

# The Relationship Between Stakeholders' Involvement In Strategic Planning And Organisation's Performance – A Study Of The University Of Venda

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## ABSTRACT

*This study focuses on the determinants of employee performance at the University of Venda, premised on the extent to which stakeholders are involved in the strategic planning of the institution. The aim of the study was to establish the effect of stakeholders' involvement in the strategic planning of the University of Venda and to determine how different stakeholders are involved in the strategic planning and ultimate implication of their involvement - or lack of involvement - on the overall performance of the institution. Using a survey approach, this study revealed that the process of strategic planning is absolutely dominated by the management cadre, thereby sending the other stakeholders into the doldrums. In the practical sense (as indicated by the findings), those who are directly affected by the strategic plan are least involved in the process of the planning. Because of the lack of involvement, the majority of the stakeholders became demotivated, culminating in their lack-lustre approach toward the implementation of the orchestrated plan. The resultant lack of buy-in by the affected stakeholders - essentially the internal stakeholders (staff members and the student community) - lays credence to the paucity of the process and the resultant poor performance on a number of indicators.*

**Keywords:** Stakeholders' Involvement; Stakeholders' Influence; Strategy Formulation; Strategic Planning; Employee Performance; Organisation's Performance

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

University of Venda (UNIVEN) is a rural-based university located in Thohoyandou in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province. It was established in 1982 to cater to the educational needs of the people domiciled in the hitherto Homeland of Venda. Since its establishment, the University has experienced tremendous growth and changes, both structural and administrative. A good example is the restructuring process, which calls for the development of a new qualifications structure and programme profile. More strategic structural changes include the establishment of the Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning (CHETEL), and the Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation (CRDPA) that offer a holistic range of programmes and services on teaching and learning to guarantee continuous improvement in throughput and graduation rates at the university. Unlike during its infancy when the University had only the School of Education, it now pools eight schools; namely, the School of Education, School of Human Sciences, School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, School of Health Sciences, School of Agriculture, School of Environmental Sciences, School of Management Sciences, and School of Law.

UNIVEN is one of the two rural institutions providing higher education for the people of the Limpopo Province. Since its days as a homeland university, it has expanded its student enrolments to such an extent that its carrying capacity has come increasingly under pressure. Currently, UNIVEN has over 11,000 enrolled students distributed across eight schools. These schools offer qualifications from certificates and undergraduate degrees to

postgraduate qualifications. Students' enrollment patterns indicate that UNIVEN is predominantly an undergraduate higher education institution. The academic, administrative, and support tasks necessary for the functioning of the University are carried out by 710 staff members, comprising 343 academics and 367 administration and service staff. The University of Venda's vision is to be at the centre of tertiary education for rural and regional development in Southern Africa, which means the Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation (CRDPA), supports the aligned government programme like agricultural and economic activities in the Vhembe District. Ultimately, the University seeks to be quality-driven, financially sustainable and a rural-based comprehensive university. To cope with the increasing enlargement of its operations, the University is presupposed to improve its strategic planning process, essentially, the aspect that deals with the stakeholders' involvement.

Research suggests that strategic planning is a conscious process by which an institution assesses its current state and the likely future condition of its environment (Hayward and Ncayiyana, 2003). The outcome of the organisational analysis is then incorporated into the future-orientated planning, organised strategies (both generic and grand), policy initiatives, and operational processes and procedures. In doing this, the organisational planning process is enlarged to accommodate as much participatory input as possible, such that sense of belonging and buy-in of the larger organisational members are achieved; hence, the need for stakeholders' involvement (Peng, 2009). Stakeholders are entities or individuals that can reasonably be expected to be significantly affected by the organisation's activities, products, and/or services and whose actions can reasonably be expected to affect the ability of the organisation to successfully implement its strategies and achieve its objectives (GRI, 2002; Thompson, Strickland and Gamble, 2005). The stakeholders are thus important to the organisation by virtue of their ability to influence the planning in the organisation. As a result, their views are supposed to be a component of decision-making. Management holds much of the decision-making powers in the organisation and, as such, it needs some approval from stakeholders to remain popular and ultimately successful in its strategic targets.

It is important for an organisation to involve stakeholders in its strategic planning processes to ensure that all structures are represented from the grassroots level. It becomes very easy for the stakeholders to buy in and to implement the plan if they have been involved in the planning. In every organisation, several stakeholders are impacted by the strategic plan. These stakeholders may also be able to have an impact on this plan as they may have information, experience, or insight that would be helpful in developing the plan (Edelenbos, and Klijn, 2006; EUNEC, 2011). Stakeholders could furthermore be in a position to either support or block progress of the strategic plan or have a vested interest in the work or decision-makers who approve and implement any aspect of the plan. This is an important point, especially as it can facilitate or hinder strategy implementation and possibly give rise to a performance gap (Peng, 2009). This is strengthened by King 11 report (2002) which suggests the use of an "inclusive approach" in the engagement of stakeholders where the purpose and values of the institution are defined and communicated to all stakeholders. The report also states that stakeholders need to be considered when developing the strategy of the institution by moving from single to triple bottom line reporting, considering environmental, social and economic concerns. In general, it is imperative to involve stakeholders in the development of a strategic plan in order to include their point of view and the intent of their involvement to result in change or a new direction, and especially the implementation of strategy (Lynch, 2012).

