

PARENTS INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The quest to improve the society makes education a collective responsibility for all stakeholders in the society as the quality of education determines quality and standard of citizens. Children are social capital to our society yet the standard of education is questionable alacrity despite the efforts of parents, teachers, governments, and other bodies who have stakes in education. This prompts the researcher to inquire the roles of parent's involvement and community participation in improving educational quality. The study adopts examination of empirical studies to discuss community participation as overall and dimension-wise on school efficacy. Emphases are laid on the issue of quality in education; obligations of the school to the local community; the importance of establishing effective links between the parent, community and school, and the benefits to schools of involving the local communities in school affairs. The roles of some local communities in Nigeria towards enhancing the quality of school education as well as challenges of teachers and educational administrators of involving community members in school affairs with implications of such involvement for educational planning are also considered. Through this study, it is explicit that parents can actively participate in their children's learning in schools through visitation to monitor hygiene; teaching/learning in the classroom; discuss pupils' performance with teachers and provide support to their children's quality learning. Child education is a major obligation which lies on the shoulder of every member of the society. It is also vivid that community participation improving school complexities; resources mobilization; organizing social-cultural activities; management of school and overall academic environment of the school. The study recommends that in order to prevent any possible misplacement of emphasis by either the community members or school staff, planning and policy formulation for educational provision should be cooperative effort involving child- teacher, parents, employers of labor, workers, religious groups and other stakeholders in education. Also it recommends that partnership and interaction between community, parents and government in education must be built to provide initiative, responsibility, and sensitivity for participation in education.

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KEYWORDS: participation, community, school effectiveness, resource mobilization, educational quality

INTRODUCTION

Community plays a variety of roles the provision, management of education and learning processes. Community participation seems paramount to education advancement because it could prompt partnership, development and program which is the core of school curriculum. (UNICEF 1992 cited in Aref (2010). Understanding barriers of participation is important when a community is getting organized for involvement in educational development planning. This understanding could help community and organizations to efficaciously impact the educational policy-making process. Further, Aref (2010) posited that it is important for government to understand that educational system also face barriers that can hinder its progress in responding and recognizing the priorities of local communities. Overcoming the barriers to education could serve to

facilitate the policy making process. This participation begins with the support of parents and the communities to schools by prevent student absence and motivating students to learn, do their homework and use their time efficiently.

Bordoloi (2012) posited that DPEP guidelines in 1994 clearly lay emphasis on the participative process whereby the local community would play an active role in promoting enrolment, retention, achievement and school effectiveness. Based on Bordoloi (2012) examinations of studies based on community effort in enhancing school effectiveness and learning achievement revealed that empowering communities could improve relevance and efficiency in primary schools in order to attract and keep more children in school as well as for effective management arid development of schools. Bordoloi

(2012) found that involvement of the community is necessary to strengthen the schools as better learning places for students. The summary of the study of this scholar pointed that participation of community increases the enrolment, retention and achievement of students in the primary schools. The findings of some studies on community participation and school effectiveness also revealed a positive relationship of community participation in the functions of the school management committee and its formation, getting financial support to the schools from the community (Kumar, et al., 1998; Rao, 1998 cited in Bordoli (2012).

Udey, Ebuara Ekpoh and Edet (2009) assumed that the invaluable roles and contributions of education in the development of an individual and the society cannot be over emphasized. Many countries including Nigeria, take education as an instrument for the promotion of national development as well as effecting desirable social change. State Board of Education (2011) empirical studies clearly connects family involvement and community participation to student success and shows that active, meaningful engagement from parents and others helps schools boost student achievement and produce graduates who are prepared to be productive, globally-competitive citizens. "parent involvement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including ensuring that (a) parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; (b) parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; and (c) parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child. State Board of Education (2011)

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study looked into parents involvement and community participation in improving educational quality. Although this study had many strengths, we did not use method, we only consider empirical studies. Major limitation is that the study draws conclusions from previously done study of the examined empirical studies without field survey or statistical testing, the conclusion may not be subject to verifications of locations and time with the present situation.

DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY

According to World Bank (1999) community may be defined by characteristics that the members share, such as culture, language, tradition, law, geography, class, and race. As Shaeffer (1992 cited in Word Bank 1999) argues, some communities are homogeneous while others are heterogeneous; and some united while others conflictive. Some communities are governed and managed by leaders

chosen democratically who act relatively autonomously from other levels of government, and some are governed by leaders imposed from above and represent central authorities.

DEFINITION OF PARTICIPATION

The term "participation" may be interpreted in various ways, depending on the context. Shaeffer (1994) cited in World Bank (1999) clarifies different degrees or levels of participation, and provides seven possible definitions of the term, including:

- Involvement-through the mere use of a service (such as enrolling children in school or using a primary health care facility);
- Involvement- through the contribution (or extraction) of money, materials, and labor;
- Involvement-through 'attendance' (e.g. at parents' meetings at school), implying passive acceptance of decisions made by others;
- Involvement-through consultation on a particular issue;
- Participation-in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors;
- Participation-as implementors of delegated powers; and
- Participation- "in real decision making at every stage," including identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION

It is not easy to give a precise definition of quality in education. An attempt is made here not to offer a precise definition, but to merely indicate the sense in which the term "quality" is used in this paper. Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary perceives quality as "peculiar and essential character; an inherent feature; a degree of excellence; a distinguishing attribute". The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary and Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary among other meanings, define it as "grade of goodness, excellence

As stated by Ejie (2005), The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) still found it necessary to view the quality of an educational system from two different angles. One viewpoint is from the internal criteria of the system, such as a profile of student performance on a standard examination like the West African School Certificate Examination. The other is based on external criteria; such as its fitness and relevance to the needs of its environment the quality of an educational system should be judged by both its ability to enable the students perform well in standard examinations and its relevance to the needs of the individual students, the community and the society as a whole. Ejie (2005) posited that quality may be increased or improved upon through the employment of highly qualified teachers, through building suitable school plants in suitable learning environments, through the

development and exposure to pupils of relevant educational programmes, through prudential management of available educational resources, and as this paper contends, through effective interaction between the school and the local community.

Parent Involvement and Community Participation in Education

Based on perception of (Moles, 1994 cited in Bordoloi, 2012), community participation and parental involvement could refer to assisting children with homework at home and engaging in learning activities. Indicators of community participation are the intensity of contacts between schools and parents, contributions of parents to schools, involvement of parents and others in the community into educational matters and involvement of parents with homework. conceived and measured community participation in terms of the involvement of the community members/parents in the development of the school activities such as: school complex; resource mobilization; organizing socio-cultural activities; management of the school and improving academic environment of the school Bordoli (2012)

According to Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) (2012) in India, education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Despite the various degrees of responsibilities taken by each group, none can be the sole agent to take 100 % responsibility for educating children. Parents and families cannot be the only group of people for children's education as long as their children interact with and learn from the world outside their families. Communities and society must support parents and families in the upbringing, socializing, and educating of their children. (World Bank,1999) schools are institutions that could prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate, by equipping them with skills important in society. posited that schools cannot and should not operate as separate entities within society.

According to World Bank (1999), since each group plays a different role in contributing to children's education, there must be efforts to make a bridge between them in order to maximize the contributions. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Accordingly, it is important to establish and continuously attempt to develop partnerships between schools, parents, and communities. (World Bank,1999). Many research studies have identified various ways of community participation in education, providing specific channels through which communities can be involved in children's education. (Colletta and Perkins 1995 cited in World Bank (1999) illustrate various forms of community participation: (a) research and data collection; (b) dialogue with policymakers; (c) school management;

(d) curriculum design; (e) development of learning materials; and (f) school construction. Heneveld and Craig (1996) recognized parent and community support as one of the key factors to determine school effectiveness in Sub-Saharan Africa. They identify five categories of parent and community support that are relevant to the region: (1) children come to school prepared to learn; (2) the community provides financial and material support to the school; (3) communication between the school, parents, and community is frequent; (4) the community has a meaningful role in school governance; and (5) community members and parents assist with instruction.

Epstein (1995, 1997 cited in World Bank (1999) seeks ways to help children succeed in school and later life, and focuses on partnerships of schools, families, and communities that attempt to: (a) improve school programs and school climate; (b) provide family services and support; (c) increase parents' skills and leadership; (d) connect families with others in the school and in the community; and (e) help teachers with their work. She summarizes various types of involvement to explain how schools, families, and communities can work productively together.

