



Harnessing Community Resources to Enhance Teacher Effectiveness in Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria like most countries of the world today is confronted with serious social, economic, political and security challenges. This underscores the several educational policy restructuring efforts in the country aimed at providing the education that will meet the hopes and aspirations of the country as well as produce people who will effectively function in the society. The teacher is central in determining the achievement of these policy visions. The teacher has to ensure that the instructional function of the school is society oriented so as to equip the students with appropriate competencies to effectively function in the society. This study is therefore, designed to identify the most efficient ways of harnessing community resources to enhance teacher effectiveness in secondary schools. Specifically, the study looked at the concept of community resources, the types of community resources and factors that affect community resources harnessing and utilization. The study finally identifies several measures of remedying the constraints to community resources harnessing and utilization so as to enhance the effectiveness of the teachers in secondary schools.

Keywords: Community resources, effectiveness, efficiency, harnessing, utilization.

INTRODUCTION

Schools are established essentially to produce individuals who would acquire general and technical competencies with which to confront the challenges of the society. It is in realization of this that, the Nigerian national educational philosophy is designed to among others; prepare the individual for useful living within the society (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). Consequent upon this philosophical standpoint, it becomes imperative for educational planners in Nigeria to design the programmes of education particularly the curriculum in such a way as to meet the needs, hopes and aspirations of the society (Tyokyaa, 2015). The teacher is central in determining the achievement of the aspirations and hopes of the society. The national policy on education (NPOE, 2004) emphasizes that no system of education of any country can rise above the quality of its teachers. In other words, the success of education system and the future of the nation obviously depend on the quantity, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of its teachers.

The Nigerian society today is confronted with serious challenges ranging from economic, religious, political, socio-cultural and above all security which include insurgency, militancy, kidnapping, pastoralism, cultism, rapism etc (Dzurgba, 2004). The teacher as a major facilitator of the programmes of the school essentially has to ensure that the schools instructional function is society oriented so as to expose the pupils or students to the realities of the society.

For the teacher to be effective in carrying out his/her instructional function which aims at equipping the pupil/student with appropriate competencies to be useful to the society, he/she has to harness and use the abundant resources of the community in his/her teaching function. Mkpa (1989) posits that successful teaching and learning is depended upon whether it is society or community oriented.

The Concept of Community Resources

The concept community resource is perceived differently by different authorities. Mkpa (1989) conceives community resources to mean, all the things found within the community outside the school which could be used to promote teaching and learning. Community resources may refer to all the resources found within the community outside the confines of the school that could be harnessed and used effectively to facilitate the study of some specific subject matter. Community resources are also perceived to be all the opportunities within the community that could be used to expand and enrich the learning experiences of the school.

Educationists maintain that resourceful teachers and administrators find the community a mine of untapped resources to enrich their instructional and management functions. Agunwa (1974) reported in Tyokyaa (1995) confirms community resources to be the learning laboratory especially of the behavioural sciences. The proper conceptualization and internationalization of theories, concepts and principles of most subject areas is when their teaching or instructional process is linked with the practical objects, situations, or activities within the community. Vande-Guma (2014) upholds that human related disciplines are better taught and learnt when related to the concrete resources of the community. The effective teacher is one who ensures that the teaching/learning function of the school is linked with the resources of the community thus bringing out in the instructional process the theoretical and practical nexus of the learned materials with the environmental realities of the community (Tyokyaa, 2015). Anwukah (1987) posits that;

The nature of the community largely determines what goes on in the school. Therefore to attempt to divorce the school from the community is to engage in unrealistic thinking which might lead to policies that could wreak havoc with the school and the lives of children. The community and the school are inseparable.

Exposing the learning experiences of the pupils/students and linking them with the realities of the community does not only strengthen the relationship and rapport between the school and the community but adequately equips the pupils/students with the skills and competences to confront the community or societal challenges upon leaving the school. Secondly, it makes the leader very effective in his teaching or instructional function.

Any resourceful teacher will find the community a mine of untapped resources to enrich classroom experiences. Teachers who relate their instructional function to the resources of the community are more efficient and effective. The use of instructional materials generally aid faster conceptualization and internationalization of the taught theories and concepts. The teacher who adequately mobilizes and utilizes the resources within the community for his instructional function does not only finds his instructional responsibilities motivating and vitalizing, but optimally finds himself very effective in discharging his instructional, administrative and general relational responsibilities. It is therefore pertinent to assert that the teachers' effectiveness could be enhanced if he uses community resources adequately in discharging his instructional duties.

