

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND SCHOOL OWNERSHIP CO-EXISTENCE: THE WAY FORWARD FOR EDUCATIONAL GROWTH IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

As economic depression continue to affect all fabrics of life including education, it has been occasioned by low funding, infrastructural decay/ inadequate provision of facilities in the schools operated by Federal, State and Private organizations. The paper therefore discusses the integration of school communities to co-exist with proprietors through engaging Parents/Teachers Associations, Age grades, Traditional leaders, Village Based Development Associations, Religious, Political and Alumni associations to salvage the problems. It suggested fund-raising activities, community levies, build-manage-Transfer technique (BMTT) and Establishment of Community Education Fund (CEF) programme to be incorporated in the school policies. The problem facing community participation in financing education were explored and suggestions were made to proprietors like effective school community relationship, comprehensive policy involvement of community, and provision of technical and material assistance as well as provision of matching grants to community for more participation in school activities as a way of progressive approach.

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to another through teaching, training or research. It is the act or process of educating or being educated (Akpa, 2005) Education can take the form of informal, non-formal and formal. Schools are places of teaching-learning process and they are community on their own, nevertheless, do not exist in isolation. They reside within the community which they serve and must cultivate relationships within them for their growth. School according to Ademola Adebola (2014) is a social institution which prepares learner for future intellectual, professional as well as social roles in whatever community, society or country in which he or she belongs. The school is expected to serve the interest of the community and to do this effectively, the community and the proprietors (owners of school) need to co-exist for effective implementation of educational goals. The rationale for community involvement is due to government inability to fund education single-handedly due to dwindling resources, increasing cost and demand for education, competing needs from other economic sectors, escalating international debts and national and global economic vagaries. For rapid development of education, it is imperative that financing of education should be the responsibility of all. (Enyi, 2011). The poor and ineffective system of education according to Beljen, (2006) in Enyi (2011) are some of the features of our educational development due to poor funding, inadequate training and unmotivated teachers as well as acute shortage of teaching materials, this have rendered the project of our educational system ill-equipped for practical living in ever growing economy. Funding may be seen as the process of providing resources usually in form of money or other value such as effort or time for a project, a person, a business or other

private or public institutions. Funding means money for a particular purpose, the act of providing money for such a purpose (Hinchliffe, 2012)

An observation by Nwachani (2000) pointed out that procurement of educational facilities, staffing and other related aspects of education input variables are adversely affected due to inadequate funding. According to Okunamiri (2007) government had been failing in most of the states to pay salaries and allowances of staffs regularly and to produce adequate instructional materials and laboratory equipment for smooth educational growth. In view of this, Enyi (2011) opined that Nigerian schools are poorly stabilized to meet international standard, hence wealthy Nigerian parents take advantage of this situation to take their children to Ghana, South Africa and Europe for studies.

Because of this ugly situation, it may be observed that formal education is at cross roads in the country, especially when other sectors of the economy are competing keenly for attention as much as education does in the national budgetary allocation. (Onifade, 2004) For the growth and development of education in Nigeria, it is therefore necessary for proper co-existence of owners of either public or private institutions to co-operate with the community to enhance the development of the education sector.

Functional education is the most veritable means of achieving the educational goals. Community according to (Enyi 2001) play some major roles in salvaging, the inefficiency of owners of both private and public schools into achieving such functions. Community according to Bray (2012) is a group of people who share social, economic and cultural interests and/or attributes. Narayan (2013) specifically suggested that community are defined in terms of its characteristics which he identified as a group of people having common interest and felt needs, a group whose decision to work together supersede, other considerations, a group not completely alienated from general social organization. An organized group whose membership are knowledgeable and skillful in task management and a group having specified and enforceable rules and regulations. The level of community participation in enhancing co-existence is essential in internationalization of educational sector. Shaeffer (1994) maintains that participation has several interpretation depending on how it is been viewed.

Levels of Participation

According to Enyi (2000:54) there are different levels of participation of community which could involve.

