

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract

Early childhood education and Community involvement sends a powerful message to children. This means that the school and the whole community have an essential role to play in the growth and development of its young people. It is believed that parents and family members play a vital role in the life of the child and so, too, does the entire community as a whole. The purpose of this study was to find out the extent to which Early Childhood Education and community relationship affect the teaching and learning. The study adopted descriptive survey design using purposive sampling techniques. A sample size of 73 Head teachers and 146 parents was selected to participate in this study, giving a sample size of 219 respondents. Data was collected by administering a set of questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed by describing emerging content from the respondents in relation to the study objectives. The study established that, there are areas of relationship between the school and the community. Areas like provision of land, security, use of classroom and playground. The study recommends among others that: The community should encourage the Early Childhood Care Educators by sending them on regular training, workshop and seminar. The community should involve in building and donating blocks of classrooms and teaching materials and lastly the school should involve voluntary parents to teach in Early Childhood Centre. This will enhance the parent child relationship, the school and community.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Community Relationship, Effective, Teaching, Learning.

Background to the study

Partnership with the local community played an important role on this journey of transformation in Early Childhood Education. The Educators and schools worked closely with community organizations. A number of the schools became informal community centres, providing resources and recreation for children, young people and adults. The school and community are inseparable and their good relationship improves the quality of education given to the pupils. Mahuta, (2007) was of the view that school as a social institution is regarded as center of knowledge and it possesses the power to mold and shape the character of individuals in the community. For the school to perform its role effectively there is a need for good school community relationship. There are many areas in which school community relationship exist which aid in the development of education, particularly Early Childhood

Education. The function of community towards maintaining and supporting its relationship with school and which ultimately lead to the development of education cannot be overemphasized. It is a known fact that there can never be a school where there is no community.

The communities normally provide lands in the schools are built as well as providing enrolment. Nasiru, (2008) and Gital, (2009) were of the view community provides school with the land to be established, find it, provide facilities to it and help greatly in the school utilizes the community resources for teaching and learning purposes and at the same time derives its curriculum from the community (Mahuta, 2007). Agbaje, (1990), Adeboyeje, (1994) and Cohen, (1998) in Ogundele, Oparinde and Oyewale, (2012) were of the opinion that school community relationship has significant impact on the provision and maintenance of school facilities, school discipline, teachers job performance, academic achievement of students and overall success of the schools. This clearly shows that school community relationship exists and helps greatly in the development of education.

School belong to the formal system of education for teaching – learning purposes. They offer an institutionalized form of education, which comprises of hierarchically organized set of activities carried out in specially designated teaching and learning environment. In describing community, Adeogun (2004) stated that community is everybody, adults, children, social and non-social persons, structures living in certain territory where all share a mode of life but not all are conscious of its organizations or groups. Having a healthy and respectful relationship with its community can benefit a school in its recruitment of local people as teachers and a range of other roles. Community, in this study, is the environment of the school where formal education takes place including bodies like the Parent Teacher Association, Board of Governors, and specific groups that have some interest in what goes on in the school which all gear towards school progression, growth and development.

School-community relationship has as its central focus the enhancement of teaching and learning. All the activities of the school in relation to significant others such as the host community, PTA, public, the ministry of education or the professional staff, refer to this relationship which should ultimately contribute to educational growth (Ejiejeh, 2007). Through appropriate school-community relationship, the school come into factual contact with the community thereby issues are addressed accordingly. 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.

Statement of the Problem

Children grow emotionally, intellectually, and physically through both their relationships and through their community. They might find this community in school or at home, on the playground, or in the backyard. For children, community involvement and engagement produces long-term benefits in their lives. It gives them a sense of belonging and is crucial to the building of their identity. Presently, the extent of community involvement in Early Childhood Education in Zaria Educational Zone appear to have declined. For instance, as Okeke (2001) also noted, some community leaders show indifference and disregard to the

affairs of the schools in their communities. Ofougwuka (2005) added that parents in such communities only pay the P.T.A levy when forced and go on to complain that the school administration extorts money from them without teaching their children well. It is also not uncommon to hear of community leaders who go to schools to attack or insult the principal or any other staff for one reason or the other. Some community leaders are at conflict with school principals and often petition for the transfer of some principals and staff. Obi (2004) also noted that in some cases, the community leaders negatively interfere in the day to day administration of the school, encroach or trespass on the school land as well as imposed hostile laws on the schools. These situations are detrimental to child development and depict such community members as showing indifference to their children's educational development. On the other hand, Ibiam (2011), examined a cooperative relationship existing between the school and its host community and based her proposition and or finding on the fact that the school and the country have something to offer and benefit from each other.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the extent to which Early Childhood Education and community relationship affect the management of the school facilities and resources.

