



CONTRIBUTION OF THE ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY MAKING ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: STAKEHOLDERS VOICES FROM THE FIELD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the contributions of stakeholders' engagement in educational policymaking as perceived and experienced by various participants in the field. By adopting a phenomenological approach, this study offered a nuanced understanding of stakeholder engagement in educational policy making, shedded light on the subjective experiences and meanings that shaped policy development processes. A total of fourteen (14) participants were considered in this study who joined the in-depth interview and focused group discussion respectively. The findings of this study have significant implications for enhancing participatory governance in education. By highlighting the real-world contributions and experiences of stakeholders in the policy-making process, the study offers valuable insights into how inclusive engagement can lead to more responsive, equitable, and sustainable educational policies. These implications serve as a guide for policymakers, school leaders, and education practitioners in refining their approaches to stakeholder collaboration and in strengthening the overall effectiveness of education systems.

KEYWORDS- *Contribution of the Engagement, Educational Policy Making, Department Of Education, Stakeholders Voices, from the Field*

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of education, stakeholder involvement in policy formulation is essential, as educational policies shape teaching, learning, and institutional development. These policies significantly impact both students and educators, making inclusive, collaborative, and context-sensitive engagement vital for effective governance. This study aims to explore the complex dynamics of educational policy development by examining the roles, motivations, challenges, and contributions of various stakeholders. Through addressing the current research gap, it seeks to highlight the importance of diverse perspectives in creating equitable, efficient, and sustainable education systems.

Stakeholders play a crucial role in educational policy making, influencing decisions and outcomes in schools, as highlighted in the systematic review on educational policy components. This is because stakeholders represent diverse perspectives: students bring their learning experiences to the table, parents advocate for their children's needs, educators offer expertise in curriculum and instruction, and community members provide insights into local contexts. Components of an educational policymaking model in education should account for this rich tapestry of viewpoints. Paying attention to all dimensions and factors from curriculum development to funding allocation – can ensure that educational policies are comprehensive, effective, and ultimately lead to improved quality education for all (Sargheni & Talebi, 2023).

Moreover, Bobrytska (2020) Stakeholders play a crucial role in educational policy making, influencing decisions and outcomes in schools, as highlighted in the systematic review on educational policy components. This is because stakeholders represent diverse perspectives: students bring their learning experiences to the table, parents advocate for their children's needs, educators offer expertise in curriculum and instruction, and community members provide insights into local contexts. Components of an educational policymaking model in education should account for this rich tapestry of viewpoints. Paying attention to all dimensions and factors from curriculum development to funding allocation can ensure that educational policies are comprehensive, effective, and ultimately lead to improved quality education for all. In Ukraine, involving stakeholders in educational policy-making through a bottom-up approach has shown effectiveness. This approach prioritizes input from those directly affected by the policies, fostering a sense of ownership and encouraging student participation. Research suggests that simulations of the bottom-up approach in educational settings can be a powerful tool. By engaging students in mock policy-making processes, these simulations not only equip them with valuable civic skills but also lead to positive changes in their behavior and motivation. This demonstrates the potential of the bottom-up approach to not only shape effective educational legislation in Ukraine but also to empower future generations to be active participants in their educational landscape.

Meanwhile, Stakeholders in the Philippines highlighted barriers like limited resources and industry influence in implementing school policies, emphasizing the need for clearer language and policy coherence. Lack of resources and capacities hinder implementation, leaving schools struggling to develop and enforce healthy food guidelines. Clearer delineation of duties and responsibilities needed, with specific roles assigned to government agencies, schools, and even parents to ensure effective policy execution. This could involve increased budgetary allocations for training, infrastructure, and healthy procurement alongside clear guidelines for food vendors operating near schools (Reeve, 2018).

Also, gaining a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder participation will be essential for enhancing the quality, fairness, and efficiency of education systems on a global scale. By magnifying a range of perspectives, the processes of policy creation can become more inclusive and adaptable. Creating participative and transparent educational governance systems involves



understanding the factors that hinder or support the process. This research will enhance the influence of individuals and groups involved, reinforces the principles of democratic governance, and fosters beneficial societal transformation by harmonizing policies with the requirements and preferences of the community.

