An Overview of COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on Educational System in Nigeria

Ifeoma .M. OKONKWO
Department of Physical and Health Education, Federal College of Education Kano
Email: doveagle3pull87@yahoo.com
Tel: +2348050458783

Abstract
Education is the process of training man to fulfll his aim by exercising all the faculties to the fullest extent as a member of society. Education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man. Education is a never ending process and as said in a famous diction, Education starts from the womb and ends in the tomb. This paper reveals the concepts of coronavirus (COVID-19), issues, challenges and impacts on the educational system of Nigeria. The paper concluded that the outbreak of coronavirus has shaken the educational sector of Nigeria off its strength. In fact, looking at the trend of the pandemic, it could be something we are going to live with for a long period of time. The paper recommended that teachers and tertiary institutions staff are to soft-pedal their actions with the government on the reopening of schools, they can as well volunteer to make provision for the preventive kits in schools and other related health facilities to curb the further spread of coronavirus in our schools.

Keywords*: Concept of COVID-19, Nigerian Education System, Impact on Education'

Introduction

It is no surprise that the continent's experience of Covid-19 has differed widely, reflecting the preparedness of individual countries, their relative prosperity or poverty, the efficacy of their health systems and the political will of those in power. Clearly, the response of some countries and institutions has been more effective than that of others for a variety of reasons, even given the exigencies of the lockdown and school closures (Salvanas, 2011)

Africa's first case of Covid-19 was reported on 14 February 2020 in Egypt. And since then, it has spread throughout the continent. In the middle of June, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) reported that the virus was beginning to spread rapidly throughout the continent and cases of infection were increasingly being found in provincial areas outside the main capital cities. More than 70% of the deaths are taking place in only five countries: Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa and Sudan. South Africa is the most affected, accounting for 25% of the continent's total cases, with the Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces reporting a high number of cases and deaths daily." "Many countries were quick to make difficult decisions and put in place lockdowns and key public health measures such as promoting physical distancing, good hand hygiene and testing, tracing of contacts of people with Covid-19 and isolation of cases..

COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily closed educational institutions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. According to UNICEF (2019), some countries are currently implementing nationwide closures while some are implementing local closures. School closures impact not only students, teachers, and families. but have far-reaching economic and societal consequences including student debt, digital learning, food insecurity and homelessness, as well as access to childcare, health care, housing, internet and disability services (Taibat, 2020).

Concept, Issues and Consequences of COVID-19

Education is the process of training man to fulfll his aim by exercising all the faculties to the fullest extent as a member of society. "Education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man" (Aleed, 2016). Issues in education refers to parents are not involved enough, schools are closing left and right, Our schools are overcrowded, technology comes with its downsides, there is a lack of diversity in gifted education, school spending is stagnant, even in our improving economy and we are still using the teacher training methods of yesterday (Aleed, 2016).

The challenges of education system in Nigeria include lack of adequate budget, lack of policy implementation, defective examination system, poor physical facilities, lack of teacher quality, lack of implementation of education policies, directionless education, low enrollment and high scale dropouts (Aleed, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is a continuing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) Beer (2021). Sone consequence of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Nigerian Education System include but not limited to the following:

Impacts of COVID-19 on Schooling

School closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have shed a light on numerous issues affecting access to education, as well as broader socio-economic issues. As of March 12,

Zamfara International Journal of Education
The Official Journal of Faculty of Education
Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria
Maiden Edition (Volume 1, Number 1)
June, 2021

An Overview of COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on … (Okonkwo (2021)   www.zijedufugusau.com

more than 370 million children and youth are not attending school because of temporary or indefinite country wide school closures mandated by most government around the world as well has temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Student Learning Outcomes are statements that specify what students will know, be able to do or be able to demonstrate when they have completed or participated in a Course or Program. SLO's specify an action by the student that must be observable, measurable and able to be demonstrated. School closures negatively impact student learning outcomes. Schooling provides essential learning and when schools close, children and youth are deprived opportunities for growth and development. The disadvantages are disproportionate for under-privileged learners who tend to have fewer educational opportunities beyond school. When schools close, parents are often asked to facilitate the learning of children at home and can struggle to perform this task. This is especially true for parents with limited education and resources (Carlsson, 2015).

Student drop-out rates tend to increase as an effect of school closures due to the challenge of ensuring all students return to school once school closures ends. This is especially true of protracted closures. Disadvantaged, at-risk, or homeless children are more likely not to return to school after the closures are ended, and the effect will often be a life-long disadvantage from lost opportunities. Schools are also hubs of social activity and human interaction. When schools are closed, many children and youth miss out on social contact that is essential to learning and development (Petrie, 2020).

According to Thelma (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has affected more than 91% of students worldwide, with approximately 1.6 billion children and youngsters are unable to attend physical schools due to temporary closures and lockdowns. It carries high social and economic costs. The disruptions they cause affect people across communities, but their impact is more severe for disadvantaged children and their families including interrupted learning, compromised nutrition, childcare problems and consequent economic cost to families who cannot work (Dhawan, 2020). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools in urban areas began conducting classes via video telephony software such as Zoom (Palden, 2020).