Ways in Parents Involvement and Community Participation can Influence Education Quality

As stated in World Bank (1999), the following include ways in parent involvement and community participation influence quality of education;

- Parenting- Assisting families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.
- Communicating- To design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication that enable parents to learn about school programs and their children's progress in schools as well as teachers to learn about how children do at home;
- Volunteering- Improve recruitment and training to involve families as volunteers and as audiences at the school or in other locations. Enable educators to work with volunteers who support students and the school. Provide meaningful work and flexible scheduling.
- Learning at Home - Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities.
- Decision Making - Including families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and other organizations.

- Collaborating with the Community- To identify and integrate resources as well as services from the community in order to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning
- Training- Provide training for school staff on vital elements of effective family involvement which may include: Family, community and school partnership development, and Provide training to families, community members and staff in such a way that it establishes a common set of knowledge, standards, and expectations.

The Contributions of Parents Involvement and Community Participation in Education

- ***Developing Relevant Curriculum and Learning Materials***

Communities' and parents' involvement helps achieve curriculums and learning materials that reflect children's everyday lives in society. When children use textbooks and other materials that illustrate their *own* lives in their community, they can easily associate what they are learning with what they have already known.

- ***Identifying and Addressing Problems***

Communities can help identify and address factors that contribute to educational problems, such as low participation and poor academic performance. This is well illustrated in the case of the Gambia, in which the techniques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) were adapted to education. The work was carried out in order to understand why girls do not attend schools, to mobilize communities around these problems, and to assist them in organizing their own solutions (World Bank 1997a cited in World Bank 1999)

- ***Creating and Nourishing Community-School Partnerships***

There are various ways to bring parents and community members closer to schools which they serve, including: (a) minimizing discontinuities between schools and communities, and between schools and families; (b) minimizing conflicts between schools and communities, schools and families, teachers and parents, and what is taught in school and what is taught at home; (c) making easy transition of pupils going from home to school; (d) preparing pupils to engage in learning experiences; and (e) minimizing cultural shock of new entrants to schooling.

- ***Increasing Accountability***

Parental involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them. This has been witnessed in some places such as England and Wales, Canada and the United States. The notion of parental involvement for accountability derives from a more market-oriented concept in which school-family partnerships are viewed rather like business partnership, through which the two parties receive mutual and complementary benefits

which enable them to operate more effectively. Rugh and Bossert (1998 cited in WorldBank 1999)

Rugh and Bossert (1998 cited in WorldBank 1999) that accountability is developed through routine parents' meetings and reporting systems on student progress. When parents contribute their time, labor, materials, land, and funds, they tend to be more involved in school activities, including participating in meetings with teachers and monitoring teachers' performance. Teachers and school staff, in turn, feel more obliged to deliver better education for the students in order to respond to the needs of parents and communities. Participation can greatly help develop accountability, which contributes to improving the education delivery.

- ***Ensuring Sustainability***

One of the major factors to ensure sustainability of programs is the availability of funds, whether from governments, private institutions, or donor organizations. In this regard, community participation in education cannot ensure the sustainability of schools by itself since communities oftentimes have to rely on external funding to keep the program sustained. However, involving community is a way to ensure that the benefits brought by a development program will be maintained after the external interventions are stopped. Thus, sustainability is dependent on the degree of self-reliance developed in target communities and on the social and political commitment in the wider society to development programs that support the continuation of newly self-reliance communities. Community members are expected to be actively involved in the process of interventions through planning, implementation, and evaluation. Furthermore, they are expected to acquire skills and knowledge that will later enable them to take over the project or program.

- ***Improving Home Environment***

Community participation can contribute to preparing and improving home environment, by encouraging parents to understand about the benefits of their children's schooling. A World Bank study which analyzed primary education discovered that families aware of the importance of education can contribute much to their children's learning achievement, even in disadvantaged districts. It also shows that students from families that encouraged children's schooling, by allocating time at home for study, encouraging reading, and supporting their children's educational aspirations, scored significantly higher on tests of learning achievement.

