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## Understanding the Impact of Community Participation on Secondary School Education in a Depressed Economy: A Sociological View

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### Abstract

This is an extensive review which draws on the relevance in understanding the impact of community participation on secondary school education in a depressed economy. The review tried to infer the functionalist perspective towards explaining the context of community participation through which cohesion, consensus and solidarity play significant roles in reducing the financial burden of government, school management, parents and community members alike, in financing schools. The review tried to explain on how best communities can be involved through shared funding: provision of facility, additional funds, infrastructure, extra curricula activities and so on. Thus, literature was reviewed under some of the following sub-headings: the concept of community service, community service and secondary education, including community service in Nigerian education curriculum and community service a key to community development among others. It was concluded that community involvement and education on the needs and requirements for secondary education is a booster towards achieving its goals in a depressed economy.

**Keywords:** Community, Community participation, Secondary Education, Funding, Depressed Economy

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### 1. Introduction

Schools are located in communities, but are often “islands” with no bridges to the “mainland.” Families live in neighbourhoods, often with little connection to each other or to the schools their children attend. Nevertheless, all these entities affect each other, for good or ill. Because of this and because they share goals related to education and socialization of the young, families and communities must collaborate and actively participate in schools’ activities to minimize problems and maximize results (Baiz, 2013) <sup>[1]</sup>. Dealing with multiple and interrelated concerns, such as poverty, child development, education, violence, crime, safety, housing, and employment requires community service. Also promoting well-being, resilience, and protective factors and empowering families, communities and schools also requires the concerted effort of all stakeholders (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2013 and Ogunbiyi, 2017) <sup>[2,5]</sup>. Schools are more effective and caring places when they are an integral and positive part of the community. This plays out as enhanced academic performance, fewer disciplinary problems, higher staff morale, and improved use of resources. Reciprocally, families and other community entities can enhance parenting and socialization, address psychosocial problems, and strengthen the fabric of family and community life by participating in schools’ programmes. Building such collaboration that require stakeholders’ readiness, an enlightened vision, creative leadership, and new and multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools and other community members who are willing to assume leadership (Baiz, 2013) <sup>[1]</sup>. Just as Shilpi (2017) <sup>[7]</sup> puts it community participation has a powerful influence on children’s achievement in schools.

**Theoretical Framework** The theoretical perspective used in supporting the discussions of this paper is the Functionalist Perspective. The central view of the theory is consensus, solidarity and cohesion. It is a theory that establishes and portrays society and or a system as a human body which entails or is made up of various parts that work together for a common purpose. It is evident that school as an institution function as an agent of socialization to maintain among other things social solidarity,

collectivism, understanding and cohesion in the development of the individual and the community as a whole. Community participation could be viewed from the functionalist perspective on the basis that, it is a collection of individuals with varied family backgrounds, social standing and above all simultaneously working together to achieve a common goal through secondary education. The workings of this theory cannot be undermined in addressing issues of concern that affect the establishment and running of secondary education in our communities. The involvement of the community for whom schools are built creates comfort in the minds of the people running the schools and the members of the community: it apparently becomes a shared responsibility on both parties to want to have the best of education for generations to come.

### **The concept of community service**

A community may be defined as a group of people living in a geographical area, who have identical culture, beliefs, values, traditions and are united with common interest. It is this common interest that brings them together to share a territory. According to Anyanwu (2012)<sup>[11]</sup> cited in Ewelenu and Mbara (2016), a community is a social group, occupying more or less defined geographical area, and based on the feeling that people have for one another. Such feeling can accommodate the facility to identify a common sentiment, the ability to share a recognized way of life and the possibility of living wholly within such groups. Baiz (2013)<sup>[1]</sup> in his study on community financing presents three different types of communities: geographic community, ethnic, racial and religious communities and shared family or educational concerns communities which include parents' associations and similar bodies that are based on families' shared concern for the welfare of students for instance.

Community service according to Baiz, (2013)<sup>[1]</sup> refers to volunteering or taking part in activities that help the community without hoping for any material or financial reward. Community service is a fundamental part of individual and social growth, and it is important that Nigerian youths go through this stage to develop the sacrificial spirit. It is an act that people engage in to bring benefits to the local community, it may also be defined as the projects that members of a certain organization may undertake for the development of society, such organizations may be the boy scout, girl's guild and others. Examples of community service projects include:

1. Clearing pathways
2. Collecting items for charity, such items may include clothes, food, toiletries and so on
3. Clearing road verges
4. Helping the elderly in nursing homes
5. Helping the local fire or police service
6. Tutoring children with learning disabilities

