

INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TOWARDS ENHANCED SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Dr. Lateef Adeyemi Yusuf

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Sokoto State University.
e-mail: adedeyemi88@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the innovative management strategies towards enhanced school-community relations. Both the school and the community are interdependent and interrelated. They are expected to benefit each other in the use of school plants, economic activities and acquisition of knowledge. This paper highlighted the need to link the school and the community into a cohesive group that works effectively towards the achievement of mutually established goals. This paper comprehensively discussed the concept and benefits that are associated with school- community relations, for instance involvement of community members in school is particularly useful in order to mobilise financial, material, and human resources. This paper revealed important innovative management strategies towards effective realization of enhanced school-community relations in the 21st century. Part of the management strategies stated that, the schools' personnel, and most importantly the teachers, should be opened to the community's involvement in the school, help them (in a fascinating manner) in their community development and cultural activities, draw community talent and other resources to the school and allow community members to use school resources and the likes, equally the school administrators particularly the new ones should participate in civic activities outside schools.

Keywords: Management, Strategies, Innovations, School-Community Relations.

Introduction

An important aspect of school administration is school-community relations. This function is also called the public relations functions of the school administrations. In many contexts participation of communities in the operation of schools has helped increase access, retention and attendance rates of children to school. Education is a social activity in which, in addition to the school, society plays the role of a facilitator and partner (Sujatha, 2011). Successful schools understand the importance of establishing good and harmonious relations with the community in which they operate. These relationships exist at the two levels, at formal and legal level, as well as an informal and voluntary one. The former is expressed by the representation of the community through formal organisations such as School Management Committee (SMC), Social Development Committee (SDC), also Parent Teachers Association (PTA). The latter take the form of voluntary participation. In order to enhance the community's participation in education, it is essential to promote a school environment where community members feel welcomed, respected and trusted.

Notwithstanding there has been a general lack of integrated theory development and model building in terms of the differentiated functional roles of the principal, especially vis-à-vis school-community relations. In the last two decades, school, community and family relations have evolved from traditional model of provider-receiver to model of partnership and collaboration, and this purposeful transition is much stressed in education

reform efforts. In addition, there seems to be a growing interest in the extant literature about the importance of partnership and collaboration of schools, community and families, cooperative effort and support between school and community are very influential for students' success. The partnership of these two institutions may make a substantial difference for school improvement with a better socialization and education process (Getswick; 2015, Sander, 2008 and Sanders & Harvey, 2002).

Regarding the importance of the partnerships of the two institutions, school administrators can carry out critical roles for the establishment of the partnership. Administrators must take lead in establishing good public relationship with the community. It has been convincingly argued that the term "school community" is appropriate only when there is a two-way school-community relationship in which the latter participates to a large degree in schools. The most important argument for school-community relations rests on social considerations which involve the concept of democracy. Participation is in itself a form of education. By taking part in discussion, and sharing in the process of decision-making on social and educational policies, members of a community learnt important social skills and partake meaningfully in a significant political processes. Community involvement provides the opportunity to put democratic practices into schools and into the community at large. In the process, we have the chance to enrich the quality of life (Ejie,2007).

It is becoming increasingly clear to the schools that the "secret garden" era is coming to an end as we progress into new world of "parent power". The community education movement is spreading rapidly; parents are pressing for more radical changes in the school government; schools are becoming more accountable; and the present relationship between the school and the community is being questioned and undermined.

Theoretical Framework

Joyce Epstein Theory of Overlapping

The theory of overlapping was developed by Joyce Epstein in the year (1992). Epstein developed her theory of overlapping spheres of influence, positing that students learn more when parents, educators, and others in the community work together to guide and support students learning and development. The theory identifies three major contexts within which children develop and learn: the family, the school, and the community. The overlapping spheres of influence model recognizes that there are some practices that family, school and community conduct separately and that there are others that they conduct jointly in order to influence the growth and learning of the child. According to Epstein, successful partnerships must be forged among these three spheres in order to meet the needs of the child.

In this theoretical perspective it is assumed that communities and schools are more effective when intersecting connections are developed, and when valued information, advice, and experiences are shared on a continuing basis among members of these institutions. Productive connections may contribute to improved academic skills, self-esteem and positive attitude toward learning thereby contributing to effective realization of school goal and community goal.

This simply means that both the school and the community must relate well, fulfill their responsibilities for children's learning and development community involvement in school decision-making, governance and advocacy could be instrumental towards enhanced school-community relations. This necessary implies that effective practices of partnerships between the school and community are developmental and responsive to the goals of the school and the community at large.

Concept of School-Community Relations

When used by educators, the term 'school community' typically refers to the various individuals, groups, institutions that have invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school and its community that is the neighbourhoods and municipalities served by the school. In many context, the term encompasses the school administrators, teachers and staff members who work in a school; the student who attend the school and their families and local residents. Further on that, Glossary of Education (2019) submitted that, the term school community also implicitly recognizes the social and emotional attachments that community members may have to a school, whether those attachments are *familial* (the parents and relatives of students, for example), *experiential* (alumni and alumnae), professional (those who work in and derive an income from the school), *civic* (those who are elected to oversee a school or who volunteer time and services), or socioeconomic (interested taxpayers and business who may employ graduates and therefore desire more educated, skilled and qualified workers).

