SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND DIVERSIFICATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

Tolutope Idowu Oke
Department of Educational Foundations.
University of Jos.
Oketolu66@yahoo.com
&
Hauwa'u Muhammad Mainoma
Department of Educational Foundations.
Nasarawa State University Keffi.
hauwamainoma@yahoo.com

Abstract

Communities can play a variety of roles in the provision and management of education. In the provision of education, Community participation focused on bringing the different stakeholder's together for problem solving and decision making that will advance the course of provision of education. This is in harmony with the FGs acknowledging the need for and calling for interested people and organization to partner with them in the provision. The paper examined the concepts of community and participation in the context of provision of education, the characteristics of community participation in provision of education, the roles of some education stakeholders in stimulating and mobilizing community participation in the funding and administration of primary education for effective universal basic education programme, Suggest possible ways of an all inclusive primary education in Nigeria. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when the different groups collaborate. It is important therefore, to establish a defined pattern of partnership between schools, parents, and communities.

Introduction

Education is a huge enterprise which calls for both school and community partnership, it is a must for the survival of individual and for nation building (FRN, 2004]. This statement is supported by Oke (2010), who also sees education as an undisputable and indispensable tool for nation building. Many of today's leaders in education, business and community development are coming to realize that schools alone cannot prepare our youth for productive adulthood. It is evident that schools and communities should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals. Schools can provide more support for students, families and staff when they are an integral part of the community. On the other hand, agencies can make services more accessible to youth and families by linking with schools. Appropriate and effective collaboration and teaming are seen as key factors to School-community development, learning and family self-sufficiency.

Conceptualization of School – Community Partnership

Partnerships should be considered as connections between schools and community resources. The partnership may involve use of school or neighborhood facilities and equipment; sharing other resources (Cole 2007); collaborative fund raising and grant applications; volunteer assistance; mentoring and training from professionals and others with special expertise; information sharing and dissemination; networking; recognition and public relations; shared responsibility for planning, implementation and evaluation of programs and services; expanding opportunities for internships, jobs, recreation and building a sense of community.

Community

Community is a group structure, whether formally or informally organized in which members play roles which are integrated, around goals with the problems from collective occupation and utilization of habitation space (UNICEF 1992). Communities could be based on shared family or educational concerns, which include parent's associations and similar bodies that are based on shared families concern for the welfare of students.

Community is a part of the society and education is the counterpart of both the above mentioned elements. School is the social institution where consciously designed learning experiences are provided with the objectives of achieving social aim at large, over a period of time (Miranda 2007). School is also defined as a subsystem of the larger system of the society. It has to functionally coordinate with its immediate environment, the community in which it is situated.

Community Participation

Community participation refers to peoples' engagement in the activities of educational system. It is a concept that attempts to bring different stakeholders together for problem solving and decision making (Talbot and Verrinder 2005). Community participation is considered necessary to get community support for educational planning and development (Cole 2007). It plays an essential and long standing role in promoting quality of life (Putnam 2000).

School-community partnerships

School – community partnership is one of the mechanism to empower people to take part in educational development (Aref etal, 2009). Thiscan interconnect together many resources and strategies to enhance communities that support all youth and their families. They could improve schools, strengthen neighborhoods and lead to a noticeable reduction in young people's problems. Building such partnerships requires visioning, strategic planning, creative leadership and new multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools and communities.

The community is meant to employ a wider grouping of people located within fairly recognizable boundaries, and related to each other by socio-economic and civic activities which produce oneness among them sufficient to develop a recognizable identity as a group (lacy etal. 2002). The main group and agents involved in the dynamics of the relationship between school and community are school management, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents, governing bodies and school board.

Beyond immediate proximity with the schools are the local political authorities, governmental bodies and political parties as well as other public, social and cultural institutions. Parent's are always in a constant touch with the school and are proper channel of the procedure which is the part of the community.

Though parents meetings in a school is informal of the general ignorance of people in a village regarding keeping their immediate surrounding clean, staff members can take up this as a serious mission. Hence, parents are a counterpart of the school subsystem.

The Need for Community Participation in the Provision of Education in UBE Program

A critical analysis of the NPE document may suggest that the government of Nigeria has adopted a government-pool education model; in which government assumes responsibility for providing and regulating education. However, the lack of resources and management capabilities has proven that government alone cannot provide adequately the required materials, equipment, infrastructure, qualified human resources etc. needed for delivery of quality education to the citizenry (community).

