

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NIGERIA HIGHER INSTITUTIONS.

BY

UMAR-OLAREWAJU, HARUNA ISHOLA
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY,
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES,
OSUN STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
ILA-ORANGUN.

hiumarwaju@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the impact of COVID-19 on the teaching and learning in Nigeria higher institutions. The outbreak poses serious concern to global educational system. Efforts to contain Coronavirus prompted unplanned closure of schools in many countries of the world. Conventional strategies of teaching are not adequate for teaching geography students during the pandemic because of the lockdown and social distancing. After the announcement of closure of institutions, Nigeria is one of the nations where students are worried and went through a difficult phase of learning because a lot of course works could not be done. Many learning management systems are introduced but none of them could come even closer to the impact and quality a physical classroom can provide. The e-learning would be the best alternative. The findings shows that COVID-19 has adverse impact on education as many educators and students relied on technology to ensure continued learning online during pandemic. However, online education was hindered by poor infrastructure such as poor network, erratic power supply, poor digital skills. The study underscores the damaging impact of COVID-19 on the teaching and learning of geography education and need for all educational institutions, educators and learners to adopt technology and improve their digital skills.

Keywords: Impact, COVID-19, Lockdown and Social Distancing, Teaching, Learning.

Introduction

The novel COVID-19 virus which originated from the Wuhan province of China in December 2019 disrupted the educational system of the world, causing almost all educational institutions to close ranging from nursery to tertiary institutions. As of mid-June 2020, approximately 1.101 billion learners had been forced to stay at home as a result of closure of the schools due to the pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). The closure of

schools in response to combating COVID-19 affected not just students but teachers and families as well. It also affected the socio-economic well being of the nation (Peterson, 2020). The virus grinded the economic and educational sector of the world to a halt. The closure of educational institutions measure was enacted to reduce the transmission rate and safe lives, although there is no any tentative data to reflect the effectiveness of these measures, except that it delays the time taken to reach peak mortality rates (UNESCO, 2020).

The Coronavirus pandemic has no boundaries, and the effect is large and fast. Just within few months of the outbreak of the disease, it has drastically changed the lifestyles of the entire world with billions of people being forced to 'stay at home', 'observe self isolations', and work and learn from home. It has limited the freedom of people to move, trade or associate. Not only has COVID-19 caused a total lockdown in many countries across the world, but it also caused the death of thousands of people including, women, and the elderly.

The Nigerian government through the permanent secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education, ordered the closure of all educational institutions which includes tertiary secondary and primary schools nationwide on the 26th of March, 2020 (Olisah, 2020), as a non-pharmaceutical and preventive measure. This measure promoted self-isolation and social distancing which is effective in mitigating the spread of the virus. Every student was advised to self-isolate, maintain social distancing and keep human interaction to the barest minimum. The ministry of education then threw its weight behind e-learning and encouraged the educational sector to embrace it, since all schools were closed down across the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Clement, 2020). Keying into this, various states started their own e-learning services via varying methods. Some started airing educational programmes and teaching via radio service and local television. Other embraced the e-learning portals the government made available for them, while some created their own e-learning platform and deployed it. Telecom service providers also keyed into the e-learning and started making technical adjustments to their systems to accommodate free access to these

e-learning platforms (Azeezat, 2020).

Efforts were made by the government and its stakeholders to turn to using the e-learning technology as an alternative to the routine classroom pedagogy, which is mainly a classroom and teacher centred model. Their efforts exposed lapses in the implementation of this e-learning initiative caused mainly by the under financing of the educational sector and less attention that was initially paid to the system. The more exposed the glaring digital divide that exist between students from poor homes and students from rich homes, ranging from internet availability and affordability to availability of consistent Electrical power to charge mobile devices. It also exposed the technological illiteracy amidst the Nigerian students and teachers whereby they are ignorant of the processes in accessing the internet and some applications designed for this purpose.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research work is to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the teaching and learning in Nigeria higher institutions.

COVID-19 Pandemic Outbreak Effect on Educational Sector and Students Online Learning Globally

Globally, the sluggish rate of reform in learning institutions is appealing, despite thousands of years old seminar-based learning methods; structural prejudices rooted and outmoded classes. While the corona virus quickly circulating in a lot of countries, many states had required decisive and drastic steps to avert on overflowing-blown contagion. Several reports have been released on the halting enrollment at colleges and Universities. As of March 13,

the OECD projected that more than 421 million children were impacted by funding cuts declared in 39 nations or enforced there Holcombe (Huelsenman, 2020).

