

## STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT AND PROJECT OWNERSHIP IN SELECTED DUAL TRAINING PROJECTS IN RWANDA

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### ABSTRACT

Projects are designed to achieve specific results, affecting people or organizations. However, project sustainability beyond the donor funding emerged as an important challenge to many projects across the world due to limited ownership of stakeholders. The objective of the study was to evaluate the influence of stakeholders' involvement on the ownership of project. A descriptive research design and a structured questionnaire were adopted. The study targeted 7 dual training projects with a total number of the 67 stakeholders, 62 managers accepted to participate in this study (92.5% response rate). The data were analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Findings indicated that the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is 0.723 representing 72.3% indicated that the stakeholders' involvement contribute to increased ownership (F-test 40.811; p-value = 0.000); thus the null Hypothesis stating that there is no significant influence of the involvement of stakeholders on the ownership of the project cannot be accepted. The conclusion is that stakeholders' involvement has a significant effect on the ownership of the project by the direct stakeholders. It is recommended that project managers actively involve stakeholders in project processes to increase the stakeholders' level of ownership of the project.

**Keywords:** Driver, Involvement, Project, Stakeholders, Sustainability, ownership

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globally, several projects are designed, launched and implemented with the aim of achieving desired results within the defined scope, timeframe and resources. Each project has people or organizations who are affected by its activities and results or who can influence activities, performance and results of the project. Known as stakeholders; they demonstrate interest on the project, depending on the expected benefit or impact. While projects have defined time, scope and budget, the intention is that its core activities or benefit can continue beyond that timeline to achieve long term outcome and impact on beneficiaries (sustainability).

However, some projects are directly funded by donors or development partners from the design to the closing phase thus becoming problematic for stakeholders to continue operations or enjoying benefits when the funding ends, which is sustainability. It is paramount to understand the relationship between the involvement of project's stakeholders and the ownership of the project as a key driver of project sustainability. In the developed economies like Poland, Brajer-Marczak, Marciszewska and Nadolny (2021), indicated that the confirmation of the relationship between stakeholder's engagement and the sustainability of the results of projects implemented by the non-profit organizations is an interesting issue.

In Africa, the African Development Bank (2001) indicated that the sustainability of development interventions is largely determined by beneficiaries own appraisal of the usefulness and effectiveness of project benefits and services. Consultations with project beneficiaries (and other stakeholders) are an essential aspect of evaluating a project's overall quality and success at completion (AfDB, 2001).

Sustainability can be referred to as the ability of the community to continue with the project activities while at the same time reaping similar dividends from a project long after the sponsor has phased out. That is, communities are capable of producing results for their benefits for as long as their problem still exists (Lungo, Movole, & Otieno, 2017). The participation of stakeholders determines the sustainability of project activities. The stakeholder's participation is associated to the continuation of the project. To enhance project sustainability, consultation, collaboration and working in partnership is must in order to improve the intervention (Tumwebaze & Irechukwu, 2022).

The sustainability of donor funded projects requires a full ownership and commitment of key stakeholders including beneficiaries and direct implementing stakeholders. However, Peter, Geroge, Kirui and Luvega (2013) found that both indirect and direct beneficiaries of the donor funded projects kept seeing themselves as benefiting part of the project rather than being part of and parcel of the project implementation and sustainability thus resulting in the failure of many projects after the withdrawal of funds by donors.

In Rwanda, while the dual training programs requires active participation of both schools and companies or employers as key implementing stakeholders, it is reported that "the limited number of companies involved in education and training reflects, and is a result of, a limited ownership of the training and education (Workplace Learning Policy, 2015). The limited ownership of projects by the direct implementing stakeholders remains a key barrier towards the sustainability of dual training projects.

The objective of the study was to evaluate the influence of the involvement of stakeholders in (project design, project planning, capacity building and monitoring and evaluation) on the ownership of the project. Thus, the Null Hypothesis (H01 is stated as: Ho1: There is no significant influence of the involvement of stakeholders in project design, project planning, capacity building and monitoring and evaluation on the ownership of the project.

## 2.0 LITERATURE

### 2.1 Stakeholders' Involvement

According to Ouma and Mburu (2017), projects have many stakeholders and their degree of influence of project sustainability varies significantly. It is therefore paramount to involve stakeholders through actively giving and getting their support and working together with them in the design, planning and implementation of sustainable project business solutions. Stakeholder involvement has been the term of any development initiative for over 50 years, though this term and efforts are being in plague by Criticism, there has been an assentation that, policy are formulated and was practical only if there are locally accepted hence sustainability was achieved (Tuyiramyem&Mulyugi, 2016).

According to Tuyiramye and Mulyugi (2016), studies reveal that stakeholder's involvement, Ownership and commitments to the monitoring and evaluation planning has helped to bring sustainability of intervention or initiatives, hence most of them emphasize on stakeholder driven approach if an intervention wants to maintain its presence after the exit of donor support. Mukunga (2012), indicates that the stakeholder involvement in the project involves skills contribution and capacity by making the decisions concerning the sustainability of the project.

