Parent-community involvement in school governance and its effects on teacher effectiveness and improvement of learner performance: A study of selected primary and secondary schools in Botswana

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This study surveyed 45 selected primary and secondary schools in Botswana which aimed to identify how parent and community involvement in the governance of schools affect teacher effectiveness and improvement of learner performance. The study started from January 2005 to December 2006. Literature review, administration of questionnaires, interview schedules and local conferencing at the chiefs’ palaces (kgotla) and in churches were used to gather data. The conclusion that could be drawn is that in schools where parents and community involvement is visible, teachers are highly effective and this contributes to learners’ positive behaviour and improvement in their performance.

Key words: Parent-community involvement, governance of schools, teacher effectiveness, improvement, learner performance.

Introduction

This study was conducted in randomly selected 45 primary and secondary schools in Botswana chosen as follows: two primary and three secondary schools from each of the nine designated regions. However, in the compilation of the final report, new developments were identified in several print media and were considered very relevant to include in the literature review. A typical example was the blame piled on parents, PTAs and School Governing Bodies for bad school results in South Africa by the South African Department of Education. This was front page headline in the Sunday Times of the 13th May 2007. The researchers surveyed a number of literature and included questionnaire and structured interview schedules, kgotla (Batswana participatory consultative meetings at the chief’s krall) and confer-encing with churches. These helped to gather relevant primary data to support the literature review to be able to address the research questions. Respondents were made up of 10 parents, 10 school heads/teachers, 10 learners from each of the randomly selected schools, 10 school governing bodies (primary schools do not have governing bodies) and 10 parent teachers’ association members summarised in Table 1.

Four complementary research methods were considered relevant to the study. These were participatory, action, qualitative and quantitative methods. After collecting the required data, the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used which provided in-depth analysis, statistical and graphical interpretation of data which made it possible to solicit the required information that enable the researcher to identify and list the findings which led to the recommendations.

The conclusion that could be drawn from the study is that in schools where parent-community involvement is highly visible, teacher effectiveness is apparent and this contributed significantly to the improvement of learner performance while in schools where parent-community involvement is non-existent or minimal, the result is the opposite.

Background to the study

When formal education was introduced in Botswana
schools were regarded as exceptional environment for teachers, school administrators and learners. To a large extent, parents and the communities regarded themselves as something outside of the education system. When the child misbehaves at home parents usually used to comment “Is this what you’ve been taught at school?” Worst still for any misbehaviour, they would always indicate to the child “I am going to report you to your teacher.” This kind of attitude put the onus of responsibility on the teacher. Teachers too did not see parents and the community as instruments which could be used to advance their activities as indicated by Farrant (1980, 2):

“Traditionally, schools have tended to keep parents out, using the argument that a professional skill such as teaching must be carried out without interference. Today, this attitude is changing and, schools are trying to encourage parents to take a greater interest in the school” (p. 250).

In short, the school was considered as something outside of the parents and communities.

However, in the early 1980s, which heralded new developments in the governance of schools in Botswana, the trend shifted to involve parents and the communities. In our modern era of scientific and technological advancement in almost every aspect of human endeavour, there has been relentless agitation for accountability from public institutions by interested parties. In the education system this agitation is highly visible and as such parent-community involvement has been advocated, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Ministry of Education, Botswana (MoE, 1993). This is highly desirable because in our post-modern society we can no longer get every work in the school system effectively and efficiently done by teachers, students and school administrators alone. The reason is that school governance has become very complex for any one group to successfully do it alone (Fullan, 2001). Furthermore, the new ways of collaborating are threatening and very complex as well. However, it has become necessary to move towards a new paradigm in the governance (administration, organization and management) of the school system. Parent-community on one hand and the teachers, learners and the school administrators on the other hand, should move towards each other to be able to address and resolve concurrent pertinent educational problems mutually.

The question of parent-community involvement in schools has been the subject of many books as well as research studies (Abed, 1992; Anderson, 1991; Fullan, 2001; Henry, 1996), but specific studies of this nature concentrating on a selected education system in a selected African country like Botswana have been very few. Review of some of the literature consulted revealed a mass of contradictions, confusion and even hopelessness for understanding, let alone, coping with the relationship between parent-communities and schools. One source concurs that:

“The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement” (Fullan, 2001, p. 198).

