



Stakeholder Engagement in Formulation and Implementation of Development Plans in Secondary Schools in Temeke Municipality in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Ingia Madika Mtenga^{1*}, Daniel Oduor Onyango², Demetria Mkulu³

^{1,2,3} St. Augustine University of Tanzania

Correspondence e-mail * : ingiamtenga@gmail.com

Abstract: This study assessed the level of stakeholders' participation in decision making during the formulation of School Development Plans (SDPs) in public secondary schools within Temeke Municipality, Tanzania. Guided by Participatory Governance Theory, the research adopted a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative data from interviews and document reviews. The findings revealed that stakeholder participation in SDP formulation remains limited and uneven across different groups. While local government education officers and community leaders were actively involved, other stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students, and NGOs were inconsistently engaged, often restricted to consultative or implementation roles. The study also found that although most students were aware of the SDP, their contributions were rarely integrated into final decisions. Similarly, school board members and Ward Education Officers were largely excluded from strategic discussions despite their governance and operational expertise. These findings highlight a predominantly top-down planning approach that undermines inclusivity, ownership, and accountability in school development planning. The study concludes that strengthening participatory mechanisms, enhancing communication channels, and institutionalizing inclusive planning structures are essential for fostering transparency, collective ownership, and sustainability of SDPs in public secondary schools.

Keyword : Formulation and Implementation, Stakeholder Engagement, School Development Plans

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Introduction

Stakeholder engagement is a critical component of effective educational planning and governance, as it fosters accountability, inclusivity, and shared responsibility among teachers, parents, students, and community members. Globally, active participation of stakeholders enhances decision-making by ensuring that educational objectives align with community needs while promoting transparency in resource allocation (Epstein, 2011; UNESCO, 2017). Through participatory approaches, stakeholders contribute diverse perspectives that support curriculum improvement, infrastructure development, and student performance (Anderson, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2012). UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that inclusive governance is

essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on equitable access to quality education. Countries adopting participatory planning frameworks, such as those outlined in UNESCO's Framework for Action 2030, demonstrate stronger alignment between education policy and local priorities.

Internationally, studies have shown varying levels of stakeholder involvement in school development planning. For example, in Indonesia, Fransiskus et al. (2021) found that experts often prepared strategic school plans without meaningful stakeholder participation, which undermined ownership and implementation success. Similarly, Yan (2023) in China emphasized that development planning in primary and secondary schools improves quality and innovation but faces challenges such as limited resources, teacher training gaps, and digital inequality. In Sub-Saharan Africa, participatory planning has been identified as a key strategy for addressing educational inequities and resource shortages (Uwezo, 2020). Countries like Kenya and Ghana have demonstrated that active community involvement through parent-teacher associations and school management committees enhances transparency and academic performance (Dunne et al., 2017; Yamoah & Quansah, 2025). However, limited capacity, weak policy frameworks, and socio-cultural barriers continue to constrain stakeholder engagement in many parts of the region.

In Tanzania, several policies and legal frameworks including the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2016/17–2020/21 and 2021/22–2025/26, and the School Quality Assurance (SQA) Policy of 2017 emphasize participatory planning in schools (MoEST, 2016; 2017b; 2021; 2023). The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) mandates schools to prepare and regularly update Whole School Development Plans (WSDPs) that involve parents, teachers, and local authorities in addressing challenges related to enrolment, infrastructure, and academic outcomes. These frameworks promote accountability and encourage school communities to set measurable goals, monitor progress, and adapt plans to emerging needs. However, as noted in policy reviews, the effectiveness of these plans depends largely on how well they are updated and integrated into the daily management practices of schools (MoEST, 2016).

