

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ECONOMY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world economy, educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closures of schools, universities and colleges. Nigeria already is face with immense pressure with lack of updated technology for educational purposes, broken healthcare system with inadequate facilities to cater for the citizens, epileptic power supply among others. This chapter is on impact of COVID-19 pandemic on economy and higher education in Nigeria. The various sectors of the economy considered in this chapter include aviation, agriculture, health, religion and transportation sectors. The impact of COVID-19 on higher education has been highlighted which include cancellation of examination, interruption in teaching and learning, students' dropout as well as cut in budget of higher education. It was recommended among others that the federal governments should provide stimulus packages to support the tertiary education sector during the pandemic.

Keywords: economy, educational systems, technology, educational purposes, higher education

Introduction

The COVID-19 virus has infected several people globally. Most countries of the world are shaken by the pandemic and for the first time in several decades, the world is witnessing a type of virus that does not discriminate based on age, gender or even race. The virus emanated from the Wuhan province of China and has since spread to every part of the world. The disease has been categorized as infectious and contagious by health experts. As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Governments alike, have advised their citizens to practice good hygiene by washing their hands with soap and running water or with alcohol-based hand sanitizer while keeping their nose and mouth covered with a face mask (WHO, 2020). News continued to spread about the virus and more information learned about the virus, governments all over the world led by the World Health

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

Organization (WHO), impressed on the populace to practice social distancing and the advice culminated in mass self-isolation and a grinding halt in economic activities. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented measures to be taken by many countries, such as travel restrictions and restrictions on social gatherings (De Vós, 2020). Governments all over the world commenced mandating all non-essential persons to stay in their respective homes. This wise advice if heeded, has the potential to reduce the spread of the disease and save lives in the process. Unfortunately, developing countries such as Nigeria already face immense pressure with lack of updated technology for educational purposes, broken healthcare system with inadequate facilities to cater for the citizens, epileptic power supply among others.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closures of schools, universities and colleges. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19 (UNESCO 2020). Students are currently affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. Various global businesses, political, social and even sporting events like the Tokyo Summer Olympics 2020 have all been postponed. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has downgraded its growth projection for the global economy as the COVID-19 outbreak threw its earlier projection into serious doubt (International Monetary Fund, 2020). The flow of goods through global supply chains have reduced drastically, given that China is one of the world's largest manufacturers and exporters, and the Chinese government ordered the closure of major factories in the country. There is a general consensus among economists and financial analysts that the pandemic may likely plunge the world into another global recession (Financial Times, 2020). COVID-19's effect on the global economy is broader and more severe than most epidemics, pandemics, and economic crises of recent decades. Most recessions are triggered by a lack of spending, which governments can address through fiscal stimulus, but COVID-19 is interrupting economic activity at multiple points, creating a complex combination of supply and demand shocks at the same time (Baldwin, 2020).

Impact of COVID-19 on the Nigerian Economy

Economies around the world are fighting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, not least in Nigeria, which was already tackling its own fiscal challenges. As the reality of the coronavirus pandemic dawns on Nigeria, the country, like the rest of the world has begun cancelling events, flights, and virtually everything that requires social, official and religious gatherings. The impact of these measures aimed at reducing the spread of the virus has hit the economy too. These impacts are likely to cripple the economies of most countries and may lead to the collapse of fragile economies. Nigeria's economy is facing

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

collapse as it largely depends on oil exports. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the oil markets have been on a downward trend as demand has been crippled (Ayoade 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic affected various sectors of the Nigerian economy which include but not limited to:

1. Aviation Sector:

Before the outbreak of the virus, it was easy to fly on air to any part of the world and within the country but the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the aviation sector in Nigeria into a huge crisis. The pandemic has grounded activities in the sector across the world. Since Nigeria recorded its first patient of COVID-19 in March, 2020, alongside the next closure of all the airports within the country, activities within the sector suffered a sharp decline. Expectedly, revenues have also nose-dived. The federal government had on March 23rd, 2020 shut all international airports for an initial period of one month as part of efforts to contain the spread of the virus in the country while local airports were also shut few days later. The lockdown and restriction of airspace movement have led to the grounding of about 120 domestic aircraft nationwide, leaving operators with no income but recurrent expenses. The Nigerian aviation sector has been losing N21 Billion monthly since the outbreak of COVID-19. The huge loss is attributed to lack of activities at the sector whose income solely depends on flight operations (Sirika, 2020).