Some of the literature sources advised that the decision about the precise nature of parent involvement must take into account cultural, ethnic and class differences as well as variations related to the age and gender of learners (Abed, 1992; Fullan, 2001). Furthermore, Shaeffer (1994) is of the opinion that in determining what conditions parent-community involvement is most beneficial we have to understand the different forms of parent-community participation and their consequences for the school, the learner and other personnel in the whole school system. The reason provided by Shaeffer and others is that certain forms of involvement produce positive results while others may be wasteful or completely counter productive (Anderson, 1991; Shaeffer, 1994).

Henry’s study of parent-school collaboration in poor neighbourhood in the USA concluded that:

“Educators have to go out into their communities with empathy and interact meaningfully with their constituents” (1996, p. 132).

Henry’s observation will definitely involve shifts in power and influence, but it is what new power arrangements can accomplish that really matters to the parent-community-school administrators’ relationship so as to be able to govern schools amicably.

Sarason (1995,) is sceptical about this new power game advocated by Henry and indicated that:
"To seek power is to raise and begin to answer the question: To seek power to change what? Changing the forces of powering no way guarantees that everything will change...."(p. 53).

The researcher is of the view that, it is not a matter of seeking power to change tradition, but to seek input from stakeholders to be able to make the change meaningful, empowering and contribute towards good governance of schools in communities where all stakeholders will feel that they are part and parcel of the whole system of schooling and not just the business of school teachers and administrators.

To the question of: What will it take to mobilise more people and resources in the provision of quality services in the education of all learners? To answer this question several sources were reviewed and the revelation was that teachers and school administrators cannot do it alone (Bryk et al., 1998; Coleman, 1998; Henry, 1996; Mortimore et al., 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sarason, 1995, Steinberg, 1996). According to these studies, the expertise and specific experiences of parents and other community members are crucial and largely untapped resources who have assets and expertise that are essential to the partnership. These studies further emphasise that parents-community have knowledge of their children that is not available to anyone else. Such knowledge would be of immense help to the teachers. Further to this, parent-community have vested and committed interest in their children’s success, and they also have valuable knowledge and skills to contribute that usually spring from their interests, hobbies, occupations and place in the community including their professions.

The study by Coleman (1998) was very clear about the benefits and the necessity of parents-community engagement. Based on his interviews and surveys of parent-community members, learners and teachers collaboration Coleman argued that:

“Learners commitment to schooling (or engagement in learning) is primarily shaped by parents through the curriculum at the home and parents involvement is an alterable variable which can be influenced by school and teacher practices” (p. 11).

Coleman strongly believed that (1998), the power of three, namely “parent-community, learner and the teacher” (p. 14) is very crucial because when the development of learner responsibility occurs; it is a function of the attitudes and practices of all the triad members. This idea is unflinchingly supported by Fullan (2001) and listed the vital elements of the triad that could be derived as follows.

“For teachers, beliefs about parental involvement, learner capabilities and the importance of deliberate teaching of responsibility in the classroom are crucial. For learners, communication with parents-community about school, confidence in the ability to do the work, valuing school for its importance to the future collaboration with teachers is significant. For parents, valuing school as an invitational teacher attitude and communication with learners about the school cannot be over emphasised” (p. 200).

Coleman (1998) concluded that student commitment can be sustained and strengthened by collaborative teacher attitudes expressed in and through their practices and for that reason, strong connections with the home are essential to the success of the task.

Teachers can facilitate and encourage parent-community collaboration through some simple practices all well known but not implemented consistently in many schools. Most parents are conscious that much more could be done to help their children learn in the classroom and in the home as well. For consistency and preciseness about the role of parent-community involvement in schools; Mortimore et al. (1988) undertook a study of school effectiveness and found that parental involvement practices represented one of the twelve key factors that differentiated effective from less effective schools. They wrote:

“Our findings show parent involvement in the life of the school to be a positive influence upon learners' progress and development. This included help in the classroom and on educational visits and attendance at meetings to discuss learners' progress...Parents' involvement in learners' educational development within the home was also clearly beneficial. Parents who read to their children, heard them read and provide them with access to books at home had a positive effect upon their children's' learning" (p. 225).

