



POLICY BRIEF

STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT IN STRENGTHENING IN-SERVICE TEACHER MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT PROJECT

Preamble

The experience shows that most of the project initiators and implementers do not provide room for stakeholder engagement to learn and understand the project for sustainability and scaling. Thus, stakeholders often are excluded or feel excluded from engaging fully in processes, which directly concern and address their problems. Stakeholder engagement is instrumental to achieve the Strengthening In-Service Teacher Mentorship and Support Project (SITMS) innovation. This policy brief on stakeholder engagement summarizes the current state-of-art of stakeholder engagement and their roles in the SITMS project and highlights the different processes of engaging stakeholders. It shows implications and provides recommendations for policy actions to advance stakeholder engagement.

Background

Recent projects funded by donors, which directly affect people's life need involving stakeholders' engagement to allow them to be part of the solution in challenges they face. Stakeholder engagement includes groups who have expert knowledge that should be taken into account and will be essential to the design and implementation of a project and have an interest in the outcome of the work (Jeffery, 2009). Involvement of a wide range of actors is seen as a key pre-requisite for achieving long-term impact on solving educational challenges. Finch et al. (2016) assert that a key component of innovation is stakeholder engagement, that is, the involvement of those affected by the outcomes, such as end users and actors performing the required educational activities of the research project. If not engaged, no one will own the process. The engagement creates the motivation to learn and be part of the process. There is high possibility of the engaged stakeholders to cherish the innovation and make it part of their daily practices and be ready to see the possibilities of spreading the innovation to various places of the same nature. By involving stakeholders in the research process, (Bowen et al., 2017; Verhagen et al., 2014) research objectives will be more aligned to the stakeholders' needs and context, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful implementation. Not only the ownership, but any productive innovation needs to be sustained to ensure it will transform the way the beneficiaries carry their daily practices. Chizimba (2013) adds that, the contribution made by stakeholders' engagement has helped in sustaining and strengthening the interventions before and after implementation of a project, hence ensuring sustainability of innovation, which can lead to scaling of innovation in different ways.

The Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE) and HELVETAS, a Swiss International NGO conceived the project “*Strengthening In-service Teacher Mentorship and Support (SITMS)*” and partnered with the Kibabii University in Kenya and the University of Zambia.

The project aimed to strengthen the capacity of teachers by generating and strengthening the use of knowledge on effective teacher mentorship and support models to address the shortage of professional development for teachers, especially at the secondary level. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada and the Global Partnership Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) funded the SITMS project. The project goal was realized by adapting and scaling up a teacher mentorship and support model known as School based In-service Teacher Training (SITT), a practice-based teacher mentorship and support approach that involves training of mentor teachers to coach and mentor fellow teachers through peer learning exchange, model lessons and team teaching. SITT was first piloted in Tanzania in 2003 by HELVETAS and has since gained momentum across Tanzania’s primary schools. The project adapted and scaled up the primary SITT model to secondary schools in Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia, placing emphasis on the elements of SITT innovation, while at the same time integrating Mathematics in it. This practice aligns to the competence-based curriculum, also advocated in the Tanzania framework for Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Stakeholder engagement (Hendricks *et al.*, 2018). can be organized on a continuum based on the stakeholder’s relationship to the research project and their involvement. The lowest level of engagement on the continuum, stakeholder’s involvement is doing what the research project requires. At the highest level, stakeholders’ relationships to the research are involved in all the decision-making on the project. At the moderate level of engagement is where stakeholders’ relationships to the research project are collaborative in nature. The SITMS project used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design to guide the project intervention during planning, implementation and assessment to achieve the stated objectives and expected results. In PAR, all project participants become agents of change who work together to understand the problematic situation affecting teachers’ performance and improve it through mentorship and support. The participants comprised of the (national) research team, teachers, college tutors, heads of secondary schools, and education officials among others. PAR enables teachers to develop ownership of their mentorship activities, as they take the lead of their professional learning, while collaborating with researchers, school leaders and other stakeholders. PAR facilitates a systematic collection of information in the course of intervention activities with the aim of improving the project practices, methods and approaches (Reason, P. and H. Bradbury, 2008).

This policy brief on stakeholder engagement summarizes the current state-of-art of stakeholder engagement and their roles in the SITMS project and highlights the different process of engaging stakeholders, shows implications and provides recommendations for policy actions to advance stakeholder engagement.

