

**CHAPTER TEN**

**The Consequences of COVID-19 on Nigerian Education System**

**Ado-Kalu, Ogbonne**

Administrative Assistant

Nigerian Army University, Biu

Borno State.

**Abstract**

Corona virus (COVID-19) is a deadly virus that has led to the death of so many people. Although it has helped to bridge the gap that existed among family members as most parents who hardly had time to stay at home with their family members now enjoy the company of the members of their family due to the lockdown. Its adverse effects supersede the positive effect. This is because its existence has adversely affected every sector (education, health, security, etc). The purpose of the book chapter is to find out the consequences of COVID-19 on Nigerian education system. This will expose the extent at which the pandemic has adversely affected the education system in Nigeria. The consequences of COVID-19 on education system in Nigeria include interruption in learners' learning; nutrition and food insecurity; cancellation of assessment. Based on the findings, it was suggested that all hands must be on deck to ensure the effective implementation of the use of distance learning programmes and education applications and platforms; government should help in instituting libraries which are well equipped with books and other learning resources.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Consequences, Nigerian Education System, nutrition, food insecurity

**Introduction**

According to Mayo clinic(2020), Corona virus 2019(COVID-19) disease is an infectious disease that is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2(SARS-COV-2). Ever since it was identified in December, 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei, China, it has succeeded in spreading faster than lightening around the globe. This is because as at 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2020, more than 12.9 million cases have been reported across 188 countries resulting in more than 571,000 deaths. The Guardian (2020) reports that 32,558 cases have been confirmed positive in the 36 states of the Nigerian federation. Since 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020, every sector in Nigeria has adversely been affected by this pandemic. The consequences of COVID-19 on Nigerian education system is indeed very grave. The nation-wide

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

lockdown of educational institutions is as a result of this pandemic which is causing major (and likely unequal) interruption in learners' learning; nutrition and food insecurity; cancellation of assessment; broad disparity between the rich and the poor; encouraging students to drop out from school; gap in childcare; unemployment and non-payment of teachers' salary. All these constitute the consequences of COVID-19 on Nigerian education system which shall be fully discussed in this chapter.

### Consequences of COVID-19 on Nigerian Education System

According to Simon and Hans (2020), ILO and UNICEF (2020) and Newsroom (2020), the consequences of COVID-19 on Nigerian education system include the following:

1. **Interruption in Learners' Learning:** Schools' closure affects the students' performance adversely. Prior to the outbreak of the global pandemic, students perform poorly in the exams if they are absent from school for a period of time, within the term. This is because they were not around when the teacher taught some topics (due to sickness, non-payment of fees, etc). This shows what the students are likely to encounter in their intellectual abilities as a result of the pandemic because schooling provides essential learning. When schools are closed, children and youth are deprived the opportunities for growth and development. The disadvantages are disproportionate for under-privileged learners who tend to have fewer educational opportunities beyond school. (UNESCO, 2020).

When schools close, parents and guardians are often asked to facilitate the learning of their children and wards at home. Most parents fail to do this because they have limited education and resources. This hinders poor children the opportunity to learn from their teachers who happen to be their only source of learning (if their parents are not literate). If they try to study on their own, they tend to learn slower than when schools were open. This is because there is no teacher who is available to explain whatever they are reading with suitable examples and practicals. This is in agreement with UNESCO (2020) that says, "schools' closure negatively impact students' learning outcome".

2. **Nutrition and Food Insecurity:** According to McCary, (2006), Nutrition plays a critical role in cognitive development and academic performance for children. Many children rely on free and discounted meals at schools. (UN,2020). When schools are

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

closed, nutrition is especially compromised for children in schools where food is provided. In most of the government owned primary schools across the thirty-six states of the federation, the government provides daily free meals for the pupils in the school. students, who are boarders in government owned secondary schools rely on the school to provide free or low cost but nourishing meals for their breakfast, lunch and dinner. The closure of schools affects these children and their families adversely (especially if they are poor). It also affects them if they do not benefit from the relief materials that the state government and some non- governmental organizations do donate to the indigenes in order to alleviate the effects of the pandemic. It makes the standard of living to be unbearable for poor parents because they have to feed extra mouths (the children who could have been fed by the government while in school).