Rosenholtz's (1989) research found out that:

“Teachers from struck schools held no goals for parent participation in their activities while teachers from moving schools focused their efforts on involving parents with academic content thereby bridging the learning chasm between the home and the school”(p. 152).

Bryk et al (1998) reported that those schools that were more successful were found to be committed to developing “the engagement of parents and community resources” (p. 127-128). To buttress this Mr. Fraser Tlhoi-we (In the Voice 30th March 2007, p. 20), the head of Mater-Spei School in Francistown in the North-Eastern District of Botswana in his address to parents succinctly indicated that:

“Without parental support, it becomes difficult for teachers to be effective in disciplining children. All these key elements are terribly important for any school to perform well academically. In many instances, students whose parents never attend meetings fail exams”.

In addition to what is expressed above, (Angela Matlhape In the Ghetto Metro In the Weekend Sun, 9th May 2007),
the Headmaster of Tashatha Junior Secondary School at Tati Siding also in the North-East District of Botswana complained by stating that:

“Some parents seem not to care about their children’s performance. Some parents are not forthcoming when it comes to discussing school issues. They never attend PTA meetings. This is so serious that it has even affected student’s performance in our school”.

She further pointed out that most parents have failed to collect their children’s school report for term one and that the school management has decided not to give reports to students until their parents come to the school to collect them. This is an indication that there is a big rift between the school administrators and the community. In all the literature sources consulted, attention was not paid to how this involvement contributes to teacher effectiveness which consequently would help the learners to improve in performance which this study intends to unravel.

Statement of the problem

Does parent-community involvement in the Governance of schools (administration, management and organisation) affect teacher effectiveness and improvement of learner performance in schools in Botswana?

Research questions

The following were the main research questions:

1. Do parents and communities get involved in schools?
2. How long have they been involved in schools?
3. What is the extent of the involvement?
4. What specific roles do they play?
5. What is the effect of the involvement on teacher effectiveness and improvement of learner performance?
6. How can parent-community partnership be encouraged to complement the work of the school administrators?

Aims of the study

This study aimed to provide insight into the following:

- To identify the roles parent-community plays in the running of schools.
- To identify the effects these roles can have on teacher effectiveness and improvement in learner performance.

In addition to the list above, the study also had the following subsidiary aims:

1. To provide a brief history of parent-community involvement in schools in Botswana.
2. To provide information about new developments in parent-community involvement in schools elsewhere.
3. To briefly outline the extent and trends of involvement of parent-community in schools.
4. To use the findings to show how parent-community involvement in school governance can affect teacher effectiveness and the improvement in learner performance.

Applicable and relevant methodological choice and application

This study is about parent-community involvement in the governance of schools (administration, management and organisation) in Botswana. This is a purely community-oriented study. It was, therefore, identified that methodological paradigms, be it action, participatory, qualitative or quantitative are not merely collection of research methods and strategies used for a research study. For any study to be effective, it must be a given study, like this one, certain assumptions and values regarding their choice and use should be considered under specific circumstances (Boaduo, 1998). In this study, the researcher encountered both the actual methods and the underlying philosophies regarding their use and the inherent awareness of the limitations of equally applicable methods. However, it was identified that:

- All research methods and techniques are task specific.
- The task is defined by the research goals.
- Different studies use different methods and techniques relevant and applicable to the study because they have different aims and objectives.
- The methods and techniques must be specific, relevant and applicable for the task at hand.
- Both methods and techniques should apply equally to data collection, treatment, analysis and interpretation as well as for sampling, questionnaire and interview schedules design.

The implication, in this respect, is that qualitative, quantitative, action and participatory research methods and techniques are used because they complement each other for verifiability and reliability of data. For instance, where data were required to be quantified the quantitative method was applied especially during the treatment and analysis of questionnaire and interview responses. During the final analysis and interpretation of the gathered data, the qualitative method was used.

