

CHAPTER THREE

Social Distancing at COVID-19 and Classroom Management in Nigerian Secondary Education

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Abstract

The paper examined the issues relating to the social distancing and classroom management of Nigerian Secondary Education. It should be noted that the Secondary Education in Nigeria lack proper maintenance in the aspects of infrastructure and the teachers' motivation. However, the educational stakeholders had been crying for the provision of the needed infrastructural facilities to cater for the social distancing in the Schools. The paper therefore, defined social distancing, classroom management, the issues relating to classroom management and how to cope with them so as to cater for social distancing problems in the interest of curtailing the havoc of COVID-19 Pandemic in the Secondary schools, and eradicating community transmission of the virus in Nigeria through the Secondary Education system. It was suggested among others that the counsellors through their counselling services should enable the students and teachers to abide by the rules of social distancing in the classroom.

Keywords: Classroom management, Secondary education and social distancing

Introduction

The issues relating to social distancing advocated for curtailing COVID-19 pandemic is not a new situational method used in Nigeria. Social distancing method had been effectively used by the classroom teachers in the past. The teachers have been using social distancing for effective students' sitting arrangement in the classroom. According to Adeoye (2006) classroom management is the process of coordinating, organizing, directing and administrating the available resources in the classroom for achieving predetermined goals in the schools. However social distancing was revealed by the Federal Republic of Nigeria that the teacher-student ratio is 1:40 (2013). This is to say that Federal Government through the National Policy on education tried to avoid over-crowded classrooms. It should be noted that, through the benchmark of the teacher-student ration in the class, adequate classrooms were provided to accommodate exact number of the students, the teacher students-ratio became the yardstick for the number of teachers required, number of the required classrooms and the numbers of schools needed, it also helps to determine the total number of hostel accommodation. The National Policy on Education is a laudable plan,

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but failed drastically due to the social demand for education which gave rise to the universalisation of education.

Faherty (2019) defined social demand for education as the principle or approach which made it compulsory for every individual to be educated. He opined that education is social responsibility that everyone should enjoy as a citizen of a country that education should be free at all level. The application of the approach, therefore encourages high patronage of the citizens to educational system without correspondent palliative measures to cope with the students' population explosion. According to Moronfoye and Ogundele (2013), the palliative measures identified are construction of more classrooms, laboratories, purchase of equipment, establishing more schools to cater for social demand requirement on education, also, authors advocated for training and recruitment of more teachers to teach and provide hygienic, healthy and conducive teaching-learning environment in the schools in the interest of maintaining social distancing among the students in the Schools. However, the needed palliative measures were not provided by the government which created the existing problems of overcrowded classroom, school overpopulation and dilapidated classrooms, over-stretching of the available educational facilities. Inadequate infrastructural facilities for both the students and teachers use in the schools which inturn leads to low productivity, low quality and the quality service delivery and the quality assurance cannot be quarranteed. (Sani & Ogundele)

It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic which entered Nigeria on 27th February 2020 had led to the close down of all the socio-economic institutions like Banks, Industries, hospitals, markets, motor parks, both the locals, state, national and international borders were closed. All the educational institutions from crèche to tertiary institutions were also closed down indefinitely. To compound the problem of the higher education the more, the Academic Staff Union of Universities declared on indefinite and prolong strike action over their enforcement to register under the integrated payroll and personnel information system (IPPIS), and thereby withholding their salaries for five (5) months. The lockdown therefore paralyzed all the academic activities in Nigeria higher institutions. However, due to the fact that the education sectors have problems with overcrowded classroom, high school population explosion and shortage and dilapidated infrastructure. The problem therefore became an issue of concern for curtailing COVID-19 in the society that the community transmission may occur and reverse back through the students in the higher institutions especially when the institutions finally re-opened for the students. The principles and operations of social distancing must be observed for effective classroom management in Nigerian secondary school system.

Social Distancing for Effective Classroom Management in Secondary Schools

It should be noted that before the advent of COVID-19 in Nigeria, the public secondary schools had the problem of political and public neglects. The well-meaning Nigerians had been calling on government and philanthropist to come to the aid of secondary education sector but the call did not yield fruitful result. The callings centred on the financing of secondary education, teachers' welfare and provision of infrastructural facilities like buildings, equipments, library, scientific laboratories, lawns and landscaping and furniture yet no response. However, with the COVID-19 Pandemic

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coupled with social distancing, the classrooms become difficult to manage for the teachers, in order to achieve the educational goals in secondary Education.

