ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL- COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

Gladys O. Uzoechina

Abstract

This study investigated the status and barriers to good school-community relationship in secondary schools in Anambra State. Guided by two research questions, the sample was 1,818 respondents (80 principals, 1678 teachers and 60 community rulers) selected through stratified random sampling. The descriptive research design was used. Data, collected through a 21-item researcher developed questionnaire, was analysed using mean scores. The findings revealed that the school-community relationships existing in secondary schools in Anambra state was poor. Fraud, principals'/teachers' attitudes, community apathy and illiteracy among community members were similarly identified by principals, teachers and community rulers as the barriers to good school-community relationship. It was recommended among other things that Principals and teachers should encourage good rapport between them and the community leaders. They should make more efforts to see community involvement in school affairs not as threat but as one way of enhancing its quality.

Introduction

Schools 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 specifically designated teaching and learning environment. In describing community, Adeogun (2004), stated that community is everybody, adults, children, social and non-social persons, social institutions, structures living in a certain territory where all share a mode of life but not all are conscious of its organizations or groups. 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 is a term that is used to describe the nature of association between schools and communities. Cibulka (1998), defined school community relationship as the presence of interactive relationship between teachers, principals, and the community where the school is located. To Ajaniyi (2004), school community relationship is the co-ordination of the efforts of people in the community and those in the school towards the achievement of the broad and specific goals of education. It involves the inter-linkage association and cooperation between a school and the host community (Okam and Bozimo, 2004). It is also concerned with bringing human resources in the community and school for effective and functional school administration.

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(Lumsdane & Lumsdane, 2000; Ejieh, 2007). Through appropriate school-community relationship, the school come into factual contact with the community thereby issues are addressed accordingly (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.

Presently, the extents of community involvement in secondary schools in Anambra State 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 arc detrimental to child development and depict such community members as showing indifference to their children's educational development (Okongu, 2002). Such situations might have been influenced by some barriers and the nature of the school-community relationship in schools making it crucial for an empirical investigation of the extent of school-community relationships in secondary schools in Anambra State is carried out. Hence, this study.

Research Questions
Two research Questions guided the study:
1) To what extent does a good school-community relationship exist in secondary schools in Anambra State?
11) To what extent do some issues constitute barriers to school-community relationships in
Anambra State?

Methods and Materials
The study was a descriptive survey conducted in Anambra State which is one of the States in Nigeria. It covered all the 261 government-owned public schools in the six education zones in the State. Six thousand and forty-one respondents constituted the population for the study. Based on data collected from the State Education Commission and Anambra State Bureau of Information and Culture, respectively in Awka, Anambra State, this population comprised 261 principals, 5,587 and 193 community rulers in Anambra State as at the time of this study.
The sample comprised 1,818 respondents selected using the proportionate stratified-random sampling technique. The secondary schools were stratified on the basis of the education zones where they are located. From each education zone, approximately 30 percent of the principals, teachers and community rulers were selected. On the whole, 80 principals, 1678 teachers and sixty community rulers were randomly sampled for the study.
A researcher developed questionnaire containing 48- items was used to collect data. The items were structured on a four point scale weighted as follows: Very Great Extent (4), Great Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very low Extent (1). Three experts who were lecturers in Educational Management and Policy validated the instrument, and made some modifications. The Cronbach alpha procedure for testing reliability was applied. The cronbach alpha value for the entire items was 0.85, which was considered satisfactory for the study.

