

## **E-LEARNING IN COVID-19 NIGERIA: A DISASTER**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Many factors abound to determine or undermine the success of emergent models in realities of time. Thought approaches to resolve problems and consequently, move away from existing patterns to more beneficial ones for the development of all societies are based on promising models. Coronavirus pandemic which has been linguistically, coded COVID – 19, since last year, 2019, has announced its fame as an invincible and invidious health challenge across the globe, assembling a commensurate global attention. With globally ingrained attitudes among cultures, the search for instantaneous solution to the pandemic remains pantomime. In Nigeria, electronic learning is thought as best option of learning while solutions are aggressively sought to combat the scourge. Already, an attitudinal strategy has been popularized as a way of preventing massive spread of the pandemic virus. The government and international organizations have discouraged massive gathering of citizens at particular places, to promote social distancing and self isolation. This paper explains 8 eight different reasons why the policy of e-learning, would not receive the blessings of Nigeria and Nigerians. Electronic learning at pre-primary, primary and post primary levels would be disastrous if it becomes the only learning option available to Nigeria. The paper as contribution to the existing strategies being proposed, explains with recommendations to government what is needed to keep our education moving in the times of COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is no general ambiguity between what is known today as Coronavirus or COVID-19 and the calamity it has melted out on distraught populations across the world. Apart from the substantial economic damages it has brought to the fore, social and religious relations have remained at a standstill. Experts, including reputable organizations like the World Health Organization, WHO, have since come out to enlighten the world about the best combative strategies to be adopted in order to tame the enormity of the scourge on human population. Governments among other precautionary measures have asked citizens to imbibe habits of social distancing and self-isolation. This portends that, no more, the pulsating rhythm of social,

economic and religious relations would be the same again (at least within the period of the scourge).

This new social patterns evidently divorce citizens from rights of freedom and association, with options of provisional existence. The rudimentary knowledge of the pandemic Covid-19 has fast gone round the globe like the virus itself. This means, citizens of nations across the world are fully aware about its dangers, impact and the determination of their leaders to subdue its fatal consequences on citizens. The search for solution involves continuous modification of patterns, reforms of various components of the social system to gain best options to contain the effect on human population.

Education remains the most assured path to the development of any society. Daily improvements are made towards learning and teaching across the world for greater efficiency and results not only in times of epidemics. Computer-aided programmes have been developed across faculties of knowledge to support teaching and learning, and this has deemphasized the age-long practice of mere chalk and chalk board. Nigeria to some extent has tuned into this global reasoning, aiming to imbibe best global practices to keep abreast with the changing times. Unfortunately, the nation is yet to attain this dream when Covid-19 hit the global scene, exposing the vulnerability of different nations based on their peculiar realities which Nigeria is not an exception. In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, widespread alternatives are being currently sought for Nigeria's educational system. The option that has received wide approval across Nigeria's population is electronic learning (e-learning). Learning, as educationist have clearly taught, can hardly be thought away from teaching and vice versa. It means, teaching can neither be defined without learning. An attempt is made below to define teaching as understood by Ezeude (2007:204):

Teaching is generally seen as a system of activities designed to induce learning. The teacher in this sense is a facilitator of learning. Two kinds of participants are involved in the teaching process, the teacher and the learner. The act of teaching, therefore, is a dynamic interaction of individuals- teachers and learners to bring about a permanent change in behavior.

Judging from what it means by teaching we have already established the possibility of different approaches in this interactional exercise in education. A lot of approaches to teaching have been experimented upon which include among others structural view approach, functional view approach, interactional view approach, translation/traditional method, direct method, army method, the audio lingual method, the communicative method, eclectic method, discretional method and a host of others, which all at different situations have been tested in Nigeria. The paper will not waste time explaining these approaches because; its aim is to find a nexus between e-learning approach and the global challenge of Covid-19 in Nigeria. However, the later learning approach will be elucidated upon due to its pivotal orientation to this reading.

## **COVID-19 OR CORONAVIRUS: GENERAL OVERVIEW**

Digging into the global politics that now surrounds the emergence of the pandemic virus, covid-19 is baseless to this paper. This portion is reserved for students of development history, power and politics, if they find it important to be investigated. This exception is crucial because the knowledge of the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic is still shrouded in controversy. The facilitative opinion available about it is that, it is a laboratory virus created by Chinese scientists for economic dominance.

