

School-Community Collaboration and Young Adults' Identity Formation

Daniel Ehimen KADIRI

Lagos State University of Education

kadiride@lasued.edu.ng

Abstract

This qualitative case study builds on the existing research on community collaboration and educational impact on young adults' identity formation by examining the roles young adults play in community collaboration that can positively influence their identity formation. Three research questions were raised and answered in this study. Mixed method exploratory sequential design was employed. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. The sample size for the study was 520 participants comprising of 40 principals/vice principals, 50 teachers, 200 students, 200 parents and 30 Community Development Association (CDA) members across Lagos Mainland, Apapa and Surulere. Questionnaire, interview guide and Focus Group Discussion were used for data collection. The data were analysed using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. The study revealed among others that young adult identified collaborative activities that directly impacted on the exploration process of their identity. The findings thus suggest the need to engage in communities organising activities to build social capital by confronting social isolation and exclusion among groups, examining power and privilege among community members and developing critical place-based leadership for intergenerational capacity building.

Keywords: Collaboration, School-community collaboration, Young adults, Identity formation

Introduction

The pedagogical philosophy that education is everyone's responsibility and not just the teachers is predicated on the assumption and beliefs that education is far too important to be left solely to the educators (Welch, 2022). Hence, the need for community collaboration which will enable educators, social workers, and other school professionals to form sustainable, strategic partnerships with families, community agencies, neighborhood organizations, and the private sector, has become imperative. According to Barkley, Major and Cross (2022), community collaborations are assuming greater roles which have generated increasing attention in social work and adult education because of its potential for enhancing the quality of services to meet the multifaceted needs of young adults. These collaborative efforts and action can accomplish much

when they are able to pool diverse resources, skills, and forms of creativity resulting in improved and increased students' participation (West, 2020).

This consideration has become relevant particularly, in the environments where inequality and lack of fairness in the access to resources and opportunities for many young adults persist, and where there is a high level of moral decadence. Hence, the need to examine more deeply the role community collaboration can play in the educational impact of young adults' holistic development with regards to their exploration process in identity formation. Sadly, in the face of today's challenges as evidenced by deteriorating social and family values and conditions, educational researchers and policy makers have recently argued that school and other human service agents saddled with the task of nurturing and supporting young adults' development have failed in their duty (Biag & Castrechini, 2016; Fehrer, & Leos-Urbel, 2016). Consequently, this has negatively affected their ability to make relevant identity choices in their search for their own personal identity (Côté & Levine, 2022).

The concept of collaboration as used in this study is a form of working together on a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The study therefore views community collaboration from the perspective of joint efforts of the school and community to act or decide on issues related to their domain by engaging in an interactive process with stakeholders, such as parents, community leaders, members of Community Development Association (CDA) members, using shared rules, norms, and structures to find solution to common problems. This perspective has been reiterated in the education literature for quite some time and educational researchers have been touting the benefits of collaboration among schools, families, and communities as a means of achieving educational impact of young adults (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 2021). Community collaboration is therefore seen as one possible means for schools to provide material resources, social support and educational experiences, to supplement young adults' in-school learning opportunities by involving members of the community as a way of enhancing their exploration process of identity (Scribner, et al, 2021). This onus for the establishment of school and community collaboration calls for both principals and teachers to reach out to parents and communities to fashion out collaboration strategies based on students' needs and development.

However, literature on young adults' involvement in community collaboration is limited as research is often carried out from the perspectives of school personnel which does not examine the nature of the relationships among individuals in the partnerships. Also, in some of the projects conducted on a smaller scale, the community partners' viewpoints are solicited but as in the larger research studies, young adults' viewpoints are rarely consulted (Bronstein, & Mason, 2018). Hence, community collaboration research from young adults' perspectives, specifically examines their views on school–community relationships as well as their partnering practices, becomes relevant. Invariably, this research will contribute to the community collaboration literature by examining the collaborative experience from the young adults' perspectives to determine how they view their participation with community members and to gain insight into their partnering practices and the social contexts that necessitate collaboration efforts as it relates to identity formation.