This situation necessitated the emergence of the collaborative model in which community plays a supportive role in government provision of education (Cole 2007).

Furthermore, the unique identities and the names of Nigerian society require the communities' partner with government to inculcate the society norms to the younger generations, (Bature and Oke 2014). School – community partnership is essential for the following reasons;

(a) Maximizing the utilizing of the scarce resources
(b) Limited available resources (human and materials)
(c) Limited management capacities
(d) A growing concern of parents/households about the quality of education of their wards/children.
(e) In places where teacher absenteeism is higher and poor performance of children is critical, parents can be part of the monitoring team towards minimizing the incidences of absenteeism and ensuring that both teachers and students are effectively involved in the process of teaching and learning.
(f) School facilities are developed on lands whose ownership is of members of the community.

(g) The absence of government presence and support leaves the School infrastructure. equipment. school supplies in the hands of parents and the community.
(h) The total education of the child requires the collaboration of the school home. and the community.
(i) The education process prepares the recipients to provide services to the community and society at large. Therefore the skills. knowledge and values to be inculcated may be relevant and useful to the needs of the community.
(j) Parents can help their children with homework and make sure that children are physically ready to effectively participate in the learning process.
(k) The community is used as a resource for field trips and excursion.

Challenges of Community Participation in Provision of Education in Nigeria

(a) Raising funds to support the school
(b) Advocating enrolment and education benefit.
(c) Stimulating staff morale.
(d) Ensuring students regular attendance and completion of school programmes.
(e) Contributing in labour, material land, and funds.
(f) Making decisions about school location and schedules
(g) Preparing children's readiness for schooling by providing them with adequate nutrition and appropriate environment for cognition development.
(h) Providing security for staff students, and school facilities.
(i) Establishing effective communication between the school and the community.
(j) Providing skill instruction and local culture information.
(k) Recruiting and supporting teachers.
(l) Regular attendance of meeting and other open door actual in the school to appreciate the problems of the school needing community attention.

School – community partnership and Parent Teacher Association / SBMC

The purpose of the PTA is to provide a structure through which the parents/guardians of children attending Schools and teachers can work together for the possible education and welfare of their children.

Bature and Oke (2014) observed the objectives of the Parent Teachers Association and School Based Management Committee to effectiveness of UBE as follows:

(a) To represent the views of parents.
(b) To promote a positive views of parents through liaison with the Parent representatives on the Board of Management.
(c) To develop partnership between the school bodies
(d) To inform parents of current changes in the education system, if need be.

(e) To network with other Parent Associations through involvement with National Parents Council.
(f) To work as a team and to have a yearly plan.
(g) To establish a forum through which parents can communicate their opinions and concerns regarding the school, to identify issues and possibly work towards a solution.
(h) To establish a forum through which parents and teachers can exchange information and research in relation to education/welfare of children.
(i) To access any training available for staff of the school from other sources.
(j) To help raise funds for the school and the Parents Association, in consultation with the principal and Board of Management.
(k) To keep parents informed about activities for the school.
(l) To influence policy development at school level.
(m) To influence policy development at national level once affiliated to the National Parents council

The Education Secretaries and school – community partnership

At Local Education Authority, education secretaries perform the following public relations roles to promote school – community relations such as:

(1) Making decisions about school location and schedules.
(2) finding out and providing what information parents would like or need
(3) Contributing to the school newsletter.
(4) Helping the teachers to set up an information meeting for parent.
(5) Bringing Department of Education and Science and Education committees' circulars or any relevant information to the attention of teachers and parents.
(6) To support parents, teachers and students to ensure that all children are treated in accordance with the ethics of the school.
(7) To support teachers, and to work with them in delivering the curriculum.
(8) To elect a committee and sub-committees, e.g. Fundraising Committee, Ethics Committee.
(9) To help plan and carry-out programme of activities for the year, in consultation with the H.M/Principal and Board of Management/Education Committee and to run activities that involve parents and children.

Oke and Mainoma (2014) present list reflects of community resources that could partner with schools:

(1) Country Agencies and Bodies like; Departments of Health, Mental Health, Children & Family Services, Public Social Services, Office of Education, Police & Fire Departments, Planning Area Councils, Recreation & Parks, Library, Housing Authority, etc.