According to Dess, Lumpkin, Eisner, McNamar and Kim (2012), stakeholders are persons or groups of people who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, as well as those who may have interest in a project and/or the ability to influence its outcome, either positively or negatively. The starting point for correctly identifying strategic factors and developing successful strategies is to know the stakeholders (Graham, 2005). According to Graham (2005), the whole process of developing strategies becomes more manageable when the organisation's environment is broken into identifiable key stakeholders. According to Hayward and Ncayiyana (2003), successful strategic planning, in higher education, is inclusive, allowing every major stakeholder - students, academic staff, administrative staff and service staff an opportunity to participate and, more importantly, to support the strategic plan. Successful strategic planning involves 'top-down' and bottom-up' input from interested and affected people – the stakeholders.

Dess et al (2012) further observed that most organisations put stakeholders at the end of the strategic plan process, as targets in the communications plan after all the thinking has been done. This author observes that in the new world, where employee and customer blogs can have more influence than an official blog, the traditional

approach of putting stakeholders at the end of the process is ineffective. Balogun and Johnson (2004) suggest that an effective modern university is likely to involve all key stakeholders in the development and implementation of strategy and policy. Academics should be at the heart of planning and decision-making in their organisation and be encouraged to contribute on a systematic basis to achieve effective educational and research outcomes for their organisation. It follows then, that academics have a responsibility to become more active participants within their organisations and can no longer afford to be excluded from an important decision making process, such as strategic planning.

Studies suggest that key stakeholders are the base on which successful strategy is built (Graham, 2005; Dess et al, 2012). These authors further suggest that the whole process of developing strategy becomes more manageable when you break organisations' environment into identifiable key stakeholders. Rowley and Sherman (2001) further contend that strategic planning is a process that is challenging in and of itself. They are of the opinion that one of the most effective methods of assuring campus-wide acceptance of major strategic decisions is to ensure that everyone has a voice and that the voice is effectively heard as part of the overall system of strategic planning.

Balogun and Johnson (2004) indicate that many stakeholders are concerned about the value provided by colleges and universities. Although there has been an effort to call attention to the issue and to examine select-educational process, there is a dire need to address all aspects of the university/college administrators, understand the critical aspects of identifying, defining, managing, and delivering superior value to all stakeholders of the institution. Balogun and Johnson (2004) further provide a university planning process model for incorporating value in the strategic planning process of any university. The authors further stated that the universities are faced with increasing pressure to reduce the churn rate of students and increase retention. Also, it is expected that the universities' focus must shift toward attracting students who fit with the value proposition (delivery) of the institution.

According to Rowley, Lujan and Dolence (1997), the contribution and value of stakeholders' engagement at the colleges and universities is not new, nor is it unique to American universities. While a few institutions enjoy a peaceful administrative process, a lot others are not that lucky. These authors suggest that quite a number of institutions of higher education are currently facing a crisis of confidence and trust by parents, prospective students, alumni, congressional committee, and the media, thereby necessitating stakeholders' involvement in the strategic planning and implementation process of the institutions.

## **STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

According to Logan (2004), stakeholders are groups of people who have an interest in an organisation's work and to whom the organisation has an ethical duty. Thompson and Martin (2010) identify an organisation's stakeholders as employees, competitors, potential partners, suppliers, the public, regulatory bodies, and the government. In the opinion of Dess et al (2012), whether an organisation is working on a strategic plan, policy development, or creating a new program, consultation with key stakeholders is an important factor in achieving ultimate success. These authors point out, however, that participatory inertia always poses a challenge in that regard. According to Hayward and Ncayiyana (2003), the initial reaction is often "why participate?" People usually have to be convinced to serve, and that requires showing them why it is in their interest to do so. Hayward further stated that, in most cases, the realization that being part of the strategic planning process will allow them to help define the institution's future and is incentive enough.

The need for participatory planning stems from the universities' shared governance model. Within colleges and universities, the major means of production (teaching and research) are the exclusive rights of the faculty and top-level strategic decision-making cannot be adequately accomplished without the advice and consent of professoriate. The faculty can exercise significant veto power over the options available to university administrative leadership (Rowley, Lujan and Dolence, 1997). Finding a mechanism to get faculty involvement at every stage - particularly at the implementation stage - becomes essential to success. It should also be noted that faculty cannot be "commanded" but have to be willing to voluntarily participate.

