

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study interrogates some of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on education in Oyo State, Nigeria. This was carried out using case study research using qualitative methods. Findings of the study includes that education was seriously affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, brought with it devastating effects in terms of the quality and quantity of teaching delivery, decay infrastructural deficit, and a distorted social behavioural pattern among students as a result of long exposure to corrupt experiences in the larger society occasioned by the long stay away from school. It was thus concluded that like other aspects of life, education in Oyo State was largely impacted by the dynamics of Covid-19. The study therefore recommends that should take to e-learning and encourage its development at all levels of education. It is also recommended that all stakeholders such as the Oyo State government, teachers, parents, old students, examination bodies, philanthropist and of course, students' representatives must discourage the use of violence as means to settling disputes among groups and individuals.

KEYWORDS: Ethnicity, Religion, Conflict and National Security

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted hugely on the economies of the world, and by extension, its educational system also. The first case of the coronavirus disease was recorded in Nigeria on the 27th of February 2020 in Lagos State; when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020). Since then, the number of people infected with the virus as reported by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has continued on a daily increase across the country. The pandemic has spread to all the 36 states of the federation not excluding the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). In order to properly and efficiently manage the situation, different measures were put in place by the government and other relevant stakeholders to halt spread of the disease.

The Federal Government set up the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 (PTF on Covid-19) (Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, 2020) which included the Minister for Health, the ministers for Education and other relevant stakeholders but was headed by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Boss Mustapha. They initially imposed a partial lockdown on Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, as one of the temporary measures of curtailing the spread of the virus but would later extend the lockdown to the whole country. The government in partnership with other state governments set up isolation centres as well as testing departments in major hospitals across the state. The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) was also put in place to provide information to the public, creating awareness about the virus and various preventive measures to curtail its spread.

It was observed that because of the large population of Nigeria, the mitigating strategies and preventive measures were not done by the government (Federal & State) alone but received help from the private sector coalition body, philanthropies and religious bodies; all who collaborated with the local governments and State governments to prevent and distribute palliative measures to curb the impact of this virus and prevent the spread. The

government enacted new forms of rules and regulations such as social distancing, avoidance of social gatherings, lockdowns and travel bans. These affected human behaviour in forms of stress, fear, social stigma, increased levels of depression, confusion and various types of anxiety. Apart from the behavioural change of people in the country, the livelihood of workers was also affected to a large extent following an increase in the records of job losses, reduction in the income of the people. This reduction in income of the people due to recession was caused by the lockdown among other factors.

Furthermore, it was also observed in Nigeria and other parts of the world that the education system was shut down and therefore kept school administrators, teachers and students back at home. As a result of these disruptions, the government at the federal and state levels in Nigeria responded by putting some measures such as online teaching to digitalize the Nigerian education system. Online education though not new in Nigeria, had a massive impact on education significantly such that modern devices with wireless internet access could help people receive and send completed tasks in one click from any location to another, be it rural or urban. With the aid of research and innovations, new online education software products have demonstrated that learning outside the formal classroom could be more exciting and engaging. It also makes it easy for physically challenged student who does not have the ability to attend classes to run live translations of any study by using pre-recorded video lessons and also have their test online through same means. Unfortunately, this appeared to not be the case in most cities in Nigeria, Oyo State inclusive. It was observed in Oyo state and other parts of Nigeria that most teachers lacked online teaching skills as well as the use of technologies that are associated with online teaching thereby making it difficult for digital teaching and learning to take place during the COVID-19.

Since education is the bed rock of national development which instils beliefs, norms, values, knowledge and skills, hence the consequences of education system shutdown is such that secondary schools in Oyo State which are considered as the critical foundation of tertiary education were affected. In that regards the income of teachers and supports staff were

affected, those who used the school environment as their source of living were also affected among others. This raises some salient questions such as, “ To what extent has COVID-19 pandemic affected teaching and learning process in public secondary schools in Oyo State?” “In what ways did modern technology help in the teaching of students during the lockdown?” In what ways were the income and other sources of living of teachers in public secondary schools in Oyo state affected?” “What were the changes that took place in the pattern of food and non -food consumption during the pandemic?” The answer to these and other questions are critical for policy purpose. To achieve the objective of this paper, desk research was adopted and recommendations were made based on the findings.

