

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria education system experience a huge setback as a result of the unprecedented pandemic that forced so many schools to shut down. When the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) claimed so many lives and spread fast around the country. The government had to take drastic step by giving directive that all schools should shut down as the disease is likely to spread fast among the younger ones, especially in primary schools. This is because primary pupil may not be able to adhere strictly to all Covid-19 protocol. However, the reopening of schools when the number of cases reduces called for all stakeholders in education to make serious adjustment to the new normal in the society. The school had to make provision for hand washing basin, hand sanitizer and ensure learners' sitting arrangement so as to give room to social distancing. This study will look into the impact covid-19 had on primary school administration and give recommendation for stakeholders.

Keywords: Covid-19, Primary school administration, learners

Introduction

There is no gain saying that resources in educational institutions are inadequate to achieve all set goals. The emergence of Covid-19 and the need for most school to make provision for facilities that will enable institutions to adhere to all protocol make it worrisome especially in public owned schools. Although, government made provision for hand washing materials, sanitizer as well as thermometer, this is to ensure proper management and control of

the spread of the disease among the people. Unfortunately, the provision made were inadequate for the number of schools and pupils in the state. Therefore, the need for the monitoring and proper use of the few provided.

Educational administration is a process that enables school management to make quality use of available limited resources to achieve educational goals. Administration as the capacity to effectively coordinate many and other conflicting social, energies in a single organization that will operate in unity. This can only be

achieved if there is deliberate effort to mobilize people, procedures and materials to achieve desired results.

Craig A.D. (2018) described educational administration as the study and practice of managing the resources, tasks and communications involved in running a school. Educational administration is a process through which the school administrations arrange and co-ordinate the resources available to education for the purpose of achieving the goals of educational system (Amadi, 2008).

Primary Education Administration

Primary education is the foundation where other levels of education are built (Oni, 2009). The quality of primary education received by a child guide his/her performance as he/she progresses in education. Primary education is the basic education received by pupils to enable them to acquire necessary appropriate literacy, numeracy communicative, manipulative and life skills read and write.

The administration of primary education in Nigeria passed through different stages and each stage exercised its control from time to time. Government establishes boards that are in-charge of proper administration of primary education.

Primary education is aimed at:

- (a) Helping the child to develop intellectually, physically, morally, socially and emotionally;
- (b) Producing well-qualified

citizens that are capable of going to secondary and tertiary institutions and

- (c) Assisting primary school learners who cannot further their education to become useful citizens to themselves and community at large (Quadri, 2001)

This shows the importance of primary education over other levels of education. Adesina (2011) also stated that primary education serves as the foundational level of all other education by providing children with a good preparatory ground for further education. It is however, disturbing to see the state of learning facilities in most public schools in Nigeria. The facilities are dilapidated, ancient and not conducive for learning. Other problems facing primary education administration are non-payment of teachers' salary, insecurity, lack of instructional materials, pupils are forced to learn under shades of tree, partitioned classes and take their benches home daily to avoid been stolen. Teaching aids are unavailable for teaching-learning process and some teachers are not committed as a result of salary been paid (Olaniyan & Obadara, 2008).

The above stated problems of primary education system may hinder the achievement of Universal Basic Education goals.

The establishment of Universal Basic Education Board as well as state Universal Education Board are moves by the

Government to ensure attention is given to proper administration of primary education.

The Universal Basic education programme was introduced in 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a reform programmed which was targeted at providing access to, and ensuring quality of basic education all over Nigeria. The objectives of UBE programme is as follows:

- a) Ensuring an uninterrupted access to 9-year formal education by providing free and compulsory basic education for every child of school-going age.
- b) Providing early childhood care development and education.
- c) Reducing school drop-out and improving relevance, quality and efficiency;
- d) Acquisition of literacy numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living

The above indicate the importance of basic education for every citizen of the country. The need to ensure easy access for all citizens and achievement of citizens who are willing and ready to contribute to national development.

