

Involving Community Participation in the Control of Covid -19 Pandemic in Schools in Nigeria

Benignus C. Nwankwo, Stanley U. Nnorom, Agogbua Victor Ugochukwu,
Anyanwu Jude Azubuike

Abstract— The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, and present time has widened the gaps in the education industry across the globe. The pandemic has caused disruptions in the academic activities of schools in many countries of the world. Most Nigerian students and other African countries were more disadvantaged because most educational institutions in Nigeria still follow the traditional set-up of face-to-face lectures in normal classroom settings. Its impact on the entire humanity is unprecedented trauma. The novel COVID-19 has emerged to break and collapse the walls that surround our education sector and it is imperative for all stakeholders in education industry particularly teachers and students. COVID-19 caused major adjustments to teaching environments, educational strategies and class delivery, with a significant impact on students' learning experience. As the virus continues to spread from person to persons in communities and frenzied the world, the need for an effective real-time surveillance system becomes paramount. There is need to involve community participation in controlling the unexpected virus in schools in Nigeria. Community should be part of the response to prevent, limit or slow the spread of the virus and curtail its impact. Community participation is one of the mechanisms that will empower people to take part in controlling the pandemic in educational system.

Index Terms— Covid-19, Community participation, Control of covid-19 pandemic, Schools response.

I. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is considered this century's greatest global health problem. Community should be part of the response to prevent, limit or slow the spread of the virus and curtail its impact. Compared to the education system, the public health system has a smaller presence. Community participation is considered necessary to get community support for educational planning and development (Omenuko, 2016). Community participation refers to peoples' engagement in activities within the educational system. The term "participation" can be interpreted in various ways, depending on the context (Nwankwo et al, 2020). In other definition Participation is concerned with human development and increases people's sense of control over

issues which affect their lives, helps them to learn how to plan and implement and, on a broader front, prepares them for participation at regional or even national level. Community participation has received increased attention across the world in recent years. CP in education is an important means of improving educational relevancy, quality and access to increase resources, improve accountability of schools to the community they serve.

It plays an essential and long-standing role in promoting quality of life. A community is a group of people that interact and support each other, and are bound by shared experiences or characteristics, a sense of belonging, and often by their physical proximity (Olagbaju, et al, 2019). A community inherently consists of a group of people. It cannot be established by a sole individual. Each individual will understand information in relation to themselves, so it is important to tailor messages to target groups for each communication.

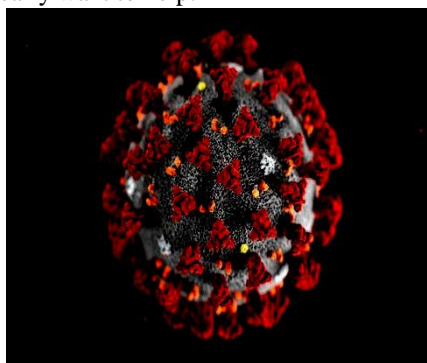
Community participation is a concept that attempts to bring different stakeholders together for problem solving and decision making (Okenwa et al, 2020). Community participation in controlling covid-19 and educational development processes can support and uphold local culture, tradition, knowledge and skill, and create pride in community heritage (Ikwu et al, 2020). Community participation is one of the mechanisms that will empower people to take part in controlling the pandemic in educational system. It will be launched as a key concept of development. Increase participation is a means to achieve development to resolve the tensions of the pandemic in educational system (Okenwa et al, 2020).

Stone, et al, (2018) emphasized on the need for standard co-operation between community and school in enlighten the students about the virus. Community transmission is evidenced by the inability to relate confirmed cases through chains of transmission for a large number of cases, or by increasing positive tests through sentinel samples (routine systematic testing of respiratory samples from established laboratories). Community engagement for health is "a process of developing relationships that enable people of a community and organizations to work together to address health-related issues and promote well-being to achieve positive health impact and outcomes" (world Health Organization, 2020).