Conceptual Clarification

Covid-19

According to WHO (2020), Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARs - CoV-2 Virus whose origin is traceable to Wuhan region in China in the year 2019. like most pandemics, covid-19 has two features that unequivocally qualifies it to be ranked as a pandemic. Scocik (2021) discussed the spread and severity of pandemic with particular reference to Covid-19. he was of the opinion that while Covid-19 spread as wild fire across the globe, its severity in tern of existential challenge it posed to humanity is phenomenal. It has recorded so far, the highest figure of human casualty when compared with past pandemics of similar nature and precisely SARS-CoV-1 of 200) and MERS-CoV of 2012.

The present global data of Covid-19 infection according to WHO is put at 430,257,564 while the death figure recorded is 5,922,049 and the recovery figure put at 363,641,734. the data above suggest that Covid-19 is health challenge that has come to redefine humanity in all facets of life be it existential, economic, political, technological, cultural and most importantly in education.

Education

Various scholars have attempted to define what education is. The word EDUCATION comes from two Latin words “EDUCARE” meaning. to bring out and “EDUCERE’ meaning,

improvement or enhancement. In essence, education is seen as a process of bringing out improvement and progress out of an individual. Mahatma Gandhi defined education as an all-round drawing out of the best in a child and man - body, mind and spirit. Another scholar John Adams, saw education as a bipolar process where one personality acts upon another to modify the development of the other.

All the explanations above suggests that education is an all-round development of an individual that touches on his physical, mental, social, emotional, ethical, creative and spiritual development. It is a deliberate attempt to bring out rather than indoctrinating the child. It aims to develop to the fullest the potentiality and endowment of a child. Simply put, we can say that education is both the art and science of developing and ensuring the cultivation of appropriate learning that makes a child a functional member of the society he finds himself.

Theoretical Framework

Conspiracy Theory: This theory was propounded by K.M. Douglas and was essentially put in place to explain why people, nations or group strongly hold the view that an event or phenomenon that befalls a group or society is a deliberate act of sabotage or espionage by the other party. Such a thinking is further strengthened when there are no immediate explanation or solutions to challenges facing them. At the core of the conspiracy theory is the belief and sometimes an overt assertion that a co-competitor in the social, economic, political and global space had deliberately ignite a problem to cause social dislocation for the victim. The inability of the victim at the receiving end to find a satisfactory answer to the challenges bedevilling the group, nation or society presently or in the immediate future reinforces the thinking that there is a hidden agenda targeted at the group being perpetuated by a suspected known enemy.

Relating this theory to the Covid-19 pandemic is the thinking that the virus that led to the outbreak of Covid-19 was manufactured by the Chinese in one of their laboratories with the sole aim of waging war on the United States of America who is considered as being a foremost and domineering world economic power that must be checkmated at all cost. The spilled-over effect of the covid-19 pandemic as at today suggests that it is a leveller that

respects no nation be it weak or strong. It has thrown up both existential and social challenges that has impacted negatively on the fortunes of the world over. It has brought with it the need to think of new ways to live our lives in all ramifications, the education sector not exempted.

The Impact of Covid-19 on Secondary Schools in Oyo State

The most social challenge of the global response to COVID-19 was the closure of schools to stem the spread of the pandemic. This action as observed deprived millions of education personnel their means of income and reduced their overall well-being as well as depriving students from all forms of learning. The economic shock associated with the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be significantly larger than the shock of the financial crisis of 2008/09. The spread of the pandemic as perceived had a high human cost with virtually many households struggling to cope as costs continued to grow. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant trade disruptions, drops in oil price, and the tightening of financial conditions in Nigeria and many other countries. These effects have already led to large increases in unemployment and underemployment and has continued to threaten the survival of many households, institutions and firms. In response to this, governments, agencies and institution began to put policies in place to slow the transmission and to improve the livelihood of the citizens.

As at March 25th, 2020, approximately 150 nations throughout the world had reported school closures. School closures are important because they serve as a strategy to establish social distance in order to slow the transmission of the disease and avoid an increase in cases that would put a load on health services. The effectiveness of the closures as a measure to halt the spread of the virus, especially in Africa, will be determined by the exact timing of the closures, the age structure of the population, and the length of the closure. Others predicted that school closures would result in an extended period of disrupted instruction, causing children to become disconnected from their studies, which would have the potential cost of reversing gains in learning results (Jamerson & Mitchell, 2020).

