
A Critical Assessment of Community Involvement in School Management

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess the community's involvement in school management. The school is a mini society that needs good relationships with the community to function effectively. On the other hand, the community also needs schools for their survival and progress. A good school community relationship could result in: accommodating students from different backgrounds and abilities within school programs; building the school foundation on community needs; leading to growth in all its ramifications for the good of the citizen; and genuine curiosity about how a child learns and develops both socially and emotionally. The whole community has an essential role to play in the growth and development of its young people. In addition to the vital role that parents and family members play in a child's education, the broader community too has a responsibility to assure high-quality education for all students. The study concluded that the need for schools to relate positively with the host community is necessary and inevitable because the school will always be influenced by the economic standards of the community members, by its budget that comes from public tax money, and by parents who are involved in their children's learning and the development of the school in one way or another. One of the recommendations made in the study was that schools and communities should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals of provision and management of education, as well as teaching, learning, and enforcement of processes.

KEYWORDS: A Critical Assessment of Community Involvement in School Management

Introduction

School community relations were viewed as unavoidable or unavoidable contact, as well as consciously or deliberately planned relationships. The need for a school to relate positively with the host community is necessary and inevitable because the school will always be influenced by the economic standards of the community members, by its budget that comes from public tax money, and by parents who are involved in their children's learning and the development of the school in one way or another. While an enriching educational experience and student competence remain the core focus of schools, how schools achieve community relations can be strongly influenced by the extent to which parents, teachers and students form an effective school community. A strong school-community relationship can also support the values and skills of students, as not only participating young citizens, but also as community-minded adults (Bibire, 2014). The sense

of community that makes up a school can also improve the function and day-to-day administration of schools. Therefore, community participation involves two or more people, mutually pursuing the attainment of some defined objectives of development. Such inefficiencies contribute significantly to the withdrawal of communities from assuming their roles in the running of the school, and this has adverse consequences for children, especially in cognitive development, which is exhibited through poor academic performance. Many schools involve the community in school-based or school-related activities.

A good school community relationship could result in: accommodating students from different backgrounds and abilities within school programs; building the school foundation on community needs; leading to growth in all its ramifications for the good of the citizen; and genuine curiosity about how a child learns and develops both socially and emotionally. According to Bakwai (2013), a school-community relationship is a two-way symbiotic arrangement through which the school and community cooperate with each other for the realization of the goals of the community and vice versa. Therefore, a school is a mini society that needs good relationships with the community to function effectively. On the other hand, the community also needs schools for their survival and progress. Madumere (2004) was of the view that a school as a social system means that the school is part and parcel of society. He added that the sociologist sees the school as belonging to the community that builds it. A cordial relationship between the school and the community is a pre-requisite for achieving a meaningful educational objective in our community and nation at large (Gital, 2009). Generally, the community has a vital interest in what schools do and how they do it. The schools always reflect and promote the community's values and interests. It should be noted that the community's values, ideas, norms, and beliefs are to be perpetuated by the school as a social institution, and at the same time, the students in the school come from the community (Aminu, 2006). Therefore, successful development of education depends so much on the relationship between the school and the community.

Review of Concept

Mutual Benefits of Community Relations

School as a social institution and agent of socialization needs to have a good relationship with immediate and far communities. Symbiotic relationship always exists between the school and the community which lead to the success of the two. Bakwai, (2013) was of the view that school community relationship is a two-way symbiotic arrangement through which the school and community cooperate with each other for realization of goals of the community and vice versa. Therefore, a school is a mini society that needs a good relation with the community for it to function effectively. On the other hand, the community also needs school for its survival and progress. Madumere, (2004) was of the view that school as a social system means that the school is part and parcel of the society. He added that the sociologist sees the school as belonging to the community that builds it. Cordial relationship between the school and community is a pre-requisite for achieving a meaningful educational objective in our community and nation at large (Gital, 2009). Generally, community has a vital interest in what schools do and how they do it. The schools always reflect and promote community's values and interest. There is a vast of knowledge out there, more than any school can possibly hope to teach and so one of the tasks confronting school is to select what to teach. Each country chooses the curriculum to match and advance its view, history, values, interest and culture as a whole.

