

Community-Based Learning (CBL): A Solution to Managing Learning during COVID-19

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Abstract: Community-based learning is a high impact practice which can improve student retention and engagement, and help students better absorb, retain, and transfer knowledge. This paper contains suggestions for working with community partners to offer students an authentic learning experience. Community partners or facilitators present to students with a real-life problem, a relevant question, or a research area related to the course curriculum. Over the duration of the learning period, students apply what they are studying in the curriculum to analyze the problem, reflect on what they are learning, and provide potential solutions to the community partner's problem or need.

There are many good reasons for taking the time to offer this type of learning and especially at this time during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Working with a community partner has the benefit of bringing students into meaningful contact with future employers, customers, clients, and colleagues. Students experience higher levels of engagement and take a deeper approach to learning when they are able to apply what they are studying to address a real-world problem. They are better able to apply theory to the specific project and deeper understanding of the subject matter and relate it to the real world experiences. Students can improve on their critical thinking, problem solving, presentation, analytical, team work, and interpersonal skills. They can experience what it is like to work on real problems relevant to their discipline, and reflect on that learning in a safe and supporting environment.

In the current situation when students are at home given the effect of COVID-19, there are several problems facing them ranging from sexual abuse, teenage pregnancies, drug and substance abuse to anxiety and mental health problems among others. Efforts to keep students productively engaged is of essence at this point in time. The paper seeks to address the most productive way in which students could be engaged within their own communities or networked to share knowledge and intern would productively engage teachers, parents and other volunteers in working with students. This concept will help address the challenge of idleness among students. There is a higher risk among learners of contracting the disease at the moment for most of them are not engaged. The paper explores more organized and productive way of engaging students in the context of COVID-19 pandemic using a multi-agency approach. The paper has illustrated a simple methodology of implementing the programme and ensuring that learners remain safe and healthy. The paper explores ways in which all students can immerse into deep learning for life-long learning and engagement. It is evident that just a small percentage of learners are able to access online lessons but through the proposed approach, all learners including those from very remote areas would be engaged in learning.

"In my community experience, I went from learning what something is, to applying it to real life. I learned why I need to know the things that I learned in math class. I had a chance to work with some neat people who let me try out things for myself. The mentor really seemed to care about me as a person, and I had fun."

—A Student

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of democracy, as such it must work for all young people. Yet far too often young people disengage from learning and do not reach their full, human potential. Community schools, places where partners come together to offer a range of supports and opportunities for children, youth, families, and communities before, during, and after school, address this need by using community-based learning to reengage students in education and to create the conditions for their success. Community Based Learning fosters a learning environment that extends far beyond the classroom walls. Students learn and problem solve in the context of their lives and communities. Community schools nurture this natural engagement. Because of the deep and purposeful connections between schools and communities, the curriculum is influenced and enhanced, removing the artificial separation between the classroom and the real world. The vision for community schools is that they are places where all students engage in learning, achieve to the best of their ability, and become productive citizens and participants in our democracy and general societal wellbeing. Learning for life or life-long learning is intended to have learners learn for transformation and not just a rite of passage. Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship underscores the need for a concerted and intentional effort to engage all students in learning. Numerous approaches to community based learning are already in use; with highlights of six models with a particular emphasis on community problem solving: academically based community service, civic education, environment-based education, place-based learning, service learning, and work-based learning. If all students are to succeed, we must pay much more attention to community based learning as a strategy for engaging and motivating students and for strengthening the relationship between schools and communities. The chance for such strengthening is now in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

1.1 The Rationale for CBL

There are two types of education: One should teach us how to make a living and the other should teach us how to live. *John Adams.*

In recent years, national tragedies both manmade and natural have forced many countries to see how much we rely on strong neighborhoods, communities, and democratic institutions. We've seen how lack of attention to their well-being affects us all. These events lay bare the moral imperative that underlies the mission of public education to develop active, engaged citizens who are able to participate in and contribute fully to a democratic society. In order to learn how to be citizens, students must act as citizens. Therefore, education must connect subject matter with the places where students live and the issues that affect us all. Schools are ideally situated to connect learning with real life; but typically, they do not. To a large extent, public education following the lead of higher education has failed to recognize the benefits of student engagement with their communities in acquiring knowledge.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a group of major business and education organizations, believes that making the connection between learning and the real world is imperative for student success. According to the Partnership, "the education system faces irrelevance unless we bridge the gap between how students live and how they learn." The Partnership defines literacy to mean not just reading, writing, and computing skills, but "knowing how to use knowledge and skills in the context of modern life." A large majority of parents agree that involving students in more real-world learning experiences would greatly improve student outcomes. The time to have learners get engaged in family hood and appreciate applying what they learn to the well-being of their communities is fundamentally of great importance now during this long rest period during school closures in the context of COVID-19.