The researcher collected data with the help of ten research assistants who were teachers in secondary schools in Anambra State. At the end of the data collection exercise, four principals, thirteen teachers and four community rulers did not complete their copies even after several repeated visits from the research assistants. On the whole twenty-one copies were lost and only 1797 (98.85%), copies were retrieved and used for data analyses.
Mean ratings were used in analyzing the questionnaire items for answering the research questions. The decision rule for interpreting the mean scores of the data was 2.5 as the cut-off point for accepting an item as indicating great extent. A mean score below 2.50 was taken as an indication of a low extent of school community relations

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question one; To what extent does good school-community relationships exist **in** secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1. Summary of Mean Ratings of the Responses of Principals, Teachers and Community Rulers on the Existence of Good School-Community Relations

S/NO	Items on school community relations	X	Decision
1	Community rulers invite school staff and students to community events like Ofalla festivals, New yam festivals etc.	3.56	moderate extent
2	School staff attends community events such as August meetings and deliver lectures or make appeals to community members.	3.20	great extent
3	Community leaders often seek information on the school's needs, conditions, and achievements.		great extent
4	Community members protect school staff and students from masquerade invasion during community festivals.	2.76	low extent
5	Community members write to Stale Ministry of! education lo intimate them of school needs.	2.39	low extent
6	School staff pay condolence visits to deceased community prominent members.	2.14	low extent
7	Community rulers send congratulatory/good will school achievements	1.98	low extent
8	Community members often visit the school and inspect school facilities.		low extent .
	Average mean	2.45	Low extent

In Table 1, only the mean ratings for items 1 and 2 are above the cut-off point of 2.50. The mean ratings for the remaining 6 items were less than 2.50 indicating a low extent of good school-community relations with respect to the statements in the items. The average mean for the entire items on school-community relationship is 2.45 indicating that there was a low extent of good school-community relationships in secondary schools in Anambra State, generally.

Research Question2: To what extent do the designated issues constitute barriers to school-community relationships in Anambra State?

Table 2: Summary of Mean Ratings of the Responses of Principals, Teachers and Community Rulers on Barriers to School -Community Relationship

S/no	Items on school-community relationship	X	Decision
9	Principals keep community members waiting outside their offices for long hours before attending io (hem.	2.73	Great extent
10	Principals invite community leaders only to participate when there is crisis.	3.45	Great extent
11	Principals and teachers would prefer to do their work quietly in their schools with minimum interference from members.	3.45	Great extent
12	Fraud and corruption among school staff and representatives.	3.73	Great extent
13	When community members make a comment against teachers' activities, the teachers victimize the person's child in the school.	3,54	Great extent

14	If community members make a suggestion, no matter how significant it is, it is often ignored by the school staff.	2.48	low extent
15	Many community members are poorly educated and lack the basic knowledge and skills for active participation in school management.	3.25	Great extent
16	Some community members incite students to rebel against the school authorities.	1.57	Low extent
17	Some principals do not recognize community leaders as persons of worth to the school.	1.43	low extent
18	Some community leaders are very busy and only attend to school staff after repeated visits by the school staff.	3.71	Great extent
19	Community members feel frightened to communicate with strict and harsh principals.	2.87	Great extent
20	Frequent transfer of school staff by the State Commission.	2.40	Low extent
21	Non-availability of government guidelines and incentives community participation in school management.	3.72	Great extent
	Average mean	2.95	Great extent

The mean ratings of items 14, 16, 17 and 20 were below 2.50. This shows that the respondents do not perceive that the issues as barriers to school-community relationships in secondary schools in Anambra State. On the other hand the remaining ten items scored above 2.50 indicating that the designated issues in these items were, to a great extent, barriers to good school-community relationships. The average mean for the entire items was above 2.50 which indicated that the designated issues constitute barriers to school-community relationships in secondary schools, to a great extent.

Discussion of Findings

The major finding of research question one is that there was a general low extent of existence of good school-community relationship in secondary schools in Anambra State. For instance, there was a low extent of: community members protection of school staff and students from masquerade invasion during community festivals; school staff paying condolence visits to deceased prominent community members; community rulers sending congratulatory/good will messages to acknowledge school achievements , and community members often visit the school and along with the principal, inspect the facilities in school. This finding disagrees with that of Obiechina (2006), who found that good school-community relationship do not exist in Primary schools in Anambra State. Conversely, this finding is at variance with that of Ofougwuka (2005), who found that the parents through the Parents Teachers association (PTA), fostered good school-community relationships in primary school in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. Egboka (2007), also who found out that there was a moderate existence of good school-community relations in primary school in Anambra State.

