

Community-School Collaborations and Administrative Efficiency of Headteachers in Public Primary Schools in Post-Covid Abia State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The inability of school administrators to leverage collaborative relationships with the school community could prevent the school system from viable opportunities. Collaboration, therefore, becomes one of the resources that school administrators should work with in the post-covid era. This forms the premise on which this study examined the relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of Headteachers in public primary schools in post-covid Abia State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Three research questions were raised and one hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The population for the study covered all teachers in public primary schools in Abia State. A multi stage sampling approach was used to select 499 participants for the study. A self-developed questionnaire titled “Community-School Collaborations and Administrative Efficiency of Headteachers Questionnaire” (CSCAEHQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. Research questions were answered with descriptive statistics while hypothesis was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings from the study showed a significant relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of Headteachers. Based on the findings, the study concludes that community-school collaboration is a viable resource for monitoring the activities of staff; as well as an avenue for harnessing resources for the school. The study recommends amongst others that policy makers should make School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) more functional in the state, as this will be helpful for capacity building in the public primary school system.

Keywords: Collaborations, community, school, administrative, efficiency.

Introduction

The effectiveness and efficiency of public primary school administration could depend to a large extent on the collaborative efforts that Headteachers are able to muster with the school community. The recognition of this fact would have prompted the action of the government in seeking ways of empowering Headteachers to the advantage of schools. The result was the decentralization of authority to the school level through the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC). The essence of empowering Headteachers and expanding their scope of operation is to promote a culture of accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency in the management of public investment in education which is a vital element in school administration. The government is the major financier of public education at all levels. But it is quite obvious that resources are scarce; thus the inability of the government to provide free education to all that needs it both in quantity and quality. In order to keep up with the provision of public education and ensure effectiveness and efficiency in administration, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) made provision for stakeholder involvement as a support system to both the government and school administrators. Similarly, with the apparent failure of the persistent vertical policy on educational management, the participation of the community in the planning and management of education will be a vital success factor for the school leader in general school administration (Chowdhury et al., as cited in Alam, 2015). Furthermore, community involvement in education goes beyond providing solutions to issues of access, to becoming a possible means of introducing innovations in the school system through viable relationships with schools. This could also help to make up for the inadequacies of the government in the provision and management of public education, by bridging the values gap between government programmes for schools and the actual needs of schools; and could equally facilitate opportunities for capacity building and reaching out to children most susceptible to social exclusion. This way, schools can leverage community relationship to access resources, which they cannot access without them. This, according to Nahapiet and Ghoshal; Leana and Van Buren; Adler and Kwon (as cited in Andrews, 2007) is consistent with the current emphasis on collaborations with stakeholders as a practical option for effective and efficient organisational management.

This need for collaborative relationships between the school and the community was further heightened by the outbreak of the covid-19 virus which resulted in the total lockdown of the economy; and saw to the shutting down of schools for more than six months. The continuity of learning while pupils were at home would somewhat depend on collaborative efforts of

schools and community members, given that public education is the sole responsibility of the government. While different state governments directed that public schools resort to learning using media stations such as radio and televisions, there was no visible effort from the government that was directed at ensuring that this mode of learning was accessible to all that needs it. Nigeria has a very peculiar situation in terms of access to basic needs – food, shelter, water, light, good roads, etc. In a country where majority of the citizens are living below the poverty level, it is obvious that most of the families whose children were meant to join the online learning via media mode, do not have access to media facilities. While the government could not offer any practical help due to the alleged pressure on the economy, it was also not easy for school administrators to access support in terms of sponsorships and donations geared towards reaching out to their pupils during the pandemic, for some sort of learning. This situation made remote school administration very cumbersome for school leaders. An existing functional relationship between the school and the community would have made a significant difference in the situation; and so becomes a necessity for effective and efficient administration in the post-covid era.

Community-school collaborations suggest relational ties between the school and the community. Here, the community extends beyond physical proximity to like-minded individuals, groups, and organisations that share in the visions of the schools, such as SBMC; Parents Teachers Associations (PTA); International Development Agencies (IDAs) like the World Bank; United Nations International Children’s Educational Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); U.K Department For International Development (DFID); United States Agency for International Development (USAID); Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); and others; religious bodies-churches and mosques; Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector (FRN, 2013).