To create both learners and citizens, the paper advocates strategies that engage students in learning through community-based problem solving. Collectively referred to as community-based learning, these strategies include academically based community service, civic education, environmental education, place-based learning, service learning, and work-based learning. It draws from research on peer-assisted learning, project-based learning, and experiential learning. As an intentional dimension of the curriculum, community-based learning helps students acquire, practice, and apply subject matter knowledge and skills. At the same time, students develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes of effective citizenship by identifying and acting on issues and concerns that affect their own communities. When implemented thoughtfully, these strategies create a pedagogy of engagement. Students invest time and attention and expend real effort because their learning has meaning and purpose. Community-based learning helps students build a sense of connection to their communities. At the same time, it challenges them to develop a range of intellectual and academic skills in order to understand and take action on the issues they encounter in everyday life. By intentionally linking academic standards to

the real world of their communities, community based learning should narrow the gap between knowledge and action and between what students must learn and what they can contribute.

COVID-19 has caused disruptions across the globe and basically shut the four “walled learning spaces”, the classroom. The big question we must ask ourselves is whether we should concentrate on managing learning or managing learning institutions. This could be the right time to re-think learning and concentrate on managing learning rather than managing schools. Rather than learners waiting to access education through a four walled space and formal institutionalized programmes, there is need to look at education from the point of the society.

Many of today's leaders in education, business, and community development are coming to realize, even more than in the past, that schools alone cannot prepare our youth for productive adulthood. These leaders are ready to try new approaches that link learning activities in classrooms with a full range of learning experiences available in our communities. In short, there is a growing consensus that change is needed in education, not only in reforming *what* is taught but also in *how* and *where* it is taught.

From the time learning institutions were closed in our country by His Excellency the President as an effort to combat the spread of the virus amongst students, teachers and non-teaching staff in educational institutions, learning seemingly has come to a standstill. Since then, there have been a myriad of challenges among school going children, namely teenage pregnancies for girl child, drug and substance abuse, sexual abuse, child labor, increased mental health and truancy among others. Various efforts by both the government and the private sector have been explored to facilitate learning though online/virtual platforms just to mention. Notably though, virtual learning does not guarantee equity, access and quality given that not all learners can access ICT supported learning. Children in remote areas, those under difficult conditions and special needs children are quite disadvantaged and not able to access virtual/online lessons. Notably as well, there is a missing link in teacher capacity to teach remotely, lack of ICT enabled infrastructure, and lack of online approved curriculum/online policy guideline and no clear set quality assurance standards for monitoring the learning process.

Given the recent pronouncement by the Cabinet Secretary, Education, that learners in Kindergarten, Primary and secondary are only likely to resume school by beginning new year 2021 and possibly start from where they left in regards to the curriculum, there is likely anxiety among students and mostly those that were preparing to sit for their national examinations. The thought of repeating a class may on the other hand cause among other effects mental health issues among students. This period could be ideal to sensitize learners on the effects of COVID-19 and how to do self-management for prevention though Community Based Learning approach. Universities and all middle level colleges too are to have students stay away from face to face until January 2021. Even though Higher learning institutions are trying to offer classes online, quite a larger majority of the students are not able to access online classes during to several challenges like lack of internet connectivity, electricity, and computers among others. In the recent days we have seen quite another of Universities carry out virtual graduations, meaning this is seemingly becoming the new normal. One would then as, where would all the graduating students end up? Possibly in the community.

The paper proposes to the Government to apply Community-Based Approach to facilitate Skill-based, Competency-Based, and Proficiency-Based learning models to have the learners remain engaged through experiential and small group community projects. The model is simple and basically makes learning practical and relevant for life. It is not evident that face to face learning may resume in January as suggested. This would basically depend on the recommendations from the Ministry of Health/WHO and the impact of the Virus then. It is vital is to note that schools can become high risk centers for spread of COVID-19 if protocols are not well adhered to. The big question remains, how possible it for the government to provide additional infrastructure in public schools between now and January. The proposal to consider this approach is to provide a solution to learning using available resources and at the same time ensuring that matters health and well-being of learners and teachers are not compromised. Community based learning approach would ensure access, standardized approach and equity to learning. The idea is to manage learning other than managing learning institutions. With the use of multi-agency approach, learners would be able to link what they learn to real life experiences.

2. COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING

2.1 What is Community Based Learning?

This synthesis uses the term *community-based learning* as a broad framework that includes service-learning, experiential learning, School-to-Work, youth apprenticeship, lifelong learning and other types.

We define community-based learning as the broad set of learning strategies that enable youth and adults to learn what they want to learn from any segment of the community. Our definition provides for learners of all ages to identify what they wish to learn and opens up an unlimited set of resources to support them. By *community*, we are including the schools, formal and informal institutions in one's neighborhood, and the entire country through such resources as the Internet.