Identity according to Grotevant (2017), is established through exploration and commitment processes. Exploration is the examination and consideration of different identity alternatives, and an active search to the question “who am I? While commitment is the choice made in identity relevant areas after exploration. This exploration process of identity provides the individual with purpose and direction and a sense of personal continuity. Thus, there is a need for young adults to have some ideological guidelines with regards to sense of order and meaning to life (Kroger (2017). Meaningful values can therefore play a significant role in identity formation, particularly among young adults. The quality of the choices required to make good identity decision is therefore predicated on quality of educational impact young adults are exposed to. Regrettably, the current social conditions under high levels of uncertainty and complexity have led to multifaceted needs of young adults. Such risk factors at the individual, family, school, and community levels affect young adults' quest to establish positive identity owing to the complex interactions within and between risk protective factors at multidimensional levels.

Research has linked sound educational outcomes as a vital prerequisite for identity exploration. For instance, the more impactful the education outcome, the better prepared the young adults in making sound choices in the identity exploration before commitment. In addition, young adults cannot improve their learning outcomes without addressing other individual needs and environmental issues in the community that affects the exploration process of their identity formation (Clancy & Dollinger, 2022). As a result, a consensus has emerged between schools and

community organisations that young adults' identity formation can be improved if they deal simultaneously with various obstacles in schools, families, and communities in a collaborative manner (Bland & Alweh, 2017). These complex social conditions encourage them to work together because no single agency has sufficient knowledge and resources to provide comprehensive services to meet the multifaceted needs of young adults in their quest to establish identity (Davies, Burch & Johnson, 2022; Beck, 2021). Therefore, the need for community collaboration for educational impact in the areas of identity exploration therefore becomes imperative.

Previous studies have provided substantial evidence about the effectiveness of community collaboration on educational impact and other wide range of outcomes for young adults, families, schools, and communities (Davies et al, 2022; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell & Valentine, 2021; Fapohunda, 2018). The importance of community collaboration for educational impact was heightened by the mid-twentieth century. This entails the capacity of collaborative groups to develop and sustain new organisational structures, processes, and strategies, which have become necessary as we project into the next 20 years of educational change. Therefore, a thorough examination of community/school collaboration in line with school–family–community partnerships has become germane for facilitating positive conditions for identity exploration. Research has shown that broadening the educational change discourse to be inclusive of community partnerships is crucial to identity exploration of young adults (Khawam, DiDona & Hern, 2017).

Research has also shown that community schools provide young adults with equitable learning opportunities, manifested through a strategy that addresses the needs of the whole child. Young adults and families receiving such a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated range of academic, health, and social/emotional services tend to provide supports for improved outcomes for underserved children (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016). In the light of these, the current research study seeks to identify the role(s) young adults play in community collaboration for educational impact that has a bearing on the exploration process of their identity.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does the role(s) young adults play in community collaboration for educational impact have a bearing on the exploration process of their identity?

2. How significant are the conditions influencing young adults' interest and involvement in community collaboration for educational impact that can aid the exploration process of identity?
3. In what ways are young adults involved in community collaboration for educational impact that will positively influence their exploration process of identity formation?

Methodology

Mixed method exploratory sequential design was adopted for the research design. This was necessary to allow the researcher to first gather qualitative data in order to first explore the phenomenon and then subsequently use quantitative data to find the relationship existing between the qualitative data. Community collaboration described as the nature of adults' involvement as defined by their experiences and perspectives, was investigated using research questions, a qualitative mode of enquiry.

