



## STAKEHOLDER MAPPING IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN GHANA: INSIGHTS FROM C. K. TEDAM UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY & APPLIED SCIENCES

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**ABSTRACT:** *The relevance of key stakeholders in the strategic decision-making processes of an organization cannot be overemphasized. And it has been established that for higher education institutions to survive the competition, they must engage stakeholders as one of their main intangible assets. It is against this background that this study was conducted to investigate stakeholder mapping strategies adopted by public universities in Ghana. It employed a qualitative method to interpret responses from Key Informants (KI), and literature, to empirically understand how effective stakeholder mapping is undertaken in higher education management. Expert Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the KIs to obtain privileged information regarding stakeholder mapping in higher education management using the C. K. Tedom University of Technology & Applied Sciences as a case study. The software applications used for the data collection and analysis were Google forms. The findings revealed that stakeholder mapping as a concept and a practice is anchored on the Act establishing the C.K. Tedom University of Technology & Applied Sciences and the University's Statutes. It further reveals that stakeholder mapping served as a strategic tool for identifying and engaging key stakeholders through representation on Boards and Committees as well as consultative meetings and public fora on the basis of power, influence, and interest. However, some key stakeholder groups were not covered in the Act and thus not adequately represented on the governing council which is the apex decision making body. Accordingly, this study recommends that any future amendment of the Act should cover neglected stakeholders and Corporate Social Responsibility should be institutionalised as a measure for enhancing the University's relations with external stakeholders.*

**KEYWORDS:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Higher Education Management, Stakeholder Mapping, Committees and Boards, Public Universities, Ghana.



## INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder theory has infiltrated the academic dialogue in management and a wide array of disciplines such as health care, law, and public policy (Freeman et al., 2010). Much attention has been paid to some basic themes that are now familiar in the literature: that firms have stakeholders and should proactively pay attention to them (i.e., Freeman, 1984), that stakeholder theory exists in tension (at least) with shareholder theory (i.e., Friedman, 1970), that stakeholder theory provides a vehicle for connecting ethics and strategy (i.e., Phillips, 2003), and that firms that diligently seek to serve the interests of a broad group of stakeholders will create more value over time (i.e., Campbell, 1997; Freeman, 1984; Freeman, Harrison & Wicks, 2013).

Although the term ‘stakeholders’ often appears in the literature, it has been pointed out that relatively little attention has been paid to developing systematic approaches for identification and an analysis of stakeholders (Bryson, 2004).

Thus, to develop relationships with stakeholders, it is essential to devise complete strategies that ensure collaboration and engagement with stakeholders (Stocker et al., 2020). HEIs are now working as quasi-commercial organizations and their realization hinges on their ability to implement efficient management approaches (Cho, 2017).

Bryson (2004) also distinguishes between two broad definitions used in public and non-profit management literature. The first definition, according to him, defines stakeholders as those individuals or groups who have the power to affect the future of an organisation, implying that those who do not have such power do not qualify as stakeholders. The other definition, which Bryson argues in favour of, has a clear ethical dimension. According to such a definition, stakeholders are a wider range of individuals and groups including the “nominally powerless” (p. 22) to whom certain responsibility is owed. An example of such a definition is that provided by Nutt and Backoff (1992: 439, as cited in Bryson, 2004) – “...all parties who will be affected by or will affect [the organisation’s strategy]...” Similarly, Kaler (2002) distinguishes between two sorts of definitions of stakeholders as those seeing stakeholders as “claimants” and those seeing them as “influencers.” For the purpose of business ethics, he argues that stakeholders should be defined as those with a claim on the organisation’s services.

According to Harding and MacDonald (2001: 4), “...the very fact that they take an interest means that they should be engaged with. They have defined themselves as stakeholders and excluding them from your definition will not make them go away....”

