



DUAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of Covid-19 pandemic was quite phenomenal and seemingly unprecedented. The ravaging effects were massive across every aspect of human life and global economy. High mortality rate and disruptions of socioeconomic and educational activities are very evident. Interestingly, the effects of the novel pandemic posed dual implications for the educational industry in Nigeria. This seems to be at variance with the popular view that projects the pandemic as a disaster without benefits. Hence, this study examined the dual effects of Covid-19 on educational development in Nigeria. A rigorous literature review was carried-out to collect data. Multiple searches were embarked upon on websites and databases. Concepts, opinions, observations and reports were identified, recorded, analysed, discussed and inferences were made accordingly. Literature on the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic and its adverse effects on educational development were reviewed. Furthermore, the beneficial effects of the pandemic on Nigerian educational system were identified and some ameliorating strategies to cushion its effects were suggested. Arising from the foregoing, it was concluded that the outbreak of Covid-19 is both a curse and a blessing for educational development in Nigeria. Recommendations were made which include; adequate funding and provision of educational facilities, collaborative partnerships among educational stakeholders.

Key Words: COVID-19, Pandemic, Dual effects, Education, Educational Development

1. INTRODUCTION

The world population seems to have been sometimes threatened by diseases, viruses and outbreaks that are more contagious in nature and widely spread, which are often referred to as pandemic or plagues. On December 30, 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) received a report about a number of patients with pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, China, and on January 7, 2020, this cause was identified to be a novel Coronavirus-Covid-19 (Guarner, 2020). Generally, pandemic is a disease outbreak that spread from countries to countries or continents to continents affecting large numbers of people with many deaths (Ikoni & Ogundele, 2020). Hussain (2020) opined that pandemic such as coronavirus and other outbreaks generally pose serious challenge for health practitioners, policy makers and the general public



as to the effective measures that will not only curb its spread but also provide a lasting remedy to cure those who are already the carrier for the survival of human kind. The novelty and phenomenal shock that came with the outbreak of coronavirus and its ravaging impact in terms of the speed of its spread, effects on economies, number of deaths recorded and its devastating effect on education all over the world distinguish the virus from other pandemics or plagues experience in human history (El-Mousawi & Kanso, 2020; Hussain, 2020).

Despite the discovery of vaccines against the spread of the virus, its prevalence with different strands led to the adoption of several precautionary measures such as travel restrictions, lockdown and social distancing with the goal of containing its spread posed serious challenge on the survival of households, firms and the government (Miftahu & Oruonye, 2020). It impacted different facets of human life including economic, health, social and political life (Li, 2020). The dramatic death toll and high rates of morbidity of victims of the virus across many nations affected people physically and mentally (Lewin, 2020). In many countries, hospitals and other health facilities were overloaded with people already absconding medical care for fear of getting infected in the hospital environment (Filho, Brandli, Salvia, Rayman-Bacchus & Platje, 2020). As a result of the virus, the global financial markets collapsed in the first of quarter of 2020 due to the global economic shutdown, fear and future uncertainty (Li, 2020). In addition, it has also led to an unprecedented loom in the level of unemployment and the need for government support forcing governments of many nations to accumulate uncomfortably high level of debts as many sectors in the economy require support (Filho, Brandli, Salvia, Rayman-Bacchus & Platje, 2020). It has also cause high level of uncertainty and rendered the vulnerabilities and fragilities of the current economic system visible (UN News, 2020).

The pandemic affected every sector of the global economy and the lifestyles of people, the most hit sectors are the aviation industry-44 percent decrease in revenue, entertainment industry- 40, 000 jobs lost, and education- 94 percent school closure, among others (Olagbaju, Awosusi & Shaib, 2020; ILO, 2020; Eze, et al (2021)). With the significant growth in travel restriction due to total or partial border closure in many countries in addition to the grounding of airlines flights, international trade and tourism reduced and there is the possibility that many airlines may face bankruptcy (Leigh, 2020). According to United Nations (2020) coronavirus pandemic has pushed the world into the worst recession in human history with lasting effects on economies and public finances. The economic implication of the pandemic on the global market in 2020 was estimated around 1trillion US Dollar by the United Nation Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD).

