

Article

Participating Stakeholders in Decision Making of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria as Panacea for Tertiary Education Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper looked at the benefits of participating stakeholders in the decision-making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper is a position paper that depends on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from online and print publications. The paper identified a stable academic environment, effective implementation of tertiary education goals, quality tertiary education and job satisfaction, and adherence to democratic principles, as those things that lead to substantive decisions and outcomes and lead to accountability and transparency in the system as benefits of participating stakeholders in the decision making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper concluded that the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is vital to the realization of tertiary education goals in Nigeria. The paper recommends that the government and the agencies in charge of tertiary education management in Nigeria should ensure stakeholders in the Nigerian tertiary institutions are always engaged and consult before making policies and taking a decision that directly and indirectly affects the operation and welfare of the staff in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Decision Making, Tertiary Education, Stakeholders

1. Introduction

Tertiary education in Nigeria is confronted with many problems. One such problem is the poor engagement of critical stakeholders in policy formulation, decision-making and making and poor stakeholders' participation in policy planning and project implementation (Femi, 2018, Ogunode, Ayoko, & Orifah, 2023). This development has affected the development and growth of the education system in Nigeria.

The critical stakeholders like the students, parents, private institutions, host communities, trade and organized unions like the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities, (SSANU) and National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT) are often left out of critical policy formulation and decision taking on the management and administration of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Following the above development, Femi (2018) noted that the various stakeholders in Nigerian tertiary institutions have been desiring and calling for more participation and engagement in the decision-making processes regarding tertiary education in Nigeria. The essence is to enhance sustainable peace and development since effective communication is when dependents are carried along in the decision-making process that affects them (Ayeni, Sani, & Uzoigwe, 2019).

Stakeholders' participatory decision-making, helps improve the quality of decisions, increasing the understanding of the group and also their commitment to the decision-

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making process. Participation in decision-making connotes consultation, delegation of authority or group consensus. It involves judging, analyzing and selecting a particular alternative from so many possible choices. Any effective action carried out in the school is a result of the right administration made (Nwanna, et al, 2016).

It is based on the foregoing that this paper seeks to discuss the benefits of participating stakeholders in the decision-making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Clarification of terms

Concept of Tertiary Education

Tertiary Education is the type of education that a person undergoes after the basic secondary education. It could be in a University, Polytechnic or college of education. Tertiary education is post-secondary and this is where students specialize in the core area of their pursuit which could be sciences, arts and vocational (Johnstone, Arora & Experton, 1998). Tertiary institution is undertaken in tertiary institutions; hence it is a micro section of the larger society (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024). Tertiary education prepares the individual for the world of work with a study of the proper theories and relevant hands-on experience. The curriculum of tertiary institutions is developed to ensure that students can meet the challenges of the workplace and also ensure that all the relevant materials necessary for this are available for effective training and experience (Mgboji, Uzoegwu, & Onah, n.d). More importantly, the curriculum is one of the material resources aiding the attainment of tertiary education (Ayeni, Munkaila, & Ogunode, 2024). Tertiary institutions, functioning as microcosms within the broader society, are purposefully structured for teaching programs, research endeavours, and community service. They represent an organized subset of the larger society, comprising diverse individuals with varying cultures, lifestyles, and values (Ogunode & Odo, 2023).

The National Policy on Education (2013) defines tertiary education as the educational phase following Post Basic Education. It encompasses institutions like universities, Inter-University Centres (e.g., Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village), Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and specialized entities like Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology, and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Tertiary education is an educational institution that is saddled with the responsibilities of teaching, research and community service implementation for manpower development and nation-building (Ogunode, Awah & Suleiman, 2024). Ogunode, Edinoh and Okolie (2023) conceptualized tertiary education as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and for the total transformation of society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education is also seen as post-basic and secondary school education that enhances advanced teaching, research and community service (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Ogwuche, 2024).

