



SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP: PROPULSION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the impact of school community relationship as propulsion for quality assurance practices in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study is an impulse which presents and explains such conceptual issues as: education, quality assurance, and the roles of government in planned curriculum, school and community partnership building, Importance of school community relationship, school community partnership building, school management and leadership and effective quality assurance of teacher and student. The paper therefore sought and found quality assurance in education as a systematic management, monitoring and evaluation procedure adopted to measure the performance of school administration, and improvement drives coming from principals/teacher quality and instructional effectiveness as essential factors in the classroom as inputs/outputs drive. Furthermore, it recommended that Parents and teachers should not allow the management of their schools to the hands of the school administrators alone hence their contribution is vital and necessary for the development of the schools. School managers should create a conducive environment for old students associations to effectively operate in their schools and where they are not in existence, the school heads should find ways of bringing the old students together for the benefit of the school and the community in general. Schools should also provide enough advisory committee members that can be able to guide both teachers and learners to achieve their objectives in life and the plans of the school. Then recommended that, partnership envisaged cuts across different, but mutually inclusive groups of stakeholders: the private sector, international development agencies and families of learners being the

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utmost benefactors of the products of the educational system, who needed to be co-opted into the pursuit of quality education in secondary schools in Nigeria by government.

Keywords: education, objectives of secondary education, quality assurance, school community partnership

1. Introduction

Education is a vital tool for inculcation of the right values and skills necessary for the development of individuals and the society at large. It is widely acknowledged as a major instrument for promoting socio-economic, political and cultural development. It is an indispensable instrument for human progress, empowerment and affecting national development. The Federal in its opening statement on the National Policy on Education, maintained that “*education in Nigeria is an instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development*”. (FGN, 2013). This suggests that a nation that lacks a sound educational philosophy and culture stands the risk of decay whereas a nation that sees to the development of its education is bound to achieve great success (Amaechi, Anamonye, Onuoha and Okwu, 2012). Every nation of the world placed educational development at the top most level among other social service providers in the state. Abdulyaqin and Durosaro (2017) would say that the status of education as both a service and a business has made the educational sector retain a place of priority in the budgetary allocation of any national. The type of service provided by education is in different levels, thus in Nigeria, we have pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels. With the launch of UBE, and the policy to eradicate illiteracy and to ensure that all children of school age are in school, the government alone could not chatter for the provision of educational services in this country thus have allowed the participation of voluntary agencies and private partnership in education.

To buttress this, Abdulyaqin and Durosaro (2017) opine that even though investment in education comes from both public and private bodies, it is the role of the government to create an enabling environment for private participation in the educational sector. The type of service provided by education is in different levels, thus in Nigeria, we have pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels. With the launch of UBE, and the policy to eradicate illiteracy and to ensure that all children of school age are in school, the government alone could not chatter for the provision of educational services in this country thus have allowed the participation of voluntary agencies and private partnership in education. Ayeni, (2012) sees education as the transmission of knowledge and worthwhile values from one person to another in the school.

School as an open system and a social organization thrives on the effective interrelationship within it and with its relevant community. What happens in a school affects the community, and what happens in the community affects the schools (Nwankwo, Nwokafor, Ogunsanwo & Ighalo, 1985) as sighted in Bala (2013). This means

that the community builds its schools and the schools build their communities (Sidhu, 2007). Therefore, school community interdependence is unbreakable. This means that school community relationship is very important in secondary schools because schools cannot exist in isolation but in cooperation with the community in which they find themselves (Ihebereme, 2008). The success or failure of secondary schools depends to a large extent, on the level of relationship the schools maintain with their neighbouring communities. This makes it demanding on the school administrators to identify the key areas of school community relationship between their schools and the host communities. Miller (2011). The school in pursuit of quality requires a lot of human, materials, physical facilities and financial resources for building the capacity of the education system to be able to deliver high quality and relevant curriculum to learners of all ages. To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote long life learning opportunities there must be recognition of measurable learning outcomes in schools especially, in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

A community is a group of people that interact and support each other, and are bound by shared experiences or characteristics, a sense of belonging, and often by their physical proximity. A community inherently consists of a group of people. It cannot be established by a sole individual. For instance, geographical location (e.g., neighborhood) is often a common element to various definitions of community (Miller, 2011; Sampson, 2001; Vaughan, 2011). Physical proximity was the most frequently reported theme in the reviewed literature and the focus groups. Researchers often focus on proximity as a necessary attribute which bounds people in their communities (Parsons, 1960; Sampson, 2001).