Linney (2020) observed that COVID-19 had indeed been just a vehicle for learning establishments all over the globe to look for groundbreaking approaches in a relatively brief timeframe. Many simplified ideas but no less inventive were introduced across the country. Traditional Simultaneous interactive education resources (including reading materials through Google Classroom) have already been brought to one University with bidirectional face to face visual training to support avoid closures in classrooms.

Akther (2020) said that class delays have a detrimental effect on academic performance for the students. School education offers critical schooling and the potential for growth and advancement for children and young adults are robbed. Those limitations for impoverished learners who continue to have less educational resources outside education one severe.

A proactive response is critical to the containment of any disease outbreak, but the coronavirus took the world by surprise and most countries were not prepared initially for the pandemic including the world powers. Shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19, the World Health Organization (W.H.O) issued guidelines and updates on how to mitigate the spread of pandemic, and thereafter, many countries adopted different measures in addition to the W.H.O guidelines to contain the spread of the disease. There were lock-downs in most parts of the world, and people were asked to work from home. Some countries even deployed their military to enforce coronavirus restrictions, and to reduce the

number of covidiot. There were increased demands for health equipment including protective gowns, sanitizers, face masks, and hand gloves. Countries like the United States and U.K also opened their visitation doors for medical professionals such as doctors and nurses who were working or willing to treat the effects of COVID-19. Also, large gatherings and sporting activities were suspended at both local and international levels.

Global responses to Coronavirus pandemic were varied from country to country, but most countries endorsed the closure of school strategy as a means to contain the spread of COVID-19. Below are the selected COVID-19 responses globally in relation to the closure of schools.

In Nigeria, the federal government ordered a total closure of all schools. The decision was largely applauded and the National University Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), regulating bodies for higher institutions in Nigeria gave directive a follow up directive to all Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics in the Country to shutdown. The government also suspended social gatherings, and workers were asked to work from home. An Italian who was reported to be first case of coronavirus in Nigeria was successfully treated and discharged according to the government but new cases emerged thereafter.

In Germany, schools were shutdown in response to the spread of coronavirus. The death rate due to coronavirus was reported to be low compared to their neighbours. The country also earmarked more than 800 billion dollars to fight the pandemic.

In Ghana, schools were shutdown to curtail

the spread of coronavirus disease. The government also released 100million US dollars to enhance the fight against the pandemic. The country reacted proactively to contain the spread of the virus.

In the United States, many schools were closed down, and scheduled tests and examinations were also cancelled. The report shows that some of the schools were closed down for coronavirus. In the U.S might not resume back for the rest of the academic year (Madeline, 2020). New York and California States were among the worst-hit states in the U.S and the number of cases increased steadily despite strong measures put in place by both the Federal and State Governments to curtail the pandemic. At a point, the country surpassed China in the number of cases of Coronavirus, but the country is determined to defeat the pandemic. School closures in the U.S affected over 60million students in the country.

In Saudi Arabia, Middle East Monitor (2020) reported that schools and universities across the kingdom were closed down for coronavirus by the Ministry of Education. The government however, directed that “virtual schools and distance education be activated to ensure that the educational process continues in an effective and quality manner. The closure of schools in Spain particularly in Madrid led to the suspension of job contracts for people who work at school cafeterias and in special education. The closure of schools in Spain was very necessary considering that the country lost 849 people in a day due to the pandemic.

In France, the government ordered the closure of all schools in a televised broadcast by President Macron. The measure was in response to the increased health crisis in the country due to

coronavirus. The country was badly affected just like their counterparts in many parts of the world. The coronavirus were reported to have Originated from Wuhan, China and it was the epicenter at the beginning of the outbreak. Schools and other public institutions were shutdown to mitigate the spread of the virus. The closure of schools and other measures put in place by the government proved effective and the pandemic was contained to a large extent. The country also closed its borders with some neighbouring countries.

In Madagascar, the country has recorded zero COVID-19 death so far, and the country has claimed a breakthrough in Herbal medicine for COVID-19 treatment. However, the WHO issued a warning that such claim has not been scientifically approved and cannot be recommended by the organization as cure for COVID-19.

