

**INTEGRATING TOTAL SCHOOL THEORY AND STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN
NIGERIAN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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Abstract

This article delves into the integrating total school theory (TST) as a strategy for enhancing learning management and planning in secondary schools in Nigeria, with a particular emphasis on the significance of stakeholder collaboration. The school's philosophy centers around an integrated, interconnected learning environment that combines academic, social, physical, and cultural elements, all deeply rooted in the school's culture. The theory promotes collaborative, shared decision-making among students, teachers, parents, policy makers, and community members in managing and enhancing schools. It examines the significance of school leaders in fostering stakeholder engagement and how this engagement can support permaculture planning. Furthermore, it examines the necessity for reform to facilitate the implementation of policy implications and regulatory practices grounded in test principles. The paper also investigates challenges related to involving stakeholders, including socio-cultural and administrative obstacles, and provides suggestions for addressing these challenges. A thorough examination of this theory emphasizes its advantages in fostering effective communication and cooperation, while also acknowledging the potential challenges it may encounter in terms of resource distribution and policy constraints within the Nigerian context. This paper offers theoretical perspectives and strategies for educational leaders, policy makers, and researchers who are interested in the development of testing in Nigerian education. The results indicate that the implementation of school theory can result in more efficient school management, ultimately leading to enhanced education practices across the country.

Keywords: Integrating, Total School Theory, Stakeholder Engagement, Inclusive, Educational Planning and Management

Introduction

Nigeria's secondary education system plays a crucial role in the country's socio-economic progress, acting as the link between primary education and higher education. The system comprises junior and senior secondary schools, which are structured to offer general education,

vocational training, and the cultivation of critical thinking abilities. Unfortunately, Nigerian secondary schools encounter several obstacles, such as overcrowding, insufficient funding, inadequate facilities, and low teacher-student ratios (Adeyemi & Uko-Aviomoh, 2024). Furthermore, the system is plagued by weak administrative structures, lack of accountability, and limited involvement of key stakeholders such as parents, local communities, and Ngos (Obasi, 2021). These obstacles impede the efficient management and planning of educational institutions, ultimately impacting student achievements and the overall performance of schools. Stakeholder engagement in educational management involves the active participation of all individuals and groups who have a stake in education, including teachers, students, parents, communities, government agencies, and private organizations, in the decision-making process. Active involvement of stakeholders in school management and planning promotes openness, accountability, and shared responsibility, which are essential for achieving success in the education system (Bakare, 2021). In Nigeria, the involvement of stakeholders in the management of secondary schools is often inconsistent, with many stakeholders being excluded from important decisions (Onyema, 2020). The absence of inclusion in school management and planning leads to inefficiencies, which are further intensified by the disconnect between educational policies and the day-to-day challenges encountered by schools.

Total school theory (TST) is a comprehensive approach to school administration that recognizes the interdependence of various elements within the educational setting, such as academic programs, social dynamics, physical infrastructure, and community engagement (Fasasi, 2019). According to the theory, a school can operate at its best when all its components students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community are united and actively involved in working towards shared educational objectives. In the realm of educational administration, total school theory offers a comprehensive framework for incorporating diverse stakeholder inputs into the management process. This guarantees that decisions are made in a manner that takes into account the interests and requirements of all parties involved, thereby improving the effectiveness of school planning and governance. Total school theory holds significant importance in countries like Nigeria, where educational systems face challenges due to limited resources and inadequate planning strategies.

Despite acknowledging the significance of involving stakeholders in education, Nigerian secondary schools persistently encounter substantial gaps in inclusive management. Parents, community members, and even teachers often have limited influence in the important decisions that impact the day-to-day functioning and future planning of schools (Obasi, 2021). This exclusion results in policies and practices that do not adequately address the needs of the students and the wider school community. Additionally, the disconnection between government policies and the actual conditions in schools adds to the complexity of managing schools, leading to the continued existence of inefficiencies in Nigerian educational institutions (Fasasi, 2019). Total school theory proposes a potential solution to these challenges by advocating for an inclusive, collaborative approach to school management. Despite its potential, the application of this theory in Nigerian secondary schools is still limited, and

further research is required to understand how it can be effectively implemented to enhance stakeholder engagement and improve educational outcomes.