### **Community education: a key to community development**

Community education is the type of education needed to ensure the self-confidence, self-respect and personal independence as well as to safeguard human rights and achieve social equality. Community education is essential in stimulating community members to actively participate in social activities, find or generate employment, increase their incomes and improve their quality of life. In this regard, educational profiles reveal that most developed and developing nations of the world accord great importance to

adult and community education as the spring board of their national development. The term "community education" enjoys a variety of meanings. According to the Canadian Association for Community Education (1987)<sup>[10]</sup>, community education is a process whereby learning is used for individual, community and global betterment. It is characterized by the integrated involvement of people of all ages, use of community learning resources and research to bring about community change and recognition that people can learn through, with and from each other to create a better world. Viewed from this vantage point, community education is a channel for enhancing the initiative and creativity of the people to solve their problems. This implies that education goes beyond reading, writing and calculating, though they are important elements of the educational process (Findsen, 2010)<sup>[9]</sup>.

Community education as portrayed in the above definition is a tool that enables individuals and groups to develop their capacities for a full and rich personal and social life. In this vein, Ezimah (2004)<sup>[12]</sup> defines community education as a process aimed at raising consciousness, spreading understanding and providing the necessary skills, including the human and material resources, for the social, economic, political and cultural development of the community. Community Education is learning activities that groups or individuals undertake for their personal, community, cultural or economic development. It touches all other areas of learning but its primary focus is the adult as learner and the community as context. It is deduced from the various definitions examined above that community education is education for life in society rather than education merely for livelihood. It is education for people's empowerment to take control over their own lives. In this vein, community education is education geared towards the articulation of community needs and problems.

### **Community Participation**

Community participation in education varies widely in different areas. However, community participation in secondary education can be referred to as construction of classrooms, teachers' houses, school toilets and teachers' offices; attendance of meetings; contribution of cash; labour and involvement in decision-making. Community participation is the active involvement of parents, families and local communities in the planning, designing, coordinating, executing, supervising, monitoring and evaluation of programmes or projects for better education delivery. Community participation has become a central value in many sectors including health, education, environment, international rural development and urban renewal. In many sectors, community participation has been adopted as a strategy for reasons such as equity, efficiency and social cohesiveness. Community participation is imperative for any policy designed to improve educational performance in a country. Parents and community participation is one of the five key elements common to school effectiveness models, the others being learning, teaching, responsiveness to children's needs and management (Stephen, 2015).

Community participation can be achieved through integrating the schools activities into those of the community within which the school is located; providing the necessary financial support to the school for school development projects such as construction and or renovation of classrooms; provision of

instructional facilities, laboratories, libraries among others; provision of school facilities such as plants, equipment, buildings, furniture such as table, chairs and other infrastructural facilities to enhance effective implementation of the curriculum; maintenance of discipline amongst students; maintaining a conducive teaching/learning environment to raise academic standards in the schools and participation in management of the school. Mohammed *et. al* (2015) identified five key areas the community can participate to ensure effectiveness of education of the child, these are:

1. Enrolment of school age children to school prepared to learn;
2. Provision of financial and material support to the school;
3. Effective communication between the school, parents, and community;
4. Community's role in school administration; and
5. Community's participation and assistance with instruction

Community participation in these areas will enhance school performances. Efficiency participation implies a greater chance that resources available to development projects will be used more efficiently. Participation can for example help minimize misunderstanding or possible disagreements and thus the time and energy, often spent by professional staff explaining or convincing people of a project's benefits, can be reduced. Participation is also cost-effective since, if local people are taking responsibility for a project, then fewer costly outside resources will be required and highly paid professional staff will not get down in the detail of project administration. Participation, therefore allows for more efficient use of the resources available to a project. Effectiveness participation also makes project more effective as instruments of ward development. Projects are invariably external instruments which are supposed to benefit people of a particular area. Participation which allows these people to have a voice in determining objectives, support project administration and make their local knowledge, skills and resources available most results in more effective projects. Participation concerned with human development and increases in people's sense of control over issues which affect their lives, help them to learn how to plan and implement and, on a broader front, prepares them for participation at regional or even national level. Coverage- in many instances delivery services have contract with only a fraction of the rural population. Community Participation will extend this coverage in that it would bring more rural people within the direct influence of development activities. Participation will increase the number of rural people who potentially can benefit from development and could be the solution to broadening the mass appeal of such services. Sustainability, community participation is seen as the antidote in that it can ensure the local people maintain the project dynamics (Muhammed, Elija, Florence and Linus, 2015) <sup>[4]</sup>. Accordingly, community participation in the provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities has a great advantage to the development of school administrators, teachers, students and community members as well. School administrators benefit more in the management of school facilities and the control of personnel working in the school. This is because the community members will supplement or support him/her in the supervision of any new building on construction or about to be constructed in the school.