It is important to note that while many countries were shut down, some other countries like Singapore, Sweden, Brazil, and Australia kept their schools open as a kind of strategy to contain the contagion. The untimely closure of schools was good supportive measures to contain the spread of the disease but it also had some adverse consequences on millions of students globally who were faced with multiple challenges in their education.

Impact of COVID-19 on Educational System

The Outbreak of Coronavirus negatively affected educational activities worldwide. The effect on the educational systems led to the widespread closure of schools. It created serious disruptions in academic activities as well as in career plans. As part of the global efforts to combat COVID-19, many countries across the

world closed down schools in an attempt to contain the coronavirus pandemic. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) monitoring over 100 countries implemented nationwide closures, impacting over half of the world's student population. Even Britain, where prime Minister Boris Johnson-one of those who earlier opposed the move, later admitted that “closing down schools could place further downward pressure on the upward curve of the Coronavirus outbreak. Some of the countries that closed down schools due to COVID-19 included, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, China, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Japan, Iran, USA, France, Spain, Italy, Lebanon, Thailand, Germany, and South Korea, etc. School closures carry high social, educational and economic costs, and the disruptions they cause touch people across communities, but their impact is particularly severe for disadvantaged persons and their families (UNESCO, 2020).

UNESCO Director-General, Andrey Azoulay cited by VOA News (2020) warned that “the global scale and speed of the educational disruption due to Coronavirus is unparalleled and if prolonged could threaten the right to education”. No doubts, unplanned school closures can cause severe problems for students, educators, parents and the society at large. It could negatively affect the academic interest and performance of students. If the students are not engaged productively, it could lead to idleness which might result in youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, and poor academic performance. The US centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) also expressed concerns about the implications of school closures. According to the CDC,

“longer closures may result in more students congregating outside of schools”.

McGowan (2020) stated that school closing is very controversial and it can have spillover effect on a large number of students in receiving schools. It can affect the quality of teaching and learning and academic achievement particularly for students with special needs or those with learning difficulties that often requires more physical attention and guidance from the teachers. Though technology can be used to remedy some of the fallouts from school closures, but cannot replace the important effect of face-to-face interactions by students and teachers. Besides, many students do not have the necessary access to supportive technologies which makes it harder to maximize the potentials of learning technology during school closures.

However, against all odds, mathematical model and empirical analysis of the reactive closures of schools in past pandemics indicates that it reduces the total number of cases in the community by 25 percent and postpones the peak of the pandemic by a week or two, while proactive closures of school during pandemics remains one of the most beneficial interventions that can be employed to mitigate the impact of epidemic disease (Erika and Nicholas, 2020).

Impact on Parents and Teachers

The pandemic has affected not only to students but parents and teachers. Most of the schools in Nigeria are teaching online to their students. Many schools are not really comfortable with such online courses, and both students and teachers have been confronted with a problem. Both the parents and teachers worry about their jobs. This is presumed to increase the rate of

unemployment. Recent graduates in Nigeria fear that the current situation will mean the withdrawal of job offers from companies. Estimates of unemployment at the centre of monitoring Nigeria's economy rose from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% in early April, with the urban unemployment rate risen to 30.9%. Education will gradually decline when unemployment rises (Christakis et.al, 2020).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

In the lives of children and educators worldwide, the effect of pandemic underlines the crucial role of education in the psychosocial wellbeing and social and emotional development. Today, educators need to assist young people in the creation of vital mentality in order to provide significant environment around them which is impacted by the virus. The government issued a statement for the lockdown of the nation to cater the increase of the cases of the virus, this has affected not only the education system but also affected the minds of the students, teachers and parents.

The false news in the social media and other platforms are also creating a negative impact on the young mind of the nation. As social and emotional learning was already significant in modern education.

Challenges in the Periods of COVID-19 on Education Sector

- (1) Substantial investment in infrastructures and facilities to develop a proper learning platform.
- (2) Periodical training and workshops for the educators and the technical staff to enhance their skill set and expertise.
- (3) Educators readiness in embarking on

computer technology-oriented pedagogy.

- (4) Limited time for the educators to finish the prescribed course
- (5) Reduced global employment opportunities.
- (6) Payments of schools, colleges fees are delayed.
- (7) Traditional learning environment versus virtual learning environment.

