

Educational activities in the Post-Covid Era: The Nigerian experience.

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Abstract

Nigerian societies saw an unusual experience in the academic cycle as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions by the Federal and State governments prevailed in most states in Nigeria as one of the measures to checkmate the spread of COVID-19 after the WHO declared it a pandemic disease. The shutdown of schools in most states in Nigeria affected the academic syllabus to a great extent. The post-COVID-19 experience in Nigeria resulted in the rescheduling of final exams before the lockdown, while some schools cancelled or rescheduled exam dates, just to minimize the spread of the virus. The paper using an analytical method argues that COVID-19 has contributed negatively and positively to the Nigerian educational system. Positively it has enlightened many in the academic world in Nigeria on the importance of virtual education. Negatively, it destroyed to an extent our traditional educational system. However, the paper recommends that the Federal government of Nigeria should improve on the new system of education in the New Normal World by equipping various schools with new facilities for virtual education. This is because the omen might result again. More so, teachers in primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions should embark on virtual education training.

Keywords: Covid 19, lockdown, syllabus, education, society

Introduction

The Post-COVID-19 era in Nigeria disfigured our educational system in many dimensions. It affected people regardless of nationality, level of education, age and gender. Students in Nigeria from privileged backgrounds are sorted for alternative learning opportunities. Some people from disadvantaged backgrounds resorted to alternative learning opportunities, while those from poor backgrounds often remained shut out when their schools were shut down. In response to the compulsory closure of primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions by the Federal government of Nigeria as part of measures to checkmate the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria, efforts were made to keep students busy with academic activities during the lockdown. Some schools engage students in different kinds of online learning approaches. This was limited to private schools because the government-owned universities were on strike. Lecturers went the extra mile to ensure that students had meaningful



learning experiences.¹ They engaged students with materials varying from text notes and voice notes, to animated videos.² They also used different online tools and platforms like Google Classroom, Google Meet, WhatsApp and YouTube.³

This crisis exposed many inadequacies in our education systems. The lockdowns in response to COVID-19 interrupted conventional education with nationwide school closures in many states in Nigeria. The educational communities made concerted efforts to maintain learning continuity during the era. It witnessed an era where children and students depend on their resources to continue learning remotely through the Internet, television or radio. Many teachers also adapted to new pedagogical concepts and modes of delivery of the lecture, for which they may not have been trained. Learners in most states, that don't have access to digital learning resources could not cope with the new system.

As a result of the closure of all schools from March 27th, 2020, as one of the Federal Government measures to limit the spread of the disease, different states' Ministries of Education released modalities for radio and TV teaching and internet-based learning for students in public primary and secondary schools. Though these efforts could be effective, with experience from developed countries, they can amount to a far-reaching negative impact on the education system in developing low-income countries like Nigeria.⁴ Digital education is the type of education in which instructors and learners (i.e. students) utilise digital technologies to deploy teaching and learning via remote locations.⁵

Conceptual Analysis

This section will be open for a few analyses of some vital terms that concern the topic of discussion.

Zoom Meetings: The post-COVID learning witnessed a good number of people who used the Zoom meeting application. Zoom is a proprietary video teleconferencing software programme developed by Communications. The free

¹ Israel, Olasunkanmi, "Nigerian University Students Find Online Learning Painful" Wednesday 26 August 2020, Retrieved from <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/africa/nigerian-university-students-find-online-learning-painful-here-s-why-73037>, Accessed on 1/11/2021

² Israel, Olasunkanmi, "Nigerian University Students Find Online Learning Painful" ... <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/africa/nigerian-university-students-find-online-learning-painful-here-s-why-73037>, Accessed on 1/11/2021

³ Israel, Olasunkanmi, "Nigerian University Students Find Online Learning Painful" ... <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/africa/nigerian-university-students-find-online-learning-painful-here-s-why-73037>, Accessed on 1/11/2021

⁴ Obiakor, T., & Adeniran, A. P, "Covid-19: Impending Situation Threatens to Deepen Nigeria's Education Crisis, Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA), 2020", Retrieved from <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/COVID19-ImpendingSituation-Threatens-to-Deepen-Nigerias-Education-.pdf>, Accessed on 1/11/2020