Types of Community Resources

There abound community resources that could be used to make the teacher very effective. The school community goes beyond the immediate environment in which the school finds itself to include the nation, the state, the local community, the influence of visitors to the school, the parents and the guardians of the students (Mkpa, 1989). Resources on the other hand are, the wealth, supplies of goods, raw materials etc which a person, country, etc has or can use (Hornby, 1990). Community resources therefore are all the things and opportunities within the community outside the school which the school could use to promote teaching and learning. Community resources are also called local resource materials, local community resources or societal resources.

To classify community resources is rather a herculean and an arduous task. Anwukah (1987) maintains that it is difficult to make a discrete classification of community resources for schools because the resources are independent in many instances. The resources and their uses are many and varied, and in nearly all cases, human resources are involved. Notwithstanding, the difficulties in ensuring discreteness in their classification, Nicholls and Nicholls (1975) classified community resources into three; human, natural and man-made.

Nicholls and Nicholls Classification of Community Resources

- i) Human resources:
The human resources include specialists, parents of students, agencies representatives, government representatives, and citizens advisory committees.
- ii) Natural resources:

The natural resources include; plants, wildlife, rocks, water, soil, minerals and other natural objects

iii) Man-made resources

The man-made resources are listed to include all those resources created by man which have significant educational value which play important roles in teaching and learning. Examples here include buildings, aircrafts, railways, museums, shrines, statues, markets, black or chalkboards, desks, television sets, computers, companies, manufacturing sites etc. Adapting the Nicholls and Nicholls classification, Mkpa (1989) came up with four main groups or classes of community resources. The four classes are: natural community resources, material community resources, human community resources and institutional resources.

Mkpa's Classification of Community Resources

i) Natural Community Resources

The natural community resources are the resources that are not man-made but are found within the community and could be utilized to facilitate teaching and learning. These vary from place to place according to geographical conditions in the parts of the country e.g. mountains and hills, rivers, streams, lakes, trees, animals etc.

ii) Material Community Resource

The material resources describe those resources that are more often though not always man-made e.g. motor vehicles, electrical gadgets such as fans, electric irons, electronic equipments such as wrist watches, radio recorders, television sets etc, types of houses built, products of arts and crafts by such craftsmen as blacksmiths, specialists in leather works, raffia works, pottery, weaving, wood work etc.

iii) Institutional resources

Institutional resources refer to the practices or patterns of behaviour, which have served the needs of a people for such a long time that the community has cultivated a strong faith in it as a desirable component of the life style of the people. These include religious institutions, economic institutions, political institutions, social institutions and health institutions.

iv) Human resources

Human resources are the people who, as a result of their wealth of experience and knowledge in their various fields of endeavour, become very useful to our schools and other educational institutions. These are specialists in various disciplines ranging from experts in local crafts to experts in surgery. In other words, it refers to professionals with general and technical competencies who are willing to avail the schools these competencies at little or no cost.

Adapting the collaborative classification of Nicholls and Nicholls (1975) with the classification of Mkpa (1989), Tyokyaa (2015) adapted the two classifications and categorized community resources into four classes. These are resource personnel, resource places/locations, resource things/materials and resource activities.

i) Resource personnel

Resource personnel include specialists/professionals, citizens' advisory committees, government representatives, agency representatives, parents/guardians of students, artisans.

ii) Resource places/locations

Resource places/locations are locations or sites of educational interests which include markets, industrial sites, banks, museums, legislative and other governmental houses or buildings, institutions, professional agency offices or laboratories, workshops, lakes/rivers, farms, mountains/hills, erosion sites, recreational centres etc;

iii) Resource things/materials

Resource things/materials are all things or materials of educational value within the community which include among others, money, wildlife, water, jewelries, soil, statistical data, minerals, artifacts, tools of work, natural vegetation, motor vehicles, electrical and electronic gadgets, buildings etc and finally,

- iv) Resource activities
Resource activities include such activities as excursions, field trips, production processes, skills/craft exhibitions, banking, marketing, broadcasting, festivals, seminars/ symposia, dramatization, role-playing etc.