Every school is located within a community of people, indicating that no school can exist in isolation but thrives in a mutual relationship with both the immediate and extended community. The essence of community-school relationship is to ensure more productive outcomes for the school system through such ways as, complementing the efforts of the government in the provision of resources, accountability of schools to the community, and community involvement in schools’ decision-making. The relationship with communities can help Headteachers to manage existing resources and also leverage community resources to promote school performance. Moreover, the collaborative relationship between schools and

communities could result in increased cost-effectiveness across board. According to Dangara (2016), it is the school administrator's responsibility to attract the mobile community resources to the school or organise educational visits to the immobile community resources for balanced learning. It does not seem arguable then, that headteachers are more efficient and effective in schools that enjoy the support of individuals and institutions in their communities.

Nevertheless, the decline in communal lifestyle and economic pressure, have made several schools inaccessible to supportive relationships with different members of the community; thus, posing a challenge to the efficient administration of schools. However, if schools acquire more resources as a result of their relationship with the community, headteachers stand a better chance of operating more effectively and efficiently. The appropriate management of public primary schools, therefore, is a joint responsibility of schools and communities. Thus, community-school collaborations appear to be a viable option for the effective and efficient administration of schools. Related studies focused attention on the level of involvement of the community in schools, but this study goes further to examine the relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of headteachers in public primary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The sudden emergence of covid-19, with the attendant lockdown and issues associated with it has left enough lessons for any country or system that wants to learn. One of such lessons borders on collaborations between the school and stakeholders for effective and efficient administration. According to Nakpodia (2013), a deliberate cooperation between the school and the community will be a basis on which the full values of education can be realized. This is premised on the complementary role of the community in the provision and management of education. Unfortunately, public primary schools in Abia State appear not to be making significant progress within this partnership even with the establishment of SBMC. This situation has contributed in no small measure to the irregularities within the system and seeming despondency of headteachers, and has left the schools in a very deplorable and dilapidated form. The situation could also account for the mass exodus of pupils to private schools that appear to have better facilities and structures, and are better organized. Although the State Government claims to be making efforts to ensure that a meaningful collaboration exists between the community and schools, not much success has been recorded. It is quite glaring that if serious actions are not taken, the public primary school system in Abia State

will be a complete wreck in the nearest future. It is on this premise, therefore, that this study examined the relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of headteachers in public primary schools in Abia State, Nigeria, for the purposes of improved administration in the post-covid era.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of headteachers in public primary schools in Abia State. Specifically the study sought to:

1. determine the administrative efficiency of headteachers in public primary schools in Abia State;
2. determine the functionality of community-school collaborations in public primary schools in Abia State;
3. investigate the relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of Headteachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How efficient are headteachers in the administration of public primary schools in Abia State?
2. How functional is community-school collaborations in public primary schools in Abia State?

Research Hypotheses

The resulting hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of Headteachers.

Literature Overview

According to UNESCO (2015), in order to encourage more community relationships and involvement in the management of the public school system, the Dakar Framework for Action in the year 2000, directed participating countries to adopt a more decentralised educational management system in order to promote community participation and accountability. To this end, the National Council on Education (NCE) in the year 2005 approved the establishment of School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) in the Nigerian school system to strengthen school management at the micro-level. To this effect,

the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria [ESSPIN] (2009) outlined the benefits of SBMC as follows: Encouragement of community participation and demand for quality education; making the financing and provision of educational services better by decentralising school management; improving decision-making on education delivery at the local level; serving as a link between service users and providers; and also serving as a mechanism for channeling community voice including that of commonly marginalised groups such as women and children, and for improving accountability.

Drake (as cited in Kladifko, 2013) defined a school's community as a "group of people conscious of a collective identity through common physical, cognitive and affective educational relationships" (p.56). Kladifko then submits that a school's community is made up of all stakeholders which include businesses and agencies located within the boundaries of the school. Discussing the components of the school community, Duru-Uremadu (2017) in line with the National Policy on Education, outlined groups such as the host community of the school, Parents/Teachers Association (PTA) which is a non-political association of teachers and parents or guardians who have children or wards in a specific school. Others are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), business organisations and international organisations.

In a scholarly effort to highlight the importance of school-community relations, Nakpodia (2013) emphasised the relevance of school-community relations as a panacea to community involvement in the development of secondary schools in Nigeria. According to Nakpodia (2013) schools do not exist in a vacuum but are sited in a community of people, corporate organisations and agencies, which informs the conclusion that the development of the school is not restricted to the school authority but rather extends to the community both within and outside. Nakpodia (2013) astutely observed that the school as a social organisation is an integral part of the community in which it is located; therefore deliberate cooperation between the school and the community will be a basis on which the full values of education can be realised. Nakpodia (2013) further argued that the traditional method of getting parents involved in the school only on issues of misbehaviour of students and paying of levies through the PTA has evolved to a more modern approach where the entire community comprising the immediate community and corporate organisations and agencies, are involved in vital issues that revolve around school development. One factor that appears very consistent in the study is the need for healthy school-community relations which entail the school manager reaching out frequently to opinion leaders and important personalities and

agencies within and outside the community (Nakpodia 2013). This way, schools are improved, students' performances are positively affected and schools access more resources.

