

**Community Advocacy and Quality Education in Kwara State
Senior Secondary Schools: The Nexus**

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Abstract

The study was carried out to investigate the relationship between community advocacy and quality education in Kwara state senior secondary schools, Nigeria. Descriptive Survey research design was used in the study. Population of the study comprised all the 5,190 members of the Community Advocacy Committee including principals from 346 public senior secondary schools in Kwara State. The sample of the study comprised 336 respondents from 48 public senior secondary schools using multi-stage sampling procedure. Two self-designed validated research instruments were used, with reliability index of 0.78 and trustworthiness of the interview ensured. Data collected were analysed using percentage scores and Pearson's product Moment correlational statistics. The results showed that availability of funds (63%), people's awareness about the roles of community advocacy committee (64%), good school-community relationship (69%) among others were factors that facilitated the functions of the committees in ensuring quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools. Also, there was a significant relationship between community advocacy and quality education in Kwara state public secondary schools ($r_{cal.} = 0.573 > t_{tab.} = 0.195$). The study concluded that positive involvement of the community member in school governance enhanced quality education in the schools. It was recommended that: Government should ensure operational policy and encourage non-committed members through good school-community relationship to promote quality education.

Keywords: Community, Advocacy, Correlate, Quality, Education, Public, Schools

Introduction

Generally, the involvement of the Community Advocacy Committee in the school governance ensures sustainable inter-dependent relationship between the

school and the community, by promoting good value system and recognizing the cooperation, participation and support of significant and relevant stakeholders in the setting of standards and ensuring quality in the management of education. It also implies a pro-active means of achieving the desired goals in community inputs, instructional process and outputs that guarantees quality human capital development in knowledge, technical and vocational skills, and character for sustainable self-reliance of the individuals and the overall development of the nation. In this sense, Anthony, Yaro and Pev(2017) posited that the involvement of the Community Advocacy Committee is a dynamic process of relationship that strengthens the community intervention and instills sense of collective ownership, responsibility and commitment to the progress of the school's programmes, activities, development of physical structures, learning facilities and improvement in learning outcome.

Around the world, it is pertinent to note that Community Advocacy Committees perform different functions in the school system in order to make them to be accountable to the society. In the case of Gambia, it was well illustrated that the techniques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) were adapted in education by the advocacy committee to understand why girls did not attend schools, mobilize communities or schools around these problems, and assist them in finding solutions to the problems (World Bank 1995). Similarly, through Social Forestry, Education and Participation pilot project (SFEP) in Thailand, the committee served as resource persons to schools that strengthen partnership by sending respected community members, such as religious leaders or tribe heads, to the classrooms and talk about community history, traditions, customs, and culture, which have been historically celebrated to enhance the quality of their education.

In Great Britain, the 1988 Education Reform Act under the Thatcher government devolved power and authority to school communities to constitute management boards as mandatory corporate bodies consisting of the head teacher and governors elected by the parents, teachers, and representatives of the local authority. Under the Act, public secondary schools became autonomous and Grant-Maintained (GM) schools, owned and managed solely by each school's governing board, composed of 10-to-15-member entity, including the head teacher and parents' representatives; devoid of local education authority control. Also in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Netherlands, the Central Governments enacted appropriate legislation to decentralize power and authority with full autonomy to schools to establish and operate managing bodies in partnership with the local stakeholders to manage, regulate and take decisions on education policy matters. Such decisions are on: curriculum and teaching methods, learners' evaluation, personnel selection, dismissal and discipline; provision of infrastructure, raising and judicious use of private funds for the overall well-being of the citizenry and production of quality outputs from the educational institutions (Eurydice, 2007).

In addition, Madagascar, where Government investments at the primary level have been extremely low, parents and communities contribute money, labour

and materials (World Bank 1995). The absence of government support leaves the school infrastructure and equipment supply to the parents and the community. As a result, community and parents are in the center in keeping the schools going. Another example is found in Colombia's Escuela Nueva program for multigrade schools that incorporates a number of innovative components, including community involvement in school curriculum (Colleta & Perkins, 1995; Fullon & Watson, 2013). Research have established that community involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society England and Wales, Canada and the United States. The notion of community involvement for accountability derives from a more market-oriented concept in which school-community partnerships are viewed rather like business partnership, through which the two parties receive mutual and complementary benefits which enable them to operate more effectively (OECD, 1997). The extensive examination of six case studies on the Philippines, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Colombia and Bolivia according to Rugh and Bossert (1998) lead to the conclusion that teachers and other school staff feel they should be accountable to community clients only when the community holds some power over them: when they either come from the same village and have social ties; if their continued employment or salaries depend on community satisfaction; or sometimes when community education committees exist to manage the schools and members are empowered to exert their influence.