⁵ Orij, A, Torunarigha, YD, "Digitized Education: Examining the Challenges of Digital Immigrant Educators in the Face of Net Generation Learners", *KIU Journal of Social Sciences* 5(4):, 2019, 337–347

plan allows 100 concurrent participants, with a 40-minute time restriction. Users have the option to upgrade by subscribing to a paid plan. The highest plan supports up to 1,000 concurrent participants for meetings lasting up to 30 hours.⁶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a major increase in the use of Zoom for distance education.⁷

Education: There are many types of education, but I will limit this discussion to formal education. Generally, education is the process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals and beliefs. The methods of education include teaching, training, discussion and embarking on academic research. Formal education is divided into stages such as kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and then tertiary institution. Education is designed to support child development, particularly for participation in school and society. Preschools provide education from approximately age three to seven, depending on the country. The children now readily interact with their peers and the educator.⁸ These are also known as nursery schools and kindergarten, except in the US, where the term kindergarten refers to the earliest levels of primary education.⁹

Lockdown: During the COVID-19 pandemic many establishments including schools were on lockdown. A lockdown is a restriction policy for people to stay where they are due to specific risks to themselves or others. The term is also used for a prison protocol that usually prevents people, information or objects from leaving an area. The protocol can usually only be initiated by someone in a position of authority.¹⁰ Another name for lockdown stays at home which can also be used to protect people inside a facility or, for example, a computing system, from a threat or other external event. In buildings, doors leading outside are usually locked so that no person may enter or exit. A full lockdown makes people stay where they are and may not enter or exit a building or rooms within it, needing to go to the nearest place designated safe if not already in such a place.

The positive impacts of the Post-Covid Era on education in Nigeria

The nature of education in Nigeria in the post-COVID-19 era welcomed a new global method of learning in primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions. Some schools and teachers were not able to adapt to the system because it remains a novelty in the history of the education and learning system in Nigeria. It witnessed what many scholars identified as virtual learning.

⁶ "Plans and Pricing - Zoom". Retrieved from www.zoom.us/pricing, Accessed on 30/10/2021

⁷ Lorenz, Taylor *et al*, "We Live in Zoom Now", *The New York Times*, Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>, Accessed on 30/10/2021

⁸ "International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011" Retrieved from uis.unesco.org, Accessed on 30/10/2021

⁹ Diffey, Louisa, "50-State Comparison: State Kindergarten-Through-Third-Grade Policies", 4th June, 2018 Retrieved from www.ecs.org, Accessed on 30/10/2021

¹⁰ "Capitalist Lockdown is Bad. Capitalist Reopening is Worse | Red Flag", Retrieved from redflag.org.au, Accessed on 30/10/2021

The use of the Internet facilitated the educational system during the era, particularly when many states experienced a total lockdown. The internet itself can be credited with what enabled modern distance learning to be developed.¹¹ The internet allows the virtual student to have access to resources such as virtual test-taking functions, systems that aid coursework to include electronic reading materials, and podcasts to allow the student to have easy access to the lectures and chatrooms.¹²

The Post-COVID-19 era has impacted the educational system of Nigeria positively and negatively. Many schools in Nigeria did their viva voce through Zoom meetings, others conducted their examinations through virtual means, while a host of others organised lectures for students in primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions through Google Meet and Zoom Meetings.

It was flexible and Easy for Many Students in Nigeria: The traditional educational system that existed and continues to exist requires a student to come to class for regular lectures from teachers. But educational system during the period in question allowed students to study in their homes without coming to class for lectures. However, some students preferred the method because of its nature. Online learning is ideal for students and families who need flexible arrangements.¹³

Many Students Spent Less Financially in Post-COVID 19 Era in Education: It was noted that many students spent less through virtual learning during this era, particularly some students that reside in the Northern part of Nigeria, while schooling in Eastern Nigeria. Such students who usually spend a huge amount of money on transportation, save their money for other purposes. Since virtual learning allows one to study at home, there is no point in paying transport fares to travel to school. Many learning online resources are free, easy to access, self-paced, and beginner-friendly.¹⁴

According to Priyanka Sarangi, he notes;

One of the key points of digital learning is that it is much more affordable as compared to traditional learning. The money you spend travelling or buying uniforms or the money you spend on traditional education is not seen in digital classes. This makes it possible for students from economically weaker sections to pursue their dream careers. With digital learning, you only need to pay for university credits saving you a lot of money.¹⁵

¹¹ "Distance Learning | Education". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Retrieved from <https://www.britanica.com>, Accessed on 30/10/2021.

