



COVID-19 Pandemic and Management of Education System in Nigeria: Impacts of E-Learning Programme Intervention and Google Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the gaps in the education system globally. Though, the COVID-19 pandemic is novel, but it already has noxious effects on humanity. COVID-19 outbreak has created education disruptions and global health concerns that proved very difficult to manage by global health systems. As at now, no nation or race across the world is immune from the pandemic, and the entire world seems overwhelmed by the speed of the spread and the devastating effects of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has no boundaries, and the effect is large and fast. It has limited the freedom of people to move, trade or associate. Indeed, the entire world was in distress as a result of COVID-19 threats, the reality of the situation was challenging to bear, and the Nigerian education system remains one of the worst-hit by COVID-19 outbreak. However, this paper focuses on mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching and learning in Nigerian education system using e-learning programme intervention and Google Classroom as the best alternatives. The paper also discusses the major challenges facing the use of e-learning programme intervention and Google Classroom in the face of COVID-19. Some of the recommendations of the paper include proper monitoring of software and hardware meant for teaching and learning as well, training of personnel that are not computer literate. The private sectors and concerned individuals should as well come in to rescue our education system from the impending doom which may spring up after the lockdown caused by covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, Impacts, Teaching, E-learning, Programme, Intervention, Google Classroom and Nigerian Education System.

INTRODUCTION

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 which originated from the city of Wuhan, China, has become a major public health challenge for not only China but also countries all over the world. In fact the pandemic has led to the total lockdown of most of the human activities in various parts of the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the outbreaks of the novel COVID-19 have constituted a public health emergency of international concern (Samuel, 2020). As of February 26, 2020, COVID-19 has been recognized in 34 countries, with a total of 80,239 laboratory-confirmed cases and 2,700 deaths, there was a sudden shoot up of confirmed cases of 4.9 million in at least 188 countries with 323,300 deaths and nearly 1.7 million recoveries as at 20th of May 2020 (Samuel, 2020; Omaka-Amari *et al.*, 2020). Infection control measures are necessary to prevent the virus from further spreading and to help control the epidemic situation. One of the control measures was the total lockdown of schools at various levels in the whole world; on March 19, 2020 Nigerian government through the federal ministry of education ordered the closure of all schools at various levels. There is no doubt that the interference of the COVID-19 pandemic had caused so many challenges on the Nigerian education system.

The effect of the pandemic is alarming in the education system of the nation (Sahu, 2020; Omaka-Amari *et al.*, 2020; Kola and Opeyemi, 2020). Within short months the virus entered the country it spread widely to nearly all the states. The government short downs all schools in the nation and clamoring for social distancing to curtail the spread of the virus. Social distancing has been considered effective to curb the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing according to European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, (2020) is a step taken to reduce physical contact with other individuals. It is a measure taken during a pandemic to restrict when and where people can gather to stop the spread of an infectious disease.

Management of COVID-19 in Nigeria Education System

According to the COVID-19 response monitoring plans by UNICEF Nigeria (2020), Nigeria Education sector maintains a Response Monitoring Tool named 5W Matrix (Who is doing What, Where, When and for Whom) for monitoring Education Sector partners activities under the current COVID19 contingency response. While the pandemic is still on, partners are submitting their reports on a monthly basis to the Education Sector secretariat appointed team. Based on the submissions, the Education Sector Secretariat team on a regular basis developed maps and other tools to strengthen the coordination on the response; they ensured proper documentation in identifying gaps and prevent duplication of activities/programmes during and after this pandemic period. The Monitoring System also aimed to minimize reporting requirements to partners while at the same time provide regular required information about the progress of programme implementation and ensure alignment with the (to be) amended Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Along the line there was regular partner participation in this monitoring is critical to maintaining strong coordination because it was observed that it is through joint efforts we all can end the continuous grips of COVID-19.

