PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS ON PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to find out the perception of principals on parents' involvement in the management of public secondary schools and the challenges of involving them in school management practices. The study area was Cross River State of Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The survey research design was adopted for the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 principals (120 males and 80 females) from a population of 232 principals. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher and titled "Parents' Involvement in School-Based Management Questionnaire (PISBMQ)" for principals to assess the extent of parents' involvement in school management practices. It was a 4-point Likert scale which comprised 27 items. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.75, using Cronbach method of reliability estimate.The data for the research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while data for the hypotheses were analyzed using independent t-test statistics. The results of the study revealed that parents, to some extent, were involved in school-based management practices. The findings showed that parents were mostly involved in partnering with school to improve students' discipline, followed by involvement in policy/decision making, and the school development projects, with involvement in financial supports to school being the least. Generally, principals identified parental apathy, lack of time and expertise in school administration, working parents, and poor socio-economic background of parents as major challenges in involving parents in school management practices. The study further showed that male and female principals did not differ significantly in their assessment of parents' involvement in school-based management practices. Rural school principals assessed parents as being more actively involved in school management than urban school principals. Premised on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that school principals should create invitational school environments for parents. They should communicate regularly with parents and utilized educated community leaders as resource persons to the school to encourage parents to participate actively in school management.

Keywords: Perception, Principal, Parents' Involvement, School-Based Management.

1. Introduction

Secondary Education is a type of education children receive after primary education and before higher education. In Nigeria, the two broad aims of secondary education are preparation of the individual for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education. The objectives of secondary education as outlined by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) include among others to inspire students with the desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence and to raise a generation of people which can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour and live as good citizens. In order to achieve these laudable aims and objectives, secondary schools need effective management and leadership. They need school administrators (principals) who can mobilize stakeholders; parents, teachers, students and the community to get involved meaningfully in the operations, activities and development projects of the schools.

Incidentally, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has recognized the importance of parents' involvement in school management when it stated in the National Policy on Education that "close participation and involvement of the communities, at the local level in the administration and management of schools will be encouraged" (FRN, 2013). Thus, parents' involvement in school management is not entirely new in the Nigerian educational system. It has been in existence for several years. This is evident in the Federal Government approval of the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations in Schools to assist in the administration of schools for effectiveness and efficiency. Today, this association is found in all schools at all levels of education in the country. Thus, the association is seen as an instrument for the enhancement of parents' involvement in the educational process.

Parents are expected to contribute to the provision and management of school facilities, raise funds for development projects, assist in maintaining discipline in schools, attending school activities and attending Parent-Teacher Association meetings regularly. They are expected to participate in school decision or policy making and in the formulation of school rules and regulations. A comprehensive involvement of parents in school-based management is a pre-requisite for improving the culture of teaching and learning in schools (Tshabalala, 2013). An effective organization of parents' involvement in School-Based Management (SBM) can create parent-friendly schools and effective home-school communication.

School-Based Management therefore, means integrating the voices of parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders in school management in a formal manner. Caldwell (2005) defines school-based management as the systematic decentralization to the school level of authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations within the framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standard and accountability. The main theme of school-based management is decentralization of power from central to school authorities in decision making. Caldwell (2005) maintains that decentralization gives schools more power to impact positively in improving schools' performance and effectiveness. This means that involvement of parents in decision making in areas such as school discipline, setting of school goals and objectives and school infrastructural facilities can lead to improved school performance. According to World Bank (2008), the objectives of implementing school-based management are:

i)   To enhance parents' and communities' participation in school management and administration.
ii)   To heighten principals' and teachers' empowerment
iii)   To build local capacities.
iv)   To enhance the quality and efficiency of schools that directly improves students' performance.

These objectives depict that parents' involvement in school-based management has the potential of creating better quality and effective schools, accountable not only to the management system, but also to school communities. In support of this assertion,Ismail and Abdullah (2013) reports that with involvement of parents in SBM, the role of school principals shifts into 3 basic forms namely:

i)   Distributing leadership responsibilities and developing collaborative decision-making processes.
ii)   Enabling and supporting teachers' success through a democratic, participative and consultative management styles.
iii)   Broadening the school communities through expanding networking and public relation activities with external constituents and cooperating with the school board and the parents.