In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education, (2014) Section 12 (104b) stipulated that the community has legitimate mandate in education and allows their participation, support and involvement in the administration and management of schools in their domain. Also, it is the responsibility of the traditional institutions to mobilise and coordinate their subjects to integrate their skills and wealth of experience into the school programme in order to maximize their contributions and best practice through a periodic monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and, giving constructive advice on curriculum delivery, provision of infrastructural facilities, staff and students' welfare, management and support mechanisms, effective participatory decision making and school-community relationship. This process is expected to be achieved through the involvement of meaningful, close, strong and goal-oriented partnership between the school authority and other relevant stakeholders (Parent-Teachers Association (PTA), Old Students Association, Communities, Traditional Institution, Civil Society Organizations, Faith-Based Organizations, Ministries, and other professional and social institutions). This synergy is necessary because a virile and responsive school-community relationship stands a building block for a sustainable Quality Education (Ayeni, 2010; Aggarwal, 1981; Balogun, Okon, Musaa, & Thakur 1981; Universal Basic Education Commission, 2011).

In Kwara State, this category of committees are important stakeholders in the education sector that are saddled with the responsibility of creating awareness and canvassing the people in the community on the importance of education and the need

to send their children to school. In addition, they work hand in hand with the school in ensuring smooth and cordial relationship between the school and community which a pre-requisite for achieving quality education. Aside from this, they evaluate school programmes to establish result-oriented procedures that would help those teachers and students that do not perform well in achieving optimum productivity and quality learning outcome. With this, the principals, teachers and other members of the community will be provided with relevant information on the status of teaching and learning activities, students' academic performance, as well information that could stimulate them to find a realistic solutions to problems of quality education in secondary school. All the above was buttressed by Nakpodia(2013) who posited that the relationship between the school and the community is indeed a symbiotic one, because the function of one complements the other in ensuring the achievement of quality education.

Quality can be seen as a measure of uncompromised set standard. It is also a management strategy that ensures equitable treatment in the planning, control and implementation of all the functions and activities of an organization for the purpose of achieving the set goals. It can also be defined as the process of providing the required resource inputs, ensuring effective control and improving the process for the purpose of raising an uncompromised standard of output to meet certain expectations and fulfill public expectations. According to Babalola (2007), quality is most often defined as fitness to purpose in relation to the user and customer needs. It can also be taken to mean that the product conforms to standards, specifications or requirements. It is the sum of composite of the properties inherent in a material or product. Raouf (2008) opined that quality education is the continual improvement in the methods of implementing the various aspects of educational programmes and activities in an institution of learning to meet the desires of the stakeholders.

Quality education can be seen in relative terms because what constitute quality education vary from one country to another, based on their economic resources, value system, educational goals and philosophies among others. Longe (1999) puts learning environment (process) and students' outcomes (graduates) under the umbrella of quality education. The graduates in this case should be able to prove their worth by their level of performance in the competitive labour market among other challenges that will confront them in the society. Quality Education must be open to change and evolution based on information, changing contexts and new understandings of the nature of education's challenges. Systems that embrace change through use of data and self-assessment are more likely to offer Quality Education to students (Glasser, 1990). Continuous assessment and improvement can focus on any or all dimensions of system quality: learners' learning environments, community, content, process and outcomes.

Studies showed that a positive school climate fosters Quality Education.

Such a climate include: norms, values, and expectations that support all students in the school, feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. In a supportive climate, students, teachers, and families work together with a shared school vision. Each person contributes to the operations of the school as well as the care of the physical environment (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, Higgins, and Alessandro 2013). Safe and orderly environments that encourage and reinforce positive classroom behaviour have been identified as necessary conditions for academic achievements (Marzano, Waters, and McNulty 2005). In Latin America, a study was carried out and it was discovered that children whose schools lacked classroom materials and inadequate library were significantly showing lower test scores than those whose schools were well equipped (Willms 2000). Other studies, carried out in Botswana, Nigeria and Papua New Guinea, concur with these findings.

