

THE HOME AS A VITAL AGENT FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper portrays the home, made up majorly of parents, as a potent factor that influences the performance of learners in the school. Apart from setting the foundation for the socialization of children, the home along with the school, the teacher and the students themselves constitute the determinant factors of success in educational pursuit. The paper highlights the various ways in which the home influences the academic performance of learners and argues that educational transformation in the 21st century could be facilitated if the home is duly involved, both in policy formulation and in the implementation process. Recommendations to back up this position include that parents should be encouraged to participate maximally in their children's education in terms of providing essential equipment and facilities to their wards, participating in school-based management committees, and engaging in give-and-take conversations with their children on the things they learn about the world, life and living.

Introduction

Academic achievement of students, especially at the basic and post-basic education levels is determined by certain influencing factors. It can be said that the academic achievement of students is related to their innate ability or cognitive ability (Considine and Zappala, 2002). But outside intelligence, the four major factors that influence student achievements in an educational pursuit are the home, the school, the teacher and the student influences. The factors that can influence learners' achievement under students' factors include gender, peer group, motivation and attitude to study, interest and aspiration. The teacher factor that could influence learners' achievement consists of the professional qualifications, methods and techniques of instructional delivery, personality and motivation. The school factors that influence learners' achievements include the location of the school (whether urban or rural), ownership of the school (whether private or public), policies and school climate, and the availability of facilities such as library, textbooks, instructional materials, conveniences for staff and students, and recreational facilities (Kaduna State Primary Education Board, 2002). The home factors that can influence learners' achievements are parents' status, academic background of parents, family structure and cohesion, and parental academic support. The interaction of these non-cognitive factors goes a long way in putting the learners confidently on the path to successful achievement of educational objectives. Indeed, a happy confluence of these factors is a desideratum for learner progress in academic pursuit. Figure 1 graphically illustrates the pulsation of these factors that

determine learning achievement. It is therefore expected that any proactive educational transformation must necessarily focus on these factors (Lumuli, 2009).

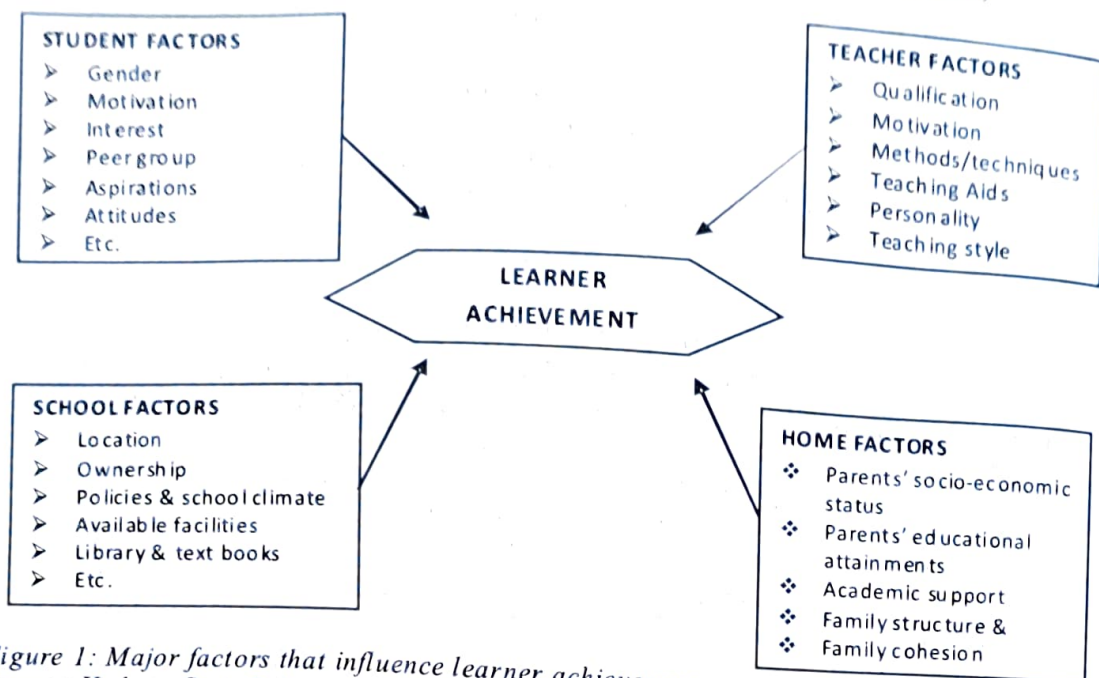


Figure 1: Major factors that influence learner achievement
Source: Kaduna State Primary Education Board (2002:199).

