

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGING EDUCATIONAL CRISIS:A PANACEA FOR SCHOOLS GROWTH

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently on healing mission after undergoing different assaults on her social, economic and political sovereignty since independence. Although, with its youth friendly policies and programs, the nation stands at risk if adequate attention is not given to the most productive segment of the populace, expected at the secondary level of education. The paper proposed community involvement in managing educational crisis: a panacea for schools' growth. It discussed in sequences the concept of community, community involvement in crisis management, and models in view of scholarly works. The paper suggested among others; scanning the environment, establishment of framework for managing crisis in school activities, inculcation of multiple agencies with multi-disciplinary expertise and capacities to provide digestible information and support for leadership decision making on crisis management, develop crisis communication strategy for social media, commitment of resources on realistic events to avoid and overcome challenges, resources for training and a plan to address events involving multiple causalities.

Keywords: Community, community involvement, crisis, crisis management, secondary schools

Introduction

Nigeria's population is estimated to have passed 200 million people in 2019, making it the most populous country in Africa and seventh most populous in the world. The population is growing at an annual average of 2.7%, which is faster than the continental average, bringing with it pressure on the resources available for public programmes. More

than half of the population is estimated to be eligible for education, and 4 in every 10 people in the country are eligible for basic and senior secondary education. In the past decade, the school age population increased by 23 million with the government having to create structures to accommodate existing requirements, as well as the additional children and youth. The implication of not meeting this demand is the loss of the opportunity to equip children and youth with functional literacy and the skills needed for gainful employment. This demonstrates the immense pressure this sector alone exerts on public resources (Education sector, 2021).

Although education is on concurrent list and the constitution provide that expenditure is a sole responsibility of the government. It is hitherto that education holds the key to social inclusion and a necessary condition for advancing the quality of life and freedom (Saidu et al., 2024). In spite of the opportunities fostered by the technology era, there is increase in cases of behavioral disorder as well as malfunctioning of the education sector (Abdulaziz et al., 2022 Okafor, 2020). Poverty in recent studies have been adduced to heighten insecurities in various dimension as a contributory factor to youth restlessness, unemployment, corruptions, and destructive behaviors. It has challenged leaders in disposition to leadership qualities and their alignment with global standard through renewal of educational system.

More so, the beginning of this century had reiterated commitments of government, non-government organizations, agencies and corporate individual bodies to serve humanity through various initiatives. These acts had proven that that no single entity has all the resources as either public or private to promote human existence in its quality and quantity. It is in the spirit of making the world a safer abode to live that leaders of various nations put in place, community involvement as strategies to overcome challenges of sorts (Adekola & Uzoagu, 2022). Surprisingly, man-made and natural events on a daily basis continue to emerge series of crisis to be part of human life, making education a democratic right impossible. It is obvious that managing crisis in any system has come with a huge cost, disproving the believe that public service delivery should be left alone as responsibility of the government. It is therefore significant as a core value of any administration particularly in schools where the major objective is the development of cognitive, psycho-motive and affective domains of individuals, to involve communities in the affairs of their children in a formal way.

Crisis is a multidimensional concept and an integral part of emergencies, disaster and catastrophe. This is a situation arising from many unplanned misinformed, ill-timed situations around socioeconomic and political environment. A state of emotional turmoil characterized with contents of threats, uncertainty and sense of urgency with unpredictable consequences (Linnel, 2023). Peltola et al. (2024) classified crisis into three levels; organizational level crises which threaten the whole school and its staff directly and immediately; community level of crises which are chronic environmental stressors that evolve over a longer period of time and individual level crises such as difficulties within a family or traumatizing event. Crisis awake humans' negligence and generate new models to overcome future occurrence.

Nigeria is currently undergoing a serious stage of healing since 2020 aftermath of COVID 19 saga which has negative impact on the nation's socio economic and political lives. In line with the renewed hope agenda of the present administration in Nigeria, the significance of education immersed the potent of secondary schools which has relative larger

populations and the link to future of young and promising adults' life transition to higher levels. With the youth friendly programme fostered by the present administration at all levels, the secondary school age with relatively large segment of productive group stands at risk if not given the decisive attention. Hopefully, the administration efforts to redefine the scope of education impact on the enabling youth expected to take up leadership position as future managers of societal institutions and implementer of government policies is imminent on community involvement as best option for managing crisis in secondary schools to avert incessant crisis within and among social groups in the nation.

