

Community Participation and Basic Education Delivery in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which community participation contributes to basic education delivery in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided by four objectives. A survey was carried out, using 135 respondents, randomly selected from five communities in the study area. The main instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, designed to elicit information on the extent of community participation. Respondents were also interviewed orally on possible ways of facilitating higher community participation. Data gathered were analyzed using simple percentages, and subjects' responses were equally collated and reported. Results were presented and discussed in line with the study objectives. Findings reveal that community participation was very low in all the areas of consideration and the different communities sampled. Based on these findings, it was recommended that strategies should be explored for enhancing community participation in the education of their children for more positive results.

1. Introduction

The relationship between education and society is so intricate that it is almost impossible to determine the influence of one on the other. While the society determines what is relevant and desirable for study in school, the school transmits to the young generation that which will ensure social continuity and stability. Unfortunately USAID/Nigeria^[1] sees the quality of basic education in Nigeria as extremely poor, leading to low demand and unacceptably low academic performance. The result is that an estimated seven million children in Nigeria are not enrolled in primary school, and even out of those in the school, less than one third make it to junior secondary school and even fewer proceed to senior secondary school consequently, the literacy and numeracy skills of a reasonable number of children and young adults in Nigeria are limited. This situation depreciates their hope of ever joining the formal work force, which is unfortunate because many

young Nigerians have been brought up to believe that one can only be seen to have been accomplished in life if one is gainfully employed in the formal sector.

USAID/Nigeria^[1] recognizes the role of education as the basis for any meaningful development intervention. The organization equally believes that a literate society will invariably introduce a productive, democratically-minded, active and healthy citizen. Its mission therefore entails designing activities to improve the quality of basic education which will contribute to a sustainable pool of skilled labour, among other issues, realizing the significant role that community members/agencies are capable of playing in basic education delivery, USAID/Nigeria^[1] further supports the creation of policies that enhance community participation in basic education among others, such as girls' education and national reading standards.

All these efforts are indicators of the importance of basic education and emphasize the need for community participation, since the burden of education cannot be left in the hands of government alone. Instruction in school consists basically of what society considers enduring needs and values, which are transmitted to learners as social and cultural skills (Michigan^[2] government documents, retrieved 28th April, 2013). In the same document, it is further noted that the school is potentially fashioned to provide well educated individuals, ready to take on responsibilities as contributing members of the community. Govinda and Diwan^[3] (2003) posit that decentralization is a vital aspect of educational reform and change. To achieve this, effort needs to be directed at bringing the school and community together and involving community members in the development of the school for maximum result. This is because the community participation has the potential to increase awareness levels of members in relation to the needs, aspiration, successes and problems of the school in the context of the society in which it is established. On this basis it is possible to employ available agencies within the community to redress the situation. Community participation is also aimed at strengthening collaboration between communities and education personnel in order to increase the quality and equity of basic education.

Department practice have lately recognized that very little attention has been given to the subject matter of involving the intended beneficiaries of development projects in the planning and execution of such projects (Bamberger 1986)^[4]. Amidst the growing realization of the pitfalls faced by national and regional authorities in effectively managing development programmes (Chambers 1983, Narayan 2000)^{[5] [6]} is the recognition of the need to devolve the functions of central governments to community based organizations and institutions (Bisong, 1996, Ake, 1996)^{[7] [8]} in order to accord greater participation to communities and sustainability for programmes and projects.

The potential benefits of community participation as stakeholders in development projects have been aptly documented by the World Bank wide learning groups on Participatory Development (World Bank, 1994:5)^[9] and include among others:

- A check on profit relevance, particularly for the poor, and appropriateness of the process and products of development efforts
- Greater commitment and stakeholder ownership of policies and projects, and willingness to share costs and interest in sustaining the benefits
- Better efficiency, understanding and improved planning base on the concerns and inputs of a wide array of stakeholders.
- Increased equity by involving the poor and disadvantaged in development efforts
- Strengthened capacity of stakeholders, as a result of their involvement in development efforts.