This has led to the starvation, sickness and even death of some of these children whose parents are poor and cannot provide food for them because of the lockdown. The absence of school will discourage most of the poor children from learning because of the absence of the free school meals. Jaime Saavedra (World Bank Global Director for Education) in Newsroom (2020) emphasizes that the effects being simulated show a potential and substantial setback to the goal of halving the number of learning poor by 2030 unless drastic remedial action is taken.

3. **Cancellation of Assessment:** The closure of schools, colleges and universities not only interrupts the teaching of students across the states in the country, the closure also coincides with key assessment period. Many examinations had been postponed and cancelled. Internal examinations are perhaps thought to be less important and have been cancelled. This makes it impossible for parents to know the performance and ability of their children as the result that shows their areas of strength and weakness, was not given before the commencement of the lockdown.

Importantly, the lockdown of institutions not only affects internal assessments. In Nigeria, external examinations like First School Leaving Examination, Junior Secondary School Examination, West African Senior School Examination, National Examination Council, National Board for Technical Education Examination, etc have been cancelled. One potential alternative for the cancelled assessment is to use “predicted grades”. But, Murphy and Wyness (2020) show that these are inaccurate and that among high achieving students, the predicted grades for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are lower than those from more advantaged backgrounds.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

Another suggestion is to replace the examination with the teacher's assessments. Evidence from various settings show that systematic deviation exists where the directions of bias typically depends on whether the child belongs to a group that usually performs better or not (Burgess & Greaves 2013, Rangvid 2015). For example, if girls usually perform better in a subject, an evaluation result of boys' performance is likely to be downward biased. Because such assessments are used as a key qualification to enter higher education, the assessment can have potential long-term consequences for the equality of opportunity.

It is also possible that some students (especially those with a low intelligent quotient) will stand a chance of being promoted into a new class, if there is enmass promotion as a result of the pandemic. Abandoning the examination procedures, will lead to the promotion of failures into the next class and graduation of certified but unqualified graduates who do not know a "B" from a bull's foot.

In higher education, many colleges of education and universities are replacing traditional examinations with online assessment tools. This is a new era for both the teachers and the students. Assessments will likely have larger measurement errors than usual. This will make the result of the assessment not to be reliable. This is because of poor supervision of the students who will likely get involved in examination malpractice and impersonation.

- 4. Broad Disparity Between the Rich and the Poor Children:** In Nigeria, we are already having living experiences of where opportunities are highly unequal. Now, those disparities are more profound as poorer children would have fewer opportunities to maintain any engagement with the learning processes. Despite efforts made to deliver online teaching to the students in order to cover the lost grounds during the pandemic, most students who are residing in the undeveloped rural areas, cannot access it. This is because they reside in places where there is no e-library, no effective internet service to access the educational applications and platforms. The children also do not have the recommended text books. Although the children from a poor family background maybe intelligent, their parents' inability to equip them with the necessary learning resources will make their rich classmates to have an edge over them.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

This makes the continuation of education at home, in the hope of not missing out much not to be effective because of the disparity between families in the extent to which they can help their children learn.(Oreopoulos et al 2006).The key differences include the amount of time to devote to teaching, the non-cognitive skills of the parents, resources(for example, not everybody has the kit to access the best online materials) and also the amount of knowledge .It is hard to help your child learn something that you may not understand (especially if you are poor that you cannot employ an extra-lesson teacher for your child). Consequently, it will lead to an increase in the inequality of human growth for the affected cohorts.

- 5. Encourages Students to Drop out from School:** According to Annette Dixon(2020) in Newsroom (2020), “Not being able to attend school impacts children in many ways: Children do not have an opportunity to learn...too many students, especially girls may lose out on the opportunity to complete their education, which will prevent them from achieving their potentials”. Annette Dixon (2020) further stressed, “Without rapid, decisive and coordinated action, the crisis threatens to pose a huge setback to hard-won gains in human capital, irreversibly damaging the lifelong opportunities of millions of children”. This is especially true to protracted closure. Baker, (2020) agrees to this by stating that disadvantaged homeless children are more likely not to return to school after the closures are ended, and the effects will often be a lifelong disadvantage from the lost opportunities. Most girls in their adolescent stage in life will be forced into marriage, especially if their suitor will help in enhancing the economic standard of the family. Once they are married, they will start bearing children, which will make it difficult for them to return to school with their mates after the pandemic. Others who are not forced into marriage will end up learning vocational skills (hair dressing, sewing, carpentry, trading, Okada riding, etc) in order to help their parents in providing food for the family. The money they will get from these skills will entice them and make it impossible for them to go back to school. Through this, COVID-19 has succeeded in making future educationists, Engineers, Health practitioners, Legal practitioners, Political leaders, etc to end up as traders, hair stylists, car drivers, etc all in the name of making the available desirable when the desirable is not available.
- 6. Gaps in Childcare:** School closure 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 (Summer lesson, WAEC and JAMB lessons, etc) which are shut