The realization of the objectives of tertiary education in Nigeria depends on the participation and collaboration with international organizations, government agencies and stakeholders in tertiary education management. The roles of stakeholders in the effective management and implementation of tertiary education programmes cannot be underestimated. The attainments of the goals of tertiary education partially depend on the active involvement of the tertiary education stakeholders.

Concept of Stakeholders

According to Asiyai (2015), stakeholders are categorized as either internal or external. Internal stakeholders encompass the government, which owns higher education institutions or service providers; students, who are the focal point of university education systems; academics, who are perpetually involved in teaching, research, and community service; university administrators, who oversee institutional operations and provide

leadership; non-academic staff; management personnel; principal officers; directors of institutes; heads of departments; and internal members of the governing council. According to McCowan, Janmaat, and Rao (2016), higher education encompasses a multitude of stakeholders, including lecturers, government officials, students, school proprietors, parents, the Nigeria Universities Commission, and community leaders. The ideas, attitudes, interests, and concerns of various stakeholders are distinct. Collaborative efforts are essential for attaining educational objectives. Consequently, the involvement of each stakeholder is demonstrated in the following elements. University stakeholders are individuals or groups with a vested interest in the activities and programs of universities due to their resources within the institutions. University stakeholders are persons invested in an organization's operations due to their interest in the institution's progress and development (Ogunode, et al 2023a). Lee (2021) asserts that stakeholders shift their focus from the broader community to individuals within the community who own a vested interest in higher education and those impacted by its policies. These individuals participate in the attainment of educational objectives. Individuals involved in the attainment of educational aims and objectives in higher education are referred to as stakeholders. They are individuals dedicated to the advancement of the institution (Oduwaiye, & Famaye, 2023). The efficacy of higher education in Nigeria is contingent upon the degree of stakeholder engagement in policy reform. The advancement of any nation is a reaction to ongoing policy modifications driven by the requirements and desires of its populace. Consequently, stakeholders collaborating effectively during policy transformations indicates a nation progressing. Consequently, policy reform aims to enhance and promote stakeholder participation. Any unilateral approach would adversely impact the nation (Oduwaiye, et al 2023).

From the above, tertiary education stakeholders are active members that are recognized by laws to be part of institutions and they are there to ensure the objectives of tertiary education are achieved as planned. Tertiary education stakeholders are members of the tertiary institutions whose aims are to ensure that the tertiary institutions' programmes are implemented by those in charge of the management and they are actively involved by contributing their materials and human resources to realize the objectives. Tertiary education stakeholders include; students, parents, lecturers, non-teaching staff, unions, government agencies, international institutions, tertiary institutions managers and administrators, host community, National Universities Commission [NUC], National Commission for Colleges of Education [NCCE] and the National Board for Technical Education [NBTE] and religious institutions. One of the cardinal functions of the tertiary education stakeholder is to engage with relevant government and private institutions in policy-making and decision-making as it affects the institutions. Ensure effective decision-making and implementation are some of the functions of the stakeholders.

Concept of Decision-Making

Ahaotu (2023) describes a decision as a determination to execute an activity, adopting a definitive stance or a resolute position on an issue to induce favorable alterations in the overall system. The scholar defined decision-making as the conscious determination of future actions and the guiding principles for those actions. It involves making choices that align with our objectives and goals, and pertains to actions taken within governmental, organizational, and group contexts to formulate, adopt, implement, evaluate, or effect policy changes. Such decisions may transpire at any level, whether in governmental, organizational, or group contexts. Decision-making is regarded as a cognitive process that culminates in the selection of a course of action from various alternatives to achieve a definitive action or decision for organizational development (Ogbaji & Oti, 2016). They claimed that each decision-making process results in a definitive choice that may or may not stimulate the activity necessary for knowledge production. It suggests that in school administration, decision-making serves as a basis for recognizing and selecting alternatives according to the needs, values, and preferences of the decision-makers in the

