Youth Voice in Nigerian School-based Management Committees

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Abstract

In Nigeria, School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) aim to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, particularly the vulnerable groups in the school's host communities such as young people and women to partake in school governance. Research on the experiences of youth voice in the committees is scant, however, as much of the existing literature on SBMCs focuses on program outcomes. Using qualitative research interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study addressed this gap by exploring how youth participate and express themselves in two SBMCs in Niger State, Nigeria. The findings, which were derived from 19 youth and adult participants, were drawn from SBMC members out of which 12 were youth between the ages 13 and 25, while 7 were adults aged 40 and above. The participants revealed that youth committee members expressed their voice in the committees through participating in a number of committee activities. Specifically, the youth participated in decision-making during meetings, aided in the construction of committee projects, undertook administrative/managerial functions and monitored the committee's projects. They also participated in revenue generation, planning, school visits and supervision, advocacy, and sensitization campaigns.

Keywords: Youth Voice, School-based Management, Youth-Adult Partnership

1. Introduction

In recent years, governments in developing countries with support from development institutions and international donor agencies such as UNICEF and the World Bank are increasingly adopting educational reforms aimed at decentralization in the administration of schools so as to increase participation of members of the community. This is based on the strong argument put forward by economic and public administration theorists that say efficiency is gained by granting service recipients both a say and a stake in the services they receive (Gershberg, 1999).

The most common practice of involving communities in the management of basic education that has now become a global phenomenon is School-based Management. Different terms, such as Site-based Management, Autonomous School Program, and Self-managing School, are used to indicate the transfer of authority in the decision-making of higher government to individual schools with parents and other members of the community's participation (Barnett, 2012; Parker & Raihani, 2011). Proponents of community participation through SBM argue that within such schools where the program is being run, improvements in all aspects of school become more feasible and possible. For instance, studies on participation of stakeholders in education through SBM show that it improves the quality of education, brings about improvement in ownership, helps to reach the disadvantaged groups, mobilizes additional resources and builds institutional capacity (Bandur, 2008; Barnett, 2012).

In Nigeria, SBMC was implemented more than a decade ago with the aim of providing an opportunity for all the stakeholders, especially the marginalized groups in the school's host communities such as young people and women, to also have a strong voice in the way their schools are governed. However, most of what is available in the literature pertain to outcomes while less is known about the process of youth voice experiences in the committees. For instance, available literature on SBMCs in Nigeria is limited to implementation strategies (Akinola, 2009; Ayeni & Ibukun, 2013), trainee's manual and guidebook for training of SBMC members (UNICEF/FME, 2012; Kano State Ministry of

Education, 2012), and challenges facing effective operation of SBMCs (Ogundele & Adelabu, 2009). It is, however, important to understand youth voice experiences among SBMC members in view of the positive role youth play in committees, boards, and organizations. Accordingly, this study sought to close the gap highlighted in the literature by using a qualitative approach to explore in-depth how youth committee members expressed their voice in two school-based management committees in Niger state, Nigeria.

2. Youth Voice

The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child can be said to have sparked the idea of advocating youth participation and voice in public decision-making. Article 12 of the convention calls for children and young people to have their voices and opinion taken into account in all major decisions affecting their lives. With the ratification of the convention by majority member states, youth voice which started slowly its evolution process is now fairly well established in some countries of the world while it is still in its infancy in many others, (Middleton, 2006).

Youth voice refers to a number of ways through which youth get to take part in the decisions that affect them and other youth (Mitra 2008). The term is not restricted to youth oral communications as it literal meaning may suggest, but also their physical expressions such as the behaviors they exhibit, the dress they wear, the company they belong to, the activities they choose to partake in and many others distinct ways in which they present themselves to the society (Maynard, 2008). Youth voice provides youth with the opening to communicate their views and contribution that would help to ensure that they are heard and acknowledged as respected shareholders in the development and implementation of programs (Maynard, 2008).