According to Edelenbos and Klijn (2006), the following are some benefits of reaching out to stakeholders through surveys, one-on-one meetings, and multi-stakeholder consultations: 1) Quality input leads to quality decision-making – a broader perspective reduces “group think”, helps to challenge traditional thinking, and sparks creativity in problem-solving; 2) greater stakeholder satisfaction with the final planning product comes from their involvements in shaping it; 3) the chances of successful implementation increases as more stakeholders feel committed to the plan or project’s goals and take ownership of the plan’s design and good governance; and 4) transparency and open communication are served when Boards communicate and receive feedback from stakeholders instead of being guided by personal agenda. Further, Hayward and Ncayiyana (2003) suggest that student participation is important for the success of the university’s strategic planning. In some cases, the students’ representatives are elected leaders of the student body. In other cases, they were chosen by senior administrators, and in a few, they were chosen by the student council. The reaction of some students’ leaders and vice chancellor to the suggestion that students be part of the planning process was negative in those cases where there was no such radiation. On the whole, student population should be seen as contributing effectively to the process - provides important ideas to the strategic planning committee and offers feedback to the student community. This was especially true in South Africa where participation at both the institutional and national levels was critical to success.

Binbaum (1991) suggests that one of the most effective methods of assuring campus-wide acceptance of major decisions is to ensure that everyone has a voice and that that voice is heard seriously as part of the overall system of strategic planning. Many authors in the area of organisational behaviour tout the importance of participation in major decision-making activities in an organisation. Binbaum (1991) was one of the authors who particularly targeted university campuses as being important venues within which participation occurs. In order to attract students, energize alumni, entice donors, and retain higher calibre faculty, the university must be perceived by each key stakeholder group as providing value in their relationship. Some scholars (Thompson, Strickland, and Gamble, 2005; Peng, 2009; EUNEC, 2011) point to the importance of the strategic planning process being highly participatory to ensure broad input, mobilise support for goals, help pave the way for implementation, and legitimatise the strategic plan. These authors further mentioned that getting broad participation is not necessarily easy. In most developing countries, there is little, if any, experience with broad-based committees that include administrators, faculty members, and staff. Student involvement is especially rare. Lynch (2012) advised that the organisations do not have to consult with stakeholders just to say they did. If the institution includes the stakeholders on their strategic planning process, it must be because it is willing to include their point of view and intend consultation to result in change or a new direction.

#### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STAKEHOLDERS’ PARTICIPATION IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

According to Hayward and Ncayiyana (2003:22), successful strategic planning is inclusive, allowing major stakeholders – the management staff, teaching and research staff, support staff, students, the council, and other interested parties – an opportunity to participate. Thompson, Strickland, and Gamble (2005) further contend that successful strategic planning is not an exclusive function of the strategic planning committee. According to these authors, effective participation of all institutional sectors in the strategic planning process is most often linked to the combined effort of the organisation leadership and the chair or head of the strategic planning committee. In his opinion, Thomas (1980) argues that there are no *specific* considerations of the higher education customer than the stakeholders. He espouses the importance of stakeholders in the strategic planning process by suggesting that the university’s survival depends on terms that are consistent with stakeholders. It is the existence of certain stakeholders which gives higher education its unique problem - the issue of students being both customers and products, simultaneously. Lovelock and Rothschild (1980) note this phenomenon as they observe that students are not only consumers of educational services but also a product of the institution in the eyes of third parties, such as employers.

According to Hayward and Ncayiyana (2003:29), there should be a pre-launch consultation on the strategic planning. The Vice-Chancellor is expected to undertake consultations with a broad spectrum of institutional leaders representing major areas of the campus community, including the faculty, staff, students, and council, prior to making a formal announcement regarding the launching of a strategic planning process. This consultation phase is most successful if it involves discussions about the importance of the strategic planning exercise to the operations,

efficiency, and the future of the institutions. This process is most effective if the Vice-Chancellor commits to open and broad discussion of issues and potential changes that facilitate the growth of at least some priority programmes, while also indicating the potential to modify or eliminate programmes that are no longer appropriate for the institution's mission or relevant to the needs of stakeholders.

Participation is a key issue in strategic research and practice. While there is no consensus on the degree to which organisational members should participate in strategy formulation, most scholars agree that a lack of participation easily leads to a poorly developed strategy, dissatisfaction among those who are excluded from the process, and consequent difficulties in implementation (Mintzberg, 1994; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Peng, 2009). While a lack of participation is not always a problem in organisation, it is widely acknowledged that a lack of engagement often tends to decrease the quality of strategic planning and create various kinds of problems for the implementation of strategic plans (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; and Laine and Vaara, 2007). Also, Hax and Majluf (1996) suggest that universities should encourage active participation of as many people as possible, including the faculty, administration, students and alumni, engaging them in the on-going dialogue and involving them in the strategic planning process in order to generate a feeling of ownership of the process and the outcomes throughout the university.