(2) Municipal Agencies and Bodies like: Parks & Recreation, library, courts and civic event units, etc.
(3) Volunteer agencies such as: Clothing & food pantry, Visiting Nurses Association, Cancer Society, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Human Services Federation, etc.
(4) Service Clubs & Philanthropic Organizations like: Lion's Club, Rotary Club, veteran's groups, Cooper Foundation, Community Services Fund, etc.
(5) Youth Agencies & Groups such as: Boys & Girls Clubs, scouts, Youth Services, Child Advocacy Center, etc.
(6) Sports/Health/Fitness/Outdoor Groups like: YMCA of Lincoln, athletic leagues, local gyms, conservation associations, etc.
(7) Community-Based Organizations such as: Neighborhood and homeowners' associations, Neighborhood Watch/Patrol, block clubs, housing project associations, economic development groups, community development corporations, civic associations, etc.
(8) Religious Institutions such as: Bible society of Nigeria, Muslim Society, Catholic Social Services, congregations and subgroups, etc.
(9) Ethnic Associations like: Yoruba Community Center, Ebira Community Center, Ijaw social Center, etc.
(10) Artists and Cultural Institutions such as: Museums, art galleries, zoo, theater groups, TV & radio stations, literary clubs, art groups, writers' organizations, collector's groups, etc.
(11) businesses/Corporations/Unions like: Neighborhood business associations, Chamber of Commerce, NUT, Industries, local shops, restaurants, banks, school employee unions, etc.
(12) Media such as: Local newspapers, TV & radio, local access cable, etc.
(13) Family Members, Local Residents, Senior Citizens Groups.

Improving School-Community Relations

Oke and Mainoma (2014) provide a variety of activities in which schools can be involved to promote school – community partnership as follows:

(a) **Career Day:** Hold annual career days; this is not only good educational experience for the students, but also helps local business people to learn more about the school and school's needs. In addition, it helps to understand the employment needs in the area.
(b) **News Releases:** News releases mailed to local media could be a good strategy for public relations and community outreach programs.
(c) **Encourage Community Use of School Facilities:** Often the school buildings sit empty after the end of the normal school day. Encouraging non-profit community groups to use the facilities is not only good use of resources but also provides opportunities for the school to get involved in community projects. E.g they can use it for Church service and Islamiya

(d) **Back to School Week:** Choose a week during the school year to invite parents and community members to your school. Make a special effort to personally invite community and business leaders to attend school for the day, or part of the day.

(e) **Newsletters:** Provide periodic newsletters not only to the families of the students, but also to board members, business leaders and other community members. A simple database can be used to include new people when necessary.

(f) **Honor Roll:** In the local media, publish a list of students who made significant accomplishment during the school year.

(g) **Positive Reinforcement** - faculty members should be encouraged to contact the families of students by phone or letter when the youngster has shown significant improvement or demonstrated positive qualities of behavior. Administrators can also increase rapport with parents by contacting them when the youngster has done something well.

In the process of providing education to the teaming population of Nigeria school age children, particular note, attention and high thrust consideration should be directed on the critical issues of "equal educational opportunities".

School-Community Partnership and Challenges of Equal Educational Opportunity in Nigeria

Nigeria as a country has at one time or the other attempted to provide education to all her citizens. The first instance was during the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976; and also the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of 1999. In all the above primary/basic education programmes, the core aims were to;

1. To universalize access to educational services for Nigerian children.
2. To give equal opportunities to all school-going age children in Nigeria.
3. To inculcate permanent literacy in the children.
4. To lay a sound basis for scientific and reflecting thinking.
5. To promote employability and improve the socio-economic development of the country [FRN 2004).

Inspite of all the above laudable objectives, there seems to be a missing link between the objectives and the drive to achieve them.