Significance of action and participatory research methods applied in this study

The central theme of the study is about people and their problems related specifically to parents, community, the learner, the teacher, the school and the school administrators. Batswana want to be involved in schools to be able to help to enhance teacher effectiveness which will contribute towards the improvement in the performance of their children in schools. Action and participatory research methods are self-reflective inquiry into social situations. They help to improve the rationality and justice of the social and educational practices, understanding them and the situations in which they are situated and carried out (Anderson, 1990; Carl-Hill, 1988). This study was to find out about the opinion of Batswana and their involvement in the education of their children. It is necessary to involve them in a participatory manner through direct intervention, questionnaire, interview and kgotla (local community gathering at the chief’s kraal) and during church attendance (Participatory Research, 1982). Action and participatory research play a liberating role in the learning process by providing the development of critical under-
standing of the social problem under investigation, its structural causes and possibilities for overcoming them (McNiff, 1995; Participatory Research, 1982; Clark, 1972). Action and participatory research call for democratic interaction between the researcher and those among whom the research is conducted (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2004; Maykut and Morehouse, 2003).

Action and participatory research is composed of three interrelated processes relevant to this study, namely:

1. The collective investigation of problems and issues with the active participation of the constituency (parents, community, teachers, learners and school administrators) in the entire process.
2. The collective analysis of the collected data from which the constituency develops a better understanding not only of the structural but also the socio-economic, political, cultural and historical causes of the problem.
3. The collective action by the constituency aimed at long-term as well as short-term solutions to the problem (Baker, 1999; Boaduo, 2006; Denscombe, 2000; Wiersma, 2000).

The three processes are inseparable and their integration gives action and participatory research their fundamental strength and power for use in this study. The processes most closely related to the investigation, analysis and action can be identified separately but each process incorporates aspects of the others (Bryman, 2004).

Above all, action and participatory research are learning processes for those involved, as would be seen later in the report. The process begins with the peoples’ concrete experiences or situations and moves to include both theoretical analysis and action aimed at change. Critical evaluation of the success or failure of action also deepens awareness of the concrete reality that the people face – that is the case being investigated in this study (Smith, 1995).

Furthermore, action and participatory research are educational approaches to social change. However, it is not a recipe for social change; rather it is a democratic approach to investigation and learning to be taken by individuals, groups and movements as a tool aimed at social change. As related to this study, the following questions were answered to place the choice of these research methodologies into clear perspective as to why they were chosen. The questions and answers follow:

1. Who are the participants? In this study the participants are all the stake holders in the provision of school education in Botswana and the recipients (Table 1).
2. Why should they participate in the study? Metaphorically, nobody takes in medication for a sick person. In other words, it is the sick person who needs medication to get better. In this study, the Batswana are the people who need solutions to their problems and, therefore, it should be their responsibility to find solutions. By participating in the study, they would be able to make inputs and share the derived benefits from the contributions that they would make.
3. How would they participate? The ways the people could be brought on board to achieve collective participation in the study are many. These include social structures like associations, civics, committees and other organisations within the society like the traditional leaders, the youth, churches and the kgotla.
4. Who has to learn? All the participants would collectively learn from the various means through which data would be collected. The learning will be practical involving all the participants and whatever is discovered through these processes will be collaborative expression of interest for solutions to the problems.
5. Why should they learn what they have to learn? The need to learn, at this stage is obvious to all the members of the community. They need to find and work out solutions to their problems. They do not need to wait for an outsider to come and resolve their problems for them.

6. How would they participate in the learning process? Initially, all the participants would be oriented and fully engaged. They would be required to make specific inputs. For instance, some of the participants would be required to devise possible significant questions for inclusion in the questionnaire based on practical, functional, applicable and relevant rules and regulations. All the participants would be learning through participation.

