Impact of Community Agents in the Planning of University Education in Nigeria

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Abstract. *This study investigated the impacts of community agents in the planning of university education. The study was carried out in the south east of Nigeria, Descriptive research design was adopted. The population comprised all the Deans of faculties in the seven universities in the area of study. Ten (10) Deans were purposively selected for study from the seven universities. A researcher developed instrument duly validated by experts was the instrument for data collection. Seven research assistants (one from each university) were used in data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used in data analysis. The major findings include: (I) there is a very high impact of community agents on planning for staff participation in decision making; planning on how to use expertise of departmental heads in school administration; planning for a cooperative work environment in the faculty and setting faculty plans to be achieved by staff and students. (2) There is a very high impact on community agents on ensuring that there are adequate lecture halls for students; ensuring private sectors participation in providing support and recreational facilities; planning for regular maintenance for repainting faculty building when due: and planning for the provision of generating sets for the faculties. (3) There is a very high impact of community agents in planning for supplementary sources of fund for faculty projects and in planning how to use money generated for the faculty through community efforts. There is low impact of community agents on making plans to impose levies on students, planning for the overhead allocation to the department and surcharging erring staff. (4) there is a very high impact of community agents on planning for departments' equal access to supplies in the faculty; planning for providing and ensuring that teaching materials sent to the faculty are used for instructional purposes; but their impacts are low in planning for students access to learning facilities and planning for lecturers' involvement in textbook selection for faculty library. The recommendations include that (1) university administrators should adopt a participatory planning approach. Adequate consultations with community members in planning academic programmes are capable of averting conflicts that would have resulted if no consultations are made, (2) community agents should not pressurize academic institutions so that the latter do not loose focus. (3) There should be cordial and supportive relationships between universities and their host communities. (4) Communities should assist schools not only in planning human, infrastructure, financial and learning resources but should also help in providing them in the schools for effective teaching and learning to take place. (5) University administrators should identify and encourage positive values of the host communities so as to attract community projects in their schools.*

Keywords: *community agents, community participation.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Whatever definition one gives to the term community depends on what meaning one attaches to it. Community may be defined in relation to location, occupation or trade, race, religion, etc. Hornsby (1974) defined community as "the people living in one place, district or country, considered as a whole". He also saw it as "group of persons having the same religion, race, occupation, etc or with common interest".

Similarly, Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development (1993) defined it as "a group of people living in one place or locality such as village or town or it may refer to a group of persons having the same or similar interest". From those definitions, we can deduce that certain groups of similar or common interest constitute a community. For instance, Church Community, Ethnic Community, College Community, Fishing Community, Parent Teacher-Association, Past-Students Association, among others.

Naturally, Communities are interested in their own well-being and survival. As a result of this, they tend to always develop keen interest in their offspring or new members who would replace them. Community tries to hand on the knowledge, values and skills cherished to its young ones for the purpose of perpetuity. The school uses education as a means for the transmission and acquisition of the knowledge, values and skills.

Reasons for Community Participation

Going through the objective of education reveals that it is particularly important for transmitting to the young those values, skills and attitudes that help him to be useful and function effectively in his society. In other words, the society has a lot to benefit from the education of its young at levels of education. The young member of the society (the child) can participate effectively in and contribute to the life of the society he belongs after exposed to education. This is one of the reasons why the community should participate in the development of education.

Similarly Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) stated that: "Government welcomes the contribution of voluntary agencies, communities and management of schools alongside those provide by the state government as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the federal Government", The task of educating the child is not only the responsibility of the government but also that of all stakeholders in education. Wealthy Individuals, philanthropists, past students Associations, parent-Teacher-Associations, professional Bodies, religious organizations and the entire community should participate in sustaining education in the state.

Again, Maduewesi (2001) argued that since every citizen benefits from the result of the education of his fellow citizens and since every generation receives its education from an older and preceding generation, every generation has a duty to reciprocate by educating the generation that comes after it. Similarly, Melden (1975) opined that the distinguishing mark of humanity is morality. He stated that the fundamental right to education is the right to a moral education, failing the achievement of which is failure to achieve moral agency itself, which thus removes such a child from the pale of humanity. In the same vein Qlafson (1975) maintained that the parents, who are also among community agents, were responsible for bringing the child into the world and that it was incumbent on them to ensure its growth and survival. The whole argument boils down to the fact that school children have right to education and it is the responsibility of both the government and the community to give them the education.