Community was also at times viewed as a tangible entity. For instance, if a person defines their community by the place where they live, then their neighborhood is the tangible representation of their community. Conversely, symbols, such as shared rituals and language, may define membership to a community. While a unifying definition was proposed, it is important to remember that community is at its core a personal experience of belonging to a group; therefore, definitions of community are relative and grounded in a specific context (Mahar et al., 2013). In Nigeria today, there should be great concern about the state of schooling at all levels. This is rooted in the realization that literacy levels and academic achievement determines an individual's job attainment and earning as well as the general economic well being of the society. Moreover, the low quality of social skills, innovation and creativity acquired in schools accounts for the poor quality of education in the country.

Perhaps the greatest culprit for the destruction of the educational enterprise in Nigeria has been excessive government involvement and the violation of the law of subsidiaries, which states that in each society a higher authority should not usurp or appropriate to itself functions and duties that can be adequately performed by a lower authority. Government has its hands in virtually every facet, feature and dimension of education at all levels, from the approval to the construction of schools, colleges and universities, from the establishment of curricula and the setting of standards and

inspection to the appointment, discipline and removal of school authorities, and from the fixing of salaries and allowances to the determination of timetables for terms and semesters, etc. This anomaly is responsible in large measure for the collapse of educational institutions and the failure of the educational enterprise in Nigeria, hence the need for community participation in quality assurance education provision.

FGN (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) holds high the stated objectives of secondary school systems in Nigeria aptly. Specifically, the school system which is geared towards catering for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles.

2. Objectives of Secondary Education System in Nigeria

The objectives of secondary education system as contained in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) are: Secondary education should provide the learner with opportunities to:

- 1) acquire necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for the development of the self and the nation;
- 2) promote love for and loyalty to the nation;
- 3) promoter harmonious coexistence among the peoples of Kenya;
- 4) develop mentally, socially, morally, physically and spiritually;
- 5) enhance understanding and respect for own and other people's cultures and their place in contemporary society;
- 6) enhance understanding and appreciation of interrelationships among nations;
- 7) promote positive environmental and health practices;
- 8) build a firm foundation for further education and training;
- 9) develop ability for enquiry, critical thinking and rational judgment;
- 10) develop into a responsible and socially well-adjusted person;
- 11) promote acceptance and respect for all persons;
- 12) enhance enjoyment in learning;
- 13) identify individual talents and develop them;
- 14) build a foundation for technological and industrial development.

The realization of these objectives as held by Okolo (2015) hinges on quality assurance indicators: quality of teachers via professional development, provision of infrastructure and creation of conducive learning environment, resource inputs, teaching process, classroom management, academic assessment, principals' supervision roles, students' commitment to learning and the quality learning outcomes.

3. Importance of School Community Relationship

The processes of social interaction are the basis for creating social relationships. According to Calhoun, Light and Keller (1998) social relationship is relatively enduring patterns of interaction between two or more people. 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. It is the degree of understanding and goodwill, which exists between the school and the community (Okorie, Ememe & Egu 2009). School as a training centre helps develop pupils into efficient social beings 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 habits. School interacts with people of the community and is linked with the larger society.

The function of the traditional school was to transmit the social heritage of the community. The school has to arrange for the students' opportunities to participate in social services, health campaigns, development plans, and other public activities. This school is not a place where only the children are educated by the whole community. The school building, furniture, equipment, human resources, etc. are public property. They should be unhesitatingly placed at the disposal of the community after school hours. The school teachers should also come forward and place their knowledge and experience at the disposal of community and assume the role of guides and leaders of the social group. The school library and play grounds can especially be of significant service to the community (Ihebereme, 2008).