The educational sector which serves as a catalyst for development of nation has also suffered unprecedented disruptions due to the temporary, total or partial closure of all educational institutions across countries in an attempt to stop the spread of the virus (Adeoye, Adanikin & Adanikin, 2020). Education has been seen as the greatest force that can be used to bring about changes in knowledge, values, behaviour and lifestyles required to achieve sustainability and stability among the country. Abubakar, (2014) observed that the greatest investment a nation can make for the development of its economic, sociological and human resources is education. Lewin (2020), opined that the social effects of lockdowns in addition to its economic effects in terms of loss of production and business confidence have serious implication on the educational system all over the world.

Efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19 through non-medical interventions and preventive measures such as social-distancing and self-isolation have prompted the widespread closure of educational institutions in over 100 countries. The closures of schools have resulted in complete disruptions to all

areas of educational administration process and procedures. In most countries, examinations have been postponed. In a few examinations have been cancelled; and in others, they have been substituted with continuous assessments or alternative modalities, such as online testing for final examinations. The pandemic created highly challenging economic circumstances that threaten the sustainability of education; it led to the largest disruption of education in history, having already had a total impact on students and trainers all over the world, from pre-primary to secondary schools, technical and vocational education and training institutions, universities, adult learning, and skills development institutions (United Nations, 2020). It has not only affected students, teachers, and families, but has far-reaching economic and societal consequences which include student debt, online learning, loss of homes, and inaccessibility to health care, food insecurity and unavailability of internet services (Lindzon, 2020).

The closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 percent of the world's student population, up to 99 percent in low and lower-middle income countries. In addition to the learning loss due to the closure of schools, the economic impact on households is likely to widen the inequities in education achievement due to the increase in number of job losses. With the pandemic, children from poor households are significantly less likely to complete primary and lower secondary education than those in the richest quintile. However, evidence has shown that the transmission of an outbreak can be reduced and also there can be decrease in infection rate by closing of schools. No country can rise above the dictate of its educational system. The educational sector dictates the pace at which the country develops, it serves as the major catalyst for national development.

Interestingly, contrary to the well-pronounced adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic, the aftermath of the deadly scourge poses some beneficial implication to sustainable educational development in the Nigerian Educational sector. In order to understand these dual perspectives of the effects of Covid-19 on sustainable educational development and the strategic approaches to ameliorate the adverse effect of the virus, the objectives of this paper focus on the review to: (i) beneficial impact of Covid -19 pandemic on sustainable educational development, (ii) adverse impact of covid-19 on sustainable educational development, and (iii) policies that can help to curtail the adverse impact of coronavirus on sustainable educational development.

3. METHODS

A rigorous literature review process was used to collected data. Relevant Information on the dual effects of Covid-19 in Nigeria were adapted from various sources, such as books, journals, periodicals, review reports among others. Multiple searches were carried out on websites and databases. Concepts, opinions, observations and reports were identified, recorded, analysed, discussed and inferences were made accordingly.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Education development in Nigeria

Education is a bridge to the future, an agent for human capital formation, a manpower industry that produces the knowledge and skills necessary for development. It has become a known creed that a nation's ability to develop the skills, knowledge, capabilities and competencies of its members is crucial and fundamentally linked to the education system. Education is one of the tools available to foster harmonious human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (Didham & Ofei-Manu 2015).

Formal education was introduced in Nigeria by the British Colonial Administrator to replace the pre-colonial traditional education. The formal educational institutions came at the peak of colonial enterprise, and were generally regarded by the few enlightened citizens as an important avenue through which the

benefits of civilization would reach the entire society (Njoku, 2016). The first educational institution was established in Nigeria in 1844 with no attempt to broaden the curriculum to adapt it to the Nigerian environment. It was firmly focused on the rudimentary subjects like arithmetic, English, History, Geography. The major purpose of the colonial government was to produce administrators for good governance as emphasized by the missionary societies. It was meant for the spreading of Christianity to the natives by teaching the prospective converts how to read and write (Njoku, 2016; Oni, 2014). The educational system was geared towards intellectual and literacy development and to improved administrative skills, but not to tackle the Nigerian economic and social problems.