Hence, it is important to devise a systematic approach for identifying the stakeholders in the context of a particular project early, so that the appropriate means for their engagement can be planned. Four key distinct techniques for the identification of stakeholders have been identified from the literature. These are: the use of a generic list, asking a set of questions, using snowballing technique and stakeholder mapping. The first three kinds of techniques are primarily oriented towards identifying stakeholders whereas stakeholder mapping, although can be useful for identifying stakeholders as well, serves a more strategic purpose in terms of designing and planning the subsequent engagement approach. In other words, the activity of mapping the stakeholders can start during the early stage where stakeholders are identified but continue further into the later stages where appropriate techniques are identified and used. Additionally, stakeholders in a particular context may be “...persons, neighbourhoods,



organisations, institutions, societies, and even the natural environment...” (Mitchell et al., 1997: 855).

Stakeholder engagement has become a norm in higher education governance particularly in the area of quality education (Beerkens, M., & Udam, M., 2017). Higher education institutions are multidimensional spaces of learning whose primary aim is to create and distribute knowledge through research and teaching (Corcoran & Duane, 2016). In an environment as competitive as the current one, therefore, the promotion of the mere commercialization of academic services can no longer help universities to differentiate themselves but engaging stakeholders as one of their main intangible assets can.

According to Jongbloed (2009), the quality of the Higher Education Institution’s dedication to different stakeholder groups (beyond keeping a list of contacts) underscores the role higher education plays in the society. It denotes a conscious effort to involve stakeholders with a view to appreciate their perceptions of the organization’s offerings and how these can be improved. Dobui and Luffman (2003) note that identifying and satisfying the needs of stakeholders are important steps towards gaining competitive advantage for higher education institutions.

This phenomenon, as deduced from available literature, remains relegated to the background in higher education management in Ghana. The import of this study is therefore to find out what steps public universities in Ghana are taking to effectively identify and engage key stakeholders in the governance of such institutions in their quest to gain competitive advantage. The C. K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS) was used as a case study.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The researchers considered two theories (system theory and stakeholder theory) which are believed to be most appropriate in addressing the demands of the research.

### **System Theory**

Given the multifaceted nature of the challenges that stakeholder engagement seeks to address, systems theory was one of the appropriate theories within a given framework. The running of the complex whole, that is, a system, is influenced by its parts and the collaboration between those parts (Jackson, 2003). Senge (1990) emphasizes that systems theory offers a means of addressing, using and comprehending the whole while taking into consideration the networks of relationships between the parts and how these relationships lead to and endure the existence of the entity, that is, the whole. The theory of system dynamics in systems theory postulates that several variables exist in systems (Jackson, 2003). Jackson further indicated that causal relationships exist between these variables that arise from communications and feedback mechanisms linking one variable to another, thereby affecting the complex and dynamic characteristics which systems use to evolve over time. According to Witter et al. (2013), a systems approach tries to comprehend the fundamental causes of practical changes (or the reasons why change has not transpired), as well as the way and context in which observed changes happen.



In applying the systems perspective to stakeholder engagement, the analysis is broadened to take into consideration the contextual factors behind complex problems. The institutional structure (such as institutional policies, dedicated campus engagement offices/units, human resources, funding, rewards and remuneration systems, and monitoring and evaluation systems) in place in a university to support stakeholder engagement crafts a stage from which stakeholder engagement initiatives, projects or programmes can run resourcefully. The idea of a stage embodies the concept of a system which is a collection of interconnected activities, resources and individuals that interrelate within an entity (Bednar et al., 2016).