institution's development. Decision-making is fundamental to management. It is a daily concern for managers across many organizations. Decision-making entails establishing premises, identifying alternative actions, evaluating them in relation to the intended objectives, and selecting the optimal alternative course of action. Decision-making skills encompass the capacity to recognize a problem, gather pertinent data for comprehension, formulate alternative strategies based on the analyzed data, and make a logical selection from the available options to resolve an issue or achieve established goals (Ebunu, 2019). The limited access to education has been shown to lead to a lack of public participation and engagement in governmental decision-making (Ayeni, 2017). Adzaga (2020) delineated decision-making as follows: promising: instilling hope and stimulating curiosity; identifying alternatives: exploring additional options; evaluating alternatives concerning the desired objectives: determining which alternative aligns with the goals; and selecting an alternative, which entails making a decision: The optimal alternative is one that facilitates an individual in making the correct decision. Decision-making may be influenced by emotions, sound judgment, or a combination of both. Cole (2004) observed that individuals in managerial or administrative positions must regard decision-making as an essential aspect of their responsibilities. Irrespective of the principal's rapport with staff, choices that serve the school's best interests must be made based on available information. Decision-making was categorized into three dimensions: decision behavior, decision role, and decision involvement. Decision behavior analysis encompasses problem identification, alternative determination, solution method selection, and efficacy assessment. The decision-making function include curriculum and instruction, staff personnel, student personnel, financial and business management, school facilities, services, and community connections. Decision involvement pertains to the board of education, the superintendent of schools, central office staff, principals, teachers, and students (Lipliam & Lloeh, 1974).

The concept of decision-making entails identifying the problem, exploring alternatives, evaluating, and selecting the most suitable course of action from several options to address the identified issues, managing crises, and resolving unavoidable conflicts (Yates, 2001). Decision-making is predicated on the principle that those impacted by a decision bear the responsibility for its execution; thus, members of an organization should participate in the decision-making process to leverage their expertise in achieving organizational objectives. Decision-making involves recognizing and selecting the optimal alternatives to address problems, hence enhancing productivity and fulfilling organizational objectives (Kanuka & Anderson 2008; Aydin, 2010). The principal's decision-making is a critical responsibility, since it permeates every administrative action related to students, staff, programs, resources, or services. The school principal and other senior management members (vice-chancellor, Bursar, principal, heads of departments, subject coordinators, and heads of school committees) are anticipated to excel in decision-making regarding goal setting, curriculum planning and implementation, as well as the coordination of human and material resources to ensure optimal performance and attainment of established objectives (Ayeni, 2018).

From the above, decision-making can be seen as an organized and planned process leading to selection from many alternatives and finally choosing the appropriate one for implementation. Decision-making is a function of management and other stakeholders that involves a systematic selection of courses of action to address institutional pressing issues from varieties of possibilities. Decision-making is vital to organizational development. Decision-making leads to effective planning, organization and coordination of both human and material resources of the institutions. Decision-making is a practical process of choosing from different alternative solutions to problems by the leaders to realize organizational goals and solve the pressing issues with the final choice.

Process of Decision-Making

Decision-making begins with identifying a problem, mapping out activities and implementing strategies in needed time. The process involves participatory planning, participatory implementation, evaluation and feedback. The decision-making process also involves policies (the definition of objectives), resources (people, money, materials and authority), and means of execution (strategies). In the school setting, the content value of the decision-making process is concerned with the ability of the school principal to be able to identify policy decision that seeks purposeful action; and execute decision that ensures the best coordination of actions.

3. Materials and Methods

The paper is a position paper. The paper used secondary data. The secondary data were obtained from both print and online publication which made up of government documentary, books, international report, journals, conference papers and abstracts. Content analysis and systematic scoping were adopted to select the final literatures used in the paper.

4. Data Analysis

Benefits of Participating Tertiary Institution Stakeholders in Decision-Making of the Institutions in Nigeria,

There are a lot of benefits of participating tertiary education stakeholders in the decision-making process as it affects the institutions. Some of these benefits include; a stable academic environment, effective implementation of tertiary education goals, quality tertiary education and job satisfaction, adherence to democratic principles, leads to substantive decision and outcome and leads to accountability and transparency in the system.