Despite these initiatives, empirical evidence suggests that stakeholder engagement in Tanzanian secondary schools remains limited. Nyanda et al. (2023) reported that many heads of schools involve only a few stakeholders in strategic planning, resulting in weak ownership and low motivation during implementation. Similarly, Jonas (2022) found that inadequate government funding constrained stakeholder participation in Tabora, while Seni and Onyango (2021) observed that parents in Nyamagana District rarely communicate with teachers, reducing their influence on students' progress. In Temeke Municipality, ineffective implementation of School Development Plans (SDPs) has been linked to bureaucratic inefficiencies, tokenistic consultations, and resource shortages (Mbunda, 2021; Nyanda et al., 2023).

Although policy frameworks encourage inclusivity, limited financial support and urbanization pressures have led to overcrowded schools and poorly resourced infrastructure, weakening the collaborative foundation necessary for sustainable educational development in Tanzania.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of stakeholder engagement in School Development Plans (SDPs) globally, secondary schools in Temeke Municipality continue to face significant challenges in effectively involving key stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and local authorities in both the formulation and implementation of these plans. While policies like Tanzania's Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) and School Quality Assurance (SQA) Framework emphasize participatory planning, empirical evidence reveals a gap between policy expectations and practice. Studies in Tanzania, including Nyanda et al. (2023) and Jonas (2022), highlight that stakeholder participation is often minimal, with heads of schools excluding critical voices during decision-making. This limited engagement results in poorly prioritized projects, weak ownership of plans, and ultimately, ineffective implementation. In Temeke, rapid urbanization worsens these issues, as competing priorities and resource disparities further marginalize stakeholder input, particularly from parents and communities in low-income areas.

The consequences of this disengagement are profound. Schools struggle with incomplete infrastructure projects due to plans that fail to reflect local needs. For instance, while SDPs may technically align with national goals, their relevance diminishes when stakeholders like teachers (who understand classroom realities) or parents (who can mobilize local resources) are side-lined. Preliminary observations in Temeke suggest that bureaucratic system, inadequate funding, and socio-cultural barriers prolong this cycle of exclusion. Without addressing these systemic gaps, SDPs risk becoming compliance exercises rather than tools for transformative school improvement. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate how effective stakeholder engagement can enhance SDP formulation and implementation in secondary schools in Temeke Municipality, with a focus on participation depth, resource mobilization roles, and actionable solutions to existing challenges.

Study Objective

To assess the level of stakeholders' participation in decision making during formulation of School Development Plans (SDPs) in public secondary schools

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Framework

Participatory Governance Theory provides a relevant framework for assessing the level of stakeholders' participation in decision-making during the formulation of School Development Plans (SDPs) in public secondary schools. The theory, as outlined by Chhotray and Stoker (2008), emphasizes inclusivity, transparency, and shared responsibility in governance processes. In the context of school planning, it suggests that involving teachers, parents, students, administrators, and community members in decision-making ensures that educational plans reflect the real needs and priorities of the school community (Fischer, 2012). This aligns directly with the study's objective, as it enables evaluation of how actively stakeholders are included in SDP formulation and whether their participation influences the content and direction of school development policies.

Through the lens of Participatory Governance Theory, this study examined the depth and quality of stakeholder engagement during SDP formulation. The framework highlights the need to assess the extent of stakeholder influence, the transparency of the planning process, and the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms (Ansell & Gash, 2008). By applying these principles, the study evaluated whether stakeholders in public secondary schools are genuinely empowered to contribute or if participation is merely symbolic. Assessing these dimensions helped reveal barriers such as unequal power dynamics, limited access to information, or exclusionary decision-making practices that may restrict meaningful participation. Understanding these factors was essential in determining how far schools in Temeke Municipality have progressed toward inclusive and participatory planning practices.

Finally, the theory emphasizes that genuine participation fosters trust, accountability, and collective ownership of outcomes. When stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in formulating SDPs, they develop a stronger sense of responsibility for implementation and monitoring, leading to sustainable educational improvement. The study therefore used this framework to assess whether existing participation mechanisms in Temeke promote collaboration and long-term commitment among stakeholders. By identifying gaps in trust, communication, or follow-through, the research provided insights into how schools can strengthen participatory decision-making and ensure that SDPs are community-driven, transparent, and effectively implemented.

