

CHAPTER TWENTY

COVID-19: A CAUSE TO WILD CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Effectiveness in quality curriculum delivery and schooling is dependent on emotional stability of both the teachers, learners, parents, society and the government. Where the mind is in fear, stability and concentration are affected. COVID-19 is a pandemic disease that threatens the lives of individuals which led to instant closure of schools because of the fear of its spread. The closure creates a room for learners to engage in so many negative behaviors at a time where full academic activities are to hold, known as wild curriculum. The chapter looked at COVID-19, signs, mode of spread and prevention. It further discussed on wild curriculum, curriculum implementation and consequences of COVID-19 on curriculum implementation. These include; disruption of academic calendar, extension of school calendar, poor commitment on both teachers and learners, crash programme and poor academic performance. The chapter suggested that both frontiers in education, parents, community members, teachers, school heads, school owners, government and other stake holders should do the needful to arrest the situation.

Keywords: Corona, Virus, Wild Curriculum, Implementation, Schools.

Introduction

Schools as formal organization has a tremendous role to play especially when it comes to implementing a curriculum. Curriculum being total activities offered to learners individually or in group, within or outside the school under the guidance of a teacher needs conduciveness for its implementation. A conducive learning environment is one of the major components for effective teaching and learning. This is also proposed by UNICEF (2000) that environment is one of the components of quality education. Therefore, academic environment is one that best prepares students for their future professional life and contributes towards their personal development and social well-being (Omoifo, 2018).

An environment that is said to be good for learning is one which is relatively modern with well-equipped buildings. It is one which has comfortable outdoor environment with relevant indoor facilities. It is also one which is safe and fear free. Free from threats, punishment, slavery,

dangers, chaos, misunderstanding and conflict. It is also said to be an environment free from any pandemic situation. Such environment is considered effective and efficient for quality teaching/learning. Nigeria as a country is today faced with a challenging pandemic (COVID-19), which made the government to impose a compulsory “stay at home and stay safe” rule. This led to instant closure of all activities including schools from universities down to primary levels. This closure despite the good intention attached to it has brought a lot of damages to the overall academic activities ranging from the school calendar, idleness, parental complains, redundancies and fear of drop in students’ academic performance. The unplanned closure of schools has led to the existence of wild curriculum (explained in the body of the chapter) which seriously affect curriculum implementation.

Concept of Curriculum Implementation

The process where curriculum content is translated by the teacher is regarded as curriculum implementation. Making the curriculum real or putting it into use is the work of implementation. What is taught and practiced by the teacher in the classroom is an implementation of curriculum. This is further explained in details by Okoro and Eziefula (2018) that curriculum implementation is conceptualized as stage in curriculum process and system whereby all relevant inputs are brought into direct contact with the learners through a wide variety of activities so that learning experience and mastering could be maximized at minimal cost. For this implementation to be successful, both school heads, teachers, learners, parents, community and other supportive staff within and outside the school need to be participatory members.

Therefore, personal experience revealed that effective implementation of curriculum requires the following variables. This is also supported by Omoifor (2016):

- (1) Sufficient, quality and relevant teachers;
- (2) Careful selection and appropriate utilization of teaching methods;
- (3) Production, improvisation, selection and skilful utilization of instructional material;
- (4) Proper supervision and sound inspection of teaching learning activities and materials;
- (5) Supply and provision of quality, adequate and relevant/suitable facilities; and
- (6) Provision of conducive environment that is safe and fear free from conflict, chaos, riot, strike, misunderstanding, as well as free from sickness or pandemic diseases.

Where all these variables are available, then there is no doubt that quality implementation will take place. Similarly, where both the teachers, parents, community members and even the government are not at ease (full of fear), not safe to send the students to schools because of the fear that they (students) could either be harmed, infected or killed by thugs, hooligans or pandemic disease. Such fear could lead to poor concentration of both teachers and learners while implementing the curriculum, poor turnout of students to school or even instant closure of the schools. This was exactly what happened when Nigeria was faced with corona virus disease which came to existence since late 2019 also known and shall hence forth be addressed as COVID-19 in this chapter.

Covid-19 Pandemic as Curriculum Trend

Curriculum trends are seen as anything that causes a turnover or bend in the actualization of curriculum objectives and content. They (curriculum trends) are also referred to as curriculum unimplementable. They (curriculum trends) are issues affecting the society which have direct or indirect influence in the implementation process. These trends could be either positive or negative. Examples include ICT, population and family life education, drug abuse, examination malpractice, street hawking, child abuse, cultism, sex for grade in campus, Boko Haram, kidnapping Internally Displace Persons (IDP), HIV/AIDs and most recently COVID-19 to mention a few. Curriculum being a slave to the society is always out to solve societal problems, as well meet the needs, aspiration and expirations of the society. Though, most of these trends are not implemented in schools, yet they pose a great threat to successful implantation of curriculum in schools. This chapter is mainly concerned with the pandemic disease that disrupt curriculum, implementation in Nigerian school known as COVID-19.