The sector has on a regular basis conducting monitoring meetings on COVID19 response at least twice a month since the inception of pandemic lockdown in Nigeria. These meetings has been holding online via Skype, Zoom in line with the social distancing rules and all implementing partners and other stakeholders have been partaking in the meetings to come out with substantial plans in managing the educational sector in such the trying times of the covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Information on partner activities and reports from periodic meetings is been shared directly with the Federal Ministry of Education and SUBEB for considerations and implementations in which education data collection strives to use the official Education Management Information System (EMIS) school codes to allow for seamless integration with Federal Ministry of Education's data. Also UNICEF Nigeria response team to COVID-19 designed a framework according to a specific need resulting from COVID19 crisis. This framework is to give partners concrete information on the impact of the pandemic so far on the educational sector and further suggest ideas of how they can support in term prevention, how they can continue to support learners during the pandemic lockdown period that schools are on complete lockdown and more detailed guidance on how the education partners can support both the federal and states' Ministries of Education to re-start learning on a gallant note and the activities to prioritize once the shutdown of schools is lifted (Samuel, 2020).

According to UNICEF Nigeria, there were three strategic selected objectives linked to the COVID19 main consequence on school system: School closure: Before, during and after (School reopening) the school closure.

1. Prevent spread and transmission of COVID-19 through and among learners, teachers, parents and School Based Management Committee (SBMC).
2. Mitigate/Minimize the impact of school closure due to COVID19 on learning and wellbeing of learners, teachers, parents and SBMC through alternatives solution.
3. Ensure effective, inclusive and safe return to quality learning for learners, teachers, and SBMC.

As at April, 2020 many states in Nigeria have switched to the radio-television means of communicating with learners whereby teachers go on air teaching their respective subjects and topics to learners listening and watch at home, some learning channels were lunched on various satellite networks even though not every home in Nigeria can afford the purchase and monthly subscriptions of satellite networks. At least

with this development some of learners are still being updated in their academics. Some private universities in Nigeria took this advantage to further develop their ICT section to create platforms in reaching out to their students' even while in their respective homes with their parents/guidance (Samuel, 2020).

The period of COVID-19 pandemic is a typical example of times when conventional teaching paradigm could not work in schools. During this period, as a measure of social distancing according to UNESCO, (2020) students and teachers are not allowed to interact physically. Schools were closed down for many weeks thus teaching and learning are disrupted. Teaching and learning required interactions between students and the teachers and therefore, students staying away from schools for a long period may adversely impact their academic performance. It is therefore, essential for the Nigerian government to be more committed to e-learning in our institutions of learning. Although, e-learning is not new in the Nigerian education system, but the quality and effectiveness are critical. Also, one of the learning frameworks that enable students to connect with the teacher to learn outside the school context is Google classroom interaction. The e-learning programme intervention and Google Classroom would reduce the impacts of COVID-19 on Nigerian education system.

E-Learning Programme Intervention

The e-learning is learning utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, programme or degree delivered completely online. It is classified as computer-based and internet based (Arkorful and Abaidoo, 2014). The type depends on the user mode. The computer-based involves the use of ICT, while the internet-based is purely online. The computer-based includes the use of computer software and hardware; the internet-based comprises e-mail, blog, and other references (Kola and Opeyemi, 2020; Samuel, 2020). The e-learning required the utilization of some tools for instructions in education for its effectiveness. According to Kola and Opeyemi, (2020), Weblog, Social bookmarking, Wiki, RSS, Podcasting, Instant messaging, Text chat, and internet forums are essential tools for any e-learning. The benefits or advantages of e-learning are enormous. Some of the advantages according to Pande *et al.*, (2016) in Kola and Opeyemi, (2020), include flexibility, efficiency in knowledge and qualification enhancement, motivation of students' interaction, cost-effective, and others.