Generally, the growing use of 'school community' reflect the recognition that schools, as public institutions supported by state and local tax revenues, are not only part of the community but also responsible to the communities they serve, they are also obligated to involve the broader community on important decisions related to the governance, operation, or improvement of the school. This simply implies that schools are to be more intentional and proactive about involving a greater diversity of community members in its governance. The school therefore does not exist in isolation of the community, a symbiotic or mutual relationship needs to exist between the school and its community as neither can do without the other.

School community relation is a two-way process and flow of ideas between the school and the community to ensure mutual understanding and teamwork for the realization of the goals of the both community and the school. Rangel (2010) submitted that schools depend on the community for a number of things such as skilled and unskilled labor, fund, and accommodation for staff. In a similar vein, Mogbule (2013) opined that school will always need the continuous support of the community in order to carry out not only its functions of finance but its human and material resources.

School community relationship is a term that is used to describe the nature of association between schools and communities. School-community relationship has its central focus that is the enhancement of teaching and learning. All the activities of the school in relation to significant others such as the host community, Parent Teacher Association, (PTA), Ministry of Education or the professional staff which ultimately contribute to educational growth. Through appropriate school-community relationship, the school comes into factual contact with the community thereby issues are addressed accordingly (Lumsdane & Lumsdane, 2000; Pearle & Blachard, 2000). Since schools are established for serving societal needs, it becomes necessary that a good relationship must exist

between the school and the community it is meant to serve. However, Okeke (2001) noted that some community leaders now show indifference and disregard to the affairs of the schools in their communities. according to Tata and Abdullahi (2004) the community's values norms, and beliefs are to be perpetrated by the school being a social institution. therefore, successful development of education and basic education in particular depends so much on the relationship between the school and the community. it is obvious therefore, that schools and communities should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals.

In effective administration of school, the principal shares responsibilities with the teachers, students, and members of the school communities. Also, giving the important roles being played by the community in effective school administration, the principal works with some community groups such as School Building Maintenance Committee (SBMC), Parent and Teachers Association (PTA), Old Boys/Girls Associations and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) for the improvement of the school in order to enhance better service delivery (Ukpong & Uzo Igwe, 2020).

Benefits Associated with Enhanced School-Community Relations

The involvement of community members in school is particularly useful to mobilise financial, material, and human resources. Community members can also participate in changing the community's attitude toward schooling. School committee members can visit reluctant parents, explain the benefits of education and convince them to enroll their children in school.

Community participation in schooling allows the formulation of school policies and practices which are more responsive and sensitive to the needs of the community they serve. This support is often reflected in higher levels of academic achievement, lower rate of truancy and reduction in dropping out, vandalism and other problems. Better student behaviour and attitudes can be achieved. Further the capacity of the school to understand and solve problems will itself increase if parents are part of the decision-making process.

Community participation in itself is a form of education by taking part in decision making process and educational policies, members of a community learn important social skills and partake meaningfully in significant political processes. There is an increase in the sensitivity and relevance of schools to the people they serve; community involvement provides the opportunity to put democratic practices into our schools and into the community at large.

Prescribed Innovative Management Strategies towards Enhanced School-Community Relations in the 21st Century

School administrator could be described as been effective in their administrative duties, if there is cordial interpersonal relationship between the school and the community. Therefore, the need to put some innovative management strategies towards effective realization of enhanced school community relation becomes a necessity.

The school administrator must examine the community in which the school lies in order to create good relationships with the community. Communities are composed of different ethnic, religious and socioeconomic groups that may either have mutual or divergent

interests. Recognizing the diversity within the community and understanding its characteristics as well as its traditions, must be primordial step for the school principal before beginning to build the relationship.

The school should support the schools' personnel and most importantly, the teachers, to be open to the community's involvement in the school, help them (in a fascinating manner) in their community development and cultural activities, draws community talents and other resources to the school and allow community members to use the school resources and the likes, equally school administrators, particularly new ones should participate in civic activities outside of the school. Administrators equally need to establish a more cooperative and supportive functional interaction among the various governmental and non-governmental organisations in the school community.

Adopt pertinent policy measures to encourage community's participation in the school. This requires the government to reinforce its involvement by passing specific legislation, procedures, and guidelines concerning the different structure that link the school and the community. However, at the micro-level, Ministry of Education, or Local Education Offices should establish clear policies and guidelines that define the responsibilities and functions of bodies composed by community members.

The school head must spend time and efforts preparing and encouraging the community participation in school. In addition, he or she must share the vision and plans of the school with community members, listen to their different points of view, and invite them to collaborate in school. Also community leaders and external actors (such as NGOs) should stay active in school, as they can act as linking agents between the school and the larger community.