Lack of access to technology or fast, reliable internet access can prevent students in rural areas and from disadvantaged families. Lack of access to technology or good internet connectivity is an obstacle to continued learning, especially for students from disadvantaged families. To aid in slowing the transmission of COVID-19, hundreds of libraries have temporarily closed. In Africa, numerous countries announced public library closures. For students without internet at home, this increases the difficulty of keeping up with distance learning (Doucet, 2020).

Impacts of COVID-19 on Childcare

Child care, otherwise known as day care, is the care and supervision of a child or multiple children at a time, whose ages range from two weeks to eighteen years. Child care is a broad topic that covers a wide spectrum of professionals, institutions, contexts, activities, and social and cultural conventions (Carr, 2012). School closures puts a strain on parents and guardians to provide childcare and manage distance learning while children are out of school. In the absence of alternative options, working parents often leave children alone when schools close and this can lead to risky behaviours, including increased influence of peer pressure and substance abuse (Thelma, 2020). Women make up almost 70% of the health care workforce, exposing them to a greater risk of

Zamfara International Journal of Education
The Official Journal of Faculty of Education
Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria
Maiden Edition (Volume 1, Number 1)
June, 2021
An Overview of COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on … (Okonkwo (2021)   www.zijedufugusau.com

infection. They often cannot attend work because of childcare obligations that result from school closures (Lavy, 2020).

Nutrition plays a critical role in cognitive development and academic performance for children. Many children worldwide rely on free or discounted meals at schools. When schools close, nutrition is especially compromised for children in schools where food is provided (Thelma, 2020). In Africa, school lunch programmes are the second-biggest anti-hunger initiative. Every year, nearly 30 million children rely on schools to provide free or low-cost meals including breakfast, lunch, snacks (Lavy.202 0).

Impacts of Covid-19 on Nigerian Education System

In Nigeria, the outbreaks of Lassa fever, bird flu, monkey pox, Ebola disease and others didn't weigh down the socio-economic and educational system as of the case of coronavirus, this has been raising dust in the country, educational system and heartfelt burden to the concern personnel, knowing well the possible effects of the prolong holidays as a result of the pandemic (Carlsson, 2015).

As schools have been closed to cope with the global pandemic, students, parents and educators around the globe have felt the unexpected ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. While governments, frontline workers and health officials are doing their best slowing down the outbreak, education systems are trying to continue imparting quality education for all during these difficult times. Many students at home/living space have undergone psychological and emotional distress and have been unable to engage productively (Petrie, 2020).

The use of online platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, virtual learning environment and social media and various group forums like Telegram, Messenger, WhatsApp and WeChat are explored and tried for teaching and learning for the first time ever to continue education. This can be explored further even after face-to-face teaching resumes, and these platforms can provide additional resources and coaching to the learners (Doucet, 2020)

Education benefits the society by helping to increase economic growth, reducing poverty, reducing crimes, increasing employment etc. and also helps the individual to earn higher income and therefore improves the latter's living standard. The COVID-19 crisis and the unparalleled education disruption is far from over. As many as 100 countries have yet to announce a date for schools to reopen and across the world, governments, unions, parents and children are grappling with when and how to approach the next phase. Countries have started planning to reopen schools nationwide, either based on grade level and by prioritizing exam classes, or through localized openings in regions with fewer cases of the virus. However, given the continued virulence of the virus, the majority of countries surveyed in May–June 2020 had yet to decide on a reopening date. These decisions carry enormous social and economic implications and will have lasting effects on educators, on children and youth, on their parents – especially women – and indeed on societies as a whole. Going to school is the best public policy tool available to develop skills and potentials, school time can be fun, and from an economic point of view the primary point of being in school is that it increases a child's ability to become a useful and acceptable member of the society. Even a relatively short time in school has a longer impact in the life of a child; a short period of missed school may have consequences for skill growth in future. This is why we cannot estimate how much the COVID-19 interruption will

An Overview of COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on … (Okonkwo (2021)   www.zijedufugusau.com

affect learning; it is only the visible effect we can see, the gradual decay of inbuilt abilities may not be easily noticed very precisely (Wondwosen, 2020), .

Managing Coronavirus Pandemic in Nigeria Education System

United Nation International Cultural Education Fund (UNICEF) Nigeria (2019) response team to coronavirus, designed a framework according to a specific need resulting from COVID19 crisis. This framework is to give partners concrete information on the impact of the pandemic so far on the educational sector and further suggest ideas of how they can support in term prevention, how they can continue to support learners during the pandemic lockdown period that schools are on complete lockdown and more detailed guidance on how the education partners can support both the federal and states' Ministries of Education to re-start learning on a gallant note and the activities to prioritize once the shutdown of schools is lifted.

According to UNICEF Nigeria (2019), there were three strategic selected objectives linked to the COVID19 main consequence on school system: School closure: Before, during and after (School reopening) the school closure.

