failure of the project. They may even be the owners of the venture. Monks and Monow (2016) observed that ownership is a combination of rights and responsibilities concerning a specific property.

Even though the stakeholder approach has become very popular in the last forty years, the concept means different things to different researchers. Some scholars seem to converge and agree on the definition that people, institutions, and agencies have the propensity to affect or be affected by the success or failure of a project or venture.

Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques by various stakeholders to project activities to meet project requirements (Heerkens, 2002). It is an art as it is linked to interpersonal aspects of leading people, and science as it includes processes, tools, and techniques. Each project will, therefore, have its own unique set of stakeholders. The shareholders' concern is to hold management accountable for their conduct of the business (Monks and Minow, 2016). They argue that they (stakeholders) share some responsibility for ensuring that the corporate managers establish mechanisms to respond to challenges within the projects or organizations. They reiterate the need for stakeholders to ensure that information systems facilitate decision-making, including the exposure of wrongdoings. This is because they have the authority and the means to make project managers make policies that conform to the efficient management of the activities. Cuts International (2009) recognizes the importance of stakeholders in trade policy-making. They demonstrate the importance of trade policy for overall growth and development and the need for stakeholder consultations to develop and implement trade policies in line with the aspirations of several nations. Among the reasons identified by Wirick (2009) as to why public sector projects fail is the lack of foresight in management conflicts coupled with the lack of engagement and involvement of the stakeholders throughout the project cycle.

2. Methodology

The literature review is a systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research (Tranfield et al., 2003). It effectively creates a solid foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development (Webster & Watson, 2002). It provides an overview of areas in which research is disparate and identifies research gaps, which are critical in creating theoretical frameworks and conceptual models.

The study was conducted through an extensive review of books, journals, internet searches, and news items. Special attention was given to reviewing the various stakeholder theories, which laid the basis for developing the proposed framework. The views of other writers were then fused into the framework to come up with a tool that would be used in assessing and maximizing stakeholder participation for maximum impact.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Stakeholder Theories

Several authors have tried to articulate the various stakeholder theories and their implications on projects and organizations in particular. Stakeholder theory has its origins dating back to the 1920s. Freeman (1984) traced the beginning of stakeholder theory as a business and management concept. He linked and connected the theory to Robert Stewart as the originator of the idea. Bourne (2009) and Ramakrishnan (2019) emphasize the concept as important for the effective implementation of organizations. They note that stakeholder theory aims to balance the equations of business objectives instead of satisfying individual interests. Ramakrishnan (2019) notes that stakeholder theory is required to manage organizations in a highly complex and turbulent environment as it gives efficient, practical, and ethical ways of managing entities.

The theory has been noted as providing a forum for analysis and management of those who have a stake in a venture or an organization (Emmanuel, 2014, Freeman, 1984). It is needed to provide an enabling context for effective decision-making and assessment. Freudenreich et al. (2016) contend that the concept and analysis of value creation through business models need to be expanded with regard to:

- Different types of values created with and for different types of stakeholders and
- Different types of values exchanged between the company and its stakeholders

In many scenarios, stakeholder management and analysis assist in identifying the interests, foreseeing challenges, gaining the support of influential groups, and developing effective communication strategies within the organization (Emmanuel, 2014, Rolof, 2008; Asher, Mahoney, and Mahoney, 2005). This requires that an effective stakeholder analysis and management model is developed and used. It should be able to classify who the stakeholders are, their characteristics, their impact on the organization, their level of influence, and other features that will help in the decision-making process of the organization (Harrison, Bosse, and Phillips, 2010, Emmanuel, 2014, Ramakrishnan, 2019).

