

## **SCHOOL COMMUNITY SYNERGY AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OBIO-AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF RIVERS STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study seeks to examine the extent of school-community synergy in secondary schools in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study had two (2) research questions that were analyzed based on the responses provided by the respondents. The populations of the study were 21 principals and 42 vice-principals (21 Vice-Principal Administration and 21 Vice-Principal Academy) which gave a total of 63 respondents. The study adopted the Census sampling technique. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. Findings showed that the respondents agreed that Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A), Old Students Association (Alumni), Board of Governors and Voluntary Concerned Agencies/Groups are agencies of school-community synergy involved in school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA. The findings also revealed that a good school-community synergy promote school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA to a high extent. The study therefore, recommended among others that the ministries of education both the state and the federal should be able to conduct periodic seminars to sensitize the school administrators on the need for the school to relate well with the community. The school administrators should cultivate the habit of constantly relating with the community, carrying the community along with the current development in the school, regularly visiting the community council of elders, also identifying the need and aspirations of the community and inputting the essential and ethical ones into the school curriculum.*

**Keywords: School Community-Synergy, Educational Development**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every school exists and belongs to a community; wherever you find a school, there should be at least small immediate community. The output of a school system is mostly been used up by the immediate community where the school is situated. To an extent, continued existence of a school in any community depends on the synergy level between the school and its immediate community. The synergy can be tag as "the cooperation between the school and the community. Mahuta, (2007) was of the view that school as a social institution is regarded as center of knowledge and it possesses the power to shape the character of individuals in the community.

The sudden and continuous increase in school population at all level of Nigeria education has led to the inadequacy of facilities and equipment in many Nigerian schools (Musaaazi, 1994). For goals and objectives of the school systems to be achieved, funds and facilities are required for the various activities of the schools programs. Unfortunately till date government of Nigeria has been unable to single-handedly provide qualitative education to all those who demand it due to its cost implications. Therefore the government gave a call to the interested individual or group to participate actively in the smooth running of schools especially in the area of providing supporting educational services (Madiewesi, 1991). This is clearly stated by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education, that the administrative machinery will be based on the following cardinal principles, Vis:

- a. Close participation and involvement of the communities, at the local level, in the administration and management of their schools;
- b. Effective line of communication between local community and the state on one hand and national machinery for policy and implementation on the other.

The separation of schools into Junior and Senior Secondary Schools as a result of the

Universal Basic Education and other forces of demand for education have led to the creation of new schools. This situation led to the sharing of existing facilities by both schools. Many of these schools were in need of a lot of resources ranging from classrooms, furniture, accommodations for staff and many more, of which the government have not been able to meet up with these required developmental trend. Therefore, the only solution is to urge communities and interested individuals to come for the rescue of their schools and for the education of their children.

As noted by Asodike (2008), the involvement of communities in the management of education in Nigeria is not new to the system. It can be dated back to the colonial period when the administrators made use of the local communities in the supervision and furtherance of western education. For example when parents gives local communities to the teachers to care for their needs, the communities elders sometimes gives out lands for the establishment of schools, provision of free accommodation and safety materials for missionaries who first brought education as the light to the black race. Bakwai (2003) was of the opinion that the school community synergy is a two-way symbiotic arrangement through which the school and the community cooperate with each other for realization of goals of the community and vice versa. In fact the ultimate goal of the community and the school is usually to further develop and to experience sustainable development which the synergy between the school and the community is one of the strong channels to that effect.

Cordial relationship between the school and the community is a pre-requisite for achieving a meaningful educational objective in the community and nation at large (Gital, 2009). Mitrofanova and Bibire (2014) opined that schools and communities should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals of provision and management of education as well as teaching, learning and enforcement of processes. This kind of relationship is when both school and the community contribute directly to the strengthening and development of each other and can provide a firm foundation for both educational renewal (school development) and community regeneration.

Agreeing to the communities' participation in the development of school, Maduwesi in Ibekwe (2012) pointed out that no school can operate effectively without community interest, understanding and participation, since the community supplements the educational opportunities offered within the community. Similarly Adelakun, (2016) stated that for the achievement of effective and efficient standards of education and sustainable development in Nigeria, there should be room for community and private sector's participation in the schools.

The involvement of the community in the secondary school development could take different forms since it will be unrealistic to leave the development of secondary school education to government alone. This involvement could also be at different rate and pace viz a viz the peculiarities of a given community, and the strength of the school community relationship is determined by the characteristics of each community. It is a known fact that there can never be a school where there is no community. The communities normally provide lands in which the schools are built as well as providing children for enrolment. Nasiru, (2008) and Gital, (2009) were of the view that community provides school with the land to be established, sometimes funds it, even provide facilities in it and help greatly in the improvement of the performance of pupils and general development of education. Generally, the school utilizes the community resources for teaching and learning purposes and at the same time derives its curriculum from the community ways of life (Mahuta, 2007). Ogundele etal, (2012) were of the opinion that school-community relationship have significant impact on the provision and maintenance of school facilities, school discipline, teachers job performance, academic achievement of students and overall success of the school. This clearly shows that school community relationship exists and helps greatly in the development of education.

