

# Level of parents' involvement in primary school education in Ondo West Local Government Area, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Primary school education in Nigeria is seen as very important and available to all. In order to fully accomplish its goals effectively, the Federal Government of Nigeria welcomes the involvement of voluntary agencies, private individuals and parents especially in this level of education. Accordingly, this study assessed the level of parents' involvement in public primary school education in Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive approach. 300 teachers were randomly selected from 30 public primary schools to take part in the study. Findings from the study revealed that the level of parents' involvement in primary school education in the areas of provision of instructional materials, curriculum implementation and administration was low. It was recommended therefore that government and other concerned organizations should organize trainings or seminars for head teachers, teachers and parents on the importance and effective ways of involving parents in primary education. Also, a policy for the support and involvement of parents in primary school education should be taken into account.

**Keywords:** Parents' involvement, instructional materials, curriculum implementation, administration, primary education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Primary school education is widely accepted as the first level of education system where formal education begins. It is seen as very important because it ensures that children acquire basic literacy skills and that they are taught to think critically. It is available to all citizens in every country of the world. This is the reason for the huge investment and involvement of governments of all countries of the world in its administration and processes. In Nigeria, primary education is recognised as the education given to children starting from the age of 6 years to 11 years plus. It runs for a period of six years, and its objectives include developing basic literacy, numeracy, communication skills, adaptation to changing environment and transmission of the culture of the people to younger generations. It should be noted that to fully realise the goals and objectives of this important level of education, efforts and resources must be pulled together by all concerned stakeholders who include government,

relevant and concerned organisations as well as parents especially. It is for this reason that the Federal Republic of Nigeria stated in National Policy on Education (2004) that the involvement of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals, parents inclusive, is welcomed.

Parental involvement in public schools has been documented as academically beneficial by educational researchers, supported politically, and valued by many educators and individuals in the general public (Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems, 2003). Hung (2007) and Mwaikimu (2012) both agreed that parental involvement is a way of making the educational system more self-governing, developing more power at the local level and allowing for greater accountability by schools to the society. Moreover, they acknowledged that in general, society needs to increase its level of educational involvement, and that this starts with the support by the parents. Dodge et al. (2002) have noted that parents and

family members have much to offer the school in terms of support, insights and skills.

Research suggests that pupils, parents, teachers and head teachers as well as schools benefit from increased parental involvement. As reported by Olsen and Fuller (2010), eighty-five studies that documented the comprehensive benefits of parental involvement were reviewed and analysed by Henderson and Berla (1994). Their analysis and other studies show that parent involvement activities that are effectively planned and well implemented resulted in substantial benefits to children, parents, teachers and schools. As for children, they achieved more, regardless of ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status, or parents' education level, had better self-esteem, were more self-disciplined and showed higher aspirations and motivation towards school. In relation to parents, they increased their interaction and discussion with their children and are more responsive and sensitive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs, were more confident in their parenting and decision-making skills, had better understanding of the teacher's job and school curriculum, became more involved in their children's learning activities at home, had improved perceptions of the school, had stronger ties and commitment to the school and were more aware of, and become more active regarding policies that affect their children's education (Henderson and Berla, 1994).

As for teachers and head teachers, they experienced higher morale, earned greater respect for their profession from the parents, experienced improved communication and relations between them and parents, acquired a better understanding of families' cultures and diversity and they reported an increase in job satisfaction. In relation to the school, they established better reputations in the community, experienced better community support, did better and had higher quality programs than programs that do not involve parents (Henderson and Berla, 1994). It is perhaps for the benefits of parental involvement in education that prompted the South African government, as reported by Duma et al. (2011), to pass the 1996 South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996) in order to establish school governing bodies that included parents in the governance of schools in such areas like planning, organising, leading, supervising, policy-making and decision-making among others.

As noted by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), among the forms parental involvement takes are contact with schools to share information; participation in school events; participation in the work of the school and participation in school governance among others. This submission by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) supports the Epstein's (1995) six types of parental involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community) which are further expatiated by Hatchuel Tabernik and Associates (2004). The purport of the

submission by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) and the types of parenting identified by Epstein are that parents should be involved in all areas of school activities such as making instructional materials available, implementing curriculum and participating in administration.