- i. Social distancing and overcrowded classrooms: The existence of overcrowded classroom before the COVID-19 pandemic had become an issue of concern. The classroom situation before COVID-19 comprised of 1:250, and 1:300 teacher-student ratio. (Ijaiya, 2007). However, with the principles and the operations of social distancing of 1:50 teacher-student ratio, the situation may become difficult to manage the Secondary Education in Nigeria. Difficulties may arise due to deficits of classrooms, teachers, laboratories, equipment and library facilities to cater for the existing classroom education in Nigeria (Sani, 2017).
- ii. Social distancing and classroom arrangement: It should be noted that before the COVID-19 the teachers had been advocating for the child-centredness approach in their teaching learning process. Such approaches include group method, individualized, questioning tutorial field trips, dramatization, discussions and demonstration methods. The existence of the classroom situation greatly affects the classroom arrangement as relating to the sitting arrangement of the students for grouping and to achieve child centeredness approach.
- iii. Social distancing and professional teachers: There were out-cries before the COVID-19 Pandemic on the grounds that adequate teachers were not recruited to teach in the schools. It should therefore be noted that there is current need for social distancing in the classrooms, hence the need for adequate teachers to key into the classroom ration of 1: 50 (Bwoi, 2017).
- iv. Social distancing and school locations: Most of secondary schools in Nigeria are strategically located nearer to the students' parental home. It should be noted that all the students that are from the same environment will move together they walk together, they eat together, interact and do different activities together using the same equipment. However, with the issue of social distancing to curb the spread of COVID-19 Pandemic, community transmission can be very difficult to curtail. Even if there is social distancing in the classroom what then will happen to the social distancing after the school hour. Katrina (2020).
- v. Social distancing, blended and virtual classrooms: The Federal and State Government advocated for the use of blended and virtual classrooms to teach the students on the social lack of consideration for different categories of classrooms like multi-grade classroom, stream line classroom. The issue of social distancing may not be relevant to the classroom situation (Olayioye, 2008) like facebook, instagram Youtube, Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, Telegram and messengers and mass media like Television station like PRTV, Lagos TV, NTA and all the national radio stations. It should be noted that the problems of power and energy supply in rural school locations, parental socio-economic background and student's attitude and interest, computer technical know-how is a threat to the operation of the blended and virtual classrooms (Ogundele & Jimba (2017).

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- vi. More emphasis is laid on a cure without focusing on the solutions to existing damages: Extreme focus placed on the COVID-19 cure without focusing on the remedy to socio-economic damages caused by the pandemic is a problem to the implementation of any post-pandemic activities. There is no counseling services for the masses on the self-understanding of COVID-19 in school (Minnesota Department of Health (2020).

Suggestions

Based on the above write ups, it could be suggested that:

1. Counseling services and programmes are necessary in the school system. The counseling provided will enable the students to understand themselves and take necessary precautions against the further spread of pandemic in the society.
2. The counselors through their counseling services should enable the students and teachers to abide by the rules of social distancing in the classroom.
3. Teachers capacity must be adequately built on the classroom management with pedagogical approaches and inter-personal relationship to enable teachers in their best in managing the classroom situation.
4. Adequate COVID-19 Pandemic preventive measures should be provided in the schools so as to prevent community transmission.
5. Just as the government, philanthropist and other well-meaning Nigerians have shown support in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, similar support should be rendered to the educational system in order to fight or prevent an illiteracy pandemic, or creating half-backed youths, education inequalities, internal and external inefficiency among others.
6. The federal and state government should make adequate provision to increase educational infrastructures that will enable maintain social distancing in the classroom.
7. More teachers need to be recruited in order to complement the existing student population explosions in the school and to forestall over crowded classroom and ensure social distancing is maintained in the classroom.
8. The three-tier of government should adopt the relevant propaganda used for solving the problem of COVID-19 Pandemic to solve the problem of inadequacy of the educational facilities.
9. The secondary schools in Nigeria should be effectively mapped out by the state and federal government according to the needs and interest of the society and individuals.
10. The schools need to be strategically sited by the federal, state, and community following the norms of distance from home, needs, interest, nearest neighbour analysis of the area to monitor the degree of distance of schools in the geographical area.
11. Adequate supervision by the school supervisors should be intensified to monitor the issue of social distancing on the sitting arrangement, school hygiene, infrastructural facilities and all factors that may affect the implementation of social distancing in the school environment.

Conclusions

It should be noted that in Nigerian secondary education, teachers had been calling on the Federal and state government to come to the aid of the secondary school system in the areas of finding provision of physical facilities, recruitment of more teachers in order to curb the problems of the overcrowded classrooms. However, the paper observed that with the COVID-19 Pandemic at the

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global level, there is the need to curb the further spread among the citizens. The avoidance of overcrowded classroom, school population explosion will help to curtail community spreading. Therefore, it could be concluded that, it is important to bear in mind the need to curtail the community transmission of COVID-19 in all ramifications.

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