- *Involvement through the use of a service, such as enrolling children*
- *Involvement through contribution of money, materials and labour.*
- *Involvement through attendance, for example, at parents' meetings at school*
- *Involvement through consultation on a particular issue*
- *Participation in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors.*
- *Participation in real-decision making at every stage, identification of problems, the study feasibility, planning, implementation and evaluation.*

Shaeffer (1994) in Enyi (2011) further identified specific activities involving a high degree of participation and are relevant to education. These include:

- *Collecting and analyzing data*
- *Defining priorities and setting goals.*
- *Assessing available goals*
- *Deciding on, and planning programmes*

- *Designing strategies to implement these programmes and assigning responsibilities to participants.*
- *Managing programmes and*
- *Evaluating results and impact.*

The United Nations Organization UNO (2005) said community participation as the way in which the efforts of the people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into life of the Nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. It can be deduced that the concept of participation is deeply imbedded in the art of taking part or getting involve in some activities within the educational setting. Participation refers to where citizens and other groups, interested or affected by schools, are partners in making various contributions in the establishment and maintenance of schools. These contributions may involve financial and non-financial resources (Ada, 2014). Financing connotes the money used to run a business or a project. It also involves the money which is available to individuals, governments or organizations for the spending on various economic activities (Akpa, 2005).

Rationale for Community Participation:

The problem of inadequate funding exists virtually at all level of education. Governments and even private proprietors are unable to maintain or expand facilities. It is in view of this that Babalola (2008) opined that education is a social investment should be shared by individuals, students, their families, communities including international agencies. In most countries, the share of private financing is limited. The inadequate funding of education in Nigeria and its effect on the quality of education combined with continued strong private demand for tertiary education especially University education have led policy makers and higher institution authorities to consider the possibility of increasing the share of financial support provided by students and their families by various lost recovery measures which include user fees, students loan, scholarship from private company and community effort. (Babalola, 2007).

The United Nation's Internationals Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2010) reveals that education in Nigeria, when compared with what obtains in other countries, is grossly under-funded whereas between 1990 and 1997, the federal government allocation to education as a proportion of total annual budgetary allocation in Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda, averaged 26%, 20% and 15% respectively, that of Nigeria was 3%. The spending ratio of Nigerian government on education in proportion to its GNP in relation to other African countries shows that the funding of this sector of the economy is very poor. (Babalola, 2007). It is important that, the need for public-private partnership with the community to deliver high quality, effective and efficient education system is important as a progressive approach. It is necessary, according to Enyi (2011) to meet the UNESCO standard and recommendation of providing 26 percent of annual budgets to education. The inability to fund education to meet up with the international standard further corroborates the case of government and private proprietors to meet up with the funding of education sector, and therefore, communities need to be involved. Enyi (2011) observed that the national budget has never exceeded 11.5 percent. The constitutional requirement that educational financing should be a joint responsibility of Federal state and local governments, local communities and other organization cannot be overlooked, (FRN, 2013). Private, parents and community members derive benefits from education, therefore there is the need

to contribute and finance education (Fagnano & Solomon, 2004). Enyi (2011) further pointed out that the community willingness to participate on their own and the uneven distribution of Educational resources call for community participation. According to Enyi (2000) community participation in financing education makes school more accountable to the communities that finance them, it also increase their interest in school affairs. This equally safeguards the abandonment of projects. The World Bank (2013) stressed that communities can help in identifying and resolving some peculiar educational problems, such as low participation and poor academic outputs.

Community Bodies Needed in Financing Education

Community support for education is generally expressed through various interest groups. According to Nwankwo (2010) and Aja (2011) the following bodies are important in corroborating with Federal, State and Private Proprietors in enhancing financial assistance

Parents-Teachers Association (PTAs)

The PTAs are associations made up of parents, guardians, sponsors of students, as well as teachers of particular schools, having the common aim of promoting the welfare of students and teachers. They co-operate with and support normally and finally the institutions of their wards.

- Other bodies include: Age grades
- Traditional Leaders
- Village based development Associations such as women associations, Town Development Unions. Youth Assemblies, men Organizations and welfare unions.
- Religious Organizations are important agencies that can be used such as churches, Islamic bodies and related organization to play some roles in educational development in Nigeria.
- Business Organization such as NGO could assist in financing education through donation of cash and equipment.
- Political Organization according to Bray and Lillis (1988) assist and provide educational materials operated in China by communist party and in Burma where political parties supply books and teaching aids, sport facilities and offer scholarships to needy students.
- Alumni Associations made up of old students play significant roles and could assist school in the development of their alma-mater as well as financing and executing different school based projects.
- Philanthropists also can be of use in assisting the school financially and donation of cash and school building.