### **Stakeholder Theory**

Stakeholder theory appeared in the 1980s as a response to the rising dynamism and complexity of the environment in which organizations function. In this approach, all the individuals or groups that have a stake in the organization are considered in the strategic management and the organization is managed with the purpose of creating value for customers, suppliers, owners, employees and local communities (Freeman et al., 2020). Stakeholder theory has been gaining increased acceptance and importance in strategic management research and business practices. However, it still needs to be well studied at a wider scope and in less discovered contexts such as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These organizations are very essential in society, not only because of their educational purpose but also as they are in charge of scientific investigation and the transfer of knowledge to develop the broader community (Bilodeau et al., 2014; Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2018). The presence of HEI can be justified through its stakeholder relationships. Several internal and external stakeholders can stimulate higher education objectives such as the quality of teaching and development of partnership research projects (Kettunen, 2015). Thus, to develop relationships with stakeholders it is essential to devise complete strategies that ensure collaboration and engagement with stakeholders (Stocker et al., 2020). HEIs are now working as quasi-commercial organizations and their realization hinges on their ability to implement efficient management approaches (Cho, 2017). These institutions have a predominantly complex set of stakeholders and ignoring stakeholder relationships may lead to incomplete success and deficient value creation (Kettunen, 2015).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Stakeholder theory views the corporate entity as an ecosystem of sorts. As Freeman says, stakeholders are those without whom the organization would not exist. A company cannot survive in the long run if it consistently fails to satisfy its stakeholders. Freeman notes that Stakeholder theory is even more important in the new global economy (Freeman et al., 2020).

Kenneth Goodpaster (2016) outlines certain implementations and the resultant pitfalls of Stakeholder theory.

#### **a) Stakeholder Analysis**

This is when the influence of stakeholders who are impacted by a particular choice and are identified as such is taken into account. But the analysis is purely academic. There is no real interest in the stakeholder or the impact on them. The analysis is carried out but no one acts on it.



The purpose of stakeholder theory is to ensure that the responsibility the corporation has towards stakeholders is taken seriously. Stakeholder theory analysis fails because merely collecting data on the stakeholders and presenting it is not the same as actually acting with the interests of the stakeholders in mind.

Stakeholder theory cannot stay in the theoretical realm. It deals with the ethical duty of the corporation towards stakeholders and stakeholder theory analysis does not involve the corporation actually fulfilling that duty.

### **b) Stakeholder Synthesis**

This occurs when the business organization actually does take the interests of the stakeholders into account. The data on which stakeholders are affected by a particular decision is collected and then acted upon. The opinion held by these stakeholders on the matter is acknowledged and acted upon by the firm. There are two sub-categories here. They are strategic stakeholder synthesis and multi-fiduciary stakeholder theory synthesis. Strategic stakeholder synthesis occurs when the stakeholders who hold the highest degree of influence in the corporation are identified and inducted into the decision-making process of the corporation. But this is done in a strategic way, as these stakeholders are acknowledged to the extent that they affect the shareholders, but the interests of the stakeholders themselves remain secondary.

### **Stakeholder Mapping**

There are several techniques for mapping of stakeholders, which are also sometimes referred to as stakeholder analysis techniques. The most commonly used techniques for analysis or mapping of stakeholders plot the stakeholders on a matrix/grid which has two key attributes of stakeholders as its axes. For example, stakeholders may be mapped on an importance/influence matrix, an impact/priority matrix, a power/interest matrix, readiness/power matrix, support/opposition or constructive/destructive matrix, problem-frame map, or policy attractiveness/stakeholder capability grid (Bryson, 2004; DFID, 2002).

Stakeholders may also be mapped through a participation planning matrix where project activities are mapped against different approaches for engagement on a larger matrix and particular stakeholders are then included/excluded from each box (Bryson, 2004). More complex techniques for mapping the stakeholders include the three-dimensional power/legitimacy/urgency diagram, as proposed by Mitchell et al. (1997), bases of power – directions of interest approach where a separate diagram is prepared for each stakeholder, stakeholder-issue interrelationship diagram which helps to show which stakeholders have interest in which issues, and ethical analysis grid.

