Behavior Change amidst COVID-19 - Implications for Education

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Focus of this presentation

All sectors of Education (Pre-primary – Tertiary)

How COVI-19 has impacted education sector through lenses of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)

Recommendations for sustaining behavior changes
In January the WHO organization declared the outbreak of the new corona virus -COVID 19 -to be a public health emergency of international concern and by March it was declared as a global pandemic.
What was done from a SBCC perspective
Focus

• Information
• Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)
Informing persons/ communities about COVID-19
• What it is?
• How it spread
• Who is more susceptible
• What can be done
Promoting behaviors aimed at reducing the spread of the virus

**Individual level**
- proper hand hygiene
- Proper respiratory hygiene and more recently
- wearing mask when you go outdoors
- Staying indoors
- Behaviours to adopt before you enter your home

**Interpersonal level**
Social distancing /physical distancing
avoiding large crowds and gatherings
national, state, local laws

COMMUNITY
relationships among organizations

ORGANIZATIONAL
organizations, social institutions

INTERPERSONAL
family, friends, social networks

INDIVIDUAL
knowledge, attitudes, skills
Secondary effects of COVID-19

Education sector

• Closure of academic institutions

• Closure of workplaces, with the exception of essential services

• Teleworking
• A recent situation report by PAHO showed that as of 17 April all schools in countries covered by its programme of cooperation in the Caribbean were and are still closed;

• UNICEF ECA situation monitoring estimated that approximately 500,000 students (>16 years) in Eastern Caribbean were not in schools (i.e. physical structures) as result of COVID-19

• UWI students were also affected as initially all campuses suspended classes
• The secondary effects of COVID-19 led to other areas of behavior change at the individual level that were not anticipated and which impacted on all education stakeholders.

By education stakeholders we are referring to:
• Educators- those who teach
• Education administrators – those who manage
• Ancillary staff/support staff
• Students
• parents of school age children from pre-secondary
So what were these new behaviors that stakeholders had to adopt
the new behaviors that these stakeholders had to quickly adopt were

**Students**
- Transitioning to learning on line
- Transitioning to learning without their teachers (e.g. in some countries primary children were given worksheets)
- Utilizing familiar platforms but for now for e-learning e.g. whatts
- Learning new platforms
- Transitioning to reduced social contact with peers and teachers in a learning environment
- Transitioning to relating to parents/caregivers as their teachers

**Parents**
- Pre-school/Primary/secondary school –learning a new platforms
- Supporting their children in online learning environment i.e. more parental involvement/parental involvement for the first time; new learning curve for some parents
- Balancing the new role of educating students with other roles at home
- Sharing devices for e-learning e.g. some homes only have one electronic tool in the house
the new behaviors that these stakeholders had to quickly adopt were

**Educators**
- Teaching classes online; nb sometimes new learning curve for teachers
- Engaging with students online
- Setting assignments online
- Grading online
- Learning new platforms in short space of time
- Communicating with parents to make decisions about their children’s education and to provide parents with support via WhatsApp, telephone, e-mail, and teleconferencing

**Administrators**
- Transition to managing online, which would include holding online meetings with persons who may or may not have access to technology; who may or not feel comfortable using technology
- Adapting their expectations (i.e. allowing teachers more flexibility as they manage work demands and other roles as they work from home
These behaviors all had to be adopted

• quickly
• As stakeholders were implementing other new/not so new or not regularly practiced behaviors e.g. shopping on line; hygiene behaviors
• as persons continued to deal with the uncertainly about COVID-19 – lots of negative news about death and dying myths-uncertainty about if it is mutating or not mutating; how it is spread
What are/were some possible impacts
COVID-19 has put into critical perspective many of the models about how individuals make decision to adopt a change.

Many of the SBCC models e.g. stages of change models:

• Suggest that people go through processes
• They consider what others think
• Weigh cost and benefits of whether it is worth it to adopt new behaviors
• Behavior change theories also suggest that we provide persons with skills if needed so they can adopt the change

• Some BC theories suggest that providing right incentives people would adopt change

• Need to work with social influencers
BCC scholars also suggest that we can help person make changes through

- Hear
- Inform
- Convince
- Decide
- Adopt the behaviour
- Reinforcement
- Maintenance
Because of COVID-19 - for the most part education stakeholders didn't have time to go through the regular BCC process for changing behaviors.

So we could argue there was in direct forced behavior compliance i.e. in some regards stakeholders do not have a choice about whether they want to or not want to adopt the behaviors.
Possible impact of the adopting of these changes could be increase stress including a type of stress known as Techno stress

Ragu (2007) Techno stress as stress created by ICT use (cell phones, IM, video conferencing etc.)