Community participation has been defined as “an active process by which beneficiary/ client influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or the values they cherish” (Bamberger, 1986:3)^[4]. Three typologies of community participation (Bisong et al, 2007:333 in BSP, 1993:47-87)^[10] are:

- **Mobilization Strategy:** where a project’s plan for action is decided and designed by outsiders, usually through specialist within government or initiating donor organizations before local involvement commences. This is considered to have low prospects of sustainability.
- **Community Development Strategy:** where surveys are carried out or meetings held to better appreciate community or institutional perceptions about a specific problem hitherto identified as a development constraint. Participatory techniques may then be applied to designing and maintaining specific

initiatives or services to solve the problem. Under this typology, the community share some level of control with the external agent. Projects under this regime are capable of generating appreciable levels of community support as outputs may be in accordance with community-felt need.

- **Empowerment Strategy:** where community-based groups, usually assisted by an outside facilitator initiate a learning and empowerment process that enables them define their goals and objectives. Communities often assume responsibility for their actions to meet defined objectives. The focus of control is with the participants. This strategy requires communities to design and implement their activities thus placing the highest level of control and responsibility with them. It is expected to yield potentially higher level of sustainability.

Most community participation strategies fall within the first two typologies identified above. While community participation has been applied to several multi-sectoral programmes including programmes in population, health, water supply, urban development, agriculture and rural development (Paul, 1986; Martin, 1986; Moser, 1986; Uphoff 1986)^{[11] [12] [13] [14]}, there is not much in the literature in its application to the delivery of basic education.

Aref^[15] (2010) argues that participation is concerned with human development and increases people’s sense of control over issues that affect their live⁵. It also helps people to learn how to plan and implement ideas and projects, particularly in today’s society, which is rife with increasing cases of poverty, unemployment and dysfunctional families.

These trends have led to alarming incidences of violence, cultism, militancy, terrorism, and gansterism, among others. Coupled with these is the case of decaying and dilapidated structures and infrastructure in our schools, especially the public schools. Against this backdrop, Aref^[15] (2010) points out that community participation implies bringing various stakeholders in education together in order to effectively resolve educational problems. Citing Lacy et al (2003),^[16] they argue that community participation in educational development has the capacity to support and uphold local culture, tradition, knowledge and skill, as well as create pride in community heritage. It provides opportunity for various people to take part in educational development. Modern society is characterized by gradual disappearance of village-like communities, which in times past supported individuals since they embarked on communal

living and sharing. Weiss, Woodrum, Lopez and Karaemer (1993) cited in Michigan education documents, agree that this has resulted in a growing number of children and families devoid of helping relationships as well as peer and emotional support and access to referral services. The authors further point out that when community participation is all encompassing and inclusive, all stakeholders benefit. The schools enjoy the informed support of the community as members are given the opportunity to contribute to their children's education. Similarly, the community looks forward to an educated and responsible work force, while school staff and community agencies enjoy morale, boost, the result is greater commitment to work and increased productivity as people's efforts seem to yield results. However, Shaeffer^[17] (1992) observes that the degree of community participation is particularly low in socially and economically marginal regions. This may be premised on the fact that education is seen as a symbol of affluence in many third world countries. In addition to this, many third world countries consider education essentially the task of the state. They therefore see no reason why they should bother about how it operates. Govinda & Diwan^[3] reveal that India is characterized by deep-rooted socio-economic divisions, problems, equitable distribution of participation, identifying and defining the community and ensuring the genuine representation of those who are excluded from decision making. The same condition applies to the present area of study. On the need to involve communities in basic education delivery, Olarewaju^[21] (Retrieved 30th Sept. 2013) argues that the reason for failure of most government programmes, is the exclusion of communities at the most critical points of design and implementation. He insisted that community participation in education involves bringing all major stakeholders to discuss the challenges and way forward in tackling educational problems in the society and for effectiveness in various communities. It would involve parents, community leaders, school based organizations (SBO) and teachers to evaluate basic education programmes in terms of planning, supervising, monitoring and evaluation. By so doing, communities and the government together assist and ensure that quality of education given to children would inculcate relevant skills and appropriate values that will enhance their functionality in society in terms of contributing towards national development. Lack of community participation would impede effective basic education delivery. It is worthwhile to note that the higher the level of participation, the more likely it is to achieve educational development and resolve educational problems^[3]. Conversely, when this participation is lacking, a lot of problems are bound to arise as the schools' operations may be frustrated. It is on this premise that this study seeks

