

# REFORMS AND INNOVATION IN SECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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## **Abstract**

The focus of this paper is on reforming secondary education through community participation. This paper takes cognisance of the fact that secondary school system has not achieved its general aim *of preparing students for useful living and higher education*. The paper therefore, examined the present status of secondary schools, the meaning of community participation in Education, and suggested ways through which communities can participate in reforming secondary education. Recommendations were made in line with the discussions in this paper.

## **Introduction**

According to chambers dictionary (1983), reform means to transform, to restore, to rebuild, to amend to make better, to remove defects from, to redress, to bring to a better way of life, to break up in reorganization, amendment or transformation, especially of a system or an institution.

Ndu (2007), opines, that the concept of reforming implies revitalization and renewal. So, an education system that is seen by the people as irrelevant to their needs and goals, needs to be reformed and renewed. In fact, the key objectives of reform in the education system is human development and the transformation of the learning environment.

Nigeria needs to revitalize her secondary education system in order to sail above the criticism of dilapidation, low quality of language communication as well

as reasoning skill in learners. The general level of academic achievement of the learners needs to be raised and the quality of teachers and teaching improved. The schools need to be made more attractive to students so that they can proudly identify with the schools and be willing to build same up, even after they have left the school, while the teachers will look forward to going to work in a pleasant and comfortable work environment. These thrust, when achieved, will both directly and indirectly uplift the society in various dimensions.

## **The Concept of Secondary Education and its Objectives**

Achuonye (2007:87) is of the opinion that *secondary education, as the name implies, comes second; that is the second level of the three-tier system of education in Nigeria Federal Republic*

Nigeria defined secondary education as; the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. In fact, the missionaries introduced secondary education in Nigeria and it started in the late 1850s.

### **The Broad Aims of Secondary Education are;**

- i. Preparation for useful living within the society
  - ii. Preparation for higher education
- From the above definitions and objectives, secondary school is the bridge between the primary and tertiary levels. It is the spring board from where all the students of higher education take of and all primary school leavers must pass through it to become useful to themselves and society.

This importance of secondary education made the Federal Government to come up with the broad aims of secondary education as stated above. But the above aims are mere mirage because the products of today's secondary school system can neither usefully lived in the society nor move into higher institution without their parents' aid or examination malpractices (Omoregie, 2006. Nigeria must not allow the secondary education to remain in this state. That is why this paper is called on the community to participate in reforming secondary education so as to serve its useful purposes.

### **Present Status of Secondary School Education in the Nation:**

As has been earlier discussed, the present secondary school students

cannot think for themselves or respect the views and feelings of others. They have no iota of dignity for labour except for things that will give them quick money. The increase in the population of these non-useful secondary products is posing great social and moral threats to the society.

Another area of problem observed in the secondary education is inability of majority of the students at this level to read fluently or write letters of application. Supporting this view is Osaghae's (2002) contribution in his *problems of standard currently in secondary education*.

Children in the junior secondary schools develop protective mechanism such as gangs because they do not benefit from the teaching that goes on in the classrooms.

J.S.S. III students, are determined to pass so they take to examination malpractices... Girls are sexually abused as they make friends with male partners and teachers so as to pass..

Abolade (2003) is of the view that problems manifested at secondary school level are examination malpractices, cultism, drug abuse and academic

Urevbu (1997) carried out a students' academic performance in West African Examination Council (WAEC), Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) between

1990 - 1994 and bemoaned poor performance of students.

WAEC in 1998, indicted teachers for 'poor coverage of the syllabus. There is inadequate teaching by the teachers at this level of education. Urevbu also said that, inadequate funding that has resulted in poor teaching facilities and dilapidated building is another problem in the secondary education. At the secondary school level, lip service is paid to science and technology while nothing is done-practically to promote its development. Evidence abound to show that there is actually poor quality of education in the present secondary school level, that is why, the aim of this paper is to suggest ways through which these problems could be solved through community participation.

### **The Meaning of Community Participation in Education**

**What is community?** Communities can be defined by the characteristics that •the members share, such as culture, language, tradition, law, geography, class and race. As shaeffer (1992) argues, some communities are homogeneous while others are heterogeneous; and some united while others conflictive.

Zenter (1964) quoted in Shekarau (2006) points out three aspect of communities. First, community is a group structure, whether formally or informally organized, in which members play roles which are integrated around goals associated with the

problems from collective occupation and utilization of habitational space. Second members of the community have some degree of collective identification with the occupied space. Lastly, the community has a degree of local autonomy and responsibility.

### **What is Participation?**

The term participation can be interpreted in various ways, depending on the context. Shaeffer (1994) clarifies different degrees or levels of participation, and provides seven possible definitions of the term, including:-

Involvement through the mere use of a service (such as enrolling children in school or using a primary health care facility);

Involvement through the contribution (or extraction) of money, materials and labour; So participation means both passive and active roles one plays or involves him or herself. Community participation therefore implies, community involvement in school activities.