This finding is not encouraging because as Ejieh (2007), pointed out, without a high extent of a good school-community relationship, schools might become isolated from the communities they are intended to service. Increased school-community relationship is desirable in the quest for the qualitative development of the secondary school system especially in these days of continued cutbacks in the votes for education. Equally desirable in this respect, is increased interaction between teachers and parents and other members of their students' community. With the present situation of poor school-community relationship in Anambra State secondary schools, mobilsing community members

especially the parents to participate in schools' activities would be difficult.

This low extent school-community relationship could have been responsible for the deplorable state of some secondary schools in Anambra State as made manifest by ill-equipped laboratories and libraries, dilapidated building, shortage of classroom accommodation, lack of science and technical equipment and consumable items (e.g. chalk), shortage of school furniture for students and teachers, lack of essential facilities such as water, light, toilet facilities and inadequate finance (Afunwa, 2003). This situation is likely to continue in the future unless some interventionist strategies are put in place to improve community participation in the schools.

It was also found that a lot of issues constituted great barriers to good school-community relationship in Anambra State. This finding agrees with Ofouguka (2005), who reported several barriers to school -PTA interaction in Anambra State primary schools. This finding is likely to continue in the future because the issues raised in fraud, corruption, poor knowledge and skills and principals' keeping community members waiting, might continue to threaten good-school community relationship in Anambra State if not properly addressed. For instance, many community members in Anambra State have personal businesses to attend to, and a situation where principals keep them waiting outside the principals' offices for long hours before attending to them, could make them to stop visiting the schools.

In addition, where principals invite community leaders only to participate when there is crisis, limits the participation of community members to mere conflict resolution. The need of frequent meetings between teachers, community representatives, and parents was stressed by Okunola (2004). There seems to be a problem in that at times, the principal would call community leaders to a special meeting which was unscheduled, and when they get there, they realize that the crisis which the principal is calling them to settle could have been avoided by frequent meetings. It is possible that these community leaders might feel that they are being utilized manipulatively, and might decline from honouring such invitations.

The issue of fraud and corruption is of serious concern. Obiechina (2006), warned that where there are cases of fraud and dishonesty in the use of school-community resources, it is likely to breed mistrust and community apathy in schools. Respondents also indicated that principals and teachers would prefer to do their work quietly in their schools with minimum interference from community members, and community members feel frightened to communicate with strict and harsh school staff.

Even worse is the tendency among teachers that if a community member says something, or makes a comment against something happening in the school, the teachers victimize the person's child in one way or another. This response seemed to be a shocking blow and a major obstacle that makes community members to dislike serving in the governing body or school-community committees for the safety and well-being of their children. This means that if the community members with children in the school want their children (o be safe, they learn to keep quiet. This defeats the purpose of community participation as a watch dog over the school as stressed by Ajaniyi (2004). For the communities to be highly and actively involved in school matters, people should be allowed to exchange words in a constructive manner. Even in democracy, there is criticism, but that does not call for intimidating response (Lumsden & Lumsden, 2000).

Finally, poor education and illiteracy were also identified as a barrier to school- relationship. Lack of skills and basic education cause many people to undervalue themselves and have low self-esteem (Peale & Blanchard, 2000). As a result they distance themselves from their children's school matters. In that way they leave everything up to the teachers with the attitude that teachers are experts and they can best do the job. These barriers are therefore, crippling the secondary education system and needs to be adequately addressed by all concerned stakeholders.

Recommendations

1. Principals and teachers should encourage good rapport between them and the community leaders. They should make more efforts to see community involvement in school affairs not as threat but as one way of enhancing its quality.
2. School staff and community representatives should hold regular school-community meetings

where which issues and strategies for effective community involvement in secondary education, would be discussed. This might make community members to feel that they are part of the school system, as such might be committed to its success.