The Department of Education emphasizes the importance of engagement in educational policy making, recognizing that it affects various stakeholders and has significant implications for the entire education system. Engaging stakeholders ensures diverse perspectives are considered, ensuring policies are responsive to the needs of various groups. They bring valuable expertise and experience, such as teachers and parents, which can provide insights into the practical implications of proposed policies. This fosters a sense of ownership and buy-in, leading to greater success in achieving policy goals. Engaging stakeholders promotes accountability and transparency, ensuring decisions are made in the public interest and subject to scrutiny. Policies developed with stakeholder input are more likely to be successfully implemented, aligning with democratic governance principles. Additionally, ongoing engagement allows for continuous feedback and adaptation of policies over time, as education is a dynamic field. The Department of Education emphasizes the importance of engagement in educational policy making for creating inclusive, effective, and responsive policies that are well-informed, transparent, and contribute to improving the quality of education for all.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of education, stakeholders refer to persons or groups who have a vested interest in the performance of schools, districts, or the broader public education system. This heterogeneous assemblage include students, families, educators, administrators and their labor unions, corporate executives, civil rights groups, and the general public at large. According to our research, it is crucial to interact with a wide range of stakeholders from the beginning and continuously in order to improve the design of and get widespread support for ambitious educational policies (Bae & Stosich, 2018).

On the other hand, Avison (2010) stated that while there is less empirical literature on the specific roles of stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of school policies, it is evident that stakeholder input is crucial at every stage of the policy process. This study examines the engagement of stakeholders in the creation and execution of school policies aimed at encouraging and facilitating nutritious eating and physical exercise. Canadian instances exemplify the involvement of stakeholders in this particular environment.

Furthermore, stakeholder involvement is a crucial aspect of strategic education governance, offering several benefits. It ensures that policies align with stakeholders' needs and interests, incorporating their knowledge and expertise. This leads to better policy outcomes, better implementation, and greater trust. Policymakers can influence stakes, enhance understanding, and create ownership by stakeholders. Direct contact and dialogues between policy makers and stakeholders can also generate credibility and trust, ultimately improving the overall effectiveness of the policy (Burns et. al. 2016).

In an effort to gain a well-rounded understanding of Hungarian higher education, stakeholder engagement activities were organized to gather input from key organizations. This approach goes beyond simply collecting data; it fosters a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives can be heard and considered. By including the views of these stakeholders, the analysis and recommendations will be more comprehensive and reflect the realities faced by various groups within the Hungarian higher education system. This can lead to the development of more effective solutions that address the needs of students, faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders who play a crucial role in shaping the future of Hungarian education (Tohidian, 2021).

According to Khadija (2022), when stakeholders are actively involved in the educational process, it leads to a multitude of benefits for both teaching and learning. By incorporating the perspectives of parents, teachers, administrators, and even students themselves, educators can tailor their approach to better meet the needs and interests of their learners. This collaborative environment fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, leading to a more engaged student body. Furthermore, stakeholder participation extends beyond the classroom. Stakeholder involvement can enhance efficiency in school management. When parents and community members contribute their skills and expertise, it allows school administrators to distribute tasks and responsibilities more effectively. This frees up valuable resources and allows educators to focus on their core responsibility: facilitating a positive and productive learning environment for all students.

Stakeholders' engagement in educational policy making, particularly in School-Based Management (SBM) policy, presents a mixed picture. While some schools boast very good participation levels, others struggle with minimal involvement. This inconsistency often highlights issues in relationships and parental involvement. Schools with strong stakeholder engagement typically foster a collaborative environment where open communication is encouraged. However, problems can arise in schools where relationships between different stakeholder groups, especially with less participatory parents, are strained. These communication gaps can lead to feelings of exclusion and disenfranchisement, hindering the effectiveness of SBM policies and ultimately impacting the overall quality of education. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that focuses on building trust, fostering open communication channels, and ensuring all stakeholders feel valued and heard (Mufidayati, 2019).