2. Empirical Literature Review

The study conducted by Paraiso (2022) focused on "Stakeholders' Involvement in School-Based Programs of Gosoon Elementary School in Barangay. The study employed a mixed-method approach; the researcher employed a validated questionnaire based on the PESTEL framework (Political, Economic, Social,

Technological, Environmental, Legal) alongside focus group discussions and interviews with 30 purposively selected stakeholders teachers, parents, and barangay officials. The findings revealed a high level of stakeholder involvement, with political factors scoring the highest (mean = 3.49), indicating strong awareness and engagement in educational policies, while technological factors scored lowest (mean = 3.38), though access to computers for learners helped mitigate this gap. Stakeholders actively contributed to infrastructure development and resource provision, driven by values of civic responsibility and educational support. The study concludes that stakeholder engagement is essential for successful school-based initiatives and recommends enhancing technological capacity, maintaining recognition of stakeholder contributions, and encouraging deeper involvement in planning and evaluation processes to strengthen educational outcomes.

Agbenyo et al. (2021) conducted a study in Ghana's Upper West Region examining stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation of educational projects. Using qualitative methods including key informant interviews with purposively sampled participants, the researchers found that while participatory approaches empowered local stakeholders, significant gaps remained in the inclusion of women and youth, along with limited capacity among beneficiaries. The study's emphasis on how resource constraints and knowledge gaps hinder meaningful participation directly informs the current study's need to examine similar barriers in Temeke's context. Particularly relevant is their finding that even well intentioned participatory systems can exclude vulnerable groups unless deliberate inclusion mechanisms are established a crucial consideration for ensuring equitable stakeholder engagement in Tanzanian school development planning.

The case study conducted by Mutale (2019) in Zambia provides crucial insights into local stakeholder dynamics through qualitative examination of three secondary schools. The research revealed stark disparities in participation levels, with parents being substantially more engaged than NGOs or business communities. This finding highlights a critical gap in the current literature that the Temeke study can address by specifically examining why certain stakeholder groups disengage from school development processes. Mutale's use of McGregor's Theory X/Y and stakeholder engagement theory provides a valuable theoretical framework that could be adapted to analyze power dynamics in Tanzanian school governance.

Nyanda et al. (2023) investigated stakeholder involvement in strategic planning for organizational performance in public secondary schools in Arusha Region, Tanzania. Using a convergent mixed-methods design anchored in the McKinsey 7s Model, the study collected data from 595 respondents through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Findings revealed only moderate levels of stakeholder involvement in planning processes, with key stakeholders often excluded. This partial engagement resulted in low ownership of

strategic plans and poor implementation outcomes. The researchers emphasized that school leaders must actively involve all relevant stakeholders in planning to enhance commitment and execution. This study highlights a critical gap in Tanzanian schools' participatory planning processes that the current research in Temeke could address by exploring specific barriers to comprehensive stakeholder engagement in that context.

Methodology

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach to assess comprehensively stakeholder participation in School Development Plan formulation in Temeke Municipality's public secondary schools. The research design began with quantitative data collection through questionnaires to measure participation levels, followed by qualitative interviews to explore the underlying dynamics and contextual factors influencing engagement. Using a combination of random and purposive sampling, the study gathered perspectives from diverse stakeholders including school administrators, teachers, parents, and education officials, ensuring broad representation. The methodology integrated statistical analysis of quantitative data with thematic analysis of qualitative insights, reinforced by documentary review and ethical safeguards, to provide valid and reliable findings about participatory decision-making processes in educational planning.

