

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TEACHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

¹Goshie, Samuel Ndagi; ²Mamman Rashidu & ³Jonathan Jiya Sab

Corresponding E-mails: ndagijob2@yahoo.com;

mammanrashidu@gmail.com; jonathanjiyasaba@gmail.com

¹ Department of Biology, Niger State college of Education, Minna² Department of Biology, Niger State College of Education, Minna.³ College of Agriculture Mokwa, Niger State.

Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the course of world history, to say the contrary would be an understatement. This paper is a review paper, that dwelt on the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on teacher education, the challenges it brought forth, impact on security and solutions proffered. The paper highlighted some of the impacts COVID-19 had on students, teachers, of Niger State college of Education, Minna. and challenges of insecurity it brought to bear. Finally, it gave some pragmatic solutions in the form of recommendations on the way forward, which includes amongst others that government should provide online teaching facilities like computers, Wi-Fi (internet facility) for staff and students of the school, training and retraining of staff and students on online teaching procedures and methodologies.

Key Words: COVID-19 pandemic, challenges, insecurity, solutions, Teacher education

1.0 Introduction

The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), originated in Wuhan China in December 2019. This disease was formally declared as pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), on the 11th, of March 2020, after it spread to many countries of the world and also caused more than 171 countries of the world to close their educational institutions for several months in the year 2020 affecting about 1.5 billion students worldwide (Agbele and Oyelade, 2020). According to Udeh and Elizabeth (2020), Nigeria has recorded about 50,000 confirmed cases, with 974 deaths as at August 2020.

To say that COVID-19 Pandemic has not changed the course of world history would be an understatement. The Pandemic and its impact are still being felt world over, as it is always in the news. COVID-19 practically affected every sphere of life of human endeavor. The setback due to COVID-19, cannot be overemphasized, as it practically impacted family life, social life, business life, and most importantly on world economies of many nations has been attested by the accompanied job losses. Most economies have practically been brought to their knees, and begging for resuscitation, as new strategies have been adopted to return such to normal.

A major area of concern and in particular for this research in Africa, is its impact on the

educational sector in Africa. Budgets for education in Africa, are nothing to write home about, and new innovations and technologies embraced in the western world to move education is lacking in Africa, and in particular, Nigeria. No wonder we have our doctors and teachers migrating to foreign nations for the so-called greener pasture, because of their advancement in technology and priority given to such sectors, in area of budget, and facilities. The world they say is global village, and Nigeria is not an exception. Nigeria was also brought down to her knees in the period of COVID 19, and the aftermath, i.e., the present. This is the crux of this review, or rather what necessitates this review, which tends to look into the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on teacher education, the challenges it brought, and solutions proffered, and also the effects it has on insecurity.

2.0 Brief History and Philosophy of Niger State College of Education, Minna:

- According to the TETTFUND (2021), Niger State College of Education, Minna was established as an Advanced Teachers college by the defunct North-Western State Government on the 1st, of November, 1975, in order to meet the soaring Teacher needs, and was upgraded to the status of college of Education in 1983, with the following objectives, according to the law establishing it:
 - Provide fulltime courses in teaching instruction, research and training in all fields of learning relevant to the needs of the State for the purpose of producing qualified NCE Teachers for the Basic Education level, for higher training in Education and for research to improve teaching and learning.
 - Produce highly qualified, motivated, conscious and efficient NCE teachers for Basic Education Schools.
 - To provide Pre-NCE courses
 - To conduct in-service courses in Education for serving teachers.
 - To arrange and organize conferences, seminars and workshops for training and retraining of NCE teachers in all aspects of Teaching and Education in general.
 - To perform such other function(s) that may promote the objectives of the college.
 - However, the mandate of the institution has now been extended, as it now undertakes degree Programmes, in affiliation with other universities, such as Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and Usman Dondodiyo university Sokoto with a directorate coined for it known as Directorate of University Affiliated Programmes (DUAP). This accounts for the reason for the high populations of students, attending the Institution.
 - To be able to accomplish the above mandate, we have to reflect back and also view

the current challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic, to be able to give a fair assessment and suggest pragmatic solutions.

3.0 The Impact of COVID-19 on closure of Niger State College of Education, Minna: Several impacts were felt over the closure of the College of Education Minna, as result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, as an academic community. The impacts were felt by both the students and lecturers. We shall outline them and discuss them in no particular order. Suffice also to say that most of the impacts outline here tend to agree with those of (Agbele and Oyelade 2020).