Thus, parents' participation in school management provides them with opportunities to collaborate with schools. It has a positive impact on the teaching and learning process when there is an active and frequent contacts between parents and school administration in improving school financial accountability (Koros, Peter, Ngware, Sang & Anthony, 2009). Involvement of parents in school management provides opportunities to both parents and teachers to discuss and negotiate on effective ways of improving their children's education standard. Parents are the closest people to their wards and therefore, they have better understanding of students' behavior and needs. Their participation in school management will help to improve students' welfare and performance in schools.

However, the extent to which parents participate in secondary school activities and administration has become a matter of serious concern. The trend now in Cross River State secondary schools make one to wonder if parents are still participating and making useful contributions to the management of schools. Several instances abound where students with their uniforms go to school very late. This is an indication that school-home partnership is not effective. In some schools, teaching and learning go on in dilapidated buildings and libraries are not available in some secondary schools in the state. Lack of well - equipped laboratories, adequate classrooms and other essential facilities characterized some of the secondary schools. In some schools, the principals do not provide invitational school environments to encourage parents to participate in school governance. Premised on this background, the researcher was motivated to investigate the extent of parents' involvement in school-based management as perceived by principals and the challenges faced by school principals in involving parents in school management.

2. Literature Review

Parents' involvement in School-Based Management (SBM) has been widely recognized by countries throughout the world and the benefits arising from parent-school partnership are greatly supported by researches (Booth & Dunn, 1996 &Cairney, 2000). In a study conducted by Wolfendale and Bastiani (2000) and Wolfendale (2002), it was revealed that parents' participation in school management enhanced school effectiveness. This was supported by the work of Ng (1999) who reported a significant relationship between parental involvement and school improvement in Hong Kong. According to Ismail and Abdullah (2013), parents' involvement in school management helps to improve the principals' and parents' as well as students' work satisfaction because it possesses a high potency which provides space to teachers, parents and occasionally, to community members or students to express themselves in school decision making processes. In their study on Malaysian autonomous schools, Ismail and Abdullah (2013) found that the involvement of parents in school policy-making and other school activities were relatively high. The study further revealed that parents provided moral and material supports to schools, showed concern towards their children learning process, cooperated with schools to improve students' discipline and general school improvement. This finding was supported by the work of Tshabalala (2013) who discovered that strong leadership from heads of schools together with formal organization of parents' involvement established parent-friendly schools, regular home-school communication and innovative parent volunteering. Thus, parents' participation in school management complements government efforts in provision and maintenance of infrastructures in the schools. Abdullahi (1996) stated that parents' involvement in school management enhanced understanding and good rapport between parents and teachers and curtail crisis that often arise in the schools. Owuamanam (1991) reported that parents make financial contributions through Parents-Teachers' Association levy and personal donations for the support of the schools in their communities.

In a study by Ezuizo and Enueme (2013), it was found that in the perception of male and female principals, parents contributed to school plant management to a little extent, but made great extents to contribution to raising the moral tone of the school. The study further showed that male and female principals did not differ significantly in their assessment of parents' participation in school management in areas of school plant management and raising the moral tone of the schools. These findings were at variance with the findings of Chang (1995),Onderi and Makori (2013) who found that parents through the PTA made significant high contributions to the management of school plant. Lin (2010) in a study in USA reported that parents were involved in classroom decisions, in promoting communication, social events and fund raising to support the schools.

Research has shown that some principals do not involve parents in school administration for fear of being criticized (Ekundayo&Alonge, 2012). This was in agreement with an earlier study by Fehrman, Keith and Reiners (1987) who reported that most parents would like to play a more active role in their students' progress in schools and decision making about school programs, but school administrators and teachers exhibited a great reluctance to encourage parents to become partners in school governance. This non-involvement of parents results in lack of cooperation between the school and the parents which invariably limits the extent of school performance. Previous study also showed that many working class and rural parents face the constraints of participating in school management as a result of poor skills, distance from schools and lack of time (Tshabalala, 2013).