Principles of community-based learning relate to the changing nature of society, the learner, the learning processes, and sources for learning. *A Model for Restructuring Education for the 21st Century* (Owens 1994), identified several critical assumptions that can serve as a foundation for community-based learning:

- Education must be viewed as a continuum from preschool through lifelong education for adults.
- Learning is what we do for ourselves. It therefore requires the full involvement of the learner as well as the teacher/mentor.
- Jobs in the future will require not only more education, but a different type of education that includes critical thinking, teamwork, and the ability to apply knowledge to real life situations.
- Adults need to be involved in community affairs and to balance work, family and community responsibilities.
- Problems affecting learners today are much broader than schools alone can solve. Involvement of the family, business, labor, the community, and other agencies is essential.
- Resistance by some teachers, schools, and communities to the changes implied by the above assumptions are to be expected.
- That the local community plays a fundamental role on the learner's aptitude and attitude towards learning.

2.1.1 Associated Literature

Stephen Brookfield's (1983) book *Adult Learners, Adult Education and the Community*, is one of the most coherent contemporary discussion of learning outside conventional educational frameworks. His approach is via the hypothesis that this phenomenon has certain features:

1. It is deliberate and purposeful in that the adults concerned are seeking to acquire knowledge and skills.
2. Such purpose and intention may not, however, always be marked by closely specified goals. Learning may be apparently haphazard and therefore unsuccessful at times. A tenants group faced with a massive increase in rents may spend much time engaged in unprofitable and inappropriate enquiries as they are initially unable to specify the terminal skills and knowledge they require to achieve their broad objective.
3. It occurs outside of classrooms and designated educational institutions and does not follow the strict timetable of the academic year.
4. It receives no institutional accreditation or validation.
5. It is voluntary, self-motivated and self-generating. Adults choose to engage in this learning, although the circumstances occasioning that choice may be external to the learner's control (as in the example in point 2).
6. Acknowledging that the term 'learning' is a gerund – a word which can stand as a noun or verb – it is used (here) in its active sense. Thus, learning refers to the process of acquiring skills and knowledge, rather than an internal change of consciousness. (Brookfield 1983).
7. Brookfield's approach has a number of strengths. He highlights the fact that learning is happening all the time outside 'educational institutions'. Crucially, he is able to bring out the purposeful nature of the activity while at the same time

showing that it does not conform to those models of education which ask for tightly specified goals. Other key dimensions are also present – such as engagement in the activity by choice. His focus on learning as a process rather than a change of consciousness is useful as it helps to keep in view the fluid and changing nature of what we are exploring. In this we do need to bear in mind that his focus is on *learning* in the community. The task of educators (following his 1986 formulation) would be to manage the external conditions so that such a process can take place. In the case of individual or self-directed learning projects the learner would also take on the role of educator, Tough 1967 described these efforts at one point as ‘self-teaching’.

This said, there are some problems around his formulation:

First, the definition limits learning to the process of acquiring skills and knowledge, and this would appear to be unnecessarily constraining. Why has the conscious acquisition of attitudes and values been left out? Negative feelings can distort perceptions, lead to false interpretations of events, and can undermine the will to persist. Positive feelings and emotions can greatly enhance the learning process; they can keep the learner on the task and can provide a stimulus for new learning. The affective dimension has to be taken into account when we are engaged in our own learning activities, and when we are assisting others in this process. External influences to validate the worth of individual learners and groups of learners are often needed. (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985: 11)

Second, Brookfield appears to set school against ‘community’. There is:

- Learning in the community; and
- Learning in the school (or formal institution).

The former specifically excludes the latter and Brookfield does not specify at this point what ‘community’ means. In the definition it is simply something beyond the school or formal educational institution. Talking about educating or learning ‘in the community’ does not mean making a crude distinction between the school or college on one hand, and the community on the other (Smith 1988). Schools and colleges link into the very social systems that many see as constituting communities (Bell & Newby 1971: 48-53). In this sense educators can be as much ‘in the community’ when teaching the second year German/French/English, as when they are engaged in a heated discussion about the local authority spending in the tenants association. Learning or educating in the community, what I would want to argue is not simply work which takes place beyond the school or college fence. It involves a particular way of making sense of practice and location.

To be fair to Brookfield – at this point he is considering something called ‘learning in the community’. Later on in his book he looks at community adult education in its various UK and North American manifestations. However, I think that these points still stand.

Lastly, Brookfield’s focus derives more from the tradition of individual learning projects (after Tough) than from the associational and social concerns (see social pedagogy) linked to other European models. (Central to his research was a detailed study of a number of adult learners). This means that on the one hand it becomes rather more embracing – the range of activities covered is wider. On the other hand it loses, to some extent, its social and political edge. It is education *in* the community rather than education for community.