Steadily, youth are now being engaged in governance in such areas as youth organizations, community organizations, schools, and other public policy arenas, where they are making positive impacts in crucial daily functions such as "program design, budgeting, outreach, public relations, training, and evaluation" (Zeldin et al., 2007, p. 91). They attend public hearing and demonstrate in meetings, serve on the agency's boards, conduct researches that are community-based, make presentations on policy and demand accountability from public office holders for their actions (Checkoway, 2011). Similarly, Wright (1999) reported that youth participate in the different groups they belong to as planners, administrators, advocates, counselors/peer to peer support, income generators, decision-makers, monitors, and evaluators.

Several programs provide youth the opportunities to exercise their voice some of which according to Checkoway (2011) are youth service, which respond to problem; youth development, which promotes the prevention of problems; positive youth development, which creates caring and supportive communities; youth leadership, which empowers them to leadership positions; community service, which enables them help with one service or the other; and social action, which involves them in organizing action group around issues like racial discrimination, and homelessness.

A number of studies conducted on youth voice in organizational governance have found that "youth demonstrated increased competence, acquired knowledge, and practical skills, and strengthened ties to their communities" (Wong et al., 2010). Thus, youth voice is highly beneficial to the youth as well as to the organization and community because youth gain from the "learning process and sense of connectedness of participation while the organization and community benefit from the effectiveness of the projects" (Tarifa, 2006, p. 52). It is in view of these potentials profits that Zeldin, Krauss, Collura, Lucchesi, and Sulaiman (2014) considered youth voice as an issue of social justice, a platform for positive youth development and effective citizenry and above all, a strategy for nation-building. However, more than two decades after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child declaration on the right of children to participate in decisions that have to do with all matters of importance that affect them, yet the voice of youth, particularly in Africa is still not heard in schools, communities, organizations and governmental circles (Buck, 2013). There is still very limited number of studies focusing on youth voice in decision-making coming from Africa, and Asia continents, as youth development literature globally is almost completely dominated by Western theories (Hart, 2008).

3. School-Based Management Committee

The School-based Management is a form of decentralization of authority whereby decision-making and responsibility for school matters are transferred from higher authority to principals, teachers, parents, students and other members of the community the school is located (Caldwell, 2005; UNICEF/FME, 2012). This pragmatic approach formally alters the bureaucratic style of school administration with a more democratic structure that brings about the bottom-up approach into educational planning and management and vested the powers of decision-making authority in the individual school through which improvements are stimulated and sustained (Gamage, 2006). SBM, which is now a prominent feature of public school management in many countries of the world (Bandur, 2012), was first experimented in the late 1980s in response to the failure of school administration and was aimed at building relationship amongst parents, staff, policy makers and their community that will result in the school becoming accountable, flexible and innovative enough to customize programs that best suit them (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007).

SBM in Nigeria started as a pilot project in a few selected schools in 2005, and today the program is being implemented in all schools at basic education level throughout the country with the aim of providing an opportunity for all the stakeholders, especially young people and women groups that are usually marginalized in the communities, to also have a strong voice in school governance. The is sequel to a policy guideline directive handed down by the National Council on Education (NCE) that mandated all basic education school in the country to set up a School-Based Management Committee (SBMC), comprising adults and youth to assist in both planning and management of the school and provide a conduit to the local community where the school is located (UNICEF/FME, 2012). However with about 12 years of the implementation of SBMC at basic education level in Nigeria, information regarding the experience of youth

committee members is sketchy as available literature pertains to training and implementation strategies (Akinola, 2009; Ayeni & Ibukun, 2013; UNICEF/FME, 2012) and outcome (Adediran, 2012; Ogundele & Adelabu, 2009). Thus, this study seeks to close this gap by exploring how youth committee members participate and express their voice in school-based management committees (SBMCs) in Nigeria.