Effective learning cannot take place at any level if the learner has not passed through the institution in a most studious manner Community for that reason should participate in development of education.

In deed, it is obvious that any contribution made towards meaningful development such as in the area of education satisfies and boosts the contributor's morale- He gets that self-satisfaction that he has contributed in developing education in his community. Equally, the entire community ought to derive joy from educating its young ones by helping to sustain the education programme already in place. When a community participates in the education of its young, it has a sense of belonging that at least it is involved in a venture that rewards.

Areas of Community Participation

Community can participate in a number of areas. Community groups can contribute financially towards developmental projects in the schools. Members of the community might decide to levy themselves or have special launching from where fund will be raised and made available to the schools to execute projects. The funds can be utilized to provide classroom blocks for the school. *Apart* from making direct financial contribution, the community can participate by helping to provide instructional resources such as human and material resources.

In a related development, community leaders such as traditional rulers, chiefs, town union officials, woman representatives and Youth leaders can organize the entire community or their individual groups as often as their assistance is needed to carry out given tasks in the schools. At primary and secondary levels for instance, the task may be in form of clearing grasses, working in the school farm, serving mansions constructing school buildings, constructing paths within the school, planting flowers and raising of mud houses or cement block houses for the school library. Other items that can be donated to the school include: desks, chairs, dusters, isle, chalkboard, uniform, table, chairs, electrical appliances and vehicles.

Again, the community may decide to participate in sustaining education programme by donating enough land for expansion. The Vice Chancellors should always liaise with community authorities to acquire land for expansion where there is need for it. Illegal acquisition of land for the school should be avoided to prevent unnecessary fracas between the community and the school.

Again, community groups and former students may get involved in self-help project for the purpose of generating funds for the school. It is also necessary that community should participate in the management of the schools; members of the community should be parts of policy formulation and planning for the school. They ought to monitor learning achievement and contribute to curriculum modification to take care of community's special needs. Deserving students, that is, those who excelled very well in their studies should be granted scholarship by the community.

Ways of Community Participation

Community can offer effective participation by adopting the following suggestions.
- There should be regular meeting between the university and community agents to foster good communication link between them.
- Long existing university committee should be reinvigorated and empowered to be in-charge of all matters relating to education at village or community level
- Community agents should be properly orientated on the need to pay adequate - attention to issues on education in our universities.
- Community agents should include the needs of the universities in the overall community goal operation plan.
- Accounts of all monies collected in the community agents for education should be clearly given when required.

- Community agents should always see the universities as vital components of the community and treat them as suck Problem of the universities should not be regarded as the problem of Government alone rather it should be seen as something, which demands the attention of all stakeholders in order to get it solved. At this stage one needs to know who community agents are.

Community Agents

Community agents may be structural or non-structural. Structural agents are those that are established organs e.g. community development officers, L.G. Officers and Councellors, Agricultural Extension Staff, Cooperative Officers; while the non-structural agents are the non-established organs e.g. voluntary agencies, town improvement unions, women organizations, "Sons of the Soil abroad", teachers and youth organizations. When the initiative of the people does not come spontaneously either as a result of ignorance, low motivation or lack of self-direction, the community agents help to encourage, stimulate and galvanize the people to action. They also educate and influence the people so that they can identify their felt needs. Community agents also help to create communities in areas of "no-community". This can be achieved by using appropriate technique, e.g. group processes, to infuse a sense of belonging, "we feeling" and the consciousness of communal life. This demands a long term program of community education.

At this stage, it is important to examine some community agents who participate in administration of academic institutions in Nigeria. Some of the community agents are discussed below:

The Local Community or "Town": The local community or village group otherwise known as "town" was the largest political unit in the Igbo traditional political system. Today the local community or "town" still remains the crucial centre of community development activities. A town composes of a number of villages whose people feel that they share some common identity in social, economic and political ties. In some "Towns" in Igboland for example, there is a central deity recognized by the people of the town as the deity to whom the town owes its origin and continued existence. For example, Ukpor has "Udu-Ukpor", Nnem has "Edo" Awka has "Imo", while Enugwu-Ukwu has "Ala".