The involvement in project designs is defined as meeting with primary and secondary stakeholders to update them on the progress of project preparation and to seek their input with regard to the more specific operational and technical details of project design. Ideally, stakeholders should be identified and invited to contribute to project design from the earliest stages of project identification (AfDB, 2001).

According to Kwizera, Mulyungi and Shukla (2018), the planning is the identification of needs, requirements, knowledge, financial and human resources. Project sustainability is influenced by the stakeholders' participation in project planning; through actively participating in work planning, risk management and communication planning activities. Project planning had a strong influence on sustainability elements of beneficiary ownership followed by outcome results and lastly on maintenance cost respectively (Ouma&Mburu, 2017).

The capacity building is considered as a combination of formal training courses, workshops, mentoring, and other mechanisms. The knowledge and skills accumulated by project counterparts and stakeholders can contribute to sustained changes. The systematic capacity building prepares local stakeholders to continue useful interventions post-project (USAID, 2018). By increasing the ability of people to be self-reliant, they are then being able to contribute towards the sustainability of development projects which in turn could contribute to the broader notion of sustainable national development (Ochunga, 2016).

According to monitoring and evaluation refers to tracking and reviewing a project to evaluate what is effective and what is not, from there to decide if a change or improvement is needed thus helps those participating with some form of project to determine if change is needed. Monitoring and evaluation is an effective tool for transparency (Nyamutera&Warue, 2021). Studies revealed that stakeholder's involvement, Ownership and commitments to the monitoring and evaluation planning has helped to bring sustainability of intervention or initiatives, hence most of them emphasize on stakeholder driven approach if an intervention wants to maintain its presence after the exit of donor support (Tuyiramye&Mulyugi, 2016).

Ownership refers to relations among stakeholders in development, particularly their respective capacity, power, or influence to set and take responsibility for a development agenda, and to master and sustain support for that. Ownership was incorporated into development cooperation based on the assumption that a lack of ownership in development aid would result in a lack of sustainability of the results of development interventions (Mucanj, 2021).

According to Kyamusugulwa (2014), local ownership as an approach where local actors are in control of the project management and important project decisions, and they perceive a foreign donor project as theirs. On the other hand, local ownership is considered as a process where local people are involved in the project implementation while also being part of management

and monitoring. According to Mucaj (2021), the findings clearly related the concept of ownership to the sustainability of the project results, emphasizing that it is a necessary precondition for the sustainability of development projects. Without ownership, there is no foundation for building something sustainable.

The study of Ouma and Mbaru (2017), found that stakeholder's participation in project identification was found to have overall statistically significant influence on project sustainability significantly. Further, findings confirmed that project identification influenced sustainability elements of beneficiary ownership 61.3%. Equally, project identification elements had a mean influence on project sustainability. In addition, findings revealed that project identification influenced sustainability elements of beneficiary ownership 65.3%. Further findings established that project monitoring and Control influenced sustainability elements of beneficiary ownership 60.0%.

In another study conducted by Tumwebaze and Irechukwu (2022), it was concluded that there is significant relationship between stakeholder involvement and beneficiary ownership of skills development project of Gasabo District in Rwanda. The study by Tuyiramye and Mulyungi, (2017) found that stakeholder's participation explains project sustainability and that stakeholder participation would significantly have influenced the project sustainability.

### 3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on the stakeholder's theory. The role of stakeholders in any projects is pivotal as they can affect the project or be affected by the project positively or negatively at any stage of the project. Therefore, this study was anchored on stakeholder's theory because the study showed that the involvement of stakeholders in the lifecycle of the project would allow them to contribute to it and own it thus leading to its success and subsequent sustainability of the project. Project managers would be encouraged to engage, manage and build relationship with stakeholders to ensure the success and sustainability of the project. The Stakeholders' theory argued that managers needed to understand the concerns of shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, lenders and society, in order to develop objectives that stakeholders would support in order for an organization to succeed in this new context, the managers have to simultaneously satisfy owners, employees and their unions, suppliers and customers. This support was necessary for long term success. Therefore, management should actively explore its relationships with all stakeholders in order to develop business strategies (Freeman & Mcvea, 2001).

On the other hand, projects are designed to produce benefits to stakeholders which can be maintained beyond the project time and cost constraints. Therefore, the study is also anchored to theory of sustainability as complementally as funded projects should also consider the future of their project and how the benefits can be sustained through the ownership and commitment of the stakeholders. The Sustainability theory suggests that human and social capital should be valued as natural resources which can perish if it would not be treated optimally. The optimal use of human and social capital has the great influence to the long term sustainability of the respective society (Commission of the European Communities, 2013). Sustainability may be defined as the capacity to maintain or improve the state and availability of desirable materials or conditions over the long term. Pursuit of sustainability or sustainable development implies

that the goal is to maintain or improve beneficial conditions (to sustain them), particularly with improved capacity to extend desirable conditions over the long term (Harrington, 2016).