4. Methods

This is a qualitative study that employed case study method, which involved two School-based Management Committees in Niger state, Nigeria. The basis for the selection of the two committees as the unit of analysis was as result of their success in the implementation of SBM program. The two SBMCs were part of the first set of committees that were created when the program was first implemented in 2009 in Niger state, with support from UNICEF and Federal ministry of education of Nigeria. Today, the two committees are considered as some of the few functional SBMCs, and as a result, models for other SBMCs in the state (Okojie, 2012). SBMC 1 comprised 18 members while SBMC 2 had 19 members drawn from the schools and their communities and shouldered with the responsibility of managing human and material resources of their respective schools.

The study used 19 participants in total, drawn entirely from the membership of the two SBMCs out of which 12 were youth between the ages 13 and 25, while 7 were adults aged 40 and above. All participants selected and used in the study had served for not less than two years so as to ensure that they were acquainted with the workings of the committee. However, youth members who had joined the committees for less than one year at the time of the data collection were also used so as to get a sense of the feeling and experience of new youth members in the committees.

Data in this study was simultaneously collected by the researchers through individual interviews and follow-up interviews (where necessary), observations and document analysis. This is to eliminate the danger of systematic prejudices or limitations of a specific method and allows for a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations that the researcher develop at the conclusion (Maxwell, 2005). It should, however, be noted that semi-structured interview was used as the prime data source for the study. The researchers conducted 29 interviews with the participants, observed a few committee meetings as a non-participant observer, and studied a number of documents such as minutes of meetings that relate to the administration of the two committees. Data analysis was done alongside with data collection and once all the data was collected, the intensive analysis started with tentative findings validated, reviewed and reorganized. NVIVO qualitative research software (version 10) was used in the process of data analysis and management. Pseudonyms of the participants were used in this study for the purpose of confidentiality.

5. Findings

In order to understand how youth participate and express their voice in the committees, both adults and youth participants were interviewed regarding youth voice experiences in the committees. In addition, documents of the committees were studied and committee meetings were observed in order to verify some of the issues raised by the participants in the interviews. In response to the questions that seek to ascertain how they express their voice in the committees, youth participants have stated that they expressed their voice in the committees through participation in a number of committees' activities. For instance, Mika stated that "we youth participate in almost all the activities of our committee". He specifically listed those areas that he participates in the committee as "in decision-making during meetings, in the construction of committee's projects, in the purchase of items on behalf of the committee and in monitoring committee's activities and projects among others". Below are the five ways through which youth participated and expressed their voice in the committees:

5.1 *Decision-making*

All the youth participants stated that they participated in committees' meeting where decisions on matters related to the functions of the committee were made. It should be noted that the two SBMCs organize their general meetings annually and on this occasion, staff of the school, parents of the pupils and other community members join committee members to review the year's activities, plan for the following year and also take reports from the committee and sub-committees. However, there was an opening for an emergency general meeting of the SBMCs whenever the need arise. On the part of the committees, they meet every school term, with opportunities for emergency meetings as much as there was the need. At the committees' meeting, major decisions are taken and sub-committees' reports are presented among other things. Some of the sub-committees meet more frequently because of the nature of the activities or assignment they were carrying out. Commenting on youth's participation in the committees, Yunusa of SBMC 2 has this to say:

> You can find one or two youth members in each of the sub-committees where we make our own input and contributions for the success of the sub-committees during meetings. In fact, a lot of issues that has to do with the SBMC are familiar to the youth, particularly we the older youth, because some of us are teachers, businessmen, and women and like me, I am a politician and I was a one-time councilor representing this community. So we have some knowledge and connections that help us to contribute in decision-making.

Describing how he participated and contributed to decision-making during committee meetings, Rahman of SBMC 1 stated that:

> Before we go into meetings, I interact with other youths so that they tell me their views and concerns on the issue to be discussed. During meetings, I contribute based on what I discussed with other youth before the meeting. When someone makes a good point in the meeting I support. When questions are asked or something information that I have is needed, I explain. When we could not agree on an issue and it is time to vote, I vote.

