Comparative Analysis of Challenges Faced by Primary and Secondary School Education in the Era of Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

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Abstract
The study analysed the challenges faced by primary and secondary education in the era of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all secondary schools Teachers in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 secondary schools in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State. Fifteen (15) teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) as sample for study. One (1) research hypothesis was raised and tested in this study. A questionnaire with reliability index of 0. 76 was used in collecting data. Data collected were analysed using Analysis of variance. The findings revealed that primary school pupils were disadvantaged as a result of COVID-19 pandemic compared to secondary school education. Secondary school can effectively utilized Educational Television and radio and other means of learning while early childhood and primary level students are seen to be most likely to be disadvantaged by the crisis and least likely to be able to access the technologies required for learning. It is therefore recommended that governments, local authorities and education institutions should urgently build an appropriate distance/technology enabled component into the curriculum, taking a semi-blended, self-paced element into all learning, without disadvantaging any educational level

Keywords: Challenges, COVID-19, Comparative, Analysis, Pandemic

Introduction

In late January and early February 2020 when countries such as China and other European, American and Asian countries were battling with the nascent COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria appeared to be kept aloof from the Chinese disease. The reality of the disease was dawn on the country on February 27 when the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Nigeria. On March 23, 2020, when the total confirmed case was 40, with one death, two recoveries and 37 active cases, the Federal Government of Nigeria temporary closed down all schools in Nigeria in a bid to contain the spread of the coronavirus (Becker, 2020).

Unlike other countries where governments came up with policies and measures to feel in the gap created by school closure, Nigeria had no plan to keep the students engaged in academic activities. The ministry of education casually announced that pupils and students should tune to public media channels such as radio and television for learning programmes. There was no clear cut policy thrust to immediately tackle the disruption of academic activities to cater to over 45 million students affected by the closure of schools. Students were kept at home without any form of academic engagement (Eebo,Kareem & Ayuba,2020). The private universities swiftly switched on to virtual learning platforms and carried on with learning activities while the public schools remained shut totally. The Nigerian education system was indeed hard hit by the COVID-19 outbreak. Second term examinations did not hold in primary and secondary schools, the second term was never started, and junior secondary school and senior secondary school certificate examinations, as well as university examinations, were suspended (Sheikh & Rabin, 2020).

Covid-19 pandemic laid bare the wretchedness of the Nigerian education system. The system obviously lacked the capacity to migrate schools to virtual learning platforms. There was no unified data; schools were not linked up to any central information system or portal. Some rich and middle-income households according to Adediran (2021) were able to engage their children in remote learning activities via the internet, but so many households do not have the facilities and resources to engage their children in such. Also, many households are located in places with limited internet access and unreliable electric power supply, thus, making them leave their children in the dark when their counterparts in other climes were making progress.

So many countries in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak and its attendant lockdowns were able to adopt effective measures to curb the effect of disruption of regular schooling (Maclean & Dahir, 2020).

The Chinese government, for instance, provided computers for low-income households and offered mobile data and telecom subsidies as well to enable their children to participate in virtual learning . In France, students who do not have access to computers were lent the devices they need. Portugal, on its part, partnered with postal services to deliver working sheet to a student who does not have access to the internet at home. COVID-19 pandemic has clearly revealed that there is a digital divide between an average Nigerian child and his counterparts in most developing and developed worlds. The ministry of education was a handicap to play any interventionist role during the lockdown. The efforts of some state governors to adopt the use of local media channels such as were grossly ineffective as such programmes did not involve competent teachers and had no feedback mechanism (Odunsi, 2020).

There is a widespread recognition that technology will play an important role in the future of education and the virus provides a 'wakeup call' to grapple seriously with this future. Africa's education sectors are diverse and so too are their challenges. Primary education has different challenges to secondary education, as do private to public, and urban to rural provision. While the issues may differ between countries, there is one important commonality, the scale of the issues is different at different education levels. Only a small minority (20%) attend university. Only a minority of students finishes secondary school (40%). It is at the primary level where there is the closest to universal provision (80%).

The survey by Ifenkwe (2021) reported that it is the primary level which is least able to cope with the

disruption of schooling. Primary children, in general, have little experience of study outside the classroom, they are unlikely to have adequate provision for learning at home or access to internet-enabled devices and many parents will not have the ability to provide sufficient support to their learning. So, those in need of support are the least likely to be able to access it, and if a child drops out of primary school, they are unlikely to return to full-time education.

Governments across Africa closed down educational institutions early. With very little warning, the whole approach to education through classroom teaching became unviable, with little planned to replace it. This problem faced governments worldwide but has been particularly severe in most African countries where there is a wide disparity in provision for the 'elite' and for less advantaged people, mostly in rural areas. While educational programmes on television and radio were quickly launched by many governments, they were only accessible to those with access to a television or a radio set (Ifijeh, 2020).

Similarly, online learning was only accessible to those with internet access. While 59% of respondents were satisfied with their government's response to the pandemic, 59% thought they did not take sufficient account of teachers' views in relation to education, and only 36% thought the government's actions would be effective in maintaining educational progress, through distance education. While the need for distance learning was clear from the outset of the pandemic, achieving effective reach to students was more complex. Universities were left to their own devices and their responses varied according to their resources and resourcefulness. At both the primary and secondary school levels, priority was often accorded to continuing with examination classes, i.e. those classes taking the primary and secondary leaving certificates, but, for the majority, neither students nor teachers had any prior experience in teaching and learning outside the classroom (Hussain, 2020).