Areas of Community Participation in Co-existence with Owners of Schools

Enyi (2001) opined that communities have participated virtually in all areas of educational provision. The involvement include service-oriented activities, maintenance, capital oriented activities, curriculum-oriented activities and financial roles. Such activities according to UBEC (2009) reported that 34.96 percent of primary and senior secondary schools receive community support in area of provision of security guards.

Strategies and Methods of Raising Community Resources for Education

An account of self-help cannot be ignored in the various ways of generating resources for school project. The methods are many and varied. These methods according to Abegunde (2009) include fund-raising activities organized by community-based organizations, women “August meetings” to raise funds for many educational project. According to Nwanko, (2010) the use of fund-raising strategies like cake-cutting, kola breaking, award of titles to prominent indigene and wealthy members of the community and naming projects after distinguished community members help in mobilizing resources. Other method according to Nwanko, (2010) include “annual return or mass returns” to undertake projects community levies, Direct labour inputs, contribution from farm crops, working on farm lands and Build-Manage-Transfer Technique (BMTT). This BMTT technique according to Enyi (2004) is a method where individual and corporate organizations are invited by communities to develop identify school facilities for example students hostels. On the completion of the project, the developer is allowed to operate the facility for a specified period, during which he/she is expected to recover the cost of the investment and returns on it.

It is of important that, the ownership of the facility reverts to the school, during which the developer, if he so wishes may enter into another agreement with proprietors to continue operating the facility or embark on another project. This co-existing seems workable in developing countries where financing of education becomes a challenge to school owners (Onah, 2010).

Way Forward for Encouraging Communities for Mutual Co-existence

The ability of communities to participate effectively in financing education depends on proper understanding of the problems inherent in their participation. Such problems according to Enyi, (2002) outlined were incoherent government’s policies, inadequate government support, ethnic and boundary conflicts. However, government should recognize the communities and encourage them by mobilizing them and providing them full recognition. There is the need for a more comprehensive policy on community involvement in education. It is not enough to indicate encouragement but clearly articulate and define roles and processes for community involvement in education. In the general terms, Akumah, 2008 has advocated that, for any policy to be meaningful, it must be comprehensive and cover every area it intends to protect. Ajayi and Otuya (2006) indicated that it is necessary in understanding the nature of communities and allow communities to initiate and plan their projects voluntarily, under government technical guidance. Enyi (2011) opined that the formation of Community Education Mobilization Programme (CEMP) should be encouraged to co-operate and collaborate with government and other agencies in financing education. The provision of matching grants to communities as a support by government in financing education as practice by Ghanaian government will help internationalization in education. (World Bank, 2010).

Conclusion

Government alone cannot provides all the necessary infrastructural facilities needed for quality and enhanced educational development needed in Nigeria. This paper concludes that parents, communities on their own part should co-exist with government to contribute to education financing. The progressive concept of self-reliance awareness among Nigerians communities, voluntary organizations, religious organizations and Non-governmental organizations. Based on this sudden awareness, I believe community will mobilized themselves to embrace and supplement government efforts towards financing education.

Recommendations

The economic depression world wide has been observed, as many nations of the world are planning and working towards surmounting the challenges posed by this situation in human endeavour. This situation also affects the educational sector.

1. Proprietors of schools, like Federal, State governments as well as private bodies should encourage community participation in financing education due to the proprietors' inability to fund education single-handedly.

2. Government and private organizations should recognize the historical and contemporary roles that communities played and make possible effort to mobilize resources.

3. An effective school-community relationship should be enhanced. Within this context, the management team, and their administration should be opened, accessible and proactive to community issues. This may involve making some school facilities available to community members on request, inviting and sensitizing them on school problems and having a viable and functional Parents Teachers Association (PTA).

4. Encourage communities in the formation of Community Education Mobilization Programme (CEMP).

5. Proprietors should have more interest in community affairs, protect and guide what they help to contribute to schools. Community members who contribute resources to schools are more likely to show greater interest in schools. For example Shaeffer (1994) in Enyi (2011) noted that when communities participate in school programmes, they are more likely to show interest in such activities as protecting school property, monitoring students' enrollment and checking various aspects of school operations.

The paper therefore, recommended that communities should be sensitized to help in identifying and resolving some peculiar educational problems, which could be integrated into a Community Action Plan (CAP). This will facilitate internalization of education in Nigeria educational system

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