# School Community Relations as Panacea for Community Involvement in Secondary Schools Development in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper deals with school community relations as panacea for community involvement in secondary schools development in Nigeria. The school as a social organization is an integral and almost inseparable part of the community in which it is located. The full values of education can only be realized by a close co-operation between the school and community, yet the area has often received little attention in development of secondary schools in terms of school management, curriculum development, financial and disciplinary matters. In a nutshell, conclusion was drawn that there should be a growing interest in secondary school development by community involvement through a school - community symbiotic relationship. When the issue of community involvement in schools is placed in focus, the usual effort that cooperation rather than antagonism should characterize it. Hence, this paper emphasized the involvement of community in the development of education, which refers to switching from the usual practice of schools´ relations with parents in the running of schools to the full involvement of parents and the community in the development of the schools. It was therefore, recommended that schools and community should have cordial relationship in the development and use of secondary schools in the country by community involvement in terms of enlightenment programmes, social amenities, infrastructure facilities and finance.*
*Keywords: Community, Participation, Education, Development, Nigeria*

## INTRODUCTION

School community relations has education as one of its components which may be developed in form of campaign against illiteracy, in which case extra-moral classes can be conducted for dropouts. Functional literacy, mass literacy, job training, facilities and programme can be mounted for the people. School community relations thus enhances community involvement in school development not only by providing educational services to the citizens, but it does more than that, because it provides the function of informing, enlightening and educating the people in the school through newspapers, radio, television and Parents - Teachers Association as important means of disseminating information about the school to the community through various community agencies. The school does not exist in vacuum and its development is not only the responsibility of the school authority but also the community in which the school is situated. The community is a group of people living in the same locality and under same government which includes parents/guardians, residents, corporate organizations etc. who are responsible in educating the child, and using the best techniques for applying a new development of the child's capabilities or potentials. The task of child's upbringing should be tripartite responsibilities involving the government, the

schools authority and the parents who are community members (Taiwo, 1997). Involving the community in the development of education refers to switching from the usual practice of schools´ relations with parents in the running of schools to the full involvement of parents and the community by the school in the development of schools. One specific reason for the involvement of the parents and the community by the schools is the fact that what happens before and after the school day is as important as what happens during the school day. One of the wrong notion currently observed is the notion that the responsibility of running the schools solemnly lies in the hands of the education authorities and that of the school management put in place. While educational authorities and the school management take their responsibilities seriously, they must also recognize that they cannot do it alone as the success of their work need and depends on the support from parents and community members. As much as it is the responsibility of a pupil or student to excel in his or her academic pursuit, it is also important for parents and the community to guide this individual to excel academically since learning does not stop in the classroom but extends to the student's home and the immediate environment.

In most public schools in Nigeria, the involvement of parents in the activities of the school have mostly been warranted by the need to communicate a child's misbehavior or the need for certain levies to be paid. However, there are some vital issues that are left out mostly in this process, issues like communicating performance and how to boost or maintain such performance of the individual. This is just one of the many issues that require the full involvement of parents and the community in the development of schools. The sole responsibility of the community is to ensure that there is an effective administration and management in the school system in Nigeria. This is because administration amongst its many definitions is the means by which formal goals are achieved through cooperative human efforts and as the capacity to coordinate many and often conflicting social changes in a single organizations so adroitly that they shall operate as a unity and a process of working with and through others to efficiently accomplish organizational goals.

It takes a village to raise a child is a popular proverb with a clear message: the whole community has an essential role to play in the growth and development of its young people. In addition to the vital role that parents and family members play in a child's education, the broader community too has a responsibility to assure high-quality education for all students. In the past, parent involvement was characterized by volunteers, mostly mothers, assisting in the classroom, chaperoning students, and fund-raising. Today, the old model has been replaced with a much more inclusive approach: school-family-community partnerships now include mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caretakers, business leaders and community groups-all participating in goal-oriented activities, at all grade levels. Traditionally, parent involvement in education has included home-based activities (such as helping with homework, encouraging children to read, and promoting school attendance) and school-based activities (such as attending PTA meetings, parent-teacher conferences, concerts, and other school events; helping to raise money for various school-improvement projects; and volunteering at school during the day). Some parents readily volunteer their time for the schools.

Other parents are reluctant or unable to participate. Although getting parents involved in their children's schools is a great challenge for educators, research shows that educators can do a great deal to promote greater parent involvement. The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning (1994) indicates that parents who receive frequent and positive messages from teachers tend to become more involved in their children's education than other parents do.

