

Community Participation in Quality Assurance (CPQA): A Catalyst in Enhancing Quality Basic Education Service Delivery in Nigeria

SOFOLUWE, Abayomi Olumade Ph.D

Department of Educational Administration, University of Lagos, Lagos. Nigeria

AKINSOLU, Abiodun Olatoun Ph.D

National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, Ondo Nigeria

Abstract

Nigeria, like most developing countries is having challenges in reaching the Millennium Development Goals, Education for All and national education goals within the globally agreed timeframe of 2015. While the widespread progress in enrolment figure is laudable due to social demand for it, there are persistent challenges of exclusion, inequalities, low completion rates and low learning outcomes. It is within this context that this paper examines Community Participation in Quality Assurance as a catalyst in enhancing quality and equity towards the attainment of Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria Education Sector. A descriptive survey study conducted through the use of a developed instrument on expected role of community members in assuring qualitative education service delivery in the basic education sector tagged "Community Participation in Quality assurance Instrument". Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the opinion of 150 school managers (both principals and head-teachers) and 150 classroom teachers totalling 300 respondents. The instrument was validated and reliability test was carried out using test- re-test and found reliable at 0.85 reliability coefficient. Findings revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of all the respondents towards community participation in Quality assurance at the basic education level. The implications of the study as a catalyst in fast tracking access, participation and enhancing quality and equity towards attainment of EFA and MDGs were also stressed,

Keywords: Community, Participation, Quality Assurance

Introduction

'Empowering local authorities must go hand in hand with local government empowering citizens and neighbourhoods. This means more opportunities for individuals to have influence and choice over what, where, when and by whom a service is provided regarding all issues that revolves around them' Hargreaves, 2003

School based governance at the community level is a focus on improving quality through localization of education delivery. It refers to the global trends of enhancing quality of instruction, strengthen and decentralize decision making, and mobilizing local resources for sustaining improvements (Caldwell, 2005). The problems of poor quality and poor quantity of education service delivery in centralized systems have led to experiments with decentralization and local governance in developed and developing countries alike. Traditional centralized systems of the latter half of the twentieth century have led to dissatisfactory outcomes. In such a set up, policies and their impact became distanced by the time they reached the people who were to implement them, and also the intended beneficiaries. Information and skills remained confined to a limited number of people. It has globally been realized that the remedy lies in decentralization reform, which provided possibilities for grass root people to participate in school governance (Goldsmith, & Newton, 1998).

Nigeria government in its effort in repositioning the education sector as a result of the warning signs of a poor education delivery introduce the School Based Management Committee (SBMC) initiative in ensuring effective participation of community members in governance of schools in Nigeria. It entails the decentralizations of aspects of decision making to the school level and it involves the management of human, financial and other resources, depending on governmental preference. It is therefore within the purview of this paper to explore the possibility of these community members in assuring qualitative education service delivery at the basic education level.

Concepts Clarifications

Community Defined

The term community participation is used widely that its meaning is often unclear. The term community is commonly used to refer to people grouped on the basis of geography and or common interest, identity or interactions. It can thus be defined as a group of people who share an interest, a neighbourhood or a

common set of circumstances. They may, or may not, acknowledge membership of a particular community. According to Adediran, (2008) community is a multi dimensional concept involving a complexity of horizontal and vertical relationship between people and organisation. It is the basic unit of a society. A group of people with a connection established through geographical proximity, special interest, or shared experience, with the power to influence and be influenced by its members. He stressed further that community should be mobilize in education by organizing parents, and other community members around the school, helping them to agree to do an activity together and to complete it satisfactorily for the benefit of the school. This will result in improving the quality of education in school.

Quality assurance

Quality Assurance is related to quality control but it functions in a rather pro- active manner. It goes beyond the comparison of output with defined standards to include an approach which seeks to prevent defects arising within the school setting. Quality Assurance extends the focus from outcomes or outputs to the processes which produce them. It is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximising the effectiveness and efficiency. (Ehindero, 2004).He stressed further that the complementary role of the community should be given recognition.

Community Participation in Quality Assurance

It is a structure whereby all key stakeholders of the community participate in the management of the school to enhance effective teaching and learning education delivery. It entails the decentralization of aspects of decision making at the school level and involves the management of human, financial and other resources, depending on governmental Preferences for effective teaching and learning.

- Community participation involves people in a community projects to solve their own problems.
- Participation process through which people with an interest influence and share control over developments initiatives and the resources that affect them.
- In a participation community, power and responsibility are decentralized.

