

# **FATHOMING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The paper concerns itself with fathoming the impact of COVID-19 on education in Nigeria. The disease outbreak which occurred in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China spread to other parts of China and indeed to several countries killing thousands of people. The disease eventually spread to Nigeria and due to the deadly nature of the virus, the government came up with the policy of social distancing leading to the closure of societal institutions such as schools, markets, motor parks etc. This abrupt closure of schools as a measure of containing the COVID-19 pandemic no doubt has made some impact on education in Nigeria. For instance, it was found that in the lower level of education, second term examinations were written abruptly and some subjects were not written due to the governments executive order to close schools; the academic calendar has been altered; proprietors of private schools may not find it easy to pay their teachers' salaries during the period when COVID-19 is ravaging; Also apart from classroom activities of teaching and learning, other academic exercises such as researches, conferences, workshops, symposia as well as other extra-curricular activities such as school inter house sports, matriculation and convocation ceremonies are put on hold. Besides, renowned examination bodies such as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) have*

*postponed their earlier scheduled examinations. The Federal Government had also introduced the learn-from-home education broadcast on national radios and national televisions due to the pandemic. To this end, it was recommended among other things that when the pandemic is contained, all the schools should continue what they could not finish in the previous term; the ₦150 billion earmarked by the Central Bank of Nigeria for small and medium Enterprises should be extended to school proprietors; the learn-from-home education broadcast should be sustained.*

**Key words:** Impact, COVID-19, Education, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Wuhan City is the capital of Hubei province in the Peoples Republic of China. Wuhan City is associated with the outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus). The COVID-19 is a deadly disease that killed dozens of people living in Wuhan City. The disease is a respiratory and contagious one hence so many persons contracted it. No sooner did the outbreak

occurred than the disease spread to other parts of China and from thence to many countries of the world. In Nigeria the first index case was an Italian. He was quarantined and after several days of treatment, he was said to have tested negative and therefore was discharged. Meanwhile those who had contact with him were suspected to have contracted the disease. Giving credence to the above assertion, Salau (2020) reported that

*Relief came to the families of all the 179 people quarantined for contact with the Italian who was diagnosed of COVID-19 popularly known as coronavarius in Nigeria as they were released yesterday. Forty of the 179 people who had contact with the index case were quarantined in Ogun State while the rest were monitored in Lagos State (p.7)*

But many other Nigerians contracted the disease. This was largely because many travelled to the countries that have high cases of the COVID-19. Some are foreign diplomats while some are top government functionaries who often travel overseas for one official engagement or the other. It is therefore not surprising that the COVID-19 had spread into Nigeria. To buttress the above assertion,

Chukwunyem (2020;5) stated that "tougher times could be ahead for Nigeria and its economy following Chief of Staff to the President, Abba Kyari's positive test for the coronavirus". Closely related to the above, Olaoye (2020:5) reported that "three others yet to be identified members of staff working directly with Kyari in the Villa were also reported to have contracted the disease". In

furtherance of the claim, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) views that though President Muhammadu Buhari reported negative for coronavirus, it is imperative that he douses public tension by addressing a distressed nation on the status of the Villa especially given that other officials, like Abba Kyari, had travelled to high-risk countries in the course of their duties. The public tension

need to be doused concerning the status of certain key officials who have not been visible in the last few days (Eze, 2020). In a similar vein, the Governor of Bauchi State, Governor Bala Mohammed had tested positive for coronavirus. Giving credence to the above, the governor's Senior Special Assistant (SSA) on Media, Mr. Muktar Gidado as reported by Garba (2020) revealed thus

*This is to inform the general public that the result of the six initial test carried out by Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) on Governor Bala Mohammed, his family and aides that accompanied him to Lagos is out. Of the six initial tests carried out, one sample was confirmed positive of COVID-19. The positive result happened to be that of Governor Mohammed, the Governor of Bauchi State. At this point, it should be noted that the governor is in self-isolation as his doctors and officials from the NCDC have taken full charge of quarantine (p.5).*