Findings and Discussion

Involvement of Stakeholders in Formulation and Implementation of SDP

To attempt specific objective the study collected data from teachers, students, WEO, Head of schools, and Board members. The purpose was to find out the extent of stakeholders engagement in the formulation and implementation of School Development Plan (SDP). The first question asked to teachers on the level of stakeholders' participation in decision making during formulation of SDPs and their response presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Stakeholders in Formulation and Implementation of SDP

Descriptive Statistics						
S/N	Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
i	School board members involved in setting priorities during SDP planning	16	1.00	4.00	2.00	1.03
ii	Parents invited to contribute ideas and feedback during the design of SDP activities.	16	1.00	4.00	2.06	1.06

iii	Teachers consulted during the drafting and finalization stages of the SDP document.	16	1.00	3.00	2.00	0.89
iv	NGOs involved in planning and implementation of SDP	16	1.00	4.00	2.50	0.97
v	WEO consulted during the preparation of SDP	16	1.00	4.00	2.13	1.09

Source: Field Data, 2025

Based on descriptive statistics from 16 teacher respondents, perceptions of stakeholder involvement in School Development Plan (SDP) formulation reveal a pattern of moderate yet inconsistent engagement. Key internal stakeholders school board members, teachers, and parents show mean scores hovering around 2.00 (“Often”), indicating their regular but not consistent inclusion. This is particularly significant for teachers, who, as primary plan implementers, require deeper integration. Conversely, external stakeholders like Ward Education Officers and NGOs demonstrate lower involvement (means of 2.13 and 2.50, respectively), with NGOs’ engagement bordering on “Rarely,” highlighting a missed opportunity for external expertise and resources and ultimately pointing to a need for more systematic and inclusive participation to strengthen SDP effectiveness.

The findings indicate that while the planning process strongly influenced by formal, institutional stakeholders such as government officials and community leaders ensuring policy alignment this top-down approach results in limited grassroots participation from teachers and parents, whose direct experience is crucial for developing practical and relevant School Development Plans. This marginalization, coupled with the underutilization of NGOs, risks producing plans with limited ownership and sustainability. Therefore, addressing these participation gaps through more inclusive and deliberate engagement strategies is essential to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the planning process, a conclusion that aligns with Paraiso's (2022) emphasis on stakeholder involvement as a critical factor in shaping successful education policies.

Awareness of Students on School Development Plan (SDP)

The study also asked students to get information of stakeholder's involvement on formulation and implementation of SDP. First, the students asked if they are aware of the School Development Plan (SDP) in their school and their response presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Students' aware of SDP

Students' aware of the School Development Plan (SDP)		
	Frequency	Percent
YES	58	72.5
NO	22	27.5
Total	80	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2025

The findings on students' awareness of the School Development Plan (SDP) presented in Table 2 revealed that, a majority of students are aware of the plan. Out of 80 respondents, 72.5% indicated that they were aware of the SDP, while 27.5% reported that they were not. This high level of awareness among students suggests that information about the SDP is, to some extent, disseminated within schools, which reflects positively on the efforts of school administrations in Temeke Municipality to communicate the existence of the plan to the student body. Nevertheless, the fact that over a quarter of the students remain unaware points to a notable communication gap. As primary stakeholders and direct beneficiaries of the SDP, students' lack of awareness may indicate deficiencies in communication strategies and missed opportunities for meaningful engagement.

This finding carries several implications for stakeholder engagement. Firstly, the high awareness rate (72.5%) provides a solid foundation for student participation, as awareness is the initial step toward effective involvement. Secondly, the 27.5% of students who are unaware highlight weaknesses in inclusive communication that schools must address to ensure all students are adequately informed. Lastly, since most students know about the SDP, the focus can now move from general awareness to the quality and depth of involvement. This opens up further inquiry into whether aware students feel their views sought and valued in both the planning and implementation of the SDP, thereby linking directly to the study's objectives on participation, contribution, and challenges to stakeholder engagement.