In the same line of thought, Kladifko (2013) reasoned that it is not strange for school leaders to develop collaborative efforts with parents of pupils in their schools and with the staff. However, it becomes a problem when such collaborations are expected to go beyond parents and staff, to the wider community. Kladifko brought out a salient point by stressing that even though schools are located in a community of people, organisations, and businesses, more often than not, schools appear isolated from these groups. This informs why some schools will not venture into programmes that will involve the broader community. Kladifko also explained that it is the responsibility of the school leader to initiate partnerships with different entities that make up the community through advocacy and lobbying. The school leader should attend community functions with school representatives, and also invite the community leader and responsible members of the community to school programmes. Such links, when established, can build trust and eventually yield dividends to different areas of school life. The dividends could come in the form of donations, physical resources, maintenance of facilities, infrastructural developments, training sessions, security, scholarships, excursions, and mentorships, among others. In this context, school administration becomes less cumbersome but more efficient for the school leader (Kladifko, 2013).

To prove the relevance of community-school relationships to school administration, Abraham and Ememe (2012) examined effective school-community relations as a key performance indicator for the secondary school administrator in Aba South District and found a positive significant relationship between school-community relations and performance of the school administrator.

Similarly, Ogundele, Oparinde, and Oyewale (2012) investigated community-school relations and principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools in Kwara State. The result of the study showed a highly significant relationship between community-school relations and principals' administrative effectiveness.

Sa'ad and Sadiq (2014) also investigated the relevance of school-community relationships on the development of primary education in Azare metropolis of Bauchi State. Sa'ad and Sadiq maintained that the relationship between schools and communities can be beneficial across board and could help school leaders to acquire more resources which will help in the development of schools. The study found that the community provided assistance in such

areas as providing land for school buildings, assistance with funds and facilities, supervision and maintenance of discipline in schools. This helps to strengthen the efforts of the headteacher in general school administration.

In a study on the influence of school-community relationship on the management of secondary schools in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria, using a descriptive survey design, Anthony, Yaro and Pev (2017) discovered that school-community relationships have a significant influence on the management of secondary schools in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State. The findings showed that all the indicators of school-community relationships have a significant influence on school management.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population for the study was made up of 9502 public primary school teachers in 17 LGEAs in Abia State. Yamane (1967) sample size statistical model for a finite population was used to determine the sample size for the population. Thus, applying the Yamane formula, the sample size for the study population =384, plus an additional 30% (115) to compensate for non-response. In all, 499 teachers from 57 schools formed the sample size for the quantitative survey; and were selected using the multi-stage sampling procedure. A researcher constructed questionnaire tagged, “Community-School Collaborations and Administrative Efficiency of Headteachers’ Questionnaire (CSCAEHQ)” for teachers was used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section sought for demographic data of the participants in terms of age, gender, highest academic qualification and teaching experience. The second section contains items for the variables of community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of Headteachers. The response categories were rated on a 4-point Likert type scale which was scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive items while the negative items were scored in reverse order. The criterion mean was set at 2.50. To ensure for both content and face validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, from the University of Lagos for vetting and proper scrutiny, prior to the administration of the instrument. The results from their suggestions and other corrections formed the basis for the modification of the final version of the instrument. In determining the reliability of the instrument, a Pilot Study was carried out with 40 teachers outside the sampled area. In measuring the internal consistency of the instrument, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient test of reliability was applied, using the

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, to ensure reliability at an alpha level of 0.05. The analysis gave an alpha co-efficient of 0.745 which was considered high enough to justify its use. The results were presented using descriptive statistics while hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: How efficient are headteachers in the administration of public primary schools in Abia State?