It is therefore within the purview of this study to ascertain the involvement of community members in school level governance in assuring qualitative education service delivery in the basic education level and it is in tandem with the current holistic approach to quality assurance in the Nigeria education sector known as whole school evaluation.

Background

The State of Education Report (2009) gives a general overview of the education situation in Nigeria. It was reported that 8 million school aged population children were out of school due to physical, economic and psychological factors, poor teacher quality, and inadequate participation of stakeholders, decaying infrastructure, inadequate instructional materials and under-funding among numerous others. The report concludes that in order to see a big improvement in education in Nigeria in the coming years, it is crucial for communities to be engaged and empowered with relevant question any variations between the actual and the expected deliverables.

The existing organization and management of schools have elicited severe criticism from most educationalists and other stakeholders. The indices show that monitoring and evaluation need to be expanded for effective outcome. This must necessary involve other key players within the micro school system. The present situation in the schools is such that the head teacher and his assistants in most cases run the school in respect of monitoring and evaluation while other teachers, community leaders and professionals are left out. This is not working as thought. Inspections and supervision are hardly done, thereby leaving few hands to manage it. Involving the community is to make it more proactive and dynamic. Not only this, communities become more committed to their schools, if they have greater say in school planning, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, community involvements usually ensure more equitable utilization of school resources and bring about increased transparency in financial transactions; thereby encouraging potential donors thereby improve the performance of school and ensure quality in education delivery.

Review of Related literature

The ultimate measure of any education system in any given community is not how many children are in school, but what and how well they learn. There is growing evidence that the world is moving more quickly to get children into school than to improve the quality of the education offered. Learning achievement deficits are evident at many levels. International assessment exercises point consistently towards severe global disparities. The 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) found that average students in several developing countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco, performed below the poorest-

performing students in countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea (GMR, 2009). This implies a mismatch between educational investment and educational outcomes hence the need for urgent remediation.

Global Monitoring Report (GMR) by UNESCO, (2009) reported that governments of every nation want to see the transformation of schools and this can be achieved when significant, systematic, and sustained change has occurred, resulting in improved outcomes for all students in all settings, thus making a contribution to the social and economic well-being of a nation. Community based participation in management of school is invariably proposed as one strategy to achieve the transformation of schools. Also at the 3rd Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Education Ministerial Meeting in Santiago, Chile in April 2004, with the theme titled “quality in education”, particular attention was given to decentralization. Ministers endorsed school-based management through collaboration with community members as a strategy in educational reform but also endorsed aspects of centralization, such as frameworks for accountability. They acknowledged that arrangements in different economies should vary, reflecting the uniqueness of each setting.

Recent studies (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; Fullan & Watson, 2000; Ouchi & Segal, 2003; Volansky & Friedman, 2003) have highlighted the importance of local decision-making being pre-eminently concerned with learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching, especially in building the capacity of staff to design and deliver a curriculum and pedagogy that meets the needs of students, taking account of priorities in the local setting, including a capacity to identify needs and monitor outcomes. Also evident is the importance of building the capacity of the community to support the efforts of schools. According to them, the introduction of school-based management may have no impact on learning unless these measures, broadly described as capacity building and capacity utilisation, have been successful.

GMR, (2010) reported that the report on international studies of student achievement such as TIMSS and TIMSS-R and PISA have confirmed the importance of a balance of centralization and decentralization, with a relatively high level of school-based management being one element of decentralization, including local decision-making on matters concerned with personnel, professionalism, monitoring of outcomes, and the building of community support. These reflect the importance of intellectual capital and social capital in building a system of self-managing schools.

Ross and Levacic, (1999) likewise opine that in a decentralised governance of schools, school leaders capacity for plan-driven budgeting that ensures high priority learning needs should be developed to determine an allocation mechanism that delivers resources to schools in a manner that reflects the unique mix of needs. This will guide the effective collaboration between the school and the community. This confirms Hargreaves, (2003) who asserted that knowledge-based networks are not the alternative to existing forms of public provision: they are an essential complement. Rather than being represented by an organizational structure or single policy lever, transformation becomes an “emergent property” of the whole system as it learns to generate, incorporate and adapt to the best of the specific new ideas and practices that get thrown up around it.

Goldsmith, and Newton, (1988) assert that decentralising requires a balance of responsibility between the centre and the periphery, between politicians and professionals. There must be a clear division of accountability. With the new and rapidly changing economy and production, as well as globalisation, and the rather dramatic changes in the volume and structure of knowledge, we have to realise that it is becoming more and more difficult to plan the content of education centrally. More decentralisation means that we have to perform the governing of content in new ways therefore decentralisation must be linked to clear goals; if not it becomes an empty rhetoric.