Traditional Rulers: The local community has an abundant and powerful associations and structures which participate in the school administration. Perhaps one of the most important of these is the traditional ruler. A traditional ruler is a traditional authority of a local community selected or appointed and installed through traditional process and norm. According to the Dasuki Committee Report (1986) a traditional ruler is defined as:

> *A person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with custom and tradition of the area and has sovereignty over the people of the area.*

The Dasuki Committee Reports definition produces four salient points. First, a traditional ruler's throne is hereditary, which implies that the office is gained through inheritance. Second, traditional rulers are appointed which contradicts the view that their thrones are gained through inheritance.

Town Improvement Union: The Town Improvement Union/Development Union provides effective leadership in rural development efforts in the eastern states. The town improvement Union is defined by Coleman (1958:424) as an "association organized for the purpose of promoting a loyalty towards, and advancing the progress and posterity of, anyone of the several communities to which a member belongs". Further, Coleman (1958. 213) stated that these associations whose band of unity is derived from the feeling of common traits and

traditional affinity gave "organizational expression to the persistent feeling of loyalty and obligations to the kingship group and the town or village where the lineage is located".

The Town Improvement Union started in the late 1920's. Its original purpose was to provide mutual aid and cooperation among the members of the association hence Coleman (1958) described the union as impulse for brothers abroad to come together for mutual aid and protection". As time went by during the early state of its emergence the town improvement union began to expand its purpose by showing great concern to the development of their home communities. It is in this perspective Coleman (1958:214) observe that "at an early stage the members of these associations began to export to their rural homelands the enlightenment, modernity, and civilization they encountered in urban centers". He further observed that this development was the result of three major factors as follow "(a) their feeling of obligation toward the homeland which has been a striking characteristic of African social organizations; (b) their acute awareness of the wide gap between the higher standards of living in the urban centers and the poverty of their rural villages, powers of town improvement Unions represent community democracy.

Age Grade/Social Clubs: The Age Grades and Social Clubs play leading role in community administration. In the past, Age Grades were very powerful in the initiation and execution of development projects in the Eastern part of Nigeria. However, with the emergence and proliferation of social clubs, members of Age Grades join one social club or another. This tends to reduce the activities of Age Grades in rural development. In some places, social clubs have tended to supplant Age Grades. Nevertheless, Age Grades are still very active in some communities like Abriba and Ohafia in Abia State. Social Clubs initiate and execute economic, educational, infrastructure and social welfare programmes and generate enormous funds from their members through huge levies and generous donations (Ogunna, 1987:40.41) Age Grade/Social Clubs are dynamic and progressive in action, initiative in developmental ideas and egalitarian in philosophy. Rapid development, egalitarian attitudes and modernizing values tend to put them in constant conflict with the traditional authority and other community associations in many local communities.

In view of the above, it is important to investigate the extent to which community agent's impact on the planning of university education in Nigeria.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the extent of impacts of community agents on the planning of university education.

Specifically this study investigated extent of the impacts of community agents on the university planning of:
(a) Human resources;
(b) Infrastructure resources;
(c) Financial resources; and
(d)Learning resources

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:
1   To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of human resources?
2.   To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of infrastructure resources?
3.   To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of financial resources?

4. To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of learning resources?

2 METHODOLOGY

The study is a survey carried out in the South-East of Nigeria. All the population of the study comprised all Deans in Two Federal Universities (University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka) and five state universities (Abia State University, Uturu; Anambra State University, Uli; Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu and Imo State University, Owerri) in the zone. Purposive sampling method was used to select ten (10) Deans each from the seven (7) Universities.

A researcher-developed questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was structured into sections. Section "A" solicited background information of the respondents. Section 'B' was on impact of community agents in the administration of tertiary institutions.