It should be noted that the community's values, ideas, norms, and beliefs are to be perpetuated by the school as a social institution, and at the same time, the pupils in the school come from the community (Aminu, 2006). Therefore, the successful development of education, and primary education in particular, depends so much on the relationship between the school and the community. Mitrofanova (2014) and Bibire (2014) believe that schools and communities should collaborate closely to achieve their mutual goals of education provision and management, as well as teaching, learning, and process enforcement. This is a kind of relationship in which both the school and the community contribute directly to the strengthening and development of each other. It can provide a firm foundation for both educational renewal and community regeneration.

In another vein, the community maintains its relationship with the school by providing resource mobilization. This is mostly done through the School Based Management Committees and Parent Teachers Associations. When there is any urgent need at the school, the community mobilizes resources from its members. It is through this kind of relationship that community members donate a lot of materials to their immediate school, like furniture, teaching materials, including notes and textbooks, chalk, etc.

Community Involvement in the Management of School

It takes a village to raise a child. Is a popular proverb with a clear message: the whole community has an essential role to play in the growth and development of its young people. In addition to the vital role that parents and family members play in a child's education, the broader community too has a responsibility to assure high-quality education for all students. Zetlin & MacLeod, (2005) expressed that in the past, parent involvement was characterized by volunteers, mostly mothers, assisting in the classroom, chaperoning students, and fundraising. Today, the old model has been replaced with a much more inclusive approach: school-family-community partnerships now include mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders and community groups—all participating in goal-oriented activities, at all grade levels, linked to student achievement and school success. Schools, parents, and the community should work together to promote the health, wellbeing, and learning of all students. When schools actively involve parents and engage community resources, they are able to respond more effectively to the health-related needs of students (Jeynes, 2003). also stated that policies relative to partnerships among schools, families, and communities should comply with the following standards:

- Schools should strive to involve parents and family members of all ages and grade levels.
- Schools shall strive to provide parent educational activities throughout the school year to help parents support their children's learning.
- Schools should frequently communicate school performance, student progress, personalized learning strategies as adopted by the local school board, and academic opportunities, using both print and online formats.
- Schools should work with agencies and businesses to support community-based developmental activities that prepare young children for school and promote ongoing achievement.

- Schools should promote collaboration among parents, schools, and the community on school improvement and student achievement projects.
- Schools shall strive to harness all available community resources, including but not limited to organizations, businesses, talented individuals, natural resources and technology, to engage each student in achieving the necessary skills and knowledge, and
- Schools should encourage business partnerships to assist students in making a successful transition to employment or further education.

Federal Public Law 108-265 requires that schools establish a wellness policy which will encourage the school community to provide a healthier school environment. A parent must be a member of this team. Parents may contact their school or find out who represents parents on the wellness committee. Parents may also visit the USDA Child Nutrition Web site.

Cahill (1996) suggests that a community can be defined using geographical, philosophical, political, sociological, or economic terms.

Also, the types of community connections with schools are as follows:

- Connections that integrate or locate health and human services at school sites and use school facilities and resources for the benefit of the entire community. These kinds of connections are generally called “full service” or “community” schools (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000).
- School-to-work initiatives that link career training and real-life experiences with academic content (Hughes et al., 2001).
- After-school programs that provide remedial or enrichment learning activities for students while maximizing the use of school resources and fulfilling parents’ need for childcare (Miller, 2001).
- Community-driven school reform efforts that simultaneously seek to improve local schools, build the social networks that exist in the community, build the capacity of local community members to take action and solve problems at the local level, and create “new standards and expectations for life in the community” (Rockefeller Foundation, 1997, as cited in Jehl, Blank, & McCloud, 2001, p. 4).
- School-business partnerships in which businesses provide schools with resources, business expertise, and volunteers (Sanders, 2000).
- Connections with community organizations, such as local health and human services providers and community-based youth development organizations, to provide services or enrichment opportunities for students at or near the schools (McMahon, Ward, Pruett, Davidson, & Griffith, 2000).
- School-university partnerships where universities, usually colleges of education, provide expertise, resources, and professional development to schools while schools participate in research studies or other professional collaboration projects (Restine, 1996).