Similarly, Mohammed, Samsuddeon, and Norzaini (2005) and Nachiappan, Ahmad, Andi and Veeren (2012)in their studies identified personal attitude and heavy engagement in work as major drawbacks in parents' involvement in school management practices.

According to Duma (2013), some principals love to have parents intricately involved in the governance of their schools, while others feel that too much participation in the governance of schools violated their sense of professionalism. Duma (2013), in a study on principals' view on parents' participation in the governance of rural schools reported that parents' involvement in school governance was effective in instilling discipline among students, ensuring that students attend school and in the maintenance of school facilities. The study also revealed that rural school principals were supportive of parents' participation in school governance, but they identified parents' illiteracy rate as a major challenge faced by principals in involving parents in school management. Butler, Henderson, Gilford and Macwilliams (1992) identified lack of time and conflict in work schedules as significant barriers for increased parents' involvement in school management. This finding was supported by the work of Malaspina (1993) who identified time as an obstacle to parents' effective participation in school governance and stated the importance for parents in finding time to be involved in the education of their children and accepting education as a shared responsibility. In another study, Dixon (1992) reported that both parents' apathy and lack of encouragement and support from educators were hindrances to parents' participation in school administration.

Ajayi, Ekundayo and Arogundade (2009) reported in their study that parents were much involved in the administration of secondary schools in Nigeria. The study further revealed that secondary schools in the study area were moderately effective and that there was no significant relationship between parents' involvement in school administration and school effectiveness. This finding depicts that parents' participation in school management is not a guarantee for school effectiveness. The literature so far reviewed has revealed that school administrators have varying opinions on parents' participation in school management. It also showed that parents' involvement in school administration contributes immensely to school success and development and also enhances school effectiveness. Some barriers to effective involvement of parents in school administration have also been reviewed. Most of the literature reviewed were researches carried out in foreign countries of the world. This indicates that very little or no research has been done in Nigeria on principals' perception of parents' involvement in school-based management. Thus, the present study seeks to bridge this gap.

3. Purpose of the Study.
The purpose of the study was to find out the
i.   Principals' perception of parents' participation in school-based management.
ii.   Challenges faced by principals in involving parents in school-based management.
iii.   Extent to which male and female principals differ in their perception of parents' participation in school- based management.
iv.   Extent to which urban and rural principals differ in their perception of parents' involvement in school- based management.

4. Research Questions

i.   How do principals perceive parents' involvement in school-based management?
ii.   What are the challenges encountered by principals in involving parents in school-based management?

5. Hypotheses

HO_1:   There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals in their perception of parents' involvement in school-based management.
HO_2:   There is no significant difference in the mean scores of urban and rural principals in their perception of parents' involvement in school-based management.

6. Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The design was considered appropriate because it makes comparison and evaluation of existing conditions as well as collection of factual information through the use of questionnaire. The design is suitable because the researcher collected data from principals on parents' contributions to the management of secondary schools in Cross River State of Nigeria. Stratified random sampling method was used to sample 200 principals out of a population of 232 principals in 232 public secondary schools in the study area.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Parents' Involvement in School-Based Management Questionnaire" (PISBMQ) for principals to assess the extent of parents' participation in school management practices. The instrument consisted of three sections. Section A sought personal information of the respondents such as gender, age, qualification and years of administrative experience. Section B was a 4-point Likert scale which consisted of 20 items covering four areas of school-based management namely, involvement in policy/decision making (5 items), involvement in school development projects (5 items), partnering with the school to improve students discipline (5 items) and financial support to schools (5 items). Each item had 4 response options ranging from Very Highly Involved (VHI), Highly Involved (HI) to Moderately Involved (MI) and Lowly Involved (LI). The respondents were required to tick one of the 4 options against each item to indicate the extent of parents' involvement in school management. Section C consisted of seven items and each item had four response options ranging from one to four with one being the least score and four being the highest score. The respondents were required to rate the challenges to involving parents in school-based management by ticking one of the four options against an item. The instrument was trial tested by administering it on 30 principals who were not part of the main study. Then, Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to ascertain the reliability (internal consistency) of the instrument. The result of analysis gave a reliability coefficient of 0.75. This was good enough for the instrument to be considered reliable. The instrument was administered to the respondents in their various schools. All the copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and returned on the spot.