Researchers have claimed that instructional materials play very important role in the teaching and learning process and that the success of any learning enterprise depends on them. Instructional materials provide the teacher with interesting and compelling platforms for conveying information since they motivate learners to learn more (Okobia, 2011). Meremikwu and Erukoha (2010) had found in their study that when instructional materials were used, pupils' Mathematics achievement was significantly higher. Despite the importance of instructional materials, it seems that they are not available in our primary schools. This is why in Nigeria, Olaitan et al. (2012) found in their study that instructional materials are not adequately available in primary schools and so teacher do not use them. On way by which this problem could be overcome is to involve parents in primary school education. Parents could help to provide instructional materials to schools, join teachers in improvising them and assist teachers on how to effectively operate or handle certain instructional materials. The question however is how much are parents of public primary school children involved in providing instructional materials to schools in Nigeria? Apebende et al. (2010) had found in their study that parental involvement in their children's education was significantly low in Nigeria. Pansiri and Bulawa (2013) also found on the foreign scene that there is minimal parental support especially in rural and remote areas and in boarding primary school system in Botswana.

As submitted by the Commonwealth of Learning (2000), curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects. The process involves helping the learner acquire knowledge or experience. Implementing the curriculum is the most crucial and sometimes the most difficult phase of the curriculum development process. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1998), curriculum implementation requires a supportive atmosphere in which there is trust and open communication between administrators, teachers and educators. It is dependent on understanding relationships, the traditions, the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the school system as well as outside the school system. It could be said therefore, that curriculum implementation requires the support of parents. This becomes important because Nigerian parents now interact with the changes in the wider society, they should therefore play their major roles and contributions to enhance efficient learning (Adebile, 2009). Parents could provide information on the culture, values and traditions of the society, provide additional information on the best ways by which teachers should disseminate the content

of the curriculum, provide materials to aid effective implementation and assist the teachers in providing activities that aid the process of curriculum implementation. Meanwhile, despite the efforts that the federal government of Nigeria has made in refurbishing and implementing the primary school education curriculum, it does not seem as if any achievement has been made even as primary education continues to be plagued with problems such as poor performance and lack of interest in learning.

Administration is an organisational behaviour which deals with a wide range of activities involving the mobilisation and co-ordination of human and material resources in order to accomplish some set objectives. In the primary school system, administration is a process of getting things done by a judicious utilisation of available human and material resources for the realisation of the objectives and goals of primary education. The resources in the primary school system include persons, equipment, finance, time, space, work techniques and policies implementation among others. As observed by Iwu and Iwu (2013), head teachers face myriad administrative problems which militate against effective running of schools. Such problems may include lack of qualified and dedicated teachers, lack of fund to maintain schools, lack of accommodation for pupils, indiscipline on the part of teachers and pupils among others. It is worthy of note to mention that parents could be of assistance in administration of primary education. Parents could attend Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings and take valuable decisions-concerning the school's administration, volunteer to assist the school with fund raising, supply valuable suggestions on schools internal rules and regulation, organise workshop and other educational programmes for teachers, assist in building, maintenance and repair of school facilities classrooms, staffrooms, laboratory and other important buildings and assist to act as members of committees in the school. With these many roles that parents can play in administration of primary school education, one wonders if parents of pupils in public primary school in Nigeria play such roles. Findings from a study carried out by Amanchukwu (2011) in Rivers State had revealed that parents display a lukewarm attitude towards the meeting of PTA. This could be the reason for the recommendation made by Iwu and Iwu (2013) that primary schools should maintain a co-operative community by incorporating parents of pupils.