- Direct support from individual community members (church members, neighbors, and other adults) to students, to provide learning opportunities, expectations for educational achievement, and support for overall student well-being (Honig, Kahne, & McLaughlin, 2001).
- Connections with educational organizations, such as museums, libraries, and cultural groups, to provide out-of-school opportunities for informal teaching and learning (Faucette, 2000).
- Community service or service learning programs that link academic content with activities that allow students to contribute to the well-being of the community (Schine, 1996).
- Tutoring and academic support in specific school subjects by community based volunteers (Invernizzi et al., 1997).
- Deliberative dialogue programs that bring together community members to explore issues affecting schools. These dialogue sessions provide a mechanism for two-way information sharing between the school and community (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2000).
- Community participation in school decision-making through formal mechanisms such as school governance councils (Sarason & Lorentz, 1998).

Several authors have recently attempted to categorize the different kinds of school and community connections. In one article, Cahill (1996) categorized the different types of connections by their primary purpose: a) service provision to meet youth needs, b) school-community educational partnerships, c) school community partnerships in youth development, d) school-community economic development collaborations, and e) community redefined schools. A General Accounting Office (GAO) report to Congress (Shaul, 2000) identified a set of common elements found in school-community connections, including:

- Services and activities tailored to community needs and resources, with the flexibility to change as community needs change.
- A value for and encouragement of parent participation and individual attention from caring adults.
- An understanding that support for the family is integral to improving outcomes for children and youth.
- Active roles for parents, students, community residents, and organizations in guiding policy and practices through such entities as advisory committees.
- A continuing emphasis on the importance of collaboration and communication among school and community partners.

Parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. When schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs. Researchers cite parent-community involvement as a key to addressing the school dropout crisis and note that strong school-family-community partnerships foster higher educational aspirations and more

motivated students. The evidence holds true for students at both the elementary and secondary level, regardless of the parent's education, family income, or background—and the research shows parent involvement affects minority students' academic achievement across all races. Henderson and Mapp (2002) cited that supporting teaching and learning requires addressing students' social service needs, as well as their academic ones, and this broad-based support is essential to closing achievement gaps. Also, positive impact of connecting community resources with student needs, as has been well documented. In fact, community support of the educational process is considered one of the characteristics common to high-performing schools (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

Adoption of Good Communication Media with the Community

Communication plays an important role in all forms of relationships. It is the process by which ideas and opinions are transmitted or exchanged and depends on the use of words. Creating school-community partnerships based on two-way communication enhances parental involvement and boosts administrative effectiveness.

Contributing to school-community communication, Gital, (2009) recommended a school newsletter. In their view, the school should ask parents to write articles for newsletters, tips parents can give for helping children with homework, and family activities parents would like to share with the school. In the same vein, Swap (2005) recommended Happy-Grams where teachers can send notes to parents, complementing children for specific achievement and behavior. Green added that because teachers also appreciate notes of kindness, the school can print blank Happy-Grams forms in a newsletter where parents can clip the forms in the newsletter and send them to teachers. Also discussing school-community communication, Johnson (2007) recommended the Parents' Bulletin Board. According to Johnson, there should be a bulletin board, especially for parents, at the main entrance to the school.

As a way of fostering school community relations, Swap (2005) suggested that newsletters be produced by the school principal to contain:

1. News of policies and plans being considered or enacted by the school.
2. News about people. Which students won awards at the track meet? Which teachers are new to the school? Which classes participated in the music festival?
3. News of upcoming events.
4. News of what's happening in education outside of the school. Information and school board policies may be included along with information about major issues in education.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) suggested the use of report cards by teachers to inform parents about the child's progress in school. According to Henderson and Mapp, a report card should be a two-way communication by including the parents' report of the child's progress at home with such related topics as: willingness to do homework, reading for pleasure, moderation of television, and attitude toward learning.

Provision of Social Amenities

Social infrastructure and amenities are crucial to creating sustainable communities. Experience from the post-war new towns to more recent new housing settlements has

repeatedly shown that local services like schools, shops, and public transport are needed at an early stage in the life of new communities. Equally important are the visible types of support, like the provision of social amenities for use by the members of the communities. According to Gital (2009), these amenities help community members feel at home in their surroundings and foster a sense of local identity and belonging. Extra support is also needed to help understand and use new and emerging environmentally sustainable technologies. School community partnership is achieved when the school interacts with the host communities in a variety of ways, including the use of such new and emerging environmentally sustainable technologies.