Research Question

What relationship influence exist between Early Childhood Education and the community with regards to effective management of school facilities and resources

Review of Related Literature

School location from preprimary school to tertiary level is usual located within a community either in rural or urban area. In one way or the other, the community has a stake in the life of the students. Mbipom (2000) pointed out that since the school is an integral part of the society, its administration should involve both the people within the school and outside the school. school's community refers to the various individuals, groups, businesses and institutions that are interested in the welfare and vitality of a school and form the neighbourhoods served by the school. It encompasses the school administrators, teachers and staff members who work in a school; the students who attend the school and their parents and families; and local residents and organizations that have a stake in the school's success, such as school board members, city officials, and elected representatives; businesses, organizations, and cultural institutions; and related organizations and groups such as parent- teacher associations, booster clubs, charitable foundations, and voluntary school improvement committees. The School community concept is closely related to the concept of voice and shared leadership which generally seek to broaden the involvement of more individuals and diverse view in the governance and programming in the school (<http://edglossary.org/school-community/> and Waswa, 2017).

Sergiovanni (1994) in Waswa, 2017 asserts that community building is important in schools because it is the tie that binds students and teachers together in a special way to something more significant than themselves. "Community can help teachers and students be transformed from a collective of "I" to a collection 'we', thus providing them with a unique and enduring sense of identity, belonging, and place" (Waswa, 2017). Community building must become

the heart of any school improvement effort. Whatever else is involved in improving teaching, developing sensible curriculum, creating new forms of governance, providing more authentic assessment, empowering teachers and parents, and increasing professionalism must rest on a foundation of community building. Successful community building depends in large measure on each individual school defining for its own life and creating for itself its own practice of schooling (Sergiovanni, 1994 in Waswa, 2017).

The relationship between school and its host community must be friendly, cordial and sustained since the school is a life asset to the community. Jaiyeoba & Atanda (2004) maintained that the promotion of good relationship with the community is essential if schools are to enjoy maximum opportunities that could be tapped from their community and attracts donation in terms of facilities and fund to support the development strides of the school. Schools exist in the heart of each community and school community links are beneficial. The principal can play a leading role in fostering these links. A school is a social institution responsible for promoting social interests and it is the responsibility of communities to look after the school in terms of buildings and furniture, providing direction, in recruiting volunteers to help at school functions, in mentorship functions and a sense of stability. Parents' involvement in the education of their children is associated with student motivation. The principal and the faculty of the school should find methods and techniques to establish rapport with parents and guardians of the students. Spencer, Nolan, Ford and Rochester (1989) in Waswa, (2017), highlight that schools were formed by a society, within society and for society so that through its children, society will retain its identity and viability. According to Spencer et al. (1989), school enhances interaction between a society's communities and its teaching-learning institutions. Hence, effective education is a function of community and school interaction. According to Onyango (2001) in Waswa, (2017), the principal should possess a thorough knowledge of the community by being the centre of the community activities and seek to foster a good working relationship with the Board of Management (BoM) and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) which are important links between the school and community. The principal should also co-operate with other agencies in the community that render important services to the school.

The school has a lot of resources which it uses to develop, maintain and strengthen school community relationship in addition to its main role of imparting knowledge and socialization of the younger generation. Bibire, (2014) was of the view that the impact of the schools on the community will largely depends on bonds as well as on how the school systems are organized and degree to which they are organically integrated with the community needs and aspirations.

One of the important resources of the school which aid in strengthening school community relationship and improves education is allowing community to use school facilities. Mostly, in northern Nigeria, it is common to all that the primary school buildings or classes are used by "Islamiyya" in the evening or in the night. In relation to that Mitrofanova, (2011) was of the view that encouraging non-profit community groups to use the facilities is not only good use of resources but also provide opportunities for the schools to get involved in community projects. In addition to that community members make use of the school compound for

parking their valuables, particularly cars in the night for security reasons. School halls and play grounds are used by the community for meetings, conduct of cultural festivities and games. Nasiru, (2008) and Bakwai, (2013) were of the view that school halls are used for community meetings, play grounds for games and cultural activities; and the school building for emergency cases. The school also assists the community in sharing good information with the public. A lot of messages reach the community through the schools, particularly in our villages. Pawlas, (2005), Mitrofanova, (2011) and Bakwai, (2013) were of the view that school pass vital information to the community and it is normally done through news release and newsletters. This sharing of information creates better school community relationship which ultimately improves teaching and learning and general development of education, particularly primary one. Mahuta, (2007) was of the opinion that the school community relationship has long been recognized as a strong tie for the smooth running of the school in the community.