### Statement of the problem

Primary education has been widely accepted as the first and most important level of education. It is for its importance that governments all over the world as well as Nigerian government invest massively in it. This is why the Nigerian government also welcomes the involvement

of private individuals, organisations and most especially parents in its administration and implementation. Despite this, it seems that many things are wrong with primary school education in Nigeria in the areas of availability of instructional materials, curriculum implementation and administration. This could be because parents of primary school children are not actively involved in primary education. It is based on this background that this study investigated the level of parents' involvement in primary school education in the areas of provision of instructional materials, curriculum implementation and administration. An examination of involvement of parents of public primary school education in these areas would lead to valuable suggestions and proposition of practical steps that could be taken to improve primary education in Nigeria.

### Research questions

1. What is the level of parents' involvement in public primary school education in provision of instructional materials?
2. What is the level of parents' involvement in public primary school education in implementation of primary school curriculum?
3. What is the level of parents' involvement in public primary school administration?

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey approach. The population for the study comprised all public primary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area. 30 public primary schools were selected using purposive sampling technique on the criteria that the schools were located within urban area of the local government and that the schools had been established for over five years ago. In each of the schools, 10 teachers were selected using the simple random sampling technique of the ballot system. In all, a total of 300 public primary school teachers were selected as sample for this study.

One instrument titled "Questionnaire on Parents Involvement in Primary School Education" was used. The questionnaire had four sections. The section A contained three items which was based on demographic information of the respondents. The section B which had five items was based on parents' involvement in area of instructional materials; the section C contained five items based on parents' involvement in area of curriculum implementation while the section D contained ten items that were based on parents' involvement in administration of public primary schools. The Likert Scale response type was adopted for the instrument. The response sets used were Never (N), Rarely (R), Occasionally (O) and Frequently (F).

To ensure face and content validity of the instrument, it was given to three lecturers in the field of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education Studies. It was also given to two long serving public primary school teachers. After corrections had been effected, 20 copies of the instrument were administered outside the local government used for this study in order to test its reliability level. The data collected through the 20 copies was analysed using the Cronbach Alpha Technique, and the instrument yielded

**Table 1.** Level of parents' involvement in provision of instructional materials.

S/No	Item	N (%)	R (%)	O (%)	F (%)	M	SD
1	Parents supply/provide instructional materials to make teaching and being more real and interesting	234 (78.0)	47 (15.7)	16 (5.3)	3 (1.0)	1.29	0.61
2	Parents assist or join teachers to improvise instructional materials.	247 (82.3)	32 (10.7)	19 (6.3)	2 (0.7)	1.25	0.60
3	Relevant books like textbooks, Atlas, Dictionary, Story book etc. are provided by parent	156 (52.0)	65 (21.7)	58 (19.3)	21 (7.0)	1.81	0.98
4	Other relevant items that can be utilized as instructional materials are provided by parents.	144 (48.0)	47 (15.7)	86 (28.7)	23 (7.7)	1.96	1.04
5	Parents assist in guiding teachers on how to effectively operate or handle some instructional materials	260 (86.7)	31 (10.3)	5 (1.7)	4 (1.3)	1.18	0.51
Weighted Average		1.50					

Note: The response sets used were Never (N), Rarely (R), Occasionally (O) and Frequently (F).

**Table 2.** Level of parents' involvement in curriculum implementation.

S/No	Item	N (%)	R (%)	O (%)	F (%)	M	SD
1	Parents assist teachers in teaching the contents of the curriculum	262 (87.3)	28 (9.3)	7 (2.3)	3 (1.0)	1.17	0.50
2	Additional information and suggestions are provided to teachers by parents on curriculum contents (topics)	248 (82.7)	36 (12.0)	15 (5.0)	1 (0.3)	1.23	0.55
3	Materials that help in implementing content of the curriculum are provided by parents	255 (85.0)	23 (7.7)	19 (6.3)	3 (1.0)	1.23	0.61
4	Parents assist teachers in breaking down the curriculum into smaller and manageable units	267 (89.0)	27 (9.0)	6 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	1.13	0.39
5	Parents, with teachers, come up with initiatives on how best the curriculum can be implemented	231 (77.0)	22 (7.3)	45 (15.0)	2 (0.7)	1.39	0.76
Weighted average		1.23					

reliability coefficient of 0.82.