Stable academic environment

Participation of the tertiary education stakeholders in the decision-making process of the institutions helps to guarantee a stable academic environment. When the tertiary institutions' administrators and policymakers involved and fully participate in the various stakeholders of the tertiary institutions in the policy-making, decision making and policy implementation it creates an atmosphere's devoid of conflicts and crises. One of the reasons for protests in Nigerian tertiary institutions among the students, staff and non-teaching staff is that they are not involved in the policy formulation and decision-making that affects the entire institution. The above shows a clear negation of leadership integrity that is expected to exhibit leadership qualities like honesty, forward-lookingness, competency, inspiration, teaching, guidance, intelligence, and creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen (Ayeni, 2018).

Effective implementation of tertiary education programme

Participation of the tertiary education stakeholders in the decision-making of the institutions in Nigeria will aid the effective implementation of the tertiary education programmes in Nigeria. When the various stakeholders in tertiary education in Nigeria are fully engaged in the process of decision-making and taking in the institutions it creates an environment that will support the smooth implementation of the tertiary education programme which includes the teaching, research and provision of community services. Participation in tertiary education by stakeholders like the government can either enhance national development or retards development (Asaju & Ayeni, 2020). Stakeholder involvement in tertiary education decision-making in Nigeria plays an important part, as the purpose of each stakeholder is to reach a common tertiary educational programme through team effort. When multiple stakeholders are engaged, the team effort increases the chances of success in reaching these goals and aids the effective implementation of these programmes. Engaging stakeholders in tertiary educational decision-making is not just a noble idea; it's a necessary strategy for creating teaching and learning environments that are responsive, dynamic, and equitable. This is because it is the responsibility of the

government to provide those facilities that empower them (stakeholders) (Ayeni, Sani, Idris, & Uzoigwe, 2019). This above development is expected to bring about the pursuit of peacebuilding that lies in addressing the root cause of conflict (Ayeni, & Abdullahi, 2024, p. 80). By understanding the roles and contributions of each stakeholder group, the management can work towards a more collaborative and effective tertiary education system. Belasco and Alutto (1975) and also Hoy and Miskel (1992), that participation in decision-making increases teachers' morale and productivity, and these are desirable objectives of the higher institutions and this directly and indirectly has led to the implementation of the cardinal programme.

Quality tertiary education

Quality tertiary education can be realized in an environment that guarantees peace and ensures that all resources are managed optimally. The participation of the tertiary institutions' stakeholders will lead to the agitation of provision of adequate human and materials resources and the commitment of the stakeholders to ensure effective use and efficient utilization of the resources will help to guarantee quality in the system. This will lead to satisfaction and happiness since participatory democracy itself is capable of bringing about political development where there is happiness for the greatest number of citizens (Ayeni & Sani, 2021). Participation in tertiary institutions in the decision-making processes will lead to; quickly identifying key difficulties, challenges or opportunities; creating a better, deeper understanding of the situation, problems, issues, opportunities and options for action; managing single-issues advocates; building better relationships; manage conflict more effectively; build a coalition of support and get it right the first time. All these can lead to a peaceful academic environment that can guarantee quality tertiary education in Nigeria. The task of deciding on educational practice, especially in the management of tertiary education is very important because of the need to improve the quality of interaction among the teaching and learning resource elements. This includes teacher interaction, teacher-learner interaction, learner interaction, teacher-material interaction, and learner-material interaction in the school system. The interactive actions also require adjustment and modification of educational programmes, activities and techniques to improve the teaching-learning process and achieve the set educational goals in secondary schools (Ayeni, 2018). Participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria helps to promote accountability that is directly influencing the delivery of quality education (Ogunode, Obioma, & Belloh, 2023)