The instrument was duly validated by experts. With the score from a pilot test done with 30 Deans of Delta State University, Abrakaja calculated reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The data were collected by the researcher who distributed the instrument to the respondents and collected each batch the same day. This was done between the months of June and July, 2011.

A total of seventy copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and retrieved. The analysis of data were done using mean and standard deviations to answer the research questions Four-point scale was used. In answering the research questions, decisions were based on 2.50 mean score. Any item that has the mean score of 2.50 or above was taken to mean that the respondents agreed with the researcher while any mean score for each item that is less than 2.50 was taken to indicate that the respondents disagreed with the researcher.

3 RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of human resources?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Deans of Faculties on impact of Community Agents on the Planning of Human Resources

S/N	Aspects of Human Resources Planning	Principals		
	To What Extent Do Community Agents:	X	SD	DEC
1	Pressurize you to plan for staff participation in decision making.	2.70	0.51	VH
2	Direct you to plan on how to use expertise of your heads of departments in school administration	2.62	0.48	VH
3	Encourage you to plan for a cooperative work environment in the faculty-	3.62	0.35	VH
4	Encourage you to impose your excellent plans on staff.	1.71	0.24	L
5	Advice you to set faculty plans to be achieved by staff and students.	2.80	2.00	VH

VH = Very High; L = Low.

Results in table 1 indicate the extent of the impacts of community agents on human resource planning in universities. The mean ratings of 2.70, 2.62, 3.62 and 2.80 for items 1, 2, 3 and 5 respectively indicate that community agents' impacts are very high on human resources planning in the universities.

Research Question Two: To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of infrastructure resources?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Deans of Faculties on Impact of Community Agents on the Planning of Infrastructure Resources

S/N	Aspects of Infrastructure Resources Planning	Principals		
	To What Extent Do Community Agents:	X	SD	DEC
6	Liaise with the faculty in ensuring that there are adequate lecture halls for students.	2.71	0.52	VH
7	Plan with the faculty to ensure that private sectors participate in providing sports and recreational facilities for students in your faculty.	2.67	0.45	VH
8	Plan with the faculty for regular maintenance of faculty buildings.	2.60	0.35	VH
9	Plan with the faculty for repainting faculty buildings when due.	2.70	1.25	VH
10	Support your plan to provide generating set for the faculty	2.91	1.05	VH

VH-Very High.

Table 2 presents the extent of the impacts of community agents on the planning of infrastructure in universities. The mean ratings of 2.71, 2.67, 2, 60, 2.70 and 2.91 for items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 respectively indicate that community agent's impact very high on the planning of infrastructure in universities.

Research Question Three: To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of financial resources?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Deans of Faculties on Impact of Community Agents on the Planning of Financial Resources

S/N	Aspects of Financial Resources Planning	Principals		
	To What Extent Do Community Agents:	X	SD	DEC
11	Support your plans to impose levies on students.	1.61	0.32	L
12	Encourage your plans for the overhead allocation to the departments.	2.31	0.47	L
13	Support your plans to surcharge erring staff.	2.40	0.15	L
14	Make plans for supplementary sources of fund for the faculty projects.	2.72	1.23	VH
IS	Participate in planning on how to utilize money generated for the faculty through community efforts.	2.95	1.26	VH

VH = Very High; L = Low

The results in table 3 indicate the mean ratings of the respondents on the impacts of community agents on the planning of financial resources. The mean ratings of 2, 72 and 2.95 for items 14 and 15 respectively indicate the extent to which community agents' impact on financial resources planning.

Research Question 4: To what extent do community agents impact on the university planning of learning resources?

Table 4: Mean Ratings of Deans of Faculties on Impact of Community Agents on the Planning of Learning Resources

S/N	Aspects of Learning Resources Planning	Principals		
	To What Extent Do Community Agents:	X	SD	DEC
16	Support your plans for students' access to learning facilities.	1.62	0.22	L
17	Support plans for departments' equal access to supplies in the faculty.	2.51	0.42	VH
IS	Support your plans for providing teaching facilities in your faculty.	2.60	0.25	VH
19	Encourage your plans to involve lecturers in textbook selection for the faculty library.	2.22	0.22	L
20	Support your plans to ensure that teaching materials sent to the faculty are used for instructional purposes.	2.90	1.16	VH

VH = Very High, L-Low

The mean ratings of the respondents on items 17, 18 and 20 indicate very high impacts of community agents on some aspects of planning of learning resources. However the mean ratings of 1.62 and 2.22 for items 16 and 19 indicate that the impacts of community agents are low in some aspects.