Concept of Community

The idea of a community by nature is believed to stem from the basic unit of socialization. It involves father, mother and children which later extends to nuclear members such as uncles, aunties, cousins, niece, nephew and neighbors. In certain circumstance, community which may not necessarily be related by blood but as a body that shared perspectives, history, geographical entity, profession, and are willing to advance the course of their relationship. Such existence is premised on conformity to social understanding in ethics, norms and value system. According to Organization for Economic and Community Development (2020) community implies a legitimate source of moral authority in which government is justified in promoting particular ways of life and its social consequences. Linnel (2023) summarized the term community as an established or pre-existing network in terms of organizations, workplaces, families, associations and congregations where people are willing and ready to participate in a collective effort to achieve a common goal. Scholars such as Amopho (2020) and Ramsey Soroghaye (2021) noted that an ideal community ought to be conscious and considerate of socioeconomic and political needs of its members. Therefore, the word community is associated with terms such as self-confidence, self-respect and personal independence as well as to safeguard human rights and achieve social equality through community capacity building, community vitality, empowerment, rural development.

Community Involvement defined

The spirit of community involvement and participation in Nigeria is an age long exercises tied to collective behavior rooted in the philosophy of the people, building a democratic communal life prior to colonial era. Such principles preserve the diversity and fundamental rights of all community members to participate on issues of concern; socioeconomic and political. In spite of the emancipation of formal education by colonial masters, the community involvement during and after the period played significant role in the structural development of Nigeria, despite exploitation expended by the former on Nigeria resources (Mbamalu et al., 2021; Maranzu et al., 2019). Ofangbonmu et al. (2024) defined community involvement as crisis management and an essential component of school administration which ensures the safety and continuity of education during unforeseen events. He stated that effective crisis planning, clear communication, staff training, collaboration with external agencies, and strong leadership are critical strategies for managing crises in schools

Previous studies investigated shown that community involvement is enabled by factors such as; government recognition, increased democratization and cohesive community

structures (Adekola et al., 2022; Aruma et al., 2018). Rayeni et al (2021) added that involving community in managing crisis create safe, resistant and resilient societies with strong economies and good quality of life. It is significance to involve communities in managing crisis in schools due to their understanding of environment. Adekola et al. (2022) stated that community involvement is the fosters of development in a holistic approach grounded in the principle of empowerment, social inclusion, human rights, justice, self-determination and collective actions. The scholars pointed out the use of traditional, conventional and participatory approaches could have been productive, if not in the wrong usage.

Abbas (2022) expressed that reasons for community involvement is thein-depth understanding of locality and its problems to ensure ownership at local level and sustainability of initiatives; accountability to stakeholders' increases quality; mutually explicit relation of parents maximize learning; an exercise of democratic rights; and community relation for provisions of relevant resources. These are distinguished by level of participation such as; marginal, where community has little influence in resource control and impact; participation increases to a wider level but externally controlled; while structural, makes direct impact in decision making and implementation process. These levels are classified based on engagement, activities that can be collaborative, manipulative and tokenism.

Managing crisis by involving community is a system that considers the local people or the inhabitant as crucial and potential resources whose participation and cooperation are a guarantee rather than an obstacle of sustainability. Therefore, if this management method is formulated and implemented based on scientific principles and mutual respect and trust, it will be a suitable lever to ensure the reduction of damages caused by disasters (Rayeni et al., 2021).In view of this,Oyalowo (2021) opined that the formation of community involvement plunged into associations are backed up by lawsto carry out responsibilities such as promote self-help efforts within the community; raise funds for the implementation of community projects and activities;

Defining Crisis Management

The beginning of this century calls for the attention of world leaders particularly in African continent to myriads of crisis that its management later metamorphosed into Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. The goals are central to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, among other. These variables are the main challenges that confront rural communities in third world countries where abundant resources are socio economically derived for the development of urban centres hence, the need for crisis management and the essence of community involvement as a strategy for achievement. (Meta etal., 2023).