Community Learning

In the United States the notion of community learning tends to be utilized with regard to extension of opportunities to children. For example, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC) program enables schools to stay open longer, “providing a safe place for homework centers, intensive mentoring in basic skills, drug and violence prevention counseling, helping middle school students to prepare to take college prep courses in high school, enrichment in the core academic subjects as well as opportunities to participate in recreational activities, chorus, band and the arts, technology education programs and services for children and youth with disabilities” (www.ed.gov/21stcclc/). Currently around 1600 rural and inner-city public schools in 471 communities—in collaboration with other public and non-profit agencies, organizations, local businesses, post-secondary institutions, scientific/cultural and other community entities – are participating as community learning centres. Community learning centres have also begun to appear in a one or two countries as a result of USAID activities (see learnlink. The Ghanaian centres, for example, have been set up to ‘to enhance basic education, train teachers, develop local businesses, strengthen municipal administration and civil society

organizations, and provide health care information'. They make use of the notion of a 'telecenter' – particularly exploiting the use of the internet.

In Scotland we have seen the growing replacement of the notion of community education with that of community learning (this is very similar to the shift from adult education to lifelong learning elsewhere). In part this is an aspect of political rhetoric masking a movement into more individualistic approaches to learning. However, the notion of 'community learning' does hold the possibility of more associational and collective endeavors (and here the link to the strong tradition of community development in Scotland is apparent).

Change through learning:

The Scottish Executive (1999) *Communities: Change through Learning. Report of a Working Group on the Future of Community Education, Edinburgh: The Scottish Office.*

Our vision for Scotland is of a dynamic learning society. A democratic and socially just society should enable all of its citizens, in particular those who are socially excluded, to develop their potential to the full and to have the capacity, individually and collectively, to meet the challenge of change. The learning society will provide an active and informed citizenship.

Community education is a key contributor to lifelong learning and plays a significant part in combating social exclusion. Through its commitment to learning as an agent for change, it supports the Scottish people to improve personal, community, social and economic well-being. Primarily community education is more a way of working than a sector of education. Its unique contribution is to create learning opportunities within and for communities. Community based learning opportunities for all ages are as important to the realization of our vision as schools, colleges and universities. The whole of the education system, other public services and the voluntary and private sectors require to collaborate to realize it.

The capacity of individuals and groups of all ages to participate in developing their own learning is crucial to improving their quality of life. Through learning, people can come to make a real contribution to their own communities and participate in local and national democratic processes. Through learning, people can build the confidence and capacity to tackle wider social and economic issues, such as health or community safety. Skills can be acquired at many levels which are applicable in any walk of life. Sometimes these are essential skills, such as literacy or basic life management, which those who have benefited most from the formal education system take for granted. Without them, social exclusion is much more likely. With them, people can increase the opportunities for moving into further and higher education and into employment. Through them, local people can develop productive partnerships with other agencies relating to a wide range of social, economic and health as well as educational needs.

For both individuals and communities, the results of community education can be tangible and lasting. That is what makes it a subject of critical national importance at this point in time to ensure that more coordinated learning continues despite the impact of Covid-19. In the Kenyan context, the model of CBL was well used in the colonial times. The few Kenyans then who were taught by Missionaries on how to read and write could facilitate learning to the society through small groups mostly in churches/faith based organizations. The learners engaged in community projects but only used "schools" for mental arithmetic, reading and writing.

2.1.2 CBL referenced to Commonwealth of Learning

The model of community based learning would closely take the approach Commonwealth of learning whose main objective is to empower communities through open learning and distance education. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organization created by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1987 to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL's greatest impact is in supporting efforts to provide Commonwealth citizen's greater access to quality education and training through open, distance and technology-enabled learning, thereby allowing them to benefit from improved livelihoods, greater gender equity and overall economic, social and cultural development leading to sustainable development. COL is committed to promoting equitable access to quality lifelong learning for all – believing, in effect, that access to learning opportunities will lead to progress in achieving sustainable development.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF CBL

3.1 Successful Implementation of CBL

While no single approach guarantees success, community-based learning offers an important avenue for achieving multiple goals by developing knowledge and skills in many more students, increasing school resources and support, and improving communities. While community-based learning may look different depending on school systems and community involved, the Coalition for Community Schools identified several basic assumptions that drive successful implementation and promote public support.

We're all in this together: Society as a whole (families, community members, the private and not-for-profit sectors, government, faith communities, and students themselves, along with schools)—shares responsibility in preparing young people for future success. Success includes living productive lives, engaging in lifelong learning, finding gainful employment, and contributing to civic life. To close the gap between living and learning, schools need to seek out learning opportunities from within their communities. At the same time, advocates and practitioners of individual, community-based learning strategies need to work together in bringing these real world approaches to the classroom.

Prepare for the future today: Current school age children and youth will be tomorrow's parents, workers, and citizens. Their energy, curiosity, Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship, and too often their unmet needs already shape their neighborhoods and communities. Educators implementing community-based learning understand that preparing students for the future means helping them to become involved in positive community opportunities, today.

Community-based learning happens everywhere: Community-based learning must be integrated within the regular school-based curriculum. Before and after school programs and a host of community-based organizations currently offer an important venue for shrinking the gap between living and learning. Successful implementation of community-based learning opportunities in these settings may introduce the benefits of community-based learning to school staff, families, and decision makers, thus easing its way into the regular curriculum.