All the adult participants attested to what the youth participants said about the part they play in decision-making. A statement by Musa of SBMC 1 indicated clearly that youth's contributions form an important part of committees' decision-making process:

> When it comes to decision-making sometimes we depend on the youth's point of view because they are exposed and they know a lot about many things. They make contributions, make clarifications and give useful suggestions on issues they are familiar with that help us arrive at a conclusion.

The minutes of meetings which was another document that the researchers studied during the data collection at the two SBMCs revealed that most of the resolution of the meetings were linked to the contribution of the youth during meetings and that indicated the influence youth voice had on other members. In addition, it was observed that in the minutes of meetings, many names of youth committee members appeared in the list of ad-hoc committees and sub-committees members set up during the meetings to attend to some special and emergency matters that emanated from the resolutions of the meetings. All these confirm the confidence that adult members had in the youth that made them assign responsibilities to the youth, which in turn served as a springboard for the youth to increase their voice/influence in the committees.

5.2 Handling Administrative Responsibilities

Data analysis shows that youth committee members were given responsibilities at both the committee and sub-committee level accomplished. They take minutes of meetings and in some cases conducted meetings at the sub-committees' level. In addition, youth were responsible for the purchase of items on behalf of the committee, kept committee's records and represented the committee at different functions. When youth participants were asked to comment on the responsibilities assigned to them on the committee, Ibrahim of SBMC 1 explained that "the committee is made up of sub-committees that are created and assign specific responsibilities to do and youth are also included as members of those sub-committees". When asked to specifically mention the responsibilities that youth handle in the committees, Yunusa of SBMC 2 stated that "as the secretary of purchase and supply committee, I participate in purchasing and supplying items for the committee and also keep record of such transactions", while Mika of SBMC 1 stated that "I am responsible for taking minutes of meetings of disciplinary committee". Ali also of SBMC 1 stated that "I chair meeting of sub-committee on public relations whenever the chairman is absent from the meeting". Kenneth, Makada and Jagaba, all adult member of the SBMC 2 agreed with the youth that responsibilities were assigned to members, which have enabled such youth to make their contributions on the committees. Makada stated that youth are given the opportunity to hold some positions and make decisions on issues that they are more conversant with. When asked to give example, he said that:

> We delegate them (youth) to represent the committee in some occasion or activities here or somewhere else. I remember that some youth like, Yunusa and Abubakar were part of the delegation we sent to a nearby community to help them sort out the problem in their committee.

5.3 School Visit and Supervision

Another area where youth expressed their voice in the activities of the committees was through school visit for supervision, which is a visit committee members pay to the school from time-to-time, to inspect what goes on in the school and report to the committee. The youth participants stated that they constituted the membership of the committee that participates from time-to-time in the school visit so as to see what is happening in the school and how the teachers and pupils are doing. The written report at the end of the visit usually forms the basis for some committees' decisions. Yunusa, a youth committee member of SBMC 2 has this to say on what they do during a school visit.

> We check into the school without giving notice of our visit, to see what is going on in the school. We check the teachers' attendance register to see who are present and who are absent and we also go round class by class to see who are teaching and who are not. We also listen to complaints from the teachers and pupils. If we see anything wrong in the school, like a teacher is absent without explanation or shortage of teaching and learning aid, we write a report on that and the committee will take action.

However, the supervisory record books, which were among other document I studied during the data collection at both SBMC 1 and SBMC 2 only showed the record of older youth such as Mika, Isah, and Ali of SBMC 1 and Yunusa and Abubakar of SBMC 2 as those that have participated in school supervision. While the names of younger youth such as Rahman, Ibrahim, and Maku of SBMC 1 and Halima, Magaji, Aisha and Sanusi of SBMC 2 were not found on such reports. This means younger youth were not accommodated in such team and as such, they were not involved in the supervision of school activities.