3. Workshops or some type of thorough and intensive training is essential in order to equip .community members with the necessary skills and knowledge current educational affairs in school-community relationship. The school principals should therefore, liase with community rulers and organize internal frequent workshops, targeting community members, their leaders, learners, and teachers.

4. The school administrator must make himself accessible to parents and members of the public. He could also demonstrate active interest in the community life by promoting the involvement and participations of the school in suitable social activities and extra-mural programmes.

5. Government should effectively implement the private-public sector partnership reform initiatives to boost community participation in education management. They should also make efforts to revive School Governing Boards (SGBs), in the schools.

6. The Government should also devise strategies where communities get some kind of honoraria for the hours they spend at school in meetings, or awards for making provisions to schools.

Conclusion

School-community relationship is necessary in secondary school management. In Anambra state, school-community relations is yet to receive the attention it deserves from principals, teachers, and community members, because of certain barriers. This would likely continue to affect the quality of community involvement in secondary schools in Anambra State. Therefore, educational planners, principals and teachers should plan, develop and implement strategies for improving school-community relations.

References

Adeogun, A. A. (2004). The use of community power structure as strategy for effective secondary school management in Nigeria. In J.B. Babalola and S.O Adedeji (Ed). *Contemporary Issues in Educational Management: A Book of Honour.* Pp 233-342. Ibadan: Awemark publishers.

Afunwa, S.A. (2003). *The Role of Communities in Financing Education in Nigeria.* Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press Ltd.

Ajaniyi, R. B. (2004). Effective school-community relations for enhanced community participation in Nigerian schools. In E.O Famigbaye; J.B Babalola; M. Fabunmi, & A. Ayeni (Eds.). *Management of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria.* Pp 325-334. Ibadan: Codat Publications Limited

Anakee, G. (2004). Impact of school-community relations on school administration in Awka south local government area. Unpublished B.Ed project, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Egboka, P. N. (2007). School-community relationship in primary education management in Anambra State: the way forward/ Paper presented at a national conference of Nigerian Primary and Teacher Education Association holding at university of Jos, Nigeria from 31[sl] -3rd August 2007.

Ejieh, M. U. (2007). Educational quality and community involvement in Nigeria: Some Implications for Educational Planning. *Journal of Social Sciences 10(\): 43-48.*

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education.* Lagos, Nigeria. NERDC press.

Lumsden, G & Lumsden, D. (2000). *Communicating in Groups and Teams: Sharing Leadership.* Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth.

Obi, E. (2004). *Education Management.* Enugu: Computer Edge publishers.

Obiechina, J. (2006).School community relations and the status of physical facilities in secondary schools in Anambra State. Unpublished M. Ed Thesis Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Ofougwuka, A. (2005). Appraisal of the roles of PTA in primary school administration in Onitsha zone. Unpublished M. Ed Thesis UN1ZIK Awka.

Okam, C.C. & Bozimo, G.O. (2001). Forging an effective school-community relationship in implementing the curricular issues intrinsic in Nigeria' Universal Basic education at the primary school level. *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum Studies.* 8, 11, 232-239

Okeke, N.O. (2001). *Administering Education in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects.* Ibadan: Heinemann Education books Nigeria.

Okongu, E. (2002). *Strategies for Funding Secondary Education In Nigeria. Retrieved on 26[1,1] September 2006from www. http//informaworld, com, org.pub.*

Okunola, P.O. (2004). Public participation in educational policy making in Nigeria: trends, issues and prospects. In E.O Famigbaye; J.B Babalola: M. Fabunmi, & A. Ayeni (Eds.). *Management of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria..Pp* 313-324. Ibadan: Codat Publications Limited.

Peale, N.V. & Blanchard, K. (2000). *The Power of Ethical Management.* London: Random House.