The school also helps arrange public lectures, exhibitions, fairs, tournaments, symposia, discussions, recreational programmes and other social functions that involve the community as a whole. The school grounds may be thrown open to the other children of the locality who have no other place for playing. The school will serve as a society in miniature-a small but ideal community. It will be a model for the society around. It will be the people's school, but at the same time it will give new direction to the people and community. It will act as a watchdog against social degeneration. By enhancing its own status and contribution it will enhance the status of the community as a whole (Sidhu, 2007). The increase in single-parent and dual income families... coupled with the gradual disappearance of village-like communities... leaves a growing number of children and families woefully isolated from helping relationships, peer and emotional support, and access to referral services (Fiore, 2006). According to him, "*When families, schools and community institutions (e.g. local business, community colleges and health agencies) collectively agree upon their goals and decide how to reach them, everyone benefits.*" He identifies the following as the importance of school community relationship:

- 1) Schools enjoy the informed support of families and community members. Families experience many opportunities to contribute to their children's education, and communities look forward to educating a responsible workforce. Benefits accrue to the staff of schools and community agencies as well: they can observe boosts in morale, heightened engagement in their work, and a feeling that their work will net results.
- 2) Communities can provide schools with a context and environment that can either complement or reinforce the values, culture, and learning the school provides for their students or negates everything the school strives to accomplish.

- 3) Communities can furnish schools and students in them with crucial financial support systems as well as the social and cultural values necessary for success and survival in contemporary society.
- 4) Communities have the potential to extend a variety of opportunities to students and to their families-social, cultural and vocational.
- 5) Schools, in turn, offer communities a focal point of educational services for children. Schools have the potential to build well-educated citizens ready to take on responsibilities as contributing community members.

This indicated that communities play important roles ensuring the academic performance of students and provision of facilities in schools. In support of this, Koko and Nwiyi (2006) stressed that communities should be able to execute programmes that will provide resources, manpower and funds to the schools.

Development of education therefore has to be considered as a joint venture between parents and government, particularly now that the latter welcomes and encourages such gestures (Phan & Cao, 1973). While Oladepo (1988) seems to be in support of this argument:

“The government will receive no more requests from parents asking to build more schools because they have already felt that they are responsible for their own community.... They will therefore play a more important role after having acquired a better knowledge of education and of their own community problems (p. 109). Finally it is very obvious that the mill development goals awareness project through the NYSC has been a vital instrument to the transformation of several rural communities on UBE in Nigeria with several corps members initiating and implementation development project that taught live of people at the grass root level. Some example includes building of health centres in rural communities, teaching baking skills to women in poor communities and help them access credit facilities to build a bakery among many others” (p.43)

Parent participation in school activities helps parents to have a more positive view of the school children have better attendance, better behaviour and high academic achievement motivation. Parents need to be supportive by involving themselves in school programmes and activities such as Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, athletic events, plays, parties and other related engagements. Despite all the benefits associated with such involvement, many parents do not regard engagement in school programmes with all seriousness (Okubanjo, 2006).

4. Importance of Parents’ Involvement in School Areas

Importance of Parents’ Involvement in school areas as follows:

- 1) When parents are enabled to become effective partners in their child’s education, performance in schools where children are failing improves dramatically.

- 2) Schools that work well with families, where parents are involved: Outperform identical programmes without parent and family involvement; Have improved teachers' morale and higher rating of teachers by parents; and Have more support from families and a better reputation in the community.
- 3) When parents are involved, students: Achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnical/racial background or the parents' education level; Exhibit more positive attitudes as well as decreased violence and antisocial behaviour.
- 4) Parental involvement early in the educational process results in more powerful effects.
- 5) Different types of parent/family involvement produce different gains: When parents collaborate with the teacher, educators hold higher expectations of students and higher opinions of the parents; Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better because parents and professionals are bridging the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.

