

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

CHAPTER TWELVE

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article deals with COVID-19 and educational inequality in Nigeria. This has to do with coronavirus as a pandemic which has seriously affected all aspects of life, including education in Nigeria. Hence, the educational system has been devastated and children from poor families or homes are already bearing the brunt of it. The Global economy has been affected by this pandemic, which has forced many businesses to close. The unfortunate situation is that the educational sector is a part of the receiving end as it has brought about educational inequality. Educational inequality is the unequal distribution of academic resources including but limited to school funding, qualified and experienced teachers, books and technologies to socially excluded countries tend to be historically developed and oppressed. In the article, deliberations have been made in the embracing technology at Covid-19 and the challenged were enumerated where the recommendations on how portable solar radios could be provided among others.

Keywords: COVID-19 educational inequality, pandemic, Nigeria

Introduction

According to a 2019 Executive Summary on poverty and inequality by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 40.1% of the population in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and the largest producer of oil in Africa is classified as poor. That is, on average, four out of ten Nigerians have per Capital Expenditure below \$400. A UNICEF report states that 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5 to 14 years are not in school. Only 61% of 6 to 11 years old regularly attend primary schools. Some States in the North East and North West of the country have more than half of the girls not enrolled in schools as marginalization ensures that girls are deprived of Basic Education. The struggle was going on prior to COVID-19 to ensure young children stay in school and have access to proper education, as Nigeria contributes approximately 20% of the total global out of school population.

Coronavirus has seriously affected all aspects of life, including education in Nigeria. In Nigeria the educational system has been devastated and children from poor families or

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homes are bearing the brunt of it. The Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has affected the global economy. It has forced many businesses to temporarily short down and government across the globe including Nigeria has to place a restriction of movement while exempting providers of essential services who are to strictly observe social distancing rules while providing services as a way to contain the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, the educational sector is a part of the receiving end. According to UNESCO, an estimated 1.725 billion learners have been affected as a result of school closures, representing about 99.9% of the World's students' population as of April, 13th 2020. A COVID-19 pandemic is revolutionizing digital and on-line education globally but kids in rural and underserved communities in Nigeria are been left behind as they are not equipped to adapt or transition to the new method of learning.

Educational inequality is the unequal distribution of academic resources, including but not limited to; school funding, qualified and experienced teachers, books, and technologies to socially excluded communities tend to be historically disadvantaged and oppressed. More times than not, individuals belonging to these marginalized groups are also denied access to the schools with abundant resources. Inequality leads to differences in the educational success or efficiency of these individuals and ultimately suppresses social and economic mobility. These inequalities of educational out-comes are partly driven by poverty and disadvantage outside the school. In part, the impact of education on income inequality is because progressive spending on schooling had a direct impact on the income distribution.

Embracing Technology at COVID-19

To cushion the effect of the pandemic, the world is embracing technological innovation. The issue of virtual interaction has been increasingly adopted to replace face-to-face engagement and limit the total disruption to many sectors. UNESCO has recommended the use of distance learning programmes, open educational applications and plat forms by schools and teachers to reach learners remotely. This could include integrated digital learning plat forms, video lessons, massive open on line courses and broadcast through radio and television. The success of this recommendation hinges on the use of high technology or low technology solutions, which are basis on the reliability of local power supply, internet connectivity and digital skills of teachers, students, parents and care-takers. As interesting as these solutions is, it is said that students from underserved low income communities would be left out of the game and unable to access learning during this very period. This is because, in Nigeria, many States have embarked on airing school lessons on radio and television.

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Non-governmental organizations (NGO) like Teach for Nigeria are partnering with government agencies to facilitate the implementation and adoption. For example in Ogun State Teach for Nigeria is working with the government to deliver classes on television and have deployed on-line capacity building workshops for teachers on programming using a scratch (a block basis visual programming language and website targeted primarily at children) This is in a bid to develop skills for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education.

Challenges of Educational Development at COVID- 19

This is been challenged by (1) inadequate resources for development to underserve communities. Another challenge or major factor is (2) Poverty. The World poverty clock, the Nation currently have about 50% of the population living in poverty with many of the citizen struggling to afford three square meals, especially at this time of pandemic, despite the palliative measures by the government and individuals. This means that they are a lot of students who do not have the access to either radio or television, coupled with the issue of erratic power supply. These group of students, have no internet access nor educational technological resources, a situation that is creating or has created a gap in their academic progress for as long as the COVID-19 exists. COVID-19 is magnifying the educational inequality in Nigeria as only those with access to digital learning resources will keep learning in the comfort of their homes while those without access (the majority) are left behind. This learning crisis is widening the social gap inside of narrowing them. Students are now been disadvantage by the pandemic. In the future, this disadvantage will team to show up as (3) Weak skills in the work force, thereby making it less likely for this category of young people to get well paid and satisfying jobs. When this happened, these young people become nuisances in the society, championing curses that are not just noble just to make ends meet. This remind us of a saying by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Nigeran Nationalist and State man) which goes thus: The children of the poor you failed to train will never let your child ren have peace.

The Way Forward

The time to bridge the gap of educational inequality is now. This can be done by ensuring adequate funding of educational sector. It is of paramount interest to provide an equitable and inclusive learning environment for the students to ensure continuity in learning for all, irrespective of their social economic back ground. One of the palliative measures that can be adopted include a Public private partnership with a non- profit and other government agencies who are working to salvage the situation. The efforts can be supported through the provision of funds at the critical time, since education is the bed rock of the nation.

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Conclusion

The Covid-19 and educational inequality in Nigeria is something that can be managed. This can be adequately managed by the adequate funding of education. This is very important because it is good to provide an adequate and inclusive learning environment for the students to ensure continuity in learning for all, irrespective of their social economic background. That is why no matter the efforts of the government to make frantic efforts in the technologies for the teaching and learning of the students, it is paramount that the poor ones in the rural setting should be taken into consideration to adequately bridge the gap.

Suggestions

It is on this ground therefore that it is recommended that:

1. Portable solar radios be provided to each family in remote places. This will ensure continuity in learning for the majority of learners who are unable to access digital learning resources during this period of COVID-19.
2. There is a need for proper training of teachers on how best to deliver radio lessons. This kind of training can be done using visual plat forms.

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