Most of the things that happen in a school affect the community, and what happens in the community affects the school (Nwankwo, Nwokafor, etal, 1985). This means that community builds its schools and the schools build their communities (Sidhu, 2007). Therefore, school-community interdependence is unbreakable. There is a reciprocal relationship. The two works for one another and the two have direct impact on one another. If schools are expected to be successful in their primary mission of educating the community's children, they need to know a great deal about the community and the families from which the children come. This means that a school cannot exist in

isolation but in co-operation with the community in which it finds itself (Ihebereme, 2008).

Kenkwo (1992) observe that the school depends on the community for a number of resources, such as water, land, human resources (skilled and unskilled laborers), accommodation for staff, finance, and equipment for the continued existence of the school. On the other hand, the school can contribute so much to the community. The community depends on the school for the provision of manpower needed for its continued existence as the students go back to the community when they schooled. Most of school employees are hired from the communities and live in the community. The community also depends on the school hall for their meetings, playground for their cultural activities and the school building, can also be put to use in times of emergency. Agabi etal, (2005) noted that the classrooms are used for adult literacy activities nationwide, for public health activities like immunizations and public enlightenment exercises and in emergency epidemic situations, school building are converted into makeshift hospitals. School buildings are also put into use during voting exercises.

Presently, the extents of community involvement in secondary schools in Anambra State appear to have declined. For instance, as Okeke (2001), also noted, some community leaders show indifference and disregard to the affairs of the schools in their communities. Ofougwuka (2005), added that parents in such communities only pay the P.T.A levy when forced and go on to complain that the school administration extorts money from them without teaching their children well. It is also not uncommon to hear of community leaders who go to schools to attack or insult the principal or any other staff for one reason or the other. Some community leaders are at conflict with school principals and often petition for the transfer of some principals and staff. Obi (2004), also noted that in some cases, the community leaders negatively interfere in the day-to-day administration of the school, encroach or trespass on the school land as well as imposed hostile laws on the schools. These situations are detrimental to child's development and depict such community members as showing indifference to their children's educational development (Okongu, 2002). Some barriers might have influenced such availabilities of the agencies of school-community synergy and the nature of their synergy in schools making it crucial for an empirical investigation of the extent of school-community synergy in secondary schools in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State is carried out. Hence, this study

## **Research**

Two research Questions guided the study:

1. What agencies of school-community synergy are involved in school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA?
2. To what extent does a good school-community synergy promote school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA?

## **Questions**

## **CONCEPT OF SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SYNERGY**

School-community relationship is cordial and mutual interactions that exist between the school and the community where the school is situated. This relationship assists both the school and the community to achieve their predetermined goals in a healthy atmosphere. Bortner (1972) saw school-community relationship as planned activities and a way through which the school seek to learn about the community and interpret, when need be, the purpose, programme, problems, and needs of the school; and involve the community in the planning, evaluating and management of school policies and progress.

According to Thomas etal in Ogunu (2000) school community relations may be considered to be two-ways interpretive process between the society and its instrument, the public institution. It involves for more than "publicity" or "interpretation". It means genuine cooperation in planning and working for good schools, with the public giving as well as receiving ideals. It becomes a two-way process, a two –way flow of ideals between school and community which provides the basis for mutual understanding and effective teamwork.

Adelakun (2016) defined school-community relationship as the cautious and uncautious

interaction between any elements of the school and the host community. It is a mutual interaction between the school and the community whereby they gain mutual help and understanding from each other as well as been aware of one another activities, policies, plan, progress, problems. Having said these, the school is part of the community, it cannot exist in isolation. Therefore there is need for mutual relationship between the school and the community.

School-community relationship is also the interaction between any element of the schools and the element of the host community. It is a mutual interaction between the school and the community whereby they gain mutual help and understanding from each other as well as been aware of one another activities; policies, plan, progress, problems. School-community relationship envelopes the series of land activities and it's media through which the school seeks to learn about the host community and interpret when necessary the purpose, programs, problems and evaluating school policies and progress.

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

### **SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SYNERGY AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT**

The function of community towards maintaining and supporting its relationship with school and which ultimately lead to the development of education cannot be overemphasized. The increasing cost of education necessitates the call by federal government for funding of education in Nigeria. The call was reflected in the National Policy of Education (2008), which stated that "government" welcome the contribution of voluntary agents, community, and private individuals in the establishment and management of pre-primary, primary and secondary education alongside what is provided by the state and the local governments as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the federal government. With this, government herself saw the need to involve the non-governmental bodies in the development of the school system in Nigeria.