Equity in educational provision means achieving fairness in all that is needed to promote success in attaining expected educational status. Additionally too, equity duals with accommodating and meeting specific needs of specific individuals. By this statement, Abama (2014) lamented that all individuals by right ought to have equal opportunities to basic education. Unfortunately, such thinking does not always apply in the Nigerian context, even in circumstances where schools exist, certain categories of children are unable to access the provided educational opportunities and are not equally due to the following reasons:

(a) *Gender Biases* – It is traditional and cultural that women in the Nigeria in context are considered to be good enough only for domestic chores. This being the case some parents

do not believe that the girl-child deserves education, but rather be married off to take her place in a husband's house. This belief and practice have therefore kept many female children off school and are denied the educational opportunities available to all and sundry requires a kind and thoughtful consideration which might result to taking special and specific steps that will purposefully ensure inclusion of every Nigerian child of school age.

(b) *Low – Level Education of Parents*: There are some parents who never went to school at all and therefore do not see any reason why their children should thread a different path. This is as a result of ignorance and illiteracy which blind them to the good outcomes acquisition of educational skills that will bring about meaningful living for their children.

(c) *Low Level Economic Status of Parents* – Poverty is so endemic in Nigeria such that parents who are economically powerless rely on their children to support the family by engaging in farming activities or petting trading – typically hawking to earn some money.

(d) Geographical Inhibition – Some schools especially those in the rural areas as well as some in the cosmopolitan cities are sited either in places that make the children cross fast running streams and very busy high ways respectively that endanger the lives of the school child. In view of such school locations, some parents choose to keep their children at home instead of risking their lives.

Some aspects of inequality in educational opportunities as observed in Nigeria include:

(a) *Instructional Facilities* – Pupils exposure to a positive learning environment by means of teaching facilities brings out the best learning capabilities in the school child. The school child who is taught under abundant teaching facilities will have better learning opportunities

(b) *Quality of Teacher* – The teachers assigned to teach the pupils account for the quality of education the pupils will receive. If for instance, one school in a particular local government has well qualified teachers and other, unqualified teachers, the opportunity granted them to learn cannot be the same, as those with qualified teachers will learn better than the school with the unqualified teachers hence their output will not be t he same.

(c) *Teacher Absenteeism* – A situation where the teacher continuously absent himself from the classroom does not afford the pupils that desired opportunity to interact and to learn.

(d) *School Infrastructure* – This refers to properly constructed, roofed, and ventilated with comfortable furniture for the pupils. Learning under such a conducive environment as compared to one where the pupils sit on the floor, clustered in an overpopulated classroom, which is not properly ventilated; this does not connote equal educational opportunity.

Apart from the above factors, some Nigerian children are further constrained from accessing the provided educational opportunities due to very special reasons. These groups of children are not covered by the activities of the formal school sector. They include the normads, handicap, disadvantaged group like the girl-child, illiterate adult and the street children, otherwise known

as the Amajiris. efforts should be geared towards including these special groups of Nigeria children in consideration.

Strategies for School - Community Partnership Effectiveness in Promoting UBE Programme

With 2015. a date set by for the achievement of Education For ALL (EFA) steaming us in the face. most EFA goals are like and may remain unachieved before the target date. This is because the pace in achieving these universal primary education goals is woefully slow and encumbered by so many factors. Notwithstanding. Abama (2014) provides the following strategies for improvement in Education For All. UBE programme:

(a) Orientation/persuasion of parents on the benefits of education generally.
(b) Embarking on school enrolment drive/campaigns.
(c) Allocation of adequate and even resources based on size and enrolment rates.
(d) Legislation on school enrolment.
(e) Government to earmark a certain percentage of its budget to the primary education sub-sector hence most parents are unable to pay their children's fees. even though the programme is pronounced 'free education', but is not so in practice..
(f) Visitation of homes of parents whose children are out of school to enquire on why and determine intervention steps that is appropriate.
(g) Government to enlist the support and contribution of multi-national companies. UN organizations and other business tycoons in the country to guarantee that Nigerian children have access and equal educational opportunities to quality public education.

Conclusion

In summary. educating the child requires the involvement of all stakeholders: no stakeholder has the sole responsibility for educating children. not even government.Communities and society must support families/parents in the bringing up. socializing and educating their children.Schools are institutions that can prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they live and operate. equipping them with skills relevant to the developmental needs of the society.Schools therefore cannot and should not operate as separate entities within the society.

Since each group plays a different but complementing role in facilitating children's education there must be effort to harness the contributions of the various groups in order to maximize the use of the various contributions. This would go a long way in promoting School – Community Relations and effectiveness of EFA policy of Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.

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