to establish the extent to which community participation contributes to basic education delivery in Calabar Education zone with a view to discerning what could be done to encourage greater involvement.

2. Objectives

The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To determine community involvement in the provision of a secure and conducive working environment.
- ii. Ascertain community involvement in the enforcement of values and culture.
- iii. Establish the extent of community participation in provision of infrastructure and support for school projects.
- iv. Determine community involvement in the discipline of students.

3. Methodology

The study is a survey involving five communities, in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 135 respondents selected through purposive sampling technique from the communities. The sample cut across teachers, members of Parents Teachers Association (PTA), community leaders and members of the State Education Board. A questionnaire was the main instrument used to elicit information from the respondents on the objectives under focus. The questionnaire was divided into two major sections. Section A focused on the background information of the respondents like name of community, school, education zone, designation of respondents and age bracket. While section B was further sub-divided into sections to elicit information on the various aspects of communities' involvement in basic education along the objectives defined earlier on. Respondents were also interviewed on how best community participation in basic education delivery could best be fostered. Data gathered were analyzed using simple percentages and the subjects' responses to the interview questions were equally collated and reported.

4. Data presentation and discussion

Objective 1: To determine community involvement in the provision of a secure and conducive working environment.

Table 1: Community's Efforts in Securing Life and Property in School

	Akam kpa	Akpab uyo	Bia se	Cala bar	Odukp ani
Organise vigilante groups	40%	27%	48%	22%	24%
Provide & pay for security personnel	19%	27%	26%	33%	32%
Build a school fence	22%	21%	13%	26%	24%
Secure doors and windows in school	19%	24%	13%	19%	20%

Analyses of responses from the survey data collated above show the various ways and the extent to which communities get involved in providing security for their schools. Results reveal that the commonest way communities get involved is to organize vigilante groups to guard school property. This is indicated by their response pattern as follows Akampka (40%), Akpabuyo (27%), Biase (48%), Calabar (22%) and Odukpani (24%). In securing doors and windows in the school, results revealed that community involvement was very low in Akamkpa and Calabar represented by 19% respectively while Biase indicated 13% involvement, Akpabuyo and Odukpani indicated 24% and 20% respectively. Teachers in some of the schools visited lamented over the rate of thoroughfares across the school compounds by passers-by and the use of the school facilities like toilets by members of the community, because of the unlimited access they have into the school compound, after school and during the holidays. This has increasingly put pressure on the facilities indicated. In providing and paying for security personnel, the result above shows that response is very low in Akamkpa as indicated by 19%. It was

also noted, that on further inquiry, the teachers reported that hooligans take over the school compound as their hide-out for their nefarious and vandalistic activities, as the school compound was not fenced. They emphasized that these strange youths have constituted a threat to their own lives. Response of involvement in Akpabuyo in providing security is 27%, Biase 48%, Calabar 22% and Odukpani 24%. Overall result shows the community involvement in providing security and a conducive environment for learning is still at its lowest ebb. It is obvious from the facts in the data collected, that basic education delivery in the community schools visited is greatly hampered.

Objective 2: Ascertain the community involvement in the enforcement of values and culture.