Despite the vital roles e-learning plays in education institutions in many countries of the world: most developing nations including Nigeria are yet to unlock the full potentials of it. E-learning attempts to shift the focus of the educational environment away from the physical teacher-student context while disseminating information (Franklin and Nahari, 2018). The e-learning in some parts of the globe is not a new phenomenon in promoting education but Nigeria schools are using it to promote distance education and lifelong learning (Ajadi *et al.*, 2008). Several studies have been documented on how e-learning helps the students to receive instructions from teachers and learn adequately at all times including the vacation period (Franklin and Nahari, 2018; Aina and Olanipekun, 2018; Samuel, 2020).

Different types of e-learning could be explored as practiced in most developed nations. The typical e-learning in most Nigerian institutions is the distance learning programme. There are concerns about how the distance learning programme could effectively teach online students by exploiting ICT technologies and collaboration to enhance in-depth interactive engagement. Some devices used for this distance learning programme are TV, CD-ROM, Radio and recently the mobile phones (Aina and Olanipekun, 2018). Suggestively, e-learning is critical to Nigerian education system as it is the use of information and communication technologies in various processes of education to support and enhance teaching and learning and therefore, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Nigerian education requires the adoption of e-learning especially during the period of lockdown. However, due to the rule of social distancing, any e-learning that requires physical contact during teaching and learning may not be effective. Therefore, Google Classroom with an extensive literature search shows the best e-learning suitable for teaching and learning at this period of COVID-19.

Google Classroom

Classroom is a free web-based platform that integrates your G Suite for Education account with all your G Suite services, including Google Docs, Gmail and Google calendar. Classroom saves time and paper, and makes it easy to create classes, distribute assignments, communicate, and stay organized. Google Classroom enables teachers to create an online classroom area in which they can manage all the documents that their students need. Documents are stored on Google Drive and can be edited in Drive's apps, such as Google Docs, Sheets and so on. But what separates Google Classroom from the regular Google Drive experience is the teacher/student interface, which Google designed for the way teachers and students think and work. Google Classroom is a Google Apps for Education that helps the teachers to create and organize assignments quickly, provide feedback efficiently, and communicate with their learners easily (Shaharane *et al.*, 2016).

Research studies indicate that the application helps students to learn more electronically and teachers spend more time with students than with papers (Rabbi *et al.*, 2018). Google classroom is an emerging technology in education since 2014 which had impacted teaching and learning in most developed and developing nations (Shaharane *et al.*, 2016). Previous studies also show that Google classroom enhances ongoing learning on the basis that the students and the teacher can be sited in various geographical contexts (Mafa, 2018; Samuel, 2020; Kola and Opeyemi, 2020).

Google Classroom sits between you and Google Drive and provides a teacher/student-friendly way of managing classroom documents. Summarily, here's what you can do with Google Classroom according to Kola and Opeyemi, (2020):

- a. **Make assignments:** The main thing you, as the teacher, will do with Google Classroom is making homework assignments for your students. When you create an assignment, you can upload the necessary documents for the students to read or work on. Students receive e-mail notification of new assignment. The students "turn in" the assignments when finished, and you can then grade the assignments.
- b. **Make announcements:** If you have a quick announcement for the entire class, you can quickly type in the announcement, which is e-mailed to all your students in the class.
- c. **Store classroom materials:** The materials you add to an assignment aren't the only documents you can store. You can store any other necessary documents for students on Google Drive.
- d. **Allow students to interact:** Students have the ability to comment on assignments and announcements, as well as e-mail each other through the Classroom interface.

Though, e-learning has challenges that could make them not suitable at this period of COVID-19. The inadequacy of Nigeria's weak and underdeveloped broadband infrastructure is a significant shortcoming (Trucano, 2014). Inequalities could be one problem of distance e-learning because of the differences existing between urban and rural students; between the rich and the poor who cannot afford the cost of internet. The problem of bandwidth and diversion of intention on the net are some of the problems associated with e-learning. Earlier studies show that Google Classroom enhances learning on the basis that the students and the teacher can use it in different geographical locations (Mafa, 2018). Google Classroom launched less than a decade ago has been one of the compelling ways technology is impacting teaching and learning in the world. Based on the above background one can rightly suggest that one way to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on Nigerian education is to adopt e-learning mode in teaching in our institutions. Therefore, the online e-learning, which does not depend on traditional paradigms like the Google Classroom would be the best for instruction in our education system in the face of COVID-19. The Google Classroom framework would provide the same instruction to every student irrespective of their parents' background. It will offer the students the same classroom context as against the present situation where some students attend school well equipped with learning resources while some do not.