Job satisfaction

Participation in decision-making allows stakeholders like the lecturers and non-teaching staff to express their thoughts and share their knowledge with both the school administration and the government representative. The above can enhance human security since people do not suffer as a result of the inability of the relevant authorities to provide those things that are their responsibilities to the people (Ayeni, Andeshi & Uzoigwe, 2022). This not only strengthens the relationship between institutions' administrators and lecturers, but it also fosters a strong sense of teamwork among the staff in the higher institutions. Participation in decision-making, according to Omobude and Igbudu (2012), is an excellent approach for tertiary institution administrators to acquire information about how lecturers operate and where training may be required, both of which contribute to better effectiveness and, ultimately, strong teamwork and performance. Muindi (2011) discovered a considerably strong and positive link between job satisfaction and participation in decision-making. Participation in decision-making becomes an important aspect of school success because job satisfaction is important for teacher effectiveness. Ogunode, Ayoko, & Orifah, (2023) noted that in Nigerian universities, the need for lecturers to participate in decision-making at all levels, that is, at the Council, Senate, Faculty, Departmental and Committee levels, has become imperative for several reasons. In the first place, it will be appreciated that the educational standards of lecturers are probably higher these days. To these lecturers, it may be discovered that

money alone does not give them the satisfaction they need. Authority to make decisions may be more valued by them.

Adheres to democratic principles

Nigeria as a country promote the culture of democracy and a country embraces the notion that people have the right to influence what affects them. Paying attention to the public's ideas, values and issues results in more responsive and democratic governance.

Leads to substantive decisions and outcomes

Participation of tertiary institution stakeholders in Nigeria in the decision-making of the institutions will lead to substantive decisions and outcomes that will better reposition the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Horntvedt, (2024) noted that better results occur when decision-makers have access to:

More information. Stakeholder involvement brings more information to the decision, including scientific or technical knowledge, knowledge about the context where decisions are implemented, institutions involved, history and personalities. More information can make the difference between a good and poor decision.

More perspectives. Additional perspectives expand options and enhance the value of the ultimate decision. The more views you gather in the process of making a decision, the more likely your final choice will meet the most needs and address the most concerns possible.

Increased mutual understanding. Tertiary institutions' stakeholder participation in decision-making provides a forum for decision-makers and stakeholders to understand each others' issues and viewpoints. The discussions broaden the knowledge base as each one contributes to the decision.

Free consultation. Involving the public provides free consultation to public projects. Members of the public bring technical expertise, specific knowledge about the effects of decisions, local experience and history, and other specialized experience to the decision-making process.

Accountability and transparency in the system.

Tertiary institutions' stakeholder involvement in the decision-making of the institutions by the government or agencies of the government will aid and promote accountability and transparency in the allocation of resources. It will help to curtail corruption and every other act of corruption in the tertiary institutions system. This development is expected to help in conflict management that addresses conflict to ensure that there is a peaceful atmosphere that gives room for people to carry out their day-to-day business (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Samuila, 2024). Studies such as the one carried out by Belasco and Alutto (1975) suggested that participation in decision-making may help solve some of these educational problems like an overpopulation of the classroom, curriculum development, inadequate or non-provision of instructional materials and poor quality of leadership. Participation of the stakeholders in the decision-making processes of the higher institutions in Nigeria aids accountability in the system and reduces corruption practices and mismanagement of institutions' resources (Ogunode, et al 2023)

5. Findings

The paper established that the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is vital to the realization of tertiary education goals in Nigeria and a stable academic environment, effective implementation of tertiary education goals, quality tertiary education and job satisfaction, adhering to democratic principles, leads to substantive decision and outcome and leads to accountability and transparency in the system as benefits of participating stakeholders in the decision making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This looked at the benefits of participating stakeholders in the decision-making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper concluded that the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is vital to the realization of tertiary education goals in Nigeria. The paper also identified a stable academic environment, effective implementation of tertiary education goals, quality tertiary education and job satisfaction, adherence to democratic principles, leads to substantive decision and outcome and leads to accountability and transparency in the system as benefits of participating stakeholders in the decision-making of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper recommends that the government and the agencies in charge of tertiary education management in Nigeria should ensure stakeholders in the Nigerian tertiary institutions are always engaged and consult before making policies and taking a decision that directly and indirectly affects the operation and welfare of the staff in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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