¹² "Distance Learning | Education". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ... <https://www.britanica.com>, Accessed on 30/10/2021

¹³ "Distance Learning | Education". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ... <https://www.britanica.com>, Accessed on 30/10/2021

¹⁴ "Pros and Cons of Online Education | NC State Industry Expansion Solutions". *NC State Industry Expansion Solutions*, ... <https://www.ies.ncsu.edu>, Accessed on 30/10/2021

¹⁵ Priyanka Sarangi, Advantages and Disadvantages of online classes/e-learning May 5, 2021

Currently, to an extent, many students prefer this new method of education because of the transportation and the movement that is involved in the traditional educational system.

More Students were taught during the Period: The traditional system of education is very limited numerically because of the use of the classroom in studying. Virtual learning is unlimited numerically. A large number of students can receive a lecture from a single lecturer without having any congestion and complications because of a mammoth crowd. It allows teachers to instruct more students than in a face-to-face classroom setting.¹⁶

The New Educational System Allows Students to Study in Any Country of Their Choice: Presently, there are a lot of students who want to travel to other countries to study but as a result of the method of learning in the New Normal World, they changed their mind to continue in virtual learning. Somebody in the United States can study in Nigeria, while somebody in Britain can equally study in Singapore because of the nature of the system. However, it has made the educational system international.

During the Period there was no Interruption of any kind: The method of learning in the New Normal World is unique because it is beyond interruption of any kind. The traditional method of learning has numerous deficiencies, particularly during festivals and other occasions that usually take place in some Nigerian states. Lectures can be held even while there is a public holiday. Some private institutions enjoy the new method of learning because lectures cannot be easily interrupted.

Post-COVID Education Created New Teaching Jobs in Nigeria: Some people were employed by some institutions particularly those who can lecture through virtual learning applications like Zoom Meetings, Google Meet and Skype. In the primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions, some facilitators were employed to handle the virtual section of their schools. In the same vein, it made many that are into virtual learning to be proficient in that dimension.

Post-COVID-19 Made Many Students and Teachers Save and Maximize Their Time: In the traditional education system, many students usually waste their time on many occasions. However virtual learning makes students save time because online learning applications are wisely timed. For instance, if a class is held by 3:00 pm West Africa Time, many students will like to keep to that time. In digital classes, a student can learn and get a degree while sitting in the comfort of their home.¹⁷

¹⁶ Dynarski, Susan M. (2017-10-26). "Online schooling: Who is Harmed and Who is Helped?". Retrieved from <https://www.brooking.edu>, Accessed on 30/10/2021

¹⁷ Priyanka, Sarangi, Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Classes/E-learning, May 5, 2021

The negative impacts of the Post-Covid Era on education in Nigeria

When COVID-19 struck Nigeria, the Federal government and some states imposed temporary and sometimes full shutdowns of education systems to curtail the spread of the disease. This development disfigured academic activities in many dimensions. Many institutions are yet to recover from the effects of the pandemic. However, these are some of the negative impacts of the Post-COVID 19 education in Nigeria.

It Affected the School Curriculum of Many Schools in Nigeria: Many institutions in Nigeria were badly affected by the total lockdown imposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria. This resulted in the closure of many schools from primary to tertiary institutions. Students experienced major teaching interruptions in their studies, and some private universities that engaged their students with online teaching could not conduct examinations or assess their students as building trust in their students is a major setback in an online learning environment.¹⁸ In general, the time of graduation for every university student has been indirectly elongated and they are likely to graduate at the beginning of a major global recession.¹⁹

Many Students Were Not Able to Focus on Screens during Teaching: Many students struggled to focus on the screen for long periods during lectures. Online class technology like Zoom Meeting, Google Meet and Skype use computers or phones. During classes, students can easily be distracted by social media and numerous factors. The transition from traditional learning to online education comes with many distractions. Locked indoors with family, roommates, families, and friends and the generator sound of some neighbours is not conducive to an academic environment. With social isolation, limited activity and the very real option of spending the entire day in bed, some are finding it tough to remain focused.²⁰

Virtual Learning in the Period and After was Depleted with Network Issues: Internet connectivity usually poses a big issue in virtual learning. Even though the internet and networks have grown in leaps and bounds in many urban cities in Nigeria, some remote villages do not have a network. Without a consistent internet connection and a good network system, students and teachers will not enjoy the system. This development remains inimical in the New Normal World.