It appears that the coronavirus infects or are contracted more by the affluent class and their close associates in Nigeria. This view is suggestive of the idea that the poor hardly travel overseas whereas the wealthy especially

the aristocrats do. These wealthy members of the society also have more affairs with their fellow wealthy people. So if the wealthy contracts the disease, it is more likely that it would spread among them. Consistent with the above, Garba (2020) succinctly stated thus

*Governor Mohammed had been in self-isolation following contact with Mohammed Abubakar, son of former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar who has tested positive to coronavirus... Mohammed and Atiku's son met in Lagos in Aero Contractors aircraft, where they shook hands and exchanged pleasantries. Before he went into self-isolation, the governor had on Sunday, met with traditional rulers in Bauchi State on how to further strengthen the prevention and control of coronavirus and lassa fever (p5).*

It is however worthy of note that it is not only top government functionaries and wealthy citizens that became infected with COVID-19. Rather, any person that comes in physical contact with an infected person automatically contracts the disease. Those identified as being infected were quarantined but the number of cases kept rising on daily basis. Considering the fact that there is no known vaccine for COVID-19 yet and also considering the death rate in high-risk countries, Nigeria decided to adopt the social distance measure. This led to the closure of religious institutions, educational institutions and some economic institutions as well as social gatherings. Analysing it further, both churches and mosques were temporarily ban, all schools were closed down, markets were ban, National Assembly shut down plenary, night clubs were ban, motor parks were closed, social events such as weddings, child dedication, burials, naming ceremonies as well as other traditional and cultural festivals/ceremonies were put on hold. The thrust of this paper is to unravel the implications of COVID-19 pandemic on education in Nigeria. Consequently, the paper discusses the facts about COVID-19, Measures taken by both federal and state governments to curb the spread of the COVID-19; and the implications of the pandemic on education in Nigeria.

### **Important Facts about COVID-19**

Following the outbreak of the deadly COVID-19 and the subsequent declaration of the virus as pandemic, various countries or geo-

political areas as well as organizations took it upon themselves to disseminate information about the pandemic for people to take precaution.

In Nigeria, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) articulated nine information about COVID-19 and disseminated as follows

#### **1. Facts**

- i. Coronavirus is also called COVID-19
- ii. Spread is from person to person
- iii. Detected in over 100 countries
- iv. Swallowing or gargling with acetic substances won't help
- v. Currently there is no vaccine
- vi. Spread through drop-lets
- vii. Ordinary face mask will not protect you
- viii. Mask is best for those already infected to prevent spread

#### **2. Clinical Features**

- i. Fever
- ii. Cough
- iii. Difficulty in breathing
- iv. Sneezing
- v. Body weakness

#### **3. Incubation Period**

- i. Symptoms show up within 14 days of exposure to the virus

#### **4. Actions to be taken when under Investigation**

- i. Isolate (self) patient immediately
- ii. Provide facial mask and educate on cough etiquette
- iii. Appropriate hand hygiene

- iv. Identify the numbers to call in the closest Teaching hospital/General hospital near to you which include  
Email: NG-COVID19@ncdc.gov.ng  
Toll free Number 08097000010  
SMS: 08099555577  
WhatsApp: 07087110839

## **5. For Children**

- i. Validate their feelings of worry (don't dismiss it outrightly)
- ii. Calm their worries with correct information
- iii. Maintain regular routine for playtime
- iv. Limit computer screen time and media exposure
- v. Do not let fear control your life
- vi. Life must go on...

## **6. Treatment**

- i. Depends on severity
- ii. Supportive measures such as self isolation, eat a lot of fruits to boost immunity
- iii. Avoid crowded places
- iv. Avoid public transport if you can (walk short distance)
- v. Avoid rails, do not touch surfaces

## **7. Definition of Close Contact**

- i. Being approximately 2 meters (6 feet) within care area.
- ii. Living with, visiting or sharing health care waiting area with any suspected case
- iii. Having direct contact with infection, secretions e.g being coughed on.

## **8. Best way to Protect Ourselves**

- i. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, nose with unwashed hands
- ii. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently (every 2 hours)
- iii. Avoid contact with people who are sick/sneezing/coughing or cough into your elbow.