Findings

Stakeholders’ engagement and their roles

The nature of the project and the methodological approach used in implementing the SITMS project was typically participative and required the engagement of various stakeholders to make it a success. In regard to the SITMS project, the stakeholders were engaged by designing, implementing, monitoring, learning and sharing project interventions as well as during the dissemination of project results. The stakeholders engaged by the project were from ministries related to education, local government authorities at district level, teachers colleges and schools. Table 1 summarizes the stakeholders involved in the SITMS project and their roles.

Table 1. Engaged Stakeholders and their Role

S/n	Stakeholders	Their roles and tasks in the SITMS project
1.	Representatives from MoEST and PO-RALG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the professional development at national and local government. Co-create understanding of the project and securing acceptance from the educational authorities. Cross checking the alignment to the CPD framework.
2.	Representatives from LGAs-DEOs, SQAOs,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with project team to understand the project goals and objectives. Become capacitated and engaged in monitoring the project implementations. Make follow-up during the implementation of the SITMS project activities. See the possibility of scaling the project to other schools for sustainability. Put aside the budget to support CPD to teachers in their district using SITMS project elements.
3.	College Principals and Tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainers of most secondary school diploma teachers. Trainer of mathematics teachers. Conduct mentorship and support to mathematics teachers. At ward level the Ward Education Officers (WEO) and at school levels all heads of schools in the project schools were part of the SITMS project team.
4.	Teachers Trade Union, e.g., Tanzania Teachers Union – TTU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested partner for CPD for its members. Participate in and contribute to monitoring and evaluation. See possibility of funding the scaling-up of the SITMS project.
5.	At school level; heads of schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SITMS team member. Support implementation of the project. Allow time and space at school level. Participate in and contribute to monitoring.
6.	Mathematics teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement SITMS element at school levels. Create SITMS team at school level. Establish peer learning groups among students. Establish communication with mentors. Prepare action plan for project implementations. Write reports and document success stories as they are teaching.
7.	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries of the project. Active participants. Engage in preparation of local resources.

MoEST : Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

PO-RALG : President’s Office – Regional Administration and Local Government

LGA : Local Government Authority

DEO : District Education Officer

SQAO : School Quality Assessment Officer

WEO : Ward Educational Officers

Stakeholder Engagement Process

Inception design phase

In Tanzania, 62 Education Administrators (23 women, 39 men) from eight district councils attended a one-day orientation about the SITMS project approach, with the sessions happening at teacher colleges. Besides creating awareness about the project and the SITT model, the workshop aimed at creating a dialogue to brainstorm and agree on the roles and responsibilities of education administrators and teacher colleges towards effective implementation of the SITT model at schools. Various monitoring forms like class observation sheets and the quality assurance checklists were developed and reviewed for uptake during class/ school visits. Capacity building on how to give and receive feedback was part of the workshop to equip participants with more skills to conduct constructive feedback to teachers and students during their visit to schools. Participants developed a plan of action and agreed on the modality, timing, and information flow from either side regarding the progress and challenges in implementing the project. Project members from HELVETAS and DUCE participated in these workshops to provide a broader understanding of the roles and monitoring requirements.

Stakeholder engagement in Capacity building phase

Different stakeholders require capacity to assume roles and deliver on responsibilities. In many instances, capacity cannot be taken for granted, but needs to be invested on and built deliberately (Burns, Köster and Fuster, 2016). The SITSM project conducted Training of Trainers to Tutors from the Teacher Colleges (TCs) so that they can conduct training to teachers on teaching Mathematics through the application of the SITT model. In addition to the Mathematics Training, the project conducted a capacity building session to seven TCs to equip tutor mentors with knowledge, skills, and techniques on conducting mentorship and support practices, so they can provide effective mentorship and support programs to teachers and schools. The teachers' mentorship and support framework developed by the project team, was very useful and enabled tutors to effectively apply it during mentorship and support to mathematics teachers in a class/school settings. It also helped to assess whether teachers are effectively applying SITT elements in teaching and how schools' environments reflect a proper learning environment for Mathematics and other subjects.