Multi-stakeholder networks have become very common since the 1990s. Network actors such as governments, suppliers, and civil society involved in some form of collaboration, get together to find common ground affecting them (Rolof, 2008). Freeman (1984) and Rolof (2008) both agree and acknowledge that stakeholder theory does not adequately reflect what happens with multi-stakeholder networks. In multi-stakeholder networks, managers tend to be participants and may not be in control of the proceedings. Bhattacharya & Korschun (2019) look at internal stakeholders, the employees. They argue that organizations should enhance relationships with employees. They contend that job requirements, rewards, and responsibilities play an important role in the performance of an organization without realizing that employees are also active interpreters of their work environments. Workers can react to the way the organization defines itself. It is, therefore, imperative to recognize them as stakeholders. Managers, therefore, need to distinguish who the key stakeholders are in order to accomplish their objectives (Emmanuel, (2014, Harrison et al. (2010), Bettinazzi and Feldman (2021).

Donaldson and Peterson (1995) classified the stakeholder theory into three parts, namely: descriptive, normative, and instrumental.

3.1.1. Descriptive Theory

According to the writers, this theory is concerned with how managers and other organizational stakeholders behave and how they view their actions and roles. The theory describes specific organizational characteristics and behaviors, for instance, the nature of the organization, the thinking of managers, and the board members' perceptions of the organization, and explains how corporations manage their businesses.

3.1.2. Normative Participation Theory

This theory attempts to interpret the functions of and provides guidelines for organizations on the basis of some underlying moral or philosophical principles. It attempts to explain how stakeholders should act in view of stated ethical principles.

3.1.3. Instrumental Stakeholder Theory

This theory dictates how the managers want to favor, work and influence organizational interests like the maximization of shareholder value. It is also used to identify connections between stakeholder management and achieving commonly desired corporate objectives.

Most writers have regarded the descriptive theory as the most controversial. Harrison, Bosse, and Phillips (2010) agree with this view. Barnard (1968) agrees and contends that it attempts to explain how the value of the firm can be distributed between the various major stakeholders to maximize the benefits and ensure long-term collaboration. Asher, Mahoney, and Mahoney (2005) agree that the accuracy of the normative and instrumental stakeholder theories is supported by its instrumental and predictive value. According to them, the theories enrich the strategic management research approach. According to the theory, firms and their business units are organized to bring together stakeholders with various resources. (Freeman, et al, 2007, Harrison, et. al. 2010, Parmar, et. al. 2010). Bettinazzi and Freeman (2021) contend that firms lie at the center of stakeholder networks that interact as a complex system for exchanging goods, services, information, technology, knowledge, and other resources. A mechanism is, therefore, needed to govern relationships, resource contributions, and competing demands of the key stakeholders (Friedman & Miles, 2002; Asher, Mahoney, and Mahoney, 2005; Blair & Stout, 1999).

3.2 Application of Stakeholders Techniques in Development Projects

The thinking behind development intervention is constantly evolving. Many projects in developing countries used to focus on expert input to design infrastructure and technology development-oriented projects, often with little input from the primary stakeholder (IFAD, 2003). Over time, attention moved towards more participation of primary stakeholders in project designs and management and towards strategies that build capacity and empower people to direct and manage their own development ideas. Emmanuel (2014) acknowledges that the term 'stakeholders' is self-explanatory. He contends that the word itself is explicitly defined as:

- A self-determining party with whom each of those, who make a stake, deposits their money and makes decisions regarding the management of the organization and
- An individual who has curiosity or appreciation for something, especially an organization

Howitt and McManus (2012) agree with this definition and state that it is a mechanism that facilitates decision-making in organizations. They all contend that it encourages business management to develop trust and cooperative relationships with stakeholders without the need for assumptions. Emmanuel (2014) notes that there are different views on the interpretation of the stakeholder theory – from the academic point of view, the consultants, and the management views. He, however, notes that the theory, in its broad terms, gives attention to a dynamic methodology rather than dealing with a business of expected interests.

Development entails the rational use of limited resources, which includes factors of production such as labor, land & capital, to yield the best economic results (Roemer & Stern, 1981). More and more literature, however, seems to suggest that low and medium-level countries with abundant natural resources do not benefit as much from their resources as those with high-income levels (Mehlum et al., 2006; Kronberg, 2004; Auty, 2007). Kronenberg (2004) even found a negative relationship between natural resources and economic growth. It has also been noted that power disparity is a primary factor that leads to stakeholders' negative attitudes towards their engagements (Liu et al., 2022). Countries normally have their own development objectives commensurate with the existing economic resources and their ability to absorb foreign assistance. Such demands entail that all stakeholders must accept the consequences of participation, including the management of risks and uncertainties.