Community help the principal in the supervision of repairs of broken furniture, doors or windows, renovation or fumigation of classroom, and or any school building to ensure the quality and durability of materials and services.

Community participation explains how schools, families and communities can work productively together to help children succeed in school and in later life. It focuses on partnership of schools, families and communities aimed at improving school programmes and school climate, thus improving educational delivery so that more children learn better and are well prepared for the changing world. Students' academic performance has been linked with parents and community participation (Muhammed, Elija, Florence and Linus, 2015) <sup>[4]</sup>. Conclusively, community participation in education can also be a powerful incentive for teachers. Teachers' absenteeism and lack of punctuality to show up in classrooms on time are serious problems in many places. Among many other reasons, lack of monitoring system is one of the critical factors contributing to these problems. When teachers are monitored and supervised for their attendance and performance by communities, they tend to be more aware of what they do. Feedback from parents and the community about their teaching performance can be a strong tool to motivate teachers, if schools are also collaborative.

#### **Community service and secondary education**

Secondary school or education means, a post-primary school belonging to people living in a particular community, state or nation. Secondary school is an educational institution that gives training to students at post primary level. Here, students are prepared for higher education and are also trained to acquire basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship. Secondary education in Nigerian context is a six-year training given to students after receiving primary school instruction. This training consists of three years junior secondary education and three years senior or post-basic secondary education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), defines junior secondary education as the type of education "which a child receives immediately after primary education" while senior secondary education is the education children receive after successful completion of nine years of basic education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate Examination (JAISCE). A major reason why many projects have not been effective in the past, in achieving the purported objectives is because local people were not involved. Satephen (2014) sought ways to help children succeed in school and later life; focuses on partnerships of schools, families, and communities that attempt to:

1. Improve school programmes and school climate;
2. Provide family services and support;
3. Increase parents' skills and leadership;
4. Connect families with others in the school and in the community; and
5. Help teachers with their work.

Satephen (2014) summarized various types of involvement to explain how schools, families, and communities can work productively together: (1) *Parenting* – to help all families to establish home environments that support children' learning at schools; (2) *Communicating* – to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication that enable parents to learn about school programmes and their children' progress in schools as well as teachers to learn

about how children do at home; (3) *Volunteering* – to recruit and organize parent help and support; (4) *Learning at home* – to provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with home-work and other curriculum-related activities, decision, and planning; (5) *Decision making* – to include families in school decisions, to have parent leaders and representatives in school meetings; and (6) *Collaborating 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.

Furthermore, parents and community members can contribute teaching materials that are locally sensitive and more familiar to children. Teachers and students will also benefit from the available facilities for easy delivery and acquisition of skills, concepts and other learning experiences. The community members will eventually benefit from the education received by its members in terms of rendering services and bringing new developments that could up-lift the living standard of people of that community (Stephen, 2015).

### Relevance of community service in secondary education

Community service is an important social development factor; it helps in building the society by improving the structure of the community and also impacts positively on the individuals who carried out the work. The volunteers and the community people benefit from it, though it seems the citizens of the community benefit more than the volunteers (Osaretin, 2016) <sup>[6]</sup>. Below are top five relevance of community service as outlined by (Osaretin 2016) <sup>[6]</sup>;

- a. **Impact on student's life:** community service is a proven way to improve a student's life. Studies show that students who volunteer are more likely to get a higher GPA in school and perform better in other areas of their life. It is also proven to increase a student's self-esteem and help them meet other people and develop connections with their community.
- b. **Helps in socialisation:** community service can serve as a platform for some introverted individual to connect and make friends while on site. It gives the opportunity for people especially students to connect and make friends with one another. Introverted students sometimes have problems meeting people and making friends, but volunteering might help shy and quite individuals with this issue as it offers lots of opportunities to meet and work with various people. Thus, it is a valuable experience for improving and practicing how to socialize in diverse surroundings.
- c. **Raises social awareness:** community service provides a perfect opportunity to become closer to the community, it broadens horizons through understanding the needs of the society and the population to help. Reading or hearing about issues is not quite the same as getting personally involved. It brings you closer to families and individuals in need and gives you first-hand experience and understanding of the conditions they are in.
- d. **Societal development:** it helps in the building and development of society especially when there is a problem to solve that requires financial aid, such problem can be solved by the volunteers, thereby helping the community to save or allocate funds to other needs

of the society which will in turn bring more development.