The term crisis according to Ndungu et al. (2022) is a significant disruption to the normal activities of an organization leading to extensive media coverage and public scrutiny. Peltola et al. (2024) viewed crisis as sudden event or set of circumstances that could significantly affect an organizations' ability to carry out its' business. Also, Canyon (2020) defined crisis as an uncertain situation possessing latent risks and opportunities that must be resolved within a certain time-frame. Samawi (2020) described crisis as a period of unstable

condition, with a clear indication of a defect existing in a society, awaiting a critical change which is pain or dysfunction. He expressed that the level of severity irrespective brings the up the negligence of humans to knowledge. A state of emotional turmoil characterized with suddenness, failure of the normal method of coping; short duration and have potentials to produce self-destruction behaviour. Thus, crisis can be classified as development, situational, existential, and environmental.

Crises may damage organizations' reputation, environment, health, safety or well-being. The fundamental characteristic of crises is that they are unpredictable. Generally, crisis is subjective to the criteria of threat, uncertainty and urgency caused by inability to understand and interpret the situation of crisis with implication on the organization, personnel and the environment as a fundamental and difficult task of management which leads to wastage in resources. Linnel (2023) pointed that maintaining a sense of control, assessing needs, giving support, reducing lethality, and linking others to helpful resources are main goals to managing crisis. Crisis management is regarded according to Samawi (2020) as an independent science, using scientific methods to restore society to its natural balance, once the discovery of overlapping variable by adapting to changes, in all fields of humanities. Crisis management reveals many angles and stages to issues of conflict, distinguished by pre crisis, crisis and post crisis periods. Conflict as a subset of crisis could be functional and dysfunctional depending on the management of the opportunities imbibed by the social circle within the environment (Abdulaziz et al., 2020).

Ofangbomu et al. (2024) disclosed that crisis management is a coordinated efforts strategically designed to prepare for respond to and recover from critical incidents that can disrupt normal school activities. Samawi (2020) asserted that managing crisis require special skills, talents and natural readiness in character from school personnel special trained to confront possibilities in unwanted situations. He believed that managing crisis in an education system is an unceasing administrative process of predicting crisis, keeping an eye on both internal and external source of the variable, exploit the accessible resources and capabilities to mitigate at the greatest degree of effective and professionalism, with the least damage on the environment, in a minimal cost to return to normalcy while studying the cause for future prevention.

Peltola et al. (2024) opined that crisis management is a special type of change management, where change is unexpected, the size of an incident is great, and the events, which may be critical in terms of life-and-death, occurred and responded to within a short time frame. Samawi (2020) explained that crisis management refer to as a special management process that will produce a strategic response, to crisis situations, through a group of pee-selected and well-trained managers, who use special skills and procedures to avoid or reduce losses. Among the issues that have been considered in community-based crisis management are empowering local people and groups, recognizing regional disasters, planning to eliminate potential risks, raising the awareness and preparedness of local communities in the face of emergencies, and similar measures that are accomplished by public participation

Models of Crisis Management in the School

Linnel (2023) Model

In Linnel (2023) crisis management becomes significant where distinct experiences differ among the social impact of catastrophe, emergencies and disaster. The five stages of crisis management are as follow (Samawi, 2020; USAID, 2020; Alkalawi et al., 2024).

The first stage: It is the stage of birth and emergence of the crisis, and it needs the expertise of the decision maker to get to know the crisis and find solutions to it.

The second stage: The stage of expansion and growth of the crisis: a stage that begins when the decision maker fails to face the crisis and includes the presence of internal and external nutrients that increase the strength of the crisis.

The third stage: The summit stage of the maturity of the crisis: This stage is rare but it is increasingly underestimated and inexperienced, as the crisis becomes highly destructive.

The fourth stage: the decline and shrinkage stage: It is not a final stage, but within the procedures followed the crisis begins with regression and contraction.

Fifth stage: the disappearance of the crisis: the crisis loses all manifestations of strength and momentum, begins to fade, and society begins to recover.