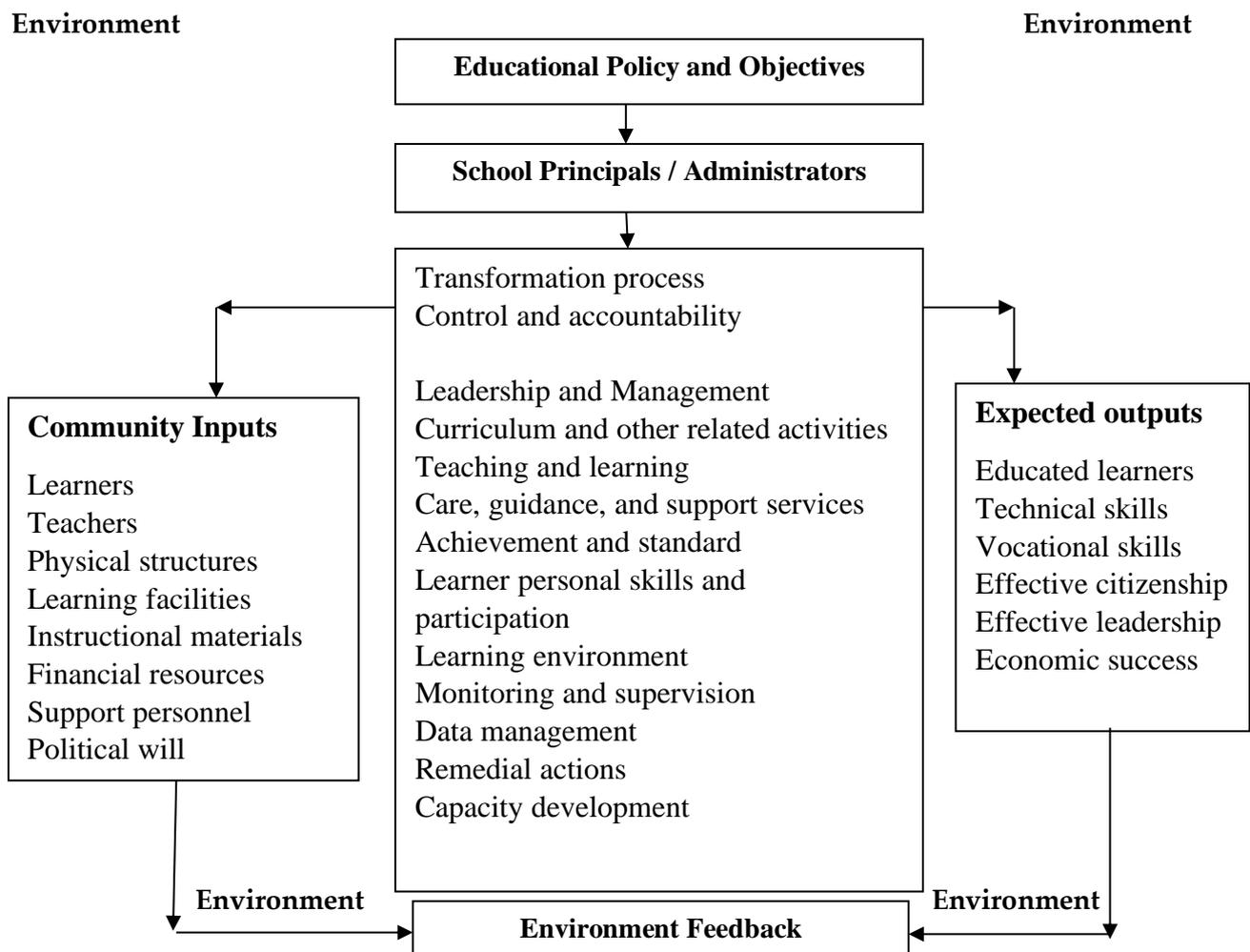
5. Academic Quality Assurance

Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argue that quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their slated objectives. Academic quality assurance can be referred to as (Okebukola, 2004) ensuring that all the processes involved in the instruction of students remain standardized at all times. The connotations by authorities on quality assurance are numerous. Major views are on programmes for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met. Okolo (2015) opined that Quality Assurance is therefore, the efficient management, monitoring, evaluation and reviews of the resource inputs and transformation process (teaching and learning) to produce quality outputs (students) that meet set standards and expectations of the society. In another vein, Menyaga and Rihanat (2014) defined quality assurance as a means of putting in place appropriate structures, legislations, supervision of personnel and materials in order to ensure that set minimum standards are attained, sustained and seen to have meaningful impact. Furthermore, Adenipeku (2013) observed that education quality assurance is designed to disseminate information on the best practices. Other authorities that corroborated these positions are; Ugwu and Obom Egbulem (2012) in their view said quality assurance is the achievement of the degree of excellence specified of a programme. Bamaiyi (2010) view it as a paradigm shift from school inspection towards high standards service delivery by teachers, instructors and significant stakeholders and learners. These definitions raise the issue of promoting "good value" in the institutional management and supervision of teaching-learning processes to produce quality learners from the school system.

6. The Roles of Government in Maintaining Quality Standards in Education

This Quality system management standard in the education sector is supervised from the Ministry of Education, the board and right in the schools. The supervisory roles and its operational structure, its components consist of the policy objectives, and the programme schedule for the expected community inputs going through the transformation process for the expected outputs. Planned curriculum is one of the four major aspects of curriculum. It is also known as curriculum on the paper, Igbokwe (2009) viewed it as the official education policy which contains the learning goals of the educational system. These goals include both the specific and general goals of education, as well as the private goals of individual learners. As such everything that affects teachers, learners and the process is carefully planned and included in the curriculum bearing in mind societal needs. The education quality assurance schematic representation below shows the inputs and outputs drives:

Figure 1: Education Quality Assurance Schematic



Source: Question Assurance Instrument for Basic Secondary Education in Nigeria (2009); Ayeni, A.J. International Journal of Research Studies in Education 2012.

7. School and Community Partnership Building