It, therefore, becomes necessary to list the strengths and characteristics of action and participatory research methods by Boaduo (1988) to support the choice of methods for the study:

1. “A critical analysis is encouraged throughout the research process and not just at the beginning or termination.
2. The approaches encourage active involvement on the part of all the participants.
3. It is positive in initiating and helping to bring about change and enhance the improvement of understanding among the participants.
4. By either using the field or the classroom or both as the study environment; the natural behaviour of participants is accommodated.
5. As research frameworks, they are flexible, applicable, relevant and adaptable.
6. They describe relationships as they develop over time and accommodate changes in reasoning which reflect mutations occurring in the context of the study” (p. 20-25).

Data analyses and interpretation process

This study was conducted with the aim of generally finding out the extent of parent-community involvement in the governance of schools and how this process affects teacher effectiveness and helps the learner to improve in performance. The study revealed a variety of interesting and equally important data some of which were not anticipated, which enabled the researcher to list the findings to be able to make recommendations and identify some areas where further research is required. In the analyses of the data collected for the study the following techniques were used.

A field text was created. This consisted of field notes, questionnaire and interview responses obtained from the field (Sanjek, 1990; Plath, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Delamont, 1992; Stouthamer-Loeb and Van Kamm, 1995). The field notes were based on the field text and recreated as a working interpretation document containing the initial attempts to make sense of what has been learned and found in the field (Carspecken, 1996). The final text was produced from the field notes, observations, interviews, questionnaires and documents consulted (Van Maanen, 1988). The analysis that follows is derived from the framework listed above.

Discussion of primary data: The general overview

Generally, the consensus was that it is necessary for pa-
rents and the community to get involved in the administration, management and organisation of schools in their communities (90%). However, there was no general consensus about the extent of involvement and in what ways they are to be involved (85%).

When asked about how they understand involvement, 40% of the parents sampled for the study indicated that, they should be given the opportunity to be members of the school community and assist in doing some of the activities in the school. Their explanation was that some of them have been teachers and have some talents and expertise that they can share with the teachers, especially the new and inexperienced ones as well as other capabilities that they can pass on to both learners and teachers. Arts and crafts and coaching in soccer, football, netball and other extra curricula activities were mentioned.

When asked about who should give them the opportunity to be involved in the schools in their communities? Out of the 900 respondents 50% were not sure. For the remaining 50%, 35% believe that the school head should take the initiative and invite them to discuss the issue. The enlightened few constituting 15% among the respondents were of the view that, the parents and community should invite the school heads and teachers to a kgotla and discuss about the involvement and if possible assign specific responsibilities to parents for regular involvement in the activities of the schools. This confirms the notions of Graves, Gargiulo and Homes (1996) that:

"Parental involvement is a process of actualising the potential of parents, of helping parents discover their strengths, potentials and talents and using them for the benefits of themselves, their families and schools"(p. 143).

To add to this, the Sunday Times of 13th May 2007 at page1 suggested that:

"As part of the radical new plan, principals must prepare an academic improvement performance plan and submit It to the School Governing Body" for discussion and onward implementation”.

When asked about the degree of involvement in the schools, 55% of the parents indicated that they need to be called upon and plan together with the school authorities so that the areas where they can make specific inputs could be identified and the responsibilities assigned to them. They further indicated that they would also need to plan a workable time table with the school heads and teachers to infuse parents-community daily chores with that of the school and that parents and community should have a copy to be able to know when and where they are required to make a contribution; for instance during the opening and closing of terms, prize giving and cultural days as well as fund raising and sporting activities. The remaining 45% had no idea about what aspect of the school activities they should be involved in. However, they indicated that if they were requested to join a group for any reason, they would oblige.

Despite the positive initiative discussed so far, 70% of the parents, especially those who do not have gainful employment, were sceptical about getting involved in the activities of the schools. They complain that they are illiterate, and those who are not completely illiterate think they have low educational and socio-economic status and for that reason they cannot make any contribution when required. The minority (30%) of the respondents in this category indicated also that they do not have time to spare because they are struggling to make ends meet. They argue that they are not gainfully employed and for that reason struggle throughout the day to be able to put food on the table at the end of the day for their children. Furthermore, they felt that the responsibilities of the schools are not theirs and asked the following questions.