The System of Education Isolated Students: In the traditional system of learning students can identify with each other easily. They can learn from being

¹⁸ Alaba, Tolulope Agbele and Emmanuel, Akinbami Oyelade, "COVID-19 on the Nigerian Educational System: Strengths and Challenges of Online/Virtual Education", *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 13(1), 2020, 26-35

¹⁹ Alaba, Tolulope Agbele and Emmanuel, Akinbami Oyelade, "COVID-19 on the Nigerian Educational System: ... *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 13(1), 2020, 26-35

²⁰ Frankie Carlson, Online Class During COVID-19: boredom, Distraction and Procrastination, *Minnesota Daily*, APRIL 10/2020 Retrieved from <https://mndaily.com/208161/arts-entertainment/aedistractions/>, Accessed on 1/11/2021

in the company of their peers. In an online class, relating with other students is very limited. This often leads to the isolation of students from students.

People of all ages, including university students and academic staff in the majority of countries, were asked to avoid physical social contact and participation in group and community activities, family gatherings and public events. With few exceptions, self-isolation was suddenly required by nation-states, particularly individuals returning from more severely affected regions, as well as for older people and those with underlying health conditions. While self-isolation has been generally considered an act of individual responsibility, some countries introduced and enforced new specific regulations to restrict movement outside the home and require the wearing of face masks, and established the authority to impose fines or imprisonment for non-compliance.²¹

The isolation did not only affect various schools in Nigeria, it also affected the market, religious organisations and other forms of social gatherings.

The System was a Novelty in Nigeria's Educational System: Before this era, learning in Nigeria was traditionally inclined. As a result, many of our teachers and lecturers were ignorant of the system even at present some teachers cannot host a Zoom Meeting, and neither can they use other applications to lecture. More so some students are novices regarding the use of online learning applications. Most students were not able to join a meeting because of their inability to use the applications. Online learning requires teachers to have a basic understanding of digital forms of learning.

It was Very Expensive to Many People: The fees paid by online learning require a student to buy computers or devices.²² Many people cannot afford to buy expensive phones or laptops that can access virtual facilities applications. This can equally disassociate many students from joining academic activities. In addition, some people in remote areas do not know how to operate a good phone or computer. In such places, it will be difficult for some students to operate the system. E-learning needs basic infrastructure that makes it possible for the process to be reliable and efficient. In many developing countries, acquiring digital tools such as laptops and smart phones is expensive. For example, in Nigeria, data are not cheap, and given the poverty level is at approximately 40% of 200 million people, this translates to a population of 74 million low-income earners.²³

In a related development NC State Industry Expansion summarised some visible disadvantages of online education as follows;

²¹ "Impacts of COVID-19 and Social Isolation on Academic Staff and Students at Universities: a Cross-Sectional Study", June 24th 2021 Retrieved from <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-11040-z#Sec2>, Accessed on 1/11/2021

²² "Priyanka Sarangi, Advantages and Disadvantages of online"... May 5, 2021

²³ "City Population (Nigeria: States and Cities) 2020", Retrieved from at: <https://www.citypopulation.de/Nigeria-Cities.html>, Accessed on 2/11/2021

Remote learning can reduce engagement, and interaction, and lead to a lack of socialization, which can potentially decrease a student's social competence or skills such as their ability to cooperate with others; a home or online environment may potentially be more distracting or disrupting than a physical school environment; Organising an online school may be more expensive and more complicated to organize. Those without access to technology or devices would not have access to virtual education; Many virtual schools are relatively new and inexperienced, and therefore may be unfit for educating students properly; Technology or the Internet can be more unpredictable since it may be vulnerable to power outages, Internet outages, hacks, exploits, online trolling, glitches, or errors that can potentially be more difficult to fix or deal with when online; Potential employers may be sceptical of the credibility of online degrees and virtual programmes; Cheating online may be easier or more tempting since online resources may be more accessible and restrictions or consequences may be more lenient.²⁴ The increased anonymity online may further encourage or allow the continuance of misbehaviour such as trolling. Online schools may be too lenient or disengaging, thus may potentially encourage or harbour potentially damaging and undisciplined behaviour that could threaten a student's future or career; Not using the physical tools might diminish a student's ability or competence; Online can be potentially limiting since physical activities or hands-on activities, specifically for courses like Physical education and Chemistry, may be more difficult to engage in or occur less frequent.²⁵