In quality education, three principles seem to be broadly accepted, thus; the need for more relevance, greater equity of access and outcomes, and proper observance of individual's right. To fulfill these needs, several key determinants have been identified by educational experts. The learners' characteristic dimension involves the background of the students that affect their ability to learn, talent, persistence, willingness, knowledge and socio-economic backgrounds, hindrances, condition of health, place of residence, and the likes. This dimension is the very first element that is necessary to prepare the children to be ready for the educational development and to allow them to reach their highest potentials in terms of cognitive, affective and creative capacities. Students' capacity and experience have a strong influence on their learning.

Enabling inputs are the second determinant in enhancing quality education. Teaching and learning can only be successful if sufficient supporting resources are available and well managed. Inputs that enable students' learning, include teaching and learning materials, physical infrastructure and facilities, human resources, effective school governance, and the likes. Schools without these essential resources will not be able to give qualitative education to students. Teaching and learning is quite related to enabling inputs and can be considered as a subset of the enabling input dimension; however, it is worth listing separately and distinguishing as it differs from other inputs. The teaching and learning dimensions include several factors as learning time, teaching methods, evaluation system, response, motivations, and class size.

The third determinant is the surrounding environment that embraces all other elements and might have positive and negative impacts on other elements. It covers a very wide area, some controllable and some uncontrollable. It characterizes the community and society textures such as economic and labour market conditions, social-cultural and religious factors, educational knowledge and support facilities and the environment, the public resources available for education, the competitiveness of the teaching profession in the labour market,

national governance and management strategies, the philosophical standpoint of teachers and learners, peer effects, parental support, time available for schooling and homework, national standards, public expectations, labour market demands, globalization, just to mention but a few. The links between the environmental factors and education are very strong and each influence the other.

In consonance with the above, in the study of Wolfendale and Bastiani (2000); Wolfendale (2002) and Charles (2014) it was indicated that involvement of the School-Based Management Committee in the School Governance ensures sustainable inter-dependent relationship between the school and the community, by providing necessary infrastructure, promoting good value system and recognizing the cooperation, participation and support of significant and relevant stakeholders in the setting of standards and ensuring quality in the management of the school resources. In addition, Charles (2014) found that the dynamic process of relationship between the school and the community appears to strengthen the community intervention and mandate in education and instills sense of collective ownership, responsibility and commitment to the progress of the schools' programmes, activities, development of physical structures, learning facilities and improvement in learning outcome. Sariem, Ibrahim, Auta and Ndukwe, (2012) and Sariem, Fwangshak, Shalkur and Adeniyi (2014) in their studies found that giving academic advice by parents and other members in the community helped the students to adjust to the academic environment, and encourage them to make informed choices and have good grades in their course in general.

Similarly, Ogundele, Oparinde and Oyewale (2012) found that high significant relationship existed between community school relations and principals' administrative effectiveness, school plant provision and maintenance, and instructional development of secondary schools. In line with this, Kheang and Luz (2012) identified some challenges faced by the School Committee in Cambodian Secondary Schools as: participation of members of the committee was low despite their initial agreement to serve, some of the members had little knowledge and understanding about some aspects of school management. Similarly, in the study of Ayeni and Williams (2013) it was established that some of the challenges facing School Committee in Nigerian Secondary Schools include among others: low competent capacity of key members, poor attendance of members at meeting due to lack of incentives and financial supports, lack of cooperation between the school administrator and the committees' Parents' Teachers' Association resistance to the committee decision making. All these resulted in ineffective school management and indirectly deteriorate students' academic performance.

In Nigeria providing quality education for all and at all levels is the exclusive responsibility of government, the government on the other hand is surrounded by many other competing infrastructural demands as water supply, electricity supply, provision of health care services and road networks. Hence, the

sector of education suffers a lot of untold hardship. Government efforts in education are not enough in meeting the needs and aspirations of Nigerians. All these have invariably resulted in the quantitative and qualitative collapse of productive educational pursuits and achievements. The challenge, therefore, is to have a fundamental reform, shift or decentralization of school management in order to have focused, sincere and committed governance with a view to solving such educational crises.

All these inadequacies that characterize the learning conditions of most of the public schools have, among others, called for community advocacy for quality education in Nigeria. This is evident in the way many parents and communities support the educational pursuit of their wards. Advocacy requires acting on behalf of the individuals and groups and to address social concerns. To do this work, the use of professional knowledge, skills and exercise value judgments to determine what one should advocate is required. Advocacy is dependent on communicative methods; it is tied to relevant life experiences and often forces committee members to work “outside of their comfort zones.”