Okorie, Ememe and Egu (2009) opined that most people have many social relationships, from casual acquaintance to intimate friendships and close family bond. School community relationship is a two-way symbiotic arrangement through which the school and the community co-operate with each other for the realization of goals of the community and vice versa. It is the degree of understanding and goodwill, which exists between the school and the community. School as a training Centre helps develop pupils into efficient social being and to train them to further educate the backward and unprogressive members of the society. The students are prepared to launch a vigorous and systematic crusade against social evils, anti – social habits and unhygienic habit. School interacts with people of the community and is linked with the larger society. The school is a special environment where a certain quality of life types of activities and occupations are provided with the object of securing child's development along desirable lines (Mishra, 2007).

The following are relevance of school community relationship to school development:

1. It foster community understanding of the needs of the school and allows the community to be involved in supplying the needs of the school.
2. It helps develop schools and communities understanding of all aspects of societal operations that promotes' peace and national understanding.
3. Societal contribution such as fund raising for the development of the school and even the

community.

4. It helps the school manager to be aware of the values, needs expectations and aspirations of the community. By this the school will not be operating in isolation, but will run with the societal expectations, making the school to be relevant to the current world.
5. A school with effective school community relationship will always enjoy maximum discipline in the school because there is a mutual understanding between the school and the community which will foster the development of the school.
6. Provision of lands and facilities by the host community is a channel of school community relationship which enhances the development of the school. When the host community provides the school with land to build the school, a larger part of the school problem is already solved. Also, facilities can as well be provided by the philanthropists and community council for the school to make use of in order to ensure a sustainable development.
7. Maintenance and safeguarding the school plant: - Various artisan groups within the community such as carpenters and bricklayers do assist in the installation, maintenance and repair of school facilities. Also the community usually provides the security guards to protect the school facilities. These will help in prolonging the life span of the school facilities which will aid the development of the school.
8. The host community do provides residential accommodation to both the staff and the students of the school. Especially in the current day Nigeria where schools do not have befitting accommodation for both staff and students. When this happen there is a push to seek for rooms to lay their head at night and plan for continuous and smooth running of the school.
9. In order to further encourage the strength of the staffs and students, the community sometimes makes provision for scholarship to brilliant students and hardworking staffs. The scholarship may cover school fees, books, other and even basic needs. These usually do serve as motivation to the concern staff and student, in fact the school is generally pushed to do more and ensure the output of the school satisfy the needs and demands of the society.

### **AGENCIES OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT**

Adelakun (2016), highlighted the following as the agencies or groups involved in school community relationship and school development

1. Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A)
2. Old Students Association (Alumni)
3. Board of Governors and
4. Voluntary Concerned Agencies/Groups

He said all the above mentioned agencies perform the under-listed task-functions to further help the school development:

- a) They promote the welfare of the school and the community
- b) Supply the schools with brilliant ideas and advise to further enhance the school's development
- c) Seek financial assistance on behalf of the school from outside bodies to enhance the development of the school
- d) Provision of effective link between the school and home which will make the parents to be aware of their child's progress in the school
- e) They strengthen the authority of the school in the event of discipline problems
- f) The agencies contribute to the provision and administration of welfare services for the students and the school e.g. portable water supply, modern toilet facilities, school bus, etc.
- g) They support the school authorities to ensure the staff and students conform to the school rules and regulations
- h) Provision of scholarship and bursary for deserving outstanding students and staffs
- i) Organization of in-service training and career talk or seminars to enhance both the staffs and student capacity in support of the school's development

- j) Decision making and involvement in the employment of qualified staffs to enhance the development of the school
- k) Provision and repair of the school facilities

### Methods

The population of the study comprised all the 21 public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor local government area of Rivers State. In these secondary schools, there are 21 principals and 42 vice-principal (21 Vice-Principal Administration and 21 Vice-Principal Academy), who served as respondents for the study (Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, 2020).

The sample of this study consists of the 63 principals and vice-principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The technique for getting the principals and vice principal was Census sampling technique. Census was used because information were gathered from the 63 principals and vice principals in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor local government of Rivers State.