The home is very important for whatever obtains in the school system, particularly because the school merely plays the role of parent substitute in the nurturing and intellectual development of children. Furthermore, the home provides the financial resources to support the acquisition of learning materials and the payment of fees that facilitate the remuneration of the teaching staff. Even the quality of physical and human resource that affects teaching and learning will be determined by availability of financial resources (Onyara, 2013).

Transformation as defined by Merriam-Webster (2015) implies an act, process, or instance of transforming (altering, renovating) or being transformed (changed, transmuted). In effect, transformation will usher in a complete or major change in the structure, appearance, functions and culture of an organization or system which in our case is education. Mathematicians embark on transformation when they deal with the operation of changing one configuration or expression into another in accordance with a mathematical rule such as by rotation or mapping. In this regard, transformation may involve change of the variables such that in a function, new variables or coordinates are substituted for the original variables.

The word 'transformation' is frequently used in different parts of the world, in the context of organizational change that occasions structural, administrative, and logistic variations in a system. Based on this perspective, Bhuiyan (2015) conceives transformation as a radical change in an organization so as to bring out a new form or take on a new shape with new basic assumptions. Hence, to participate actively in the transformation of education in the 21st Century Nigeria, parents and guardians should contribute effectively to at least three proactive approaches intended to reshape the school system

It is a well-known fact that teachers are the pivot on which all school programmes revolve. Their qualifications, motivation, methods and techniques of teaching, their use of teaching aids and even their personality greatly influence the attention and acquisition of

knowledge by learners. It is also acknowledged that school factors such as location, ownership, available facilities, library and text books, policies and school climate, all go a long way to determine the conduciveness of the learning environment. Neither can the pupil influences be neglected with regard to their gender, motivation, interest, peer group, aspirations, attitudes and native ability, all of which work in concert to ensure success. But by far the most influential determinant of pupils' achievement in basic education is the home influence.

Importance of Home Factor in Children's Education

Often when a reference is made to the home factor, the mind quickly goes to the socio-economic status of parents, but the more influential variable of the home as an agent of educational pursuit revolves on parental support. This factor can be analyzed to include the several roles that parents play to support the education of their children. The readiness to feed pupils timely and get them ready for school cannot be taken for granted. That is the beginning of home support. The ability and willingness of parents to pay school fees, as at when due, has great motivational effect on learners. It musters confidence in the pupils and makes them feel obliged to reciprocate parents' sacrifice by being committed to bookwork.

Of course, no pupil goes to school without the necessary equipment in terms of appropriate uniforms, text books and writing materials. The home is in charge of purchasing necessary schooling facilities. Children that are properly equipped go to school with confidence and high morale. Whatever activities the school initiates, they readily respond without hesitation because they are well equipped for school work.

Consequently, educationists seem convinced that parental involvement in their wards' education is fraught with a lot of advantages. According to Henderson and Berla (1994), students with parents who are involved in their schooling tend to have fewer behavioral problems and better academic performance. They are also more likely to complete the years of secondary education than their counterparts whose parents are not involved in their school. In their meta-analysis of the performance of middle schoolers, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) equally reported that parental involvement in school combined with positive parent-teacher interactions, have been found to positively affect teachers' self-perception and job satisfaction. Research evidence shows that students tend to perform better in school work if their parents (both fathers and mothers) are involved (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1998; Nord & West, 2001). Hill and Tyson (2009) revealed that parental involvement in the school life of learners facilitated their high academic performance much more than assisting them with homework.