3.1 Impact on our Students:

1. It disrupted the academic calendar of all higher institutions and Niger state college of education is not exempted. Ogunode (2020) observed the closure of all educational institutions from primary school to tertiary institutions would affect the students' academic plan and Programmes because at the time COVID-19 came in many institutions COE Minna had started first semester examinations
2. It interrupted the teaching of our students because of the lockdown, thereby affecting the academic growth and development of our students.
3. By the time COVID-19 came many higher institutions, including College of Education Minna had started their first semester examination and this agreed Simons and Hans (2020), who observed that the closures of Schools, Colleges and universities not interrupted teaching of students, it also affected the key assessment periods as many exams were either cancelled or postponed
4. Some of our students were also affected, by the fact that they were deprived after the lockdown to return back to continue their studies, as some of them are from poor homes, and their sponsors can no more shoulder the financial burdens as a result of the extension brought about as a result of COVID-19.
5. It also affected them by the fact that as it coincided with key periods of assessment and examination, which had to be postponed or cancelled, for example SSCE(WAEC), which particularly for those who needed to make up for their O level deficit.
6. The implication of the above impact is that some of them who are hoping to transit to the UG Programme, will be delayed, till they are able to write such exams.
7. Perhaps one of the most important fallout out the COVID-19 Pandemic on the students of Niger State college of Education, Minna, is the alternative of online teaching, which many keyed into most especially private institutions. This entails using digital technology, like the use of Laptop computers, Android

phones, data, internet access, Wi-Fi facilities which we could not key in, as such facilities are not available to our students. We are used mainly to face to face classroom teaching, and never been introduced to this modern innovation, or even pilot tested in our institutions.

3.2 Impact on teachers:

The following are some of the major fall outs of the effects of COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of College of Education, Minna on the teachers.

1. Introduction of online lessons and lack of ownership of computers by academic staff of not only College of education, Minna teachers but by higher institutions of learning nationwide is a limiting factor, coupled with the fact that we do not have the requisite technical knowledge or training to carry out this task that is required for online teaching. We are mainly used to the traditional face to face classroom teaching, and this agrees with (Rannatu Avalos and Simon 2020)
2. The cost of obtaining the necessary gadgets, form online Programmes, like computers, software's for developing on line Programmes and lack of training are practically nonexistent, and it is absolutely necessary that we key into this innovation, and this agrees with the summation of (Farooq et al 2020)
3. Electricity or power to power the online Programme, even if in place can be a major challenge or hindrance. We are all aware of the epileptic power supply in our nation even though called the power state, and even in the country as a whole.
4. Lack of internet facilities such as the Wi-Fi, network, data are also challenges that hinder e-learning during the COVID-19, lockdown in not only in Niger state college of education, Minna but other institutions as well, and this is in line with (Al-Balas et al. 2020).
5. The challenge of getting across to our students in their various localities is also there. Majority of our indigent students live in rural communities where infrastructural facilities like power, network coverage and obtaining data is not there. Majority of them engage in assisting their sponsors parents in rural farming, and menial jobs for sustenance.

4.0 Insecurity issues posed as a result of COVID-19

1. The school close down, has led lack of what to do and association with peer groups has led to arise in kidnappings and other antisocial behaviors that we see recently been exhibited by youths in Minna and its environs
2. Discouragement of educational pursuit by the parents even in the event of school opening to allow their wards to resume school, because of fear of been kidnapped

3. The use of nose mask, though a preventive measure for COVID -19, is also a security issue, because it conceals the face of one, and many youths use it to cover their faces people to perpetuate crime
4. Many have also resorted to the selling of nose mask with ulterior or evil intentions, because the nose mask sold are contaminated with drugs to make you drowsy once you wear it, and they follow you, and when you become drowsy, they rob you or rape you or kill you.
5. During the COVID-19, lockdown staff and students were forced to do numerous financial transactions online, which made many victims of fraudsters and yahooboy.
6. Some level of cyber insecurity was also experienced by students and even staff, particularly during online registration, as cyber thieves use these opportunities to cause problems.
7. It was also observed that both staff and students had the challenge of health insecurity, because many were afraid to visit health facilities for fear of contracting COVID-19, or fear of been confirmed as COVID-19 case.

5.0 Recommendations

1. The government and school management should as a matter of urgency embark on the integration of college of education, Minna and others into online education
2. The government should increase the funding of higher institutions so that they will be able to obtain, upgrade facilities to key into online teaching
3. The government in partnership with NGOs, should embark on supporting the school by the provision of computers, wireless facilities, online software needed for online education
4. The banks, government and private organizations and relevant bodies need to strengthen and secure their data base against fraudsters and data thieves.
5. The management of the institution should as a matter of urgency continue to organize workshops, seminars and training of its staff on online teaching methodologies
6. Teachers should be magnanimous in putting more efforts into the teaching and learning process in order to cover for the lost grounds during the COVID-19 lockdown.

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