The researchers including some research assistants visited all the schools that were selected for this study. They met the heads of the schools and explained the purpose of their visitation to the schools. After approval had been secured, the researchers with the research assistants administered and retrieved the questionnaire within two weeks. The data collected was then analysed using the descriptive statistics of percentage, mean and standard deviation.

## RESULTS

**Research question 1:** What is the level of parents' involvement in primary school education in provision of instructional materials?

Table 1 shows the public primary school teachers'

response on extent of parent's involvement in primary education in the area of provision of instructional materials. The table shows that majority of the teachers agreed that parents never do the following: supply/provide instructional materials to make teaching and being more real and interesting ( $\bar{x} = 1.29$ ), assist or join teachers to improvise instructional materials ( $\bar{x} = 1.25$ ), provide relevant books like textbooks, Atlas, Dictionary, Story book etc. ( $\bar{x} = 1.81$ ), provide other relevant items that can be utilized as instructional materials ( $\bar{x} = 1.96$ ) and assist in guiding teachers on how to effectively operate or handle some instructional materials ( $\bar{x} = 1.18$ ). Meanwhile, based on the value of the weighted average (1.50) which is less than 2.50 that is accepted in this study as the value that indicate

high level of parental involvement, it can be inferred that the level of parents' involvement in primary school education in the area of provision of instructional materials is low.

**Research question 2:** What is the level of parents' involvement in public primary school education in implementation of primary school curriculum?

Table 2 shows the teachers' response on extent of parent's involvement in primary education in the area of curriculum implementation. The table shows that majority of the teachers agreed that parents never do the following: assist teachers in teaching the contents of the curriculum ( $\bar{x} = 1.17$ ), provide additional information and suggestions to

**Table 3.** Level of parents' involvement in primary school administration.

S/No	Item	N (%)	R (%)	O (%)	F (%)	Mean	SD
1	Parents attend PTA meetings and take valuable decisions-concerning the school's administration	25 (8.3)	33 (11.0)	121 (40.3)	121 (40.3)	3.12	0.91
2	Parents volunteer to assist the school with fund raising	27 (9.0)	82 (27.3)	145 (48.3)	46 (15.3)	2.70	0.84
3	Schools internal rules and regulation are made following valuable suggestions supplied by parents	74 (24.7)	100 (33.3)	117 (39.0)	9 (3.0)	2.20	0.85
4	Parents help to organize workshop and other educational programmes for teachers	226 (75.3)	38 (12.7)	32 (10.7)	4 (1.3)	1.38	0.73
5	Parents supply valuable suggestions when decisions are made in the school	41 (13.7)	115 (38.3)	114 (38.0)	30 (10.0)	2.44	0.85
6	Parents assist in maintenance and repair of school facilities	62 (20.7)	57 (19.0)	157 (52.3)	24 (8.0)	2.48	0.91
7	Classrooms, staffrooms, laboratory and other important buildings are provided by parents	146 (48.7)	78 (26.0)	61 (20.3)	15 (5.0)	1.82	0.93
8	Parents are involved in supervision of building projects	89 (29.7)	72 (24.0)	112 (37.3)	27 (9.0)	2.26	0.98
9	Parent assist to act as members of committees in the school	65 (21.7)	57 (19.0)	108 (36.0)	70 (23.3)	2.61	1.07
10	Parents join school management in planning	86 (28.7)	82 (27.3)	89 (29.7)	43 (14.3)	2.30	1.04
Weighted average		2.33					

teachers on curriculum contents (topics) ( $\bar{x} = 1.23$ ), provide materials that help in implementing content of the curriculum ( $\bar{x} = 1.23$ ), assist teachers in breaking down the curriculum into smaller and manageable units ( $\bar{x} = 1.13$ ), join teachers to bring initiatives on how best the curriculum can be implemented ( $\bar{x} = 1.39$ ). Based on the value of the weighted average (1.23), it can be inferred that the level of parents' involvement in primary school education in the area of curriculum implementation is low.

