

# ROLES OF RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROMOTION OF SECURITY IN SCHOOL

*Oparaeke, M.I\*, Odu, M.A\* & Otujo, C.O\*\**

*\*Dept. of Physical and Health Education*

*Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu-Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria.*

*\*\*Biology Department, Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu-Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria.*

## **Abstract**

*Nigeria and many other developing countries are facing the menace of insecurity and violence in schools which has caused emotional trauma and death among students, their parents, school authorities and communities. The paper explored the roles of parents, school administrators and students in promotion of security in schools. In order to achieve this, the paper reviewed the concept of security, school security, the importance of security in schools, how to improve security measures in school, the role of parents, school administrators, students and government in promotion of security in schools. The authors recommended that school administrators should establish security committee which includes parents, teachers and students, staff development strategies in order to acquire knowledge and skills on safety education, parents to be involved in drafting, reviewing and implementing the security procedures of schools.*

## **Introduction**

The present day Nigerian schools are thriving to meet educational needs of learners and the communities in which the schools are situated, but they are opened to every kind of security threats from within and outside the school environment. Due to contemporary social, economic, political and cultural challenges various individuals or group threats may be consciously or unconsciously exerted on schools. Schools may also be exposed to pandemic diseases, fire outbreaks, natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes etc. The school management and the community has to be prepared for all kinds of threats and have to develop strategies to meet up adequately with them.

Since the threat to school security may stem from various sources in the community or society, the school safety issues should comprise a wide range of bodies such as teachers, students, parents, managers, law enforcement agencies, health institutions business etc. Therefore, schools which accommodate so many students, teachers, managers and supportive staff are compelled to provide safe working conditions for staff and students. The schools should ensure a safe environment for individuals in the school by focusing on prevention of violence within and outside the school for the safety of all. Schneider (2008) believed that

to deal effectively with the social and crime behaviour, schools should promote positive school climate and school – wide effective prevention and intervention strategies.

### **Concept of Security**

Security is freedom from the threat or fear of harm or danger. Ekeke (2016) defined security as a condition where one is well protected and without risks. It is protecting people and assets from hazards, threats and creating a safe and security conditions.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) defined security as a condition of being protected against planned, malicious and criminal incidents. It stressed further that security measures are created to protect people and property from injury or loss by deliberate actions taken by people. Security covers everything from personal to national security.

### **School Security**

School security encompasses all measures taken to combat threat to people and property in education environments (Duplechain, Morris and Winter, 2014). A term that is connected to school security is school safety, which is defined as the sheltering of students from violence and bullying as well as exposure to harmful elements such as drugs and gang activity (cultism). Along with other public places, schools are at risk for invasion from outside as well as attacks from students within the school. A safe and healthy school environment is critical to education but in recent years the schools are not safe for the learners and for the school personnel any more due to some problems threatening school security, as in the case of Chibok girls in Borno State, Nigeria.

Apart from the abduction of the Chibok and Dapchi school girls in Borno and Yobe respectively. On February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Babington Macaulay Junior Seminary, a school on the outskirts of Lagos was thrown into pandemonium when some school children were abducted. Armed men struck and kidnapped three school girls and demanded for ransom before the release of the school children. Also at Igbonla Model College in Epe, armed men stormed the college and kidnapped the school's vice principal, a teacher and four pupils during the school general assembly morning devotion. Also at Nigerian Tulip International College (formerly Nigerian Turkish International College), Isheri, Ogun State were also attacked by gunmen.

Montee (2008) affirmed that receiving attention to the responsibility of schools for providing a safe environment so that students and teachers maximize the education experience, Steinka-Fry, Fisher, and Tamer-Smith, (2016) stated

that schools are faced with numerous issues involving school safety, it was stressed further that from preparing for national disasters to preventing school violence and protecting students from illnesses, school administrators are seen responsible for ensuring that students are safe at schools. In relations to assurance of security at schools, each school has its own unique ways of dealing with security problems because each school has its own characteristics, security problems and the specific ways/strategies of handling such problems. Scheneider (2008) noted that there is no simple solution to school safety, every campus/school has a unique mix of architecture, community characteristics and funding to consider in school security.