Hax and Majluf (1996) confirm that engaging stakeholders in the strategic planning process benefits universities in a variety of ways. It creates a framework of determining the direction that a university should take to achieve its desired future. It also provides a framework for achieving competitive advantage and allows all university constituencies to participate and work together toward accomplishing goals. The stakeholder involvement raises the vision of all key participants, encouraging them to reflect creatively on the strategic direction of the university, which allows dialogue between the participants, improving understanding of the organisation's vision and fostering a sense of ownership of the strategic plan and belonging to the organisation. When stakeholders are involved in strategic planning, it allows the university to set priorities in terms of its strategic objectives.

Hayward and Ncayiyana (2003) suggests that one of the vital aspects of strategic planning is to focus attention and thinking on the academic strengths of the institution that will promote excellence and meet national needs in the future. He further mentioned that the strategic planning requires discussion - which includes representatives of all institutional stakeholders - about the mission, vision, and goals of the institutions, prioritisation of goals, and thoughtful reflection about the future. He argues that the successful strategic planning should result in an enhanced institutional focus for all stakeholders. Further, Paris (2003) intimates that the stakeholders' involvement in the strategic planning creates external advocacy for the organisation. Employers, for example, are much more likely to support an educational initiative, such as a new degree program or a revamped curriculum, if they have a first-hand role in a well-designed planning process. Paris (2003) further contends that stakeholders' involvement in the strategic planning process can contribute greatly to employees' commitment to mutual goals and a sense of organisational unity. The institution or department receives valuable feedback, both on successful efforts and on areas where improvements should be made.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The fundamental purpose of strategic planning in higher education is to provide an on-going process of examination and evaluations of institutions' strengths, weaknesses, goals, resource requirements and future prospects, and to set out a coherent plan to respond to the findings and build stronger, more effective institutions (Lynch, 2012). In line with the on-going, strategic planning has been defined as 'a conscious process by which an institution assesses its current state and the likely future condition of its environment, identifies a possible future state for itself, and then develops organised strategies, policies, and procedures for selecting and getting to one or more of them' (Hayward and Ncayiyana, 2003:3). Further, Rowley and Sherman (2001) state that strategic planning is a process that is challenging in and of itself. Unfortunately, implementing the strategic planning has presented its own set of highly complex issues. In higher education, many authors have already identified that the strategic planning process is even more complex and that implementation is seldom successful.

According to Pfeiffer, Goodstein and Nolan (2001), strategic planning is the process by which the guiding members of an organisation envision its future and develop the necessary procedure and operations to achieve that

future. EUNEC (2011), as well as Peng (2009), observe that strategic planning is aimed at engaging with work groups to envision the future and manage the inevitable changes caused by economic conditions, leadership, students or departmental needs, and technology. These authors are of the opinion that strategic planning assists organisations to help shape the future rather than simply prepare for or adapt to the future. They hint further that strategic planning looks very carefully at the current performance and allows for analysis of the gaps between the present and the envisioned future. Because all levels of staff and faculty are to be included in this process, all tasks and positions are open to evaluation.

In an institution of higher learning, the composition of the institutional strategic planning committee, which may be chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, is crucial. The strategic planning committee should include senior management - usually the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Finance - and someone involved in institutional research or data management, senior member/s of the teaching staff, senior staff, students and representatives of Alumni or community if appropriate to the institution. The Council should be briefed regularly about the progress and direction for the strategic planning committee (Hayward and Ncayiyana, 2003:27). Rowley, Lujan and Dolence (1997:14) state that strategic planning is a “formal process designed to help a university identify and maintain an optimal alignment with the most important elements in the environment within which the university resides.” This environment consists of “the political, social, economic, technological, and educational ecosystems”, both internal and external to the university.

Lynch (2012) observes that setting the stage for strategic planning can be difficult, even after overcoming the question of why the planning has to take place at all. Peng (2009) also hints that change will not take place without the general recognition, within the organisation, that the need for such a change is necessary. Part of the process of strategic planning is to get people to recognise the need for change. This requires involvement in the planning process by the entire community, deans, faculty members, staff, students, board members, and in some cases, members of the public. People must understand why change is needed. An effective strategic planning committee, with broad representation, can help make the case for a desirable change.