Rather than corona-virus, President of the United States of America (USA), Donald J. Trump, in one of his addresses, referred to it as Chinese virus. This further legitimized the suspicion and accusations that Chinese scientists experimented the virus in Wuhan (a leftist county in Chinese politics) which slowly penetrates the entire world.

Also, given the strategic position of China in global affairs, the spread of the virus since its inception in the mid of 2019 becomes efficient, reaching all continents of the world. As at April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, the WHO on its website, published that while eight Hundred and sixty thousand, one Hundred and seventy (860, 170) cases were recorded globally, one hundred and seventy eight thousand and forty four (178,44) had recovered from it, while forty-two thousand three hundred and forty four (42,344) died of the scourge.

In the midst of Covid-19 global economic challenges, countries like the Peoples Republic of China, Republic of Italy and the United States of America are the worse hit by the pandemic, all with index cases above one hundred thousand with recorded deaths above ten thousand each. All these nations are locked down. Government has provided a little window opportunity for shopping at specified hours in the countries as a way to stop the spread of the virus.

Moreso, given the tendency and viability of the pandemic with horrendous expansionist visibility across the globe, strategies available to combat it remain similar. Nations of the world have locked down and restrained citizens from movement while they have encouraged social distancing and self isolation. Either suspicious or known cases of infection are quarantined to twig the virus from moving to uninfected areas.

There is also general panic to the scourge across the world. This is because of the ravaging effects it has created on human lives. It was reported that in Italy, the cases of infections have overstretched medical facilities, killing over ten thousand citizens. With regards to Italy, the old population, jaded by the strenuous requirements for preventing self infection of the virus they have died more, while absolute cure to the virus is yet to be ascertained, continuous experimentation becomes a child of necessity to different nations. The emergency authorization granted by the United States of America to chloroquine as dependable cure to Covid-19, is still

under contention and ballads of controversy. These are typical observations selected from a great number of issues that surround covid – 19 pandemic across the globe. The policy which dictated these instructions are based on panic and a continuous search for solution.

In Nigeria, however, the virus was first associated with an Italian whose names are in permanent secrecy in the country for no pronounced reasons. The Italian national was thought to have been on a business trip to Osun State (Nigeria). Neither his pictures nor profile is availed to inquisitive Nigerians nor the media for sighting since his alleged isolation, treatment was on going. No verifiable details are given by Nigerian authorities about him until it was announced on the media; he recovered from his infection and was discharged.

As at the time of this writing, April 2, Nigeria Centre for Diseases Control, NCDC announced officially the number of infected persons in the country were one hundred and forty seven (147), the centre also disclosed that while two (2) deaths were only recorded in the country, not less than twenty persons recovered from the infection. The sad issue with the figures is that since it is an epidemic, they are bound to change daily.

Despite the huge panic which the spread of coronavirus in Nigeria has summoned, the global practices of social distancing, lockdowns and self isolation have proven not totally fulfilling. The panic strongly emanated due to the deplorable medical system of the country. All state Governments in Nigeria lunched Covid-19 emergency teams to monitor, advise, procure treatment materials and create Covid-19 isolation centres to enable governments whittle the virus from spreading.

Largely, both autonomous and joint actions have been imbibed to tackle the covid-19 incidence in Nigeria. Autonomous actions, according to Clark (1996:289) are things that individuals have to be willing and able to do, but joint actions take the commitment of all participants. Covid-19, principally in the Nigerian experience is being tackled using associative commitment. The emergent purpose for these joint and autonomous actions is the idea that the spread of virus is not restricted to social class, religion, power and gender.

### **ELECTRONIC LEARNING/TEACHING TECHNIQUES**

There are multifarious methods or approaches to learning and teaching on conventional basis which are appropriate to the disciplines, knowledge is being transmitted. Learning and teaching are indivisible in education. Education itself is formal and informal. Informal education connotes the kind of education learners acquire without formal tools. They may not necessarily be enlisted in schools to gain this knowledge. They may in many instances lack a social agent (teacher). Learners under informal education do not make use of instructional materials like writing and reading books. There could be zero room for feedback under informal education; however,

informal education is a reality due to the presence of traditional institutions which were responsible for the control of behavior of the people and the transmission of acceptable standards in the environment. Institutions for informal education are family, religious institutions, social networks like meetings, peer groups and many others. There are also avenues for cultural education like folktales, riddles etc. Participants in these cycles as they interact, are bound to teach themselves and learn from one another.