Government provided television and radio educational programmes, sometimes in partnership with the private sector, but not all were well organized. Some state undertook effective interventions, others did not. This did not always equate to their relative wealth or poverty. It was quickly clear that, for the majority of learners, sophisticated technological approaches were not always the answer (Adediran, 2021). Survey respondents were clear in highlighting the three main obstacles for learners in the midst of school shutdown: a lack of access to technology, an unsuitable home learning environment, and a lack of access to learning materials. For teachers, the main impediment was the lack of appropriate training to design and manage distance learning programmes. This was compounded by a lack of infrastructure: electricity connectivity, devices; and a lack of appropriate learning materials: books, television and internet-enabled devices. The findings are clear: poor students and those most geographically dispersed are most at risk of missing out on education if there is no conventional school to attend (Hussain, 2020).

In addition to these difficulties, respondents noted that most teachers were as inadequately prepared and ill-equipped to deal with this new situation as their students were, and similarly, parents were also ill-equipped to support their children's education at home. While some governments provided 'sensitization' for teachers and parents, many did not. 83% of respondents thought that their current school curriculum did not lend itself to distance delivery. In spite of all these challenges, 50% of respondents thought that Covid-19 would provide 'new opportunities for education systems,' particularly in the integration of technology into learning. Some respondents saw it as a chance for governments to turn their words into actions and to evolve education systems into something fit for the 21st century. While it is too early to say what has been learned from these trying times, there are some common themes, a need for good communication between governments and the broad population; between government, institutions and teachers; between institutions, teachers, parents and students. The involvement of the private sector was seen as a considerable benefit in several instances, with some governments working with telecoms companies to provide free data access to educational sites. This, together with radio and television provision of educational programming, and effective distribution of paper materials, seems to have been an effective combination. Specific technologies such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook and Moodle were also named as being useful. There remains, however, the danger that the current crisis ultimately increases the 'digital divide' in education between those with access to technologies, even television, and those without. Several respondents signaled the potential social challenges of having a 'two-stream' approach to education, one for those with access to technology, and another, lesser, system for those without. The survey generated many ideas and much good advice.

Findings from UNESCO (2020) revealed that learners in primary school are those most likely to be disadvantaged as a result. Early childhood and primary level students are seen to be most likely to be disadvantaged by the crisis and least likely to be able to access the technologies required for learning compared to secondary school education. Educational TV and radio are seen as the most important technologies for sustaining learning for students at the primary level but at the secondary level, online learning is considered to be the most important. Therefore the problem of this study therefore is to comparatively analyse the challenges faced by primary and secondary education in the era of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the research is to comparatively analyze the challenges faced by primary and secondary education in the era of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Specifically the objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the differences between the challenges faced by Primary and secondary school education during COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria

Hypothesis

There is significance difference between the challenges faced by Primary and secondary school education during CVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. Population comprised all secondary school teachers in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State. The random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) secondary school teachers in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State. Fifteen (15) teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) as sample for study. A self-developed questionnaire (r=0.76) was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) ay 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for challenges faced by Primary and Secondary School Education.

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Primary Education	100.833	1	100.833	.343	.559
Secondary Education	34695.833	118	294.032		
Total	34796.667	119			

$p<0.05$

Table 1 shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA), testing if there is no significance difference between the challenges faced by Primary and secondary school education during COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The result shows that at F=.343 and .559<0.05 which implies the hypothesis will not be rejected. Which therefore means that, there is significance difference between the challenges faced by Primary and secondary schools education during COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria?

Discussion of Findings

From the results gathered from hypothesis, it was shown that there is significance difference between the challenges faced by Primary and secondary school education during COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The challenges faced by each level of education vary during COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The primary level which is least able to cope with the disruption of schooling. Primary children, in general, have little experience of study outside the classroom, they are unlikely to have adequate provision for learning at home or access to internet-enabled devices, and many parents did not have the ability to provide sufficient support to their learning. The result is in line with the findings from UNESCO (2020) that learners in primary school are those most likely to be disadvantaged as a result. Early childhood and primary level students are seen to be most likely to be disadvantaged by the crisis and least likely to be able to access the technologies required for learning compared to secondary school education. Educational TV and radio, Whatsapp, Zoom, Face book and Moodle were also named as being useful for secondary school students and primary school pupils cannot make used of those medium.

Conclusion

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant cessation of learning activities in schools have provided an unprecedented opportunity for a deeper reflection on the Nigerian education. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the embarrassing loopholes in the Nigerian education sector as it did on the health sector. The education system in the decade has remained underfunded and is beset by myriads of problems such as inadequate and dilapidating infrastructure, inadequate teaching facilities, poor teachers' welfare, poor research funding, poor quality of teachers, unconducive learning environment and the like. It was concluded that primary school pupils are disadvantaged as a result of COVID-19 pandemic compared to secondary school education. Secondary school can effectively utilized Educational TV and radio and other means of learning while early childhood and primary level students are seen to be most likely to be disadvantaged by the crisis and least likely to be able to access the technologies required for learning.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study the researcher made the following recommendations:

i. Governments, local authorities and education institutions should urgently build an appropriate distance/technology enabled component into the curriculum, taking a semi-blended, self-paced element into all learning, without disadvantaging any educational level.
ii. Governments should seek, through fiscal measures and other incentives, to develop an 'enabling environment' and to encourage the private sector to contribute to a firm technological basis for the education system.
iii. Governments should draw up, publish and consult widely on crisis management plans, to ensure the continuity of education in any future crisis.
iv. Governments should prioritize the training of teachers in the use of technology and in conducting lessons online.
v. There should be a concerted effort by all stakeholders to redeem the Nigerian education from tilting beyond the precipice.

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