Obiakor and Adeniran (2020) estimated that 23.5 million enrolled primary school students in Nigeria during the period under review are absent in school. Also, they were of the opinion that not only will the closure of schools affect up to 46 million students across the country, but 4.2 million students in the North-East states of Borno, Adawama, and Yobe, which contain the most vulnerable populations of children in Nigeria, will be the most affected. The economic impact of COVID-19 in most nations can be felt through three scenarios: the labour productivity shock, which results in an average drop in labour productivity of 1.4 percent during the pandemic in 2020 due to loss of jobs. The second shock is the total factor productivity shock, which refers to a temporary halt in domestic activities due to disruptions in distribution and the inability to provide inputs and services because of worker quarantine. This resulted in a 1 percent reduction in global GDP total factor productivity growth. The trade shock is the final effect, which occurred through international trade interruptions and have increased the cost of conducting business by roughly 5% on average. This is enough to increase the cost of global economic growth by 1% (Vos, Martin & Laborde, 2020).

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted education and raised global health concerns, no country or race is immune to the virus, and the entire world appears to be swamped by the pandemic's rapid expansion and catastrophic impacts. The pandemic knows no bounds, and its impact is widespread and swift with restrictions on people's ability to migrate, trade, and interact. It also threw the entire world into a state of emergency, the reality of the situation was difficult to face, and Nigeria's school system remains one of the worst-affected by the pandemic (Akuh, 2020). As the country grapples with these issues, a key question arises: Is Nigeria's education system designed to adjust quickly to changing circumstances? Given the current state of affairs in the globe, a country's ability to ensure that learning continues will be primarily dependent on its ability to quickly harness existing technology, create suitable infrastructure, and mobilize stakeholders to establish alternative learning programmes.

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According to UNESCO (2020), the pandemic has changed the contexts in which curricula are implemented, not only due to the use of platforms and the need to consider circumstances other than those for which the curriculum was originally designed, but also due to the fact that certain knowledge and competencies are more relevant in the current context. A variety of decisions must be made and resources must be made available, posing a challenge to school districts, educational institutions, and teachers. This is true of curricular changes and priority, as well as the contextualization required to guarantee that the contents are relevant to the present emergency situation, and is based on consensus among all stakeholders. These adaptations must also highlight the capabilities and values that have emerged as a result of the current circumstances, such as solidarity, self-directed learning, self-care, care for others, social-emotional skills, health, and resilience, among others. The social impacts of corona virus and the actions taken to reduce its spread are severe, such that the circumstances have resulted in a unique situation in which people had to change their routine lifestyles, their activity patterns, the way they work and how they travel which are three facets of daily life (Mathijs, Faber & Hamersma, 2020).

Strengthening the resilience of education systems, according to UNESCO (2020), enables countries to respond to current issues such as safely reopening schools and positions them to better cope with future crises. Governments might focus on fairness and inclusion, strengthen risk management capacities at all levels of the system, provide strong leadership and coordination, and improve dialogue and communication procedures in this respect. In addressing the issue of disruption in education learning in Nigeria, a range of technological tools and services have been designed that can allow remote teaching and learning. Radio platforms are being used to transmit lesson instructions to a big number of children at the same time more than ever before. The majority of education service providers have also modified their platforms to allow large-scale remote learning. Apart from English language and mathematics instructional websites have expanded their content, by offering other disciplines that primary and secondary school students are obliged to acquire during this time. Also,

education technology tools were rebuilt to include elements that allow parents or guardians participate in their children's or wards' remote learning (Adegboye & Henshaw, 2020). According to Simon and Hans (2020), the global lockdown of educational institutions will result in severe (and likely uneven) interruptions in students' learning, disturbances in internal assessments, and the cancellation or replacement of public examinations for qualifications.

Response to Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools during COVID-19 Lockdown

According to COVID-19 Global Impact Survey, all institutions of learning in Nigeria shut their campuses in the wake of the outbreak of the disease as a precautionary measure. About 80% of secondary schools were not prepared to move their teaching online and had to suspend teaching in the aftermath of the Pandemic. In the same manner, most of secondary schools at state level including Oyo State have no communication infrastructures in place to reach their students. Although, there were frantic efforts to devise means of exploring online teaching to continue with the interrupted academic sessions but truth is that states secondary education was not prepared and had little or no online teaching and learning infrastructure.