Between the various two-dimensional grid-approaches to mapping stakeholders, the simple and much widely used power/interest matrix is potentially very useful for Sustainability Assessment. This is for two reasons: Firstly, relating stakeholders to their power to influence decision-making and/or its outcomes can be extremely useful in identifying the power imbalances and preparing strategies for addressing these (Bryson, 2004; DFID, 2002). Any constructive values-based stakeholder interaction would require that the powerless (and indeed the powerful) in relation to the project are identified early, and the specific choice of techniques of stakeholder engagement contributes to a more equitable forum for dialogue. Secondly, mapping stakeholders relative to their level of interest (for example, as against their importance, or their readiness, or priority) provides an opportunity to bring those stakeholders



within the assessment process who might otherwise be left out and might precisely be the ones who could oppose policies/decisions if not involved.

Although it is recognised that power-interest matrices have a lot of value in planning and strategizing stakeholder engagement (Bryson, 2004; DFID, 2002), they can also be useful while identifying the stakeholders.

**Table 1: Stakeholder Matrix**

		Level of Interest	
		High	Low
Level of Power	High	<b>Key Players</b> Stakeholder Participation Stakeholders: <i>Directors</i> <i>Upper Tier Sponsors and Partners</i> <i>- Emirates Airlines</i>	<b>Keep Satisfied</b> Stakeholder Engagement Stakeholders: <i>Met Police</i> <i>Transport for London</i>
	Low	<b>Keep Informed</b> Stakeholder Engagement Stakeholders: <i>Supporters</i> <i>Banks</i> <i>Shareholders</i> <i>Lower Tier Sponsors</i> <i>Upper Tier Sponsors and Partners</i> <i>- Delaware North Companies</i> <i>London Borough of Islington</i> <i>Local Community Residents</i>	<b>Minimal Effort</b> No need to engage/participate Stakeholders: <i>Premier League</i> <i>Broadcasters</i>

(Source: Mendelow, 1991)

Mendelow's power/interest matrix as espoused above focuses on identifying stakeholders whose needs and expectations can change the organization's policies and priorities; knowing the category of stakeholders whose interests will be most affected by actions taken by the organization; identifying stakeholders that need constant involvement; and prioritising stakeholder's interests to allow for efficient utilization of resources or leverage for maximum advantage.



## HOW MENDELOW'S MATRIX WORKS

This matrix works in a simple way. You draw a two-by-two matrix that enables you to classify your stakeholders into relevant quadrants which best describes them by their power and interest level. You end up with something like this:

### **Key Players (A)**

In this quadrant, you end up with stakeholders who have lots of influence and are highly motivated to express their own interest. Within the Higher Education context, these may include Government, the Governing Council, Management, Parents, employees, represented by unions, and industry. The strategy here is one of early involvement and participation; this way, their goals can be integrated with organizational goals ensuring their support.

### **Keep Satisfied (B)**

Here, you find stakeholders with high power, basically high ability to influence what the organization is up to, but currently have low interest in the organization. This group is important because if dissatisfied or concerned, their interest level may arouse. Examples here could include governmental agencies and regulatory bodies, large suppliers, or even senior management from other organisations. The strategy to use with these is to keep them satisfied so that they do not exert their influence.

### **Keep Informed (C)**

These stakeholders have high level of interest in your organization but lower power. They are important because if these are not kept on the know about decisions they may seek additional power and influence the running of the organization. Some of your workers could be in this category or imagine running a hospital and having volunteer groups; these groups provide services that are "nice to have" but not necessarily essential, so the volunteers have high interest but less power. The recommended strategy is to keep these stakeholders informed of plans and outcomes through communication and stakeholders marketing.

### **Minimal Effort (A)**

The stakeholders in this group are the type that are not interested in the organization and do not have much power either. An example here could be the suppliers with whom the organization only does a small volume of business. The decisions relating to these stakeholders have a low impact. What you want to do here is ensure that you do not waste resources taking these stakeholders goals or potential responses into account.