In addition, the coming of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the poor state of infrastructure and facilities in the health sector of Nigeria and the reality of the dilapidation and poor funding of the educational sector. Aside from the health sector, no other area has suffered the impact of COVID-19 like education.²⁶ While many countries have easily adapted and switched to virtual classes, in Nigeria, it is not only difficult but also impossible to open our schools virtually due to the lack of facilities necessary to operate virtual classes, poor provision of the internet network, unstable power supply, high cost of mobile data and other challenges.²⁷

²⁴ "Pros and Cons of Online Education | NC State Industry Expansion Solutions". *NC State Industry Expansion Solutions*, ... <https://www.ies.ncsu.edu>, Accessed on 30/10/2021

²⁵ Calkins, Ruth. "How to Keep Kindergartners Engaged in Distance Learning", Retrieved from www.edutopia.org, Accessed on 1/11/2021

²⁶ Maryjacob Okwuosa, and Mukhtar H. Modibb, "Education financing in Nigeria and the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic" March 01, 2021, Retrieved from <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/education-financing-nigeria-and-impact-covid-19-pandemic>, Accessed on 1/11/2021

²⁷ Maryjacob Okwuosa, and Mukhtar H. Modibb, "Education Financing in Nigeria and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic", March 01, 2021,... Accessed on 1/11/2021

The introduction of the home teaching method by the Nigerian Ministry of Education to teach through radio and television did not yield the desired result as the electricity supply in the nation is below average and the majority of Nigerians are living below the poverty line and cannot afford televisions or radios.²⁸ More so, COVID-19 brought unemployment to many private school teachers. Many teachers (especially private school teachers) were not paid during the time schools were locked. Many private school teachers were not able to provide adequate needs for their families during the period. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a lot of havoc in the lives of many teachers and more so they face a lot of psychological problems such as stress, fear, anxiety, depression, and insomnia that lead to lack of focus and concentration.²⁹

The COVID-19 pandemic disfigured and also shaped the future educational system of Nigerian societies. Notwithstanding, the negative impacts and positive impacts might be in equilibrium because of the 21st-century educational system which has been globalised in many dimensions. Though it affected the educational system of many states in the federation. This should not deprive Nigerians of adapting and adopting the system of the New Normal world.

Conclusion

Some institutions in Nigeria have adopted the virtual method of learning into the mainstream of their academic system because of the glaring pros. It becomes very pertinent for various schools in Nigeria ranging from primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions to be proficient in the system. This can only occur if such schools start organising training for students and lecturers on how to use such virtual learning facilities and applications. However, some students and teachers in Nigeria do not welcome the system because of the facilities that are involved which are inadequate and insufficient in Nigeria. From the look of things, the advantages may outweigh the cons, all things being equal we should consider the advantages and disadvantages and see how we can maintain an equilibrium.

Recommendation

- ❖ From the look of things in the academic world, it is very glaring that the New Normal World has come to stay in the academic cycle. As a result, the Nigerian government should see how to adopt and adapt to the system on many occasions. That does not mean that traditional education should be completely abolished.
- ❖ Many of our teachers in primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions are yet to know how to use some of the virtual learning applications like Zoom Meetings, Google Meet and Skype to teach. The paper recommends that

²⁸ Maryjacob Okwuosa, and Mukhtar H. Modibb, "Education Financing in Nigeria and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic", March 01, 2021,... Accessed on 1/11/2021

²⁹ Alaba, Tolulope Agbele and Emmanuel, Akinbami Oyelade, "COVID-19 on the Nigerian Educational System: ... *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 13(1), 2020, 26-35

intensive classes should be organised for all the teachers in the federation on how to use such applications.

- ❖ Since virtual education leads to the isolation of students, schools need to allow other forms of communication between the students, and teachers. Such means of communication include online messages, emails and video conferencing calls. Such will allow face-to-face physical interaction with students.
- ❖ To checkmate the future and present challenges of the Post-COVID-19 educational system in Nigeria, schools need to invest in the training of teachers with the latest virtual learning technology just to ensure feasible conducting of online classes. Both in-service teachers and student teachers in educational institutions should be well-trained.
- ❖ During the lockdown in Nigeria, some states in Nigeria adopted local media channels such as radio programmes. In light of this, the Nigerian government should provide solar-powered educational devices, pre-loaded with offline academic resources, to students and lecturers in many schools.
- ❖ Parents should provide an enabling environment so that students can benefit from face-to-face online teaching and learning. These will help the students to benefit maximally from online schooling.