School-community partnership is a driving force behind quality assurance practice. Okolo(2015) posited that it aimed at improving the quality of school management, learning environment, curriculum delivery and students' learning outcomes 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' leadership, Ministries, School Board, Individuals and other social institutions). This synergy is necessary because a virile and responsible school-community relationship is a building block for the attainment of specified standards and set goals and production of quality outputs that will satisfy the expectations of the institution's customers- the society (Ayeni, 2012). School and community partnership is a two-way process of relationship in which members of the school and communities share common values, aspirations, beliefs, responsibilities, obligations and develop mutual respect, understanding and ways of working together to ensure effective management, instructional practices and improvement in students' learning outcomes. The partnership enables the community members and agencies to help schools with extra learning resources, enabling environments, and builds teachers' capacities by co-opting competent and professional educationists from the community into the school-based teacher development committee to help improve teachers' capacities for effective instructional performance and improvement in students' academic performance.

Positions taken by other writers like Ugwoke, et al (2014) is that School community relationship is an important aspect of school organization. It involves school staff, tutorial and non-tutorial and every member of the community where the school is situated. Also, Oboegbulem et al (2012) defined school community relations as the degree of understanding and goodwill between the school staff and the community. Oboegbulem further posited that school as a social institution is designed to serve the needs of the society. These authors stressed that the school administrator, the staff and the community are to be involved in taking decisions that may affect the school and the community.

8. Schools Management and Leadership

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) defines 'principal ship' as a leading learning community'. In the learning community, staff members meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, work together to solve problems, reflect on their job, and take responsibilities for what to learn, hence to have credibility as principal the person should be a practicing teacher.

The association went further to say that: *"Principals are the first teachers who work with others within and outside the schools; who are highly visible in the school and stay close to the instructional process; they are expected to spend an average of 20 percent of their time in a week on teaching; they possess skill of resource provider especially, instructional resource.*

Principals are communicators of progress and challenges to stakeholders because of their and visible presence in school and stay close to the instructional process." (Okolo, 2015; Stahl, 1998 & Weindling, 1990).

Quality Assurance school principals establish clearly defined goals for academic achievement, and they concentrated their available resources and their operations on attaining them, provide adequate time-table for teaching, routine check of lesson notes and subject diaries, observation of classroom instruction, continuously monitor students' progress to determine whether their instructional goals are being met, provide feedback on student performance, motivation of teachers for improved performance, reinforcement of students for excellent performance, maintenance and appropriate usage of physical facilities, enforcement of discipline to ensure peaceful atmosphere, capacity building of teachers for effective service delivery, provision of instructional facilities and materials, motivating teachers for optimum productivity and building synergy with relevant stakeholders to enhance quality teaching-learning processes.