Make better use of what we know: Much is known about how young people learn and what motivates their interest. A considerable gap exists between this research, however, and the approach to teaching and learning employed by a majority of schools and educators. Community-based learning strategies are founded on well researched theoretical frameworks and have been used in many settings. Implementation is most effective when educators understand the broad theoretical principles that underlie these strategies and use this information to shape and evaluate their practice.

Academically based community service, civic education, environmental education, place-based learning, service learning, and work-based learning are increasingly evident in classrooms and after school programs. School staff, administrators, parents, community members, and students themselves see the benefits of these strategies and want them to take root and grow in their schools and communities. Until now, however, the glue needed to join these separate efforts has been missing. By uniting these strategies under the banner of community-based learning, the Coalition for Community Schools intends to call attention to their shared purposes and greatly increase their visibility.

3.1.1 Lessons Learnt on Education from West Africa during the Ebola:

The outbreak of Ebola in West Africa lasted from March 2014 to June 2016 with a death rate of about 40%. Ebola and Covid-19 have some similarities some of which include rapid transmission rates, prevention is through hand washing and social distancing, no proven vaccines or treatment, and both spread through human contacts/interactions. Crowded places are basically hotspots for transmission of the two viruses hence schools are high risk spots for fast spread of COVID-19 just like the case of Ebola.

With schools closed in West Africa, emergency radio programmes were initiated as the mode of transmission of lessons on daily basis for Primary and Secondary School students just as it is happening in Kenya today with additional programmes on TV and mobile apps. Some schools in Kenya especially private schools are as well conducting lessons through ICT enabled platforms (Learning Management Systems). West Africa faced many challenges some of which included, lack of equity and access to radio lessons, gender disparity as most girls missed out lessons as they were occupied with domestic chores, early pregnancies as girls were more exposed to sexual abuse. World Bank report on effects of Ebola indicated that about 25% and 13% of the students in Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively did not return to school post-Ebola due various reasons some of which included early marriages, child labour, truancy, mental

health issues, loss of interest in learning, lack of fees especially for secondary students due loss of income and livelihood (poverty) for most families and teenage pregnancies among others. This programme if well implemented will help contain learners ensuring their general safety and well-being.

While online learning is currently ongoing in some schools, the number of learners able to access learning digitally is quite low due to challenges like lack of infrastructure, low capacity of teachers to facilitate online learning, lack of redesigned curriculum for virtual learning and absence of policy guidelines for online teaching and learning.

3.1.2 CBL for learner progression and syllabus coverage in the context of COVID-19 Pandemic

There seems lots of anxiety among learners and especially on imagination that they would repeat a class. Just like the case of West Africa where the Ministry of Education had to review the curriculum, condensed it and applied an accelerated approach in which only essential/main subjects (examinable) were taught after the Ebola, we may use community learning approach to avoid class repetition. Given that the curriculum is spiral and progressive, it would be possible for learners to proceed to the next class but spread some of the units missed out across the grades within the academic calendar. Notably, by analyzing general/specific learning outcomes, it would be possible to have some of the expected learning outcomes that would be realized by doing (experiential) to be covered through Community-Based Learning Model.

The programme can be modeled in such a way that candidates may end up having a shorter period to prepare for exams. Active learning approaches like problem based, research based, flipped and collaborative learning would be applied to link curriculum content to real world experience. Thus it can be possible for KCPE/KCSE candidates to sit for their exams by March of 2021. Most of the candidates especially form four students are in panic mood and if made to wait for another year to sit for exams may attract a myriad of challenges like school dropouts, truancy, student unrest, early marriages/pregnancies, drug and substance abuse and mental ill-health among others.

The model can applied to manage learning making it more communal and learner responsive. This would create strong link between the learners and their communities. It would enhance creativity, innovation, critical thinking and problem solving skills. There is need to take learning away from the four walled rooms making it flexible and learning by doing (Experiential). Through small group community based learning approach, Key skills and competencies like physical and health education, home economics, food production, art/craft, financial literacy, environmental conservation, entrepreneurial skills, citizenship, self-efficacy, creativity/innovation would be acquired.

3.2 Key Objectives/Outcomes:

- i. To ensure that all learners across the country are comprehensively sensitized on COVID-19, its effects and self-management to prevent the spread
- ii. Ensure that all learners are engaged to keep them off all the negative effects that may arise from the Coronavirus
- iii. Teachers remain a key component of the society hence provide space for them to engage with learners during the pandemic and help learners learn through experience.
- iv. Provide an experiential learning approach in which learners connect academia to real world experiences and help solve societal problems
- v. Create curiosity, critical thinking, problem solving skills within the community
- vi. Have the youth get engaged in solving community problems and appreciate serving their own communities for their well-being
- vii. Help young people in appreciating their own initiatives as a way of community development
- viii. Reform Learning approaches to community problem solving and accelerate local/communal research.
- ix. Mentorship and Psycho-social Support to the learners
- x. Create awareness of climate change and environmental conservation in our communities
- xi. For learners to appreciate being producers of knowledge as opposed to being consumers
- xii. Introduce entrepreneurial, financial literacy and the concept of lifelong learning for community development