Table 2a: Measures taken to keep children in school during school hours

	Akam kpa	Akpab uyo	Bia se	Cala bar	Odukp ani
Arrest children found loitering	35%	23%	13%	46%	27%
Impose fines on parents/guardians	3%	10%	26%	8%	12%
Address issues of truancy	45%	45%	22%	33%	20%
Use town criers to warn against truancy particularly on market/festive periods	17%	15%	39%	13%	34%
Lets students know the consequences of leaving school	-	7%	-	-	-
Organise meeting with the community, parents	-	-	-	-	7%

and teachers					
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Results of the data analysis reveal that community involvement in the enforcement of values and culture is low. This analysis is broken down into three sub-variables. The first part of the sub-variable highlighted in the table above reveals the results of the measures taken by the communities to keep children in school during school hours. It shows that organizing meeting between the community, parents and teachers attracted 7% involvement by Odukpani. Overall results show that other communities were nonchalant to these meetings. The teachers lamented that the unruly behavior of the pupils at times were unconsciously fueled by the communities. They solicited the support of the communities in stemming the tide of unruly behavior. Letting students know the consequences of leaving school, have no support from four communities except Akpabuyo that registered 7% involvement. Using town criers to warn truants indicated a response rate of 17% for Akamkpa, 15% for Akpabuyo, 39% for Biase, 13% for Calabar and 34% of Odukpani. A lot more participation is seen in addressing truancy issues across the communities as indicated by Akamkpa and Akpabuyo 45% respectively, Biase 22%, Calabar 33% and Odukpani 20% while imposition of fines on parents and guardians of erring children attracts low involvement by the communities. This is demonstrated by the response patterns of Akamkpa 3%, Akpabuyo 10%, Biase 26%, Calabar 8% and Odukpani 2%. Rather, arresting children found loitering seems to attract more participation of the communities as evidenced by Akamkpa 35%, Akpabuyo 23%, Biase 13%, Calabar 46%, Odukpani 27%. The above result suggests that there is need for more involvement of the communities in the delivery of basic education by enforcing values and cultures. It was observed that one of the challenges that plague primary schools, particularly in the rural areas is the issue of truancy, particularly on market and festive periods. Teachers seem to have been overwhelmed by this cankerworm called truancy; they requested the efforts of the communities to help keep the children in school for effective delivery of the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

Table 2b: Handling cases of maladjusted behavior of students

	Akamkpa	Akpabuyo	Biase	Calabar	Odukpani
Investigate & apply appropriate	48%	645	37%	60%	43%

iate penalty					
Punish culprits publicly	17%	21%	22%	4%	10%
Punish those who insult their teacher	34%	3%	305	28%	33%
Invite culprits to public for counseling	-	12%	4%	8%	13%
Expel student as examples to others	-	-	7%	-	-

The second sub-variable reveals results of community's involvement in handling cases of maladjusted behavior of students. The table above shows more involvement in investigating and applying appropriate penalties to students with maladjusted behaviors. Evidence shows that Akpabuyo and Calabar come higher by 64% and 60% respectively, while Akamkpa, Odukpani and Biase follow by 48%, 43% and 37% respectively. This method appears to be the most effective way of handling issues of maladjusted behaviours of students, although the level of involvement in terms of percentage response is still low. In punishing culprits publicly, Biase (22%) and Akpabuyo (21%) seem to be the two communities involved in doing that, while very minimal support is from Akamkpa, Calabar and Odukpani represented by 17%, 4% and 10% respectively. The result further reveals that communities are involved in punishing students who insult their teachers, except in Akamkpa where only 4% involvement is attained. While in expulsion of students as a deterrent to others attracts a very significant non-involvement by the communities except in Biase (7%). This result confirms the probe response by the teachers in the communities that the issue of maladjusted behaviour by pupils and students are on the increase daily. They solicit more involvement by the communities in combating unwholesome behaviours and exterminating a culture of violence which is capable of disrupting a congenial environment for basic education delivery.