Theoretical Foundation of Total School Theory

Total school theory (TST) is a comprehensive educational management approach that recognizes the interdependence and interconnections of various components within a school system, encompassing academic programs, social dynamics, physical infrastructure, and interactions with external stakeholders (Fasasi, 2020). The theory posits that schools operate as a holistic system, with each element playing a vital role in the overall achievement of the institution. The roots of total school theory can be traced back to general systems theory, which was first introduced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1950s, and later applied to educational settings in the latter part of the 20th century. The theory gained popularity in educational management through the writings of scholars like Hoy and Miskel (2013), who argued that schools should be viewed as intricate, interconnected systems that necessitate a collaborative approach to management. Total school theory developed as an expansion of these concepts, incorporating ideas from organizational theory and participatory management models (Ademola & Fasasi, 2019).

At its core, total school theory is based on the principles of inclusivity, collaboration, and systems thinking. It is based on the belief that schools are not separate entities but are intricately linked with their immediate surroundings, such as families, communities, and larger societal frameworks. The main principles that underpin TST are as follows:

1. Holism: this principle emphasizes that schools should be managed as interconnected systems where all components are interdependent. The academic, social, cultural, and infrastructural aspects of the school should be seen as equally important for the overall growth and development of students (Fasasi, 2020).
2. Inclusivity’s promotes the active participation of all stakeholders in the management and planning processes. This encompasses not only teachers and administrators but also parents, students, community leaders, and government bodies (Omoniyi, 2021).
3. Shared responsibility: the theory advocates for a collaborative leadership approach, where decision-making is shared among stakeholders to ensure that a wide range of perspectives are considered in shaping the school's policies and practices.

Components of Total School Theory

Total school theory (TST) is a comprehensive approach to educational management, highlighting the interdependence of all components within the school setting Bush, (2011).

S/N	Component	Description	Indicators
1	Leadership & Governance	Effective school leadership and participatory decision-making	Vision, transparency, distributed leadership

2	Curriculum & Instruction	Relevant, inclusive, and student-centered curriculum delivery	Curriculum alignment, teaching strategies, instructional resources
3	Learner Development	Focus on cognitive, emotional, and social growth of learners	Student engagement, counseling, inclusivity
4	Teacher Quality	Well-trained, motivated, and professionally developed teachers	Certification, pedagogy skills, ongoing training
5	School Environment	Conducive physical, social, and emotional climate for learning	Safety, infrastructure, student-teacher relationship
6	Assessment & Evaluation	Continuous assessment of learning processes and outcomes	Formative/summative assessments, feedback systems
7	Community Involvement	Active participation of parents, community, and stakeholders	PTA activities, partnerships, school-community projects
8	School Resources	Adequate financial, human, and material resources	Funding, learning materials, facilities
9	Management Processes	Efficient planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of school functions	Timetabling, school records, staff coordination
10	Quality Assurance Systems	Mechanisms for monitoring and improving school performance	Internal audits, external inspections, improvement plans
11	Technology Integration	Use of ICT in administration, teaching, and learning	E-learning tools, digital literacy, management systems

Table 1. Source: Bush, (2011)

Application of Total School Theory to Educational Management

Total school theory (TST) is utilized in educational management by advocating for a comprehensive, cooperative leadership style that encompasses all facets of the school setting.