Another study from Yaro et. Al (2017) states that the results revealed that education stakeholders play a crucial role in implementing policies, which can be divided into two main areas: total dedication and support for the school system. As a result, it is suggested that stakeholders be given ample opportunities to actively engage in education delivery. Additionally, the government should establish robust strategies for effective implementation to ensure the delivery of quality education through collaborative efforts.



Moreover, in Isabela City, the findings of the study of Guzman (2022) indicated that the stakeholders play a substantial role in the creation, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of the School Improvement Plan. Additional findings suggest that the school's performance is consistently excellent, regardless of the school's type. Despite the significant level of stakeholder involvement in all three stages of the School Improvement Plan, they still encountered problems. There is no notable disparity in the extent to which various stakeholder groups participate in the three stages of the school improvement plan, regardless of the type of school. Furthermore, the analysis yielded the same outcome, indicating that there was no notable disparity in performance amongst schools of different types. Using the Pearson r , another discovery was made that indicates there is no significant correlation between the level of involvement of stakeholders in the three stages of the School Improvement Plan and the performance of the school. This implies that the level of stakeholders' engagement does not necessarily ensure a significantly high level of school success.

Furthermore, in Tacloban City, the investigation validated Freeman's assertion that both individuals and groups have the capacity to influence a system and, conversely, are influenced by the organization. There is variation in the level of assistance from stakeholders in terms of the overall resources generated by Brigada Eskwela across different schools. The primary focus should be on the meticulous allocation of activities and resources, including both human capital and financial assets. Additionally, it is essential for them to identify areas that require enhancement in order to foster increased backing from stakeholders and ensure equitable support for all schools. Given that the previous study emphasized the external support received by the school, it would be beneficial to undertake another study that specifically examines the internal support received by the school, including the factors that influence it and potential strategies for enhancing it. Given the limited scope of this study to a specific locality, it is advisable to undertake further studies in other cities or municipalities in order to ensure comparability of the results and validate the findings (Panela & Panela, 2020).

Another study from San Fernando City concluded that the engagement of stakeholders in public elementary schools in Dolores District during modular distance learning is satisfactory. Teachers' overall mean percentile scores and school-based management implementation are satisfactory. The level of stakeholder engagement significantly relates to school performance, and there is no significant difference between internal and external stakeholders before and after engagement. The learning continuity plan implementation also achieves satisfactory performance (Rivera, 2023).

Research Questions

This study seeks to explore the experiences of stakeholder engagement in educational policy making. By capturing their direct experiences and perspectives, this research aims to contribute to a detailed understanding of the impact of stakeholder engagement in educational policy making.

1. What are the lived experiences of the stakeholders on their engagement in educational policy making?
2. What coping strategies do stakeholders employ to navigate the complexities and challenges inherent in educational policy-making?
3. What educational insights can be unearth on experiences of stakeholders experiences on educational policy making?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research employed various methods to collect rich, in-depth data, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Phenomenology offered a valuable framework for understanding the essence of human experiences and the meaning individuals attribute to their interactions within the educational policy landscape (Tindal, 2009).

By adopting a phenomenological approach, this study offered a nuanced understanding of stakeholder engagement in educational policy making, shedding light on the subjective experiences and meanings that shape policy development processes.

Research Participants

Participants were purposefully selected to represent a diverse range of stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, administrators, students, parents, and community members. This selection ensures that the study captures a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives relevant to educational policy making.

This qualitative research relied on purposeful sampling, where participants were chosen specifically because they possess characteristics relevant to the research question. This targeted approach allows researchers to gather in-depth information from individuals who can offer rich insights on the topic. However, for a more comprehensive understanding, combining sampling strategies can be even more effective. By using multiple purposeful sampling techniques, researchers can capture a wider range of perspectives and experiences within the target population. For instance, they might combine maximum variation sampling to include participants with diverse viewpoints alongside a critical case sampling approach to focus on particularly informative cases. This strategic combination strengthens the research by providing a nuanced and multifaceted picture of the phenomenon under study (Palinkas, 2015).

A total of fourteen (14) participants were considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion respectively. Seven (7) of them will join the in-depth interview (IDI) while the remaining participants were subjected to the focus group discussion (FGD). All data gathered during IDI and FGD were recorded and transmuted to summarize the responses of the participants in an orderly manner.