**Table 2: Stakeholder Categories and Constitutive Groups**

<b>Stakeholder category</b>	<b>Constitutive groups, communities</b>
Governing entities	State and federal government; governing board; board of trustees; buffer organisations; sponsoring religious organisations
Administration	President (Vice-Chancellor); senior administrators
Employees	Faculty; administrative staff; support staff
Clienteles	Students; parents/spouses; tuition reimbursement providers; service partners; employers; field placement sites
Suppliers	Secondary education providers; alumni; other colleges and universities; food purveyors; insurance companies; utilities; contracted services
Competitors	Direct; private and public providers of post –secondary education potential: distance providers; new ventures Substitutes: employer sponsored training programmes
Donors	Individuals (includes trustees, friends, parents, alumni, employees, industry, research councils, foundations.....)
Communities	Neighbours; school systems, social services; chambers of commerce; special interest groups.....
Government regulators	Ministry of Education; buffer organisations; state & federal financial aid agencies; research councils; federal research support; tax authorities; social security; patent office
Non – governmental regulators	Foundations; institutional and programmatic accrediting bodies; professional associations; church sponsors
Financial intermediaries	Banks; fund managers; analyst
Joint venture partners	Alliance and consortia; corporate co-sponsors of research and educational services

*Source: Barrows (1999)*

The table above as postulated by Barrows attempts to identify key stakeholder groups in a typical higher education context. It gives an indication of the governance framework of higher education institutions as well as individuals and institutions that are either affected by the operations of such institutions or whose activities or engagements affect the operations of the said institutions.





## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative method to interpret the responses from Key Informants (KI), and literature to empirically understand how effective stakeholder mapping is undertaken in higher education management, with specific reference to public universities in Ghana. A qualitative approach was used because not much is known about how stakeholders are mapped within a higher education context, and qualitative research permits researchers to understand topics that have little background information (Oosterbaan et al., 2012). The study interviewed seven (7) KIs, using semi-structured questions to allow for follow-up questions to have an in-depth insight into stakeholder mapping in higher education management.

Expert purposive sampling was used in the selection of the KIs (see Table 3) to obtain privileged information regarding stakeholder mapping in higher education management using the C. K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences as a case study. The software applications used for the data collection and analysis were Google forms. The responses were submitted online and the findings were analysed qualitatively.

The researchers also reviewed the Act and Statutes of the C.K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences, (CKT-UTAS) to gain insight into the stakeholder mapping strategies of the University.

**Table 3: List of Key Informants Interviewed**

Interview type	Status of KIs/Department
	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Office of the Vice-Chancellor, President, University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG, CKT-UTAS Branch), Secretary, Teacher & Educational Workers Union (TEWU CKT-UTAS Branch), Chairman, Senior Staff Association-Universities of Ghana (SSA-UoG), Treasurer, Ghana Association of University Administrators (GAUA CKT-UTAS Branch), President Student Representative Council (SRC CKT-UTAS), President, Graduate Student Association of Ghana (GRASAG CKT-UTAS).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Regulatory Framework/Policy Perspective

Public universities in Ghana like most higher education institutions are the creation of legislations otherwise known as Acts of Parliament. These Acts or legislations are further operationalized to take care of institution specific mandate and structure by statutes. The selected university for this study, to wit, the C. K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences, was established by the C. K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences Act 2019 (Act 1000). A review of the Act and statutes reveals some degree of stakeholder mapping in the governance and decision-making processes of the university. Section 2, subsection 1 of Act 1000 enjoins C. K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences inter-alia, to foster Relationships with persons outside the Institution in accordance with certain established principles. Section 5 establishes a governing council which shall be the highest



decision-making body of the university and membership of which includes a chairperson appointed by the president of the Republic of Ghana; three other persons also appointed by the president; the vice chancellor of the university; one representative each of the University Teachers Association of Ghana, University Senior Staff Association of Ghana, Teachers and Educational Workers Union, Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools, Students' Representative Council and Graduate Students Association, and representatives of the Alumni Association.