### **The Importance of School Security**

Keeping schools safe allows children to look forward to being in an encouraging environment that promotes social and creative learning. When basic safety needs aren't met, learners are at risk for not feeling comfortable at school and may stop showing up, or they may remain on edge throughout the day. Promoting school safety creates an open space for students to explore, learn and grow. The security of schools has become a growing concern due to recent happenings in society including terrorists attacks, gun crime, vandalism, kidnapping, child exploitation and other issues prevalent in our society that put the safety of children, students, teachers, staff and parents at risk.

Kennedy (2017) believed that in some schools, colleges or other educational institutions, intruders can wander in and out of the premises as they please, as the access to buildings is not considered seriously enough within risk assessments. Students and teachers have the right to feel safe and secure with the peace of mind that should a situation arise they have the right security measures and procedures in place to keep themselves and those around them safe. Parents too should feel reassured with the knowledge that their child attends school, they will be safe in the care of the teachers and the security of the building.

Keeping children safe at school is another importance of school security. A safe learning environment is essential for students of all ages. Without it, they are unable to focus on learning the skills needed for a successful education and future. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) stated that when violence is part of the educational setting, all students are affected in some way. Even though a child may not be the actual victim of violence in school, there is a very good chance that he or she will witness violent acts throughout the educational years. Jeynes (2016) affirmed that children who feel unsafe at school perform worse academically and are more at risk for getting involved in drugs

and delinquency. Therefore, the issue of school safety should be a major concern at all levels of government.

Another importance of school security is to protect all students and school personnel from violence that includes assaults, bullying, theft, victimization violent crime, use of weapons, classroom sexual attacks etc.

Ways that schools can beef up security safety in schools need to be given high-level priority. There are a lot of miscreants in the society who are targeting the innocent and it needs to be controlled. The crime rate against children in Nigeria is quite alarming like kidnaping, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect etc. The following are few ways that schools or educational institutions can beef up their security.

#### *Getting a fleet on their feet*

Having a few guards just at gates and entrances/exits is never enough. It is always better to have a full force of guards deployed throughout the campus, should there be an emergency situation. Since children are not quick enough to save themselves, they do require the guidance of trained people.

#### *Never Wander Alone*

The school should make sure that there are no children wandering around alone, especially when there are classes going on. There are times during the day when the campus may be relatively empty and this is not a safe time for children to walk around by themselves.

#### *Timings are important*

Schools must schedule and stick to strict timings, avoiding late evenings and nights to be accessible to students. The earlier the timing are wrapped up, the safer it is for children to commute and reach home safe.

#### *Monitored transport*

Many schools provide in-house transport services, which is a great way to keep a check on students. A simple way to make this safer would be to make sure that at least one trusted staff is assigned to each vehicle, in case of a situation of danger. It's important to always have a count of the students in the vehicle.

#### *A few extra eyes*

CCTV cameras are brilliant way to monitor children at all times. In case any child is missing, using the camera to find him/her would make it so much easier. Since the school cannot keep an eye on every child at all times, the CCTVs could do that job for them and there's always recorded proof.

### *Use of mobile applications*

Recently, a few schools have come up with their own mobile applications, where parents can monitor their child's presence in school, real-time. They will always be informed of when their child has entered and left the school campus and can also contact the management at any time, if they have concerns (Rahul, 2016).

### **Role of Parents in the Promotion of Security in Schools**

Parents are main stakeholders in attaining a secure and safe school environment. Rising number of incidents against children in schools is a big concern among the parents. To ensure safety of children in schools, it is very important for parents to take certain steps for the safety of their wards.

As a parent, it is important that we teach our children to be assertive in order to protect themselves against incidents of bullying and emotional exploitation. Parents most importantly, should make their homes a place of trust and support. At school, creating a safe learning environment, identifying pupils who are suffering or at risk of harm and then taking suitable action, are vital to making sure that children are safe.

Ekeke (2016) gave the following as the expected roles of parents in the promotion of security.

