

Chapter Sixteen



REVAMPING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: A DISSECTION OF TOR IORAPUU'S AGBAJOWO AND IGWEBUIKE

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Introduction

Running a school, whether at the primary, secondary or tertiary level has always been supported by the goodwill of the stakeholder. Most of our readers can easily connect with the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) as a contributing agent to the progress of schools in Nigeria and across the globe. Indeed, the parents, teachers and the owners of the school (private or public) make up the tripartite arrangement that guarantees the smooth running of the schools. The PTA was so powerful that it served to check both the excesses of teachers and proprietors on one hand, and also cater for the welfare of students and staff of the school on the other. Many schools then could only attempt capital projects with the support and cooperation of the PTA. These could be seen in the procurement of school buses, chairs and lockers, equipping libraries and laboratories, renovations/building extra blocks of classrooms and even

supporting extra-curricular activities in the area of sports, dance and cultural events. The synergy between these three major stakeholders is critical to the effective management of public schools. Okendu posits that the controlling functions of school heads, and parents-teachers association has a significant relationship with the management operations of public secondary schools (201). It will be safe to postulate even at the beginning of this paper that running a school without the engagement of organized stakeholders is a sure way of running it down. Studies after studies in different nations of the world have also come to this same conclusion (Iqbal, Murtaza & Khan 2011, Okeke 2014 and Undiyaunde, 2020).

The way this collaboration works in private schools has always outperformed their counterparts in public schools. It is on the strength of these facts that the Cambridge Education Limited under the project called Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), contracted the services of the Youth Adolescence Reflection and Action Centre (YARAC) to implement a community theatre intervention in three southern States, after successful execution of the same project in the Northern States. The core objectives of the Community Theatre-ESSPIN Project as articulated by Iorapuu & Ogbureke (2020) were that:

1. Sensitized audiences become critical voices in demanding quality basic education and holding service providers accountable for effective service delivery
2. Encourage individuals and collective actions that would lead to sustained public dialogue to support their local schools (6).

School-Based Management Committees

In Nigeria, School-Based Management Committees (SBMC) or School Management Committees (SMC) are established by the government to act as a bridge between schools and the communities they serve. The SMC is more than a rebranded or upgraded name for the parents-teachers association; in fact, it is a critical support structure that operates independently from the parents-teachers association and is recognized by the ministry of education. They are expected to play leading roles in the running of the school. The purpose for the

establishment of SMCs and PTAs as Akyeampong, (2004) observed is all directed towards rejuvenating the status of communities and their members in school-level management. In its configuration, the head teacher serves as the secretary while a parent chairs the Committee with teachers, parents, and students serving as members. Abreh, (2017) argues that SMCs are managerial support to basic public schools that is to be seen as governing agencies of the school whose roles are central to the key activities and operations at the school level. The SMC is primarily structured to enhance the school and the community by working in the interest of the school. The SCM Guidebook encourages collaboration, especially in the areas of:

Communicating with other organizations The SBMC should meet regularly with other local education-focused organizations. Through working together, positive change can be achieved. Collaboration with the following stakeholders should take place: Parent Teacher Association PTA, Nigeria Union of Teachers NUT, Old Pupils' Association OPA, All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools ANCOPSS, Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All CSACEFA, MDA Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (20).

ESSPIN and YARAC Collaboration on Community Theatre

The Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) supports capacity development in basic education in Nigeria. ESSPIN is funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID). ESSPIN was a nine-year programme (2008-17) that sort to bring about sustainable improvements in the delivery of education by building institutional capacity to support school improvement at the federal, state, local and school or community levels in Nigeria. The programme works in six Nigerian states: Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, and Lagos, in conjunction with government partners to deliver governance and systems strengthening reforms.

ESSPIN's integrated approach to school improvement is delivered via the School Improvement Programme (SIP), a package of interventions that includes support for improving head teachers' effectiveness, teacher competence, functional school-based

management, and inclusive practices. ESSPIN's work had evolved over the years into four output streams: strengthening federal government systems to support state implementation of school improvement, improving state and LGA capacity for governance and management of basic education, strengthening the capability of primary schools to provide improved learning, and improving community participation in school improvement. In their bid to achieve effective community participation, the Youth Adolescence Reflection and Action Centre (YARAC), employs participatory approaches to build the capacity of youths and youth organizations to raise issues, sensitize and mobilize communities. Getting communities empowered to be at the forefront of issues affecting them is a fundamental goal of YARAC. YARAC's community organizing approach is inviting and participatory and it fits into a number of projects on Health, Education, Economic Empowerment, Peacebuilding, and Governance. McKenna, (2014) while agreeing that effecting change in communities can be a difficult process, recommends Theatre as a way of creating this change in the classroom and in the broader community. Environmental protection, sustainable economic development, and good governance are important issues of the century, and theatre can play an important role in addressing them (Inyang2016).