According to Hayward and Ncayiyana (2003), strategic planning is a dynamic process requiring a high standard of future-focused thinking on the part of those involved in the planning process. Among the keys to strategic planning success at an institutional level are: 1) creativity and viability of the vision; 2) mission and goals developed for the future; 3) commitment of the institutional leadership to the plan; 4) extent to which the vision is communicated, understood, and shared by institutional leadership and members; 5) scope and depth of analysis involved; 6) relationship of the plan to budget; 7) human capacity, and 8) environmental realities. These authors further contend that strategic planning is a means of establishing major direction for the university, college, school or department within the academic setting. Through strategic planning, resources are concentrated in a limited number of major directions in order to maximize benefits to stakeholders - those that the institution exists to serve and are affected by the choices that the institution makes. In higher education, those stakeholders include students, labour market, funding agencies, and society, as well as internal stakeholders, such as faculty and staff.

Literature (Paris, 2003; Dess et al, 2012) suggests that effective strategic planning can accrue many benefits to the organisation. According to these authors, it enables the organisation to be proactive and to actively shape its own destiny. Given that the process requires attention to trends and external developments, an educational institution or department is less likely to be taken by surprise by a new problem or development if the strategic plan is well orchestrated. According to Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997), strategic planning could be used as a tool, which is designed to help a university identify and maintain an optimal alignment with the most important elements in the environment within which the university resides. This environment consists of “the political, social, economic, technological, and educational ecosystem, both internal and external to the university”.

Paris (2003) states that a major benefit of strategic planning in higher education institutions is that it can lend stability to the organisation in spite of increasingly frequent leadership changes. Simmons and Pohl (1994) found that from 1980 to 1994 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the average dean’s tenure was five years. He further noted that the average length of leadership tenure was declining sharply with each year. His observation was that strategic planning creates a broad decision-making group by actively involving middle and operational levels of

management. By pushing decision-making down, a system for strategic planning can help the organisation maintain a core purpose during times of changing leadership.

Simmons and Pohl (1994) also point out that a broadly-based participative strategic planning process can actually make the most of the frequent leadership changes by coupling a new leader's external perspective with a stable core internal group that is committed to mutual goals and a shared vision of a successful future. According to Benjamin and Carroll (1998), universities are driven to engage in a strategic planning process by a variety of forces which include increasing demand for higher education concurrent with a decline in government funding, changing student demographics, and a need to compete with the emerging models of higher education while keeping the essence of a traditional comprehensive university. A strategic planning process can help prepare a university to face these emerging challenges. According to Glassman and Rossy (undated), institutions of higher education that do not rethink their roles, responsibilities, and strategic planning can expect a very difficult time in the next decade and the next generation. These authors pragmatically contend that some universities may not survive the test of time being heralded by the dictates of time and circumstantial parameter of globalisation.

The specific case of the University of Venda reflects the uniqueness of the university's settings and administrative conscript. The university's five-year plan outlines, in a succinct manner, its commitment "to be a quality-driven, financially-sustainable, rural-based comprehensive university" (UNIVEN Strategic Plan 2009-2013:3). According to the UNIVEN 2009-2013 strategic plan, the university's strategic plan is guided by both internal imperatives (new vision and mission and the statue of the University of Venda) and external imperatives, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), The South African Paper on Science and Technology (1996), the Higher Education Act (1997), the Education Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (2001), the National Students Financial Aid Scheme Act, Act 56 (1999), the Human Resources Development Strategy (2001), the Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (2001), the Restructuring of the Higher Education System in South Africa (2002), the new Institutional Landscape for Higher Education in South Africa (2000), the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (2007), and the Higher Education Amendment Act (2008). This launch pad of the university's strategic planning (identified above) lays credence to the orchestration of eight strategic objectives and six success factors. In a nutshell, all the objectives and measurable indicators of the university's strategic plan are informed by the enabling regulatory environment and the strategic intent of the university's leadership.

#### **ASSUMPTIONS ON THE LACK OF STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT**

In August 2010, external consultants were contracted to conduct a strategic review workshop. All staff members were invited and scheduled to attend the workshop. Upon attending, it was revealed that almost 80% of staff members were not aware of the strategic plan document. Although the majority of stakeholders were represented in the strategic planning process, the finding suggests that only senior management and trade union representatives understood the essence of strategic planning. The rest of the stakeholders, especially the middle and lower class cadres, were not well informed about the importance of strategic planning, thereby hindering their effective participation in the process. This may imply that the representatives of the trade unions did not give proper feedback to their members. It may also imply that the management cadre did not conduct the necessary consultation/sensitization with the middle and lower class cadres in order to create the much needed awareness and education about the importance of strategic planning. The strategic plan document is written and published in English and the majority of service staff cannot read or write English. The majority of lower level staff felt excluded from the province of the plan because they do not even understand the language, hence the content.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The target population was drawn from the university population, which includes academic, administrative and service staff, students, and management staff. The population included both males and females from the ages of 17-37 and older, irrespective of gender, physical ability, race, and culture. One hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were administered during the study period, but 130 were returned, out of which only 113 were useable (fully completed), giving us a response rate of 75.3%. In order to ascertain the involvement of the internal stakeholders in the strategic planning of the University of Venda, their level of involvement was measured on a

Likert's 5-Point scale. Obviously, some members of the targeted population were reticent to participate in the study. As such, a non-probability sampling method was used in order to allow reasonable flexibility in choosing the respondents.