Table 1: Frequencies, Percentages, Mean and Standard Deviations of the Responses on Administrative Efficiency of Headteachers (N=479)

S/N	The Head Teacher:	Positive response	Negative response	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Assigns teachers to handle special tasks.	168[35.1]	311[64.9]	2.19	0.955
2	Provides a fair evaluation of teachers' activities.	102 [21.3]	377[78.7]	1.69	0.800
3	Improvises resources whenever there is need.	206[43.0]	273 (57.0)	2.48	0.585
4	Uses staff skills or knowledge for the benefit of the school.	85 [17.7]	394 [82.3]	1.98	0.640
5	Plans school programmes with teachers before resumption.	82 [17.3]	397 [82.9]	1.69	0.950
6	Recommends teachers for training in areas of need.	53[11.1]	426 [88.9]	1.89	0.566
7	Ensures that teaching materials are available/ properly used.	76[15.9]	403[84.1]	1.55	0.752
8	Supervises classroom teaching to ensure that teachers do their jobs well.	109 [22.8]	370[77.2]	1.65	0.828
9	Enforces discipline in school.	34 [7.1]	445 [92.9]	1.59	0.619
10	Effectively controls staff absenteeism.	60 [12.5]	419 [87.5]	1.42	0.703
11	Ensures that community resources are used for the benefit of the school.	0 [0.0]	479 [100]	1.25	0.436
12	Maintains a close link with community, voluntary organisations.	0 [0.0]	479 [100]	1.39	0.489
13	Rents school facilities to generate money for improvement.	108 [22.5]	371 [77.5]	2.08	0.607
14	Involves stakeholders in decision making.	23[4.8]	456[95.2]	1.48	0.589
15	Protects all school facilities from damages.	87 [18.2]	392[81.8]	2.05	0.562
16	Uses imprest well.	77[16.1]	402[83.9]	1.74	0.719
	Average			1.76	0.675

Key: positive response=(Always + Often), Negative response=(Sometimes + Never)

Data presented on Table 1 showed that all the mean scores ranged from 1.25 to 2.48. The average mean of 1.76 with a standard deviation of 0.675 was recorded, indicating that headteachers are not really efficient in the administration of public primary schools in Abia State.

Research Question Two: How functional is community-school collaborations in public primary schools in Abia State?

Table 2: Frequencies, Percentages, Mean and Standard Deviations of the Responses on community-school collaborations (N=479)

S/N	Statements	Positive response	Negative response	Mean	StdDev
1	Headteacher does not involve the community in school events.	220[46.2]	257[53.8]	2.40	1.008
2	Pupils are taken on excursions to important places in the community.	227[47.4]	252[52.6]	2.41	0.983
3	Headteacher maintains a good relationship with the Alumni	166[34.8]	311[65.2]	2.18	0.815
4	The community does not involve the school in their events.	290[60.8]	187[39.2]	2.74	0.967
5	My school gets helpful information from community.	182[38.0]	297[62.0]	2.27	0.984
6	Headteacher makes some school resources like playgrounds, halls available for use during major community events.	233[48.8]	244[51.2]	2.48	0.851
7	The community supports my school in terms of security or physical facilities.	222[46.5]	256[53.5]	2.46	0.845
8	Guest Speakers or Mentors are got from the community.	201[42.4]	274[57.6]	2.35	0.821
9	My school gets support from Local and International Development Agencies like World Bank.	220[46.5]	253[53.5]	2.44	0.852
10	School-Based Management Committee helps to meet our needs in school.	232[48.8]	244[51.2]	2.47	0.869
	Average			2.42	0.900

Key: positive response= (Very True +Somewhat True), Negative response=(Not Very True +Definitely Not True)

Data presented on Table 2 showed that all the mean scores ranged from 2.18 to 2.74. The average mean of 2.42 with a standard deviation of 0.900 was recorded, indicating that community-school collaborations are not very operational in public primary schools in Abia State. **Hypothesis One**

H₀₁: There is no significant association between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of headteachers in public primary schools.

Table 3: Community-school networks and administrative efficiency of Headteachers

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	R	P-value	Remark	Decision
Community-school Partnership	479	23.19	2.737	.395*	0.000	Significant	H ₀ Rejected
Administrative Efficiency		28.93	3.343				

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents the summary of analysis between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of headteachers in public primary schools in Abia State. The test of hypothesis shows a significant relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of Headteachers in public primary schools in Abia State ($r = 0.395^*$, $p = 0.000$, $<.05$). Thus the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between community-school collaborations and administrative efficiency of headteachers in public primary schools in Abia State was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from research question one showed that headteachers were not efficient in the administration of public primary schools in Abia State while findings from research question

two showed that no functional relationship exists between the communities and public primary schools in Abia State. This could be a result of lack of motivation, proper training in administration and commitment as well as the unavailability of relevant resources with which headteachers work. Another issue of concern could be the irregular payment of public primary school staff salaries. Such a situation can affect both teacher and headteacher commitment and attitude to work. This finding is contrary to the findings of Besong (2013), whose study showed a high level of administrative efficiency of Principals in public secondary schools in Cameroun. The finding, however, corroborates the position of Chapman (2002) who maintains that most headteachers lack the political will and relevant preparation to achieve efficiency in the administration of public primary schools.

