

## Strategies for Promoting Parent/Teacher Partnerships in Assessment of Children With Emotional and Behavioural Disorder (EB/D) in Schools in Nigeria



### Education

KEYWORDS :

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines strategies for promoting parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of children with emotional and behavioral disorder in schools. Descriptive survey design was used. The study was carried out in Ezeagu Local Government Area, Enugu State. Three research questions were formulated for the study. Questionnaire instrument of 30 items was used to illicit information from secondary school teachers. Mean statistics was used to analyze the data. It was found out that teachers' competence in communication skills, their knowledge of students cultural and home backgrounds and school support programme promote parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of children with behavioral and emotional disorder.*

### Introduction

Children take to school home experiences. These experiences often conflict with that of the school. The way parents and other significant others understand the child and his background affects their assessment, behavior and expectations in school. Such assessment remains indispensable for the child's growth and development in school. However, assessment in school today for various purposes is not free of bias. Assessment bias emerges from the bias inherent in assessment instrument and practice and as such fail to meet the needs of heterogeneous learners in schools.

Among the heterogeneous learners are children with emotional and behavioral disorder. There are children whose behavior deviate from all norms significant enough to affect their educational performance. Behavior is a reflection of cultural background and one aspect that is assessed in schools. Best practices in the area of assessment dictate that an effective assessment utilizes a cultural appropriate approach that always seek to evaluate a child within the context of his or her environment. Experts have advocated the use of multidisciplinary team in assessment where information is sought from different context. Information got assist teachers in effectively assessing children who actually have emotional and behavioral disorder achieve positive educational outcomes. The disciplinary team includes teachers, parent and others.

However, alienation and miscommunication can hinder collaborations. Issues of cultural differences, inequitable educational outcomes in Nigeria, low literacy level of parents and incompetence of teachers contribute to these. Many parents have little knowledge of their children's disabilities. What is regarded as behavior disorder by teachers may not be the same in the context of parent and vise versa. Challenges in academic and social learning of children with behavioral and emotional disorder can persist if there is no partnerships in assessment of children with emotional and behavioral disorder; this; the need to bring the school and home together in partnerships.

### Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorder

Children take to school home experiences which often conflict with that of the school. The way parents and other significant others understand the child and his background affects their assessment, behavior and expectations in schools.

Emotional and behavioural disorder is a disorder characterized by behavior of emotional responses that are different from all norms and different groups and which affect educational performance (Smith, 2007).

Children, whose behavior deviate from all norms and significant enough to affect their educational performance have emotional and behavioral disorder. Children with emotional and behavioral disorder often struggle in their interaction with family members, peers and teachers and exhibit verbal and physical aggression. Research has shown that these children have more severe

difficulty coping with school and after school lives compared to students with other disabilities (Gresham, 2002).

The cause of the dismal result is traceable to the homes, school and communities. For instance, cases of instabilities, single parenthood, blended families, broken homes, socio-economic breakdowns in homes bring with them series of psychological and social consequences that have an influence on children. Moreover, differences in approaches to parental authority often bring about negative behavior in children.

Having a child with behavioral disorder is a challenge to all, especially parents and teachers. Experience has shown that parents often blame themselves for the child's behavior. Assessment for behavioral disorders stem from expression of parental concerns. Moreover, the identification of concerns regarding children disorder is most appropriate in the domain. In Nigerian schools, there is continuous increase in ethnic diversity evident in the composition of its population and also changes in social and economic patterns which affects everybody. In this vein, many students with emotional and behavioral disorder. In recent years students behaviors at school have become increasingly challenging, hostile and even violent.

### Banners to Parent/Teacher Partnerships in Assessment of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorder

Expectation for parents and families' involvement are high for students with disabilities when compared with their peers without disabilities (Smith, 2007). Every parent has much love and concern for their children. This concern for their children is lightened more through empathy when a parent sees any form of limitation on the part of the child. However, banners to parent-teacher partnership especially for children with emotional and behavioral disorders abound.

The teacher's perception of diversity determines how he/she responds to students with emotional and behavioral disorder (E/BD) and their families. Most behaviors are rooted in culture and cultural conflicts arise more when teachers and students do not share similar cultural backgrounds, ethnic identities, value orientations, social protocols, or relational styles. Learners from different cultural backgrounds sometimes fail because their traits are incompatible with the schools teaching practices. Smith (2007) sums up this idea by stating that without understanding of a child's family, educators can inadvertently create unfortunate and unnecessary obstacles to the development of red partnerships.

Moreover, in addition to difficulty in parenting a child with emotional and behavioral disorders, parents often view their children's behaviors as a reflection of their parenting skills. Also, teachers, and other significant others blame families for their children's behavior. As a result parents may feel disenfranchised and disinterested about school and programme. According to Cartledge, Kea & Ida (2000), too many families feel disenfranchised or confused about rules, regulations and the purpose of

special education.

Nevertheless, economic meltdown in the country has put much pressure on parents depriving them the opportunity to partake in their children’s education. In most families, both parents are breadwinners and often times dual earners. Parental involvement in the education of their children with disabilities is no longer parent’s highest priority.

Cases of poor attitude of teachers towards children with various disabilities often extend to the parents of such children. Negative attitude of both parent and teachers are strong factors hindering home – school partnerships in assessment of children with emotional and behavioral disorder. Many parents complain of receiving negative treatment and have been subjected to condescending attitudes and disapproving judgment from educators ( Bowman, 2000). This can lead to feeling of mistrust and thereby leading family members to be highly cautious about disclosing personal or family matters that might reflect negatively on themselves and the family.