Care was exercised in sorting the responses generated. Being a characteristic of survey studies, some of the questionnaires were returned with inadequate information, which necessitated nullifying some of the questionnaires – an exercise that reduced the overall response rate. The descriptive statistical analysis was done with the use of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) computer programme (Version 20, 2011).

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

As indicated in the questionnaire, Section A represents biographical information of the respondents. The summary of the results of that section is presented in the following paragraphs, which is intended to refresh readership through a biographical presentation. The section that deals with age categorisation suggests that the majority of respondents (57.5%) are in the age category of 37 years and older. More specifically, 15% are in the age category of between 22 and 26 years and 12.3% are in the age category of 27-31. Further, 9% are in the age category of 17-21 years. The least number of respondents were in the age category of 32-36 years (6.2%).

In the gender category, male participants slightly outnumbered females (5.1:4.9). The section that presents population groupings indicates that black respondents account for 95%, while white population accounts for the rest. The sample mainly comprises of respondents that hold post-graduate degrees (48.7%; academic and management staff members), followed by 24.4% respondents in possession of first degrees (post-graduate students and administrative staff members). Only 13.7% have passed Matriculation (undergraduate students and administrative staff members), while 9.7% hold a diploma (undergraduate students and administrative staff members). Only 3.5% of the respondents indicated that they have not passed Matriculation (the menial workers).

Further in the biographical section, responses generated on the occupational category of the respondents show that 39.8% of them are administrative staff, 22.1% are students, and 17.7% are academic staff, while management staff accounts for 10.6%, followed by service staff at 9.7%. The analysis also shows that the majority of the respondents are new in the university. About 40% of the respondents spent less than five years in the university, while only 10% have been working for the university for about 10 years. More so, about 30% have worked in the university for more than 11 years, while more than 20% have been in the university for close to 20 years. Having looked at the biographical demographics, we now turn our attention to the responses generated, especially those that have direct impact on employee performance and motivation. Table 1 contains the results of the correlation analysis.

From Table 1, there is a strong statistical significant relationship between stakeholders' participation and the eventual implementation of the strategic plan. The covariance of these variables expressed the highest statistical value in the analysis (1.22), establishing the extent of their strong statistical association. Further to the implementation argument, the table also suggests that there is a strong relationship between stakeholders' buy-in and effective implementation of the strategic plan. Further analysis suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between involvement of stakeholders in the strategic planning, and the individual performance, which eventually translates into overall organisational performance. For the sake of robustness, the Spearman's rho estimation technique was employed to test the behaviour of the variables and the level of association between them. The Spearman's rho technique is applied because it is known to be capable of providing protection against outliers among the variables' values. More specifically, in the case of X and Y variables, the Spearman's rho correlation ignores Y, as well as outliers among the Y values, and the same pattern is followed for the X variable. The result of the Spearman's correlation is presented in Table 2.



**Table 1: Correlation Analysis Of Stakeholders’ Involvement And Performance**

Correlations					
		An opportunity was provided for all staff members to participate in the development of the University of Venda strategic planning	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Performance	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on buy-in by stakeholders
An opportunity was provided for all staff members to participate in the development of the University of Venda strategic planning	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.299**	0.188*	0.236*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001	0.046	0.012
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	136.035	33.186	19.593	26.876
	Covariance	1.215	0.296	0.175	0.240
	N	113	113	113	113
Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	Pearson Correlation	0.299**	1.000	0.675**	0.622**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001		0.000	0.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	33.186	90.726	57.363	57.850
	Covariance	0.296	0.810	0.512	0.517
	N	113	113	113	113
Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.188*	0.675**	1.000	0.521**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.046	0.000		0.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	19.593	57.363	79.681	45.425
	Covariance	0.175	0.512	0.711	0.406
	N	113	113	113	113
Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Buy-in by stakeholders	Pearson Correlation	0.236*	0.622**	0.521**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012	0.000	0.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	26.876	57.850	45.425	95.434
	Covariance	0.240	0.517	0.406	0.852
	N	113	113	113	113
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

According to Table 2, all the variables tested for correlation are statistically significant at 0.01% error level, suggesting a very high statistical relationship. This corroborates the analysis contained in Table 1 and further establishes that giving the stakeholders’ the required opportunity to be involved in the strategic planning of the University does affect not only the buy-in, but also the implementation of the strategic plan, as well as the individual performance (and the overall performance of the University). To establish the extent to which the opportunity to participate in the development of the strategic plan influences the implementation of the final strategic plan, the cross tabulation technique was adopted. The result of the cross tabulation is presented in Table 3.