Involvement of Students on School Development Plan (SDP)

Furthermore, the question of awareness among students followed by the question on how they involved in SDP activities and the findings presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Students' involvement in SDP activities

The involvement of students involved in SDP activities		
	Frequency	Percent
Through student council	56	70.0
Through surveys	8	10.0
Not involved	16	20.0
Total	80	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2025

The findings on students' involvement in School Development Plan (SDP) activities as presented in Table 4.5 indicated that, a majority participate actively through formal channels. Out of 80 respondents, 70% reported participating through the student council, while 10% were involved through surveys. However, 20% of the students indicated that they were not involved in any SDP activities. This suggests that while a significant portion of students are engaged in planning and feedback mechanisms, there is still a minority that remains unengaged. The implications for stakeholder engagement are clear. The high involvement through the student council (70%) demonstrates that existing structures can effectively channel student input into SDP activities. Participation via surveys, although smaller (10%), provides an additional avenue for gathering student perspectives. The 20% non-involvement highlights a gap that schools need to address to ensure that all students, especially those outside formal leadership structures, have opportunities to contribute. Strengthening inclusive participation strategies could help bridge this gap, enhance the representativeness of student input, and improve the overall effectiveness of SDPs.

Stakeholders Participation on Planning and Implementation of SDP

The study also used Likert scale for students to rate the participation of stakeholders on planning and implementation of SDP. The findings of students' perception presented on Table 4.

Table 4.
Participation of Stakeholders on Planning and Implementation of SDP

Descriptive Statistics						
S/N	Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
i	I helped propose ideas for new school projects included in the school development plan.	80	1.00	4.00	2.90	1.07
ii	I participated in meetings organized to gather student input during SDP preparation.	80	1.00	4.00	1.88	0.97
iii	I worked with other students to develop proposals for better facilities or academic programs within SDP.	80	1.00	4.00	1.93	0.92

Source: Field Data, 2025

The findings in Table 4 shows descriptive statistics from 80 student respondents. This analysis explores the extent of student involvement in the formulation of the School Development Plan (SDP). Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = Always, 2 = Often, 3 = Rarely, and 4 = Never. The data reveals a consistent pattern where students are actively engaged in informal, grassroots activities but show limited involvement in formal, high-level planning stages. For instance, the mean scores for participating in meetings organized to gather student input (1.8750), and working collaboratively on proposals for facilities or academic programs (1.9250) all fall between "Always" and "Often."

In addition, these results suggest that schools have established mechanisms for collecting student input at the foundational level, and students are utilizing these opportunities. However, student engagement diminishes significantly, as the planning process formalized. The mean score of 2.9000 for helping to propose ideas for new school projects indicates that such participation occurs "Rarely." The findings carry important implications for the study's objective on assessing stakeholder participation. The data suggests that, student involvement follows a "token" participation model consultative rather than collaborative. Although students invited to share their views early on, they largely excluded from critical decision-making processes such as prioritization, formal proposal development, and final review.

Moreover, the members of school board involved through interview and their response recorded as quotes followed by discussion and implication.

Member of school board 1.

"Honestly, we're not at the table when the planning happens. The head of school and a few teachers formulate the 'School Development Plan,' and then we're given the final product. Our role seems to be to rubber-stamp it and then get a call when they need us to sort out a problem, like finding extra funds for a project or mediating a parent dispute. It feels like we're the emergency response team, not the planners."

This quote highlights a significant disconnect between the school's administrative leadership (head of schools and teachers) and the board members. The board member feels excluded from the initial, crucial stage of formulation. The use of the phrase "rubber-stamp" indicates a lack of meaningful involvement and suggests their role is perceived as merely ceremonial approval rather than active collaboration. This situation points to a top-down approach to school planning. The head of school, as the school's chief executive, may believe they are streamlining the process by involving a select few. The most significant implication is a weakened School Development Plan. Without the board's strategic input, the plan may be less realistic, financially unsound, or fail to address the broader community needs and governance issues.