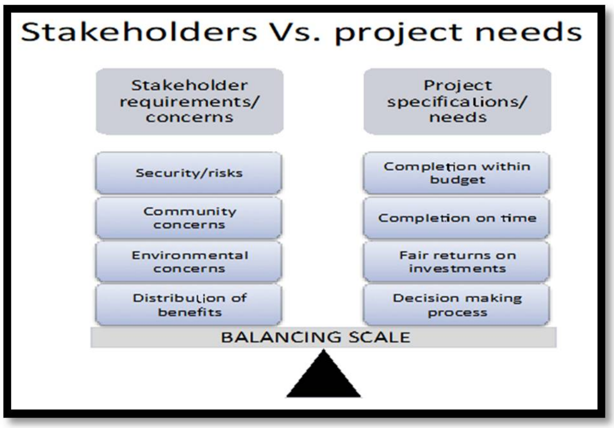

Figure 1: Stakeholders vs. Project Needs/Specifications

Van Tulder (2007) and Roemer and Stern (1981) have documented the link between resource abundance and economic development. The government's poor economic policies, the inability to diversify the economies, and the inability to select viable and productive investment ventures due to bureaucratic tendencies are some of the reasons for slow growth in resource-abundant economies. There has been renewed interest in exploiting natural resources due to the revival of commodity prices. The price surge is being driven by the rising demand for mineral resources from fast-growing economies in Asia (Sooli, 2020, b). If the limited resources are used to attain one objective, it implies their reduced availability for attaining the other objectives. However, if the limited resources are used efficiently, the number of objectives that can be pursued will increase.

Development Planning refers to the process of identifying and prioritizing objectives and the efficient allocation of scarce resources. Very often, the development plans are drawn by central planning organs like the Ministries of Economic Planning, National Planning Commissions, etc., which are responsible for the general development of the economies. The plans are normally generalized and do not covers all the sectoral projects.

Project Planning, on the other hand, is the process of evaluating the viability of both public and private investment decisions. The process starts when a project is identified to a time, it is implemented, and evaluated. It involves the stakeholders through the assessment of costs and benefits, both qualitative and quantitative. Human capital is the most precious capital of all (Sadie, 1963). Various research scholars have indicated that only a small fraction of the nationals of the developed countries can be ascribed to the accumulation of physical assets. The rest is due to human skills and ingenuity. That entails the various stakeholders' inclusion and participation (Nastran, 2013). The resulting project objectives set have to be specific so that it is easy to know at the end of the period whether or not the stated targets and expectations have been achieved.

The main aim of project planning is to facilitate the choice of projects that meet national aspirations and stakeholder objectives.

The choice is based on two criteria:

- Limited resources used more efficiently
- Screening alternative proposals that would contribute more toward national objectives

It is also vital to note that national or project objectives can only be attained if all the concerned parties, i.e., stakeholders, are willing to ensure that the identification, formulation, preparation, or in general, all the project stages are based on specified criteria and not driven by personal or other motives.

Thorough national plans address the issue at a macro level, while projects address the micro-level issue. It is often an accepted principle that projects require development plans and development plans require projects. The national plans would set social and economic objectives and priorities between different sectors of the economy, which are then achieved through the implementation of projects. In other words, the successful formulation and implementation of national development plans depend on the proper selection of project information on population levels, production quantities of goods required, prices, and export and input statistics. These are normally given in general and broad terms by national plans but are segregated at a project level and require the participation of various stakeholders. As a result, projects should be planned according to their contribution to the attainment of the final national objectives or provide linkage to other sectors. At this stage, it is vital to note that national development objectives are closely interrelated. This relationship is very complex: its nature differs from country to country and from time to time within the same country. Its characteristic features are dynamic and sometimes complementary. The common characteristic is that for these to succeed, the stakeholders must be identified to play an active role in the project planning process. If project planning was done in isolation from the national development plans, it would be very difficult to coordinate the development efforts of a country. Coordination between the different sectors and the investors would be difficult without an organ to provide the development guidelines and information needed. When it comes to evaluating the project, this will be much more difficult as projects are evaluated according to the expected linkages with other projects and the extent to which they contribute to the overall development objectives within the sector.