In 1977, the Government of Nigeria published a National Policy on Education (NPE) which provided a policy framework for efficient administration and implementation of education system across the 3-tiers of Government with the bid to ensure quality education delivery (Oni, 2014). This policy document had been revised in 1981, 1989, 1998, 2004 and 2013 and reprinted in 2014. The 2004 edition gave a comprehensive structure of current educational system in Nigeria and laid the foundation for the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria- i.e., six years primary schooling, three years junior secondary education, three years senior secondary school and four years university education (Imam, 2012).

The policy reiterates the Government's commitment to the implementation of the Universal Basic Education programme and the modified 6-3-3-4 structure to 9-3-4 system of education. The basic education is given in the form of six years primary education after which pupils proceed to the Junior secondary school where they spend three years. The policy saw the disarticulation of junior secondary school from the senior secondary to form basic education schools. The goals for primary education are the provision of functional literacy and numeracy, cultivation of positive attitudes, leading to cooperation, community and continuous learning that support national development (Imam, 2012).

4.2 Adverse effects of COVID-19 on Educational Development

4.2.1 Disruption of Classroom Learning Activities

Justifying the devastating effect of Covid-19 on sustainable education, Cam-Tu, Anh-Duc, Van-Quan, Manh-Tuan, Viet-Hung, Quynh-Anh, Thu-Trang & Hiep-Hung, (2020) stated that the pandemic has led to intangible destruction of the educational institutions with both the teachers and students suffering the adverse consequences. The teachers in particular who happen to be the most critical intellectual resources in the educational system have faced various types of financial, physical and mental struggles due to the pandemic. With the combined effect of the pandemic, worldwide, the teaching-learning activities and the school closures could turn into a generational catastrophe if care is not taken. The outbreak has intensified the already existing disparities in the educational system by reducing the opportunities for many vulnerable, physically challenged and the displaced persons to continue learning. The deprivation of classroom learning activities also threatens beyond this generation and erase decades of progress already achieved in supporting girls and young women's educational access (United Nations, 2020).

4.2.2 Disruption of physical academic programmes and learned conferences

In addition, the pandemic has also influenced the tertiary institution at both the undergraduate and post graduate level and the most significant impact is on the postgraduate research community with research into many areas of discipline (Alsafi, Abbas, Hassan & Ali, 2020). There are concerns regarding the number of conferences that have been cancelled or postponed and these conferences are the key to scientific research in many disciplines, which allows the dissemination of research as well as providing networking opportunities for collaboration and job-seeking. Many conferences have moved online, however these 'virtual conferences' are often not as amenable to networking and informal means of scientific communication (Nicola, Alsafi, Sohrabi, Kerwand, Al-Jabird, Iosifidis, Agha & Agha, 2020).

4.2.3 Hindrance to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals

The closure of educational institutions in Nigeria hinders the provision of essential services to the population, such as, access to food and means of livelihood. This increased the risks of violence against women and girls (United Nations, 2020). In the same vein, due to severity of the virus, the world is now off-track in the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs) which deals majorly with equal access to education. The pandemic poses serious threat to the achievement of the goals including the fact that student already lock-out of school by the temporary closures may not return to school after lifting the lockdown, especially if they are already at risk of dropout. The demand for technical and vocational education might fall as labour markets shrinks; equitable opportunities to learn are threatened by instabilities in school income, staffing, and safety; universal literacy may have less utility as modern sector development slows; global citizenship is challenged by closing borders and restrictions on movement of workers and students (Lewin, 2020). Many educational institutions are attempting to maintain programs through online education. However, equity is a major constraint on access to distance learning. In developing countries, many students do not have access to the internet, or do not possess personal computers or tablets, or a safe and supportive learning environment appropriate for e-learning. The pandemic could therefore hinder education in all spheres (SDG 4-Quality education). This impact negatively on childcare and increases the pressure on school performance. It causes rise in the rates of school dropout (Filho, Brandli, Salvia, Rayman-Bacchus & Platje, 2020).