*School Community Relation:* A careful review of the literature on the subset reveals that 'Community' is not static. There has been different apache to the definition of the concept. A community could be viewed in terms of all the people or group of people living within a specific geographical area such as a village, a town, a city, a neighbourhood or even a whole state. Community when conceived in this way is used in two senses, first, as social unit and second as geographical or ecological unit. This implies that such groups of people are closely knitted and organized. This togetherness among the people spells out a common feeling of community.

Again, Community can be perceived as a people or group of people who share common interest or functions such as farming group or agricultural group education, culture or religion. This group may not include everyone within the geographical area or boundary, but who have a particular interest or functions in common. In a similar vein, community is also referred to as a legal, political or administrative unit. As a legal unit, it is likened to a municipality, a school district or a nation with a clearly defined social structure. In this sense, a community will feature the formulation of laws to guide the conduct of members, and this is what is required to ensure its existence. The regulations or laws are enforced by an administrative unit. As a legal unit, it is likened to a municipality, a school district or a nation with a clearly defined social structure. The school by its nature and operational techniques is a social organization. Society sets up the school to preserve, maintain, promote, modify if need be, and the cherished culture and values to be passed from generation to generation. This is done by balancing culture conservation and revolution. To achieve this goal is to ensure very healthy school-community relations. The school manager should be outreaching regularly in contact with opinion leaders and relevant figures and agencies within and outside the community (Watson, 1998).

The community through a healthy working relationship with the school manager and the entire school community would get to know the school strength and weaknesses. Community support becomes easier in this situation. The PTA, Old boys and Old girls (Alumni) Associations, Community Progressive Unions, Youth Wings etc. could be harnessed by the school manager in this regard. Unfortunately most school managers are not able to maintain healthy school community relations because of selfishness, poor public image making and rustic behaviour as they seem to be out of tune with changes. The home therefore, provides the foundation on which the school builds, but some parents believe that as soon as the child starts to go school, they can hand over his training to the teachers. The formal way of maintaining contact with the community is through the Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A) and the principal in such relationship, is a key person in bringing about enthusiasm and zeal in community support for the school to meet up with the emerging

design of education (Nakpodia, 2011). Communities throughout the world have been known to be actively involved in the development of schools within their neighborhood. The community may want to have a say in almost every aspect of the managing and developing the schools in terms of administration, finance, planning, staff recruitment, disciplinary matters and public relations. It is no gain saying that the home influences the education of the child. As contented by Epstein (1995), a child from a home where the parents care for his education has a greater advantage over a child from a home where education is ignored.

***Establishing School Community Relations:*** The school is a part of the community and sometimes, whatever happens in the community affects the schools. It is therefore, crucial that the schools should establish and maintain good relationship with community in which the school is situated. It is likely that the schools may face many difficulties in its effort to establish good school community relationship. Such problems include:

(a)     Local politics
(b)     Hostile attitude on the part of the members of the school community
(c)     Lack of co-operation on the part of teachers

There are some guidelines however, which may help to establish good relations between the school and the community such as: accessibility of the teachers and supporting staff to parents and member of the community involvement in the school in terms of suitable social activities and extra-curricular programmes, making available to the community some of the school facilities, visiting important places in the community, and inviting parents to participate in some school activities. In fostering a sound programme of school community relations, the school must become intimately acquainted with the values, expectations, needs and aspirations of the local community. Through daily contact with citizens who insist on being heard, the principals and teachers immediately become the representative of the school system in their community. The principals and teachers in the school therefore, must conceptualize, understand and analyze the needs of the community served by the school to plan and implement appropriate curricular programmes.

The relationship of the school as an institution to the community that it serves is schematic in the sub-public differentiation in the community. Based on the social systems theory, it may be observed that the culture, ethics, and values of a community have systematic and continuing interaction with the expectation for the school as an institution. Instead of viewing the community as an entity, the one should recognize that the formal and informal sub-public cleavages within the community often have a powerful and direct influence on the nature and frequency of citizens' interaction with the school. Although the major emphasis of school community relationship lies on the character of the community, the desires and aspiration of citizens, information about the school and the role of other community agencies. In fact, the nature of the community largely determines what goes on the in school. Therefore, to attempt to divorce the school from the community is to engage in unrealistic thinking which might lead to policies that could reek within the school and the lives of children (Peretomode and Nakpodia, 1991).