It would be entirely incorrect to state that project planning cannot be accomplished without overall development plans. A project can still be planned without development plans. While it may be true that project analysis requires a great deal of knowledge about existing and potential projects and employment figures, which can only be obtained from the aggregate plan, it is still possible to have individual project plans. Countries like the United States of America have no overall central planning institutions. However, the information system is well developed, and investors find it easier to collect it than their counterparts in less developed countries (LDCs). The bottom–line is that even if the country has no central coordinating body for projects, the concerned government should have its own objectives and policy guidelines and, above all, the influence and the means to control and ensure that the investments are channeled into the right sectors that promote development.

3.3. Challenges Faced by Stakeholders

Stakeholders face various challenges in executing their duties to ensure that projects are completed on time and run within budget. Indigenous people, multinational corporations, governments, and development agencies, enter encounters with presuppositions about each other's motives, culture, and rights (Sooli, 2020, a). Cuts International (2009) identified several challenges pertaining to the management of trade policy projects. These are itemized as follows:

- Limited technical and human capacity to undertake effective project management
- Lack of resources to establish and ensure effective functioning of stakeholder consultative mechanisms
- Lack of adequate and timely coordination among government ministries on trade issues
- Institutional weaknesses in the government machinery
- Lack of effective relationships and trust between the various stakeholders

4. Discussions – Framework for Stakeholder Participation

While several methods are used in analyzing stakeholders, the participation matrix technique provides more information on the roles of the stakeholders in managing projects. The tool aims to identify and describe the stakeholders in terms of their attributes, interests, and resources. The technique assists in identifying which stakeholders to involve and in which way based on their resources. The other technique used in stakeholder analysis is the importance influence matrix, which identifies stakeholders who are risky to the project, those who need to need to be protected, those who have a very strong relationship with the management team, and those stakeholders to be ignored and paid less attention to. The actor analysis checklist technique is meant to identify stakeholders' primary interests, their position in decision-making, and their corresponding impact on the project. The task analysis checklist tool, on the other hand, discusses the roles and responsibilities that each of the stakeholders plays in the project, while the Venn diagram technique examines the relative weight allocated to each stakeholder in decision making and the extent to which they collaborate with each other and share information. Very useful techniques in identifying key stakeholders and involving them in the management of the projects, especially during monitoring and evaluation. However, none of these techniques provides a joint and comprehensive picture of the analysis of the stakeholders.

Nastran (2013) uses a tool that classifies the stakeholders into:

- Those to inform,
- Those to consult,
- Those to partner with and
- Those to control

This classification has to be carried out throughout the stages of the project. The writer notes that the salience of different stakeholder groups varies during various project stages. Consequently, the writer concludes that the perception of how and to what extent those stakeholders should participate also varies.

Each technique seems to provide inadequate and insufficient information on the factors needed to fully describe the stakeholders to assess their participation in development ventures. The proposed framework attempts to provide a platform required to have a deeper insight into the attributes of the stakeholders for use in the implementation and management of development projects. The proposed model describes the stakeholders in detail so that their attributes can be well-understood, making it easier to incorporate into project management for maximum impact. It gives an insight into who all the stakeholders are and provides a framework through which their participation can be anchored. It identifies and narrates the stakeholders in terms of their attributes, interrelationships, concerns, and interests. The framework has to be undertaken throughout the life cycle of the projects and at different stages of the project development to enhance and promote a positive impact on the project.