Crises in Secondary Schools as Highlighted by Scholars

Schools as an organization different from other organizations because of the large number of novices, or students: individuals with limited ability to ensure their own safety. Peltola et al. (2024) defined school as a micro systems responsible for supporting students learning by creating a safe and secure environment for all personnel. Secondary school education provides opportunities to acquire more knowledge, exposure to enhance productive segment of adult life towards contributing into national development for any primary school leavers. The secondary education starts within the age of 11 years to 18 years from junior secondary to senior secondary level with its stated objectives (Amopho, 2020).

Crisis in schools is envisaged in areas where leaders are expected to make crucial decisions in shortage of resources, untimely information, poor communication among others that can lead to loss and wastage in achievement of objectives. Crisis in schools in recent cases produce traumatic events that are accompany with grief and pity. For instance, Okafor (2020) revealed that low self-esteem and the need to cope with academic challenges were the causes of drug abuse among students of university of Ilorin. Ofangbonmu et al. (2024) revealed that schools are vulnerable to a wide array of potential disruptions, including natural disasters, public health emergencies, security threats, and technological failures. These crises can severely impact school operations, interrupt the educational process, and pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and the broader school community.

Al Kalkawi et al. (2022) discovered that crisis management is characterized by lack of clarity and difficulty in estimating its impact especially in areas of decision-making comprising speed and accuracy that makes it difficult. Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2023) hinted that crisis in relation to educational sector is an intrusive and painful experience that cause unexpected and fundamental disruptions to school functioning with potentially high consequences for the organization, relevant stakeholders, and reputation. Ndungu et al. (2024) raised crisis issues on fire incidents, students' welfare, bullying, student unrest, among other emergencies in public secondary schools in Nairobi.

Deviva (2024) asserts that school effectiveness is achieved when there is safe, respective, nourishing and intellectually stimulating environment. The study indicated that school effectiveness decline when poor leadership skills of administrators are poor to influence teaching and learning, preparation, and students' achievement. This is opined on the notion that school effectiveness is attainable with good crisis management skills and leadership practices. Ofangbonmu et al. (2024) opined that failure of schools to prepare ahead of crisis face consequential losses, damages and longer recovery time.

OECD (2020) supported that social media is revolutionizing the communication channel with relative low cost and high efficacy, yet challenged by issues of security of information, question of liability, multiplicity of players, confidentiality, expectation of population, generation of information among others. Bradshaw et al. (2023) in their findings emphasizes the importance of regular training for school personnel beyond selection of members as precursor to violence in crisis management. The study found that social media plays a crucial role in shaping first perceptions of news, as a significant proportion of the public can get the news first through social media before it is disseminated by traditional media outlets.

Community Involvement in Managing Crisis in Public Secondary Schools

Linnel (2023) recalled that community is complex and not often united. He explained that one community might contain another with individuals serving as members of several communities due to factors such as location, occupation, religion affiliation, economic status and recreational status. Community becomes dynamic once connected with diverse entities beyond jurisdictional boundaries which reflect needs, priorities and economic interest in the purpose of collaboration. A good example is school which has a formal entity in operation. The school community involvement is a crucially designed relation between the school and the host community. It promotes understanding and increase mutual trust to sustain achievement of goals of the school.

The school is a second home to the students and a work place to staff, therefore requires, a supportive hand from the community as external environment as a social system. Alkalkawi (2022) found out that principals' ability to extrapolate and predict crisis ahead using requisite expertise of teachers based on local knowledge of the environment is significant to successful management of situations in schools. The role of community in school is simply a planned partnership for service delivery. Such involvement is a change process facilitated to encourage, empower and make use of expertise, knowledge, understanding and provisions of relevant values both in kind and cash towards ideas of development. Rayeni et al. (2021) hinted that community-based crisis management is designed to involve all segments of society and has a positive effect on reducing vulnerability and thus increasing resilience. According to the results of the study's findings, community-based crisis management and strategies that would lead to reduction in psychological and social problems of societies. That means the main purpose of community-based crisis management is to involve local and indigenous forces in the processes of planning, policy making, coordination, control, and organization of the crisis management with the guidance of the government.