## 4.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive research design. Where a descriptive research was used to understand and describe the characteristics of stakeholder's involvement and the project sustainability drivers in dual training projects in Rwanda. The researchers used structured questionnaire to collect the main primary data from respondents. The 62 respondents representing institutions involved, were considered and actively participated in the study.

X= Stakeholders' involvement (Independent variable)

Y= Project sustainability drivers (Dependent Variables)

Where:  $X = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5)$

$x_1$ =Involvement of Stakeholder in Project Design

$x_2$ = Involvement of Stakeholder in Project Planning

$x_3$ = Involvement of Stakeholder in Capacity Building

$x_4$ = Involvement of Stakeholder in Monitoring and Evaluation

$x_5$ = Stakeholders Involvement

and

$y_1$ = Ownership

The study targeted 7 dual training projects in Rwanda with a total population of 67 stakeholders' institutions including 37 companies and 30 TVET Schools/colleges. A total of 62 institutions responded to the questionnaire, indicating a 92.5% response rate.

## 5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section concerns the statistical analysis of the findings.

**Table 1 Model Summary**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .861 <sup>a</sup> | .741     | .723              | 1.30022                    |

a. Predictors: (Constant), involvement in monitoring, involvement in project planning, involvement in project design, involvement in capacity building

The results indicated that the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is 0.723 representing 72.3% indicating that the stakeholder's involvement contribute to the increased ownership, while 0.277 representing

27.7% of increased ownership comes from other variables that are not included in the model one.

**Table 2: ANOVA**

| Model        | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig.              |
|--------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 275.975        | 4  | 68.994      | 40.811 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
| Residual     | 96.363         | 57 | 1.691       |        |                   |
| Total        | 372.339        | 61 |             |        |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: increased ownership of the project

b. Predictors: (Constant), involvement in monitoring, involvement in project planning, involvement in project design, involvement in capacity building

From ANOVA Table, the F-test is 40.811 has a p-value = 0.000. This imply that all stakeholder’s involvement components variables jointly have positive and significant effect on increased ownership. Therefore, H01 which states that there is no significant influence of the involvement of stakeholders in project design, project planning, capacity building and monitoring and evaluation on ownership of the project is rejected at all levels of significance.

**Table 3: Coefficients**

| Model                            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|                                  | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| (Constant)                       | 10.424                      | 2.156      |                           | 4.836 | .000 |
| Involvement in project design    | .299                        | .071       | .344                      | 4.202 | .000 |
| Involvement in project planning  | .006                        | .066       | .006                      | .090  | .929 |
| Involvement in capacity building | .243                        | .096       | .239                      | 2.545 | .014 |
| Involvement in M&E               | 1.296                       | .152       | .824                      | 8.539 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: ownership of the project

From coefficient table, involvement in project design has a positive and significant effect on increased ownership ( $\beta_1 = -0.344$ ,  $t = 4.202$ ,  $sig. = 0.000$ ). This indicates that 1-unit change in involvement in project design leads to 0.344 unit change in increased ownership. From coefficient table, involvement in project planning has no significant effect on increased ownership ( $\beta_2 = 0.006$ ,  $t = 0.090$ ,  $sig. = 0.929$ ). Involvement in capacity building has a positive and significant effect on increased ownership ( $\beta_3 = 0.239$ ,  $t = 2.545$ ,  $sig. = 0.014$ ). This indicates that 1-unit change in Involvement in capacity building leads to 0.239-unit change in increased ownership. Involvement in monitoring and evaluation has a positive and significant effect on increased ownership ( $\beta_4 = 0.824$ ,  $t = 8.539$ ,  $sig. = 0.000$ ). This indicates that 1-unit change in Involvement in monitoring and evaluation leads to 0.824-unit change in increased ownership.

These results are in line with the study by Tumwebaze and Irechukwu (2022), who indicated there is significant relationship between stakeholders' involvement and beneficiary ownership of skills development project. The results confirmed the stakeholders' theory which shows that all the individuals or groups that have a stake in the organization are to be considered in the strategic management.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives of the study were achieved as the researcher assessed the effect of stakeholders' involvement on ownership of the project. It was concluded that stakeholders' involvement significantly affects the ownership of the project by stakeholders. Based on the findings project managers are recommended to involve stakeholders in project design, project planning, capacity building and monitoring evaluation to increase the level of ownership of stakeholders thus increasing the possibly of achieving the project sustainability. By involving stakeholders at various levels of project lifecycle, the project managers lay a foundation for the ownership of the project by stakeholders, as a key driver of the sustainability of their interventions after the closure of the project.

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