4.2.4 Socioeconomic losses and difficulties

Furthermore, the e-learning platforms also poses challenge to majority of the students because of the limited access to internet, shortage of power supply, inaccessibility and unavailability issues and lack of the technical knowhow of these technological devices. Also in Nigeria, there is a high level of fear and apprehension associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic among the general public occasioned by huge National, State as well as individual socio-economic loss and difficulties due to the lockdown and restrictions. As a result, many especially those on small and middle cadre employments have lost their jobs, there is increased dependency, hunger, sufferings and has posed a lot of restiveness and social insecurity (Stanley, Nkporbu & Stanley 2020).

Miftahu & Oruonye (2020) opined that on the social and economic impact of covid-19 in Nigeria based on analytical approach shows that virtually all essential macroeconomic indicators are grossly affected with tax, remittances and employment exhibiting severe consequences. Also, uncertainty, panics and lockdown measures are key to motivating higher decrease in world demand. The supply disruptions and huge death toll generates a heightened uncertainty and panic for household and business. This uncertainty and panic leads to drop in consumption and investment thereby causing a decrease in corporate cash flows and triggered firm's bankruptcy. Also, lay-off and exiting firms produce higher unemployment while labour income decreased significantly. Similarly, Sumner, Hoy & Ortiz-Juarez (2020) shows that COVID-19 poses a real challenge to the UN Sustainable Development Goal of ending poverty by 2030 because global poverty could increase for the first time since 1990 and, depending on the poverty line, such increase could represent a reversal of approximately a decade in the world's progress in reducing poverty. In some regions the adverse impacts could result in poverty levels similar to those recorded 30 years ago. Under the most extreme scenario of a 20 per cent income or consumption contraction, the number of people living in poverty could increase by 420–580 million, relative to the latest official recorded figures for 2018.

4.3 Beneficial Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on Educational Development

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed various beneficial effects on the educational development. After the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic and subsequent partial or total closure of schools at all levels of education in most countries of the world to curb the spread of the virus, there is a transition from the traditional method of education to e-learning. Adeoye, Adanikin & Adanikin, (2020), noted that many educational institutions across countries of the world have devised online education mediums in order to maintain their programmes and for continuity in the educational sector. The online platform that has been adopted include Zoom, Microsoft teams, google hangout (meet), skype, Bamboo learning, online libraries, google classroom, Docebo, WIZIQ, Adobe captivate, Elucidat, Blackboard learn amongst others. As a result of the virus, governments in many countries, including Nigeria encourage colleges and universities, together with the rest of the society, to adopt online learning. In addition, it has shown through the covid-19 pandemic crisis that it is possible for students to learn without having physical contact with the teacher through the online platforms that have been adopted. Pius-Uwhubetiyi, (2020) opined that the online learning medium has encourages students towards self-directed learning. The students are able to learn conveniently at the comfort of their homes.

4.3.1 Transformation of Learning Modules

In addition to the foregoing, policy makers in the educational sector also demands that new online courses should be transformed to meet up the quality as previously delivered face-to-face courses in order not to view the online classes as not been up to standard when compare to the face-face classroom teaching. It demands that teacher workload in delivering online courses should be recognized as equivalent to teacher workload in delivering face-to-face courses. Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin, (2020) observed that the pandemic has shaped a new normal in the higher educational sectors all over the world as it has stimulated the transformation of traditional classroom teaching delivery system to an online learning platform and has aided the restructuring of the application processes and stimulating crisis management strategies.

4.3.2 Accentuating Teacher's Indispensability in the Learning Process

The pandemic has further reminded the world of the essential role of teachers and the responsibility of government and key partners in ensuring adequate care for the life and well-being of the teachers. It has also pointed-out that the future outlook of learning and the accelerated changes in the mode of delivering quality education which must ensure that no one is left behind especially for children and youth that lack resources and enabling environment to access leaning. The covid-19 pandemic has also pointed out that the teachers need better training in new methods of learning delivery as well as motivation from governments in order to build and maintain the standard of education.

4.3.3 Stimulating Innovation

Consequently, in favour of positive impacts of Covid-19 on sustainable education, the United Nations (2020) posits that coronavirus pandemic has stimulated innovation within the educational system. It has brought about innovative approaches to support education and the training community; from radio and television to take-home package. There are new innovative approaches to the teaching and learning methods. In addition, distance learning solutions were developed through the effort of the governments and other national and international stakeholders. The conventional classroom instructional system has shifted in favour of e-learning platforms such as Google and virtual classroom, radio and television classroom instruction. Despite, the applicable opportunities associated with the embracing e-learning which includes lecturers/learners' convenience, exposure and cost benefits, the adoption of the online learning platform has revealed the lapses and shortages in the educational system and facilities in many

educational institutions across the world especially in the developing countries of Africa with Nigeria in particular (Olagbaju, Awosusi & Shaib, 2020). These have created space for innovative pedagogy and educational technologies.