But perhaps the more important aspect of the home as a vital agent of educational transformation is embedded in the interest shown by parents and guardians in pupils' school work. The interest with which parents ask learners what they did in school on daily basis is a constant reminder to the pupils that they owe some sort of accountability for the hours spent at school. An extrapolation of this kind of home support is parents not just reminding pupils to do their homework, but insisting that they do their homework before playing. Some parents even provide timetable for their children's engagement time at home. Here lies the beginning of development of core values. The foundation of development of sound moral character of pupils is usually laid at home. The school merely expounds on what the pupils have brought from their homes. Thus, motivation to aspire for the best attainments in school emanates from home. This is because parents, and the immediate adults in the home, are the first ideal models for children to imitate. A family that is given to decency, sincerity and high standards transfer those traits and qualities to their children with little effort. Wherever the children go to, they move with their family norms of good behavior. Indeed, as the saying goes, charity begins at home.

Past Attempts at Transforming Education in Nigeria

Nigeria believes that education is at the pivot of national development; hence, the catchphrase in the National policy for education that Nigeria has adopted education as "an instrument par excellence for achieving national development" (FRN, 2014). By implication of this avowal, there is always a manifestation of faith in education to supply the country with graduate outputs that are worthy in learning and character. One would expect such graduates not only to be qualified academically, but also to be competent and committed human resources that can guarantee the sustainable development of the country.

Unfortunately, contemporary graduates from the Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of education and other tertiary institutions do not seem to offer satisfactory services in terms of productive functionality in job situations. The observed incompetence and poor functionality of contemporary graduates is often attributed to mismatch between the demands of the labour markets and the teaching and learning that took place in the educational institutions (Babalola, 2007). Stakeholders have often complained against the poor communication skills exhibited by contemporary university graduates besides their lack of requisite practical skills that can conjure high utility value to employers. Consequently, thousands of recent have remained unemployed for years.

The clamor for reforms was therefore inevitable in view of the fact that education remains the precursor and pedestal for every other sector of national development. Efforts at reforms have tended to emphasize programmes of the Federal Government targeted at national advancement, either by shift in paradigms of public service practices or by redirection of resources for better utility value leading to empowerment of particular segments of the society. Recent reform efforts included an Act on Universal Basic Education, Due Process, Monetization, New Pension Contributory Scheme, Reform of the Judiciary, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, Public Private Partnership scheme and Vision 20 2020 (Balogun, 2004).

From an appraisal of these reform strategies one could develop the impression that was education marginalized and not given the priority attention it deserved as a vehicle of change. Even when the Federal Ministry of Education introduced such programmes as poverty reduction among rural teachers, enhancement of education quality, multi-grade teaching, early child care and education (ECCE), gender sensitivity, and entrepreneurial education, yet the home was not involved. Hence, there are still street children and the Almajiri hovering around despite education being free and compulsory for all children of school age.

Transformations in Education – What the Home can do

The home can positively contribute to transformation in education by assisting to alter certain practices in the contemporary schools to become better from the perception of members of the society who are the ultimate consumers of the educational products. It is recalled that in recent times, reforms aimed at enhancing quality in education have dwelt mainly with curriculum loadings championed by experts without consultation with parents. Such reforms have generally not yielded the desired fruits partly due to inability of key government officials to facilitate implementations in the correct perspective and partly due to many 'viruses' that existed in the system. As observed by Anikweze (2011:303):

The reforms that Nigeria needs for the envisaged rebranding, pontificated by officials of the Government, ought to incorporate carefully designed content and strategies for removing abuses that exist in the polity, and refining the

practices that prevail by eliminating inefficiencies and installing quality so that the output becomes more productive and dependable.

Obanya (2008) posited that transformation in education should involve a complete redirection in goals, strategies, systems, processes, outcomes, etc. It should transcend mere changes that consist of *patch-patch* alterations that do not have any profound effect on the system. Obanya is of the view that realistic reforms in education should be based on properly articulated transformational objectives which must emphasize the anticipated long-term multiplier effect on the entire educational system. Such transformation should be seen to deal with the real challenges facing education such as issues of national standards, strategic plans, implementation of continuous assessment, peace and security education and examination malpractice. It must also be system-focused on the extent to which specific interventions can bring about varying degrees of positive and sustainable transformation.

There is however, an aspect of reform in the management of what transpires in the school system which demands the full participation of parents. The reference here is to School-based Management Committees (SBMC).