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

down temporarily because of the pandemic, parents who are on Governmental special assignment (Health, Media, Paramilitary and Military officials), often leave their children at the mercy of the house helps, friends, neighbours, etc. This can lead to risky behavior including increased influence of peer pressure and substance abuse. This can result in getting involved in premarital sex, rape, abortion, taking of hard drugs like Indian hemp, marijuana, etc which can even lead to death. All these and more occur because parents who are supposed to take care of them are actively engaged in discharging their duties to the government and society while they (the children) are suffering. (Cooper, & Harris, 1996)

The students in secondary and higher education will rather waste the time they ought to use in learning via educational applications and platforms to play games, watch movies and sports. This happens because there is no body to supervise their activities. This makes the efforts of UNESCO to turn to futility as the aims will not be effectively achieved. (Rangvid, 2015).

7. **Unemployment and Non-Payment of Salary:** It is appalling to realize that some states' teachers have not been paid prior to this pandemic. The commencement of the lockdown worsens the issue. Others who are teaching in the private schools, are also owed since the commencement of the pandemic. This makes the lives of the affected teachers miserable as they cannot shoulder their responsibilities effectively due to the fact that they have not been paid. It makes them leave the educational institution for other institutions where they are sure of having a greener pasture. It can also make them to encourage their children to drop out from school in order to acquire some vocational skills through which their needs will be met while the pandemic lasts.
8. **Social Distancing Affecting the Numeric Strength of the Schools and Classrooms:** Since the commencement of this pandemic, everyone is advised to stay at least five feet away from others. Based on the sizes of our classrooms and population of the learners in the school, can this be feasible? Most schools (both government and private) are over-populated due to inadequate schools in the country. This will make the case of social distancing to end up being unrealistic. For it to become realistic, more schools will have to be established with more classrooms so as to contain all the learners with enough space. This will definitely take enough time, resources (human, money, etc) to become a reality.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

Accordingly, Ejieh and Ajadi (2011), suggests that the increase in the enrolment at any level of the education system necessitates new school buildings or expansion of the existing ones. The size of the school plant enrolment in each case will reflect the numbers and sizes of the classrooms. This shows that a school that has four classrooms for a particular year (JS1, JS2-SS3) should not enroll more than twenty learners in a classroom for effective social distancing. Although this promotes classroom management, control, organization and encourages the learners to participate actively during the teaching and learning process, some learners will be forced to drop out from school if there is inadequate school in his community. This is in agreement with Miller's (1965) observation that a school plant can either be an effective tool or a barrier to education.

If due to inadequate resources (human, money, etc) more schools and classrooms are not built by government to observe social distancing, most parents are likely to withdraw their children from school. This is because they will not be sure of their children's health condition in the school that is over populated. In order not to lose their child (only son, only child, etc) by carelessly allowing him/her to study and live in a school /classroom/hostel that is over populated. Proprietors who will obey the rule of social distancing in their schools will increase the school fees. This will make it very difficult for the poor man's child to attend such school even as he tries to learn in a school that is not over populated. In a bid not to contract the deadly virus, he will be left with no option than to drop out from school. This hinders the realization of both UNESCO and Nigerian educational objectives.