Teaching and learning in these situations do not require systematic approaches. With regards to formal Education, the choices for teaching and learning are manifold. Since the onerous goal of formal education is the transmission of skills and information to learners, the aim is to see resultant behavior which enables learners deliver on certain functions. The techniques for teaching also vary considerably across disciplines which learners are engaged. The most common of these approaches in Nigeria as earlier mentioned are eclectic approach, discretionary method, functional structural view approach, interactional view approach Audio-lingual approach, communication method, army method, translation/traditional approach etc. Here, learners are taken through different methods, performed by their teachers to gain knowledge of what is being taught.

The advent of computer technology has eased learning and teaching in several ways. This presupposes that the traditional style of assembling learners and teachers under one roof becomes less important. Unfortunately, this traditional style is still the most commonly used model in Nigerian learning system. Advanced countries have years adopted e-learning model and it has been proven, the most efficient, reliable and time saving. Nigeria is yet to make available the facilities in her schools for this learning and teaching model.

The India Council for Technical Education (ICTE) defines e-learning as a learning system based on formalized teaching but with the help of electronic resources. The council emphasizes that while teaching can be based in or out of the classrooms, the use of computers and the internet forms major component of e-learning. The body also discloses that e-learning can also be termed as a network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, and the delivery of education is made to a large number or recipients at same or different times.

The ICTE explains that earlier in days of e-learning experimentation, it was not accepted whole heartedly as it was assumed that the system lacked the human element required in learning. However, it maintains that with the rapid progress in technology and advancement in learning systems, it is now embraced by the masses. According to the council, the introduction of computers was the basis of this revolution and with the passage of time, as we get hooked to smartphones, tablets, etc; these devices now have an important place in the classrooms for

learning. It is now known, books are gradually getting replaced by electronic educational materials like optical discs or open drives. Knowledge can also be shared through the internet.

### **PERCEIVED IMPEDIMENTS OF E-LEARNING IN COVID-19 NIGERIA**

Coronavirus, also known as Covid-19 poses a global threat not only to health but to the economy of the world. The government has pronounced that the best strategy for combating its spread is social distancing, self-isolation and lockdowns. In Nigerian experience, all public institutions are ordered by Government to close down. This means that all public and private schools are shut down within the period of mitigating on the spread of the pandemic virus. It is in the light of these issues, experts, educationists, development strategists are searching out for measures and alternatives to our conventional or traditional model of teaching and learning. Many proposals have favoured electronic learning as a solution to the present quagmire which the education sector of Nigeria is currently trapped in. It has shown that all levels of learners in Nigeria are home observing social distancing order by the Government. As the situation lingers, a lot of distortions would have been caused in Nigerian students' educational careers. It is on this basis, the search for solution has occupied stakeholders in education. This segment of the paper discusses some of the challenges that are likely to make e-learning unattainable as the present situation in Nigeria rages on:

i. **Power Supply:** electronic learning system entails steady availability of electricity for online interactions between learners and instructors. Be it at any level of education, it is a requirement which targets effective teaching and feedback. Unfortunately, Nigeria is still a nation without steady and covered power supply. In addition, most homes of learners, be they, pre-primary, primary and post primary are not connected to power which makes it difficult to deliver to them electronic teaching. Coupled with learners who are homed in remote villages where electricity is yet to be connected, it compounds the problems and it becomes a mirage to experiment electronic learning system in Covid-19 situation and an electrically challenged environment. This, in Nigeria will become impracticable, indemonstrable as predictably, not all learners will be captured in learning. The option of café servers too would be windy as the situation demands lockdowns and social distancing.

ii. **Internet Facilities and Personal Computers:** the possibility of Government supplying personal computers to learners across all levels of learning in Nigeria is a null hypothesis. The next stage which is to plant internet opportunities to learners and teachers will be more problematic. Given that there is much strain in Nigerian economy and its toll on citizens, it will be unrealizable to force parents and guardians even by laws to procure personal computers for children and wards for electronic-learning while at home. The prospects for making learning

efficient at home and on a platform that is entirely new to students can also not be guaranteed. This is most especially with learners at preprimary and primary levels.