1. How am I going to get food for the children when they come back from school if I get involved in the activities of the school instead of fending for them?
2. How do I get involved when most of the activities of the schools take place during the time I have to go out and struggle for some money to provide for the children?
3. What are the teachers doing?
4. Do the teachers want us to do their work for them?
5. Will they pay us when we do their work?
6. Are they not paid for the work they are doing?

The questions listed above made the researcher to realise that most parents do not understand the concept involvement and the extent of their involvement in the administration, management and organisation of schools in their communities. It is therefore necessary for parents and communities to be orientated so that they would be able to know and understand the need for them to be involved in the activities of the schools in their communities.

When asked about suggestions they have to give to help improve the relationship of parent-community and the schools in their communities, there were various suggestions. A small number (12%) feel that the issue is not their business at all. Others (58%) feel that the community should have meetings with the district and national education administrators to make official declaration where the role of parents and the community involvement could be discussed, specified and documented for implementation. The remaining number of parents (30%) believes that there is need to provide some form of general orientations about their involvement so that they are able to know the role they would have to play in the schools in their communities.

School administrators’ views about parents and community involvement

All the school heads and teachers (100%) completely
agree that parents and communities have very significant role to play in the affairs of the schools in their communities.

When asked about specific roles they would like parents and the communities to play, the following list was given.

1. Monitoring the discipline of learners after school.
2. Supervision of learners work at home by parents after school.
3. Parents’ regular visits to the school without prior notice to inspect learners’ schoolwork not called upon by the school.
4. Parents arranging to come and teach learners in the areas of their speciality.
5. Parents visiting the schools and attending classes while teachers teach.
6. Parents visiting the school to talk to the learners about what the community expects of them.
7. Running the school library during working hours.
8. Raise funds for the development of the schools in their communities.
9. Build teachers houses and classrooms through communal labour.
10. Help teachers to get settled when posted to their schools as well as making those who are already in the schools feel at home within the communities.

When asked about what specifically they would like parents to do under each of the specifications listed above, the following answers were given.

**Monitoring the discipline of learners after school**

The views of all (100%) the school heads and teachers are that discipline is not the duty of the school administrators only and do not take the blame parents and communities heap on their heads about learners’ indiscipline and disrespect to elders and community property. To these respondents, the enforcement and monitoring of discipline should be initiated from the homes and among the communities. To these respondents, learners whose parents place good manners and obedience as priority from the home will definitely extend that behaviour into the school environment. To them, most disciplinary problems encountered in the school environment can be resolved if parents are actively involved in the communities and monitor the way their children behave after school. The respondents are of the view that they spend less time with the learners while parents and the communities spend longer time with their children and for this reason, parents participation in disciplinary measures will be highly effective and efficient and will have positive effects on the learner while at school. They further indicated that, when learners are regularly monitored to be disciplined, especially at home and in the communities they become conscious of their behaviour either in the home, the community or at school. They become punctual, pay attention in class, take part in school activities and contribute to peaceful school environment conducive to teaching and learning. Their conclusion is that disciplined learners from disciplined homes and communities do not put up disruptive behaviour in class. They do not disturb other learners and do not participate in disruptive behaviour because they have built that positive attitude to life from home. To them, most of the successful initiatives required to succeed, as disciplined learners should be initiated from the home and in the communities that the learners live and interact.

**Supervision of learners work at home by parents after school**

All the teachers and the school heads do not take it lightly when every misbehaviour or poor performance of learners is heaped on their heads. They all feel that parents and the communities can contribute towards the performance of their children which they believe will impact positively on their effectiveness. They indicated that parents should have some time with their children every evening and inspect the work that their children bring home and make sure that their children do the home work or assignment. To these respondents, this is a very important psychological strategy, which will have two positive effects on the performance of the learners.

First, the learners become aware that, it is not the teacher only who will be looking at their schoolwork, homework and assignments. This will make the learners to know that they cannot escape from laziness and negligence and that both parents-community and the teachers will be in to make sure they are doing what they are supposed to do to be successful and improve on their performance. Their conclusion was that if both the teachers and the parents-communities are pulling together, they would be able to make a success story together towards a better performance by their children.