- xiii. Enhance learner competencies/proficiency.
- xiv. Given that the target community volunteers will be teachers and persons of post-secondary education, integrated program will provide a chance for students to proceed with the curriculum hence provide a solution to learners class progression post Covid-19
- xv. Increase community awareness and sensitization through community service on matters education, agriculture, tourism, trade and industry.
- xvi. Enhance parental engagement and empowerment through collaborative approaches between community lead volunteers and parents. This would improve parental engagement and involvement in education of their children.
- xvii. Enhance a blended learning in which online learning can be appreciated at community level (Digital Literacy).
- xviii. Serve as an entry point into the community by helping them in identifying their own problems and find solutions through a collaborative/multi-disciplinary approach, e.g. food insecurity, lack of entrepreneurial/financial literacy skills, and possibly create an avenue for inter-county trade.
- xix. Appreciate an inclusive approach in which PLWDs (Persons Living With Disability) are not left out in community engagement/empowerment in the context of Covid-19.
- xx. Help learners/youth understand demographics of their own communities.

4. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF COMMUNITY CBL

4.1 Theoretical Foundations of Community CBL

The name of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget is familiar to most educators. His seminal work introduced the idea that learning is an active process. Most educators and learning theorists accept the fact that learning is constructed. According to Piaget, the child constructs learning through a combination of biological development and experience. The child's ability to process information is dependent on his or her level of biological maturity; it qualitatively changes as the child moves through distinct developmental stages. In early childhood, the child responds to the world in concrete, literal terms; during the middle school years, the child becomes capable of understanding and manipulating more abstract information.

Within each stage, and without conscious thought, the developing child creates increasingly sophisticated conceptual schemas or "mental maps" in order to understand and respond to sensory information. When new information does not fit easily into existing structures, the mental landscape is altered as the child creates a new structure or makes existing structures more complex.

Learning is facilitated by situations that require children to both assimilate and accommodate new information. Social cognition theory, emphasizes the primary role of culture in knowledge construction. It argues that culture provides the child with both the content of thought and the tools for thinking about it. In other words, cognitive development occurs as children acquire information from the surrounding culture, typically processing it, directly or indirectly, through interactions with a teacher, parent or friends who transfer knowledge from that culture. As a result of this interaction, knowledge is shaped as children increase their understanding of the world. Situated learning theorists, also hold that social interaction plays a major role in constructing knowledge. Learning arises out of a specific activity, context, and culture. It occurs in a "community of practice" organized around certain beliefs, behaviors, and knowledge. Beginning learners remain at the periphery of such groups until they begin to learn through interaction and collaboration with others and acquire the group's core knowledge. Eventually, their growing expertise brings them to the group's center. Learning is situated in the places where young people spend time and in the relationships they have with those around them.

Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences counters the view of intelligence as a single trait or set of traits that some people have more of or less than compared to others. He argues that individuals have a number of ways in which they comprehend, understand, and benefit from experience. Learners produce knowledge by using words, logical reasoning, physical movement, spatial awareness, interpersonal skills, personal reflection, and responding to the natural world. Everyone has a personal blend of learning styles with some pathways more "turned on" than others. All these pathways can be developed under the right circumstances. Learning can be facilitated by activities that allow children to learn in harmony with their own unique minds.

Positive youth development theory has re-evaluated how adults view young people and the challenges they face. At its center is awareness of young people's strengths. Positive growth is most likely to occur in an environment that recognizes and builds on young peoples' abilities rather than simply working to prevent weaknesses. In Karen Pittman's words, "problem-free is not fully prepared." Positive youth development refers to an ongoing process in which meaningful content, practice, and opportunities for active participation allow young people build the skills, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences that equip them for life. It is also a deliberate approach for working with young people that can be implemented in various settings. Its practices are grounded in the tenants of developmental theory beginning with the notion that young people develop at various rates along several dimensions intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. It recognizes that supportive environments promote growth in all these areas. Following psychologist Abraham Maslow's well known hierarchy, it calls for learning environments that address young people's basic needs so they can successfully meet higher order challenges. It acknowledges *Urie Bronfenbrenner's* understanding that young people experience the world in concentric, expanding circles of family, school, community, and the larger society. Effective learning environments find ways to intentionally connect all of the systems that affect young people's lives home, school, and community.