Table 2 c: Reward of hardworking students by the community

	Akamkpa	Akpabuyo	Biase	Calabar	Odukpani
Award scholarship and prizes	71%	64%	64%	68%	80%
Sponsoring honours list for students	11%	21%	5%	8%	-
Giving deserved students opportunity to address others	11%	3%	18%	16%	11%
Appreciating deserved students at community function	7%	12%	13%	8%	9%

Analysis of the third sub-variable represented in the table above reveals communities' level of involvement in promoting academic excellence, by rewarding hardworking students who have distinguished themselves. Most communities show involvement in awarding of scholarship and prizes to students demonstrated by the high response patterns of Odukpani (80%), Akamkpa (71%), Akpabuyo and Biase 64% respectively. On inquiry, the teachers confirmed that the community is involved in prize-giving days especially during inter-house sports competition and open days. However, very low involvement is recorded in sponsoring honours list represented by 11%, 21%, 5% and 8% respectively for Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Biase and Calabar. The teachers described the low involvement level, as resulting from the perception of the communities, that honours list for students is purely academic and teachers' responsibility. The results also recorded low involvement levels in giving deserved students opportunity to address others during inter-house sports and other school festivals. The indicated involvement of Akamkpa (11%), Akpabuyo (3%), Biase (18%), Calabar (16%) and Odukpani (11%) were made possible as observed by the teachers through the inclusion of such item on the programme of activities of school events. The same low response is noticed in appreciating distinguished pupils and students at community functions. A further inquiry highlighted

the emphasis of the teachers that efforts to promote academic culture and excellence is largely the initiative of the schools and not the communities. They requested a joint effort from both the school and community to make basic education effective.

Objective 3: Establish the extent of community participation in provision of infrastructure and support for school projects.

Table 3: Essential inputs provided by the community

	Akamkpa	Akpabuyo	Biase	Calabar	Odukpani
Classroom blocks	17%	19%	21%	16%	19%
School Library	7%	10%	6%	8%	10%
Laboratory	6%	6%	3%	5%	6%
First aids kit	6%	6%	6%	10%	6%
Good play ground	12%	12%	10%	8%	12%
Play Equipment	4%	6%	7%	8%	6%
Seats and Tables for Teachers	13%	12%	14%	11%	12%
Desk for students	13%	12%	16%	10%	12%
Core textbooks	5%	5%	5%	9%	5%
School Bus	5%	5%	1%	4%	5%
Drinking water	11%	9%	10%	11%	9%

Summary of responses in Table 3 on essential inputs in infrastructure and support for school projects provided by the different communities, show very low participation. From the responses in terms of classroom blocks in Akamkpa community, only 17% of the respondents indicated participation; Akpabuyo (19%), Biase (21%), Calabar (16%) and Odukpani (19%). In terms of school library, Akamkpa community showed 7% participation, which is quite low. Respondents from other communities equally indicated very low participation. Akpabuyo (10%), Biase (6%), Calabar (8%) and Odukpani (10%). Participation in provision of laboratory is also very low- Akamkpa (6%), Akpabuyo (6%), Biase (3%), Calabar (5%) and Odukpani (6%). For provision of first aid kits, percentage of responses show that except for Calabar, which scored 10%, all other communities scored 6%. However, the participation is still very low, in terms of good playground for schools. The

percentage scores revealed that involvement by Akamkpa, Akpabuyo and Odukpani was 12% each, while that of Biase was 10% and Calabar (8%). On citing these purported play grounds during the data collection process, the researchers discovered that they were in most cases uneven open fields, which are often rough and devoid of grass. This made the children quite dirty after play and they at times sustain injuries from the rough ground. Responses in respect of play equipment revealed 4% by Akamkpa, Akpabuyo (6%), Biase (7%), Calabar (8%) and Odukpani (6%), which are all quite low. Equally low is participation in provision of seats and tables for teachers indicated by Akamkpa (13%), Akpabuyo (12%), Biase (14%), Calabar (11%) and Odukpani (12%). Provision of desks for students also has low percentage scores by Akamkpa (13%), Akpabuyo (12%), Biase (16%), Calabar (10%) and Odukpani (12%). Percentage scores for provision of core textbooks was very low as four of the communities scored 5% respectively, while only Calabar scored 9%, which is still very low. The rating for provision of school bus was quite low as Akamkpa, Akpabuyo and Odukpani scored 4%. Provision of drinking water was equally very poor, despite the importance of water as a life support system (Bisong, Oden & Bassey 2012)^[20]. In this area, Akamkpa scored 11%, Akpabuyo (9%), Biase (10%), Calabar (11%) and Odukpani (9%). The result of data analysis reiterates the earlier findings of Bisong, Oden and Bassey (2012), that many schools in Cross River State lacked very fundamental and essential facilities that promote a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. The above trend is not far from the fact that members of the public in the study area see education as solely the affair of government. There has not been a clarion call from the communities visited to rally support for the degrading facilities and dilapidating structures. Rather there was a general apathy observed from them that seems to suggest that government should do something, because it is their school.