## **9. Epidemiologic Risk**

- i. Travel to high risk areas in last 14 days
- ii. More than 24 hours transit in high risk areas
- iii. Close contact with confirmed case
- iv. Exposure to health care facility where COVID-19 have been reported

## **10. To Avoid Stress about COVID-19**

- i. Avoid social media-use credible sources (WHO, NCDC, Federal Ministry of Health).

## **Measures Taken by the Government to Curb the Spread of Coronavirus in Nigeria**

Sequel to the declaration of COVID-19 as pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) and increasing spread in countries, the federal government of Nigeria started a review of the case definition. Accordingly, the Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire stressed that through Port Health Services, the ministry has prioritized measures to contain COVID-19, especially the screening of passengers at entry points. The minister remarked that government has made progress in assessing treatment centres and have ensured that every state identifies a location that could be used to

manage cases, while the federal government was supporting states to scale up capacity to withstand existing needs. The minister also acknowledged that the disease could be transmitted through land and sea borders hence effort is said to be made with the Port Health Services to strengthen surveillance (Onyedika-Ugoeze, 2020).

Other measures used to curb the spread of COVID-19 is regular washing of hands and

application of sanitizers as well as maintaining social distancing. Consistent with the above, the national leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu passed vote of confidence on Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State over his management of the COVID-19 pandemic. In view of this, Ayinla (2020) reported thus.

*Tinubu, who also called for the replication of social distancing, regular hand-washing and other precautionary measures to be practiced in the market places, said that the diseases would leave Nigerians with some lessons and safety practices... Tinubu thanked Sanwo-Olu led government for frequent briefing of the residents on the latest developments in the management of the deadly virus (p. 6).*

Furthermore, members of the public were advised to embrace the new culture of social distancing which would break the cycle of transmission of COVID-19. Being hygienic at

all times is rather a new lesson which people must learn as it is an action being introduced against coronavirus. Against this backdrop, Tinubu as was reported by Ayinla (2020) stressed that

*the activities in the market must reflect the new culture; we all must obey the government. Having to restrict hugging and family excitement doesn't mean we don't love one another. We do, but we have to prevent the spread of a mysterious disease that is our common enemy (p.6).*

concern in securing the lives of the inhabitants

In spite of the above measures, the increase in the spread of the virus made the government at various levels to shut down their geo-political areas. The Governor of Rivers State, Governor Nyesom Wike showed a good measure of

of Rivers State. This claim is sequel to the fact that he ordered the closure of schools in Rivers State before other states followed much later. He restricted movement and indeed shut down the state. The Coalition of United Political Parties, CUPP through its National Publicity Secretary, Ikenga Imo Chinyere said after a

detailed review of the growing threat of the fast spreading and deadly coronavirus, it have resolved to advise all state governors to adopt a 14 days temporarily shut down, movement restriction and seat at home measures like the one announced by Rivers State Governor, Governor Wike. The Governor had already

shut down all borders going into the state and put a ban on public gatherings, markets, wedding ceremonies, burials, night clubs, motor parks, church services and gatherings in the mosque for Islamic Worship. The CUPP National Publicity Secretary as reported by Odiakose (2020) advised thus

*... we wish to direct our governor to immediately shut down their land/sea borders to stop interstate movement, close down their airspace working for the Federal government especially FAAN and stop all public gatherings, burials, close down motor parks, cinemas etc and impose a 14 days stay at home during which those already with the virus will manifest and be isolated and treated thereby wiping the virus (p.19).*

Consequent upon the foregoing, the various state governments started to shut-down their states. For instance Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma ordered the partial shut-down of Imo workforce. The order was given during the flag off of distribution of hand sanitizers to ministries, agencies, markets, churches, schools and other public places in Imo State (Uzoechi, 2020).

In the same vein, the Governor of Enugu State, Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi banned all forms of social and political gatherings in the state until further notice. Ugwuanyi directed that with immediate effect, all education institutions in the State stood closed. Meanwhile public officers/civil servants are instructed to work from home till further notice except health workers, forest guards, neighbourhood watch personnel, water corporations staff, waste management

operatives, staff of Enugu State Emergency Management Agency, Fire, fighters and those involved in essential services. He added the suspension of marriage and burial ceremonies, masquerade festivals, drinking bars, night clubs and all group sporting and recreational activities. On public transport operators, rules were made as follows: Keke-not more than two passengers, commuter buses-not more than two passengers per seat, City cab-not more than three passengers (Ofoma 2020).