Stakeholder engagement in Piloting and mentorship Phase

The piloting of the SITMS project was supported by mentorship from the teacher college tutors and monitoring visits by the education leaders. In Tanzania, tutors and the monitoring team visited the project schools to offer mentorship and assess the application of the SITT approach by teachers, while at the same time providing feedback to teachers on the areas of improvement. During the mentorship and support visits at schools, tutors were able to effectively conduct and provide a room for open dialogue between the tutor as a mentor and a teacher as a mentee and could guide Mathematics teachers and schools on how the SITT model can be utilized to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Skills and knowledge that tutors applied in supporting and mentoring teachers were very relevant and were something that teachers missed for a very long time from tutors. Teachers consider mentorship sessions as a platform to present and share various education challenges they face in teaching, whereby joint discussions on the possible ways to resolve the challenges are much appreciated. The visits result in increased morale of teaching and learning Mathematics by teachers and students. A one-day session on mentorship and support skills guide was conducted at TCs engaging one Principal and two Mathematics Tutors from seven TCs, as well as seven Education Administrators and the partner CSO, Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU) from the wards, districts, and regional levels.

Engagement in monitoring visits phase

The monitoring was intended to see the implementation and ensure the teachers were on the right track while implementing the SITMS project through the SITT innovation model. Therefore, further monitoring visits that apply a participatory approach to identify enabling and constraining factors towards effective application of the SITT model in the country were done in collaboration with the project stakeholders

particularly from Local Government Authority (LGA), TCs, TTU, Head of Schools, teachers, and students. Monitoring visits and further communications done via WhatsApp group showed that, tutors' ability to support teachers, opportunity for teachers and tutors sharing the matters regarding the application of the SITT model were increased. Support was done both physically and virtually through mobile platforms (WhatsApp and phone calls), physical visits to schools/TCs and/or out of schools/TCs environment. Maintaining active communication, ideally tailor-made to a diversity of audiences, and particularly reaching out to the most relevant stakeholders was inevitable for success of the project

Engagement in Learning and sharing phase

The project team planned that after piloting of the SITMS project the stakeholders involved would meet at the teachers colleges to share the progress and implementation of the SITMS project activities known as "learning and sharing sessions". The purpose of learning and sharing is to continue showing the commitments among various stakeholders on implementation of the project as planned. The session has been conducted and all stakeholders engaged fully in sharing their experiences. These sessions have proven the power of engaging, as every stakeholder was able to show the clear understanding of the innovation and commitment to its implementation. It was a very useful platform to correct misconception and energize the teams to continue implementing the project elements to other schools. Figure 2. Shows a group photo of the team of stakeholders attending their learning and sharing session.



Group photo showing stakeholders during their learning and sharing session in one of the TC.

Policy Implication to policy makers, local government leaders and other interested parties in CPD at multiple scales (local, national, international)

Based on the relevance and practical orientations of the SITT innovation elements, the project activities can be incorporated into existing curriculum structures in the educational systems. The SITT innovation requires strengthening existing teacher mentorship and support to allow stakeholder engagement, training teachers to use the model and allow students to interact with the model elements to increase their participation in learning.

Evidence from the SITMS project indicates clearly the importance of engaging educational stakeholders in all project activities from inception to implementation and dissemination. Their engagement will help building the capacity to find solutions to the challenges in their areas of influence and help teachers and students improving the quality of teaching and learning experiences.

Recommendations and implication

- Develop a policy for stakeholder engagement and subsequently involve the stakeholders must be the practice in all projects and innovations.
- Set aside funds for continuous professional development (CPD) to scale up the practical innovations, which have proven to transform the way teachers are working in schools
- Strengthen capacity building to all stakeholders involved or affected by innovation to ensure holistic understanding and ownership of the process.

Conclusion

The fundamental rationale for engaging stakeholders is creating ownership or 'buy-in' to the process and thus to its outcomes. This is why stakeholder engagement has played such a critical role in the SITMS project. All partners from the inception of the project acknowledged the unique knowledge that each possesses and came together around the project goal. Each project activity contributed to strengthening both organizational and individual capacities of partners to play their roles and share their responsibilities. All partners were committed to continue working together and further extend the project activities to other schools. Local partners designed the project and took a large amount of responsibility. The spirit of collaboration and responsibility among the partners has created a creative and productive space. Most importantly, the stakeholders involved have realized that this is a chance to improve the practices for mathematics teaching in Tanzania.

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