A researcher developed questionnaire containing 9 items was used to collect data. The items were structured on a four point scale weighted as follows: Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1) for items measuring research question one and Very Great Extent (4), Great Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very low Extent (1) for items measuring research question 2. Three experts who were lecturers in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Department of Guidance and Counseling (Measurement and Evaluation) validated the instrument, and made some modifications. The Cronbach alpha procedure for testing reliability was applied. The Cronbach alpha value for the entire items was 0.85, which was considered satisfactory for the study. The researcher collected data with the help of three trained research assistants Mean ratings were used in analyzing the questionnaire items for answering the research questions. The decision rule for interpreting the mean scores of the data was 2.5 as the cut-off point for accepting an item as indicating great extent. A mean score below 2.50 was taken as an indication of a low extent of school community synergy.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES

**Research Question One:** What agencies of school-community synergy are involved in school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA?

**Table 4.1: Mean and Standard deviation on the** agencies of school-community synergy are involved in school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA

S/N	Gender				Mean Set	Remark
	Principals		Vice-Principals			
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.		
1. Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A).	3.00	0.98	3.12	0.86	3.06	Agreed
2. Old Students Association (Alumni).	3.06	0.91	2.98	0.97	3.02	Agreed
3. Board of Governors.	3.09	0.97	3.08	0.93	3.09	Agreed
4. Voluntary Concerned Agencies/Groups	3.24	0.79	3.14	0.79	3.19	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>3.10</b>	Agreed

Table 4.1 summarizes the mean and standard deviations for agencies of school-community synergy are involved in school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA. The table showed that the highest grand mean rating was from the principals (M = 3.11, SD = 0.91), while the vice-principals had the lowest grand mean rating (M = 3.08, SD = 0.91), which are above the criterion mean value of 2.50. Based on the overall mean set value (3.10) from respondents, which is rated above the 2.50 criteria mean, it is concluded that the respondents are of the opinion that agencies of school-community synergy involved in school development in public senior secondary

schools in Obio-Akpor LGA includes Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A), Old Students Association (Alumni), Board of Governors and Voluntary Concerned Agencies/Groups

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does a good school-community synergy promote school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA?

**Table 4.8: Mean and Standard deviation on the extent** good school-community synergy promote school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA

S/N	Gender				Mean Set	Remark
	Male		Female			
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.		
5. They promote the welfare of the school and the community	2.88	0.95	3.18	0.86	3.03	High Extent
6. Supply the schools with brilliant ideas and advise to further enhance the school's development	3.08	0.93	2.94	0.91	3.01	High Extent
7. Seek financial assistance on behalf of the school from outside bodies to enhance the development of the school	3.09	1.03	3.25	0.93	3.17	High Extent
8. Provision of effective link between the school and home which will make the parents to be aware of their child's progress in the school	3.05	0.90	3.19	0.82	3.12	High Extent
9. They strengthen the authority of the school in the event of discipline problems	2.89	0.90	3.04	0.93	2.97	High Extent
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>3.06</b>	High Extent

Table 4.2 summarizes the mean and standard deviation for the extent to which principals' administrative competency of decision-making enhances effective management of financial resource in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The table showed that the highest grand mean rating was from the vice-principals ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ), while the principals had the lowest grand mean rating ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ), which are above the criterion mean value of 2.50. Based on the overall mean set value (3.06) from respondents, which is rated above the 2.50 criteria mean, it is concluded that the respondents are of the opinion that a good school-community synergy promote school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA to a high extent.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The major findings from research question one is that agencies of school-community synergy involved in school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA includes Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A), Old Students Association (Alumni), Board of Governors and Voluntary Concerned Agencies/Groups. This findings is supported by the National Policy of Education (2008), which stated that "government" welcome the contribution of voluntary agents, community, and private individuals in the establishment and management of pre-primary, primary and secondary education alongside what is provided by the state and the local governments as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the federal government. Also buttressing this findings is Adelakun (2016) who highlighted: Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A), Old Students Association (Alumni), Board of Governors and Voluntary Concerned Agencies/Groups as the agencies or groups involved in school community relationship and school development,

Findings from research question two revealed that that a good school-community synergy promotes school development in public senior secondary schools in Obio-Akpor LGA to a high extent. This finding is consistent with the assertion of Adelakun (2016) that task-functions to further help the school development by agents of school-community synergy include: They promote the welfare of

the school and the community, Supply the schools with brilliant ideas and advise to further enhance the school's development, etc.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Having said various importance of the school-community relationship to the development of the school, it is highly important to note that no school can exist in isolation without the influence of the community and its agencies. In fact the development of the school to a large extent is determined by the relationship that co-exists between the school and the host community.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that the concerned person (the school, government, and the community) should always ensure there is effective and efficient communication between the schools and the community. The ministries of education both the state and the federal should be able to conduct periodic seminars to sensitize the school administrators on the need for the school to relate well with the community. The school administrators should cultivate the habit of constantly relating with the community, carrying the community along with the current development in the school, regularly visiting the community council of elders, also identifying the need and aspirations of the community and inputting the essential and ethical ones into the school curriculum.

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