

Outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic: The Implications for Educational Development

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Abstract

In the wake of the outbreak of the COVID-19 a number of societal challenges have been brought to light such as technological inequality, unequal access to education, deteriorating state of the public health sector to mention but a few. As scientists and governments struggle to contain and understand its mode of transmission using approaches such as social distancing, border closures and total lockdown measures. These approaches have potential impact on the educational sector and the future of countries. This paper therefore seeks to critically analyze the impact of coronavirus-19 on educational development highlighting some of the challenges that inhibit the development of education during the outbreak of the disease while preferring solutions to tackle them such as the introduction of measures that guarantee that students from financially challenges families have access to distance learning packages, ensuring that the level of technology meets the educational demands of the populace, the establishment of digital platforms where teachers can share their experiences and address their challenges in distance learning, ensuring that parents and students are not over burdened with requirements for distance learning, reduce the cost of distance learning materials to mention but a few.

Keywords: COVID-19, Coronavirus, Education, Education Development, Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Historically, disease outbreaks have had serious implications on the economic, security, technological, sociological, political and educational development of societies. These outbreaks remain one of the leading causes of deaths globally [40, 42]. According to a report by WHO in 2020, these outbreaks which are caused by infectious diseases have impacted how societies operate, conflicts occur and the relevance of individuals and communities in general [60]. Over the last decades, dozens of infectious agents have caused disease outbreaks [8] and these disease outbreaks include Spanish flu, Lassa fever and Ebola have caused the death of millions of persons globally. In recent times there has been a rise in the emergence of novel infectious diseases such as MERS, ZIKA and SARS which have posed significant challenges to public health, economy, education, environment as well as the security of societies.

The newest inclusion in the list of novel infectious disease is the corona virus disease (COVID-19) causing a global health crisis as a result of its rate and pattern of transmission which saw its spread to almost every country in the world and thereby leading to its declaration as a pandemic on the 11th of March by the World Health Organization (WHO) [57]. According to latest figures, the corona virus is responsible for about 700,000 deaths and the consequent closure of borders, health crisis, schools, loss of jobs and businesses across the globe.

A key area that has long term implications on the society is the closure of schools across the globe. Literatures over the years highlight the essential role education plays in global stability, influencing technological, entrepreneurial, public health, economic development as well as ensuring income distribution [27, 39]. Power, C. & Sophister [41] Highlights that investment in education addresses key challenges in attaining developmental objectives by improving the standard of living and expanding the productivity of the populace [39]. Education can therefore be described as the process of nurturing, training, directing as well as bringing forth worthwhile characters in individuals [38]. It guarantees the competitiveness of a nation in the global market as it liberates the population from ignorance and ignites advancement [2, 38].

The consequence therefore of the outbreak of COVID-19 on education globally has seen the closure of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions and according to estimation, about 60 percent of the population of students globally has been impacted by the pandemic.

According to this report, numerous examinations across the globe have been cancelled leading to the loss of billions [50, 49]. In the United Kingdom for instance, exams such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Cambridge Assessment International Education have been postponed [35]. This same approach has been

employed by West African countries who have postponed their examinations such as the West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) [48]. Never has there been this level of unprecedented uncertainty in the recent history of the educational sector. These interruptions will further widen the inequality gap between developed and developing countries with regard to education [51].

Buttressing this viewpoint, a survey by United Nations highlight that the closure of these educational institutions in developing countries is further worsened by the poor standard of education and living standards of teachers [53]. As countries are adopting online approaches to education, developing countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania are faced with teachers who are ill-equipped to embark on online teaching, unavailability of facilities to achieve this and educational deficiency as well as little or no computer proficiencies of parents [51]. A lot of uncertainty, trial and error surrounds the movement of teaching online at unprecedented levels. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that education must be continued in order to guarantee the future of younger generations. This paper therefore seeks to critically discuss the impact of coronavirus on educational development.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Education

The concept of education has been described in various way by scholars and researchers hence, no definition completely describes the term education. Etymologically, it is a derivation from the Latin words “educare”, “educere” and “ducere” and according to the Oxford dictionary cited in [38] education is the process of preparing and individuals, particularly children and young persons in schools to develop competencies that meet the demands of the society. It can be further defined as a process that develops the human mind, the personality, potentials and imparts useful and relevant skills to individuals thereby enhancing the growth of the society [10, 37,39]. It prepares the persons mind to enable it cope with challenges [5].