7. Results

   Research Question 1.

How do principals perceive parents' involvement in school-based management?

The data for the research question were analyzed using means and standard deviations and the result is presented in table 1

Table I:Mean scores and standard deviations of principals' perception of parents' Involvement in School-BasedManagement

Variables	No. of items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rank Order
1. Partnering with the school to improve students' discipline.	5	14.75	1.12	1st
2. Involvement in school policy/decision making.	5	12.60	1.30	2nd
3. Involvement in school development projects.	5	12.52	1.45	3rd
4. Financial supports to school.	5	10.88	2.86	4th
Grand Mean		12.69	1.61	

Table I shows that the grand mean of 12.69 is greater than the acceptable mean score of 12.50. This means that parents, to some extent, are involved in school-based management practices. The data in Table I also reveal that parents are very highly involved in partnering with school to improve school discipline ($\bar{x}$ =14.75; SD=1.12) and is ranked 1st position, followed by parents' participation in school policy/decision making ($\bar{x}$ = 12.60; SD = 1.30) and is ranked 2nd position. This is followed by parents' involvement in school development projects, ranked 3rd position with a mean score of 12.52 and standard deviation of 1.45, with involvement in financial supports to schools being the least

Research Question 2

What are the challenges encountered by principals in involving parents in school-based management?

The result of data analysis for research question 2 is presented on table 2.

Table 2: Principals' rating of the challenges of involving parents in school-based management.

Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rank order
1. Parental apathy	3.25	1.50	1st
2. Lack of time	3.10	1.28	2nd
3. Poor socio-economic background	2.85	1.66	3rd
4. Lack of expertise in school administration.	2.76	1.77	4th
5. Parents engagement in their work.	2.60	1.63	5th
6. Lack of commitment by parents.	2.40	1.45	6th
7. Low self esteem of parents.	2.25	1.57	7th

Table 2 reveals that parental apathy, lack of time, poor socio-economic background, lack of expertise in school administration and parents' engagement in their work are rated by principals as the challenges of involving parents in school management. This is because the mean scores of these items are greater than the acceptable mean score of 2.50. The table also shows that parental apathy is the most significant challenge$\overline{X}$ = 3.25). Lack of commitment by parents and low self-esteem of parents are not rated as challenges because their mean scores are less than the acceptable mean score of 2.50.

HO$_1$: There is no significance difference in the mean scores of male and female principals in their perception of parents' involvement in school-based management.
The result of data analysis for the hypothesis is presented on table 3

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis of male and female principals' perception of parents' involvement in school-based management.

Gender	n	$\overline{X}$	SD	t
Male principals	120	12.70	1.30	
				0.11
Female principals	80	12.68	1.15	

P > 0.05; df = 198; Critical - t = 1.960

Table 3 shows that the calculated t - value of 0.11 is less than the critical t - value of 1.960 needed for significance at .05 level of significance and 198 degrees of freedom. Given this results, the null hypothesis is therefore retained. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals in their perception of parents' involvement in school-based management.

HO$_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of urban and rural principals in their perception of parents' involvement in school-based management.
The result of data analysis for the hypothesis is presented on table 4.

Table 4: Independent t - test analysis of urban and rural school principals' perception of parents'involvement in school-based management.

Variables	n		SD	t
Rural school principals	42		13.78	1.40
8.07*				
Urban school principals	158		11.60	1.82

*P < 0.05; df = 198; Critical - t = 1.960.

The data on Table 4 show that the calculated t - value of 8.07 is greater than the critical t - value of 1.960 needed for significance at .05 level of significance and 198 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is therefore upheld. This means that there is a significant difference between rural and urban principals in the perception of parents' involvement in school-based management. Table 4 also reveals that rural school

principals perceive parents as being more actively involved in school management (= 13.78) than urban school principals (= 11.60).

8. Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study shows that generally, parents to some extent are involved in school-based management practices. The finding that partnering with schools to improve students discipline is ranked highest shows that parents are highly involved in working with school authorities to maintain students' discipline. The possible explanation for this finding could be that in Cross River State, there is effective home-school relationship and the creation of invitational school environments by school principals to motivate parents to participate in school management. This finding is in agreement with research finding of Ismail and Abdullah (2013) who reported that parents' involvement in school-based management helps to improve students' discipline. The finding is also supported by the work of Ezuizo&Enueme (2013) who discover that parents to a great extent contribute to raising the morale tone of the school. The study further reveals that financial support to schools is rated least by school principals. This finding could be attributed to the high inflation rate in the country and the poor socio-economic status of parents. Although parents make financial supports through Parent-Teacher Association levy, their personal financial donations to support the schools in their communities are not substantial. The present finding contradicts the research result of Lin (2010) who found out that parents were involved in fund raising to support schools.

Another finding of the study reveals that principals rated parental apathy generally as the major challenge to involving parents in school management. This is a very serious challenge because if parents lack the interest, enthusiasm and remain indifference, it might be very difficult for principals to persuade them to participate in school governance. This finding is supported by Dixon (1992) who reported that both parental apathy and lack of encouragement/support from educators are hindrances to parents' participation in school administration. Also rated as challenges were lack of time and poor socio-economic background of parents. These probably account for parents' lack of interest in school management. This finding is in consonance with the work of Butler, Henderson, Gilford and Macwilliams (1992) who identified time and poor socio-economic status of parents as significant barriers to parents' involvement in school management.

The study reveals that male and female principals do not differ significantly in their perception of parents' involvement in school-based management. This means that gender should not be considered as a factor that can influence principals' sense of judgment with regards to parents' participation in school management. This finding is supportive of the work of Ezuizo and Enueme (2013) who reported a non-significant difference between male and female principals' rating of parents' contribution to the management of school plant and raising of the moral tone of the school. Another finding reveals that urban and rural principals differ significantly in their perception of parents' involvement in school-based management. Rural principals assess parents as being significantly more involved in school management than their urban counterparts. This means that parents in rural communities show more interest in school management than parents in the urban areas. The plausible explanation to this finding could be the proximity of parents to schools and the willingness and interest of parents in rural communities to attend Parent- Teacher Association meetings

regularly. It could also be attributed to the ability of rural principals to establish parent-friendly schools and regular home-school communication because of proximity. This finding is supported by the work of Duma (2013) who reported that rural school principals were more supportive of parents' involvement in school governance than urban school principals.

9. Implications for Educational Management

The findings of this study have some implications for educational management, particularly in the management of secondary schools in Cross River State of Nigeria. One of such implications is that parent-school partnership improves students' discipline. One of the teething problems in secondary schools is indiscipline. The result of this study will enable principals to develop good strategies that would capture the interest and enthusiasm of parents to work with school authorizes to curb students' indiscipline behaviours because parents are the closest people to their wards and therefore they know their behaviours and characters. Principals' assessment of parents' involvement in school management would enable them to evaluate the extent to which parents contribute to the education process of their children and the need for principals to utilize collaborative approach to school management in order to achieve excellent school performance and effectiveness.

10. Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, it is recommended that

School principals should create invitational school environments for parents. They should communicate regularly with parents and utilized educated community leaders as resource persons to the school to encourage parents to participate actively in school management.

School principals should be transparent in school management and they should adopt the principle of financial accountability in order to attract parents to donate willingly towards school development projects and other school activities.

School principals and teachers should maintain good rapport with parents and encourage them to attend Parent-Teacher Association meetings where issues affecting the schools are discussed and decisions taken. In other words, school principals should involve parents in school goal setting and policy/decision making. This will enable parents to participate freely in school affairs and work with the school authority as partners in progress.

Both rural and urban school principals should be supportive of parents' participation in school-based management. They should establish parent-friendly schools and maintain effective home-school communication.

11. Conclusion

Premised on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that parents to some extent, are involved in school-based management. Principals perceived parents as being highly involved in partnering with schools to improve students' discipline, followed by involvement in school

policy/decision making and participation in school development projects.   Parental apathy is identified as a major challenge faced by school principals in involving parents in school-based management. The study has revealed that male and female principals do not differ significantly in their perception of parents' involvement in school management. However, rural principals perceive parents as being significantly more involved in school management than urban school principals.

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