### **Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic for Education in Nigeria**

In the first place, it was like an unexpected policy when the various state governments ordered the closure of schools at the period some schools were yet preparing for the second term examination. The information to shut down made some primary and secondary schools to organize an abrupt examination for

the students and pupils. But even at that, some subjects were not covered. In some schools examinations were written during the weekend ie on Saturday and on Sunday for schools that operate only the boarding system. Some

schools only tested the students on core subjects which has its own implications.

Giving credence to the above, Jombo (2020) stated thus

*Nigerian cities are in lockdown, activities are at the lowest ebb. Most Government offices are not operational. These are all in the bid to reduce the spread of the coronavirus currently ravaging the world ... Even schools both Private and Government owned are closed. (p.27)*

The Covid-19 pandemic no doubt has affected the academic calendar. This stems from the fact that the date of resumption is indefinite as it largely depends on the ability of the society/government to contain the coronavirus disease. More so, if schools resume, it will take some schools to continue the inconclusive examinations before they can commence lessons for a new term.

Furthermore, proprietors of private schools may find it difficult to pay their teachers salaries for the months when the Covid-19 was ravaging. Giving credence to this assertion, the Chairman Triple Square Private Schools, Lagos, Mr. Doyin Adebunsi (cited in Wahab 2020: 28) said "private school owners now have to grapple with how to pay their teachers for the period the schools would be closed". It is indeed crystal clear that their counterparts in the public schools would be paid their full salaries. This disparity in motivation can affect the input or commitment of the private schools teachers. This of course would have

implications on the products of the private schools.

On the perspective of higher institutions, a number of seminars, workshops and fairs planned for this period when the coronavirus has started would be put on hold. Academic activities and extra curricula activities that go alongside academic programmes are halted. This is counterproductive as academic conferences billed to hold for impartation of knowledge are suspended indefinitely. It is a well known fact that the contemporary world is knowledge driven. Conferences which are fora where various researches or research findings are presented and where renowned scholars give out knowledge for societal improvement are halted indefinitely. It is indeed fora where knowledge is being cross-fertilized. This development no doubt would draw the world backwards with regards to scholarship or human resource development.

Other serious events that experienced set back include inter-house sports competition in primary and secondary schools. For instance a primary school in Emohua Local Government

Area of Rivers State, Nigeria known as State School II Ndele scheduled her inter-house sports competition on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 but unfortunately, the Government of Rivers State of Nigeria short down educational institutions on Monday 23rd March, 2020. All the arrangements that the school had made

already became wasted. Similarly, some higher institutions had scheduled their programmes or events within the period such as matriculation, convocation, etc ceremonies but events of such magnitude did not hold due to the lock down. Consistent with the above, Wahab (2020) succinctly stated thus

*Moreover, a number of high grade events in the education sector had to be postponed. the Lagos State University, LASU, Ojo, had to shift its 24th convocation ceremony billed for this week. This is despite the huge resources already spent on preparations among others (p.28).*

The policy of lockdown is indeed an experience that is difficult to forget. Ordinarily, societal members go about their normal businesses. The students are not left out. Students are always busy alongside their teachers during office hours engaging in teaching and learning activities. Contrary to the usual, the sit at home policy to curtail the spread of COVID-19 is worrisome and has adverse effect on education. In line with the above, Kupoluyi (2020:14) stated that "sitting at home means less academic work and more time for pleasure and extra-curricular activities. This may eventually lead to slow academic work by the time schools resume".