The comprehensive categorization of community resources as exposed differently above reveals that there abound adequate relevant community resources that could be mobilized and utilized by teachers to vitalize their teaching and thus make them very effective in the discharge of their duties as teachers. It is in this direction that Mkpa (1989) further asserts that every educational engagement, theory, concept or topic has a resource within the community that could simplify its understanding or make its conceptualization easier. The contentious issue here is for the teacher to identify which community resource will be relevant in teaching which academic subject or topic. The more the teacher identifies, mobilizes and utilizes the relevant community resource(s) to his advantage, the more effective he/she is in the discharge of his teaching responsibilities. It is therefore pertinent to state that teachers' effectiveness could be enhanced through harnessing and use of community resource.

Ezeocha (1990) believes that the school exists for the community and the community exists and acts as client to the school. Ezeocha further upholds that the community and the school are two brothers who enjoy mutual benefits as they are crucial in man's struggle for survival in his complex and ever changing society. To Okafor (1988), man's mind is the product of his life experiences and that environmental factors should be given primary consideration in man's upbringing. This underscores the need to expose the learning materials of the child to the environmental realities around him.

It is important to stress that there is the need to institutionalize peace education and peace culture in our school curriculum as this is essential in harnessing the community realities (resources) to the benefit of the pupils/students who upon graduation from the school would be confronted with the practical realities of the socio-cultural, religious, economic, political, and security challenges of the society. The Nigerian society today is ravaged with the threats of these vices or challenges and our educational system must not only be tailored towards equipping the pupils/students with the theoretical competences of confronting the challenges, they must be practically exposed to the realities by engaging them in the instructional programmes that necessarily harness and use the resources as represented in persons, locations, activities or materials that inherently are components of the community or societal realities (threats). This will bring the pupils/students closer to the truth or reality of the world around them. The teachers who engage their pupils/students in instructional activities that relate to the resources within the community will also become more efficient and effective in their teaching/learning functions.

Factors that affect Community Resources Harnessing and Utilization

The teachers' effort to harness and use community resources in his teaching function is not without hitches. So many factors are believed to constrain the teachers in their desire to mobilize for use the resources within the community. These factors range from teacher factor to economic constraints through administrative rigidities.

1. Teacher Factor:

Teacher factor is one of the principal constraints of community resource mobilization and utilization. Teacher factor has to do with those attributes of the teacher that influence his capacity to harness and utilize the resources within the community. These include his attitudes as well as qualification and experience.

i. Teachers Attitudes:

Teachers do seem to have lukewarm attitude in harnessing community resources in their instructional function. Lipsey (1986) in examining the extent of use of community resources in the teaching of economics affirms that economics is a social science subject by which the verification of its generalizations by reference to facts within the community is neglected as irrelevant. Nevertheless, Anwukah (1987) upholds that, even though teachers still exhibit lukewarm attitude towards the use of community resources, teachers are generally developing positive attitudes towards the use of community resources in their teaching functions. This therefore means that teachers have positive attitudes towards harnessing and utilization of community resources.

ii. Teachers qualification and experience:

Teacher quality, it is said is responsible for the quality of graduates produced in an institution. In other words, students' academic performance to a large extent depend on the quality, adequacy and dedication of teachers. Similarly, proper harnessing and utilization of community resources are hinged on the type and level of teachers involved (Tyokyaa, 1995). Confirming the imperativeness of teachers' qualification and experience as factors for effective harnessing of community resources, Ukeje (1966) reported in Tyokyaa (1995) maintains that, the teacher's utterances, actions, leadership styles, knowledge of subject matter, and teaching skills have enormous implications for his teaching function. He further argues that unqualified teachers have no initiative and cannot be creative, and that adequate professional training and experience are needed for the teacher to be effective in his effort to harness community resources for use in school.

2. Economic Factors:

Outside the teacher factor, economic constraints also constitute major encumbrances in the efforts of the teachers to harness community resources. This mainly has to do with lack of funds. Every educational venture is predicated upon availability of funds. Most schools do not have the finances to sponsor teachers to mobilize resources. The students themselves need money to tackle the ever increasing demands of the various segments of their academic programmes. They have little or nothing to sponsor the huge requirement of community resources mobilization. Constraint of finance therefore is a major factor that frustrates the teachers' efforts to harness and utilize community resources.