- e. **Learning new skills:** community service offers numerous options for personal and professional development, with one of the most valuable advantages being the potentials to learn new skills. Many organizations are always searching for volunteers to help with certain initiatives which are a fantastic way for them to free up time to focus on more vital work.

In Canada parents are increasingly asked to contribute to educational decisions that historically were beyond the purview of non-professionals. In Nigeria, studies by Osaretin (2016) <sup>[6]</sup>, showed that the level of community involvement in education is low. Osaretin found that community participation only visible are the building of schools and provision of some facilities only for such schools to be taken over by the government while PTA, old students and philanthropists participated through infrastructure development. Osaretin (2016) <sup>[6]</sup>, noted sadly that contributions from banks, firms, industries, trade associations and multi-national companies are almost non-existent. In comparison with the developed communities, it is clear that the level of community participation in the developed countries far exceeds that of Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria is lagging behind in the area of community participation in educational management.

### Including community services in nigeria education curriculum

Community services are common place with non-Governmental organizations and something corporate organizations would take up as a social responsibility. But there are suggestions that community services should be included in the academic curriculum of students, an opinion that is meant to foster problem solving mindset among undergraduate and secondary school students alike (Ogunbiyi, 2017) <sup>[5]</sup>. In a speech by the state minister for budget and national planning, Dr Clem Agba at the 5<sup>th</sup> graduation, 6<sup>th</sup> matriculation and 9<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ceremonies of the Edo Delta Development initiative said, there is need to include community development services in the education curriculum of tertiary institutions and secondary schools accordingly as it will promote charitable services and volunteer work. However, Dr Clems suggestion requires submissions about the sort of community services students should be aware of as little attempt were made clear. Community services are varying and largely influenced by the goals view. Equally, including community development service in the education curriculum is a great idea as it is believed some or all the following could be achieved:

The symbolic relationship of community services and students' involvement is very relatable and worth embracing. This is a call for consideration of this informal proposal to encourage field learning among secondary school students and undergraduate alike while also giving back voluntarily to the society (Chinedu 2023) <sup>[13]</sup>. As casual as the word education sounds, teaching an adult who never had the privilege to go through school at a young age is such a big thing they will ever be grateful for. Just like no great doctor is made in the classroom alone, no professional is crowned without active and relevant service over time. Students will benefit largely from such community services as they will mastermind their academic profession by act.

If all the teachers in secondary and tertiary institutions were to be sent back to street to teach, it will be very difficult project to achieve judging from the ratio of teachers to numbers of students plus the poor learning outcomes which may emerge thereafter. Still in the same instance, if students were to take up such project as a way of giving back to the society, it will wear a more practical outlook given the energy they will summon to showcase what they have been taught in school liberally.

### Limitations of community service in the development of schools

One of the main challenges is the lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of community involvement in education. Many parents and community members may not see their role in education beyond paying school fees. Education campaigns that promote the benefits of community service can help to raise awareness, and promote involvement.

Thus, poverty among the community members, illiteracy and ignorance, mistrust and misuse of funds, political interference in the development process, and poor performance of the pupils in their examinations and lack of transparency could distort the expected roles of the community. These challenges to large extent will affect the level of community participation in development processes of secondary schools. The level and or extent of community participation in the development of the school will reflect low performance. Community members may not be willing to participate in the development processes and or very few respond positively to participate (Findsen, 2010) <sup>[9]</sup>.

### Way Forward

The following measures should be taken to improve the community participation in the development of Secondary Education in Nigeria.

1. School heads should ensure good school community relationship as this could help mobilize community members to increase their participation in school management
2. Nigerian government should enforce laws, regulations and sanctions that will compel parents and communities to be actively involved in the management of education
3. There should be constant awareness for the local community on the need to increase community participation and involvement in school resource mobilization
4. Outreach sensitization campaigns through personal visits, print and online media handles could aid community members engagement and participation in developing secondary education
5. Principals transparency creates the sense of ownership of the school by community members who would in tun be likely to participate more in its development

### Conclusion

School as a social institution is established within the community and therefore needs to have a good relationship with immediate and far communities because of the many advantages they both render to each other. Symbiotic relationship always exists between the school and the community which lead to the success of the two. This paper discussed on how best to build relationships between the school and the community in the bid to increase functional

participatory roles towards the development of the schools and most importantly secondary education. The effective involvement of the community school activities would be seen to facilitate; provision of funds, infrastructure, discipline, effective school management and above all a sense of owner ship of the schools by community itself.

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