Salanova et al. (2014), technostress is a negative psychological state related to current or future use (or abuse) of technology
Why would stress be a factor

• Educator’s stress

Research has shown that for some educators designing lessons for online platform can be stressful; sometimes can lead to negative emotions such as frustration- especially if insufficient time is given for course planning; if there is insufficient literacy about the platforms

Age (persons introduced to the technology later in life tend to experience greater techno stress than younger or middle age person)

Coping skills

NB – these research were done in times of normalcy – it is possible that in COViD-19 environment stress could be heighten- time to respond to students’ feedback; unstable internet connectivity; rapidity with which have to adopt the behaviours; volume of information from several sources e.g. MOE, other entities, online meetings
Why would stress be a factor

Student stress – research conducted has shown these are some factors that causes students’ stress in an online environment

• Lack of digital literacy

• If person has a disability (if the course not thoughtfully designed with them in mind e.g. those with learning, neuromuscular or even visual disabilities

• Anxiety at beginning of online learning

NB other stressors in COVID-19 environment (can’t access computer in curfew environment; parenting& studying& teaching)
Why would stress be a factor

• Administrator’s/ Employee stress (Admin & ancillary staff)
  Lack of digital literacy
  Extended use of technology may cause techno stress (more meetings, longer meetings)
  Age (persons introduced to the technology later in life tend to experience greater techno stress than younger or middle age person)

Other possible COVID-19 stressors
  Private education institutions – parents/students may not want to pay fees
Signs of techno stress

- Feelings of overload
- Fatigue
- Exhaustion
- Feelings of dissatisfaction
- Students/parents requesting extensions on assignment
- Mood swings

Other stress issues
Health related
Why would stress be a factor

• Parent stress

• May not come from technology but maybe other stressors
  - Supporting children while teleworking
  - Concern about exams
  - Job lost
Recommendations to make adoption of these behaviors sustainable
Recommendation #1 Continue to understand your stakeholders

- **In SBCC it is always recommended to understand the audience at all stages before, during and after intervention.**

- **We** should continue to research but ask new questions i.e. the focus should not only be about connectivity or who have or do not have access technology.

- **For example for students some of the new qs. could be:** do they have the supporting environment to do online learning?; or any of the tertiary students essential workers? Are they parents, spouses/partners of essential workers.

- **For Educators some of the new qs could be:** how many of them are parents or caretakers - are any of them teaching and caring for their own children/elderly (how are they balancing?)

  how competent do they feel with using technology? What support do they need?

  Based on their reality what realistically should a work day look like in this new online environment?
• Parents – what does it “cost” to implement the change; Cost include
time, money, effort; self-esteem; self efficacy

- How many of them are working full time from at home –
- Can they realistically provide the support that educators are expecting from them
- Cognitive ability to understand what is needed to be done and support their children
- What have they noticed about the impact of these changes on their children
- Skills (do you need to do virtual capacity building sessions with them?)
- Do they have the time?
- Are they spouses/partners of essential workers
- Are they essential workers? Does the caregiver (e.g. Granny; cousin, relative) have the capacity to support child with the online learning
- How do they feel schooling should look like?
Understanding stakeholders

Ancillary staff - what support do they need

Administrative staff – are they “screened out” from your long meetings
Understanding stakeholders

SBCC – audiences are seldom homogenous and how persons respond to change dependent on so many variables

- gender
- household specificities
- personality differences
- age
- self efficacy
Recommendation #2 Make Adjustments based on what you have learnt from your research

SBCC - Help persons to adapt to the change by **making the changes easier to adapt and maintain**

The online can’t necessarily mirror or be a duplicate of the face to face

Adjustments may need to be made to support the implementation and maintenance of the desired behaviors
## Examples of adjustments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Desired behavior</th>
<th>Adjustments to be made to make it easier for them to adapt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Support child’s online learning while teleworking</td>
<td>Educator to reduce number of daily deliverables/assignments for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>Take Classes on line</td>
<td>Educator provide more breaks (no more 2 hrs. long lectures) Videos /recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary &amp; administrative staff</td>
<td>Attend meetings on line</td>
<td>Administrator to have shorter; focused meetings Use telephone more instead of email Focus on deliverables rather than one time (i.e. whether they are working 8 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>Teach on line</td>
<td>Administrator to adjust work day to allow time to attend to other duties e.g. 4 hr work day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Care for elderly; home duties; duties towards their own children</td>
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</tbody>
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Recommendation
#4 – Invest in support systems

Another major principle of SBCC is ensuring that persons are supported to make change
## Examples of support structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Target group/stakeholder</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Online instruction</td>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>Administrator to provide readily available IT support; short How to videos; other institutional support Psychosocial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support children’s on line learning</td>
<td>Parents (including educators who are parents)</td>
<td>Peer support MOE / school to provide psychosocial support Educator support by having e.g. scheduled/flexible online office hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join online meetings</td>
<td>Administrative staff</td>
<td>Readily available IT support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendation
#5 Invest in feedback mechanisms

Aim of feedback is to understand......

- What is/is not working?
- What should be improved?
- How can it be improved
- If what you have implemented is meeting the need of your stakeholders
COVID-19 has led to major disruptions in the world; has impacted our education sector.

Behaviors earlier described for education stakeholders might eventually become the new norm.

Important to see what aspects from social and behavior change communication (SBCC) that can be used as we move forward to not only get persons to implement necessary behaviors but ensuring that they are maintained.

Final Thoughts
Thank You