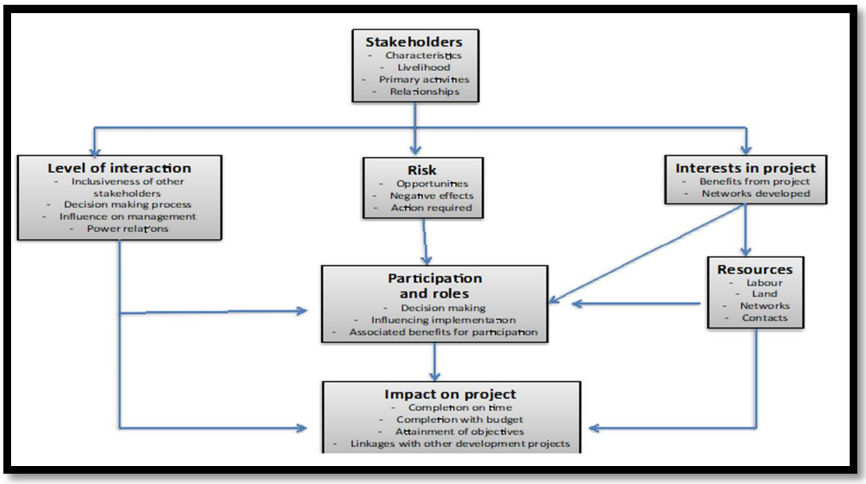

Figure 2: Framework for the Analysis of Stakeholder Participation

The stakeholder will have to be identified in the intervention as a starting point. The most cited definition of a stakeholder is that of Freeman (1984). According to him, a stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievements of a firm's objectives. Using the definition stated above, all the stakeholders involved in a project or venture have to be identified. The technique ensures that the identified stakeholders are described in terms of their attributes, values, norms, and composition to the project. In order to make the analysis more inclusive and comprehensive, the following design could be used:

Stakeholders involved directly in the project	Stakeholders involved indirectly in the project
Stakeholders affected positively by implementation or outcome	Stakeholders affected negatively by implementation or outcome

Table 1: Stakeholder Identification and Analysis Tool

The characteristics should include that which best describes the stakeholder. It is meant to understand the major attributes of the stakeholders to fully involve them in the management of the project. This description may include information such as; what the stakeholder does economically, socially, membership, location, urban or rural, national, regional, and the degree of influence in the area.

Once the stakeholders have been identified and described, this will assist the development partners in undertaking three tasks:

- Identify the interests of each stakeholder in the intervention,
- Assess the risks they pose to the project or development venture and Document the level of interaction between them

The tasks will inherently assist in identifying their levels of participation and assigned roles in the implementation and management of the outputs and outcomes of the project. The interests the stakeholders have in the project will consequently determine the amount and level of resources they can voluntarily commit to for the attainment of the development objectives. This will contribute directly to the positive impact on the project.

The level of interaction between the stakeholders will identify and reinforce the need for partnerships necessary for the project's impact. Therefore, through the participation of the stakeholders and defining their roles, the impact of the project can be ascertained and maximized.

The end results in the framework will be the stakeholder matrix shown below.

1. Stakeholders	**2. Description of Stakeholder**	**3. Impact on Project**	**4. Resources Available**	**5. Risks to Project**	**6. Level of Interaction**	**7. Concerns and Interests**	**8. Role in Project**
1							
2							
3							

Table 2: Stakeholder Participation Matrix

5. Conclusions

The framework attempts to demonstrate that stakeholder participation and improving coordination between the various players is a vital linkage to enhancing the impact on the project. This can be done adequately by the effective involvement of stakeholders and defining who they are, assessing their level of interaction, the risks they pose to the project, their concerns and interests, and stating their various roles in the implementation and management of projects leading to their impact on the project. Building knowledge of the stakeholder expectations through the proposed framework could facilitate their participation and subsequent involvement in project activities. However, this participation has to be balanced between the stakeholders and the project needs for maximum positive impact and success of the project.

Though the study is inconclusive, empirical data can be collected for this model/participation framework.

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