Research shows that many countries are using Google Classroom in their schools because of its effectiveness. It allows teachers to post:

- a) Notes;
- b) Assignments;

- c) Create different groups in one class;
- d) Invite another teacher to the class and it is flexible.

Google Classroom can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Students do not need to get to a designated building called classroom before receiving lectures and parents and guardians can track the progress of their wards (Mafa, 2018). It minimizes the paperwork for the teachers, helps classroom management and evaluation of students performance. It enhances the student-teacher interaction as well as communication.

Challenges facing E-learning and the use of Google Classroom in Nigerian Education System

Some of the major challenges include:

1. Government insensitivity to innovation in the education sector:
The Nigerian governments in all the three levels are not ready for innovation in education. The only type of innovation the government welcome is the one that would help the government official award contracts to their cronies or family members (Kola and Opeyemi, 2020). The people in government today and in the past also do not cherish any innovation that will not enhance their pecuniary desires no matter how credible and good the innovation may be. Many innovations in education have been frustrated because of this point. This is the reason the nation is changing from one system of education to another almost every time there is a new government.
2. There is lack of proper monitoring and inadequate personnel:
Proper monitoring ensures that the correct software and hardware are purchased and adequately installed in every institution of learning. In the present situation, the reverse is the case. Software and hardware purchased are not properly monitored, because most contracts are given to themselves or to known persons. Similarly, academic personnel of the institutions are not adequate. There are not adequately trained through seminars and conferences and many of them are not computer literate.
3. Another problem according to Ajadi *et al.*, (2008) is the poor bandwidth. The inadequacy of Nigeria's fragile and underdeveloped broadband infrastructure is a drawback to e-learning. This is a problem that could be attributed to the government and heads of learning institutions in Nigeria. Funds are not made available to buy good internet materials to improve bandwidth or broadband infrastructure. Where monies are made available the heads of institutions often misplaced their priorities. There are cases where monies budgeted for e-libraries were misappropriated due to a high level of corruption in education institutions. The use of Google Classroom cannot be successful except the lecturers are ICT compliance.

CONCLUSION

E-learning programme intervention and Google Classroom can be effectively used at this period of COVID-19 to teach students in Nigerian education system. Although, there are some challenges associated with the framework but are not strong enough to discourage its implementation especially in this period of COVID-19. Suggestively, some of the identified factors that could militate against its success in Nigeria schools should be tackled with seriousness and not to be downplayed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The e-learning programme intervention and Google Classroom would be an innovation in the education system of Nigeria. Therefore, to adopt it for the effective teaching and learning in the face of COVID-19, the following recommendations are made:

1. The already existing laws on COVID-19 should be enforced and sanctions attached to them and implemented vigorously on defaulters in all the States in order to enhance compliance to preventive further spread.

2. The government should be prepared fully to adopt the e-learning and Google Classroom teaching method without any political bias. It is an effective method of teaching in the face of current COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Laws against stigmatization of COVID-19 patients or survivors should be enacted and enforced by the Federal Government.
4. The government should make adequate money available to strengthen and develop the Nigerian broadband infrastructure in our education system.
5. There should be proper monitoring to ensure the correct software and hardware are purchased and adequately installed in every institution of learning.
6. Academic personnel of every institution must be adequately trained through seminars and conferences. Those who are not computer literate must make use of staff development to update their computer's knowledge.
7. The future of the country's education system is in the hands of everyone of us and we can't afford to allow it to be soiled with the interference of the COVID-19, private sectors and concerned individuals should as well come in to rescue our education system from the impending doom which may spring up now as we have come out of the lockdown caused by covid-19 pandemic.

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