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CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS OF OLD STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL WELFARE IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Stakeholders in educational institutions like business organisations, parent teachers' association and old students' association have been encouraged by governments to participate in the development of schools in Nigeria. The old students' associations' interventions, especially, in the south western Nigeria are widespread but the interventions are not well documented and guided by government policies. This paper identified few organised old students' associations in Oyo state, Nigeria and it examined the contributions they have made to the welfare of secondary schools. Findings showed that building of classrooms, supply of school equipment, donation of laboratory facilities, scholarship and awards are areas of intervention that old students' associations have made most impacts in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Keywords: *School interventions, secondary schools, schools' welfare and old students' association*

Introduction

Governments in Nigeria continue to pay lip service to the importance of education without giving it the funding it deserves. Instead of the free education for all campaigned before election, it usually became popular to hear political office holders saying that government at all levels can no longer fund education. The budgetary allocation to education continues to dwindle in Nigeria. For example, many schools lack basic equipment for conducive learning, most especially, for science practical classes, and those that claim to have this equipment are using the obsolete ones. Hence, students only learn the theoretical aspects rather than the

practical. Also, the libraries in schools lack modern books, journals and magazines that aid learning.

Funds for renovation of schools and institution, acquiring quality training facilities, training and retraining of teachers, decent teachers' salaries and welfare are some of the things that secondary schools need in Nigeria. Despite the problems that confront education in Nigeria, demand for education, especially, for secondary school education continues to increase and it has become clear that government alone cannot meet the demands and cost of education across the country. Consequently, the partnership of

other stakeholders like old students' associations in the development of schools has become necessary.

Background to the study

Old students' associations are a group of former students of educational institutions, who graduated and have come together to form a network. They come together for mutual benefits of renewing the lost contacts and relationships they had in schools (Banka, & Bua, 2015). They usually pull resources together in order to support their alma-mater. They also provide a forum and platform to foster unity, encourage one another and build the sense of belonging among the members of the association, the present students, the staff and management of the school with the common goal of school development. Aja – Okorie (2021) stated that old students' associations are always very helpful and healthy to the schools. These associations normally provides both cash and materials for the growth and development of their alma mater.

In recent years, the nation's school-age population has risen dramatically and many schools have been challenged to accommodate a growing number of children. Many of the country's aging public schools, particularly in low-income urban areas, are in need of capital projects for improvement and modernization. The demand for school facilities that need upgrading have become intensive. That is why old students' associations have risen to the challenges of rendering assistance to the governments and communities to make these schools functional.

Some of the objectives of old students' associations are: fostering of mutually beneficial interaction between the old students and the present students of the

schools and between the old students themselves; and encouragement of old students to take an active and abiding interest in the work and progress of their former institutions so as to contribute towards enhancement of the social utility. These objectives are achieved through networking.

Funding of education in Nigeria

There are three major arguments about funding of education as stated by Oyekan, Adelodun, and Oresaje (2015). The first position is that education should be treated like a commodity in the free market economy whereby government should leave the cost to individuals. The second and third positions support funding of education by government. The reality in Nigeria is that these positions have been merged but there is a tilt towards the free market argument that education should be available only for those who can pay for it. The free, universal and compulsory nine years' education has little or no effect judging from the growing privately established educational institutions, especially, at the secondary school level. Nigerians have to live with the situation of lack of facilities in schools. Members of old students' associations in Nigeria have been moved by the decadence in their former schools. These associations are on a rescue mission to save public education in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The efforts of old students' associations are widespread, especially, in the southwestern parts of Nigeria. Despite these efforts, the operations of the associations are not well documented in scholarly literature and they are not well guided and coordinated by government policies. This paper aimed at finding out some of the activities and operations of old students' associations in Oyo state secondary schools.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. identify some well-organized old students' associations in Oyo state;
- ii. find out the old students' association programmes for the welfare of secondary schools; and
- iii. examine the methods used to foster unity among old classmates of secondary schools.

- iv. There will be no significant difference in methods of fostering unity among members of old students' associations and schools' welfare programmes.

Research questions

- i. Which of the old students' associations in Oyo state are well organized?
- ii. What programmes do old students' associations have for the welfare of their former schools?

Hypotheses

- iii. There will be no significant relationship between old students' associations and school welfare.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design method was used for the study. The population consisted of all members of old students' association in Oyo state, Nigeria. The respondents were executive of old students' association, school principals, teachers and students of selected educational institutions. The sample of this study were selected secondary schools in view of their available publications, notable and significance contributions to school development. They are Olivet High School, Oyo, Government College, Ibadan, Loyola College, Ibadan Bishop Phillips Academy, Ibadan and Saint Anne's Secondary School, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.

Results and Discussion of findings

Research Question 1: Which of the old students' associations in Oyo state are well organized?

Table 1: Organized Old Students' Associations in Oyo State

Organized Old Students' Associations	Frequency	Percentage
Olivet Baptist High School Old Students' Association	51	22.8
Saint Anne's School Old Students' Association	39	17.4
Government College Old Students' Association	46	20.5
Loyola College Old Students' Association	40	17.9
Bishop Phillips Academy Old Students' Association	48	21.4
Total	224	100

Table 1 shows that Olivet Baptist High School Old Student Association (22.8%), Bishop Philips Academy Old Students' Association (21.4%), Loyola College Old Students' Association (17.9%), Saint Anne's School Old Students' Association (17.9%) are some of the organized old students' associations in Oyo State. However, the result shows that Olivet Baptist High School old students' association is the most organized among the selected associations in Oyo state.