4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Based on the data analysis, the following findings were made:
2. There is a very high impact of community agents on planning for staff participation in decision making; planning on how to use expertise of departmental heads in school administration; planning for a cooperative work environment in the faculty and setting faculty plans to be achieved by staff and students. There is a very high impact on community agents on ensuring that there are adequate lecture halls for students; ensuring private sectors participation in providing support and recreational facilities; planning for regular maintenance of faculty buildings; planning for repainting faculty buildings when due; and planning for the provision of generating sets for the faculties.
3. There is a very high impact of community agents in planning for supplementary sources of fund for faculty projects and in planning how to use money generated for the faculty through community efforts. There is low impact of community agents on making plans to impose levies on students, planning for the overhead allocation to the department and surcharging erring staff.
4. There is a very high impact of community agents on planning for departments' equal access to supplies in the faculty; planning for providing and ensuring that teaching materials sent to the faculty are used for instructional purposes; but their impacts are low in planning for students access to learning facilities and planning for lecturers' involvement in textbook selection for faculty library.

5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the analysis on the impacts of country agents on human resources planning in universities. The results indicate very high impact of community agents on planning for staff participation in decision making; planning on how to use expertise of departmental heads in school administration; planning for a cooperative work environment in the faculty and setting faculty plans to be achieved by staff and students. The above findings are in agreement with Tirozzi (2004) who found that communities sometimes mount pressures on

schools to include their people in staff personnel administration. A related study by Miller (2003) also indicates that communities pressurize school to undertake actions favourable to them.

In table 2, the results on the impacts of country agents on planning infrastructure resources are presented. Results indicate that there is a very high impact on community agents on ensuring that there are adequate lecture halls for students; ensuring private sectors participation in providing support and recreational facilities; planning for regular maintenance of faculty buildings; planning for repainting faculty buildings when due; and planning for the provision of generating sets for the faculties. The findings are similar to Adeola (2004) who found that most community promote and undertake development projects in schools located in them. He further noted that such community efforts sometimes make the communities to mount pressures on the school administration.

In table 3, the results of the analysis on the impacts of country agent on planning financial resources are presented. Based on the results, community agents impact in the planning for supplementary sources of fond for faculty projects and in planning how to use money generated for the faculty through community efforts. There is low impact of community agents on making plans to impose levies on students, planning for the overhead allocation to the department and surcharging erring staff. In agreement with the above findings, Abatam (2005) found that communities to a great extent influence school administration as the school in most cases depend on the communities for its supplementary fund.

Table 4 presents the analysis of the impacts of community agents on planning learning resources. The results indicate that community agent's impact on planning for departments[3] equal access to supplies in the faculty; planning for providing and ensuring that teaching materials sent to the faculty are used for instructional purposes; but their 13 impacts are low in planning for students access to learning facilities and planning for lecturers' involvement in textbook selection for faculty library.

In a similar study conducted by Anekwe (2004) it was found that communities are very significant in both planning and provisions of infrastructure in schools, Undeozor (2010) also found that communities pressurize school authorities to provide adequate learning resources for their children.

6 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions are made:
1. Community agents impact very high on human resources planning in universities.
2. Community agents also have impacts on the planning for infrastructure resources in universities.
3. The impacts of community agents are very high on planning for learning resources in universities.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
1. University administrators should adopt a participatory planning approach. Adequate consultations with community members in planning academic programmes are capable of averting conflicts that would have resulted if no consultations are made.
2. Community agents should not pressurize academic institutions so that the latter do not loose focus.
3. There should be cordial and supportive relationships between universities and their host communities.

4. Communities should assist schools not only in planning human, infrastructure, financial and learning resources but should also help in providing them in the schools for effective teaching and learning to take place.

5. University administrators should identify and encourage positive values of the host communities so as to attract community projects in their schools.

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