Parents’ regular visits to the school without prior notice to inspect learners’ schoolwork not called upon by the school.

A good number of school heads and teachers (85%) agree that parents should pop in their schools from time to time to find out what is going on. To these respondents, it will help parents to identify lazy teachers and irresponsible school heads who do not contribute towards the performance of their children’s school work. They believe that such impromptu visits are excellent means of putting teachers and school heads on their toes. However, 15% of the respondents believe that such visits could be disruptive and can also erase their control and dignity.

Generally, the conclusion in this case was that there should be some collaboration regarding such visits so that they become organised to be able to achieve set objectives – better performance - for both teachers and learners.
have special knowledge to share with the school should
arrange with the school heads and teachers and get slot-
ted into the timetable so that they come and deliver spe-
cial lessons to the learners. Even though this was their
suggestion, 20% feel that this could erode their control of
the learners if not arranged properly. Their fear was that
should the parents teach better than them, they would be
in for a ride. However, when asked if it would not be easy
for them to consult with the parents to explain to them in
advance what would be taught and how it would be done,
they indicated that they would rather want the parents to
teach them so that they in turn teach the learners while
they observe them. The researcher is of the view that
these are the kind of teachers who are not living up to the
expectations of their learners and fear that their inade-
quacies would be exposed. The conclusion was that this
should be put into trial to see how it would work for the
teachers, the communities and the learners.

Parents visiting the schools and attending classes
while teachers teach

Like the issue above, all the teachers (100%) suggested
that they would love to welcome parents to come and sit
in their class and observe while they teach; and some-
times help with the marking of learners’ work with the
marking key provided. They believe that it will help to
establish a bond among the parties that is parents-
community, teachers and the learners. They are of the
view that parents’ presence in the classroom will instil
some discipline to make the learners to learn to pay
attention and even perform better. To the teachers, this
will be en excellent opportunity to help them manage
rowdy classes effectively.

Parents’ regular visit to talk to learners about com-

munity expectations

All the respondents (100%) welcome this idea. They are
of the view that if parents and the community would pay
regular visits and give such talks about the issues con-
fronting the communities in relation to the school and the
behaviour and activities of the learners after school, it will
inculcate some sort of awareness among the learners
who would come to realise that they are required to be-
come aware of the roles that they would have to play
within their communities after school. They suggested
that parents-communities bring the topic, which they
would like to talk about and plan together with the school
so that the views of the school head, the teachers and
the learners would be incorporated for delivery to the
learners. In this way, the respondents believe, all the par-
ties would be contributing towards efficiency and effect-
tiveness of the school administrators, teachers and the
learners’ performance.

Learners’ views about parent-community involve-
ment in schools

The learners sampled for the study also made valid
contribution in relation to the problem under investigation.
The majority of the learners (95%) are of the view that
parents’ involvement, especially in relation to checking
them at home if their homework and assignments have
been done will help them to work hard not only at school
but at home too. This means that they would be able to
complete their home work and make the work of the
teacher easy by only submitting them for marking and not
chasing after them to complete their work. They also
indicated that the more parents ask and check their work
when they are at home the more it will make them to pay
attention in class and do their work knowing that they
would also be checked by their parents. This is a good
mark of collaborative effort where both the teacher and
the parents would be monitoring children’s activities not
only at school but at home too. They also indicated that if
parents are alert and check them, it will also have some
effects on their behaviour outside the school, especially
in the community. Their reason is that they would be-
come aware that they are being watched in whatever
they are doing both at school and at home thereby con-
trolling bad behaviour. The remaining 5% believe that it
will be interfering in their freedom as learners and will put
more pressure on them making it impossible to enjoy
their youthful years. They further insisted that it is their
democratic right and should not be infringed by anybody.
The conclusion in this case is that learners acknowledge
the need to be monitored in the communities, at home
and at school because it will make them conscious of
whatever they are doing at any place and time.