5.4 Providing Free Manual Labor

The data further showed that all the youth participants stated that they took part in the manual work for the committees. This the youth said was very important because it helped to cut cost that would have accrued to the committees if such works were to be contracted out and that the act was very much appreciated by other members of the committees. Miku of SBMC 1 and Sanusi and Aisha of SBMC 2 all stated that they participated in in environmental sanitation so as to keep the school compound clean. Isah also of SBMC 1 further explained that youth cut grasses in the school play field, worked in the school garden and did any construction work for the committee. He further explained that:

If the school management has manual labor work that they feel the pupils owing to their ages may not be able to do it we the youth members of the committee will mobilize other youth in the community to come together and do the work. For instance, the playing field in the school use to be bushy during raining season and because there is no grass cutting machine, we help in cutting low the grasses. Also, we help the pupils with work in the school garden and also supply free labor during any construction work in the school so as to reduce cost. The adult committee members are always happy whenever we do that because we save the committee a lot of money.

Similarly, all the adult participants acknowledged the important role youth's manual labor play in cutting the cost of running the activities of the committees, a practice the youth do better than the adults because of the energy advantage their youthful age gave them. It was in recognition of this that Kenneth, an adult member of SBMC 2 described the youth as "the most active ones in the committee when it comes to manual work". Aduke and Jummai of SBMC 1 attributed the success of the committee to the parts youth played in achieving committee's objectives. Equally, Jagaba of SBMC 2 stated that "youth are good in decision-making and also good in the implementation, which enables us to achieve our aims and objective". Makada of SBMC 2 stated that "that is why in the committee, powers are shared … without minding the age difference" Makada further stated that:

There are certain things that need the use of physical energy to accomplished, which the adults may not be able to do it and therefore the youth will have to do it. For instance, when we were digging the foundation of the new block of a classroom, we had to call on the youth to come and do it. Instead of providing money for people to come and do, which will cost the committee a lot, it was a service provided by the youth.

In addition, Mika, Isah, Ali, Rahman, Ibrahim, and Maku all of them youth members of SBMC1 stated that they took part in gardening. The project was critical to the sustenance of the committee because, apart from consuming the produce, proceeds from the sales of the produce were used to fund some of the financial needs of the committee. Ibrahim has this to say about their participation in the garden.

We (youth) used to physically work in the school garden, from preparing the land, bringing different seed species for planting and harvesting. Some members help in providing these different plant seeds such as tomatoes, garden egg, potatoes and also trees like Guava, Mango, and so many other things and together we used to plant them in the school garden and take care of them.

5.5 *Generating Revenue*

Youth participants stated that youth committee members were also responsible for revenue generation that was very vital to the running of the committees. In addition to contributing their own share to the fund, youth also went around the community and beyond soliciting for funds from well-to-do individuals and group. Isah of the SBMC 2 added that:

Whenever members of the community pledge to assist the committee with money or any other thing, we the youth meet them to collect it for the committee. We also contribute funds from time to time in order to help the committee to solve some of her financial needs. These funds are very important because they are used to run the activities of the committee.

Adult participants also recognized that youth committee members partook in the area of generating revenue for the use of the committees. On youth providing funds, Makada of SBMC 2 acknowledged that "Adults and some youth committee members are also responsible for providing funds when it is needed, although not all youth are within the age of providing funds in committee". On youth assisting in collecting the funds pledged by other community members, Yusuf, a member of SBMC 1 committee explained that:

When they (Community members) pledge to support with a certain amount of money, it is the responsibility of the youth committee members to go around the community so as to collect the pledge. They (Youth committee members) go house-to-house of those people to collect the money and give them the receipt.

