Assessment of Community Participation in Primary Schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study adopted correlational research design to assess the views of head teachers, teachers and community stakeholders on community participation in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria. The target population of the study was 172,321 primary school teachers across the Northwest zone Nigeria, comprising (Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara states) and their community stakeholders which wasn't established due to lack of sampling frame. A multistage sampling technique was used to obtained a sample of 383 primary school teachers and 405 community stakeholders was obtained for the study. Instrument named "Community Participation Questionnaire (CPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and educational management. The instrument was used to obtain responses from head teachers, teachers and community stakeholders in the sampled. A reliability index of 0.89 for CPQ was obtained after pilot study and was assumed to reflect the internal reliability of the instrument. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions using mean and standard deviation. The study revealed that, the level of community participation in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria was high. The paper therefore recommends that, state government should build on existing high level of community participation by providing training and support to community members and schools. Also, regular monitoring and evaluation of community participation initiatives should be conducted to ensure their effectiveness and identify areas of improvement.

Keywords: Community Participation, Communication, Resource Mobilization, Community Stakeholders

Introduction

Education shapes the next generation and provides them with the skills and knowledge required for success. Education is universally recognised as the bedrock of national development and a foundational human right. At the heart of this transformative process lies primary education, which provide the foundational knowledge, skills, values necessary for a child subsequent

academic journey and personal growth. According to United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO (2014) primary school education provides a foundation for all future learning, and is a vital stage for child's development. It provides the knowledge, skills, and values that the child needs to succeed in life. It is a multifaceted endeavor, extending beyond simple knowledge transmission to encompass the development of critical thinking skills, and values essential for holistic individual and societal growth (Chukuwurah 2013). Primary education serves as the foundational level of education in Nigeria, widely regarded as the most effective instrument for socio-economic transformation, and national development. Despite its acknowledged importance, the Nigerian education sector faces significant and persistent challenges, often described as "deplorable". A major impediment is chronic inadequate funding; for instance, the 7.04% of the national budget allocated to education in 2018 was grossly insufficient when compared to UNESCO's recommended 15-25%.

Community participation in education is widely recognised as crucial factor in enhancing educational outcome and promoting sustainable development (Epstein, 2011). Bakwai (2017) community involvement in education isn't a new concept of a sudden solution to educational challenges. Historically, community have often been central to their children schooling. He noted that until mid-20th century, community held primary responsibility for educating children. While some communities independently run schools today, the broader practice of community participation in education hasn't been fully acknowledged or widely implemented. Community participation helps to fulfil the right to access an education in schools in which attainment and achievement are similar to or higher than others in the context. It also increases the accountability of schools by reducing absenteeism increasing teacher effort and generally seem to contribute to improve student outcomes (Epstien, 2011). However, despite these benefits northern Nigeria struggle with low community participation likely due to the scarcity of community schools, and SBM policy lack clear guidelines on how to implement such engagement there (World Bank, 2014).

The concept of community participation refers to the active involvement of community members in the processes and activities of schools, which can include contributions such as volunteering, resource mobilization, and monitoring (Mapp and Zhang, 2011). Community participation in education is widely recognized as a crucial factor in enhancing educational outcomes and

promoting sustainable development (Epstein, 2010). Community participation in education occurs when a community takes charge of managing its own educational issues. Kanau and Haruna (2013) highlights varying perspectives on citizen or public participation, generally defining it as providing people with more opportunities to effectively engage in development activities. This involves empowering them to utilize their creativity, manage resources, make decisions, and control activities that impact their lives. Similarly, the World Bank (2014) views it as creating opportunities for all community members to actively contribute to and influence their school's development, and to share fairly in its benefits. However, effective community participation goes beyond mere involvement in a school project. Kambuga (2013) emphasize that it's crucial for establishing economic and political relationships within the wider society. It encompasses rural communities organizing their schools, identifying their own educational needs, and sharing in the design, implementation, and evaluation of their school programs.