School administrator can initiate the school-community interaction strategies, such as reporting progress, organizing special occasions for parents, employing community talents in the teaching-learning process, involving parents in the school-based decision-making, forming Parent –Teacher Association (PTA) and work with industry and community image groups.

School administrators should identify and establish community education programmes, that are need-oriented and community based, while the school administrators and staff that are knowledgeable in the neighbourhood function as facilitators. These are some of the ways of assisting the communities by helping parents to recognize their potentials in education.

The school head should lunch periodically, an assortment of the functioning and effectiveness of existing structures such as Parent Teachers Association (PTA), School Development Committee (SDC), and Community Adult Education Committee (CAEC).

Conclusion

in conclusion, the paper stresses the importance of school-community relations towards achieving the community and school organisational goals, and the rapidity with which education industry is growing globally depicts its indispensability. Promoting community involvement could be regarded as the major key to inclusive education. the key feature of

this role is to link the school and the community into a cohesive group that works effectively towards the achievement of mutually established goals.

Therefore, strategies in establishing good school-community relations will result in drawing the members of all ethnic groups to the schools, it is by working together that people of different groups learn to understand one another and work towards a common goal. The success of this endeavor depends largely on creating a “welcoming-environment” in schools.

Recommendations

Sequel to earlier discussions, the study prescribed the following recommendations:

1. Precisely, school administrators should assess linkages to community groups that are not presently being reached, identifying “opinion leaders” in the community and involving these individuals in decision making process. Relationship established by the school administrator with the community stimulates the interest of the community in supporting the affairs.
2. School administrators should always extend invitation to community members in order to facilitate open discussion between parents and principal for instance having informal breakfast, rap sessions, tour of the school, inviting service clubs and other organisations to meet in the school. Parent conferences should be used to explain school programs and to resolve misunderstandings. However, principals and teachers must avoid partisan politics, obnoxious religion matters and delicate sectarian issues in the community. When they get involved in local politics, the relationship between the school and community is usually destroyed.
3. School administrator must ensure a strong relationship between the school and the old students of the school through the umbrella of Old Students Association. Valedictory and Founders Day Programmes should be used to bring old students closer to the school through invitation. In the process old students individually and collectively could give financial assistance to the school. They could embark on projects or award scholarships. This will therefore keep them in close touch with the school.
4. School administrators should allow the use of school facilities by the community members. These includes school halls, furniture, playground, school bus and so on. This however should be done within the laid down rules and regulations presented by the controlling agency.
5. Provisions should be made to train school staff on practical ways to work and communicate effectively with community members and parents. Encourage them to appreciate diversity and reduce barriers to the community’s involvement in school. Also, training opportunities should take gender issues affecting participation of community members within the schools. For instance, provide special training in leadership skills, communication skills, gender sensitivity and gender-mainstreaming.

References

- Abraham, N. M. (2003). *Educational administration in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt: Pam Unique Publishers
- Ejeh, N. (2007). Educational quality and community involvement in Nigeria: Some implications for education planning. *Journal of Social Sciences*, **10** (2): 43-48
- Gestwicki, C. (2015). *Home, school and community relations* (9th ed.) Belmont, C.A: Cengage Learning.
- Glossary of Education (2019). School community. Retrieved from <https://edglossary.org/school-community>. Date: 15th November, 2021.
- Joyce, L. E. (1992). School and Family Partnership. US Department of Education. Education Resource Information Centre [ERIC ED 3437515] from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/full text/ED343715> Date: 10th January, 2022
- Mogbodile, T. O. (2003). *Fundamentals in educational administration and planning*. Nsukka: Magnet Publishing
- Okeke, N. O. (2001) *Administering education in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects* Ibadan: Heimann Education Books.
- Lumsden, G & Lumsden, D. (2000) *Communicating in groups and teams: Shearing leadership*. Belmont-Cardiff: Wadsworth.
- Pearle, N. V. & Blanchard, K. (2000). *The power of ethical management*: London: Random House.
- Rangel, C. B. (2000). At- Risk youths school-community collaborations focus on improving students' outcomes. Washington DC: United States General Accounting Office.
- Sanders, M. & Harvey, A. (2002). Beyond the school walls: A case study of principal leadership for school-community collaboration. *The Teachers College Record*, **104** (7): 1345-1368
- Sanders, M. G. (2008). Using diverse data to develop and sustain school, family and community partnerships. *Educational Management Administration Leadership*, **36** (4): 530-545
- Sujatha, K. (2011) *Managing external relations: Improving school management*. Retrieved from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002205/22053E.pdf> Date: 21st March, 2021.
- Tata, U. S. & Abdullahi, M. S. (2014). The relevance of school community relationship on the development of primary education in Azare metropolis Bauchi state, Nigeria. *Journal of Research and Method in Education*. **4** (6): 23-29
- Ukpong, N. N. & Uzoigwe, M.C. (2020). Innovations in managing school community relations and principals' administrative effectiveness: Implications for attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. *Africa Journal of Innovations and Reforms in Educational Management*. **1** (1): 503-512.