The above banners describe a picture that is acutely worrying and therefore highlighted an alarming level of need. There is much need for schools to seek agreement with parents’ procedures that are consistent with the roles and responsibilities of each party in assessment of children with emotional and behavioral disorders. This study, therefore, seeks to examine strategies for promoting teacher/parents partnerships in assessment of children with behavioral and emotional disorders in schools.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study seeks to investigate strategies for promoting teacher/parent partnerships in assessment of children with emotional and behavioral disorders. Specifically, the study will investigate.

1. The extent to which teachers competence in communication skills promote parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of children with emotional or behavioral disorder.
2. The extent teachers’ knowledge of the home background of students promotes parent/teachers partnerships in assessment of students with emotional and behavioral disorder.
3. The extent school support programmes promote parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of students with (E/BD).

**Research Question**

1. To what extent does teachers’ competency in communication skills promote parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of student with E/BD?
2. To what extent does teachers’ knowledge of students’ home background promote parent teacher partnerships in assessment of students with E/BD?
3. To what extent does school support programmes promote parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of students with E/BD?

**Methodology**

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The rationale for adopting this design is that it helps researcher gather reliable information for the study.

**Sampling**

The sample for the study comprised 60 teachers drawn from three secondary schools from Ezeagu Local Government of Enugu State. The secondary schools were Amansiodo Community Secondary School Oghe, Iwollo High School, St. Theresa’s College, and Abor where 20 teachers were selected through simple random sampling.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection is Parent Teacher Partnerships in Assessment Questionnaire (PTPAQ). The instrument is designed with 20 items on a 4 point rating scale of Strongly

Agree SA, Agree A, Disagree D and Strongly Disagree SD to identify the strategies.

**Data Analysis**

Mean is used in analyzing data. Each research question acceptance level for mean was 2.50 and above.

**Findings**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does teachers’ competency in communication skills promote parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of students with E/BD?

**Table I: Communication skills for partnerships**

S/N	Description	
1.	Engage parents in dialogue.	2.81
2.	Support parent assessment/judgment.	2.73
3.	Share information parents.	2.78
4.	Inform parents about areas of support for their children.	2.71
5.	Arrange for meetings n clear and effective ways.	2.81
6.	Allow parents to ask general questions.	2.61
7.	Take parents perceptions into account.	2.46
8.	Partner with parent’s in consulting special services.	2.54
9.	Explain expectations regarding assignment/home works.	2.84
10.	Inform parents about school programme.	2.76
11.	Allow parents to act as resources in the classroom.	2.34
12.	Allow parents accompany the students on educational outings.	2.64
13.	Allow parents take part in cultural activities.	2.68
14.	Maintain a regular contact.	2.76
15.	Respect the confidential nature of certain aspect of his or her work.	2.86
16.	Listen to parents’ explanations.	2.74
17.	Communicate to parents in appropriate language.	2.83

Table I indicates that all items on communication skills teachers need to promote parent/teacher partnerships agree with mean scores ranging from 2.54 – 2.86. This implies that competency in communication of both teachers and parents promote their partnership in assessment of children with emotional and behavioral disorder.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does teachers’ knowledge of students’ background promote parent/teachers partnerships in assessment of children with emotional and behavioral disorder in school?

**Table II: Teachers knowledge of students’ background**

S/N	Description	
18.	Knowledge of the students’ home.	2.58
19.	Knowledge of the students’ parent.	2.54
20.	Knowledge of the students’ family setup.	2.60
21.	Knowledge of the students’ language.	2.68
22.	Knowledge of method of parenting.	2.70
23.	Knowledge of parent social economic status.	2.70
24.	Reflect the students’ culture in assignment of students.	2.84
25.	Living near students’ homes.	2.00

Table II shows that out of the nine items, eight agreed with mean scores ranging from 2.58 to 2.84. Only one rejected with a mean score of 2.00. This means that teachers knowledge of the students background promote partnerships but not necessarily living near their students.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does school support programmes promote parent/teacher partnerships in assessment of students with E/BED?

**Table III: School support programmes**

S/N	Description	
26.	Organize awareness campaign programme for parents.	2.68
27.	Sponsor parents for seminars and workshops.	2.60
28.	Scheduling parents to take part in teaching their children in school.	2.51
29.	Sponsor teachers for seminars.	2.71
30.	Organize seminars for teachers and students.	2.68

### Discussion

The results obtained in this study have shown that parent/teacher partnerships can be achieved effectively when there is active involvement of teachers and parents in meaningful and two-way communication rooted in understanding and respect. This finding confirms the idea of Kea & Bacon (1999) that when families, irrespective of cultural and linguistic differences, are actively involved in all decisions that affect lives of children, there is increase in positive and collaborative interactions between families and schools. Partnership enhances the opportunity to analyze and account for cultural and socio economic factors that may be contributing to the students' poor adjustment. In other words, it gives opportunity to view the child within the child's home and cultural milieu.

The results have also shown that teachers' knowledge of the child's background will promote partnerships and put an end to parents' alienation and resistance. A thorough understanding of how family structure impacts behavior, social emotional functioning and academic functioning are vital when interpreting assessment information. Smith (2007) decries that without understanding the cultural demand and expectations of a child's family, educators can inadvertently create unfortunate and unnecessary obstacles to the development of real partnerships.

Partnerships of parents and teachers can be promoted when schools create wholesome environment where parents are given programmes that give them opportunities to contribute immensely in their children's school work.

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