Objective of the Study

The study was carried out to investigate the relationship between community advocacy and quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools, Nigeria.

Research Question

To guide the study, the following research question was raised:

1. What factors facilitated the functions of community advocacy committee in ensuring quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated in the study:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between quality education, community advocacy and students' academic performance in Kwara State secondary schools.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the 5,190 members of Community Advocacy Committee including principals of the public Senior Secondary Schools in 346 public senior secondary schools in Kwara State. The sample of the study was made up of 336 respondents selected through the use of multi-stage sampling procedure from 48 public secondary schools in Kwara State, out of which 48 were principals and 288 were other members of the Community Advocacy Committees. First, from each of the three Senatorial Districts in Kwara State, six Local Government Areas (LGAs) were

randomly selected. In each of the LGAs, eight schools were selected through a systematic random sampling technique making a total of 48 schools. The selection was done through the use of odd numbers. Purposive sampling technique was used to select one principal as each principal is the head of his/her institution and simple random sampling technique was used to select six members of Community Advocacy Committee from each school totaling 336 respondents that were used in the study.

Two self designed research instruments titled: “Community Advocacy and Quality Education Questionnaire”(CAQEQ)and “Community Advocacy Interview Guide” (CAIG) were used to collect data in the study. The CAQEQ was used to elicit information from the principals and members of the committee and CAIG was used to further elicit information from Committee members on challenges and achievements of quality education and Community Advocacy Committee in Kwara state senior secondary schools, Nigeria. The CAQEQ and CAIG were validated by research experts in the field of education and their reliabilities were determined through a pilot study conducted using five principals and 50 members of community advocacy committee from five secondary schools that are outside the sampled schools. The results obtained from the respondents were then correlated and it yielded a Cronbach alpha reliability of 0.78 for CAQEQ while the trustworthiness of CAIG was equally ensured. This value suggests that the CAQEQ and CAIG are reliable and highly consistent such that it can be used for the study. Data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, mean scores and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics at 0.05 level of significance. In addition, the interview was subjected to content analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: What factors facilitated the functions of Community Advocacy Committee in ensuring quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools, Nigeria?

To discuss factors that facilitated the functions of the committee in ensuring quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools, Nigeria data collected were analysed using frequency distribution, percentage and mean scores.

Table 1:

Factors that Facilitated the Functions of Community Advocacy Committee in ensuring quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools, Nigeria

	Factors that facilitated the functions of Community Advocacy Committee	AG %	DG %	X	Decision/Rank
1	Availability of funds	212 (63)	124(37)	4.21	AG/ 3 rd
2	Polices of the government	115(34)	221(66)	2.83	DG/ 9 th

3	People awareness	216(64)	120(36)	4.35	AG/ 2 nd
4	Good school- community relationship	233(69)	103(31)	4.65	AG/ 1 st
5	Political influence	90(27)	246(73)	2.67	DG/ 10 th
6	Capacity building for members	150(45)	186(55)	3.40	DG/ 7 th
7	Meeting periodically to deliberate school programmes and activities	192(57)	144(43)	3.46	AG/ 5 th
8	Giving of awards to committed stakeholders in the community	142(42)	194(58)	3.58	DG/ 8 th
9	Involvement of parents in school management	202(60)	134(40)	3.99	AG/ 4 th
10	Readiness of members of the communities to participate	189(56)	147(44)	3.42	AG/ 6 th

Source: Field work. AG= Agree, DG= Disagree

In Table 1, 63% respondents agree that availability of funds enhanced their functions in schools, 64% indicated that people awareness about their roles facilitated their functions while 69% of them agree to the fact that good school-community relationship facilitated their duties and responsibilities. Also, 57% of the advocacy committee agreed that meeting periodically to deliberate on school programmes and activities facilitated their functions. Equally, involvement of parents in school management as indicated by 60% of the committee members enabled them to perform their duties effectively. One hundred and eighty-nine 56% of the committee members indicated that readiness of some members to participate in the committee enhanced their functions in the schools respectively. However, government policies, political influence, organized capacity building workshops for members of the committee and giving awards to committed members of the committee were not found to have enhanced the functions of community advocacy group in providing quality of education in Senior secondary schools of Kwara State, Nigeria.