### **Conclusion**

Since COVID-19 has hindered the meeting of teachers and learners in the school in order to carry out the teaching and learning process, the realization of both UNESCO and Nigerian educational objectives have been affected adversely. Based on that, it is pertinent to know the consequences of the pandemic on our Nigerian education system. The Book Chapter has attempted to examine the consequences of COVID-19 on Nigerian education system which include interruption in learning; nutrition and food insecurity; cancellation of assessment; broad disparity between the rich and the poor children; encourages students to drop out from school ;gap in childcare; unemployment and non-payment of salary and social distancing affecting the numeric data of the school and classrooms. The consequences of COVID-19 can be checked if more schools will be built by both government and proprietors so that those learners who will be withdrawn from school A

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

due to population explosion will be able to continue with their studies in school B ;government should help in instituting libraries in various communities so that the poor man's child will gain access to books and other learning resources which will enable him to learn at home during this lockdown; government should build schools on a large portion of land so as to have enough space to accommodate all learners even while observing social distancing, etc. These will help the Nigerian education system in waging war against COVID-19 and realizing both UNESCO and Nigerian educational objectives.

### Suggestions

1. All hands must be on deck to ensure the effective implementation of the use of distance learning programs and educational applications and platforms. It will enable schools and teachers to use them to reach learners remotely and limit the disruption of education.
2. Government should endeavour to institute digital libraries which are properly equipped with books and other learning resources. This will enable children from poor family background to learn on their own (especially during this pandemic) without being a burden to their poor parents.
3. Government and proprietors should endeavour to pay their teachers' salaries when due and treat them fairly like other workers in other sectors. This will enable the teachers to have job satisfaction while discharging their duties and remain proud of being in the teaching profession.
4. Employment and regular payment of workers' salary by both government and non-governmental organizations will help in curbing the rate of students' dropping out from school. If parents are employed and are paid regularly, they will have the money to send their children to school, buy books and other learning resources for them. This will help in making the goal of UNESCO realized as no child will be left behind even in the face of the pandemic. It will also bridge the gap between the rich man's child and the poor man's child in intellectual growth and development.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

5. Government and proprietors of schools should build schools on a large portion of land so that the various classrooms will be large enough to contain a large number of learners in future when the school will be experiencing population explosion. This will help to observe the rule of social distancing without the learners dropping out from school or being withdrawn in order to avoid contacting the deadly virus.
6. Government should build more schools so that those learners who will be withdrawn from school A due to population explosion, will be able to continue their schooling in school B.

### References

Baker, J. (2020). The kids who will never return to school after COVID-19: The Sydney Morning Herald.

Burgess, S. & E. Greaves (2013). *Test scores, Subjective Assessment and Stereotyping of ethnic minorities*: Journal of Labour Economics 31(3):535-576 .

Cooper, A. & Harris, Y (1996).The Effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: *A Narrative and Meta-Analytical Review*. Review of Educational Research.66(3):337-268.

*COVID-19* Could lead to permanent loss in learning. Retrieved from <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/06/22>.

*COVID-19 may push more children into child Labour*: ILO and UNICEF. [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).Retrieved 2020-06-14.

Ejeh, M.U.C. & Ajadi, T. (2011), *School Plant Management*. Abuja: National Open University of Nigeria.

Guardian Newspaper (2020) *Report on COVID-19 status in Nigeria*. Retrieved from [Theguardian.com](http://Theguardian.com).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/coronavirus\\_disease\\_2019](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/coronavirus_disease_2019) Retrieved 2020-07-13.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/impact-of-the-COVID-19-pandemic-on-education>.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE PENDULUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

- ILO & UNICEF (2020) *COVID-19* May push million children into child labour. Retrieved from [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).
- Mayo C. (2020) Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)-symptoms and causes. Retrieved 14 April,2020.
- McCary, J. M. (2006). Improving access to school-based nutrition services children with special health care needs: *Journal of American Dietetic Association*.106(9):1333-4,1336.
- Miller, V.(1965).The public administration of american school systems. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Murphy, R. & G, Wyness, B. (2020).Minority Report: *the impact of predicted grades on admissions of disadvantaged groups*. CEPEO Working Paper Series No 20-07 Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities, UCL Institute of Education.
- Oreopoulos, P , M. Page & Stevens, A. (2006).*Does human capital transfer from parent to child the intergenerational effects of compulsory schooling?* *Journal of Labour Economics* 24(4):729-760.
- Oreopoulos,P. ,T. Von Wachter & A. Heisz(2012),*The short and long term career effects of graduating in a recession*. *American Economics and Journal: Applied Economics* 4(1):1-29.
- Rangvid, B. S. (2015). Systematic differences across evaluation schemes and educational choice. *Economics of Education Review* 48 (6)41-55.