In spite of the above, the academic institutions that used to be citadel of learning is now temporarily converted to markets for food and agricultural produce. The Lagos State government decided to convert schools to food markets to enable Lagosians have access to food supplies during the restriction period. This

was mainly to prevent panic buying after the directive that all markets and shops trading in non-essential commodities be closed. The school earmarked for food and agricultural markets in Lagos State as reported by Ayinla (2020) include

1. Bishop Aggrey Primary School Ilasamaja;
2. Ajenifuja Primary School Ilupeju, Mushin;
3. Papa Ajao Primary School, Ladipo Street, Mushin;
4. Akin Ogun Primary School, Mosan;
5. Meiran Community Primary School, Meiran;
6. Animashaun Primary School, Ijeshatedo, Surulere;
7. Ikeja Primary School, Ikeja;
8. Opebi Primary School, Opebi, Ikeja;
9. Anglican Primary School, Marine Beach, Apapa;
10. St. Jude's Primary School, Ebute-Metta;

11. St, George's Boys Primary School, Folomo;
12. Community Grammar School, Adelabu, Surulere;
13. Obele Secondary School, Adelabu, Surulere;
14. Fagba Junior Grammar School, Ifako-Ijaiye; and
15. Stadium School, Ifako (p.8)

Furthermore on the implications of COVID-19 on education, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has temporarily suspended all activities that result in physical contact in all its centres nationwide. This was in compliance with the professional advice of government on safety of all persons with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. In support of the above assertion, the board's Registrar, Prof. Ishaq Oloyode as reported in News National (2020:30) stated that "all candidates and members of the general public should hereby note that the Board has temporarily

suspended all its activities that will be requiring physical contacts in all its offices around the country".

Also the National Business Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) has indefinitely postponed the May/June, 2020 ordinary Level Certificate Examinations which are for in-school candidates. The examination earlier scheduled for 4th May, 2020 was postponed on account of the coronavirus pandemic (Osauzo, 2020). In a similar vein, the National Examination Council (NECO) has postponed the 2020 National Common Entrance Examination (NCCE) into the 104 unity schools located across the country, Nigeria in its bid to curb the spread of COVID-19. The examination was earlier fixed to hold on Saturday, March 28, 2020 nationwide but has been postponed indefinitely. In an official statement, the council's Head of Information and Public Relations Division, Azeez Sani as reported by Otokpa (2020) informed that

*The National Examinations Council (NECO) wishes to inform all candidates, guardians and relevant stakeholders of their indefinite postponement of the 2020 National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) into Federal Unity Colleges earlier scheduled to hold on Saturday March 28, 2020. This decision is in deference to the various measures being put in place by federal and state governments to curtail the potential spread of COVID-19 (p.31).*

Another important implication of Covid-19 on education is the move by the minister of Education, Adamu Adamu to introduce e-learning or on-line school for pupils and

students in Nigeria. On 27th March, 2020 the minister of Education held on an unusual video meeting with stakeholders where over 50 chief executives participated in the online conference. The conference helped to address

the minds of the participants on the federal Government's working towards learn-from-home education broadcast on national radio and

television. Consistent with the above, Aluko (2020) reported that

*about 18days later, the minister announced that the government was going to commence the basic primary school classes on the national media; the Nigerian Television Authority and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, to enable pupils to learn during the COVID-19 pandemic break (p.3).*

## CONCLUSION

The treatise reveals that COVID-19 has far reaching impact on education in Nigeria. It reveals that second term examinations were conducted abruptly in compliance to the state Government's directive that schools should be closed till further notice. Moreso, academic calendar is altered, proprietors of private schools may find it difficult to pay their teachers salaries for the months when COVID-19 was ravaging and this invariably would affect their motivation. Academic programmes such as researches, teaching and learning, conferences, workshops, symposia as well as extracurricular activities like inter house sports, matriculation and convocation ceremonies are all halted. Furthermore, some renowned examination bodies such as West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) postponed their earlier scheduled examinations indefinitely. The federal Government planned and indeed implemented the learn-from-home education broadcast on national televisions and national radio.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the expositions and conclusion above, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should be proactive in preventing such deadly virus from entering the country.
2. All schools should be made to operate a boarding system so that in case of an outbreak of disease movement into the school premises can be controlled.
3. Testing machines should be provided in each Local Government Area in the country.
4. There should be a directive that at the end of the pandemic, each school should carefully complete all what were not done in the previous term.
5. The N150 billion earmarked by the Central Bank of Nigeria for Small and Medium Enterprises should be extended to school proprietors.
6. The learn-from-home education broadcast on televisions and radio should be sustained.

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