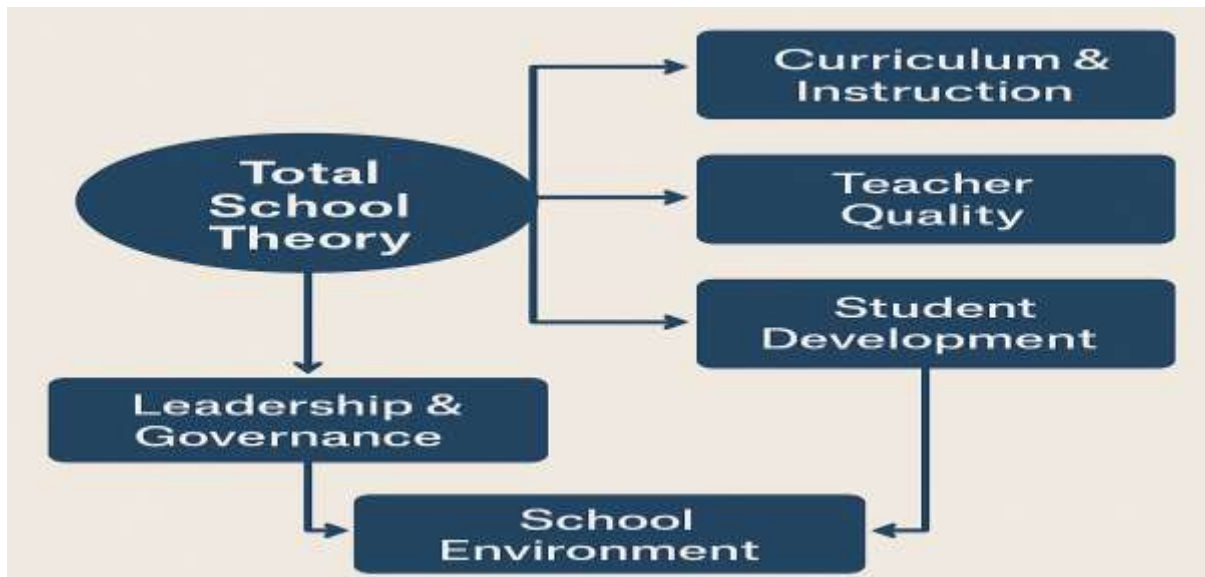


Table 2. *Source: Adopted from system theory and models of effective school management.*

Total school theory (TST) advocates for a collaborative and inclusive approach to school leadership, where decision-making is distributed among multiple stakeholders rather than solely in the hands of a few administrators (Bakare, 2020). This approach entails establishing school boards that consist of representatives from the student body, parent-teacher associations, community leaders, and local education authorities. By promoting teamwork, TST cultivates a feeling of collective ownership, guaranteeing that decisions are made with the overall welfare of the entire school community in mind. This collaborative approach promotes openness and responsibility, as all parties involved actively participate in making important choices regarding matters such as financial planning, educational content, and the improvement of physical facilities.

Encouraging Ongoing Development in Educational Environments

Total school theory (TST) places great importance on ongoing progress in educational management by encouraging regular self-evaluation, reflection, and data-driven decision-making (Omoniyi, 2021). Educational institutions are advised to establish specific objectives, track progress, and modify policies and practices to improve the overall quality of education. In Nigerian secondary schools, implementing the test can foster a culture of innovation where school leaders and stakeholders work together to tackle challenges such as underperformance, resource limitations, and teacher turnover (Fasasi, 2020). By taking a proactive stance, schools can better address students' needs, resulting in more efficient and long-lasting educational management.

Role of Stakeholders in Educational Management

In the realm of educational management, a stakeholder is any individual who has a vested interest in the achievement of a school system. In educational management, stakeholders are

individuals or groups who have a stake in the functioning, processes, and outcomes of educational institutions. The stakeholders in Nigerian secondary schools encompass students, teachers, parents, community members, policymakers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Each of these groups plays a crucial role in shaping the learning environment and impacting educational outcomes (Bakare, 2020).

Students: Integral to the educational system, they are both the primary recipients of education and active contributors whose viewpoints on learning should be taken into account.

Teachers: As facilitators of learning, teachers hold a crucial role in implementing educational policies and creating a supportive environment for students.