Community involvement in education isn't a new concept or a sudden solution to educational challenges. Historically, communities have often been central to their children's schooling. For example, Tshabalala in Bakwai, 2017) notes that until the mid-20th century, communities held primary responsibility for educating children. While some communities still independently run schools today, the broader practice of community participation in education hasn't been fully acknowledged or widely implemented. Community participation helps to fulfill the right to access an education in schools in which attainment and achievement are similar to or higher than others in the context. It also increases the accountability of schools by reducing teacher absenteeism, increasing teacher effort and these generally seem to contribute to improved student outcomes (Mapp and Zhang, 2011). As such, participation contributes to communities fulfilling their responsibilities for the education of children and the accountability of schools.

Theoretical Framework

This study was pivoted on System theory. This theory was first proposed under the name of "General System Theory" by biologist Bertalanffy (1968). This theory provides a robust framework for understanding the complex and dynamic interactions between primary schools and their surrounding communities. System Theory posits that an organization or entity, such as a school, is not an isolated unit but rather a complex system comprising

interconnected parts that work together to achieve common goals. It emphasizes the interdependencies among these components and their continuous interaction with the external environment. A core tenet of this theory is that changes in one part of the system can affect other parts, and the system itself is constantly influenced by its external context. This theory views the school and its community not as isolated entities, but as an integrated system where interconnected parts work together to achieve common goals, with changes in one component affecting others and the entire system influenced by its environment. Applying this, the primary school functions as a sub-system interacting with the community as a vital external environment that provides crucial inputs: such as financial contributions for construction and instructional materials , material and infrastructural support through labor and local resources , human resources like volunteer services and specialized teachers , local knowledge for curriculum relevance , and the students themselves, whose enrollment, retention, and attendance are influenced by community engagement. The processes within this system involve the dynamic interactions between the school and community, encompassing communication channels, decision-making mechanisms (like SBMCs), and collaborative activities. These interactions lead to various outputs and outcomes, including improved infrastructure, enhanced student performance, increased accountability, strengthened relationships, and local capacity building.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of community participation in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education, primary schools in Northwest zone Nigeria still grappled with a significant deficit in active and meaningful community involvement. This limited engagement is not merely an oversight but is profoundly exacerbated by a complex interplay of pervasive insecurity, entrenched socio-cultural norms, and severe economic constraints specific to the region (UNICEF, 2015; World Bank, 2014). Consequently, the potential benefits of local knowledge resources, and oversight for school improvement remain largely untapped, hindering the provision of quality education by weakening school accountability and oversight, impeding effective resource mobilization (UNICEF, 2021; UBEC, 2015), and ultimately contributing to poor student enrollment, low retention rates, and unsatisfactory educational outcomes. This multifaceted challenge, further complicated by a breakdown in communication and trust between

schools and communities, necessitates a comprehensive assessment to develop effective, context-specific interventions.

Objectives of the Study

The aim f this study was to assess the level of Community Participation in Primary Schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria and specifically the study is set to achieve the following objectives.

1. To determine the level of community participation in communication in primary school in Northwest zone, Nigeria.
2. To determine the level of community participation in resource mobilization in primary school in Northwest zone, Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study

3. What is the level of community participation in communication in primary school in Northwest zone, Nigeria?
4. What is the level of community participation in resource mobilization in primary school in Northwest zone, Nigeria?

Methodology

This study adopted correlational research design to assess the views of head teachers, teachers and their community stakeholders on the level of community participation in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria. The target population of the study is 172,321, primary school teachers their community stakeholders which wasn't established due to lack of sampling frame across the region comprising (Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara States). To determine the sample size, the Research Advisor (2006) table was used to obtain 383 primary school teachers, while convenient sampling was used to select 405 community stakeholders. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 4 states from the Northwest zone, Nigeria (Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi and Sokoto) due to its minimal security challenge, 45 local government areas was also selected from the 144 local government areas and purposively 3 primary schools were decided for each of the 45 local government areas selected. Convenient sampling was used to select 3 primary schools and 3 community stakeholders (i.e the School Based Management Committee SMBC's) to represent the study. Lastly,

proportionate sampling was used to get appropriately sample size for the study which comprise of (85, 153, 68, 77) for teachers, while (90, 162, 72, 81) community stakeholders for Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi and Sokoto states respectively. Instrument named "Community Participation Questionnaire (CPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts, in measurement and evaluation and the other from educational management. Cronbach alpha reliability index of 0.89 for CPQ was obtained after pilot study and was assumed to reflect the internal reliability of the instrument. Descriptive statistics were used to answer research questions using mean and standard deviation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: What is the level of community participation in communication in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria?

