

On the Importance of Functioning School Based Management Committees (SBMCs): Evidence from Nigeria

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Introduction

Most of the empirical literature in developing countries explores the extensive margin of educational policies (e.g., enrollment, completed years of schooling), while a relatively small number of studies explore their intensive margin (e.g., how well students learn). Until recently, policy design and interventions for basic education in low-income countries were mostly focused on improving access to education (school enrollment), with little attention paid to raising the quality of learning. In fact, recent estimates from UNESCO (2014) show that more than one hundred million children who have completed at least four years of school still cannot read, write, or perform basic mathematics.

One way governments in developing countries have attempted to address this issue, without significant additional costs, is through the use of School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) systems, which seek to improve accountability and educational outcomes through the involvement of teachers, parents, and students' input (Patrinos et al., 2009). However, in their systematic review, Carr-Hill et al. (2016) find that, "Decentralising decision-making to schools has small to moderate positive effects in reducing repetition and dropouts, and increasing test scores. These effects are mainly restricted to middle-income countries, with fewer and smaller positive effects found in low-income countries or disadvantaged communities."

This note examines the effects of SBMCs on the quality of education in Nigeria based on existing studies and completed programmes. We will investigate whether actions implemented by SBMCs improve learning outcomes and teachers' performance. In the first section, we will discuss the findings from data collected by the Education Sector Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN). In the second section, we will discuss findings from an exploratory analysis using survey data collected for the Service Delivery Education Indicators (SDI) in Nigeria. In the conclusion, we will discuss some lessons learned and the implications for the RISE Nigeria SBMC research design.

Key Points

- School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) seek to improve accountability and educational outcomes through the involvement of teachers, parents, and students in school management and decision making.
- Using data from the Education Sector Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) and the Service Delivery Education Indicators (SDIs), we find that stakeholder participation and involvement via SBMCs and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) are significantly and positively correlated with pupils' learning outcomes and teachers' performances in Nigeria.
- The RISE Nigeria team is launching a five-state Randomised Control Trial (RCT) focused on SBMCs. The study will investigate the determinants and consequences of community engagement in education while accounting for the varied influence of local capacity and local institutions in terms of preference for accountability and good governance.

Table 1: Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) programme details

Programme Element	Description
Head teacher development	Up to 16 days of training for head teachers on academic leadership, school development planning, management of teachers, and working with the community.
Teacher development	Up to 16 days of training for teachers (selected from programme schools) on generic basic teaching skills, basic literacy teaching (initial reading skills), basic numeracy teaching (number concepts and addition/subtraction), use of teaching aids, classroom organisation, and encouraging children's self-esteem.
School development planning and school grants	Up to two school grants received in phase 1 schools, in consecutive years to be spent on priorities for school improvement included in a school development plan based on school self-evaluation.
SBMC development	Up to 16 days training for community members on establishing an SBMC covering school planning and management, inclusive schools (focusing on the inclusion of women and children in decision making), resource mobilisation and financial processes, and child protection.
Inclusive practices	Woven throughout SBMC, teacher and head teacher development rather than treated as a stand-alone activity.

Source: ESSPIN Report No. 060 (March 2013) "Overall findings and technical report of ESSPIN composite survey 1 (2012)."

Most of the insights from ESSPIN related to the effect of functioning SBMCs on educational outcomes are discussed in Uzor (2017). The author summarises his findings as follows: "When functional, SBMCs improve intermediate outcomes, such as school resources and student enrollment; however, there is little evidence to suggest they improve the learning outcomes of students. Because SBMCs vary widely in functionality—based on differences in local politics, poverty, and other contextual cultural factors—the ability of SBMCs to engender collective action seems to differ based on the quality of their leadership." Uzor (2017) notices that variations in the functionality of SBMCs (number of meetings held in a year, regular visits from the chairman) also point to the role played by contextual factors such as local politics, culture, religion, and the prevalence of poverty in impeding collective action. This contextual perspective highlights the importance of leadership in ensuring functioning and effective SBMCs. However, the ability to draw definitive conclusions on the effects of SBMCs on educational outcomes from ESSPIN is limited since many other interventions unrelated to SBMCs took place at the same time. To overcome this issue, we have looked at another data source.

What can the SDI data tell us about SBMCs and PTAs?

The Service Delivery Indicators (SDIs) offer a set of metrics for gauging service delivery performance in education and health. The overall objective of the indicators is to evaluate the quality of service delivery in primary education and basic health services, and monitor performance. The indicators enable governments and service providers to identify gaps and track progress over time and across regions. SDI data collection in the education sector in Nigeria was implemented in 2013. Data collection was the result of a collective process involving extensive consultation with the Government and key stakeholders on survey design, sampling, and adaptation of survey instruments. Information was collected on 760 primary schools; 2,400 teachers (for skills assessment); 5,700 teachers (for absence rate); and 6,600 pupils in four states in Nigeria: Anambra, Bauchi, Ekiti, and Niger. The survey provides information on three levels of service delivery in public primary schools including measures of (i) teacher effort; (ii) teacher knowledge and ability; and (iii)

the availability of key inputs, such as textbooks, basic teaching equipment, and infrastructure (e.g., sanitation, quality of lighting, etc.). Although the focus of the data collection was on services, the questionnaire also included questions related to the presence of SBMCs and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) within schools and their functioning (presence of minutes from meetings and number of meetings since last year). These variables, with variables related to teachers' performances and students' learning outcomes, are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