Community theatre when applied to projects, teaches community members to teach others, and helps communities to process issues that directly impact them. It can also raise awareness of issues, pose alternatives, heal, challenge contemporary discourses, and voice the views of the silent or marginal.

Storyline of Community Theatre Plays: *Agbajowo and Igwebuike*

Mrs. KPOMO is the Head Teacher at LESEKO Primary School. She has been receiving calls on her cell phone from stakeholders of the school, threatening to withdraw their children from the school; her pleading falls on deaf ears as each caller is bent on carrying out their threat. Meanwhile, the security man at FASAKI Primary School tries to interrogate a parent- BABA TITILAYO at the school gate who insists that his daughter attends the school but fails to remember the name of the Head Teacher of the school instead, he calls her Mrs. Kpomo. The

security man denies him access to the school, insisting that he has the wrong address. Baba Titilayo is further angered by the functional school amenities he now beholds like boreholes, toilets, and school playground supplies like the happy swing chair. Mrs. GBOYEGA, the Head Teacher hears the altercation between the two men and comes to intervene. First, she apologizes to Baba Titilayo for the mix-up and redirects him to Leseko primary school where Mrs. KPOMO is the Head Teacher. She also confirmed that FASAKI is a public primary school and not a private school as he had thought. She pleads with him to leave as she is expecting the State Schools Improvement Team (SSIT). He leaves determined to withdraw his daughter from Leseko and enroll her at Fasaki.

The next day, Baba Titilayo enters Mrs. Kpomo's office and demands to see the boy who allegedly injured his daughter. The head teacher sets the records straight, explaining that it was an accident while trying to move the class bench away from the leaking roof, Titilayo slipped and fell as a result of the wet floor and sustained a cut on her hand. Baba Titilayo accuses Mrs. Kpomo of mismanagement of funds sent by the government to improve the school. IYKE, a civil society activist walks in to meet the heated argument, he politely challenges Baba Titilayo to be part of the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC). BAALE comes in and wedges in on the matter as he forbids Baba Titilayo from withdrawing his child from the school and challenges him to join hands with other parents and the Head Teacher to transform Leseko to Fasaki. Baba Titilayo, complains of not being available due to his work and leaves. The Head Teacher together with Baale and Iyke agree to call for a meeting with the parents to chart a way forward. Mrs. Kpomo thanks God for this intervention.

The town crier, who happens to be Baba Titilayo, brings the message of the Baale to the people, announcing that the community meets tomorrow at Leseko primary school on a very urgent matter. He encourages those who have heard him tell those who are not around. The community turn out is impressive, Baala asks them to take a walk around the school and take a look around the school, they do so in groups of twos, threes, and fours and return with dissatisfying and painful faces. Iyke opens the meeting with prayer. Baale welcomes

everyone present and commends Baba Titilayo for mobilizing the people. He informs the community that he is aware that most parents have withdrawn their children from Leseko to Fasaki and wants to know why and what is Fasaki doing right to attract such patronage. Iyke informs the gathering that he took it upon himself to invite the Head Teacher of Fasaki to share her experience, so they can benefit from it. Mrs. Gboyega thanks the Baale for the opportunity to address the gathering. She also confirmed that her school was in a similar state as Leseko before they got help from ESSPIN and Government in an integrated approach to school improvement in the hundred schools targeted with this intervention. She noted that successful schools encourage parents' interest and parents' interest encourages teacher performance and successful schools. Mrs. Kpomo enquires how the school management committee works in harmony with the school administration. Mrs. Gboyega answers the question by underscoring the place of transparency and accountability and inclusiveness. She said planning is done together and the Head Teacher is the secretary of the committee. The Baale puts the suggestion to form the SBMC Committee to the community and they all respond in the affirmative.