iii. **Homes Policies/Environment:** different homes operate distinct policies. Housing remains a frustrating challenge to many parents in Nigeria and the question of suitability and non suitability of homes for learners would remain a good factor for consideration. Houses without secluded areas as house libraries for learning will frustrate the electronic system of learning if allowed. There would also be the case of lousy or noisy environments where learning can practically be impossible

iv. **Poverty and Wants:** there are predictable issues which poverty situations in many homes can do to destabilize efficient electronic learning. While many advanced countries where poverty level is low have taken emergency actions to make funds available to citizen during the period of lock down, to further mitigate on the substantial stress lockdown have brought, Nigeria which already is named the poverty headquarters of the world has not done much in this wise. It is also clear that most homes are unable to feed while basic conveniences are also unavailable, therefore it will be difficult to summon the needed enthusiasm from both parents and students (children) to key into the electronic learning option which has been proposed for the country, if Covid-19 situation lingers

v. **Collaborative Challenges:** electronic learning or teaching requires a lot of collaboration between computer technologists, programmers, teachers and learners. There is also the need of assembling computer learning programmes across not just topics but subjects as required, if any meaning can be made of electronic learning. For instance, a particular subject per term/semester as the case may be, requires preplanned programmes to cater for the teaching of the topics therein. The possibility of accessing these programmes across the spectrum of topics, then, subjects is slim. Another close challenge to this is the disposition of the teacher who becomes an emergency computer operator, programmer to effectively and continually transmit to learners. There would be an obvious capacity void here.

vi. **Time constraints:** a lot of time would be required by the teacher to transmit knowledge to a number of learners in a particular class. Teaching also entails feedback and evaluation, and where the teacher is transmitting to a number of students, certainly learning components like feedback and evaluation will suffer because this require time to respond well lot of learners. It will be difficult to satisfactorily respond to learners' worry and intentions as time and factors like internet efficiency may not allow.

vii. **Tinkering with curriculum:** Electronic learning would be an emergency response to an emergency situation. It means therefore, the curriculum of education across levels of learning

doesn't understand it. It will spark controversies and consequently, legal tussles about its legality or otherwise. There would be legally conscious academics who will be ready to talk this aberration through the law, except the government takes available procedures which are legitimate to have the curriculum changed in order to accommodate it as a tool for teaching and learning, the controversies would be too broad to be contained.

**viii. Psychological Considerations:** Learning in a charged environment has mumbling psychological outcomes. Coupled with the aforementioned issues which have been identified, citizens of Nigeria are already psychologically traumatized about the negative impact coronavirus pandemic has on social and economic lives of the people. Therefore, any aggressive approach targeted to replant a learning model which is unknown to the environment will speak difficulties. There would obviously be psychological distancing, low enthusiasm towards it. Since teachers and learners are not always together in electronic method of learning, there would be tendency of learners not giving the required attention.

To this end, this paper makes alternative recommendations based on the current situation, which given consideration would support or encourage our educational lives while at home.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

While different options are being presented by experts, educationists, opinion moulders etc about the best ways to keep delivering Nigeria learners their educational rights in the face of the global challenge of Covid-19 epidemic, this paper takes exception of electronic learning as a trusted model, highlighting eight different reasons why it will be disastrous to us it. The paper makes the following recommendations:

- i. First, government must leverage on learner's isolated learning pains, by providing each home with funds to internally devise methods, their children or wards will receive education under the emergency situation. Parents should be availed learners' syllabus from their schools for home learning within the period of the epidemic, while also allowing them an open window to recruit teachers tested free of coronavirus to attend to them. With this, learners would have been exposed to the knowledge they need while at home. The home teachers would also prepare them for consequent examinations pending when schools reopen. This recommendation is only suitable for preprimary, primary and post primary learners.
- ii. Tertiary education learners should remain at home reading, having been availed reading list from their schools across the courses of their hold. Data allowances should be paid into their various state scholarship accounts for research. In doing so, they will keep abreast with disciplinary thoughts and knowledge , while waiting for schools' reopening



iii. Teachers at all levels of education should equally be paid data and credit subscription allowances to keep their phone lines opened to students for answers to their questions. It will cost government less with these three (3) recommendations than adopting e-learning as an option to the present situation

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper highlights the likely consequences of adopting electronic learning system as a model for Nigeria in the times of COVID-19 global epidemic. The paper among other predictable impediments, identifies, shortage of power supply and power coverage, lack of internet accessibility, poor home policies, poverty and wants, collaborative challenges, time constraints, curriculum issues and physiological problems as likely challenges to defeat electronic learning expectations. The paper ends by recommending a tripartite solution to the nagging issue of education, covid-19 pandemic has placed on the table. The paper believes that its arguments and postulations are best options for now if handled with sincerity.

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