Online teaching refers to the use of technology to renew, simplify and improve processes, tasks and products (St.meld. nr. 27 (2015– 2016), 2016). Going further, online teaching in secondary Education is concerned with the essential process of change that involves existing forms of propagating knowledge and acquiring expertise, understanding of roles and institutional structures, and cooperation in and around secondary education system (Hochschulforum Digitalisierung 2016). Nigeria as country in this period of academic shutdown made several plans and pronouncements for online learning. For instance, the Minister for Education directed that all academic institutions in the country to resume online teaching during a teleconference with stakeholders in the education sector, sometimes in March, 2020 - September, only a handful of government owned secondary schools (public secondary schools) have broached the subject of resumption. Teaching has not resumed in majority of the public secondary schools and no concrete steps were made to put the modalities that will facilitate teaching and learning into place.

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Commenting further, on the directive of the Ministry of Education that Institutions of learning in the country should commence online teaching, an editorial in the Guardian Newspaper described it as hypocritical. An opinion submitted that the regulatory agency knows for sure that the minimum ICT infrastructure and basic tools are not available in most secondary education institutions in the country. Tools like interactive digital whiteboards, smart phones, laptop computers and notebooks are not common sights. If such are found, they most likely belong to children of wealthy individuals and are not owned by these institutions. The opinion also touched on the functionality aspect that borders on stable and affordable Internet connectivity, security measures such as filters and site blockers and constant electricity. It is an open secret that electricity is a privilege and not a right in the country. There is also the serious challenge of internet connection in the nations' secondary education system which is crucial to the success of the initiative. Going through most of the secondary schools learning infrastructures in the five go-political zones of Oyo State like; Ibadan, Ibarapa, Oke-Ogun, Oyo and Ogbomoso in Oyo State Nigeria, hardly can you find schools with V-SAT or Internet mast which could aid teaching and learning during the school's lockdown. It was therefore obvious that online teaching could not work during the COVID-19 pandemic academic lockdown in Oyo State and other States of the Federation, except for few televisions and radio teaching which were also affected by poor electricity and poverty in many homes in the country.

Conclusion

COVID-19 Pandemic as observed in Oyo State and Nigeria in general created interruptions and confusions in the secondary education system which is yet to be addressed. The consequences occasioned by academic lockdown in secondary schools in the state as witnessed were, most students were not engaged in learning for a long period (one term), yet were promoted to the next class, this by no means will affect their fragile education foundation. The decay of academic infrastructures affected teaching and learning such that most teachers do not have online teaching skills and this affected the education system to a great extent,

more so, as a result of the long period of academic lockdown some of the students' social behaviour were affected such that some students at secondary school level engaged in fraudulent ways of making money (internet/spiritual scam).

Amid these, is an opportunity to use the momentum created by the COVID-19 education disruption experience to re-position the secondary school education in Oyo State and Nigeria in general, not only to meet the present challenges, but embrace the opportunities in this unexpected education change to reposition secondary education in the state to withstand any shock that may arise in the nearest future. Governments, who are the major owners of these public secondary schools, should take the lead in redrafting the education policies to fully embrace online education platform. Finally, the Government of Oyo state and Nigeria in general should pay special attention to create equal opportunities, especially for disadvantaged students. If these are done, the public secondary schools will be composed to face any education shocks in the future.

Recommendations

In line with the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on public secondary schools as observed the following recommendations were made;

- Oyo State government in collaboration teachers, parents, old students, examination bodies, philanthropist and of course, the students' representatives should come together to find out workable and prompt responses to revert the ugly education infrastructure decay that affected teaching and learning during the lockdown.
- There should be capacity building and regular training of public schools' teachers in modern teaching technology to strengthen teachers teaching skills to enhance students' learning in an online teaching environment. This will involve developing existing practices and leadership involvement within staff development programmes. It should be noted that increased use and experimentation of ICT teaching method will support students' learning and would improve students and teacher's knowledge and as well support teaching and learning in the face of education disruption in the state.

- There should be reorientation of students on societal values and norms to enable them become functional members of the society.

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