**Research question 3:** What is the level of parents' involvement in public primary school administration?

Table 3 shows the level of parents' involvement in primary education in the area of administration. The table shows that some the teachers agreed that parents often do the following: attend PTA meetings and take valuable decisions-concerning the school's administration ( $\bar{x} = 3.12$ ), volunteer to assist the school with fund raising ( $\bar{x} = 2.70$ ), assist in maintenance and repair of school facilities ( $\bar{x} = 2.48$ ) and volunteer to act as

members of committees in the school ( $\bar{x} = 2.61$ ). Some of the teachers also agreed that on rare occasions, schools internal rules and regulation are made following valuable suggestions supplied by parents ( $\bar{x} = 2.20$ ), parents supply valuable suggestions when decisions are made in the school ( $\bar{x} = 2.44$ ), parents are involved in supervision of building projects ( $\bar{x} = 2.26$ ) and parents join school management in planning ( $\bar{x} = 2.30$ ). Few of the teachers indicated that parents never help to organize workshop and other educational programmes for teachers ( $\bar{x} = 1.38$ ) and they never provide classrooms, staffrooms, laboratory and other important buildings ( $\bar{x} = 1.82$ ). Based on the weighted average value (2.33) however, it can be inferred that the level of parents' involvement in primary education in the area of administration is low.

## DISCUSSION

Findings from this study revealed that the level of parents' involvement in the area of provision of instructional materials, curriculum implementation

and administration in primary school education is low. This finding corroborates the finding of Apebende et al. (2010) that parent involvement in their children's education was significantly low. The finding is also in consonance with the finding of Pansiri and Bulawa (2013) that there is minimal parental support, especially in rural and remote areas and in boarding primary school system in Botswana. These findings failed to uphold the submission of Iwu and Iwu (2013) that primary schools should maintain a co-operative community by incorporating parents of pupils. On instructional materials, the finding of Olaitan et al. (2012) that instructional materials are not adequately available in primary schools may not be unconnected to the low level of parent involvement in provision of instructional materials to primary schools. In relation to curriculum implementation, the findings fail to uphold the view expressed by Adebile (2009) that parents now interact with the changes in the wider society, so they should play their major roles and contributions to enhance efficient learning in primary schools. In the area of administration, Amanchukwu (2011) had found that parents

display a lukewarm attitude towards the meeting of PTA in Rivers State.

These findings may not be unconnected to the fact that parents do not know how to assist the schools in these areas or that they do not know that their assistance is required in making instructional materials available, implementing curriculum and assisting in administrative processes. This lays credence to a finding in Botswana by Mannathoko and Mangope (2013) that most parents indicated that they were not aware that they were supposed to offer teaching assistance services in schools. In addition, it is possible that parents of children in public primary schools have not been sensitised or taken through a kind of training where they could learn about how important their involvement is and about ways by which they can be involved in primary school education. This again may be reason why teachers in the study carried out by Mannathoko and Mangope (2013) suggested that workshop initiatives designed to sensitise parents on the importance of being involved in their children's learning, should be organised. Apart from this, it is also possible that head teachers and teachers do not have a clear picture of how they could involve the parents, and that they do not encourage parents or give room for them to be involved.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The revelation from this study is that the level of involvement of parents of public primary school children is low in all the areas investigated. Thus, it is concluded that parents are yet to realise the immense benefits that are inherent in getting involved in primary school education. Therefore, government and other concerned organizations and bodies should sensitise and organize trainings, seminars or conferences for head teachers and classroom teachers in public primary schools on the importance of involving parents in primary education. Such training should also emphasise the effective ways by which the head teachers and teachers can involve parents in primary school education in the areas of provision of instructional materials, curriculum implementation and administration. In addition, government and the concerned bodies should organize forum whereby parents of public primary school children can be sensitized and given orientation on the benefits of getting actively involved in primary school education. The training should also highlight and emphasise various ways by which the parents can be involved. Finally, education policy makers should come up with a policy that would be based on parental involvement in primary school education. Such policy should contain what parental involvement entails, its importance and ways by which parents can be involved in primary school education.

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