Furthermore, families who are involved in schools not only have a better understanding about education but also become more willing to cooperate with schools in attempts to improve children's learning. In addition, parents can help their children with homework, and make sure that children are physically ready to learn at schools. From their extensive literature research, Heneveld and Craig (1996 cited in World Bank (1999) argue that the

parent and the community are one of the key factors to determine school effectiveness because they can prepare children's readiness to come to school and their cognitive development, by ensuring children's well-balanced nutrition and health.

Policy makers, educators and others involved in education are seeking ways to utilize limited resources effectively in order to identify and solve problems in the education sector and to provide quality education for children. Their efforts have contributed to realizing the significance and benefits of community participation in education and have recognized community participation as one of the strategies to improve educational access and quality. In preparing and implanting any efforts to promote community involvement in education, it is important to understand the whole picture of community participation how it works, what forms are used, what benefits it can yield, and what we should expect in the process of carrying out the efforts.

Activities that Involve Participation

World Bank (1999) further provides some specific activities that involve a high degree of participation in a wider development context, which can also be applied in the education sector, inducing:

- Collecting and analyzing information,
- Defining priorities and setting goals,
- Assessing available resources,
- Deciding on and planning programs
- Designing strategies to implement these programmes and dividing responsibilities among participants,
- Managing programs,
- Monitoring progress of the programs; and
- Evaluating results and impact.

Difficulties in Community Involvement

According to Ejieh (2005), although more studies are needed, it would appear that parents, community, individuals and groups are willing to play more active roles in their schools. Traditionally, schools have isolated themselves from the communities which they served and teachers would prefer to do their work quietly in their schools with minimum interference from parents and other community members. Parents and other members of the community appear to be no longer satisfied with this state of affairs. Increased parental and community involvement in school affairs is desirable in our quest for the qualitative development of our school system especially in these days of continued cutbacks in the votes for education. Equally desirable in this respect is increased interaction between teachers and parents and other members of their pupils' community. Our schools have a primary responsibility of helping each child to fully develop his potentials. For this to be possible the teacher should have as much information about the child as possible through interacting with his parents and community. To prepare him

adequately for effective participation in the life of his community and society, the educational programme which he follows at school should be relevant to the needs and aspirations of his community and the society as a whole. For the qualitative development of the educational system, schools need various inputs from their local communities. Learning resources abound in many Nigerian communities and are, in most cases, readily available to the schools that can identify and use them.

Base on considerations of Ejieh (2005) it is imperative that teachers should change their attitudes towards members of their school's local community, develop new viewpoints about education and new approaches to teaching. Teachers and school administrators have to admit that the education of the young is a joint responsibility in which parents and the entire community have some roles to play. It behooves them to know that however qualified a teacher may be, he does not have all the answers to the child's learning needs and problems. Educators often need to enlist the help of community members in the process of providing quality education for the child. The challenge to schools is to identify and locate the learning resources and resource people that exist in their school's community and utilize them effectively in the education of the young. Communities should shift from their roles as "monopolists of knowledge to that of the organizers and orchestrators of learning opportunities" (Goble and Porter, 1977:79 cited in Ejieh 2005).

School people should find time to interact responsively and responsibly with members if they are to tap the resources of the community for effective performance of their jobs. It is up to school people to open the school doors and keep them open to community members for meaningful dialogues between the two parties. It is through such dialogues that community members will know the problems and needs of the school and the appropriate roles they can play in solving such problems and in enhancing the education of their young. Teachers have to see parental and community involvement in school affairs not as threat but as one way of enhancing its quality. They have to see their own involvement with the community and its members as part of their role towards improving educational quality and ensuring its relevance. New patterns of relationships have to be established with community members and effective ways of communicating with the different sub-groups and individuals in the community have to be developed. Appropriate roles have to be formally given to local communities in the management of their schools in order not only to sustain their active interests in the schools but also to channel their efforts towards the desired directions. Ejieh (2005).