The study area was Surulere, Mainland and Apapa local government areas under Lagos State District IV. The area was selected owing to the conglomeration agencies which serves as joint partners in response to education needs of young adults as it relates to identity formation. The population of the study comprised 5 groups which include all Principals/Vice principals; Teachers; Students in all the 48 Junior secondary schools and 43 senior secondary schools of district IV; Parents and Community Development Association (CDA) members. However, the targeted population consists of 82,690 respondents (125 Principals/Vice principals, 2,222 teachers, 80,113 students (District IV,2023); 200 parents and 30 CDA members. The sample size of the study was 520 respondents comprising of 40 principals/vice principals, 50 teachers, 200 students, 200 parents and 30 CDA members. The sample size was arrived at using simple random sampling technique of 'Hat and Drop' to select 10 schools while the sample size of the students was determined using Taro Yamane (1967 statistical model cited by Adam (2020) the CDA members were selected by snow balling.

The research instrument used in accessing the community collaboration on young adults' identity formation include the Collaborative involvement Questionnaire Guide (CIQG); School Participation In-depth Interview (SPII); Parent Questionnaire Guide (PQG); and Community Participation In-Depth Interview. These instruments were used to elicit response from students. In administering the research questionnaire in relation to procedure for collecting the data, the

researcher used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) which was done through online Zoom meeting. This method provided opportunity to interact with the respondents at the same time. The information gained was useful in designing a quantitative research tool that was administered to the students. Also, all interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher and the information that was gathered was used for analysis of the questions. The data management and Analysis were analyzed using acceptable professional standards, the qualitative data analysis was done using Thematic analysis and the quantitative analysis was done with the aid of SPSS version 23. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency count and percentage.

Results

Research Questions 1: To what extent does the role(s) young adults play in community collaboration for educational impact have a bearing on the exploration process of their identity?

Table 1: Young adults' role in community collaboration for educational impact

S/N	Items	A	D	Mean	SD	Total	Remark
1	Community context and social relations allowed for your full participation?	96 51.9%	89 48.1%	2.54	0.72	185 100%	Agree
2	Community collaboration with schools recognized young adults' input and contributions?	106 57.3%	79 42.7%	2.75	0.51	185 100%	Agree
3	School and community collaboration allowed initiative and contributions from young adults?	116 62.7%	69 37.3%	2.91	0.91	185 100%	Agree
4	School environment did not give me the much-needed support to be fully involved?	49 26.5%	136 73.5%	2.24	0.51	185 100%	Disagree
5.	I was totally in charge and worked at my pace?	176 95.1%	9 4.9%	4.11	1.35	185 100%	Agree
Total Mean				2.91			

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2024

Table 1 presents the responses of young adults' role in community collaboration for educational impact and it related to the exploration process of identity. Majority of the respondents agreed to statement 1 given the mean of 2.65. Also, with a mean of 2.56, majority of the respondents agreed that they were fully involved as the collaboration between the schools and communities allowed them freedom to participate on issues bothers them. On whether they struggle with participation and involvement, majority of the respondents did not agree (mean =2.70) to the statement. Lastly, majority of the respondents agreed they were in control as they had free hand to work with a mean of 2.53. Generally, the overall mean for the construct reveals 2.61, and the implication of this is that majority of the respondents agreed to the statement

Research Question 2: Will the significant conditions influence young adults' interest and participation in community collaboration for educational impact that aids the exploration process of identity?

The responses gathered from the issue were analyzed using simple percentages and mean. The mean rating is as follows; 0.1-2.4=Disagree; 2.5-5.0 = Agree.

Table 2: Significance conditions influencing participation in community collaboration

S/N	Items	A	D	Mean	SD	Total	Remark
1	The values of social context that allows for freedom and motivation	145 78.4%	40 21.6%	3.24	0.81	185 100%	Agree
2	Young adults tend to be discouraged when they are not involved in the issues of their lives.	119 64.3%	66 35.7%	3.17	0.17	185 100%	Agree
3	Communities that put up resistance and non-compliance to young adults' participation discourages participation	175 94.5%	10 5.5%	3.48	0.57	185 100%	Agree
4	collaboration and educational impact have a direct relationship to identity exploration.	136 73.5%	49 26.5%	3.24	0.81	185 100%	Agree
Total Mean				3.28			