Igwebuike

In *Igwebuike*, UCHENNA is a physically challenged child who questions why he is not in school like other children in the compound. His father, CHIJOKE, had promised to enroll him in school with no success. Uchenna tries to enroll himself but returns crying after being tagged an illegal student. His father decides to attempt again at enrolling him but he is surprised at Uchenna who is all dressed up in a uniform determined to go to school. His father tries to distract him with the home chores of feeding the goats but he will not fall for it. He begins to weep to recall the death of his mother who he believes would have long enrolled him if she were alive. His father struggles with tears and emotion to pacify him. Uchenna stops crying and listens to his father who promises to go to the school to find out what it will take to enroll him and if they will accept special children like him. Uchenna agrees to stay back and allow his father to keep to his promise while he goes to fetch grass for the goats.

At the Udimiri School; Chijoke informs the Head Teacher of his

intention to enroll his physically challenged child in the school. The headteacher enquires about the nature of the disability and Chijoke tries to explain but confirms that Uchenna is not blind and neither is he deaf. The Head Teacher suggests he tries special schools but Chijoke says he does not have the means to afford such an education. The Head Teacher tells him to bring Uchenna to school so that they can try their best. He leaves excitedly. Head Teacher complains of being bombarded with information from school support officers (SSOs) and parents as well.

Uchenna and his father Chijoke are struggling over a chair. His father does not understand why his son needs to take a chair to school. Uchenna tells his father the ordeal he went through yesterday when he had to sit on the floor, he shows his Dad his dirty shorts. The father sympathizes with him but tries to make the point that this is the only chair they have in the house. Chijoke releases the chair to Uchenna on the condition that he will return the chair after school. Uchenna leaves happily while his father reflects and complains of the demand of caring for a physically challenged child and contemplates withdrawing him from school if his demands increase.

The school support officer (SSO) arrives Udimiri primary school and inspects the facilities in the school. He returns to the Head Teacher's office disappointed at the level of dilapidation and the clustering of pupils in the class. He observes that only two teachers are on duty and the absence of a school-based management committee. The Head Teacher shows him the copies of the request form the last Head Teacher had written for urgent attention on the school but no response was received from the authorities for the past five years. He complains that teachers who are transferred to the school give conditions for their assumption of duty which he cannot meet. He confesses that it is not his duty to start a school-based management committee and the members of the community who were approached to volunteer request to be paid. Madam Ngozi comes into the office complaining about the bullying going on in the school where bigger pupils molest smaller pupils; she also protests the enrolment of Uchenna, the handicapped child into a school established for normal children.

The Head Teacher goes out and returns with Uchenna and asks Mama Ngozi if this was a handicapped man, Mama Ngozi on sighting

him, exclaims in a burst of ridiculing laughter that Uchenna is the reason parents are withdrawing their children from the school to Mkpokiti. Uchenna begins to cry but he is quickly calmed by the school support officer and allowed to return to class. She reveals that based on information she picks at her joint, the success of the school at Mkpokiti is attributed to a name that sounds like a political party. The SSO immediately seizes the opportunity to help her memory on the name of the group to be the SBMC made up of people like herself and Madam Ngozi. She invites Madam Ngozi to a scheduled meeting at the Igwe's palace, informing her that she will nominate her as a member of the school's board management committee; this makes her happy and she promises to come along with a valued customer to which the SSO obliges.

Chijoke is at home when Uchenna arrives from school crying and reporting a woman who abuses him by calling him a 'Man Pikin'. Chijoke is alarmed by this but tries to console his son to drop the chair and take off his uniform and come and eat. Uchenna tells his father that he will not be returning to his school because he is tired of carrying the chair to and from school every day. He prefers to go to Mkpokiti. His father begs him not to even think about that because he has neither means nor the vehicle to transport him to the school at Mkpokiti. He promises to meet the woman who called him names at school the next day.

Chijoke, on reaching the school and escorting his son to his class, begins to notice a lot of things that are wrong with the school he goes to the Head Teacher's office and meets her and the school support officer (SSO). The Head Teacher welcomes him and introduces him to SSO as the father of the child Madam Ngozi makes reference to. He further aggravates the already angry father. He insists on meeting this Madam Ngozi, who has abused his son by calling him names that are inappropriate. The Head Teacher pleads with him to remain the gentle man that he is. The SSO commends him for the courage to bring his physically challenged child to school. Chijoke uses the opportunity to lament on the state of the classrooms in the school and does not blame his son for insisting on leaving the school. He wonders why the local government authority is not doing much to uplift the school. The SSO appreciates Chijoke's observation and invites him to a meeting at the

Igwe's palace to which he accepts to come.