Impediment of Participation in Education

Understanding barriers of participation is important when a community is getting organized for involvement in educational development planning. According to Aref (2010), this understanding can help community and organizations more effectively impact the educational policy-making process. Further, it is important for government to understand that educational system also face barriers that can hinder its progress in responding and recognizing the priorities of local communities. Overcoming the barriers to education will serve to facilitate the policy making process. There are several literatures that directly deal with the barriers of communities particularly in third world countries. Especially educational development has several barriers that cannot develop. Following are the main barriers:

- *Inability to analyze the changing socio cultural dimensions of educational system
- *Lack of understanding of the policy process
- *Lack of access to information (Steven and Jennifer 2002 cited in Aref (2010))

Involving communities in the education planning requires facing and tackling a number of challenges. In general, as Crewe and Harrison (1998 cited in Aref (2010)) articulate, participatory approaches tend to overlook complexities and questions of power and conflict within communities. They are designed based on the false assumption that the community, group, or household is homogeneous, or has mutually compatible interests. Differences occur with respect to age, gender, wealth, ethnicity, language, culture, race and so on. Even though marginalized or minority groups may be physically present during discussion, they are not necessarily given a chance to express their views to the same degree as others.

In attempts to understand factors that prevent communities from being involved in formal education, Shaeffer (1992 cited World Bank (1999)) found that the degree of community participation is particularly low in socially and economically marginal regions. This is because such regions tend to have the following elements: (a) a lack of appreciation of the overall objectives of education; (b) a mismatch between what parents expect of education and what the school is seen as providing; (c) the belief that education is essentially the task of the State; (d) the length of time required to realize the benefits of better schooling; and (e) ignorance of the structure, functions, and constraints of the school

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- ❖ Meaningful partnership of parents, pupils, teachers, education managers and community members that results in better schools and improved pupil performance. This partnership can best be achieved if all partners are informed about the challenges and success of the school, understand the benefits of a good quality school, know how they can

contribute, and feel a sense of pride and ownership in the school's achievements.

- ❖ Nigeria educational policy believes that significantly more emphasis must be placed on the important roles that parents, families, and communities can and must play in raising student performance and closing achievement gaps. The Association has long advocated policies to assist and encourage parents, families, and communities to become actively engaged in their public schools and become an integral part of school improvement efforts. While some states and school districts have enacted laws and policies to encourage parent-community school partnerships, more enforcement is needed. At the same time, promising, locally developed practices should be rewarded, sustained, and expanded.
- ❖ In order to prevent any possible misplacement of emphasis by either the community members or school staff, planning for educational provision has to be a cooperative effort involving various groups of people who are in one way or the other involved with the education of the child – teacher, parents, employers of labour, workers, religious groups and so forth. All these groups of people have to be involved in the determination of needs, formulation of policies, setting of objectives for the school, development of short and long-term financial and other resource plans for accomplishing the objectives, and evaluation of the plan.
- ❖ In order to enable the communities members play more effective roles in improving the quality of education in our schools, legal provisions formally assigning some specific roles and recognizing some of the roles presently being played by some communities in the management of their local schools, will be in order. A situation whereby the community members will build a school, provide some of the equipment, provide some money for running it and play some other vital roles all of which remain unrecognized officially, calls for corrective action.
- ❖ In any effort to promote parents involvement and community participation for educational quality and development, it is necessary to assess the communities' capacity to carry out what they are expected to achieve in a long run. Community participation itself is not a goal in educational development, or a panacea to solve complicated issues contributing to poor educational quality in both developing and developed countries. It is a process that facilitates the realization of improving educational quality and the promotion of democracy within society. In completion this study explored the notion of community participation in processes of educational development. The study also showed the parents involvement and community participation can contribute to educational planning and development through various channels. The following is the ways which

- communities can contribute to the educational quality and development.
- * advocating enrollment and education benefits;
 - * boosting morale of school teachers;
 - * raising money for schools;
 - * constructing, repairing, and improving school facilities.
 - * recruiting and supporting teachers;
 - * making decisions about school locations and schedules;
 - * monitoring and following up on teacher attendance and performance;
 - * forming village education committees to manage schools;
 - * actively attending school meetings to learn about children's learning progress
 - * providing skill instruction and local culture information;
 - * helping children with studying;
 - * garnering more resources from and solving problems through the education
 - * providing security for teachers by preparing adequate housing for them;
 - * identifying factors contributing to educational problems

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