It can be inferred from the finding that availability of funds, people's awareness about the roles of community advocacy committee, good school-community relationship, meeting periodically to deliberate on school programmes, involvement of parents in school management, and readiness of members to participate in the committees were factors that facilitated the functions of the committees in ensuring quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis Ho: There is no significant relationship between community advocacy and quality education in Kwara State Senior Secondary Schools

To establish the relationship between community advocacy and quality education in Kwara State Senior Secondary Schools Nigeria, Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used.

Table 2:
Relationship Between Community Advocacy and Quality Education in Kwara State Secondary Schools

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	r-cal.	r-tab.	Decision
Community Advocacy		17.81	10.158	334			
	336				0.573	0.195	Rejected
Students' academic performance		10.63	7.394				

Source: Field work.

Data in Table 2 shows that computed r-cal. is higher than the critical r-tab., thus ($r_{cal.} = 0.573 > r_{tab.} = 0.195$). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between community advocacy and quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The result showed that availability of funds, people's awareness about the roles of community advocacy committee, good school-community relationship, meeting periodically to deliberate on school programmes, involvement of parents in school management, and readiness of members to participate in the committees activities were factors that facilitated the functions of the committees in ensuring quality education in Kwara State senior secondary schools. The finding is supported by the works of Wolfendale and Bastiani (2000); Wolfendale (2002) and Charles (2014) that established the fact that involvement of the School-Based Management Committee in the School Governance ensures sustainable inter-dependent relationship between the school and the community, by providing necessary infrastructure, promoting good value system and recognizing the cooperation, participation and support of significant and relevant stakeholders in the setting of standards and ensuring quality in the management of the school resources. Corroborating the findings, Charles (2014) advocated that dynamic process of relationship between the school and the community appears to strengthen the community intervention and mandate in education and instills sense of collective ownership, responsibility and commitment to the progress of the schools' programs, activities, development of physical structures, learning facilities and improvement in learning outcome.

Also, the result showed that there was a significant relationship between community advocacy and quality education in Kwara State Senior Secondary Schools. The finding is in line with the report of Sariem, Ibrahim, Auta and Ndukwe,

(2012) and Sariem, Fwangshak, Shalkur and Adeniyi (2014) that giving academic advice by parents and other members in the community help the students to adjust to the academic environment, and encourage them to make informed choices and have good grades in their course in general. Corroborating this, Ogundele, Oparinde and Oyewale (2012) found that high significant relationship existed between community school relations and principals' administrative effectiveness, school plant provision and maintenance, and instructional development of secondary schools.

The result of the interview conducted showed that lack of operational policy by the government (free education), inadequate sensitization on government policies, and appointment of non-competent members, inadequate fund, non-challant attitude of the parents, poor attendance of members at meetings and inadequate staffing among others were the challenges facing advocacy committee members in public senior secondary schools in Kwara State. This is in line with the finding of Kheang and Luz (2012) who identified some challenges faced by the School Committee in Cambodian Secondary Schools as: participation of members of the committee was low despite their initial agreement to serve, some of the members had little knowledge and understanding about some aspects of school management. This study is also in agreement with the findings of Ayeni and Williams (2013) who established some of the challenges facing School Committee in Nigerian Secondary Schools as low competent capacity of key members, poor attendance of members at meeting due to lack of incentives and financial supports, lack of cooperation between the school administrator and the committee, Parents' Teachers' Association resistance to the committee decision making. All these resulted in ineffective school management and indirectly deteriorate students' academic performance.

Conclusions

The involvement and roles of stake holders like the community advocacy group in achieving quality education in Kwara State public secondary schools cannot be over emphasised. The groups have been found to be of immense assistance to schools in the areas of facility and equipment provision, recruitment of needed teachers, maintenance of discipline in schools, financial assistance to schools, rendering of professional assistance to schools, participating in schools' management decisions and a host of others. Based on these findings government and every other stake holders in education should encourage the sustainability of the groups in the various schools and communities where they exist.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study the following recommendations were made:

- I. Government should ensure operational policy and more qualified teachers should be recruited to reduce the work loads on the few qualified teachers;
- ii. The committee members should be more dedicated to their duties and encourage the non-committed members through good school-community relationship to promote effective teaching and learning; and
- iii. Government should collaborate with the communities where schools are located and come up with funding policy and maintenance of the available school infrastructural facilities as well as ensuring final completions of school projects.

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