School-based management (SBM) has been defined by Oswald (1995) as the decentralization of decision-making authority to the school site. Myers and Stonehill (1993) described School-based management as a strategy for improving education by transferring significant decision-making authority from state and local council offices to individual schools. In line with this conceptualization, SBM is expected to provide principals, teachers, students, and parents greater control over the education process by giving them responsibility for decisions about the budget, personnel, and even the curriculum. It is believed that through the involvement of teachers, parents, and other community members in taking key decisions, SBM can create more effective learning environments for children.

School Based Management is a process of decentralizing decision-making authority to communities in order to ensure that schools provide the social and economic benefits that best reflect the priorities and values of their local communities. It aims at improving bottom-up education planning and management in order to facilitate improvements in education quality, participation and efficiency through local level governance. School-based management can offer the following advantages:

- Allow competent individuals in the schools to make decisions that will improve learning;
- Give the entire school community a voice in key decisions;
- Focus accountability for decisions;
- Lead to greater creativity in the design of programs;
- Redirect resources to support the goals developed in each school;
- Lead to realistic budgeting as parents and teachers become more aware of the school's financial status, spending limitations, and the cost of its programs; and,
- Improve morale of teachers and nurture new leadership at all levels (Myers & Stonehill, 1993).

Although SBM is relatively a new dimension in the Nigerian education arena, yet it would be worthwhile for parents, guardians and community leaders to take interest in contributing to the development of schools, both in terms of policy enunciation and in terms of infrastructures for the advantage of the learners.

It is believed all parents must be keenly interested in supporting their children's educational pursuit is in providing security in the home from exposures to hazards of electricity shock, access to poisonous medicines, risks in careless running around, and unhealthful expenditure of energy through excessive overindulgence in games. But these days, children have become more vulnerable to insecurity on the way to school because of kidnappers. It is absolutely important that parents should spare time for school run for the safety of defenseless children. It is not sufficient to just drop the kids at the school gates and turn back. Further effort should be made to secure the cooperation of the school management or the teachers on accredited persons that could take the children away from school on dismissal. Indeed, for maximum security of infants particularly, the system of 'sign in' – 'sign out' should be maintained for the process of dropping and picking children at and from school respectively. Psychologically, children that feel insecure cannot learn well and cannot therefore qualify as future hopes for 21st Century techno-scientific development of Nigeria. Only safe and secure children feel free to exercise their creative imagination, and by so doing, they excite their ingenuity and before you know it, they have become inventors.

Finally, the home can positively act as a vital agent of educational transformation in the 21st Century by avoiding auto-regulation whereby children's impulses are prohibited with the 'don'ts' everywhere: On the TV, "Don't touch!" On the DVD Player, "Don't tune!" On the computer, "Don't touch!" On the dining table, "Don't talk!" and for cushion chairs in the sitting room, "Keep away!" With such prohibitions, children will live in perpetual fear; but that is really temporary because, as the saying goes, when the cat is away, rats jump out to play. It is therefore better to direct and control the curiosities of the little ones in order to reduce the aspects of the environment that mystify them.

Conclusion

The home has the primary mandate for the education of the child. That explains why the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 (FRN, 2004) provides for the prosecution of parents that fail to give their children opportunity for basic education. It is the home as an agent of education that prepares the ground on which teachers cultivate. It is the home that provides the ingredients with which the teachers prepare the academic diet. Thus, beside every successful learner, stands a supportive home. Therefore, any viable proposal for the transformation of Nigerian education in the 21st century should involve the home in order to guarantee its successful implementation.

Recommendations

1. Parents should be encouraged to participate maximally in their children's education in terms of patronizing the schooling demands of their wards and by showing interest in what their children do in school. In effect, parents should connect what their children learn to everyday life so that learning becomes part of the children's everyday experience.
2. Parents should be consulted before innovations are introduced in the school system. Such recognition will ginger them to leverage implementation of the new policies and practices. They should also be encouraged to participate in the school-based management committees of their children's schools.
3. Parents should engage in give-and-take conversations with their children, particularly on the things they learn about the world, life and living. It is advisable to listen to your children's ideas about issues instead of pouring information into their heads.
4. School heads should endeavor to establish and maintain cordial rapport with the parents of their students through invitations to open day events and hosting of regular Parents-Teachers Association meetings.
5. The federal and state governments should provide adequate funds for the training of teachers during pre-service education, and for retraining during capacity-building in-service workshops and through continuing professional development (CPD).

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