**Table 2: The Spearman’s Correlation Analysis On Stakeholders’ Involvement And Performance**

Correlations						
			An opportunity was provided for all staff members to participate in the development of the University of Venda strategic planning	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Performance	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Buy-in by stakeholders
Spearman's rho	An opportunity was provided for all staff members to participate in the development of the University of Venda strategic planning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.297**	0.249**	0.284**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001	0.008	0.002
		N	113	113	113	113
	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	Correlation Coefficient	0.297**	1.000	0.730**	0.608**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	.	0.000	0.000
		N	113	113	113	113
	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Performance	Correlation Coefficient	0.249**	0.730**	1.000	0.515**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008	0.000	.	0.000
		N	113	113	113	113
	Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Buy-in by stakeholders	Correlation Coefficient	0.284**	0.608**	0.515**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.000	0.000	.
		N	113	113	113	113

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 3, more than 67% of the respondents indicate that the opportunity provided by the management for the stakeholders of the University to participate in the strategic planning process eventually influenced the implementation of the strategic plan. While about 19% were unsure of the extent of that impact, about 14% believed that the implementation of the strategic plan has nothing to do with the opportunity given to stakeholders to participate in the planning process. It is very evident from the cross tabulation that the successful implementation of the strategic plan is premised on the opportunity granted to stakeholders to participate in the strategic planning process. For the sake of robustness, Chi-square tests were conducted. The result of the Chi-square tests is contained in Table 4.

**Table 3: Cross Tabulation Analysis On Stakeholders’ Participation And Implementation**

Crosstab								
			Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan					Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
An opportunity was provided for all staff members to participate in the development of the University of Venda strategic planning	Strongly Agree	Count	18 <sub>a</sub>	9 <sub>b</sub>	1 <sub>b</sub>	1 <sub>a, b</sub>	0 <sub>a, b</sub>	29
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	41.9%	19.1%	6.2%	16.7%	0.0%	25.7%
		% of Total	15.9%	8.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	25.7%
	Agree	Count	13 <sub>a</sub>	28 <sub>b</sub>	5 <sub>a, b</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>	0 <sub>a, b</sub>	47
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	30.2%	59.6%	31.2%	16.7%	0.0%	41.6%
		% of Total	11.5%	24.8%	4.4%	0.9%	0.0%	41.6%
	Not sure	Count	7 <sub>a, b</sub>	4 <sub>b</sub>	7 <sub>c</sub>	3 <sub>a, c</sub>	0 <sub>a, b, c</sub>	21
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	16.3%	8.5%	43.8%	50.0%	0.0%	18.6%
		% of Total	6.2%	3.5%	6.2%	2.7%	0.0%	18.6%
	Disagree	Count	3 <sub>a</sub>	5 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>	0 <sub>a</sub>	10
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	7.0%	10.6%	6.2%	16.7%	0.0%	8.8%
		% of Total	2.7%	4.4%	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	8.8%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	2 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>	2 <sub>a</sub>	0 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>b</sub>	6
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan	4.7%	2.1%	12.5%	0.0%	100.0%	5.3%
		% of Total	1.8%	0.9%	1.8%	0.0%	0.9%	5.3%
Total		Count	43	47	16	6	1	113
		% within Involvement of	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

	stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan						
	% of Total	38.1%	41.6%	14.2%	5.3%	0.9%	100.0%
Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Implementation of strategic plan categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.							

According to Table 4, the Chi-square test adopted the Monte Carlo tests of significance at both one and two-sided. The lower and upper bounds were also incorporated. This is done for the sake of robustness. In statistics, if the results generated through these tests are statistically significantly different, then there is a possibility of inconsistency, which may reduce the validity of the finding. However in this study, the results generated from the two set of analyses are not statistically significantly different from one another, indicating a valid and reliable result. The results shown in Table 4 attest to the reliability of the cross tabulation findings contained in Table 3. All the variables used in the analysis point to the fact that affording stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the strategic planning will ultimately have a positive effect on the implementation of the orchestrated plan. The last aspect of the study examines the relationship between affording the entire staff members the opportunity to participate in the strategic planning and the ultimate staff motivation. These variables are included in the study because it is the staff members that are responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan, and their lack of involvement in the planning process (as seen in Tables 1 and 2) would affect buy-in and performance. The result of the cross tabulation is presented in Table 5.