According to [13] cited in [38] education is everything that occurs to individuals from the day they are born to the day they die. Okeke [36] postulates that education is a specialized procedure of educating persons with the primary purpose of equipping them with necessary skills of writing, reading and calculating as well as specialized competencies and interest to facilitate persons contribute positively to the society. Asaju, K. and Adagba [7] portends that it is the procedure that involves the collation and utilization of knowledge acquired. It comprises planned and continuous communication that is proposed to attain learning [38]. It is a social institution that is obtained from the

value of the society in which it exists [54]. Highlighting its impact on the society, Moland [33] contend that it is a powerful instrument for the advancement of man and the society in general. It is the building block of social reconstruction. As such, the importance of education to the society cannot be overlooked during this pandemic era and approaches that enable the attainment of education must be employed.

Educational Development

Educational development has altered over the years, however a number of scholars have offered their perception towards educational development, a school of thought portend that it is the process aimed at improved education through teaching [4]. According to [6], it is the developmental process that see progress in the approaches to the acquisition of education, resources for education and tools for education. Furthermore, it refers to policies and approaches employed by the government that enhance the practice of education [55]. As such, it can be deduced that educational development is the process of development of education that seeks to improve the society.

Coronavirus

Numerous scholars have carried out studies on coronaviruses [8, 44, 46, 58]. The name “coronavirus” is derived from the “crown” like morphology which envelops positive stranded RNA viruses that range from 60mm to 140mm diameter when viewed with a microscope. Coined in 1968, the international Committee on the Taxonomy of Virus classified the “Coronaviridae family”. Primarily, four coronaviruses (OC43; HKU1, 229E, NL63) have been generally in circulation causing mild respiratory challenges in humans [44].

In 2019 however, a novel coronavirus strand of the virus known as (2019-nCoV) otherwise called “Covid-19” came into existence causing severe acute respiratory challenges that saw the world come to a halt in just three months [46]. Scholars highlight that the origin of the virus can be traced to a whole sale market in Wuhan, China [8,46].

Pandemic

The term has raised a lot of dust for researchers [24, 29, 20] numerous researchers have offered varying definitions of what a pandemic is. According to a WHO report in 2020, a pandemic occurs when a new transmittable agent or a recurring one spreads globally. [29] argues that a pandemic is any epidemic that has spread through continents impacting a sizable number of persons. In recent times debates continues to surround the declaration of the H1N1 influenza as a pandemic [20]. Nevertheless, a pandemic can be defined as any disease outbreak that

has spread globally [42]. Challenges of Education Development in the COVID-19 Era

The universe has been immensely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic impacting virtually every area of human endeavor particularly the area of education. As countries seek to return to a semblance of normalcy after the lockdown imposed due to the spread of the virus, the education remains one area policy makers are seeking to establish the new normal. According to [35] this lockdown and the consequent closure of schools have thrown more light on a number of issues such as digital learning, internet facilities, childcare, housing and disability services to mention but a few. According to [16] technological innovations are increasingly being adopted to limit physical engagements.

This has led to the adoption by UNESCO of distance learning approaches that comprise broadcasts from radios and television, recorded video classes, digital learning platforms and online courses etc. [49]. Kummitha [32] Highlights that no approach will be successful at this stage without employing some form of technology. The internet remains the most effective choice for the attainment of this approach. According to [19] the internet is applicable on all platforms. However, scholars argue that countries with poor infrastructural or economic development face significant challenges in effecting this new approach in educational delivery [26, 43]. These challenges can be summarized as follows;

- **Power supply**

Power supply remains a critical factor in the economic performance of nations. According to [45] electricity usage and access to electricity are strongly linked with economic development. Supporting this argument, [31] highlight the impact of electricity usage on economic growth. In the face of this new trend caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that has seen countries replacing classroom learning with online learning through the use of platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom and Skype. This situation puts countries worst hit by power energy distribution and generation at a disadvantage as these countries will find it challenging providing steady power supply to support online learning as well as citizens facing difficulties accessing energy [15]. This is particularly true in countries such as Nigeria, Yemen, Lebanon and Haiti. Thus worsening the challenges of educational development arising distance learning in these countries.

- **Poverty**

Poverty has remained a defining factor in educational attainment [8]. According to [21] socio-economic disadvantages impact the educational outcome of children. Supporting this assertion, [18] highlight that through educational development countries such as Singapore, Korea have tackled a number of challenges such as inequality, poverty and

unemployment. As such, the advent of COVID-19 which has seen an estimated 49 million people falling into extreme poverty in 2020 [1] thereby posing new challenges for educational development.

- **Unequal access to technology**

Technological advancement is key indicator of the level of development of a nation [14]. Countries like China, Korea, United States are miles ahead in economic advancement when compared to countries such as Liberia, Kazakhstan, Greece. This can be attributed to the level of technological advancement in these countries. Beder [9] highlights that access to technology remains a factor in sustainable development. In developing countries, lack of access to technological breakthroughs continues to prove detrimental to educational development [30]. For instance, new approaches to farming, public health, electioneering as well as business education can be introduced faster through technological platforms. Throwing more light on this, Mustafa [34] highlights that poor access to technology remains an obstacle to continued learning particularly for financially challenged families. The outbreak of the pandemic (COVID-19), the consequent closure of universities and the use of distance learning platforms with a view to limiting the impact of the closure of schools/educational centers has heightened and exposed this unequal access to technology as countries seeking to adopt non-physical learning approaches are handicapped by unequal access to technological facilities thereby impacting the educational development in these societies.