Research Instrument

To gather in-depth and meaningful data for this study, the primary research instrument employed is a semi-structured interview guide. This qualitative tool is designed to elicit detailed responses from participants by providing a flexible framework that allows probing and follow-up questions based on the participants' answers. The interview guide includes open-ended questions focusing on stakeholders' experiences, roles, challenges, and insights regarding their engagement in educational policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

Data Analysis

The collected interview data will be analyzed using phenomenological analysis techniques, which involve a systematic exploration of the lived experiences described by participants. Researchers engage in a process of bracketing, setting aside preconceptions and biases, to focus solely on the participants' accounts. Through a process of thematic coding and interpretation, researchers identify common patterns, themes, and essences that emerge from the data, capturing the shared lived experiences of stakeholders.

Creswell (2013) outlines six crucial stages in qualitative data analysis that are necessary for assessing and interpreting published research findings in the realm of education. This approach typically involves a systematic process of analyzing qualitative data, often following steps such as coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis. Here's a general outline of data analysis using Creswell's approach

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the broader implications of the study's findings and outlines potential directions for future research, policy formulation, and practice. Grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants, the insights gathered offer valuable contributions to understanding the dynamics of educational leadership, stakeholder engagement, and inclusive governance. The findings not only reveal existing strengths but also illuminate gaps that need to be addressed to foster more equitable and effective educational systems.

Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for enhancing participatory governance in education. By highlighting the real-world contributions and experiences of stakeholders in the policy-making process, the study offers valuable insights into how inclusive engagement can lead to more responsive, equitable, and sustainable educational policies. These implications serve as a guide for policymakers, school leaders, and education practitioners in refining their approaches to stakeholder collaboration and in strengthening the overall effectiveness of education systems.

Main Theme 1: Cultivating Broad and Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement in Educational Policy Making

Educational institutions and governing bodies must institutionalize clear, open lines of communication throughout the policy cycle. This includes publishing accessible policy drafts, using multilingual formats, and offering timely feedback to stakeholders. Transparency builds trust and encourages more active involvement.

Policymakers should move beyond tokenistic consultations and create formal structures that genuinely integrate stakeholder voices particularly those of teachers, parents, and marginalized communities into the decision-making process. Shared governance models should be strengthened to reflect collaborative intent.

Acknowledging and elevating the unique perspectives of various stakeholders such as indigenous leaders, youth representatives, and non-teaching staff can enrich the policy-making process. Their experiential knowledge can inform more grounded, practical, and culturally responsive policies.

Policies should be developed with a deep understanding of the local educational landscape. Regional, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts must be considered to ensure that policies are not only implementable but also sustainable and impactful at the grassroots level.

Main Theme 2: Empowering Stakeholders Through Effective Engagement and Well-being in Educational Policy-Making

Stakeholder engagement must be integrated at the initial stages of policy formation, not merely during implementation. This means organizing local dialogues, focus group discussions, and community consultations as regular components of policy planning.

Training programs should be institutionalized to help stakeholders especially educators and school leaders understand how policies are formed, interpreted, and enacted. Increasing policy literacy empowers them to engage critically and contribute constructively.

Leadership development opportunities tailored to different stakeholder groups can encourage ownership of policies and programs. Equipping community leaders, parent associations, and teacher organizations with leadership tools ensures sustained and informed engagement.

Policy environments must consider the emotional and mental well-being of stakeholders. Support mechanisms like wellness programs, recognition systems, and workload management should be integrated into education governance to maintain stakeholder morale and resilience.



Main Theme 3: Fostering Community-Responsive and Inclusive Educational Policy

Policy frameworks must reflect the real needs of local communities, especially underserved or geographically isolated areas. Decentralized decision-making can allow for contextually relevant adaptations, improving policy acceptance and effectiveness. Stakeholder representation must be inclusive, ensuring that vulnerable sectors such as learners with disabilities, linguistic minorities, and low-income families are given seats at the policy-making table. Equity in representation is foundational to justice in education.