According to (Aminu, 2006), 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; 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. School-community partnerships can 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.

As stated by Madumere, (2004), there are a variety of activities in which schools can become involved to build/improve school-community partnerships such as encourage community use of School Facilities. This is true because school buildings are frequently left empty after the regular school day has ended. 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. In the assessment of Aminu (2006), it became obvious that schools existing in a given community are expected to have relations with the host communities. This is true because a wide range of evidence has identified the complex dynamics of communities and in particular, the fragile nature of some communities. It takes time for those communities to develop a sense of local identity and for strong social networks to flourish. Lessons from settlements in the UK over the past 50 years have concluded that a lack of social infrastructure to support new residents when they arrive slows the process of building a locality-based community and can create long-term problems for the social and economic wellbeing and opportunities of new arrivals.

Evidence from some communities has shown how places can spiral into decline if the right mix of social infrastructure and support is not provided by the schools occupying the environment. If these facilities are not available to support the residents, the community members may not feel the corporate-social responsibilities of the schools or any other business organizations, Mitrofanova (2014). Social responsibilities are the obligation of an organization's management towards the welfare and interests of the society in which it operates. That is why some schools engage themselves in the social responsibilities of their communities. According to Bibire (2014), although there is no law as to what form of services the community should benefit from business organizations, including schools, it is morally obliged to cater to at least their host. This they do by aiding the development of

infrastructures such as access roads where necessary, the provision of good water for domestic use and also the provision of electricity for the local population. There are a lot of other services that the host community can benefit from, such as the provision of safety measures against pollution of air or water.

Introduction of Volunteering to Members of the Communities

One important way of involving members of the community in the operation of a school is through a volunteer program. As eager as parents are to see their children excel in academics, they should be willing to give their time and talents to support schools and teachers to maximize the children's academic activities if their expectations must be met. Research findings show that parent volunteering can have a significant impact on school-community relations. Volunteering in school includes: decision making teams, fieldtrip helpers, classroom assistance, tutors, coaches, fundraisers, playground monitors, and workshop presenters. Clarke (2007) identified other forms of volunteering as, maintaining discipline, dramatizing to children and story-telling, and preparing overhead projectors and instructional materials. He also noted that volunteering involves attendance at school's activities, assisting children to cross roads, inspecting and watching play grounds while the kids play, securing the children and their property, counseling services, and administering first aid treatment.

Yoga (2006) reported that when volunteers went into schools to teach, conduct demonstrations, coach pupils for competitions, and lead science and math clubs, academic achievement improved and the pupils were reported to show an interest in studying science and math and science and math-related careers as a result of the volunteer's interest and encouragement. Also, principals' effectiveness is enhanced. Mulligan (2008) also reported that teachers in Maryland schools have testified that having a trained volunteer in the classroom was one of the most valuable aspects of teaching children. He further stated that the presence of volunteers was identified as the critical ingredient in implementing cooperative learning. Swan (2008) believed that by acting as a classroom volunteer, parents establish themselves not only as willing partners in the education of their children but also that of the entire class. More so, they learn how to assist the children with completing their homework. In the same vein, Yoga (2006) added that parents enhance their own self-esteem both as role models and as teachers and learners in the process of volunteering. In Colorado schools, John reported that they have formal volunteer programs where parents serve in the following capacities: decision-making teams, field trip helpers, classroom assistants, tutors, coaches, fundraisers, and playground monitors. He added that community groups also volunteer their time to present workshops and classes.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the need for schools to relate positively with the host community is necessary and inevitable because the school will always be influenced by the economic standards of the community members, by its budget that comes from public tax money, and by parents who are involved in their children's learning and the development of the school in one way or another. Also, when communities are made to feel the positive impact of the existence of the school, mutual benefits are bound to be obtained, such that they can develop a common vision for school reform and work together to implement necessary changes in the school for the good of the immediate community and society at large.

Recommendations

1. The school and the community should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals of provision and management of education, as well as teaching, learning, and enforcement of processes.
2. There should be a law as to what form of service the community should benefit from the school's management.
3. Students should be good ambassadors of their parents and communities while in school.

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