Parents: Their active participation in school-related activities, whether through established parent-teacher associations (PTAS) or informal means, offers support and improves accountability in the educational journey (Okeke & Oluka, 2019).

Community Members: The wider community, consisting of local leaders and business organizations, can provide resources, volunteer assistance, and contribute to building a positive connection between the school and its surroundings (Fasasi, 2020).

Government officials: This include agencies and policymakers at local, state, and federal levels, establish regulations, allocate funding, and execute policies that have a direct influence on the management of schools (Akinola, 2021).

Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs): These organizations play crucial roles in providing resources, advocating for policy reforms, and supporting infrastructural development in Nigerian schools (Aduke & Ademola, 2021).

Relationship between Total School Theory and Stakeholder Engagement

Total school theory (TST) naturally aligns with the principles of stakeholder engagement, as both prioritize inclusivity, collaboration, and comprehensive management. TST promotes an integrated approach to school management, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all aspects of the school environment, including relationships with external stakeholders, and how they mutually support and reinforce each other (Fasasi, 2020).

By fostering open communication and collaborative decision-making, TST offers a framework for integrating diverse stakeholder viewpoints into school planning. This collaboration is crucial for tackling intricate educational issues, as it guarantees that decisions are made with a holistic understanding of the school community's requirements and available resources (Omoniyi, 2021). By encouraging collaboration among students, teachers, parents, and the wider community, this approach is founded on participatory governance that encourages democratic participation and inclusiveness, particularly among vulnerable groups (Adekola & Ademola, 2021).

Implications for Total School Theory to School Managers

By incorporating these theoretical models of stakeholder engagement into the total school theory framework, educational institutions can function as adaptable systems that cater to the requirements of their communities. By utilizing these models, schools can establish resilient, inclusive, and high-quality learning environments that foster lifelong education. Incorporating these theoretical models within the TST framework provides several advantages:

- a. **Improved Decision-Making Process:** considering diverse stakeholder viewpoints results in more well-informed and impactful choices.
- a. **Sustainability:** active participation fosters a sense of ownership, crucial for sustaining school programmes and policies.
- b. **Accountability:** Stakeholders actively participate in monitoring and evaluating school management, promoting transparency and effectiveness.
- c. **Collaborative Leadership:** Collaborative leadership encourages school leaders to actively engage with teachers, students, and other stakeholders in collectively shaping the school's vision. This model is supported by TST, which emphasizes a comprehensive approach to school management, where leadership is decentralized and decision-making is shared among various stakeholders (Omoniyi, 2021).

Stakeholders, School Managers and Total School Theory

According to Fasasi (2020). Total school theory can also be applied to tackle issues that exclude important stakeholders, especially parents and local communities. By fostering inclusivity and shared responsibility, TST encourages schools to actively involve individuals who are typically excluded from decision-making processes to:

1. Overcoming socio-cultural barriers: schools can use TST to challenge socio-cultural norms that limit the involvement of certain groups, such as women or low-income parents.
2. Creating a culture of inclusion: TST advocates for a school culture that embraces diversity and creates an environment where every individual feels a sense of belonging.
3. Shared responsibility in school management: by distributing leadership and decision-making responsibilities across all stakeholder groups, TST helps to create a more balanced and equitable management structure, where all voices are heard, and all contributions are valued (Bakare, 2020).

Role of Stakeholder Engagement for Inclusive Educational Management in Nigeria

Total school theory plays a crucial role in sustainable educational management by advocating for a comprehensive, collaborative approach to school management and administration. In this context, sustainability means that schools have the ability to consistently provide high-quality

education while adjusting to various factors, including population growth, technological advancements, and policy changes (Fasasi, 2020).

- a. Adaptability: schools that actively involve stakeholders are more adaptable because they tap into a broader range of perspectives and expertise.
- b. Resource mobilization: Involving parents, community members, and non-governmental organizations can result in the gathering of financial and human resources that contribute to the development of schools and enhance infrastructure, ultimately fostering long-term sustainability (Okeke & Oluka, 2019).
- c. Shared responsibility: when stakeholders believe they are responsible for the school's success, they can support the school's plans by ensuring the sustainable development of the school.