Governance is a central concern. The aim of good governance in education, as in other areas, is to strengthen accountability and give people a voice in decisions that affect their lives so as to enable the delivery of good-quality services. Good governance is also about social justice and fairness. Education for all, as the term itself makes clear, is about all citizens enjoying an equal right to quality education. Translating good governance principles into practice involves reforms in institutional arrangements that link children and parents as well as the community to schools for effective partnership with local education bodies and national ministries (Rose and Adelabu, 2007).

All-Party Parliamentary Groups meeting on Global Education for All and in Nigeria (2010) with the theme ‘Engaging the Community in Delivering Education for All: The Case of Nigeria’. It was reported that Nigeria is the country with the largest number of out of school children in the world – over 8 million at the last count – and faces significant problems in the education sector. The meeting deliberated on how the UK will support education in Nigeria at present, particularly through ensuring that local communities are engaged with schools in

bringing about positive changes.

Makoju, (2008) commented that to re-invent the epileptic condition of the basic education sector, there is need to put in place Community Accountability and Transparency Initiative (CATI). CATI is an initiative set up to publish education budgets and to ensure that communities could use them to put pressure on politicians, leaders and managers of education sector to ensure proper allocation, disbursement and utilisation of funds for their respective communities.

Abbot, (1996), Regalsky, and Laurie, (2007), reported that community participation can be both an outcome of empowerment and an effective empowerment strategy. To them, the actual process of participation can inherently empower individuals and communities to understand their own situations and to gain increased control over the factors affecting their lives. This can in turn, enhance people's sense of well being and quality of live.

Guaranteeing quality, which seems so apparent in a centralised administration system that does not question its intelligence and capabilities, becomes more difficult when spheres of jurisdiction are transferred. Do the local authorities serve the interests of the Government and assure that national goals are achieved? Do school management departments know what they need to do and do they fulfil the objectives approved for the educational system? Do teachers know what they should teach and do they ensure that pupils are provided with the knowledge and capabilities which schools are responsible for providing? Are the fundamental principles of the country's laws, such as the right to citizenship and non-discrimination, observed and put into practice in the day-to-day life of schools? According to them these are the issues which must be addressed by a Government heading towards de-centralisation and which believes that quality can be achieved by giving greater autonomy to the different levels of administration, through participation by the different partners and interested parties, and by rendering account of the manner in which this autonomy is managed and administrated to achieve the school's educational objectives (Reimers, F. and Cárdenas, S. 2007).

Theoretical Framework using Public- Private Partnership

There exists a spectrum of possibilities for alliances between the public and private sectors within the context of education. The term public - private partnership has many different definitions, especially across different sectors. In a strict definition, a public - private partnership is a model of development cooperation in which actors from the private sector (private corporations, corporate foundations, groups or associations of business moguls, community members) and the public sector (Ministry of Education, local authorities and schools) pool together complementary expertise and resources to achieve development goals in the education sector.

Since the 1980s policy makers have increasingly recognized that the traditional methods of education finance and management were unable to deliver quality basic education to all children and that radical changes were needed. Two responses to this "excess demand" and the need of enhanced quality of provision have been an increase in emphasis on participation in education from the private sector, and a push for the establishment of public private partnerships.

Public private partnership can complement and enhance the role of the government in the provision, quality control and quality assurance of education service delivery. The task that each player can provide includes financial provision, pedagogical development, human resources development, service delivery, infrastructure, facilities management, monitoring and evaluation among others. For these reasons, it is critical to investigate which are the appropriate roles of each stakeholder in the provision of education in the context of specific roles and responsibilities which thus serves as springboard for the take off of this study.

Research Design

The research design for this study was descriptive survey method which aimed at investigating the community participation in quality assurance in schools as perceived by four primary stakeholders in education- principals, teachers, students and parents.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide this study:

- What are the key areas of community participation in quality assurance?
- What are the expected outcomes of community participation in quality Assurance?

Research Hypotheses

- There will be no significant difference between principals and teachers perception in respect of Community Participation in Quality Assurance at the Basic Education Level

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target population for this study consisted of all principals and teachers at the Basic Education level in the selected Local Government Areas of Oyo State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select both male and female respondents to ensure fair representation from each group. Out of 850 respondents randomly sampled, in the existing 33LGAs of the state, sampled proportion to size was used to sample 300 respondents given a sample percentage of 35%.