5.6 *Advocacy Visits and Sensitization Campaign*

Advocacy visits and sensitization campaign were discovered to be some of the committees' responsibilities youth took part in. All the youth interviewed said that they used to be part of visitation team to commiserate with the family of any committee member, teacher or pupil who lost something or someone. In addition, they formed part of sensitization campaign team for anything that the committee needed to mobilize and enlighten the people en masse. Elaborating on youth participation in sensitization campaign and mass mobilization, Abubakar of SBMC 1 stated that they participated in enrolment campaign at the start of the school year. He explained further that:

Youth participate actively in the sensitization campaign on any issue that the committee wants to get across to the community. Like the enrolment campaign that we do at the start of the school year to encourage parents to send their children to school and to allow them to finish and not to remove and send them to sell things in the market or to just marry out the girls. Sometimes we go house to house, sometimes we gather people together in one place and talk to them on the message we have for them.

Magaji also of SBMC 2 stated that youth participate in fact-finding visits and to sympathize with members:

When there is a report that a pupil is sick or something terrible happens to him or her or a parent has withdrawn a pupil from the school to be going to the farm or hawking in the town or for any reason, we the youth and other adult members organize and pay the family visit to show our concern and sympathy with them or to find out why the pupil is not going to school. After we listen to them we then advise them how to solve the problem so that the pupil will continue to go to school.

6. Discussion

Studies have shown that youths are "making strong contributions to advisory boards and planning councils, and are integrally involved in key day-to-day functions such as program design, budgeting, outreach, public relations, training and evaluation" (Zeldin et al., 2007, p. 91). Similarly, Wright (1999) reported that the youth described ways they participate in the different group they belong to as planners, administrators, advocates, counselors/peer to peer support, income generator, decision-makers, monitor, and evaluator. Youth also participate in many activities that benefit them and other members of their communities such as "public policy consultation, community coalitions for youth development, youth infusion in organizational decision making, youth organizing, and school-based service learning" (Camino & Zeldin, 2002. P. 218). However, Checkoway (2011) states that youth attend public hearings and demonstrate in meetings, serve on the board of agencies, conduct researches that are community-based, make presentations on policy and demand accountability from public office holders for their actions. Findings from this study revealed that youth committee members expressed their voice in the committees through participation in a number of committees' activities. Specifically, youth listed that they participate and make their voice heard in decision-making during meetings, construction of committee projects, administrative/managerial functions and monitoring committee's projects. Others are in revenue generation, planning, school visit and supervision, advocacy, and sensitization campaign as areas that they participate in the committee.

6.1 Decision marking

As decision-makers, young people sit on boards and committees of schools, youth-serving NGOs and organizations to participate in decisions making process on several issues that will improve the effectiveness of the program for the benefit of the youth, their peers, and their communities (Wright, 1999). Similarly, youth members in this study participated in the committees' meeting where decisions on matters related to the functions of the committee are made. The minutes of meetings of the two committees attested to the important contributions of youth members, particularly from the older youth during the SBMCs general meetings, committees meetings, and sub-committees meetings.

6.2 Handling administrative responsibilities

Regarding youth handling administrative responsibilities, Wright (1999) reported that youth perform a vital role in carrying out the daily basic administration and activities of the group program such as typing documents, bookkeeping, and data collection and in the process acquire skills that could turn out to be useful for them to secure jobs later on in life. Equally, findings from the current study show that youth committee members were given responsibilities of taking minutes of meetings and in some cases conducted meetings as the chairmen at the sub-committees' level. In addition, youth were responsible for the purchase of items on behalf of the committee, kept committee's records and represented the committee at different functions. This is however not unexpected because, it is on record that youth participation in such governance roles with adults are not without benefit, as observed by Bernard (2005) who reported that youth stood to gain new skills, learn about citizenship, develop sense of responsibility, and acquire the developmental assets needed to succeed as adults. Other new acquired competencies and abilities are "improved interpersonal and communication skills; meeting and group facilitation skills; financial planning, mediation, nonprofit management, organizational planning, team building, report writing staff supervision, community relations" (Zeldin, 2004, p. 83).