**Table 4: Chi-Square Tests On Stakeholders’ Participation And Implementation**

Chi-Square Tests									
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)			Monte Carlo Sig. (1-sided)		
				Sig.	99% Confidence Interval		Sig.	99% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pearson Chi-Squa.	46.854 <sup>a</sup>	16	0.000	0.001 <sup>b</sup>	0.000	0.001			
Likelihood Ratio	33.538	16	0.006	0.002 <sup>b</sup>	0.001	0.004			
Fisher's Exact Test	34.283			0.001 <sup>b</sup>	0.000	0.001			
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.994 <sup>c</sup>	1.0	0.002	0.002 <sup>b</sup>	0.001	0.003	0.002 <sup>b</sup>	0.001	0.002
N of Valid Cases	113								
a. 18 cells (72.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.05.									
b. Based on 10000 sampled tables with starting seed 1614134552. c. The standardized statistic is 3.161.									

From Table 5, more than 67% of respondents indicated that granting opportunities to the staff members (irrespective of the organisational cadre) does have a positive impact on the staff motivation to fully and dedicatedly implement the strategy in a way that ensures an improvement in the overall performance of the University. While about 19% of the respondents are not sure of the possible relationship between these two variables, 14% opposed the existence of this relationship.

**Table 5: Cross Tabulation On Staff Participation In Strategic Planning And Motivation**

		Crosstab						
		Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation					Total	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
An opportunity was provided for all staff members to participate in the development of the University of Venda strategic planning	Strongly Agree	Count	14 <sub>a</sub>	12 <sub>a,b</sub>	1 <sub>b</sub>	0 <sub>a,b</sub>	2 <sub>a</sub>	29
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation	35.9%	25.0%	5.9%	0.0%	50.0%	25.7%
		% of Total	12.4%	10.6%	0.9%	0.0%	1.8%	25.7%
	Agree	Count	16 <sub>a</sub>	23 <sub>a</sub>	5 <sub>a</sub>	2 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>	47
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation	41.0%	47.9%	29.4%	40.0%	25.0%	41.6%
		% of Total	14.2%	20.4%	4.4%	1.8%	0.9%	41.6%
	Not sure	Count	5 <sub>a</sub>	6 <sub>a</sub>	9 <sub>b</sub>	1 <sub>a,b</sub>	0 <sub>a,b</sub>	21
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation	12.8%	12.5%	52.9%	20.0%	0.0%	18.6%
		% of Total	4.4%	5.3%	8.0%	0.9%	0.0%	18.6%
	Disagree	Count	2 <sub>a</sub>	4 <sub>a</sub>	2 <sub>a,b</sub>	2 <sub>b</sub>	0 <sub>a,b</sub>	10
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation	5.1%	8.3%	11.8%	40.0%	0.0%	8.8%
		% of Total	1.8%	3.5%	1.8%	1.8%	0.0%	8.8%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	2 <sub>a,b</sub>	3 <sub>a,b</sub>	0 <sub>b</sub>	0 <sub>a,b</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>	6
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation	5.1%	6.2%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	5.3%
		% of Total	1.8%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	5.3%
Total		Count	39	48	17	5	4	113
		% within Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	34.5%	42.5%	15.0%	4.4%	3.5%	100.0%

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning has effect on Staff motivation categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This article studies the relationship between stakeholders' participation in the strategic planning and the effective implementation of the plan vis-à-vis the employees' motivation, buy-in, and performance. It touches on the issue of the need for stakeholders to participate in the strategic planning of the university right from the planning stage. The study engages the theoretical conscripts of strategy formulation and implementation, especially in higher education, as established by some previous studies. This study, however, goes a step forward to integrate the principles of stakeholders' participation in strategic planning with staff motivation, buy-in, effective implementation, and the overall determination of the stakeholders to improve the University's performance. The specific approach of utilising stakeholders' support for a strategic plan, by getting them involved in the planning as an antidote for gaining their sense of belonging, motivation and desire for success, forms the bedrock of this study.

The study corroborates some of the previous studies by establishing a strong link between stakeholders' participation in the strategic planning and the ultimate successful implementation of the plan. However, the need to review the planning process was uncovered in this study. In specific, this study establishes that stakeholders' involvement in the strategic planning process is not a necessity, but rather an obligation. The study also hints that employee dissatisfaction with issues raised in the strategic plan, their lacklustre to understand and embrace the potential changes, and the resultant unceasing university-wide distrust and acrimony between management staff and the other stakeholders can be ameliorated if all internal stakeholders are duly invited to participate in the strategic planning.

From the ongoing, the conclusion could then be drawn that the successful implementation of a strategic plan is premised on the support of the entire stakeholder community; failure to secure such a support may be self-defeating and counterproductive. To that extent, the need to involve stakeholders in the strategic planning becomes inevitable.

In conclusion, while it may be difficult to get everyone on the roundtable for the strategic planning, effective communication and democratic process of representation would bode well for successful planning and, ultimately, successful implementation that is capable of changing the destiny of the institution for better in a sustainable manner.

## AUTHOR INFORMATION

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**NOTES**