Research Instruments

For this study, the instrument used was a questionnaire tagged ‘Community participation in Quality Assurance at the Basic Education Level in Nigeria (CPQABELQ). This questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A covered items on Key areas of participation by Community members in quality Assurance while section B is on possible outcomes of Community participation in quality assurance.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Some colleagues and specialists in test construction validated the questionnaire in terms of content and face validity and for the reliability; it was established through a test-retested method with two weeks interval using 25 respondents, who are not part of the sampled population. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.85 and was found to be reliable.

Methods of data Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, means, percentages and T.test statistic.

Analysis and Discussion

Research Question 1

- What are the key areas of community participation in quality assurance?
 Table 1 presents findings on key areas of community participation in quality assurance as perceived by School managers and teachers at the Basic Education level.

	Items on Questionnaire	Agree		Disagree	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Mobilize Community in ensuring that all school age children in the community enrolls, attend and complete schooling	220	73	80	27
2	Assist in textbook /teaching/instructional material provisions	195	65	105	35
3	Identify and support needs of school staff	201	67	99	33
4	Assist in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the school's development plan and annual budget.	80	27	220	73
5	Strengthening the head teacher's hands in managing the school	198	66	102	34
6	Strengthening the teacher's hands in teaching and learning the school	202	67	98	33
7	Assist in transmitting skills, knowledge, value and traditions of the community to learners	230	77	70	23
8	Monitor and maintain school's physical facilities for safe environment for children.	191	64	109	36
9	Helps in targeting school resources more effectively and adequately	225	75	75	25
10	Offers new opportunities for creative thinking and innovative planning and development at the school level	199	66	101	34
11	Assist in improvement of staff commitment to the job	230	77	70	23
12	Helps in improvement on the degree of educational wastage (drop outs and failures at the end of school programmes)	235	78	65	22
13	Assist in determining amount of class and home work assignments for students	240	80	60	20
14	Ensure the fitness of school learning to the needs and conditions in the society	80	27	220	73

Table 2 shows the perception of principals and teachers in Oyo State on community participation in quality assurance at the basic education level. From the table, response to the first question shows that 220 or 80% of the respondents sampled agree that Community Participation in school governance will assist greatly in mobilizing the community in ensuring that all school age children enrolls, attend and complete schooling

Their response to item 2 from the table shows that 65% of the respondents sampled agreed that community members can assist schools in the provision of textbook, teaching, and instructional materials for qualitative education service delivery at the basic level. In addition on the statement that they assist in identifying and providing necessary support in respect to the needs of school staff, 67% of the respondents sampled agreed with this statement. 73% of the sampled respondents disagreed with the statement that community members can assist in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the school's development plan and annual budget. 66% of the respondents agreed that with the participation of community members; it will strengthen school managers' hand in managing the school. Likewise to the above, 67% of the respondents perceived that teachers hand in teaching and learning becomes strengthen as well.

77% of the respondents sampled perceived that the community participation will assist in transmitting skills, knowledge, value and traditions of the community to learners. Also 64% of them perceived that they can assist in monitoring and maintenance of school's physical facilities for safe environment for children. While 75 % agreed that they can help the school in targeting school resources more effectively and adequately.66% agree that they can offer the school with new opportunities for creative thinking and innovative planning and development.

Response to item 11 from the table shows that 77% of the respondents sampled agreed that community members can assist in the improvement of staff commitment to the job at the schools level. In addition on the statement that they assist in the improvement on the degree of educational wastage (drop outs and failures at the end of school programmes), 78% of the respondents sampled agreed with this statement. 80% of the respondents sampled perceived that the community participation will assist in Assist in determining amount of class and home work assignments for students. While 73 % disagreed that they can help the school in ensuring the fitness of school learning to the needs and conditions in the society.

All the findings support Caldwell,(2002), Hargreaves,(2003), Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; Fullan & Watson, 2000; Ouchi & Segal, 2003; Volansky & Friedman, 2003 whose study revealed that for the set goals and objectives in schools to be achieved, there is need for effective collaboration with local community members. The finding likewise corroborates with Abbot, (1996), Regalsky, and Laurie,(2007), who opine that community participation gives room to high level responsiveness to community school needs which eventually increases uptake. According to them, involving community in school decision making lead to better decision being made, which are more appropriate and more sustainable because they are owned by the people themselves. As for findings on item 4 and 14, it confirms Goldsmith, and Newton, (1988) that decentralising requires a balance of responsibility between the centre and the periphery, between politicians and professionals. According to them, there must be a clear division of accountability. With the new and rapidly changing economy and production, as well as globalisation, and the rather dramatic changes in the volume and structure of knowledge, we have to realise that it is becoming more and more difficult to plan the content of education centrally. More decentralisation means that we have to perform the governing of content in new ways therefore decentralisation must be linked to clear goals; if not it becomes an be empty rhetoric.