Parent teachers association and school governing
bodies’ views

The responses from the PTA and SGB had a unified tone
and need to be summarised together. The indication was
that there is need for both the PTA and SGB to pull toge-
ther to buttress the activities of the school administrators
as well as involving the parents and the general commu-
nity. To them, it is only when all of the stake holders
agree and pull together towards one direction could there
be proper monitoring of the activities of teachers, lear-
ners, the school administrators. This must be done
through the combined efforts of both the communities
and parents towards the achievement of a common goal,
the success and better performance of their children. As
indicated in the introduction, the South African National
Department of Education in the Sunday Times of 13th
May 2007 in a front page article headline “State to nail
parents for bad school results” plans to force parents
serving on the country’s SGBs and PTAs to take respon-
sibility for the poor performance of pupils. This is an ex-
treme case. However, parents, SGBs and PTAs should
be given orientation to help them armed with information to be able to make a meaningful contribution in the governance of schools (administration, organization and management).

The above case fits well into the Botswana situation because as at now and as revealed by the study, most blames are heaped on the school administrators for anything negative that learners portray while at home.

Findings

The investigation of the problem revealed both anticipated and unanticipated findings. Generally, from the literature consulted and data collected, what came out are the following:

There is a need for regular interaction and communication among the stakeholders of the school community to be able to find solutions to problems together when they arise.

The activities of the school are not the sole responsibility of teachers and the school administrators alone. This is reflected in monitoring learners after school.

Batswana have been partially involved in school activities despite the fact that most primary and secondary schools are community owned.

There is general consensus that the school administration should robe in the community in the year programme planning and copies of the planned activities made available to guide them so that they are able to know when they are required to make inputs to issues of mutual importance and welfare of the school, the learners and the community.

There is agreement that monitoring learners from several perspectives would make them become aware of their activities thereby making them to behave responsibly wherever they would be.

Teachers believe that parent-community involvement would help them to improve in their effectiveness because they would be pulling resources together for instance when learners are given homework parents will make sure learners attend to it.

Learners feel that the combined efforts of parents, community and the school will make it possible for them to excel to be able to please their parents and teachers.

It is necessary that teachers should go into the community with empathy and interact meaningfully with their constituents for mutual co-existence and progress.

Parents and the community should be called upon in emergency situations outside the planned programme.

Parental and community involvement help to:

(a). Improve discipline.
(b). Punctuality of learners to school.
(c). Make learners responsible and take their school duties seriously.
(d). Make teachers feel confident that parents and community are with them in whatever they do at school add-

Unanticipated findings

The following were the unanticipated findings which were considered relevant to be included in the report.

Parents and the communities claim that they cannot take responsibility for something that they have not been trained to do. This indicates that there is need for some education to orientate parents and the communities to be involved in the management of the schools in their communities.

Parents and communities feel that they cannot be held accountable for responsibilities that they have no lawful control.

Most members of the SGBs and PTA are either illiterate or semi-illiterate and for that matter cannot be expected to understand academic and management procedures of the schools in their communities.

Recommendations

The study has revealed very interesting and easy-to-follow results that have been presented in a very simple narrative for easy understanding. The recommendations that are worth making as a sum total of the study are that Members of the SGBs and PTAs should be literate and given adequate orientation about their responsibilities.

Regular interaction with all the stakeholders of the school government should be encouraged so that there is no redundant time lapse to contribute to the ferment of Parent-community should exist in tandem for progressive development and better performance for both teachers and their children.

Implications for change

In the process of bringing about progressive change in society, there is always need for education. What is implied in this statement is that there should be regular interactive education where the teachers and the parent-community group are invited for briefing about new developments in the school government system. Such education will go a long way to cement the cordial relationship that would be developed among the stakeholders for the effective and efficient running of schools in Botswana communities.

Conclusion

From what have been sourced from the literature consulted, the interview and questionnaire administered it is pertinent to indicate that, all the stakeholders favour a kind of partnership where every member of the partnership will participate effectively in the achievement of
the goals set for schools in every community. Once there is effective and efficient collaboration among all stakeholders, there is every possibility that teachers will be highly effective and learners would be able to improve in their performance culminating into excellent results at the end of the school year.

REFERENCES