USAID (2020) affirmed the most successful partnership include community membership leadership and participation in all aspect of initiatives which women and young people are key values and are oftencounted in assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation. Recent studies support school community involvementin building the potentials of the young minds in recognition of the community value system, strengthening the pact of social mobilization on disadvantage groups, sustaining the policies and programmes of democratic ethos in the system through mutual understanding, human and material support. (OECD, 2020; Deliva et al., 2024, Nwafor et al., 2024).

Community involvement could be in form of Parent Teacher Association (PTA), School Based Management Committee (SBMC), market women and Community Youths. Ozoemema (2021) recalled SBMC as an innovative strategy to capture communities attention and resilience in building a quality educational service delivery. The guiding principles according to the scholar are all participants should have the required skills and understanding for SBMC programme, a well-designed scope and strength of the programme, a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of each structure, promotion and translation of school plans into tangible improvements, improving finance and other resources for school achievements, establish a sound procedure for transparency and accountability. Although the study revealed that environmental factors may differs such as social status, effective provision; availability and utilization of resources is guaranteed in a well-planned SBMC.

Saidu et al. (2024) described that one of the school management task is to involve community of the school in decision making. The study observed that leadership of schools were unwilling to integrate parents into decision making for reasons of; low level of education and poor attitudes to teachers. USAID (2020) in the report on community engagement discovered that communities are involvement with secondary schools in areas such as; provisions of teachers, security, instructional and infrastructural materials, access and quality, promotion of gender equity, schools oversight. It is through this that the report pointed out eight principles of effective community engagements as follows:establishment and maintenance of trust; education mustbe community driven in respect for culture and aspirations;partnerships to increase educational access and quality are inclusive;cooperation of local government for enhancement and sustainability of programs; equability between the parties; capacity building programmes to enhance community responsibility; flexible approach allows adaptation to local context; genuine community ownership requires long time commitments.

Onyekwelu (2018) described community involvement as a veritable approach using local resources to solve problems confronting people with a common felt need in an existing community. Bappi et al. (2018) disclosed that low community participation was often caused by religious, economic, political ideologies, cultural belief. Other factors according to the scholars which may hinder the school-community relations include: encroachment, discrimination, politics, land disputes and in differences to local matters.Rayeni et al. (2024) stated that in the community-based crisis management system, local people are considered a potential source whose participation and cooperation are a guarantee of sustainability rather than an obstacle to it.

Conclusion

Community involvement is a strategic means of fostering developmental goals in any nations. An in-depth analysis of crisis is a social phenomenon instigated by illogical and nonstrategic planning circumstanced through social cultural factors and biased feelings in response to late detection. These may be due to false alarm or loss of credibility sidelining timely dissemination of information without consideration for effective line of communication. Aside the fact that communities are social entity, the presence of expertise in local knowledge, values and skills present an avenue for educational stakeholders in schools to share responsibilities by tapping from such resources in building a robust youth development programme. The school through relevant stakeholders' decisive steps toward increased awareness within and outside the environment promise safety amidst eventualities now or in future. It is stated that in the community-based crisis management system, local people are considered a potential source whose participation and cooperation are a guarantee of sustainability rather than an obstacle to it.

Consequently, if this management approach is developed and implemented based on scientific principles and mutual respect and trust, it will be a suitable lever to ensure the reduction of damages caused by disasters and lead to positive consequences such as reducing risks, making the community resilient, eliminating shortcomings of responsible organizations. These avail situational theory to focus on type, environment, relevant stakeholders, communication strategy and subjects involved in crisis to note its antecedents and provide solutions. Crisis is not limited to nature, geographical, social, economic, technological entity but can be mitigated by leadership practices not only in secondary schools but at all levels of human habitat.

Suggestions

- a. There should be environmental scanning to understand the social context of the community; relevant stakeholders and value system.
- b. The government should establish framework for managing crisis in school activities.
- c. The government should try to inculcate multiple agencies with multi-disciplinary expertise and capacities to provide digestible information and support for leadership decision making on crisis Management.
- d. There should be develop crisis communication strategy for social media.
- e. There should be commitment of resources on realistic events to avoid and overcome challenges of sorts.
- f. There should be need for risk assessment, training of resources and a plan to address events involving multiple causalities.
- g. The government should integrate technology by investing in crisis management communication systems.

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