- **The outcome of student learning**

The potentials of any society cannot be unlocked with the use of education. Hence, access to education is critical to any nation if they are to experience political, societal as well as fiscal development [11]. In the advent thus, that educational facilities are unavailable it will spell negative implications for national development and educational attainment.

As such, the recent closure of universities, secondary and primary schools as a result of the pandemic has significantly impacted the educational outcomes of societies. According to [17] school closure denies youths opportunities for personal growth. This is particularly true for student's from socio-economically challenged families [23]. In most cases in the event that schools are closed, the responsibility to educate the students falls on the parents and this denies the students the avenue to develop their social interaction and learning skills necessary for overall development.

- **Strain on childcare**

Childcare in today's society has moved beyond babysitting to be about providing children with the optimal environment that ensures their development [28]. It is critical in offering children with the necessary integrated services, attention, protection and nutrition while enabling them develop their

social, mental and emotional skills. Child care and early child education forms a basis for which every other area of child development depends [3, 12].

As such, it can be deduced that child care remains one of the essential aspect of the development of a child. The closure of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic therefore creates pressure on the parents and guardians of children who must meet their educational requirements as well as meet their daily objectives. Gromada, Richardson & Rees [25] highlights that the lockdowns have placed an unbalanced burden on women who spend more time on house chores and care when compared to men. This portends, negative implications for the children as working parents most times leave their wards at home thereby exposing them to develop detrimental characteristics as a result of peer pressure. According to a report by UNICEF, COVID-19 about forty million children globally have missed out on early educational facilities thereby stuttering the development of this children [47]. Thus, it can be concluded that the closure of schools has implications on the educational development of societies.

- **Unequal access to educational resources**

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to ravage countries and social distancing approaches continue to be implemented. Access to educational resources have proved a challenge for students globally. According to a report by UNESCO, the closure of libraries has seen students' access to educational resources limited and dependent on online resources [49, 50].

Scholars highlight that as a result of copyright policies, access to some of these electronic materials have proved problematic for students [56]. This portends implications for educational development.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This study focused on the implication of the outbreak of coronavirus otherwise known as Covid-19 on the educational development however, it was challenged by a number of issues such as the fact that many researches regarding the Covid-19 pandemic are still being carried out and as such, present data and information may change. In addition, as a result of the lockdown measures put in place by most government certain information and data proved difficult to obtain. Furthermore, the research failed to exhaustively discuss every aspect of the correlation between the covid-19 pandemic and educational development.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the outbreak of coronavirus disease has altered how the world operates, socializes and has destroyed manmade borders. This can be attributed to the fact although, Coronavirus-19 belongs to a family of viruses that include common cold and the Severe

Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), its mode of transmission and its fatality rate has left scientist struggling to comprehend it and have introduced social distancing policies to curb the spread. The education sector has therefore been immensely impacted by these efforts and policies. However, these polices have posed numerous challenges such as unequal access to educational materials, technological inequality, economic inequality as well challenges to childcare to mention but a few. This has presented significant challenges to educational development and posed serious implications for sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should subsidize the cost of internet and digital devices.
- Regular psychological evaluation and community interaction should be encouraged between students through digital platforms.
- The teachers should be trained and retrained on digital skills of educating
- Government and NGOs must introduce measures that guarantee that students form financially challenges families have access to distance learning packages.
- The parents and pupils should not be over burdened with too many assignments.
- Employ available applications to connect schools, parents, guardians, tutors and pupils.
- The government and non-governmental agencies should assess the readiness of their societies and decide on the level of technology that can meet the educational demands of their populace.
- The government and NGOs should pay for license of electronic educative materials as well as provide free electronic educational resources.
- Combine important approaches and control the number of applications while blending applications that are available for educative communications and lessons.
- The parents should not be over burdened with requirements to downloads too many applications.
- Establish digital platforms where teachers can share their experiences, challenges and address their isolation or vulnerability.
- Make sure that the use of platforms does not violate the privacy of pupils.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

Numerous studies have sort to discuss the impact of the corona-virus on the society. This paper seeks to analyze its impact on educational development and highlights the importance of digitalization of the educational sector for policy makers while contributing to the already existing body of knowledge in this field.

CONFLICT OF INTREST

I, Josephine Azuka Onyido hereby declare that I have no conflict of interest submitting this paper titled: Outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: The Implications for Educational Development to the Africa Collaborative Learning Journal.

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