At the Igwe's palace, everybody present is seated. Madam Ngozi enters while making a call. Uchenna sneaks in to point Madam Ngozi to his father. His father confronts her for calling his son 'Man Pikin'. They are calmed by the people present as the Igwe enters and takes his seat. He confronts Madam Ngozi who claims she will withdraw her daughter from the school and asks Chijoke if this is what he wants to continue seeing. They both affirm that they will want to see improvement in the school. The Igwe insists that the school bears the name of the community and thus, needs the support of the community. He makes Chijoke and Madam Ngozi automatic members of the committee. He thanks the SSO for coming and helping them realize the resources they have in their community in terms of human capacities and asks her to convey their commitment to partner with the government to make education succeed in Idemiri. The two apologize to each other as Madam Ngozi calls on Uchenna and refers to him as 'my Pikin' and pledges that she and his father will do all within their power to bring development to the school.

State of our Public Schools in Nigeria

Describing the state of most public schools in Nigeria will require no embellishment as the raw truth stares us in the face. From North to South, East to West, our public schools are a shadow of what they used to be when the military government took over mission schools and pledged to be responsible for running them as public schools. Kehinde (2019) provides an eyewitness account when he recalls that:

Behind the shabby school building, gathered with my peers during leisure period, we ransack tangled heaps of broken chairs and desks like scavengers. In a school of over 1800 students, each student is responsible for his/her chair and table as the available ones are insufficient to occupy the huge number of students. Like cavemen, we apply stone to rotten nails on damaged school furniture, crafting chairs and tables on which to sit. The unlucky ones would have to place placards and cartons on the floor when there are no more vacant seats in a classroom where we sit jam-packed like sardines. Under these shameful conditions, we acquired knowledge

that scarcely managed to take root. No wonder mass failure has become inevitable at public schools. At the ring of the dismissal bell, we burst out of our various classes like a prison break, excited that another day's sentence is over.

These are not exaggerations if anything, worst situations exist in communities far away from the cameras of journalists and human right activists. The YARAC team did not sit in the comforts of the city of Jos to craft the plays for community mobilization instead. Ogbureke (6) reports that their activities included: Series of consultations through preliminary tours/surveys to ESSPIN State offices and Project sites, therefore, the grim picture painted in the two plays under review were actual and first-hand accounts of the reality on the ground. The following anecdotes from the characters of the play leave much to be desired about the state of bad and good schools:

Baba Titilayo: ... this na school? Go Fasaki and see wetin be school. Here. You no even get Security Man. Where your Jangirova? Show me your Jangirrova. You see what I mean? Where your SSIT, eh? Okey, where your SBMC? You get nothing, where my daughter, I go taking her away (20).

Baba Titilayo: ...and I wan know why Leseko Primary School don yeye like this. Government dey pump (Emphasizes it) plenty money to your agencies, where de money dey go? I dey carry my daughter go Fasaki. (As the exchange continues, IYKE, the CSO activist, walks into the scene). Thank God, Mr. lyke don come too. Let us commot our children from this yeye environment, security no dey at all (Iorapuu & Ogbureke 21).

Even though the character of Baba Titilayo is a semi-literate he is able to describe the absence of key essentials for education. He notes with sadness the absence of security. This shows how the school management has been left to chance. A school that will employ teachers and invest in infrastructure yet fails to secure it has misplaced priority. A primary school without playground equipment deprives the pupils of the use of their psychomotor domain when in school. And because he has seen what a well-managed public school looks like in Fasaki primary

school, he is able to query its absence in another public school. We see how the present state of Leseko primary school is affecting enrollment of pupils. Determinants to school enrollment include the absence of security and basic infrastructure like chairs and lockers among others. The situation is not different in Udimiri primary school in the Eastern part of the country as mama Ngozi one of the vocal characters of the play submits:

Mama Ngozi: Ehen! So, madam, wetin una dey support? Where una dey since? See de school, e bi like say na prison yard, ehn. School no get teacher, school no get water, school no get better place wey children go take play; na school be dis?

SSO: That is why we are here today.

Mama Ngozi: E don late o! I must commot my Daughter go where children dey learn better thing. (51)

The language of mama Ngozi is the same as that of Baba Titilayo, they speak of the problems bedeviling the rural school especially. She collaborates with Baba Titilayo's complaints about the absence of the playground equipment, describing the classrooms as prisons with no water supply. Perhaps the most pertinent observation was the fact that there are no adequate teachers to match the pupil-teacher ratio. Ikediashi & Amaechi (2012) maintain that significantly, pupil-teacher ratios are very essential to the quality of education. They perhaps rank alongside professional knowledge, skill, as well as strategies, in genuinely determining educational success and performance (p.264).