Community engagement serves to maximize the effectiveness of COVID-19 preparedness and response strategies and prevent transmission at school and the community level. By engaging communities in the

Benignus C. Nwankwo, Department of Educational Foundations
Nnamdi Azikiwe University
Stanley U. Nnorom, Department of Educational management & policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Agogbua Victor Ugochukwu, Department of Educational management & policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Anyanwu Jude Azubuike, Department of Educational management & policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

preparedness and response of COVID-19, the health sector can avoid the emergence of cases that would worsen the pandemic. It can also give the health sector more time to prepare to respond in realistic, relevant and appropriate ways to the needs and challenges of every population group. Further, community engagement can serve to address and prevent health and gender inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nwawudu et al, 2020). Community participation is essential in the collective response to corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19), from compliance with lockdown, to the steps that need to be taken as countries ease restrictions, to community support through volunteering. Communities clearly want to help.



Covid-19 diagram

The Role of Schools in Responding to COVID-19 and other threats

The school systems should be part of the response to prevent, limit or slow the spread of the virus and curtail its impact. The education system has a large institutional base that links it to the community, especially through the parent body. Schools are the primary institutional form of government with a physical presence and relationship through parenthood with a significant proportion of adults in the population. Information and knowledge can be communicated with learners and their parents about potential health threats to people and the community at large. The range of ways in which schools might support a campaign to limit the impact of a virus-like covid-19 requires investigation into processes that might be undertaken and the materials and instruments these would need. For this reason, closer collaboration between the community, schools, and health sectors should prove fruitful and joint interaction between Communities, Schools, Health and other relevant government departments would be needed to explore the potential for collaboration (Ikwu et al, 2020). WHO (2020) sets out a basic framework or model for a comprehensive outbreak response at an individual country level. This model is a standardized basis for managing an epidemic in every country and is necessary for international cooperation. The framework provides a starting point for identifying areas of outbreak response in which communities, Health, and educational institutions can play a role.

II. CHANNELS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTROL OF COVID -19 PANDEMIC IN SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA



Structured to stimulate and support households in communities to participate in teaching and control of covid-19 in primary health care services through various delivery platforms, namely, the facility, outreaches, and school services.

1. Preferred communication channels.

Preferences for channels and trusted sources will vary between individuals and groups, as will levels of access to radios, mobile phones, Smartphone and the internet. For example, some women may not be able to access the household phone, and some elderly people will not have access to the internet or may be unsure how to use it. Consider the barriers to using each channel for different groups and use a mix of channels for best effect.

2. Literacy and understanding.

Information should be presented in the most accessible format and language possible, adapted to literacy levels within each group. It should also be adapted for those who are visually or aurally impaired. For example, consider using pictures and simulated dialogues, and radio.

3. Reaching everyone.

Engage all groups within a community, in environments where each would feel comfortable to speak up. When working with refugees and IDPs, communicate with both host and displaced communities.

4. Influencers and local capacities.

Recognize who has power and influence in communities, networks, grassroots, women's rights, youth groups or local organizations that already exist. Work with them to pass on information, as people are more likely to follow the example of leaders and trusted groups embedded in their community. Work with both men and women influencers. The internet has the potential to allow easy exchanges between teams and communities, and between community members themselves. Consider supporting connectivity and ensuring that the data rights of individuals are respected and increasing access for groups without.

Community engagement is also fundamental to our advocacy efforts, which serve to amplify communities' voices. Advocacy should be based on what we are hearing from communities, particularly the more vulnerable and marginalized groups that may be disproportionately affected by measures to minimize transmission, such as movement restrictions and isolation procedures. Advocacy can

contribute to ensuring continuity of community engagement. Depending on the context, consider developing advocacy strategies that include issues such as digital rights or discrimination against NGOs and civil society. These could be key to guaranteeing people's access to information and maintaining the humanitarian space. Education Sector Development Implementation Manual (MOE, 1998: 43) states: Community participation is one of the strategies that should be used to achieve the goals. The participation of the community may take place in different forms. These ranges from assisting in the increase of school enrollment by encouraging their members to send their children to school to contribute for provision, maintenance and management of schools. normally it is necessary to give areal role to the parents and community in the day- today management of school. The above statement shows that attainment of educational goal is impossible without the active participation of the community in school management. The better the participation of the community in school management, the better it will contribute to increase enrollment reduce dropout improve, equality of education etc. The success of these efforts, therefore, depends on the strength of managerial and institutional capacity throughout the education system. Effective school requires effective school management. Effective school management, in turn require well- developed intermediary organizations that provide leadership and resources schools need to translate polices into action (Nwankwo et al, 2020) A key indicator of an effectively managed school is the management of the school being seen as shared responsibility of the community with the life of the school. Schools therefore need to create management systems that empower the community with the life of the school to achieve the school's goal. Governments should work on building a culture of solidarity, trust, and kindness. Rather than lay down unexplained or draconian restrictions, relevant authorities should provide empowerment and guidance to ensure that those within the community can act without fear of losing their livelihoods, can put food on their tables, and can look out for their neighbors' well-being.