4.1.1 Theoretical Interpretation of CBL

- i. **Knowledge** is constructed and influenced by social interaction.
- ii. **Memory: the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information is influenced by experience, prior learning, and practice.**
- iii. **The motivation** to learn is affected by personal judgments about one's abilities and the perceived importance and attainability of the learning goal.
- iv. Individuals learn in different ways.
- v. Barriers to learning can be mitigated by protective factors.
- vi. Effective learning environments intentionally connect all of the systems that affect young people's lives (home, school and community)

4.1.2 Integrated Approach-Linking Education concepts to Community Development

Unlike the usual approach of book and chalk under the four walls of a classroom, learning will be facilitated in such way that they start by identifying and describing the problem in the community, explore and come out with the solution to the problem. By working out the process of solving the problem, they will be learning and attaining competencies like critical thinking and problem solving, citizenship (Identifying themselves as part of the problem & solution), creativity and innovation, deep sense of analytical skills, communication and collaboration, digital literacy (researching on the solution/connecting with others digitally on their community problem could be related) and leadership (Self efficacy-who am I in the community). They will link what they learn to the problem and develop a sense of curiosity to apply knowledge to real world experiences. When face to face resumes, learners would be having a few concepts to handle. This literally is the chance to deeply connect learners to their communities. Learning will basically take place through research and projects. They will attain entrepreneurial, financial literacy skills and appreciate working within their communities for sustainable development.

4.1.3: Multi-Agency approach to CBL Implementation:

Multi-Agency Partnership working is not a new development. As early as the mid nineteenth century, health and social services were working together to endeavor to reduce poverty in England. It wasn't really until the 1980s, during the Thatcher government years, that the foundations of multi-agency partnership working were laid. The Children Act 1989 in England established the statutory requirement for inter-agency collaboration and joint working in relation to children and young people, requiring professionals to 'work together better'. The 1990s saw the development of multilateral partnerships where public, private and voluntary sector organizations joined together to tackle cross-cutting issues, such as social exclusion, community safety and neighborhood regeneration. Partnership overload and fatigue began to occur, resulting in the need for practitioners from multi-agencies to begin to reflect upon where and when the partnership 'bandwagon' should stop. The last two decades have seen several government-funded initiatives aimed at promoting integrated services and more coordinated partnership working.

The proponents of multi-agency partnership explored five degrees of multi-agency partnership working, namely:

Coexistence – clarity between practitioners from different agencies as to who does what and with whom.

Co-operation – practitioners from different agencies sharing information and recognizing the mutual benefits and value of partnership working, that is, pooling the collective knowledge, skills and achievements available.

Co-ordination – partners planning together; sharing some roles and responsibilities, resources and risk-taking; accepting the need to adjust and make some changes to improve services, thus avoiding overlap.

Collaboration – longer-term commitments between partners, with organizational changes that bring shared leadership, control, resources and risk-taking. Partners from different agencies agree to work together on strategies or projects, each contributing to achieving shared goals.

Co-ownership – practitioners from different agencies commit themselves to achieving a common vision, making significant changes in what they do and how they do it. In particular, good co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration produce efficient multi-agency working, which adds value for educational settings, that is, it increases the organizations skills and capacity to improve and meet children and young people’s Every Child Matters well-being needs.

The traditional approach to teaching students problem solving, where they are limited to finding purely technical solutions, is beginning to be critiqued in the light of rapid globalization, and an increasing acceptance of the need for graduate professionals who can locate technical requirements within their social, economic and environmental context. Problems do not know disciplinary boundaries and professionals of tomorrow will need to learn new multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving which incorporate thinking from disciplines usually associated with the social sciences and humanities. Education is meaningful when learners use the learning outcomes to solve problems, collaboratively work together as teams to identify and solve community problems and most importantly improve their livelihoods. In the 21st Century, the four types of knowledge--**theoretical, practical, operational, and value based** are supposed to be coherent if education has to remain relevant and meaningful to the society.

As within any community of practice, students as well as practitioners and educators live within some form of “common sense” that they have developed from the external social constructs of their society. “Maximize efficiency, reduce costs,” for example, is considered common sense by most engineers working in industry even though it can lead to over production and over consumption. As these views become “common sense” it becomes difficult for students to question assumptions surrounding them. If we are to enable students to take responsibility for their learning, develop a critical questioning ability, and to position themselves from a stance of social and environmental justice, questioning the implications of their developments, we need to understand how these common sense views of various disciplines are developed and attempt to deconstruct them. Once students have developed the sense of critical thinking ability, this can be transferred to other areas of their studies and improve their learning in many areas of professional and informal learning.

Any given curriculum should provide students the opportunity to develop the ‘ability to undertake problem solving, design and project work within a broad, contextual framework accommodating social, cultural, ethical, legal, political, economic and environmental responsibilities as well as within the principles of sustainable development and health and safety imperatives’; ‘the ability to function as an individual and team leader and member of cross disciplinary and multicultural teams’ and develop “ advanced level capabilities in the structured solution of complex problems. A further critically important reason for bringing in social and environmental issues has been an awareness that female students are increasingly interested in technologies, which seem relevant and beneficial to societies. The essence of learning is to ensure that learners use key transferable skills, the 4Cs (Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration and Communication) to impact the society positively by using the knowledge learnt.