6.3 School visit and supervision

Another area where youth express their voice in activities of the committees was through school visit for supervision. Youth members formed part of the committee that from time-to-time participated in the school visit so as to see what was happening in the school and how the teachers and pupils were doing. The written report at the end of the visit usually formed the basis for some committees' decisions. Similarly, Wright (1999) reported examples of youth participating together with other members in the monitoring and evaluation of program activities and objectives although this happens in few such cases of programs. However, the supervisory record books at both committees only showed the record of older youth members from both committees while the names of younger youth committee members were not found on such reports. This means younger youth were not accommodated in such team and as such, they were not involved in the supervision of school activities.

6.4 Provision of manual labor

A significant finding in the current study is that all the youth participants stated that they take part in the manual work for the committees. This the youth said was very important because it helped to cut cost that would have accrued to the committees if such works were to be contracted out and that act was very much appreciated by other members of the committees. Similarly, all the adult participants acknowledged the important role youth's manual labor play in cutting the cost of running the activities of the committees, a practice the youth do better than the adults because of the energy advantage their youthful age gave them. It was in recognition of this that adult participants described the youth as the most active committee members as far as manual work in the committees was concerned.

6.5 *Revenue generation*

On revenue generation that is vital to the running of the committees, Wright (1999) reported that youth participate in activities like sewing, growing produce, carpentry and serving food at a youth-run restaurant, through which the young people acquire valuable skills, make some money for themselves and also generate income for their organizations. Similarly, youth committee members, particularly the older ones in this study played an important role in contributing their own quota through levies and donations and also going around the community and beyond soliciting for funds from well to do individuals and group. In addition, all the youth committee members of SBMC 1 took part in gardening, which was critical to the sustenance of the committee because, apart from consuming the produce, proceeds from the sales of the produce were used in tackling some of the financial needs of the committee.

6.6 *Advocate visits and campaigns*

Researches have shown that young people play a significant role in advocating for the recognition and promoting of their own rights and advocating for the public to take action on urgent social issues through unionism in schools, participation in public campaign and rallies and contributions to public debates and policy papers (Wright, 1999). Similarly, youth committee members in this study took part in different kind of advocate visits and campaigns to mobilize and enlighten the people en masse, on matters such as enrolment drive, climate change awareness campaign, immunization campaign, and campaign against child hawking among others. This finding was also reported by Checkoway (2011), that youth attend public hearings and demonstrate in meetings, make presentations on policy and demand accountability from public office holders for their actions.

7. Conclusion

This study brings attention into how youth participate and express voice in school-based management committees in Nigeria, which hitherto has been sketchy. Findings from this study revealed that youth committee members expressed their voice in the committees through participation in a number of committees' activities. Specifically, youth listed their representation and voice in decision-making during meetings, construction of committee projects, administrative/managerial functions and monitoring committee's projects. They also participated in other activities, such as revenue generation, planning, school visits and supervision, advocacy, and sensitization campaigns.

Although some of the findings of this study maintained what have been reported in previous literature, the study is not without contribution to the theory. It has indeed closed the gap in the literature on how youth participate and express their voice in school-based management committees. The study has stretched our knowledge on universality of youth-adult partnerships (Y-AP) by looking into youth voice experiences as they interact with adults in SBMCs in the Nigerian context, which has not been investigated before. A significant finding in the current study is that youth committee members expressed their voice through participating in manual work for the committees. This has helped to cut cost that would have accrued to the committees if such works were to be contracted out, something that was very much appreciated by other members of the committees. This is a significant finding because it has not been reported in the literature before. To this end, the current findings show that youth voice makes a vital contribution to the two SBMCs studied, and as such, youth should continue to get the necessary support they deserve from adult committee members as well as all and sundry so that their voice will form an integral part of SBMCs across Nigeria. However, further studies are required in order to determine the quality of youth voice in SBMCs, and how to increase youth voice in SBMCs.

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