In a nutshell, the community can be seen as a matrix of social organization such as the school. It is a relatively permanent group of persons occupying a common area, interacting in both institutional and non-institutional role and having the sense of identification with each other. It should be noted that education in the country is largely a public venture; it can be no better than what the citizens of a community will have it. School community relationships represent both a point of beginning and a continuing concern for any school. Here, a community is defined, in operational terms only as the attendance area for a single school or the school district for a school system. One recognizes that in some ways, the state or even the nation might be thought of as a community. Moreover, one is aware that the politics of education has emerged in recent years as an important area of study. School communities maybe characterized as urban or rural. Whether, a school community is conceived in terms of a single school or communities, the characteristics of that community provide some working clues to the school administrator and teachers.

***The Role of School - Community Relation for Effective School Development:***
One aspect of school-community relation is the development of a consensus on the role of the school in the community. The basic responsibility of the school is the development of the sills of the mind, but the overall mission has been enlarged. Schools are now asked to become as good and as capable in every way as native endowment permits, the schools are asked to help the children to acquire a skill or characteristic which a majority of the community deems worthwhile. The talent of each child is to be sought out and developed to the fullest. Each weakness is to be studied and as far as possible, corrected. This is truly a majestic ideal and an astonishingly new one. Schools of that kind have never been provided for more than a small fraction of mankind. The school is a major tool for creating a nation without rigid class barriers and it is primarily the schools which allow no man's failure to prevent the success of his son.

It should be noted that schools make less of a contribution to the economic well-being of people generally than do their families. While this conclusion is not gone unchallenged, it may be that school influence is only one of the combinations of the factors that make a difference in the earning capacity of individuals in the community. Moreover, schools do not exist for economic ends only. The social as well as educational purpose of the school is also emphasized that the schools help to give the present generation of citizens and workers the knowledge and the understanding and the attitudes that make them good, bad or indifferent citizens, workers and parents. Secondly, the programme of the school is the greatest single factor in the decision of the middle-income people to live in one section of the city or another.

This implies that there is first of all the stimulation of school workers and lay citizens in thinking about the role of the school in a particular attendance area, which of course, the clear recognition that state, regional and world forces also impinge upon every locality, secondly, this consideration must be continued until agreements can be reached which will serve as operating bases for the schools. As the lay citizens and the school work together to determine a particular school - community relations, attention is given to the roles played

by some community agencies and organizations. There organizations and agencies include the home, church, city or country, government, radio and television stations etc. in the total development of secondary schools in the country, through school community involvement, each of these agencies has a part to play (Nwadum, 2003). The major roles of the community in promoting effective school-community relations must include the following:

i. Helping to build schools and providing other facilities and infrastructure
ii. Awarding of scholarships to deserving pupils in the school
iii. Cooperating with the school and providing it with useful information
iv. Being accommodating and receptive to strangers, especially school personnel
v. Provision of arable land to the school for improving its agricultural practices and ventures
vi. Active participation in the school activities and programme
vii. Protection of the teachers and attending to their welfare needs
viii. Honouring exemplary teachers and head teachers in their midst
ix. Maintaining and sustaining active School-based Management Committees
x. Developing a feeling of ownership of the school

***The Need for Community Involvement in Education:*** One of the primary purposes of the school in any society is the intellectual development of the individual child to his greatest potential. Another major purpose is the acquisition of factual information and understanding the concepts and meanings in a number of subject areas including the languages, the arts, history, geography, science and technology. In order to be useful, the school has to ensure that the skills developed in these subjects can be used in practical situations. It has to be faithful to some model of what the society is or ought to be. This is necessitated by the fact that the school should always serve the interest of the society as a whole. To do this effectively, the school has to be aware of the cherished societal values and norms. It has to be aware also of the generally held idea of what a good or ideal society is and should be able to offer the child an opportunity to develop his potentials as a social being.