3. Administrative Rigidities:

In addition to teacher factor and economic constraints there are very many other factors that affect the teachers' effort to mobilize and utilize community resources. These factors are grouped as administrative rigidities and they include: shortage of professional teachers, large class sizes of students, time constraints, rigid time table scheduling, lack of cooperation from school heads, prohibition of traditions from having access to some resources, poor school community relationships, poor leadership style of the school administrator etc. These factors constitute great encumbrances and therefore constrain the teachers in their efforts to harness effectively the resources within the community in order to be effective in their teaching function.

Remedying the Constraints to Community Resources Harnessing and Utilization

It is established that community resources harnessing or mobilization and utilization by teachers necessarily make the teachers very effective in their teaching functions. Community resources harnessing also strengthens the relationships between the community and the school and between the operating personnel of the school, example, between management and teachers, teachers and students etc. Ezeocha (1990) maintains that it was in a bid to harness community resources to the benefit of the school, community, staff and students that, the Parent Teachers Association meeting was formed. In spite of the benefits of community resources harnessing especially in making the teachers to be very effective, there are very many factors that encumber or constrain the teachers' efforts to harness the resources. These range from teacher factor to economic constraints, through administrative rigidities. In order to enhance the effort of the teacher to mobilize the resources, there must be remedial measures to remove the constraints. The remedial measures recommended among others include:

1. School management should ensure the employment of qualified and experienced teachers in all the subject areas of the school. Since qualification and experience play important role in the ability of the teacher to harness community resources, it becomes pertinent to employ qualified and experienced teachers who will have the capacity of harnessing the community resources to enhance effectiveness in instructional functions.
2. Teachers must be encouraged, supported and financed to expose the students to the opportunities available in the community by linking the theoretical component of their teaching/learning programmes with the practical realities expressed in the resources of the community. This could be done by engaging the students in education tours to sites, and locations as well as inviting professionals, technocrats and even artisans to teach or demonstrate some skills to students in the school.
3. The teacher-students ratio must be moderate to allow for effective, harnessing and use of the community resources. It is discovered that the larger the number of students in the class, the

more difficult it is for the teacher to effectively harness the community resources for the benefit of the students. But if the class size is moderate it will be easier for the teacher to mobilize appropriately relevant community resources for the teaching of any subject matter. The school administrators should therefore ensure that the ratio of students per teacher in all classes is moderate.

4. School heads must encourage teachers by financing their community resource harnessing programmes as well as approve their study leave programmes. Since mobilization and utilization of community resources is fund sapping, the school administrators should ensure that the school budgets are appropriated to take care of the financing of teachers to undertake community resource harnessing. The school management should also encourage further training of the teachers either through on the job training or off the job training so as to improve both the general and technical competences of the teachers in harnessing the resources of the community in their teaching functions.
Periodic seminars/workshops could also be organized for teachers in the area of community resources mobilization and utilization as all the subject areas and general courses to adequately equip them on mobilization and utilization skills.
5. Scheduling of time table should be a bit flexible to allow for adjustments. The school time table should be flexible enough to allow for educational tours as well as accommodate the interventions of skilled persons or professionals who from time to time would be invited or visited to interact with the students. This must however be done in such a way as never to disrupt adequate coverage of the subject content and the coverage of the content of other subjects.
6. The school management must encourage relational activities especially school-community relationship. The school administrators should ensure that there is improved inter-personal relationship between teachers and students, teachers and the school management, teachers and parents, school management and the community etc. The air of cordiality between and within the functional personnel of the school and between the school personnel and the community will remove the negative tendencies of uncooperativeness and will naturally result to ease in accessing community resources and subsequently harnessing them to the advantage of all and particularly making the teachers to be effective in their instructional responsibilities.
There should also be regular school community conferences so as to strengthen the much desired rapport that should exist between the school and the community.
7. Teacher preparation programmes must be designed to accommodate community resources harnessing in the curriculum.
8. Concerted efforts must be made through the PTA to raise adequate fund to sponsor teachers to undertake educational tours or indulge in other community resource harnessing programmes.

It is no doubt that, if the instructional programmes of the teachers are premised on the resources of the community, the teacher will be more effective as the learners will be home with the realities around them hence this will aid their conceptualization, internationalization or interiorization, and externalization or exteriorization of the learned material.

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