As early as 1989 it was recognized that approaches which were more appealing to women encouraged interaction, cooperation and trust, connected, holistic thought, joined feeling and thinking, and had an increased focus on social responsibility. Social responsibility (often “corporate” social responsibility or CSR) is a term frequently used in the current economic climate. According to Zandvoort, there is much agreement on the importance of preparing students for social responsibility, but at the same time there is little agreement in what the term really means or how to structure curricula to achieve this. Community Based Learning if well implemented through multi-agency approach will immerse learners in deep learning and begin to apply Community of Practice (COP) in the early stages of their life.

4.2 Methodology

A simple cascaded model approach would be used for this purpose:



Figure 1.0

Lead Experts: Lead Professionals (Multi-disciplinary)

TOTs: First Level Trainers (Master Trainers) tasked to facilitate the model concepts

SGCBV: Community Based Volunteers (teachers; Social workers; Counselling Psychologists; Community Health Workers; College students/Graduates; faith based organizations).

Learning Segments: Learners in various age groups put in small groups of 15 to 20 with strict observation of social distancing in open spaces within family set-ups in such a way that there is very minimal movement away from their home set-ups.

4.3. Implementation Framework of CBL using a Multi-Sector Approach.



Figure 2.0

The model shall involve integrated learning approach that would link classroom learning experiences to real life situation. The model is to ensure that all school going children/youth are engaged in the context of COVID-19 before they resume face to face learning. In some cases, learners would be supervised to listen to radio/TV transmitted lessons. The programme will run on flexible formular, meaning one volunteer trainer can handle two-three groups within the community. In some cases, mature learners would be used to guide their juniors on certain skills. This is basically creating small group learning teams to ensure all school going children are fully engaged.

Target Organizations/Government departments to partner with to facilitate the program would include faith based organizations, Chiefs; Village elders; School heads; teachers; County Government Semi-Autonomous Agencies and administrative Units; Local health service providers; Business communities; and private organizations. The model would link learners to industries hence release learners who are innovators, creators, problem solvers and visionary. Learners would immerse in deep learning and identify careers of the future through and experiential learning approach.

4.3. Managing Learning through Community Based Libraries and Resource Centres.

Information is recognized as an essential resource for the social and economic development of the world through its provision of information and library services. Although it is lowly accorded, it is an indication that the potential values of information is not yet fully recognized (Mchombu, 2012). Community libraries are crucial to providing information and meeting the information needs of the people in their communities and therefore contributing to the social economic development of their communities and countries. Community libraries also play a role in society and their impact in social and economic development should not be underestimated. The UNESCO Libraries Manifesto (1994) emphasized that libraries are gateways to knowledge, as they provide a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. They do this through the provision of free access to information and information communication technology facilities to their communities. Community libraries also contribute to community development in different spheres. Studies done by scholars such as Greenhalgh, Landy & Worpolek (1993), Kerslake and Kinnel (1997), Zapata (2009) and Pannel (2008), identified areas in which libraries are playing a role and have an impact. These areas include: education, social policy, information, cultural enrichment and economic development.

Community-Based Resource Center (CBRC) is to facilitate the development of real-world, scientifically rigorous knowledge and research on various aspects that are of great benefit to the community. Students engage in self learning and develop curiosity for research.

Lessons learnt from COVID-19 disruptions should not just be wished away but rather be used to evaluate how well we can manage learning away from the four walls of a classroom. The culture of reading would increase among learners as they borrow and read books of their interest. The resource centers will be technologically enabled to help learners have access to ICT and enhance their digital literacy skills.

5. CONCLUSION

When students engage in learning, they are more likely to care deeply, work harder, and achieve their goals. Drawing on the assets of a community; its history, culture, resources, and challenges—can help schools build citizens while infusing academic course work with meaning and relevance. Rather than diluting the school curriculum, community-based learning strategies increase the intensity of learning and the likelihood that young people will transfer knowledge and skills to new situations. By fostering student interest in their own communities, these strategies sow the seeds of lifelong learning. When students see themselves as citizens, they take responsibility for what happens to their neighborhoods, communities, and country. The end result? “Learning that lasts” well beyond the last test and a commitment to service that lasts a lifetime. While Covid-19 has caused a major disruption to education sector globally, the agency to disrupt its disruption is of essence. The CBL model if well implemented would give learners a chance to learn in small clusters within their communities through a collaborative and experiential approach. Blended learning would be progressively applied to enable different clusters collaborate digitally (ref. Commonwealth of Learning). Given the current situation, a more organized way of engaging learners is required at the moment. Lately, tuition centres are beginning to emerge in several estates within major cities like Nairobi and this could be risky as the teachers and learners involved in the house tuitions are at risk of contracting the disease and infecting each other and beyond. It is as well being realized that several centres are emerging to claim to be offering online learning. This definitely will pose risky to quality, equity, access and

standardization. CBL if adopted would offer a more organized blended learning approach conceptualized communally. The paper seeks to have the Ministry of education apply multi-sector approach to facilitate experiential learning to the learners.

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