Member of school board 2

"They involve us, but it's more about 'how' we can help them achieve the plan, not 'what' the plan should be. We get a call when they want us to approve a budget item for a new classroom or when there's a serious discipline issue with a student. The plan itself is set in stone by the time it reaches us. We're seen as the people who get things done or fix problems, not the people who help figure out what needs to be done in the first place."

This quote reinforces the theme of reactive involvement. The board member distinguishes between being part of the "how" (implementation) and the "what" (formulation). The examples given approving a budget or addressing a discipline issue are classic functions of a school board during the operational phase of a plan. However, the board member feels that this role is a substitute for, rather than a follow-up to, strategic involvement. The phrase "set in stone" conveys a sense of finality and a lack of opportunity for meaningful input.

This perspective reveals a fundamental misunderstanding or misapplication of the governance management distinction. While a board's role is typically to oversee and ensure the implementation of a strategic plan, it must first be involved in its creation. A healthy governance model involves the board providing strategic direction and oversight during the planning phase, setting the vision and priorities. The management (head of schools and staff) then translates this vision into a detailed plan.

The situation described reverses this, making the board a subordinate implementer and a trouble-shooter rather than a strategic partner.

The study further involved Ward Education Officers (WEO) and their response presented in quote followed by discussion.

Quote from Ward Education Officer (WEO)

"We know our job is to ensure that the School Development Plans are being put into action at the ward level. We are constantly visiting schools, checking on projects, and ensuring that the resources that have been promised are actually being utilized properly. A big part of that is our involvement in fundraising activities and seeking out donors. We work with the school boards to identify potential sponsors and we become the link between the school and these organizations. We have a lot of experience on the ground, so we know what needed and what kind of support to look for."

This quote provides a crucial perspective from a Ward Education Officer, a key figure in the education system. The WEO's statement clearly defines their role as being exclusively within the implementation stage of the SDP, not the formulation stage. They are the on-the-ground agents responsible for resource mobilization and oversight, effectively acting as facilitators for the school's boards in securing funds from donors and sponsors. The quote highlights a significant and potentially detrimental flaw in the SDP process: a lack of involvement from those with valuable, on-the-ground knowledge during the strategic planning phase.

The implication of this limited involvement is significant. An SDP formulated without the input of WEOs may be divorced from the practical realities of the ward. It might set unrealistic goals, overlook critical needs that are only visible at the grassroots level, or propose strategies that are difficult to fund or implement given the local context. By restricting WEOs' roles to that of implementers and fundraisers, the system is missing a key opportunity to create more realistic, contextually relevant, and ultimately, development that is successful plans. This approach can lead to a gap between the ambitious vision laid out in the SDP and the on-the-ground capacity to execute it, potentially leading to frustration and a failure to achieve the desired educational outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The study concluded that stakeholder participation in formulating School Development Plans in Temeke Municipality is limited and uneven. A top-down approach predominates, with consistent involvement largely restricted to government officials and community leaders. Key groups like teachers, parents, and school board members often sidelined during the crucial early stages of planning. Furthermore, while students are often aware of the plans, their involvement is merely consultative

and holds little influence over final decisions. Ultimately, despite existing policies, this inadequate and non-inclusive engagement undermines the ownership, practicality, and effectiveness of the development plans.

Recommendations

The study recommends that school administrations strengthen participatory mechanisms to ensure all stakeholders are meaningfully involved from the initial stages of SDP formulation. This can be achieved through structured consultation forums, planning workshops, and clear communication strategies that enhance transparency. Schools should institutionalize student representation in planning committees and expand collaboration with NGOs to leverage external expertise. Additionally, capacity building programs for school heads and board members are essential to promote understanding of participatory governance principles. For future research, investigators should explore how engagement quality influences SDP implementation outcomes and conduct comparative studies across regions to identify contextual factors affecting stakeholder involvement.

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