Ryan (2015) opined that the teachers are expected to provide essential inputs like adequate planning of lesson notes, effective delivery of lessons, improvisation of instructional materials, adequate keeping of records and appropriate discipline of students to produce and enhance expected learning achievement in secondary schools. To this note on assuring quality, an effective teacher who prepares quality students must be in place.

9. Quality Assurance of Students and Teacher Effectiveness

Literature is replete with a variety of definitions on teacher effectiveness. To this end, some Views have been expressed by some people that teachers are born. Mkpa (2010) regards this statement as being less than half-truth. He maintains that teaching is learnt, so if one learns to teach with a high degree of skills, one does it because teaching is like craft or an art that is worthy of acquiring the powers, skills, techniques and the sensitivity to do it extremely well. Ukeje (1995) holds the view that teachers may be born, but a good teacher is born and made. This is because teaching is both an art and a science. Some aspects of the art of teaching may be innate, but the science of teaching has to be cultivated. Because one mastering something does not all necessarily follow that one can effectively transmit that something to a third party. Although some people have both abilities, many do not have them. Fortunately, the second' Ability to transmit can be acquired if one is not lucky enough to be born with it. Simply put, an effective teacher should be able to interact expertly with students so as to bring about intended learning outcomes. An effective teacher is also expected to have a broad educational background anchored with the pedagogical know-how in one one's field of specialization to inspire students towards genuine learning. Smith in Obih (2009) is of the view that an effective teacher should be prepared in four areas of knowledge;

- Command of theoretical knowledge about learning and human behaviour;
- Display of attitudes that foster learning and genuine human relationship;

- Command of knowledge in the subject matter to be taught; and
- Control of technical skills of teaching that facilitate pupils' learning.

The proper monitoring and evaluation of students' performance provides regular feedback on students' performance. Fassasi (2006) opined that the students on their own end are not dormant in the quality assurance process as they are expected to attend classes punctually and regularly, possess necessary learning materials, develop good reading culture, participate actively in class exercises and take-home assignments, cultivate sustainable interest in co-curricular activities and demonstrate cordial and positive interpersonal relationships in order to achieve the expected learning outcome in schools (Ayeni, 2012). We must always note that, resultant effect is the poor teaching and learning culminates into a large scale examination malpractice and abysmal performance of students in external examinations, which depicts non-realization of sustainable quality assurance in teaching and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools (Adeniji, 2002; Ogunu, 2001).

10. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, Parents' Teachers' Associations, Old Students' Associations, school committees and school board of governors have significant impact on the management of secondary schools. The researchers recommended that Parents and teachers should not allow the management of their schools to the hands of the school administrators alone, hence their contribution is vital and necessary for the development of the schools. School managers should create a conducive environment for old students associations to effectively operate in their schools and where they are not in existence, the school heads should find ways of bringing the old students together for the benefit of the school and the community in general. Schools should also provide enough advisory committee members that can be able to guide both teachers and learners to achieve their objectives in life and the plans of the school. Finally, Community participation enhances smooth running of school in Nigeria. Therefore, it is pertinent to inculcate community relationship in the educational development of the society.

11. Recommendations

The partnership envisaged cuts across different but mutually inclusive groups of stakeholders. It is expected that the partnership structure will include the following:

- A principal who represents the empirical relevance of the totality of standards provides teacher internal capacity development as instructional processes are planned.
- Principals should supply rich and productive learning resources inputs; and give effective school management to turn around curriculum should possess the ability to measure the learning outcomes so as to enhance quality education.

- The dependency of self-ability of principal and teachers not to involve the community in decision making should be deemphasized.
- The private sector, International Development Agencies such as UNESCO, USAID, DFID and families of learners being the utmost benefactors of the products of the educational system, needed to be co-opted into the pursuit of quality education in secondary schools in Nigeria by the government.

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