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2024

Table 2 reveals the responses of respondents' significant contributions influencing participation in community collaboration for maximum educational impact and its bearing on the exploration process of identity formation. Majority of the respondents agreed (mean = 3.24) to the statement that young adults tend to be discouraged when not giving opportunities to be involved. Similarly, given a mean of 3.17, majority of the respondents agreed that nonparticipation and involvement among they youth which gives =3.48 to the statement. Last of all, majority of the respondents agreed given a mean of 3.24 that collaboration is key for explorative identity formation. Overall, the total mean for the construct is 3.28 which reveals that majority of the respondents agreed to the statement.

Research Question 3: Will young adults involved in community collaboration for educational impact positively influence the exploration process of identity formation?

The responses gathered from the issue were analyzed using simple percentages and mean. The mean rating is as follows; 0.1-2.4=Disagree; 2.5-5.0 = Agree.

Table 3: Community collaboration for education impact and its influence on identity exploration process

S/N	Items	A	D	Mean	SD	Total	Remark
1	Exposure to sound education had profound impact on identity-related choices?	96 51.9%	89 48.1%	2.54	0.72	185 100%	Agree
2	Ability to explore identity questions was predicated on intelligent choices from the quality of education received?	106 57.3%	79 42.7%	2.75	0.51	185 100%	Agree
3	Proper structure and capturing of informal sector businesses	116 62.7%	69 37.3%	2.91	0.91	185 100%	Agree
4	Community collaboration with schools has no much impact on young adults' ability to explore identity related questions?	49 26.5%	136 73.5%	2.24	0.51	185 100%	Disagree
Total Mean				2.91			

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2024

Table 3 reveals the responses of respondents on community collaboration for education impact and its influence on identity exploration process. Majority of the respondents agreed with a mean of 2.54 to the statement on exposure to sound education and exploration process of identity formation. Likewise, with a mean of 2.75, majority of the respondents agreed with the statement on ability to explore as predicated on intelligent choices. In the same vein, majority of the respondents agreed with a mean of 2.91 to the statement on the provision of proper structure and capturing of the informal sector. Lastly, majority of the respondents disagreed with a mean of 2.24 to the statement in item 4. In general, the total mean for the construct is 2.91 which reveals that majority of the respondents agreed to the statement.

Qualitative Results Presentation of Interview with Business Owners using Thematic Analysis

Themes associated with community collaboration with young adults' participation elements were established and analyzed. Responses from the principals/vice principals and teachers and members of CDA showed a validation of the findings from the research questions. The findings from transcribed themes were discussed as follows:

Young Adults' role in community collaboration for educational impact

In line with the research questions raised in this study, majority of the respondents highlighted the influence of community context on the desire to collaborate and the importance of cultivating social relations in the community for physical and mental well being as it relates to identity formation. Also, the influence of the network of relationship and its impact on the explorative identity process.

Some of the excerpts from the respondents are as follows:

“By understanding who they are, students can invariably understand how they can participate and contribute to their society fostering a socially supportive environment for the students that was enhancing student achievement” (participant 3)

“That partnering enabled the people involved to achieve something more

than individuals can as collaborative activities make it possible to satisfy the needs of the participants that would not otherwise be met (participant 7)

‘Students who feel the school is not responsive to their needs and who perceive that they have no voice and cannot impact their education become disengaged’ (Participant 5).