Section 19, subsection 1 of Act 1000 also creates an academic board which is answerable to the council and among other things is in charge of the formulation and implementation of the academic policies of the university. Membership of this board includes the vice chancellor, pro vice chancellor, deans and vice deans, directors of schools, institutes and centers, and professors and associate professors, among others.

The statutes of the university which seeks to operationalize the provisions of the Act also makes provision for key stakeholder representation on relevant committees. For instance, Statute 41 establishes a Welfare Services Board with committees whose membership include representatives of convocation, senior and junior staff, student representatives, colleges and schools' representatives, among others. Effectively, this mapping of relevant stakeholders even within the regulatory framework of the C. K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences takes cognizance of the power or influence and interest matrix espoused by Mendelow (1991). The Government of Ghana, which established the university and is responsible for the provision of infrastructure and payment of emoluments of staff among other things, appoints the chairperson and three other members of the highest decision-making body of the university: the Governing Council. By this singular act, the government, which has a greater interest in how the university is run, is able to influence the strategic direction and management of the affairs of the university.

Similarly, staff and students who form an integral part of the university community and who undoubtedly have a stake in the formulation and implementation of policies and decisions are equally represented on relevant boards and committees. This aspect of stakeholder mapping is critical as it helps ensure industrial peace and harmony which is a prerequisite for increased productivity. It is within the right of employee and student associations or unions to register their disapproval of management policies and decisions through strike actions, boycotts and demonstrations, which have the tendency to disrupt academic work.

### **Stakeholder Mapping-Internal Stakeholders' Perspective**

Internal stakeholders were unanimous on the need to identify and involve key stakeholders in the administration of the university. They categorized stakeholders into two groups, namely internal and external stakeholders. According to them, external stakeholders of the university include government and its agencies such as the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, industry, employers, parents, alumni, civil society organisations and the general public, while internal stakeholders comprise students, staff, management, governing council and unions. When asked what informed the decision to involve key stakeholders in the decision-making processes, one person was unsure while the others attributed the phenomenon to power, influence and interest in the management of the university.



This resonates with the postulation by Kenneth Goodpastor (2016) that strategic stakeholder synthesis occurs when the stakeholders who hold the highest degree of influence in the corporation are identified and inducted into the decision-making process of the corporation, and also the postulation by Jongbloed (2009) that the quality of the Higher Education Institution's dedication to different stakeholder groups (beyond keeping a list of contacts) underscores the role higher education plays in the society. Similarly, the majority of the participants were aware that key stakeholders of the university had been identified by the Act establishing the university, statutes of the university and related documents such as the administrative manual. With the exception of one person, participants espoused that representation on board and committees and consultations or engagement with stakeholders especially external stakeholders through meetings, public fora and durbars were effective stakeholder mapping strategies.

However, all the participants bemoaned the inadequacies of the strategies as it was revealed that some key constituents were not represented on the governing council and other decision-making organs of the university. This is in sharp contrast with the need, espoused by Freeman et al. (2020), for all the individuals or groups that have a stake in the organization to be considered in the strategic management and for the organization to be managed with the purpose of creating value for them.

Such measures as future amendment of the Act and statutes to reflect the interest of neglected stakeholder groups, the institutionalization of Corporate Social Responsibility as a means of meaningfully engaging a greater majority of stakeholders, and the enhanced engagement of students are recommended to address the gaps identified in stakeholder mapping at the C. K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences.

## CONCLUSION

The study identified two streams of stakeholders in the management of the selected university: internal and external stakeholders, including government, industry, employers, students, staff and university management. It was also established that stakeholders were identified in the Act establishing the university and engaged in various ways by university management on the basis of power, influence and interest in the governance of the university. In order to address the inadequacies identified in stakeholder mapping, the study recommends such measures as future amendment of the Act, establishing the university to accommodate neglected stakeholders, institutionalization of Corporate Social Responsibility for meaningful engagement with external stakeholders and enhanced student engagement.

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