1. The headteacher is expected to involve parents in drafting and reviewing the security and safety procedures of the school.
2. Security and safety must be on the agenda of all Parents Teachers Association (PTA) Meetings.
3. Parents should be familiar with school safety plan, code of conduct and the disciplinary policy of the school.
4. Parents should recognise that they too are responsible for monitoring the behaviour of their wards and neighbours.

### **The Roles of the School Administrator (Headteacher/Principal)**

To maintain a secured and safe environment in the school, the school head has the following roles to play:

1. The Head Teacher should establish security and safety committee which should comprise teachers, other members of staff, members of PTA, school board to aid in formulating, executing, monitoring, and appraising the security and safety operations of the school.
2. Communicating strategies: The Head Teacher should provide opportunities for staff development to acquire knowledge on safety education personnel to create a climate of school ownership and pride.

Students, parents, staff members and members of cooperating community agencies will feel that they are important parts of the school community.

*The teachers roles include but not limited to the following:-*

1. Create a warm and nurturing classroom climate.
2. Cater for the different learning styles of students.
3. Provide consistent and firm guidelines and rules regarding student behaviour
4. Be sensitised in recognizing the signs of anti-social behaviour.

### **Roles of the School**

1. The School also needs to empower students as agents of social change. The children should be educated about good and bad touch and feel confident to report any uncomfortable incidents to either a teacher or parent.
2. The school should make provision for unarmed guards within the premises, who should have periodic drills and have the ability to quickly contact the nearest police response team at all hours of the day.
3. Request for armed security operatives that can carry out random patrols and inspections outside the school walls to ensure there have been no recent breaches.
4. The Head Teacher should engage students in a security and safety campaign in the school. The campaign should promote students' alertness in relation to matters of security and encourage them to convey pertinent information about security and safety risks to school personnel.
5. The school authority must inform students about security and safety rules, their rights and responsibilities and the consequences of associated with the non-compliance of these rules.

### **Roles of the Students**

1. Students should be made to develop a sense of responsibility for contributing to the improvement of school order and safety.
2. Students should participate actively in the planning, implementation and enforcement of disciplinary policy and programmes.
3. Students need to be taught on how to respond in case of emergencies.

### **Roles of Government**

1. Government should continue equip the Nigerian police to have training on counter – kidnapping strategy.
2. Nigerian Government should do all within its power to curtail the rising cases of the menace to attract death penalty.
3. Holistic approach by relevant stakeholder on socio – economic factors facilitating kidnapping is required to completely eliminate this security threat.

### **Conclusion**

Safety and security is an ongoing process and preparedness is the key. Schools, parents, and school authorities should not wait until an incident occurs. They must, in association with professional security agencies, identify potential risks exposure, create and disseminate action plans, train and drill staff and students on a regular basis. The schools need to increase security arrangements to make them less attractive targets. Schools should have well – lit compounds at night and the use of solar – powered CCTV cameras. Also schools should develop school-wide prevention, intervention and response strategies to deal effectively with the destructive behaviour and to prevent the hazardous effects of natural disasters. All staff should be trained about security issues and schools should inculcate safety education into the curriculum.

In addition, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools should develop an emergency action plan taking into consideration the school environment threatening conditions and problem sources and every personnel in the school should know what to do in time of emergency and destructive situation.
2. In each school, a security committee should be constituted and this should include students, parents, teachers, media, health and security organisation and effective policies should be developed cooperatively.
3. The school environment should be monitored closely and along with the cooperation with the security officials, dangerous events and behaviours of persons should be eliminated.
4. The school should build a close relationship with families and communities so as to create awareness about security problems.
5. Identification badges and cards are possible way of improving school security. The visitors badges can also be a away to conduct background checks before the visitor enters the school campus. School to limit entry

- ways to school buildings clearly mark the main entry to the school and post signs on other entries redirecting visitors to the main entry.
6. School parking lot should be monitored so also the student common areas such as hallways, playgrounds etc. if possible, through CCTV surveillance in these areas.
  7. There is the need to encourage staff and students to take responsibility for their part in maintaining safe school environments.
  8. Staff and students who take initiatives to help keep school safe should be rewarded or duly recognised by school management.

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