Education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Despite the various degree of responsibilities taken by each group, none can be the sole agent to take 100% responsibility for educating children. Parents and families cannot be the only group of people responsible for their children's education as long as their children interact with

and learn from the world outside their families. Communities and society must support parents and families in the up bringing, socializing and educating of their children. Schools are institutions that can prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate, by equipping them with skills important in society. Schools cannot and should not operate as separate entities within a society. Since each group plays a different role in contributing to children's education, there must be efforts to make a bridge between the school and society in order to maximize their contributions. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Accordingly, it is important to establish and continuously attempt to develop partnership among schools, parents and communities.

#### **Ways Through Which Communities Can Participate in Reforming Secondary Education:**

The goal of any acViviVy mat attempts to involve community and families/parents in education is to improve the educational delivery so that more children learn better and be well prepared for the changing world. There are various reasons to support the idea that community participation contributes to the achievements of this goal. Extensive literature research has resulted in identifying ways through which communities can participate in reforming secondary education. Some of these ways are discussed below.

#### **Maximizing Limited Resources:**

Most governments all over the world have been committed to delivering education to their children. Particularly, after the World Conference on Education For All, assembled in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990; an increasing number of countries have attempted to reach the goal of providing education for all. However, governments have found themselves incompetent to do so because of lack of resources and capacities. Learning materials as well as human resources are limited everywhere, particularly in developing countries. The focus has shifted to finding efficient and effective ways to utilize existing limited resources. So, involving communities in the process of research and data collection can reveal to them the factors that contribute to lower enrollment and attendance, and poor academic performance in their schools. Furthermore, communities are usually concerned about their children's education, and are willing to provide assistance that can improve the delivery of education at this level. In Madagascar, for example, where Government investments at the primary level have been extremely low, parents and communities contribute money, labour and materials (World Bank, 1995). Here in Nigeria, the communities can equally do the same to help solve some problems at this secondary level. In fact, communities and parents are in the center in keeping the schools going by helping to take care of the schools' infrastructure and equipment. They also can complement

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government efforts by donating to schools around them and by helping to maximize limited resources available to their schools.

### **Developing Relevant Curriculum and Learning Materials:**

Communities and parents involvement helps to achieve Curriculum and learning materials that reflect children's everyday lives in society. When children use textbooks and other materials that illustrate their own lives in their community, they can easily associate what they are learning with what they have already known. Colleta and Perkins (1995) opines that, in Colombia, their Escuela Nueva program for multi grade schools incorporates a number of innovative components, including community participation in school curriculum. In each learning task, self instructional textbooks guide students to identify examples and cultural elements from their own experience and allow local materials to be accumulated in the learning centers. Their oral tradition is transcribed and classified. Local Crafts, Jobs and economic activities, health problems, geography, landscapes, transport, sports, dances, food, animals, vegetation and minerals are also described and classified for use in learning experiences. Children in Escuela Nueva are using curriculum relevant to their way of life and that of their communities, which helps to develop a series of basic learning needs, skills, attitudes, values and knowledge that enable the children to continue learning and applying what they learn in

their communities (Arboleda, 1991). These strategies could be directly used in Nigerian communities which have rich oral traditions in order to sustain our secondary school system.

### **Identifying and Addressing Problems:**

Communities can help identify and address factors that contribute to educational problems, such as **low** participation and poor academic performance, low enrolment of students, causes of truancy and absenteeism in teachers, etc. These problems when identified could be addressed by both the school and community.

### **Promoting Girls' Education:**

Community Participation can contribute to promoting girls' education (UNICEF 1992). Through participating in School activities and frequently communicating with teachers, parents and communities can learn that girls' education contributes to the improvement of various aspects of the communities way of lives, such as increased economic productivity, improved family health and nutrition, reduced fertility rates, and reduced child mortality rates. Involving parents and communities in discussions as part of school activities also helps to identify factors that prevent girls from schooling.

### **Improving Home Environment:**

Community participation can contribute to preparing and improving

home environment, by encouraging parents to understand the benefits of their children's schooling. A World Bank Study (1997) which analyzed primary education in India, discovered that students from families that encouraged children's schooling, by allocating time at home for study, encouraging reading, and supporting their children's educational aspirations, scored significantly higher on tests of learning achievement. From their extensive literature research, Heneveld and Craig (1996) argue that the parent and the community are one of the key factors to determining school effectiveness because they can prepare children's readiness to come to school and their cognitive development, and ensure children's well-balanced nutrition and health.

**Recommendations:**

Community Participation is one of the ways through which some educational problems could be solved. Therefore, the writer is recommending that;

- 1) Communities should be involved both financially and managerially in decision making about projects in their locality. This will make them value the decision and use it as a basis for increasing enrolment.
- 2) Government should provide useful ways in which communities can support the schools. Such as organizing meetings involving community leaders, where they can give

suggestions on how to run their school.

- 3) The Community should support, supplement and reinforce government actions concerning schools in their area.
- 4) Communication between the school, parents and Community should be frequent.
- 5) Schools should collaborate with the community to identify and integrate resources as well as services from the community in order to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and student learning.

**Conclusion:**

There are a lot of problems facing secondary education, which have made the achievement of the aims and objectives of this level of education almost impossible. The writer has examined some of these problems and suggested ways of solving these problems which includes community participation. It has been noted in this paper that community participation is a process that facilitates the realization or improving educational quality in our society.

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