4.4 Ameliorating Strategies for the impact of COVID-19 on Educational Development

Supervisory Measures

The educational system in Nigeria should be looked into by applying new techniques (such as in-built artificial intelligence for facial recognition, sound and voice detector) that discourage cheating among the student during online classes and examinations. The transition of traditional method of teaching to online teaching method has given room to students to cheat since some of them take classes with little or no supervision. Supervisory measures must be put in place for students to take their class and to write their examinations online.

4.4.1 Time-based learning Activities

The teaching and learning process should be flexible and simplified by giving the most necessary information and skills to student. Arwa (2020) noted that there should be changes in the duration of online classes. Student are not expected to have unlimited time for lessons online. There should be a time limit for every class online and also distance learning/ education should be made practical and flexible.

4.4.2 Encouraging Parental Support

There is need for students to get parental support during online classes at home, especially pupils at the primary school level and those at the secondary level. Some parents at the local community are not able to assist their wards on how to access online platforms due to their level of literacy and exposure. There is no other alternative now in the era of pandemic, every parent must develop a certain level of digital skills in order to help their wards in learning.

4.4.3 Aligning eLearning with educational goals through collaborative partnerships

Policy makers in the educational sector must re-purpose the e-content in a manner that fits into the curricular for achieving the desired learning objectives. It is expected that new online courses should be transform to meet up with the quality as previously delivered face-to-face courses. The stalk holders and policy makers should endeavour to maintain educational standard within the educational system. The goals and intention of education should not be thrown away in the face of pandemic. All the three levels (primary, secondary and tertiary institution) of education should seek inter-institutional co-operation and dedicate service to the local communities.

4.4.4 Adequate funding and provision of educational facilities

The government should be able to allocate adequate funds needed for educational development. With the sudden interruption of educational system in Nigeria as a result of pandemic, the government, ministries of education at various levels and other concerned personnel should have shift in the plans and strategies to finance the education system at large. Different countries worldwide have introduced various solutions during the pandemic to continue the education process; it is recommended that Nigeria educational system should do the same by adjusting to the new normal through the use of various online platforms for effective teaching and learning process.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It's no doubt that the interruption in the educational system in Nigeria due to the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic is both a curse and a blessing for sustainable education and the global economy at large. Although, the emergence of the pandemic has been blessing for educational sustainability in terms of the

ability of some educational institutions to sustain learning activities through various online platform, the adoption of these various online platforms also come with a lot of challenges such as poor internet connection. In addition, for developing countries that are grappling with infrastructural deficit, the adoption of online learning will further widen the gap in the level of education between the developed and developing countries.

Apparently, the popular notion that the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic is anaemic to sustainable education and the global economy is not true in its entirety. The outbreak of the virus has spurred several innovations and new discoveries in medicines, technology and educational sector with potential to ease the process of getting things done, improving the health of the people and enhancing comfortable living. In the educational sector, the emergence of coronavirus has led to the discovery and adoption of various online learning tools and technologies and enabling teachers' capacity development in the use of eLearning technologies thereby easing their work load and facilitating the learning process.

In the face of pandemic, the educational system must move forward. Hence, the educationists and policy makers in the educational sector are expected to mitigate the threats associated with the outbreak of the virus in achieving the goal of sustainable education and leverage on the opportunities embedded in the emergence of the virus. This will no doubt facilitates the advancement of the educational system and fast-track the achievement of the goal of sustainable education. The study recommends that national and local governments should encourage colleges and universities, together with the rest of the society, to participate in joint implementation of online education. The Ministry of education should urge universities to conduct multi-dimensional learning evaluation, and to appropriately appraise students' online achievements. Also, the government should provide the necessary resources needed and increase the budget on education at each level in order to move with the pace of the new normal.

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