The main role of the young adults was as participant rather than as developer. This is consistent with previous research, which found that young adults were most often the partnership initiators, and collaborative activities were developed based on their understanding of their students’ and program’s needs. Further, Ferrer et al (2016) stresses the importance of adult mentors at the school and in the community via strong affiliations with community partner organizations to develop and sustain student involvement and participation. Yet as Biag & Castrechini (2016) observes, those with a voice in educational institutions are often individuals in respected positions of power. Student voice and participation, then, seems contingent on young adults’ support of it, at least to some degree

Significance Conditions Influencing Participation in Community Collaboration

Many young adults were constricted in their participation due to their daily schedules and limited time. Time in the school schedule set aside for partnership development and participation, as well as resources such as money and guidance dedicated to operationalizing collaborative activities, facilitated more engagement in partnering. Overall, the students participated in collaborative activities that were developed by others. There were no resources in place to support student-initiated community involvement, and they had no evident voice in developing the relationships.

Some of the excerpts from the participants are as follows:

“socio-cultural issues in the geographic community influenced the needs of the community members including the young adults themselves and the collaborative activities they identified as needed and important “(Participant 9).

“Many of the young adults had an environment that was conducive to developing an interest in school–community collaboration and partnership development, but it lacked resources to support school–community partnerships” (Participant 12)

The finding is in line with the literature that collaborative activities will be pursued, when conditions conducive to community/school collaboration are pursued. Without conducive conditions, it seems unlikely that young adults will be involved in the process. Authentic collaboration are respectful alliances among educators, families, and community groups, especially in economically and culturally diverse communities.

Community Collaboration for Education Impact and its Influence on Identity Exploration Process

There are increasing opportunities for impactful learning to occur anywhere and anytime through initiatives such as community-based education and other school–community partnerships. Moreover, what is needed for sustained educational impact that foster sound decision as it relates to identity formation is the combined efforts of both the community and the school which are requisite to improving young adults in the exploration process of decision making before committing to identity

Some of the excerpts from the participants are as follows:

“issue that bothers on collaboration and how young adults were ready to engage in community involvement was predicated beliefs, norms and cultural identity which act as resource for identity exploration process” (Participants 4)

“The capacity of collaborative groups to develop and sustain new organisational structures, processes, and strategies, are potent factors in young adults’ exploration process of identity formation” (Participant 16)

“Collaboration between the community and the schools needs to be made for students to develop their abilities in this area, and guidance for effective decision making in their exploration process of identity formation” (Participant 32)

“schools that are successful in engaging students in partnership development build students’ capacity for effective decision and ability to make choices in this area which would be valuable to identity formation (Participant 18)

The findings have shown that community collaboration when properly pursued and where young adults are giving opportunity to be involved in the design, execution and running of the program, do benefit as their ability to be involved set the stage for explorative identity formation.

Discussion of Findings

In this study, the researcher examined the impact of community collaboration on the identity process style. Also, the conditions or factors that motivated the young adults to partner in community collaboration with regards to how it enabled or impeded their participation in collaborative activities. Furthermore, the researcher looked at how students were engaged with collaborative partnership in terms of their awareness and interest in partnering and working with people in the community.

Findings from research question one revealed that young adults understood they were global students and were open to community involvement, and many had a desire to engage in collaborative activities as a result. In all cases, the young adults who were interviewed saw the value in community collaboration in partnerships with schools. It was further revealed that young adults readily identified collaborative activities that directly impacted on the exploration process of their identity especially those that articulated specific benefits for themselves and other students as well as for the school. This finding is consistent with West (2020), who emphasized that involvement arose from young adults' perceptions of challenges or limitations to the resources in the school community and beyond. The findings corroborated the findings of Priyanka, Carr, Gregory and Walton (2019), who showed in their studies the impact of educational impact on identity exploration of university students, who were all engaged in the collaborative process of community and school engagement.

Findings from research question two presents the significant which relates to the conditions influencing young adults' interest and involvement in community collaboration for educational impact that aid the exploration process of identity. It was revealed that sociocultural issues in the geographic community influenced the needs of the community members including the students themselves and the collaborative activities they identified as needed and important. The report further revealed that values, norms and beliefs cultivated in the community have a strong hold on

young adult identity formation. The discussion around the findings clearly indicates that when school partners with community, there is likelihood of positive educational impact on young adults' identity formation.