The following are steps that governments can take to ensure community participation and guarantee collective responsibility in their COVID-19 pandemic responses. These guidelines were implemented in countries that have successfully handled their COVID-19 outbreaks. According to Livingston (2018), societal and governmental expectations have placed substantial challenges on educators to adapt their teaching outside of their personal teaching philosophy in order to meet the needs of a diverse student population. These challenges were further exacerbated by COVID-19 which required teachers to radically adjust their teaching environment, educational strategies, and class delivery, with a subsequent, significant effect on the students' learning experience.

III. SUGGESTIONS

1. Government should immediately set up and fund specific community engagement taskforces to ensure that community voice is incorporated into the pandemic

response.

2. Those of us working to address COVID-19 in the health and social care sectors and beyond should look to existing community groups and networks to build coproduction. Engagement with such groups is needed to include their voices in local, regional, or national responses to the pandemic. How can we ensure that the most marginalized are represented? How can we ensure front-line providers have a chance to feed into service improvements when they are already working long hours with little respite?
3. Policy makers working on the COVID-19 response should ensure citizens understand that their voices are being heard. Showing how policy responses or local actions address specific concerns will help communities believe that their wellbeing is valued and their needs addressed, which in turn will help increase compliance with restrictions and encourage sharing of creative solutions. Examples of responses to citizens' concerns have included introducing income guarantees for the self-employed; implementing road closures and widening to allow safer cycling and walking; and policy changes on home use of abortion medication to reduce risk of infection from attending clinics.
4. Institutional cultures that support coproduction must be created in political and health systems. We would argue that mechanisms to ensure citizen participation are essential for high-quality, inclusive disaster response and preparedness, and these can be called upon again in future emergencies.
5. All societies have community groups that can co-create better pandemic response and health services and politicians must be supported to incorporate these voices. Such public participation will reveal policy gaps and the potential negative consequences of any response—and identify ways to address these together. Community participation holds the promise of reducing immediate damage from the COVID-19 pandemic and, crucially, of building future resilience.

IV. CONCLUSION

Reflecting on covid-19 incident, we have been able to explore the important of community involvement and participation in curbing COVID-19 pandemic in schools in Nigeria and beyond. Through continuous effort, we will continue to develop to ensure that the high spread of the pandemic is controlled or minimize to the lowest level.

REFERENCES

- [1] Benignus C. Nwankwo and Stanley U. Nnorom (2020) [School Community Relationship: Propulsion for Quality Assurance Practices in Secondary School in Nigeria](#). *European Journal of Education Studies*. Vol.7 (8) 102-116.
- [2] Collaço, C. M. (2017). Increasing student engagement in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 17, (4), 40-47.
- [3] COVID-19 Pandemic Contact Tracing Using Mobile Phone. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 16(36), 1.
- [4] Ikwu AN, Igwe DC, Nwawudu SE, Adebayo AS. The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Africa's Healthcare System and Psychosocial Life. *Eur J Med & Nat studies*, 2020; 4(2): 57-6.

- [5] Livingston, K. (2018). Multiple influences on teachers in changing environments. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 41, (2), 135-137.
- [6] Nwawudu.E, Ikwu.A.,Ikwu.U., Oparah.N.,Nnorom.S. (2020). Proposed Design of a Real-Time
- [7] Okenwa, G.N., & Igbo, R. O. (2014) Extent of Community Participation in the Provision of School Plant in the Administration of Public Secondary Schools. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Education*, vol.4 (2), 74.
- [8] Olagbaju, O. O., & Nnorom, S. T. (2019). Effects of class size and peer influence on senior secondary students' achievement. *Journal of Research in Education, Science and Technology*, 4(2), 61-69.
- [9] Omenuko, P. (2016) Community and School Relations. *Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 7 (5) 6-18.
- [10] Stone, S., & Loga, N.A. (2018). Exploring students' use of the social networking site WhatsApp to foster connectedness in the online learning experience. *Irish Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning*, 3, (1), 44-57.
- [11] World Health Organization (2020). Global status report on preventing violence against children. Geneva: [in press].