Research Question 2

- What are the expected outcomes of community participation in quality Assurance?

Table 2 presents findings on the expected outcomes of community participation in quality assurance as perceived by school managers and teachers at the Basic Education in Nigeria

Items on Section B of the Questionnaire	Agree		Disagree	
	frequency	%	Frequency	%
Involving the community will make the school to be more proactive and dynamic.	230	77	70	23
Communities become more committed to their schools if they have a greater say in school planning, monitoring and evaluation.	235	78	65	22
Ensure more equitable utilization of schools' resources and increase the transparency in financial transactions thereby encouraging potential donors	240	80	60	20
Sustainable development is enhanced	211	70	89	30
It promotes better decisions making process at the school level	180	60	120	40
Increases democracy	240	80	60	20

Still on Table 2, all items were on the expected outcomes of community participation in quality assurance at the basic education level. 77% of the sampled respondents perceived that involving the community will make the school to be more proactive and dynamic. This finding support UNECO, (2009) that significant transformation in schools can be achieved through the involvement of community in school governance which thus has a multiplier effect on students' outcomes in all educational settings, thus making a contribution to the social and economic well-being of a nation.

On the statement that communities become more committed to their schools if they have a greater say in school planning, monitoring and evaluation; 77% of the sampled respondents agreed with this statement while item on equitable utilization of schools' resources and increase the transparency in financial transactions attracted 80% as agreed response while 70% agreed that with the participation of community in school governance; sustainable development becomes essential. 60% of the respondents agreed that the partnership will promote better decisions making process at the school level while 80% agreed that democracy increases in respect to school governance. All these findings support Abbot, (1996), Regalsky, and Laurie, (2007), that community participation gives room to high level responsiveness to community school needs which eventually increases high productivity. According to them, involving community in school decision making lead to better decision being made, which are more appropriate and more sustainable because they are owned by the people themselves.

Research Question 3

Is there any significant difference between principals and teachers' perception on Community participation in Quality Assurance at the Basic Education level in Nigeria?

Table 3: Difference between principals and teachers' perception on community participation in Quality Assurance in Basic Education in Nigeria

Group	N	X	SD	Df	t.cal.	t. critical	Probability level	Remark
Principal	150	36.42	7.68	298	0.015	1.86	0.05	Ns
Teachers	150	40.48	4.89					

NS = Not Significant.

Table 3 reveals the perception of principals and teachers with respect to community participation in Quality assurance in Basic Education in Nigeria. The means representing principals and teachers perception are 36.42 and 41.48 respectively. However, the t. calculated value of 0.015 is lower than the critical value of t. This is 1.86. The finding revealed that there is no significant difference in principals and teachers' perception on community participation in Quality assurance in Basic Education in Nigeria.

Implications in Fast Tracking Access, Participation and enhancing Quality in Basic Education Service Delivery

No doubt from the study, effective good governance with respect to community participation can affect basic education access and quality since having basic education universal law does not guarantee that all children will be enrolled in school nor does it ensure that those in who are enrolled receive quality education. The coming on board of the community create more awareness on some unhealthy community /cultural interferences in educational programmes and thus assist the community to take a redress on some acts such as harmful child

labor practices that hinder access and participation of all school aged children.

On equity issue, the study implies that with community involvement in school governance, there is going to be more positive response of community members towards girls' enrolment and retention in basic education. For quality issues in the basic education sector, parents and community groups thus serves as education resource providers, advocates for education reform, monitors of teachers and school performance and school managers. Community participation in school governance gives room for proper accountability and transparency of public service delivery such as basic education. Since decentralisation create intermediate levels of power that are still accountable to centralised authority; in such cases, the periphery now reinforce the centre and this actually gives freedom to local /district authorities to develop their own approaches in achieving set standards in schools.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a country need to be more innovative with regard to the management of education at all levels, based on this, the paper concludes that community participation in school will serve as remediation for some shortcomings on the part of government and other controlling bodies in respect to school management in order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency of basic education service delivery in Nigeria.

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