Critiques and Challenges Faced by School Managers in Engaging Stakeholders for Inclusive School Management

There are restrictions, particularly in the middle-level world of practice, including education. One criticism is that the theory may focus too much on the social impact and collaboration aspect, without considering constraints like resource availability and political influence (Akinola, 2021). Resource constraints will make full use of TST difficult. The most effective method through test may necessitate infrastructure and staffing levels that many schools cannot afford (Bakare, 2020). Stakeholder involvement may be restricted due to political interests that can impact the coordination of testing strategies (Adekola & Ademola, 2021). Different stakeholders may have varying opinions on significant matters like curriculum modifications, disciplinary actions, or resource distribution. These conflicts can hinder the decision-making process and result in a stalemate in school management (Okeke and Oluka, 2019). In certain situations, emergency decisions may be postponed because it is necessary to consult all stakeholders involved (Omoniyi, 2021). In a public secondary school in Lagos, the implementation of a school management committee (SMC) that includes parents, teachers, and community leaders has led to significant improvements in school facilities and student performance. The SMC, based on total school theory, has played a crucial role in fostering a sense of shared responsibility and accountability among all stakeholders (Akinola, 2021).

In rural areas of Kano State, an NGO-led initiative united local stakeholders to establish a sustainable school feeding programme. By actively engaging parents, teachers, and community members in the planning stage, the programme has successfully addressed challenges related to funding and logistics, aligning with the collaborative principles of TST (Adekola & Ademola, 2021).

Stakeholder Exclusion from the Whole School Theory

Total school theory can also be applied to address the challenge of influencing important stakeholders, particularly parents and communities within the city. By fostering collaboration

and shared responsibility, TST encourages schools to involve individuals who are typically excluded from the decision-making process (Fasasi, 2020).

- a. **Tradition and culture:** this can be achieved through outreach programs, parent-teacher associations, and other platforms that offer a space for marginalized groups to express their concerns (Okeke and Oluka, 2019).
- b. **Fostering understanding among all stakeholders:** schools can create this culture by implementing policies that promote openness, transparency, and collaboration in all aspects of school management (Adekola and Ademola, 2021).
- c. **Leadership and decision-making roles:** TST helps establish fair and balanced governance where every voice is heard and every contribution is valued (Bakare, 2020).

Conclusion

This study has clearly demonstrated that Total School Theory (TST) offers a holistic and inclusive framework for transforming the management of Nigerian public senior secondary schools. By emphasizing collaboration, shared decision-making and systemic integration, TST effectively aligns with the principles of stakeholder engagement, ensuring that students, teachers, parents, community leaders, NGOs, and government actors are all meaningfully involved in school governance. Therefore, effective school leadership must embrace inclusive practices that recognize the interdependence of school components and the critical roles of stakeholders in driving sustainable educational development.

Suggestions

1. Schools should ensure transparent communication channels that enable active participation from students, parents, teachers, and communities in decision-making.
2. Institutions should use data-driven evaluations to monitor progress and adjust policies in line with Total School Theory.
3. Policymakers should embed Total School Theory principles into national and state frameworks to support inclusive and collaborative management.
4. School administrators should be trained in collaborative leadership and stakeholder engagement to boost school performance.
5. Educational development strategies should include input from diverse stakeholders to ensure sustainability and community relevance.

Recommendations

1. Establish Inclusive School Management Committees that formally engage parents, students, teachers, and community leaders in planning and oversight.
2. Train School Leaders and Administrators in participatory management and conflict resolution to implement Total School Theory effectively.
3. Encourage Community and NGO Partnerships to support infrastructure, learning materials, and capacity building.

4. Embed Stakeholder Engagement in Education Policies at both state and national levels to ensure consistency and accountability.
5. Implement Routine Monitoring and Evaluation to track the impact of stakeholder participation on school performance and decision-making quality.

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