Corona virus-2019 (hence forth COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus (World Health Organization (hence forth WHO 2020), they are family of viruses that cause illnesses such as respiratory or gastrointestinal diseases. The disease was identified in Wuhan china. The WHO (2020) has declared COVID-19 a pandemic following its rapid spread around the globe (PhysioPlus 2020). The emergence and global spread of the 2019 corona virus disease poses a significant threat to public health globally, especially for health system in low- and middle-income countries. The first reported case in Nigeria was on 27th February, 2020, (FGN 2020). Most of the cases at the initial stage have been among travelers returning from COVID-19 reporting countries to Nigeria, (FGN, 2020).

Sign and Symptoms: The WHO (2020) has reported that, COVID-19 affect different people in different ways. Some infected people will develop mild and moderate symptoms such as fever, tiredness and dry cough. While others develop aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat and diarrhoea. It takes about 5-6 days for it to manifest and can take up to 14 days to display the signs.

Mode of Spread: The disease according to Frydmen (2020) is transmitted primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person laughs or sneezes (exhales). These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air and so quickly fall on floors or surfaces, (Physioplus 2020). Older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases and cancerous diseases are most likely to easily get infected and develop desirous illness.

Mode of Prevention

The best ways to prevent and slow down transmission of COVID-19 according to WHO (2019) and Frydman (2020) include:

- (1) Be well informed about COVID-19
- (2) Protect yourself and others by washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently and do not touch the face
- (3) Practice respiratory hygiene. Make sure you and the people around you follow good respiratory hygiene by covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbows or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- (4) Dispose the used tissue immediately.
- (5) Adopt 5 tips
 - i. Stay home as much as you can;
 - ii. Keep a safe distance;
 - iii. Wash hands often;
 - iv. Cover your cough; and
 - v. When Sick? Send a call to COVID-19 emergency numbers,
- (6) Maintain social distancing. Maintain at least one meter (1m) or 3 feet distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

It is by way of preventive measures of maintaining social distancing that the federal government through Federal Ministry of Education declared a “stay at home order”. The Education Minister Malam Adamu Adamu declared that all schools- tertiary institutions, secondary, and primary schools in both public and private sectors are to be closed from 30th March till 4th May, (FRN 2020). This is exactly the period where academic activities are carried out to the fullest while some schools were at the verge of writing end of term /semester examination before closure. The one-month order does not end there, because upon exhausting the one month stay at home order, it was discovered that the spread of the disease is on the high side, that is why the Federal Government of Nigeria also adds few weeks to the lockdown. Till the time this chapter was concluded (June, 2020) schools were still closed and unplanned closure of schools and long stay at home call for a wild curriculum.

Meaning of Wild Curriculum

The Wild curriculum is literally called virus of Nigerian education (Anukam 2018). This is because, when schools close down, eventually, normal planned education process stops, so then, the students are forced to vacate the campuses, hostels or classes, but human young brain detest void. As a result, they become face-to-face with unplanned experience, but outside the auspices of the school. These unplanned experiences whether positive or negative, which students learn without the guidance of a teacher or school as alternative for planned and hidden curriculum is referred to as Wild curriculum. In yet another write up, Anukam (2018) defined Wild curriculum (WC) as all the unplanned and unevaluated experiences the students encounter in their courses of studies, outside the school in reaction to societal economic,

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political, spiritual, social and psychological pressure that usurp the functions of schools during teachers' strike actions, students' riots and political stale mates, (Anukam, 2002). Not only that, disaster such as flood, fire outbreak and pandemic can also disrupt functions of school in which COVID-19 is a typical example. These experiences can be positive; thus, the negative sides are emphasized the more in this chapter because it has a strong link with negative hidden curriculum that learners display in schools.

Causes of Wild Curriculum

There are various factors that served as sources to Wild curriculum among these sources which include

1. **Strike actions:** strike actions by teachers at tertiary institutions triggered incessant closure of schools. These are typically seen during the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which is still in full force as at the time of writing this chapter (April, 2020). The Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), strike of teaching staff of polytechnics at both national and local levels call for an instant lockdown of schools, which stops all academic activities.
2. **Strike actions by Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), National Labour Congress (NLC) and others.**
3. **Rampant students riot and violent demonstrations**
4. **Democratic election results that are not based on transparency, fair and just.**
5. **Religious or ethnic (communal) conflicts in the society that led to destruction of school properties or caused emotional stress (fear)**
6. **Disaster- fire outbreak, flood, hurricane that destroys school facilities.**
7. **Pandemic (COVID-19)-communicable disease that can easily be spread through crowd or gathering, example of this is the current outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic which is the concern of this chapter.**