Research question 2: What programmes do old student associations have for the welfare of their former schools?

Table 2: Old students' association programmes for the welfare of their former schools

Old Student Association Programme	Frequency	Percentage
Building of classroom and office blocks, school fence, toilet	61	27.2
Donation of classroom materials and laboratory facilities and equipment	61	27.2
Sponsorship of students and purchase of WAEC Forms	45	20.1
Purchase of uniforms	9	4.0
Donation of notebooks, textbook writing materials	15	6.7
Retraining of teachers	9	4.0
Presentation of awards, grant	24	10.7
Total	224	100

Table 2 shows old students' association programmes for development of education institution. The table reveals that old students' associations are involved in development programmes such as building of classrooms and office blocks, school fence, toilet (27.2%), donation of classroom materials and laboratory facilities and equipment (27.2%), sponsorship of students and purchase of West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) forms (20.1%), purchase of uniforms (4%), donation of notebooks, textbooks, writing materials (6.7%), retraining of teachers (4%), presentation of awards, grant (10.7%). The table indicates that building of classroom and office blocks, school fence, toilet as well, as donation of classroom materials and laboratory facilities and equipment are the most acclaimed programmes of the old students' associations.

H01: There will be no significant relationship between old students' associations and school welfare

Table 3 Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between old students’ associations and school welfare

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	R	Sig	Remark
Old students’ association	224	2.977	1.459	0.971	0.00	Significant
School welfare	224	2.906	1.937			

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between old students’ associations and school welfare ($r = 0.97$; $P < 0.05$). This further shows that old students’ associations and school welfare is

positively related. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected. This result confirms that old students’ associations have made positive impacts to the welfare of the secondary schools selected for this study.

Ho2: There will be no significant difference among methods of fostering unity in members of old students’ associations and schools’ welfare programmes.

Table 4: Summary of Analysis of Variance showing the difference among methods of fostering unity in members of old students’ associations and schools welfare programmes

methods of fostering unity	N	Mean	Std.D	F	Df	Sig.	Remark
Social Media	89	2.809	1.569	1.863	2,221	0.158	Not Significant
Hall Meeting	10	2.811	1.522				
6							
Visitation	29	3.552	1.530				
Total	22	2.906	1.559				
	4						

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference in methods of fostering unity among members of old students’ associations and schools’ welfare programmes ($F_{2,221} = 1.863$; $P > 0.05$). Hypothesis 2 is, therefore, not rejected. This result shows that there is no method of fostering unity that is more effective than others. The impact of social media in reconnecting friends cannot be overlooked. According to Tuten and Solomon (2015), ‘social media are online means of communication and conveyance, collaboration and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent network of Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and

Instagram. The potential of social media is that easily, the content can be linked to persons and groups, and the content can be shared with many people. Social media have served old students’ associations in reliving their good memories. This is one of the most obvious benefits to the development of old students’ association. Social media has become a great way to strengthen a lifetime bond among peers and schoolmates. However, social media has heightened the rate of scam, fake news and crime. Unfortunately, social media groups have become more vulnerable.

Conclusion

Old students' associations have succeeded in building of classrooms, toilets, laboratories, providing equipment and facilities. These have taken the major lead of the developmental projects among the old students' associations. Also, giving of scholarship to students in the school is a significant way the old students continue to encourage students and teachers in the schools. The study also shows that voluntary donations is the major source of securing fund to execute developmental projects. Old students' associations have played a critical role in the welfare of secondary schools, especially, in Oyo state. This is because without their interventions, public secondary schools will be worse because of the negligence of successive governments. However, interventions of old students' associations will remain at the level of tokenism if their children and wards cannot attend the schools they help. This thinking could be most unpopular since government officials have since left the public school system to places where their children and wards cannot go. This needs to be reversed.

Recommendations

Secondary school administrators and staff have to continually ensure that the physical and social environments for learning be more conducive. Concerted efforts by governments and community members have to be geared towards enhancing the capacity and ability of all stakeholders in secondary education to act in a manner that supports the aim of secondary school education in Nigeria. That stage of education remains a time in students' life when they bond the most. This paper recommends that governments should not hands off the funding of schools while depending only on the old students'

associations. The development that old students' association at Government College, Ibadan intended to take over the control of the school runs against the principle of public good and altruistic motive of the communities who gave the land for building of schools. Secondary education has served Nigeria as an integrating factor for many years, so government ought to promote and preserve the schools – community relations that had existed for a long time.

On the part of government, there should be more proper monitoring of schools to support old students' associations instead of handling over the school system to them. The old students' associations also need to form a formidable team to mobilise fresh graduates. This is important if the good impact of old students will continue. The government should involve the old students' associations in the policy formulation of schools. Something similar was done during the past tenure of government in Oyo state, when one representative of the old students was selected as part of the team to manage the secondary school affairs (School Governing Board). Also prominent personality among the members should use their influence or connection to the benefit of the schools and members of the associations.

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