1. Prevent spread and transmission of coronavirus through and among learners, teachers, parents and School Based Management Committee (SBMC).
2. Mitigate/Minimize the impact of school closure due to COVID19 on learning and wellbeing of learners, teachers, parents and SBMC through alternatives solution.
3. Ensure effective, inclusive and safe return to quality learning for learners, teachers, and SBMC (WHO, 2020)

As at April, 2020 many states in Nigeria have switched to the radio-television means of communicating with learners whereby teachers go on air teaching their respective subjects and topics to learners listening and watch at home, some learning channels were lunched on various satellite networks even though not every home in Nigeria can afford the purchase and monthly subscriptions of satellite networks. At least with this development some of learners are still being updated in their academics. All necessary health precautions are to be put in place in various concerned schools, the ministries of education and school authorities are to abide by the laid down rules while the temporary school activities in ongoing (Taibat, 2020).

Conclusion

The outbreak of corona virus has shaken the educational sector of Nigeria off its strength. In fact, looking at the trend of the pandemic, it could be something we are going to live with for a long period of time. There is no doubt that there is going to be a serious set-back in the development of Nigeria education system if the coronavirus pandemic lockdown is not properly managed by the government and concern personnel. Schools calendar have been disrupted, there is reduction in the economic development of the country which has affected the education finance as well. Since the family income depends on the economic growth of any country, most of the families in Nigeria are experiencing economic hardship as a result of the pandemic lockdown; some of the vulnerable families having their children under the federal government free feeding scheme are being faced with the challenge of going in search of food for their children while they are with them at home. Unfortunately the illiteracy level of some parents in Nigeria is not helping the matter because not every parents or guidance could handle the black and white teaching of their children.

This on a long run will cause children in these category to experience a great set-back in their academic endeavors, in fact many of them may from there drop out of school and take some other things. The pandemic lockdown has led to the shortage of funds for the educational system, parents as well are been faced with the reality of having to pay extra cost on their children academics whenever they resume to school. This is certainly a trying time for the economy, a hit on the sustainable development of the country and it is not going to be an easy experience for some households who could barely afford daily balanced diet who have been sacrificing a lot for their children to get the best education for them to become a useful and acceptable member of the society. It won't be surprising if a larger percentage of students dropped out of schools after the pandemic lockdown in Nigeria as a result of inability to of parents to bear the cost of financing their children's education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are given:
1. It is highly recommended plans are to be made in ensuring the future of the education system is secured and not been disrupted with emergence of disease.
2. It is advisable for the Nigeria ministry of education to employ experts in the area of ICT to further introduce programs that will enhance the productivity of the education sector in order to compete with the outside world even in the period of global pandemic lockdown. These experts should design the teaching learning activities through social media platforms such as Google Classroom which is a free web service that is developed by Google for schools that aims to simplify creating, distributing and grading assignments in a paperless way with the purpose of streamlining the process of sharing files between lecturers and students.
3. Teachers and tertiary institutions staff are to soft-pedal their actions with the government on the reopening of schools, they can as well volunteer to make provision for the preventive kits in schools and other related health facilities to curb the further spread of coronavirus in our schools. (d) The Parent Teachers Association, Alumni, Schools Board of Governor etc. are advised to extend more supportive hands in upholding the education sector of Nigeria.

References

Aleed, Yasser (2016). "Effects of Education in Developing Countries". *Journal of Construction in Developing Countries.*.

Beer (2021). . "Research Determines Protests Did Not Cause Spike In Coronavirus Cases". *Forbes*.

Carr, E., (2012). Vive la révolution! Long-term educational returns of 1968 to the angry students. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 26(1).

Carlsson, M (2015). The Effect of Schooling on Cognitive Skills. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 2015, 97(3), 533-547

Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID-19 crises. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 49(1), 5–22.

Zamfara International Journal of Education
The Official Journal of Faculty of Education
Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria
Maiden Edition (Volume 1, Number 1)
June, 2021
An Overview of COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on … (Okonkwo (2021)   www.zijedufugusau.com

Doucet, A., (2020). *Thinking about pedagogy in an unfolding pandemic* (An Independent Report) Approaches to Distance Learning during COVID-19 School Closure). Work of Education International and UNESCO.

Lavy, V.(2020) Do Differences in Schools' Instruction Time Explain International Achievement Gaps? Evidence from Developed and Developing Countries.

Palden, T. (2020). Women test COVID-19 positive after five tests locking down entire country. *Kuensel*, pp.1–2.

Petrie, C. (2020). *Spotlight: Quality education for all during COVID-19 crisis* (hundrED Research. United Nations.

Salvanas, K (2011). Education and Family Background: Handbook of the Economics of Education, 2011.

Taibat, H (2020). Education and Covid-19 in Nigeria: Tackling the Digital Divide. Available online: https://www.soas.ac.uk/blogs/study/covid-19-nigeria-digital- divide.

Thelma, O. (2020), A.Covid-19: Impending Situation Threatens to Deepen Nigeria's Education Crisis. An article published at the Centre for the studies of the Economies of Africa.

Unicef, Nigeria (2019). *Policy brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond.* United Nations.

Wondwosen, T.(2020). COVID-19 Poses a Serious Threat to Higher Education; the Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis. International Network for Higher Education in Africa.

World Health Organization. (2020). Clinical Management of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection when Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Infection is suspected: interim guidance. Available.