Content of Wild Curriculum

The curriculum contents learnt by the student though unplanned, unorganised, and sometimes unconscious when any of the above causes manifest are observed by the current study and also spelt out by Aliyu (2015), to include

- a. **Institutional Strike:** When this happens, students learnt that it is alright for government to engage in lies, short-changing games, betrayal of institutions and denials of government policies, constitutions and agreements, manipulation of polity and the psychics of adult and youth alike.
- b. **Students Riot:** What are learnt when this happens include, disrespect for law and order, abuse of power, destruction of public property, fight, intolerance and so on.
- c. **Democratic Results:** Contents learnt here are, annulment of agreements and good election result, learners watch and imbibe the mudslinging between the government and its citizens, embezzlement of public money and property, destroying the life of youth by employing them as thugs, bribery and corruption, etc.

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- d. **Conflict/Disaster COVID-19:** The contents learnt here include, nepotism, disrespect, fighting, gossiping, stealing, cheating, inequity, marginalization, religious bigotry, destructions of lives and properties, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, raping, hacking (Fraud), cultism, etc. This is what Ahukanna and Obizue (2016) regard as a conflict which is a situation without peace.

Learning Environment for Wild Curriculum

Curriculum is meant to be learnt in an official setting or under formal school environment. Unfortunately, this is not so in Wild curriculum. This is so because, as school closure prolongs, students begin to develop fear and keep wondering about their future and so tend to appear in the wrong environment, at the wrong time with the wrong people. Parents, and guardians are not left out in such a worry. The environment where such curriculum is learnt include:

- i. Barbing saloons
- ii. Food joints/ eateries
- iii. Market squares
- iv. Movie places
- v. drinking parlours
- vi. Buses
- vii. Parks
- viii. Public gatherings (religious, traditional)
- ix. Under the shed (in a compound) etc

These are places where everyone's opinion counts, they are places where proactive suggestions and solutions to issues are discussed in an informal way. They are places where mostly negative Wild curriculum content are made desirable. This is an issue of great concern, especially with COVID-19.

Consequences of COVID-19 on Curriculum Implementation in Nigerian Schools

As a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 globally, the country (Nigeria) gave an instant order of total lockdown of all schools at all levels. The unplanned closure of schools while serious academic activities are on brought a lot of concern to all stakeholders. The following are consequences personally observed from practical experience and printed in the chapter

- i. **Disruption of Academic Activities:** When the federal government announced the closure of schools, already, some of the schools were about closing, so busy with examinations, marking and recording, some were about to start their examinations as time tables were out. Others were rounding up as revisions were at the peak. All came to an instant stand still. Teachers and learners were left stranded with hanging activities on their necks. As academic staff, as well as administrative staff of FCE Zaria, Demonstration Schools, it was observed that, classroom instructions stopped, conducts and arrangements for examination (end of term, or semester, external WAEC, NECO, JSCE) Suspended, teaching practice exercise, and supervisions stopped, project

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supervision, issuance of results and certificates, as well as other administrative activities that influenced implementation were all stopped, FGN 2020). This is a matter of great concern.

- ii. **Extension of School Calendar:** It is well known that, all activities or programme for a particular session/ semester/ term have already been planned from the starting to the finishing. So, the presence of COVID-19 destabilizes such a plan which calls for an increase or extension in the calendar with additional weeks, months or year in order to make up for the number of month spent during COVID-19 lockdown, as well as cover/ finish the already planned activities for a given programme. A programme that is meant to finish in three weeks will now have to wait till further notice, those meant to graduate this year may have an increase of months till the next year, etc. This has really caused problem in the minds of teachers, learners, and parents.
- iii. **Parents Tension:** Some parents are not used to staying with their children for long at home due to the nature of their works or businesses. With this COVID-19 both parents and their children are forced to stay together. This may make some parents take decision of getting their girl-child married either because of some behaviours she is manifesting, rapid growth, or to reduce family burden. This early marriage could make her become mother while still in school which could result to school dropout. Implementation is also affected by way of reducing high enrolment and gender sensitivity.
- iv. **Peer Influence:** As a result of unplanned stoppage of implementation (school closure), students in their wild travels in search of alternatives while staying at home fall victims of total idleness or laziness while some get influenced by their friends to join gangs of robbers, cultists, bandits (terrorist), internet fraud or money laundering with smart phones. Some also learn other negative behaviour as drug abuse, smoking, fighting, stealing, raping or sex outside wedlock. These are mild alternatives that when learnt could be taken to school and be taught to other students when schools reopen (Post COVID-19). This will surely affect the three domains of knowledge, hence a threat to implementation. This implies that, these behaviours have upper hand in shaping the students' negative behaviours because they are unchecked, (Adegoke 1990).
- v. **Laziness and Poor Commitment:** it is believed that, once there is relaxation in the brain or in a given activity for a while, there will certainly be relaxation in the performance. This is true to both teachers and learners. Where teacher stayed for more than three months at home with most of them doing nothing but washing their hands, there is no doubt that when they come back to school they may not perform as expected. This will have to take some times before they pick up. Similarly, where the teachers' salaries are deducted by 25% the Guardian News Paper, (2020) in some states (Kaduna State to be specific) Premium times News Paper (2020), time promotion and other benefits of teachers are said to be delayed till the coming year in other states, while some are given half salary or some not paid at all (private schools) these will definitely affect the level of commitment and dedication in many teachers. This is because they