It is very disheartening to see the caliber of some headteachers that oversee the public primary school system in Abia State. Most of them actually lack the political will and drive to manage these public schools. This situation aligns with the position of Chapman (2002) who holds that the responsibilities that are associated with decentralisation fall directly on the headteacher who unfortunately appear the least ready to accept such responsibilities. To further buttress the point, most headteachers in Nigeria generally lack the requisite training in administration as most of them rose in rank as teachers to the position of headteachers. Irrespective of the apparent lack of government's commitment to the primary school system, the headteachers themselves appear not to be making things easy for the system, as they consistently sit around and wait endlessly for the government despite the acclaimed autonomy, to take certain actions to the advantage of schools.

The ability of the headteacher to ensure that adequate school supplies are sent to the school in good time enables teachers and pupils to engage in meaningful teaching and learning as well as helping the headteacher carry out administrative tasks without a waste of time and other resources. In the same vein, when headteachers form the habit of engaging in collaborative decision making, by involving teachers and other stakeholders like parents and the community, the headteacher will have access to ideas and information that will facilitate administration. To efficiently manage the public primary school system, the headteacher should be creative enough to improvise resources whenever there is a need and also put staff and pupils' skills to productive use. By so doing, the headteacher effectively maximises resources and reduces operational costs. The efficient administration of schools also requires that headteachers effectively supervise classroom teaching and decipher areas of professional development needs of teachers and recommend such training in order to enhance teacher productivity, or organise in-house training sessions to help out. This is necessary because

keeping abreast of educational practices around the globe promotes school performance and enhances the productivity of the system.

Moreover, proactiveness, prompt response to issues and maintenance of school facilities will help to avoid wastages in different forms. When the headteacher is proactive, certain administrative deficiencies can be avoided and this can result in improved performance for schools. Furthermore, the ability of the headteacher to effectively involve parents and the community in key areas in the administration of schools, and also connect the school with other schools, provides support to public primary schools and helps the school to have access to more resources. This way, schools learn to be committed to their responsibilities knowing that they are also accountable to parents and the community. This situation helps the headteacher to enforce discipline among staff and pupils, resulting in decreased teacher and pupil absenteeism and misbehaviour.

The inability of headteachers in Abia State to religiously work within the boundaries of these indicators of administrative efficiency has resulted in inefficiencies in the administration of public primary schools in Abia State. This is not the way to go in the post covid era.

The result from the test of hypothesis four showed that community-school networks had a significant relationship with the administrative efficiency of headteachers. This finding is an indication that community-school networks have a direct link with the administrative efficiency of headteachers. The finding supports Abraham and Ememe (2012) whose study found a positive significant relationship between school-community relations and performance of the school administrator. This finding is to the effect that administration cannot thrive in the hands of the headteacher alone because the school is not an island but is located among people, whether as individuals or as groups and corporate bodies. The mutual relationship between schools and communities, therefore, increases the chances of schools to mobilise and maximise resources. The finding is also consistent with the findings of Ogundele, Oparinde, and Oyewale (2012), whose study reported a direct positive community-school relations and principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools in Kwara State. The finding offers explanations as to why school administrators should extend their tentacles beyond the four walls of the school, in order to garner information and support that will make administration efficient. The result of the study also supports the position of Nakpodia (2013) who maintains that the school as a social organisation is an integral part of the community in which it is located; therefore a deliberate cooperation between the school and the community will be a basis on which the full values of education can be realised to the

schools' advantage. This is an indication that the relationship between the community and schools must be a deliberate and calculated one in which all the group members understand and undertake their responsibilities satisfactorily and not just a random act. Being deliberate in this collaboration is a key element in successful school administration in post covid Nigeria.

Conclusion

In view of the findings of this study it is pertinent to conclude that community-school networks, if properly structured will avail headteachers the opportunity to effectively and efficiently manage the public primary school system, this post-covid era. This is because community-school collaboration is a viable resource for monitoring the activities of staff; as well as an avenue for harnessing resources for the school. The inability of headteachers to deliberately and consistently connect with diverse members of the school community has opened the schools up to administrative ineffectiveness and inefficiencies. A review of headteachers' responsibilities is urgently needed.

Recommendations

Given the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn therefrom, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. SBMC should be made more functional in the administration of public primary schools in Abia State. This will help in capacity building for the public primary school system.
2. Headteachers should be adequately trained in school administration and relationship/resource management.
3. There should be well articulated roles for both the community and schools towards each other. This could help improve the relationship between the diverse units that make up the school community and the schools.

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