Another obligation of the school is to the local community in which it is located. This local community is the catchment area of the school or the area from which most of its students come. It may be a village or a group of two or more villages, a town, or a combination of the town and its surrounding villages. This local community, like the larger society in which it is located, has its own history, values, norms and traditions. It is the responsibility of the school to prepare the child for life in this community in particular and the society in general. For learning experiences to be meaningful to the child in especially the primary school and the secondary school, they have to be related to the child's immediate community and society. Projects and studies in the various subject areas have enhanced meanings if they are based on the needs and problems of the school's local community. These can only be possible if the barriers between the school and its community are broken to make way for a constant flow of information and ideas between the two. Developing effective two-way communication between the school and the community will be to the mutual advantage of the two parties. It implies some specific roles for the school

staff and community members. This interaction can take various forms and there are benefits that can accrue to the child and school as well as the expected roles of the school staff and the community members in enhancing the quality of education. Parents and other citizens have a common interest in the school. In the Nigerian situation, the local community of a school is often a rural or urban town. To focus attention on the local community of the school is not in any way to suggest that we should not take into consideration the interests of the larger community. Nor does it mean that the school should be concerned with only the immediate needs of its local community. While the school should be concerned with the long-term needs of its local community, care should be taken to ensure that they are in tune with the developmental needs of the society as a whole.

The forging of effective links between the school and its local community is very importance in all educational systems. This should be through the involvement of parents in the life of the school and through the involvement of teachers with the families of their pupils. Many communities in Nigeria have been playing very useful roles in their local schools. The involvement of parents in school matters in most of the communities is usually through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). With a few exceptions, the traditional role of the PTA has been the making of financial contributions to schools. The involvement of the community in the life of their schools has recently gone beyond mere financial contributions by PTA. Educational development in some parts of the country has witnessed increased involvement of the whole community. Some communities in Nigeria established secondary schools through their own initiatives in the past. Some of them are Illutitun town in Ondo State, Modakeke community in Oyo State, Efon-Alaye town in Ondo State to mention a few.

The Parent-Teacher Association (P.T.A) helps in the general development of the school along with other community members, by providing the school classrooms, dormitory blocks, staff quarters, science laboratories and equipment, electric plant generators, school vans, libraries, books and classroom equipment (Oluchukwu, 1998). They get the funds for these by launching Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) funds and by contributing individually, directly or indirectly, towards the funds. The Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) also helps the authority to maintain discipline by the children at home on how to behave at school. However, Udom (1992) further noted that there is still conflict between the school and the community because school authorities do not involve the community in decision making especially in disbursing Parent-Teachers Association funds.

In the same vein, Nakpodia (2012) pointed out that secondary schools and communities should enjoy a close relationship so that the schools can be well developed. Thus, numerous programmes have been advocated to support community involvement in developing the school. Such programmes may include school decentralization, federally mandated parent advisory councils, the Parent - Teachers Association with the realization that the school - community relations are becoming important in developing the school and for the success of the school authority (Bassey and Archibong, 2003). It is with this noting that the caring centres run by religious organizations can sometimes be more easily provided

their students with national opportunities of sharing informally on local community life, than the secular centers in consonance with community organization which is accepted as a work. Over profession also begins to consider community organization and planning as specialist on a par with direct service methods.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there has been a growing interest in community involvement in secondary school development in the country. Reasons for this are financial constraints, the re-organization of schools along comprehensive lines, unawareness of the apparent isolation of some schools from their neighborhood and a growing concern is fast becoming a feature of the school system in the country. If the community must be involved in the development of secondary schools, it is equally important that the school should identify with the community through school - community relations. This is because community involvement in the running of public secondary schools is more in the urban and sub-urban than in rural schools. In all, no school principal involves the community in the expenditure and subvention. It is also important to state that the involvement of the state must be minimal to ensure the smooth running of activities that reflect community involvement in the schools. Often times arguments concerning the involvement of government in initiatives that is targeted at co-opting the community have ended with the conclusion that government's involvement should be minimal if such initiative should work. Of course, government should maintain its regulative role through relevant educational authorities in a bid to ensure that such programmes yield the needed dividends. Policies that support the participation of the community in the development of education should be passed since in the end, such initiative will help government to focus less time on worrying over what solution is needed to overcome the challenges of running the schools and ensuring reasonable performance of students in public schools. As a result, the following recommendations are made:

i.    An enlightenment exercise should be carried out in rural communities in educating them on how to get involved in the development of schools.

ii.   Community involvement should not only be limited to only the provision of basic amenities needed by schools but also should include knowing or seeing that the subvention for the school is well utilized.

iii.  The Parents Teachers Association should be encouraged in rural schools to improve the infrastructure facilities in the rural areas.

iv.   The State Ministry of Education should carry out an enlightenment programme on both the radio and television and to send educators to interior villages to encourage members to show interest in their children and wards education.

v.    School authorities should be co-signatory to the accounts of Parent - Teachers Association and should be fully involved in any project execution in their schools.

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