COVID-19 and Primary School Administration

The world panic has coronavirus disease spread like wild fire all over the globe. It all started in China and gradually move round the world. **Covid-19** is a viral disease which can be contacted through body contact and body fluid of the infected

person. Nigeria recorded its first case on the 28th of February, 2020 and in less than two months the figure skyrocket. This made Federal government announce the shutdown of schools with effect from March, 23rd 2020 all over the country so as to contain the spread of the disease. Due to Nigeria factors, no provision was made for pupils to continue learning at home using other available means such as virtual learning. Although, some state government made provision for teaching on radio and television but most of the students could not access it due to lack of constant electricity supply. Government also made provision for food items to selected schools in some part of the country.

Before covid-19 outbreak and school close down, government provide feeding facilitate for pupils on a daily basis, this was done to alleviate poverty level on public school learners but due to covid-19 outbreak, this programme has been limited to Basic three pupils in some schools.

The inability of the government to make adequate provision for facilities needed for effective teaching and learning such as spacious classroom to give room for social distancing of pupils in the classroom. No proper orientation of pupils on the need to adhere strictly to all protocols so as reduce the number of cases been recorded daily. Another problem facing public primary schools is the space problem, despite the fact that there must be space in-between learners sitting arrangement, but due to overpopulation of pupils, it has hindered the practices (i.e. proper spacing sitting

arrangement) rather two pupils were allowed on a bench where each of them sits at the edges to maintain little gap in-between them. This is better than when learners' sit in threes and fours on a bench.

Other impacts of Covid-19 on primary school administration are:

Disruption of Academic Calendar

The Federal Ministry of Education directed all schools in Nigeria to shut down and allow students to go home. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, on 19 March, 2020, Sonny Echono told reporters that the directive of schools shutdown was part of the country's overall strategy to curtail the spread of Covid-19 virus. This greatly affects the academic calendar of all schools in Nigeria due to COVID-19. Ogunode (2020) observed that the closure of all educational institutions from primary schools to the higher institutions affect the students' academic plans and programme because many of the upper classes that supposed to do final examination to high school were unable to do so. Therefore, all academic activities including final year common entrance to high school were suspended and only e-learning programme were recommended for them on the state television, most especially in Ogun State Television and Lagos State Television (LTV) in other to educate learners on various subjects based on their scheme of work. This had great impact on learners because it exposed them to some topics that were

crucial in each of the subjects taught such as mathematics, English language, cultural and creative. Coronavirus pandemic affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closures of schools. Over 421 million learners were out of school due to school closures in response to COVID-19. **Despite the limited data, the review found that based on emerging evidence and lessons from past health crises, there was strong evidence to suggest that women and girls suffered from extreme and multifaceted negative secondary impact as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.** Some of which may include:

- Higher poverty rates (Laouan, 2020; Mahler et al, 2020; Plan International, 2020a).
- A surge in school dropout rates and child labour (De Hoop & Edmonds, 2020; Malala Fund, 2020)
- Loss of income and reduced financial empowerment (Grown & Sanchez-Paramo, 2020; UN Women, 2020)
- Increased household work (Population Council, 2020a)
- Reduced access to healthcare and increased maternal deaths (Population Council 2020; Refugees International, 2020; Women for Women International, 2020)
- Greater food insecurity and malnutrition (CARE, 2020; Population Council, 2020)

Restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 aggravated food insecurity in the region by interrupting supply chains, disrupting casual labour markets and reducing the incomes of women (CARE, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic had serious implications on school administration as ministry of education were also not opened, information needed to make appropriate provision for school reopening were also not readily available.

The impact of school closures was felt most by the world's poorest, that don't have access to alternative distance learning. Many do not have internet access or possess personal laptops or tablets. In terms of non-digital options, radio access, safe and supportive learning environments and their parents' or guardians' ability to home school are more affected than their counterparts. In Nigeria for instance, only few can afford the android cell phone which aids learners in online tutorial whereas many households have access to television, excluding the majority of learners from TV based learning options.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

No nation can develop above the level of education of its citizens, and therefore no amount budgeted for education will be too much. So many sectors was affected by the emergence of covid 19 pandemic, most especially the education sectors which was badly affected as a result of the shutdown of school and for people to quickly adjust back to school activities when it was reopened. The following recommendation was however given;

- I. The government should increase the financial provision for education.
- ii. The government should build more classrooms to accommodate the number of pupils in primary schools across the country.
- iii. States that made provisions for media classes should be supported to continue.
- iv. Provision of solar powered educational devices, pre-loaded with offline academic resources especially for pupils in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

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