Objective 4: Determine community involvement in the discipline of students.

Table 4: Community’s Response to Teachers’ Disciplinary Measures on Students

	Aka mkp a	Akp abu yo	Bi as e	Cal aba r	Odu kpa ni
Encourage teachers by thanking them	52 %	60%	45 %	70 %	59 %
Quarelling with teachers	10 %				3%
Fighting and accousting the		3%			

teachers					
Complaining to the school authority	34 %	34%	50 %	30 %	34 %
withdrawing children from school	3%	3%	5 %		3%

The table above reveals result of communities’ involvement on teachers’ disciplinary measures on students. An overall result still depicts low involvement. However, their encouragement to teachers on disciplinary action taken is on the high side as shown by Akamkpa (52%), Akpabuyo (60%), Biase (45%), Calabar (70%) and Odukpani (59%), as well as complaining to the school authority as indicated by 34%, 50% and 30% respectively by the various communities. The teachers explained that communities report teachers, when they perceive that the disciplinary measures given were too harsh. On the contrary, it is highlighted above that interference is mild or minimal in quarrelling with teachers. It is only in Akamkpa and Odukpani that minimal response was indicated by 10% and 3% respectively. Response to fighting and accousting teachers on the way for disciplinary actions taken on the students was minimally observed in Akpabuyo by 3% of the respondents’ involvement, while response by withdrawing children from school was very insignificant as indicated by 3% response in Akamkpa, Akpabuyo and Odukpani respectively, while Calabar recorded no such response.

Although the teachers from interaction, commended the communities for their support, but insisted that the issue of discipline is very central to the effective delivery of basic education, and would therefore encourage the communities to be more involved by adopting other positive measures to instill a culture of discipline which is complementary to hard work and excellence.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is pertinent to note that to promote community participation for effective basic education delivery, there is need to engage community members in dialogue. Education policy makers should also take cognizance of the inherent capacity of community members to contribute to educational development in their community. Obviously, by engaging in collaborative partnerships, schools and communities can ensure a promising future for the children, they are nurturing. Bekoe and Quartey (2013)^[18] posit that the quality of any basic school depends largely on the kind of community participate in school activities. Education gives a nation a sense of purpose. Programs aimed to

increase participation in basic education for maximum benefits should include:

- Decentralization of basic education. This implies management shifting responsibility of education into the hands of local education authorities in order to encourage grass root involvement. This will better enhance the solution of problems before they escalate beyond control.
- Community participation in education decreases achievement gap, and encourages monitoring and evaluation of programme objectives and deliverables.

Michigan government documents^[2] (2013) rightly assess that collaborative effort is hinged on the notion that it is easier for children to develop and learn with the support of strong families, which also enjoy support from individuals and institutions in their communities. For problems of the society to be solved, there must be a conducive environment for effective schooling. It therefore follows that the school as a social institution must be protected from total collapse. On an encouraging note, Mitrofanova^[19](2013) observes that today's leaders in education, business and community development are beginning to realize that schools alone cannot prepare our youth for productive adulthood. But the school and the community must work closely together to achieve mutual goals.

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