are not motivated further to ginger up. In a situation like this, teaching delivery (implementation) may not be taken seriously, therefore, performance of both the teachers and learners may be shrinking and implementation is affected.

- vi. **Crash Programme:** Since the academic calendar is disrupted without plan, schools were closed for long, teachers and learners stayed at home for quite a while, there is every tendency that, academic activities will be done at a rush when school reopens. The essence is to meet up with the earlier scheduled activities to cover up for the term, semester or session. In this regard, both teachers and learners will be working helter skelter with serious motives of either covering the syllabus/ schemes of work or passing an examination. The right things will not be done in such situations, so implementation will surely be suffering.
- vii. **Poor Learning Outcome:** as results of a half hazard treatment of implementation by teachers. Following the crash programme, hasty attempt will be made to cover the curriculum content without being mindful of the quality delivery. Learners on their parts will not be serious and committed to their studies, rather, they will only focus on passing their examination by all means. This could lead to developing various strategies of examination malpractices, which is yet another cankerworm in the implementation of curriculum.

In the end, schools may result to producing learners with mere certificates, but without quality education, learners that could be regarded as half baked, learners that are second rated, academic rejects or job seekers only. This is the result of Wild COVID-19 stay at home order.

Conclusion

To implement a curriculum means to interpret a planned programme for a positive change in learners' behaviour. Where schools are instantly closed without plan, learners tend to look for wild activities as alternatives to the planned curriculum. COVID-19 has seriously done more harm than good as Wild curriculum found its way to have the upper hand in shaping the learner's negative behaviours, because they are unofficial and unchecked. When schools are closed for long the activities within will be in disarray. If schools reopen eventually, there will be a lot of academic casualties leading to rush or crash programme. This will in the long run affect quality teaching/ learning, delivery, quality output and quality education system as a whole.

Suggestions

On the basis of this write up the chapter recommends that:

- 1) Frontiers in the field of education should ensure that politics is not allowed to fully interfere into education matters.
- 2) Issues that involves schools should only be decided educationist after consulting real experts who will offer professional advice that will be used to reduce academic casualties.

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- 3) Parents should not be in a haste to marry off their daughters because they are tired of seeing them at home.
- 4) Rather other measures can be taken by parents in involving both children to learn new trade and other non-formal skills acquisition like tailoring, barbing, hair-dressing, catarine, interior decoration, mechanic, knitting, agriculture, ICT while at home.
- 5) Employing lesson teacher for those who have the means would be of great help. These would help in reducing idleness and boredom.
- 6) Parents and community members should be at the watch in monitoring the kind of peer group their children are walking with. In addition, they should also be observant in any strange change in behaviour of their children. That will help control negatively learnt behaviours that might be taken to school when schools reopen.
- 7) Teachers should develop the habit of self-study. Breaks like this are not meant for relaxation. Teachers of tertiary institutions for instance should engage in writing articles, conference papers, or textbooks or update their lecturer notes this will help them be more active when schools reopen, post COVID-19.
- 8) Government should not slash down teachers' salaries and delay other benefits (promotion issue) for whatever reason. Other sources can be sought out to generate more money, but not on the meagre amount given to teachers as their salaries, besides, it was not their faults that schools are shutdown.
- 9) Private school owners should also keep some money aside to take care of this type of situation in case it arises again. This money will now be given to teachers when schools are not running, which is much better than giving them 50% of their salaries or not giving them anything at all. This is hoped to encourage job satisfaction and boost teacher performance comes post COVID-19.
- 10) As the school closure is 3 months or so, the government and other stakeholders should lay a rule that long vacation period should be used to make up for the lost period. This will help in normalizing the academic calendar and cover the syllabus as expected.
- 11) Where E-learning strategies are to be used as solutions, care should be taken on the fact that some learners are audio-learners, visual-learners, audio-visual learners while others are kinaesthetic-learners. All should be carried along in as much as learners are to be given equal treatment.
- 12) Both government, school heads, private school owners, teachers, learners, parents, and community members should embrace health workers advice by providing and using (as the case may be) all the necessary equipment and facilities that will ensure good hygiene and help stop the spread of COVID-19 for schools to reopen and activities be in full force for a successful implementation of curriculum.

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