SMC Formation Procedure

The process of constituting a school management committee is well spelled out in the SBCM Guidebook, it states that:

School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) are made up of a range of local people involved with their school. SBMCs work to increase communities' involvement with education, and to help improve the quality and effectiveness of schools. They provide a way of helping the education authorities to listen to what adults and children want from schools and a way of increasing the contributions of everyone in the local area to making education

work well (9).

The table below will provide more details on the composition of the SMC Membership to include the following:

Composition of School Management Committee (SMC)

Interest Group	No.	Status
Traditional Leader	1	Adviser
PTA representatives (Female and Male)	2	Chairman & Deputy
Head Teacher of the School	1	Secretary
Representative of Teachers and NUT (Female and Male)	2	Member
Representative of Pupils (Male and Female)	2	Member
Representatives of Community (Female and Male)	2	Member
Representatives of Old Pupils	1	Member
Representative of Youths	1	Member
Representative of Community -Based Associations (Female and Male)	2	Member
Representatives of Artisan (Female and Male)	1	Member
Representatives of Religious Organisations (Muslim and Christian)	2	Member
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SBMC members will select an executive from amongst its members including the Chairman (should as far as possible be a retired teacher) Vice-Chairman Secretary (this will be the Head Teacher of the school) Treasurer (should not be a member of the school administration or a teacher) Press Relations Officer. The membership strength can be smaller as long as it covers the main offices to carry out the duties of the SMC.

The Community Theatre play scripts capture the procedure of constituting this committee in the two plays under review using both traditional rulers as initiators of the process and allowing the parents and school staff the liberty of co-opting other relevant members:

Baale: From what I am hearing, there is a strong agreement that we need to move forward by strengthening and participating actively in the SBMC. With the SBMC functioning effectively, we will check the activities of hoodlums in our schools (32).

Igwe: We have heard the SSO. We will make sure that we begin immediately. We will mobilize our community assets as you said. Mama Ngozi and Chijoke, you will contact all the Age Grades groups and unions; get the list of our children outside and we will reorganize. SSO, tell government, they will hear from us. We will do our best, but they should be prepared for us too. One final word, Mama Ngozi, Chijoke and Head Teacher, please all of you

should see me tomorrow in the afternoon (69).

The plays were able to articulate the needs of the schools in their respective communities and how every community member is expected to be involved in collectively providing a solution. The Igwe sums it succinctly with these words:

Igwe: This madam (Referring to the SSO) has made me to know better that where communities take an active role, children's access to education, the quality of teaching and learning, and the school environment can improve significantly. That is why this emergency meeting is called (66).

Audience Responses to the Plays' Performance

It is one thing to present a play to a community and it is another thing for the community to take action. This well-documented process was reported to be very engaging and reflective. The playwright's Introductory Notes underscore the effectiveness of the plays in causing a reawakening in the lives of the communities under this outreach and spurring them to action:

The responses during the post-performance discussions were evocative and participatory. The responses show that the event encouraged people to feel safe while expressing themselves around issues that affected the future of their children. Community members boldly engaged government and elected representatives and demanded accountability from them. Parents, SNMC members, traditional rulers, SUBEB staff, school pupils, and other members of the public contributed sincerely to the debate about the state of education in their respective communities (7).

Conclusion

We have been able to link community theatre intervention to the success of school-based management committee awareness and establishment in the two plays under review. This approach adopted by global education partners with Nigeria proves that theatre practice has a very strong connection to the people whether in the cities or in the villages. African strategies transmitted within the context of her

indigenous arts have proven to advance communities. Tor Iorapuu and his team at YARAC have demonstrated this beyond a reasonable doubt. It is no longer if TFD works, instead, it is how willing the government and its partners are able to deploy it for national development.

Recommendations

1. Colleges of Education through their Theatre Arts Departments can partner with State Ministries of Education to replicate this project in States not covered in the ESSPIN Project.
2. Old Students Association needs to wake up and form a pressure group for government to fulfill its obligation to the schools. Their support in taking up certain projects should not be viewed as a legal right by the school but a goodwill gesture to support what the government should be doing.
3. Parent-Teachers Associations can also adopt the TfD approach in reorienting its members to birthing a School Management Committee for better engagement with the government.

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