The research question was analyzed using frequency, mean and standard deviation as presented in table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation on the Level of Community Participation in Communication in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria

S/No	Item	Response					Means	SD	Decision
		1	2	3	4	5			
1.	School newsletter writing.	145	85	145	166	125	3.06	1.413	Moderate
2.	Designing school websites.	173	108	108	108	108	2.87	1.428	Moderate
3.	Managing social media handle.	168	120	143	141	94	2.81	1.390	Moderate
4.	Preparing reports card of students.	144	104	152	118	148	3.03	1.445	Moderate
5.	Short message services of the school.	135	103	189	126	113	2.97	1.355	Moderate
6.	Sending emails to school authority.	188	89	171	127	91	2.77	1.396	Moderate
7.	Taking minute of meeting during events.	89	105	164	163	145	3.26	1.321	High
8.	Oral interviews during recruitment exercises.	135	110	137	163	121	3.04	1.396	Moderate
9.	Telephone communication.	77	117	165	150	157	3.29	1.313	High
	Grand Average	139	105	153	140	122	3.01	1.38	Moderate

Source: The researcher's field survey, 2024

The result in Table 1 indicates the level of community participation in communication in Northwest zone, primary schools, Nigeria, The data revealed that the respondents were of the view that; school newsletter writing

(mean = 3.06 and standard deviation = 1.413), designing school website (mean = 2.87 and standard deviation = 1.428), managing social media handle (mean = 2.81 and standard deviation = 1.390), preparing reports card of students (mean = 3.03 and standard deviation 1.445), Short message service of the school (mean = 2.97 and standard deviation = 1.355), sending emails to school authority (mean = 2.77 and standard deviation = 1.396), taking minute of meeting during events (mean = 3.26 and standard deviation = 1.321), oral interview during recruitment exercise (mean = 3.04 and standard deviation = 1.396), telephone communication (mean = 3.29 and standard deviation = 1.313). Therefore, since the grand average of 3.01, was obtained as moderate. The result is accepted because there is moderate level of community participation in communication in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria.

Research question two: What is the level of community participation in resource mobilization in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria?

The research question was analyzed using mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 2

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviation on the Level of Community Participation in Resource Mobilization in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria

S/No	Item	Response					Mean	SD	Decision
		1	2	3	4	5			
1.	Fundraising of their schools.	46	100	182	183	155	3.45	1.196	High
2.	Provision of furniture to the schools.	31	95	179	254	107	3.47	1.066	High
3.	Construction of access road in the schools	42	136	159	222	107	3.32	1.153	High
4.	Volunteer teaching activities.	62	136	210	158	100	3.15	1.181	High
5.	In-kind contribution to the schools.	62	139	178	155	132	3.23	1.247	High
6.	Providing scholarship for students in the schools.	53	82	247	153	131	3.34	1.159	High
7.	Construction/renovation in the school.	34	89	201	174	168	3.53	1.153	High
8.	Purchasing of books to the school.	46	89	239	180	112	3.33	1.115	High
9.	Provision of improvised materials for teaching and learning activities.	106	151	176	127	106	2.96	1.301	Moderate
	Grand Average	54	113	197	178	124	3.30	1.20	High

Source: The researcher's field survey, 2024

The result in Table 2 indicates the level of community participation in decision making in Northwest zone, primary schools, Nigeria, The data revealed that the respondents were of the view that; Fundraising of their schools (mean = 3.45 and standard deviation = 1.196), Provision of furniture to the schools (mean = 3.47 and standard deviation = 1.066), Construction of access road in the schools (mean = 3.32 and standard deviation = 1.153), Volunteer teaching activities (mean = 3.15 and standard deviation 1.181), In-kind contribution to the schools (mean = 3.23 and standard deviation = 1.247), Providing scholarship for students in the schools (mean = 3.34 and standard deviation = 1.159), Construction/renovation in the school (mean = 3.53 and standard deviation = 1.153), Purchasing of books to the school (mean = 3.33 and standard deviation = 1.115), Provision of improvised materials for teaching and learning activities (mean = 2.96 and standard deviation = 1.301),. Therefore, since the grand average of 3.30, was obtained as high. The result is accepted because there is high level of community participation in communication in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria.