To achieve true equity, logistical and systemic barriers like lack of internet access, transportation, or institutional support must be addressed so that all stakeholders can participate meaningfully. Accessibility measures must be woven into the consultation and implementation phases.

Strong partnerships between schools, local government units, civil society, and private stakeholders are vital. Shared governance requires mutual accountability and shared vision, supported by policy that encourages co-leadership and long-term collaboration.

Future Directions

Department of Education (DepEd)

To foster more effective and inclusive educational governance, DepEd should institutionalize robust stakeholder engagement mechanisms by formalizing regular and inclusive platforms for consultation at all levels – national, regional, and school. These platforms must be deeply embedded within the entire policy-making cycle, ensuring stakeholder input from the initial development stages through to the final evaluation.

Recognizing the diverse contexts within the Philippines, policies should be designed with sufficient flexibility to allow for meaningful localization and contextualization. Providing regional offices and individual schools with greater autonomy in adapting policies to their specific needs and circumstances will enhance their relevance and long-term sustainability.

To ensure effective participation, DepEd needs to prioritize and strengthen capacity-building programs, offering continuous training opportunities for school leaders, teachers, and local education officials. These programs should focus on improving their understanding of policy and developing participatory skills essential for effective governance and leadership.

Furthermore, promoting transparent and accountable governance is crucial. DepEd should commit to enhancing openness in its decision-making processes, ensuring clear lines of accountability for policy implementers, and establishing accessible feedback mechanisms where stakeholder concerns can be formally documented and meaningfully addressed.

Finally, future educational policies must prioritize the well-being of all stakeholders by embedding support systems that address their emotional and professional needs, acknowledging their fundamental role in the overall resilience and success of the education system.

Stakeholders (Teachers, Parents, LGUs, NGOs, Students)

To foster a truly collaborative and community-driven approach to educational reform, stakeholders are strongly encouraged to engage actively and constructively in all consultation processes. This involves a commitment to providing meaningful participation, sharing valuable lived experiences, and articulating localized concerns that possess the potential to significantly enrich the development and implementation of educational policies.

Furthermore, the formation of local alliances and advocacy networks among parents, educators, community leaders, and youth groups is vital. These coalitions can serve to amplify collective voices, ensuring that educational policies remain firmly people-centered and genuinely inclusive of diverse needs and perspectives. To empower stakeholders for effective engagement, it is crucial to invest in policy literacy and civic engagement.

Through actively pursuing opportunities to deepen their understanding of the structures and processes underpinning education policy, stakeholders will be better equipped to advocate for their communities with greater confidence and clarity.

As a final point, a fundamental principle for equitable policy-making is the need to promote inclusive representation. All stakeholders must actively advocate for the deliberate inclusion of marginalized voices within policy discussions, working diligently to ensure equity not only in who participates but also in the ultimate impact and outcomes of educational policies.

Future Researchers

Future research in educational policy should prioritize a deeper understanding of how national policies are interpreted and enacted at the grassroots level. This exploration should meticulously examine the diverse local settings, identifying the specific barriers encountered and the most effective practices in facilitating meaningful stakeholder engagement during implementation.

Additionally, it is crucial to examine the impact of stakeholder participation directly and indirectly. Rigorous assessments are needed to determine the tangible outcomes of participatory policy-making on key areas such as school improvement, learner achievement, and broader community development. An often-neglected area deserving of scholarly attention is the need to study stakeholder well-being in policy contexts.

Future research can delve into the psychological and emotional impacts of various policy environments on teachers, learners, and other crucial stakeholders, providing valuable insights into the human cost and benefits of different policy approaches. To



advance the practice of collaborative governance, researchers are encouraged to develop robust theoretical and practical models. These frameworks should specifically illustrate effective shared governance mechanisms, particularly within decentralized and culturally diverse contexts like the Philippines.

To end with, to truly empower stakeholders and generate actionable knowledge, research should increasingly utilize participatory and action-oriented methodologies. Employing approaches such as participatory action research can strategically position stakeholders not merely as subjects of inquiry but as active co-researchers and powerful agents of change within the educational policy landscape

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