School Management						
	Min	Max	Median	Mean	sd	N
Presence of SC (SC)	0	1	1	0.78	0.42	760
Presence of SC Minutes (SCM)	0	1	0	0.46	0.50	760
Number of SC Meetings (SCN)	0	30	2	2.39	2.88	760
Presence of PTA (PTA)	0	1	1	0.96	0.20	760
Number of PTA Meetings (PTAN)	0	30	3	3.29	2.39	760
Presence of PTA Minutes (PTAM)	0	1	1	0.70	0.46	760
Teachers' Performances						
	Min	Max	Median	Mean	sd	N
School Absence Rate (SAR)	0	1	0	0.099	0.17	732
Classroom Absence Rate (CAR)	0	1	0.10	0.17	0.24	732
Teacher Test Score (TTS)	0	0.59	0.23	0.23	0.11	759
Teaching Time (TT)	0	59	30	29.8	10.7	730
Pupil Test Score						
	Min	Max	Median	Mean	sd	N
Pupil Test Score, English (PTSE)	0.0035	1	0.40	0.46	0.40	754
Pupil Test Score, Maths (PTSM)	0	1	0.41	0.40	0.22	754
Pupil Test Score, Non-Verbal (PTSN)	0	1	0.50	0.56	0.27	754
Pupil Test Score - All (PTSA)	0.0033	1	0.39	0.46	0.38	754
Observations	760					
<i>Note: SC and PTA stand respectively for School Committee and Pupil Teacher Association</i>						

While only 4 percent of schools in our sample lack PTAs, 22 percent of schools don't have a School Committee. On average, 46 percent of schools have written records of SC meetings, compared to 70 percent of schools with written records of PTA meetings. PTAs also met more frequently than SCs, meeting 3.29 and 2.39 times in the preceding year, respectively. The classroom absence rate of teachers is 17 percent while the average daily teaching time is 30 minutes. We also observe that on average, students performed less well in mathematics compared to Non-verbal and English.

To analyse the impact of SCs and PTAs on teachers' performances and students' learning outcomes, we performed mean difference tests and basic regression analysis to see if there is any significant relationship. On average, the number of PTA and SC meetings from the prior year had no significant effect on teachers' performance and students'

learning outcomes. The results from T-test analyses are summarised in Table 3 below. On average, the presence of a school committee and the existence of minutes from meetings had no significant effect on teachers' performance. The opposite is true for the presence of a parent-teacher association and the existence of minutes from meetings. The presence of functioning PTAs on average was associated with a reduction of teachers' absence rates (in school and in the classroom) and increased teaching time. Teachers from schools with functioning PTAs also had, on average, better qualifications reflected by higher test scores. Schools with functioning PTAs were also associated with higher student learning outcomes on average. However, the existence of functioning SCs seems to be significantly associated with lower student performance, which hints at the influence of endogeneity given the nature of the data. Our upcoming large-scale experiment on SBMCs will allow us to overcome this endogeneity issue and reveal potential causal relationships.

Table 3: Mean difference T-tests

	School Committee	School Committee Minutes	Parents Teachers Associations	Parents Teachers Associations Minutes
	Mean diff	Mean diff	Mean diff	Mean diff
School Absence Rate	0.015	0.00079	-0.076**	-0.051***
Classroom Absence Rate	0.022	0.022	-0.24***	-0.063***
Time Teaching	-0.94***	-1.49*	9.49	2.54***
Test Score	0.0068	-0.9982	0.080***	0.031***
Pupil Test Score All Subjects	-0.10***	-0.099***	0.17**	0.033
Pupil Test Score - Nonverbal	-0.032	-0.024	0.024	0.0017
Pupil Test Score - English	-0.11***	-0.10***	0.18**	0.034
Pupil Test Score - Maths	-0.031	-0.056***	0.087**	0.034*
Observations	760	760	760	760
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$				

Conclusion

This note provides evidence that increasing stakeholder participation and agency via SBMCs and PTAs can improve learning outcomes, teachers' performances, and accountability in Nigeria. The activities of SBMCs and PTAs are positively associated with students' learning outcomes and teachers' performances. The presence of functioning PTAs is, on average, associated with a reduction in teachers' absence rate (in school and in the classroom), an increase in teaching time, and skilled teachers (high test scores). However, based on existing studies such as ESSPIN, it is difficult to identify the contribution of SBMCs to these positive outcomes, as other interventions (e.g., head teacher and teacher development programmes) were implemented simultaneously. Moreover, these correlations can be driven by endogenous local institutions. Therefore, more research focusing on SBMCs is necessary to measure the role of parental involvement and local politics in improving the quality of education.

The RISE Nigeria Country Research team working on SBMCs aims to advance this research agenda by randomly introducing some variation in the functioning of SBMCs in five Nigerian states. These exogenous variations will provide an opportunity to investigate the determinants and consequences of community engagement in education while

accounting for the influence of local institutions in terms of preference for accountability and good governance. We will explore how increased community engagement (action) in politics mediates the link between increased demand for education and improved learning outcomes. We will also look at the impacts of increasing the diversity and the inclusivity of SBMCs as well as changes to parental aspirations.

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