Finding from research question three on young adults involved in community collaboration for educational impact affirmed this process to have positively influenced their exploration process of identity formation. The qualitative findings revealed was corroborated by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (2022). They affirmed that the socio-cultural environment of young adults' development when properly harnessed can result in positive identity formation.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that community collaboration is key and paramount to identity formation, a psycho-social process involving the dynamic interplay of the factors in the socio-cultural environment. Hence, future leaders, communities, educational agencies and stakeholders would benefit immensely from a research investigation on community collaboration and how young adults can maximize the social capital resources of family, school, religion, and other social networks.

There is a substantial benefit of partnering; however, the consequences of enabling students to develop partnerships may carry additional value. Involvement with community in ways that shape their destinies and those of others has the potential to empower young adults to productively engage in both the community and the broader society as citizens. Isn't that the essential purpose of education? Education is indeed too important to be left entirely in the hands of educators in school.

Recommendations

1. School personnel need to foster an understanding among young adults-and possibly their colleagues-that they should be involved in community collaboration at their schools. School administrators, principals/vice principals, teachers, parents, family members, and community leaders can collectively work to broaden young adults' roles beyond that of participant by engaging them in the collaboration development phase and involving them in decisions around the relationships to be developed.

2. The need to create a committee, similar to an action team that includes students in a decision-making capacity as well as faculty, parents, or community members. The committee can be extended to include members of the student body, beyond those on the student council, who are interested in participating in partnership development.
3. Accessible resources such as time, money, and guidance in the school community should be made available as powerful tool that set the stage for collaboration. These resources can influence whether community involvement will be sought and what types of collaborative activities will be pursued.

References

- Beck, L. G. (2021). Metaphors of educational community: an analysis of the images that reflect and influence scholarship and practice. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1),13–45.
- Biag, M., & Castrechini, S. (2016). Coordinated strategies to help the whole child: examining the contributions of full-service community schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 21(3), 157-175
- Bland, D., & Alweh, B. (2017). Students as researchers: engaging students’ voices in PAR. *Educational Action Research*, 15(3), 337–349.
- Bronstein, L.R., & Mason, S.E. (2018). *School-linked services: Promoting equity for children, families, and communities*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Clancy, S. M., & Dollinger, S. J. (2022). Identity, self, and personality: i. identity status and the five-factor model of personality. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 3, 227-245.
- Côté, J. E., & Levine, C. G. (2022). *Identity formation, agency, and culture: A social psychological synthesis*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Davies, D., Burch, P., & Johnson, V. R. (2022). Policies to increase family–community involvement. *Equity and Choice*, 8(3)
- Fapohunda, Tinuke. M. (2018). *Towards Effective Team Building in the Workplace*. International

- Journal of Education and Research. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258344173_Towards_Effective_Team_Building_in_the_Workplace
- Fehrer, K., & Leos-Urbel, J. (2016). We're one team: examining community school implementation strategies in oakland. *Education Sciences*, 6(26), 1-24
- Grotevant, H. D. (2017). Toward a process model of identity formation. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2, 203–222
- Heers, M., Van Klaveren, C., Groot, W., Maassen van den Brink, H. (2016). Community schools: what we know and what we need to know. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4)
- Khawam, A., DiDona, T., & S. Hern, B. (2017). Effectiveness of teamwork in the workplace. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)*, 32(3), 267–286. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://gssrr.org/index.php/JournalOfBasicAndApplied/article/view/7134>
- Priyanka B. Carr, Gregory M. Walton. (2019). Cues of working together fuel intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Volume 53
- Scribner, J., Cockrell, D., Cockrell, K., & Valentine, J. (2021). Creating professional communities in schools through organizational learning: An evaluation of a school improvement process. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1), 130-160.
- Welch, M. (2022). Collaboration: Staying on the bandwagon. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(1), 26-37.
- West, J. F. (2020). Educational collaboration in the restructuring of schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 1, 23-40.