Methodology

The research design that was used in this study is descriptive survey method. A survey design is an organized attempt to analyze, interpret and report satisfactorily the specific findings by the researcher. It is used to determine information on the opinions, feelings and attitudes of respondents (Osuala, 2005). In line with this, Nwankwo (2012) argues that findings from survey studies have the potentials of being used as foundation to other research work. Subsequent upon this, Olomolaiye (2010) fine tune the importance of the survey design as: 'guiding model to be followed by the researcher and the method to be used to gather and analyze data'. The population for this study comprises of the 146 parents who are the members of the School Based Management Committee and 2,519 teachers in Government Preprimary schools in Zaria, Kaduna.

Purposive Sampling, a non-probability sampling procedure was used to sample only the 73 Head teachers and 146 parents who are members of the School Based Management Committee where the study was carried out. This mean that the total sampling for the study is 219. Purposive sampling gives the researcher the opportunity to choose samples based on what he or she thinks would be appropriate for the study (Osula, 2005). The instrument used for the study is a set of questionnaire which was draw from the research objective on Early Childhood Education and community relation for effective teaching and learning. Waswa (2017) maintains that questionnaires give respondents freedom to express their views and their opinions and also make suggestions. Data presentation and analysis was done by using frequency and percentage.

Table Showing responses obtained from research questionnaire

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE	YES	%	NO	%
1	Teachers receive support to go for training/retraining from the community	189	86%	30	14%
2	The community participate in voluntary teaching in the school	35	16%	184	84%

3	The school participate in environmental cleaning of the community	190	87%	29	13%
4	The school receive funds from the community for building of classes and Instructional facilities.	49	22%	170	78%
5	The community helps for the security of the school environment	155	71%	64	29%
6	The school allows the community to make use of the classes after closure and during holidays	182	85%	37	17%
7	The school allows the community to make use of their play grounds	194	89%	25	11%
8	The school gives vital information to the community	140	64%	79	36%
9	The community and the school have meetings regularly to discuss their welfare	189	86%	30	14%
10	Lands were not provided by the community for expansion of the school	49	22%	170	78%

The table above shows the respondents opinion on the statements in the questionnaire. 86% was of the view that teachers do not receive support to go for training / re-training from the community while 14% of the respondent did not agree on the statement. 16% of the respondents disagreed that community do not participate in voluntary teacher as 84% agreed by the statement. Ubogu (2004) is of the opinion that good performance is realized when parents work together with the teachers, that effective education is a function of community and school interaction. Ryan Bretag writes, "Educators shouldn't be the only ones contributing. The community should be creating questions, puzzles, quotes, mind benders, trivia, philosophical and ethical challenges, thought provoking videos, "graffiti walls," brainstorming spaces, and play areas." There are so many opportunities for experiential learning to happen out in the community surrounding the school. We just need to find ways to connect core curriculum beyond the classroom by attracting the right people and asking the right questions. The statement that the school participate in environmental cleaning of the community proves affirmative as 87% agreed while 13% disagreed. 78% of the respondents were against the view that the school receives funds from the community for building of classes and educational programmes while 22% were of the view that funds were given to schools by the community for building of classes.

The table also shows that the community helps in the security of the school while the school allows the community to make use of the classes and playground after closure and during holidays with the following percentages 71%, 85% and 89% respectively against 29% 17% and 11%. This can also be seen in the study of Sa'ad & Sadiq (2014) where the community was allowed to park their vehicles, particularly cars in the night for security. Also the community uses their playground for games like football and other cultural activities. 64% of the respondents were of the view that the school gives vital information to the community were 36% of the respondents were against. The school and the community have their regular meeting through their representative under the umbrella of School Based Management Committee (SBMC) with 86% respondents and 14% respondents against the view. Finally, the

respondents were of the opinion that the community provide land for expansion of the school while 22% were against. The table shows that there are areas of relationship between the school and the community. Areas like provision of land, security, use of classroom and playground. More so, there are areas that needs improvement as seen from the above table.

Conclusion

The community which is the owner of the land upon which the Early Childhood Education is build should play the role of the landlord with a caring and nurturing attitude as the school stands as the tenant. This is evidence in the study were the community play vital roles that will enhance peace and security of the school. The school on its part should also involve the community in the aspect of voluntary teaching for the growth and development of community at large.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. The community should encourage the Early Childhood Care Educators by sending them on regular training, workshop and seminar.
2. The community should involve in building and donating blocks of classrooms and teaching materials.
3. The school should involve voluntary parents to teach in Early Childhood Centre. This will enhance the parent child relationship, the school and community.
4. The Early Childhood Care Educators should make herself accessible to parents, pupils and the community.
5. The school personnel should also participate in relevant areas of community-based activities and programs.

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