Concept of Online Learning Education

Technology is a key component of education in the 21st century. The increasing use of technology in education has modified teachers' methods from the traditional approach that often place them as dispensers of knowledge to a more flexible approach where they act as facilitators, mentors and motivators to inspire students to participate and learn (Onyema and Deborah, 2019). Technology facilitates Remote learning, Distance Learning, Virtual Learning, Blended Learning, Mobile learning, Distributed learning, Machine learning, Ubiquitous learning, Deep learning, cooperative learning. Most aspect of education is going digital, and education stakeholders including students are confronted with the challenge of transition to online education. The use of appropriate educational technologies increases accessibility to learning resources such as Massire Open Online Courses (MOOCS), and multiple learning approaches to meet the need of diverse learners.

Online learning education is a general concept for teaching and learning with the aid of technology tools and platforms. The success of online education depend on factors including, good internet connections, learning software, digital

skills, availability and access to technology. Online education platforms are vital tools that support inclusive education and learning. It has its roots in distance education and the emergence of digital technologies that facilitate the efficient and reliable delivery of lectures, virtual classroom sessions and other instructional materials and activities vis the internet. With the high penetration of the internet and mobile technologies across the globe, online education platforms can be maximized to bridge the gaps in education, thereby reducing the rate of global illiteracy. There are broad ranges of online education tools/platforms that facilitate online education particularly in times of outbreaks like the coronavirus pandemic. Some of these technology tools are:

- (1) Skype.com.
- (2) Blackboard.com
- (3) Vedamo.com.
- (4) Edmodo.com.
- (5) Zoom.us
- (6) WhatsApp.com.
- (7) Openculture.com
- (8) Funbrain.com
- (9) Schoology.com
- (10) Goggle hangout.
- (11) Easyclass.com
- (12) Alison.com.
- (13) Youtube.com
- (14) Udemy.com
- (15) Edx.com
- (16) Memory.com
- (17) Gotomeeling.com
- (18) Lessonpaths.com
- (19) Khanacademy.org.
- (20) Rcampus.com

Challenges of Learning from Home

This is not a new phenomenon as the home has long been epicenters of learning

particularly informal education. Learning from home is becoming a new normal for students. Education Task (2020) said the majority of higher institutions students prefer to study in the comfort of their own home because learners tend to have everything at their disposal without having to leave their chairs. However, the realities of receiving formal education from home could be very challenging to many educators, learners and parents especially those in developing countries where the accessibility, availability and use of technology in education are not widespread.

Apart from the cost of accessing online education, many other factors such as network issues, poor power supply, distractions, poor digital skills, inaccessibility and availability issues can also hinder smooth study from home. There is also the problem of time to learn new technologies that might be required to learn from home, and noises that emanate internally and externally from neighbours and neighborhood. Because unequal access to technology is another serious concern for many countries, prolonged school closures could deprive millions of students' access to education particularly those in third world countries, rural areas, and people with special needs. UNESCO understood these challenges, and efforts were made by them to help educators and students in the affected countries to teach and learn online from their homes through the provision of free software that facilitates remote education. The challenges imposed by coronavirus could be transformed into an opportunity by learners to advance their problem solving skills and digital capabilities.

Conclusion

The study affirms that the devastating

impacts of COVID-19 on the teaching and learning of geography in higher institution of learning in Nigeria and the various barriers that hinder students and teachers engagement in online education for continued learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

COVID-19 has major impacts on school characteristics, including research, academic programmes, staff professional development and jobs in the academic sectors, etc. The impacts were felt by both educational institutions, educators, students and parents and other stakeholders in education. The study emphasizes the need for adoption of technology in education as a way to curb the impacts of coronavirus and other future pandemics in education. Thus, the decision to shutdown schools for COVID-19 across the world may be hurtful, but it is sensible considering the rate of spread, and the dangers imposed by COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented school closures for coronavirus remains a lesson and a warning to the entire educational world especially those that are yet to embrace or adopt emerging learning

technologies that support online or remote education.

Recommendation

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the educational system of Nigeria, the following recommendations need to be adhered to:

- (1) Need for diversification and transformation of economies by strengthening the productive capacity of private sector to transform raw materials locally.
- (2) Need for increase in agricultural production to enhance the food value chains to meet domestic and dependable exporting consumption by other nations.
- (3) Set up and implement strategic job opportunity programmes to reduce the alarming rate of unemployment within Nigeria.
- (4) Need for channelization of more expenditure to the educational sector as to increase the nation's investment in human capital in the long run.

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