Discussion

In discussing the findings for this study, the researcher has followed the order of the data analyzed using relevant literatures to support the findings and the results.

The results in Table 1 shows that the level of community participation in communication in primary schools in north-west, zone Nigeria, was moderate extent. A moderate level of community participation in communication within primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria can be attributed to combination of factors it could be due to formal communication methods like official notice or meetings not reaching all the community members especially those in more remote areas or those who are illiterate. This finding contradicts the finding of Ahmad and Hamdan (2013) who indicated a highly positive correlation between community participation and school-community relation in their 3 variables: parenting, communicating and volunteering. The findings are in consistent with Epstein's theory and previous researches conducted by Nguon (2012); and To (2016), indicating that community members (parent or non-parent) of the students, local authorities and other stakeholders have received updated information from meetings, letters and telephone communication. In terms of communication, it was clear that parents, community members and schools shared school information by different means of communication,

including meetings, written and oral communication tools. School development, community members and parents through meetings and those who attended the meetings disseminated information to the community members who did not attend, so that members of the community could understand the value of education and participated in children's learning. UBEC (2011) advocated that good communication between SBMCs, schools, community, government and other stakeholders ensure active participation in decisions affecting students and promote the partnership between the schools and the wider community.

In addition, a study by Vega-Peronah et al, (2022) also shows that collaborative communication between parents and teachers helps create a greater sense of shared responsibility in supporting students' education. They found that schools that implemented collaborative communication programs had students with better levels of attendance, as well as higher academic achievement compared to schools that were less parental involved. This research supports the idea that structured communication, both through regular meetings and technology, is essential in supporting student academic achievement. Similarly, research by Wang and Li, (2023) found that active parental involvement, especially through ongoing communication with teachers, helps create a more conducive environment for student learning. Their research shows that students whose parents are actively involved in their education have better academic outcomes as well as show more positive social and emotional development.

The result in Table 2 shows that the level of community participation in resource mobilization in primary schools in Northwest, zone, Nigeria, was high. This is due to the fact that community members participated in fundraising, providing of furniture, providing scholarship, purchasing books and provision of improvised materials for teaching and volunteering in teaching activities. The finding this study is in agreement with Cherono (2023) in his findings that implementing effective policies for school resource mobilization, revisiting the free day secondary school education programme increase enrolment and exploring alternative method like income generating activities for development. The finding also revealed that, stakeholders' involvement plays a big role in resource mobilization and the implementation of free day secondary. In their study Likoko, Barasa and Khaemba (2022) they found that there is a positive and significant relationship between resource mobilization and academic performance of public secondary school.

This finding is in contrast with the study of Kambuga (2013), who found that the nature and extent of community participation for the majority of local communities in cash contribution and labour power contribution was generally limited. He concluded that mobilization of political support was a very important aspect because it made people aware of their participation and the kind of help they were likely to support. The finding of the study recommended that community members should be politically mobilized through education and training on the importance of their development initiatives and to make them feel that the project belongs to them.

The idea was similar to Yusuf (2022), who argues that the involvement of community members in school is particularly useful to mobilize financial, materials 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. Similarly, the finding of this study is in line with Bakwai et al (2016), the community participates through a cash donation, labour supply and material supply to finance infrastructure development in basic schools in Nigeria. The study established that the extent to which the community participates in Nigerian schools was very high. Therefore, the high extent of involvement of the community in school activities resulted in the good academic performance of students in secondary schools. Work done by Komba (2017) and Kitoki (2018) has a contrary view in their separate findings which indicated that community members feel reluctant or not interested in participating in school's activities due to a lack of clear accountability, relationships, arrangements and structure to support accountability at various levels.

Conclusion

The study thus concluded that, community participation in primary schools in Northwest zone, Nigeria is high, indicating a strong sense of ownership and commitment among community members. This finding suggests that leveraging community participation can be a viable strategy for improving educational outcomes in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made

1. State government should build on existing high level of community participation by providing training and support to community members and schools.
2. school administrators should initiate regular monitoring and evaluation of community participation initiatives should be conducted to ensure their effectiveness and identify areas of improvement.

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