Flying has been banned globally and airports have been closed, except for essential services. The travel and tourism sector has been one of the hardest hits by the COVID-19 pandemic (Shretta, 2020). Travel restrictions are more widespread and stringent than in any previous pandemic response, and the combination of economic recession and individual reluctance to travel is expected to depress international travel significantly longer than in previous pandemics.

It has been estimated by the World Bank (2017) that the travel and tourism sector is responsible for more than 10% of global GDP, 7% of all international trade, and 30% of the world's exports in services. In lower-and middle-income countries, tourism directly contributes 4.5% to 6.3% of GDP (Jansen, 2013). As of the end of April 2020, every country and territory in the world had imposed travel restrictions related to COVID-19, including totally closing borders to tourists, suspending international flights, banning entry to people arriving from or transiting through particular countries, or requiring quarantine or self-isolation measures – measures that have never been so extreme or widespread (UNWTO, 2020a). International tourist arrivals are forecast to decline in 2020 by up to 30%, with a loss of international tourism receipts of up to US\$450 billion (UNWTO, 2020b). This is approximately ten times the global financial impact of the SARS epidemic (Shretta, 2020).

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

International Air Transportation Association (IATA) recently stated that the air travel industry would lose about US\$113 billion if the COVID-19 outbreak is not quickly contained and the industry debt overhang could reach USD 550 billion by end of this year (IATA, 2020a).

The aviation industry, tourism industry, hotel businesses and international events worth billions of US Dollars have been postponed or cancelled due to the pandemic. All these have negative impact on the aviation industry. The airline industry is one of the most competitive industries in the world (Armstrong, 2020). Airlines are incredibly price competitive to ensure that price-sensitive flying customers choose their airline and not a competitor's. With the advent of COVID-19, the effect of competition on fares would be more pronounced. Globally, an estimated 25 million aviation jobs and 100 million travel and tourism jobs across the globe are at risk. Phillips Consulting (2015) has noted that the aviation industry supports 254,500 jobs in Nigeria and contributes US\$940 million (N184.7 billion) to national GDP. These quarters of a million jobs are presently at risk now in Nigeria due to the continuous closure of the airports.

2. Agriculture

COVID-19 has impacted global food security due to the lockdown and movement restrictions across many countries of the world. Nigeria's agricultural sector is affected by several challenges ranging from drought and flooding occasioned by climate change, cattle rustling in the North and farmer-herder clashes across South and middle belt. The outbreak of COVID-19 may further exacerbate the challenges of the country's agricultural sector, thereby impacting the nation's food security. The farming season varies with crops and across the different regions of Nigeria. For instance, maize planting begins March/April in the southern part of the country (e.g Akwa Ibom state, Delta state, Ebonyi state among others) and harvesting is carried out between June/August. The situation is slightly different in the Northern part of Nigeria where planting kicks off by May/June and the harvesting activities are carried out in August/September.

The commencement of the rainy season recently marked the beginning of the farming season for most crops in Nigeria. However, community transmission of COVID-19 as well as interstate movement restriction may lead to shortage of farm labourers for the current farming seasons. Local agro-industrial players could face shortages of key inputs or raw materials for production. To flatten the curve of new cases of COVID-19, the Federal government issued a directive on 29th March 2020 for an initial two-weeks lockdown and movement restriction in Abuja, Lagos and Ogun States. The exigency of the directive,

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

which came into effects left no room for people to plan (PwC, 2020). As a result, panic buying ensued with consumers stocking up on essential food items due to the uncertainty of the duration of the lockdown. Panic buying caused prices of basic food stuffs and other essential household items to skyrocket.

3. Health Sector

The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on all facets of life cannot be overemphasized. The virus has infected almost 2 million and killed 119,815 (WHO, 2020). The healthcare industry which is the forefront of the war against COVID-19 fights different battles on several fronts on a daily basis; testing challenges, inadequate personal protective equipment and ongoing need for human resources, drugs, beds, ventilators and many other items required by hospitals. Many people have expressed fears on the ability of Nigeria's healthcare system to handle the spread of COVID-19 in the nation. Several public and private hospitals have begun to turn away patients. Hospitals want to avoid crowds of people on their premises and, also more importantly, avoid any yet-to-be-detected COVID-19 cases, since most do not have facilities to carry out testing and the risk to the staff is high (WHO, 2020). The worst affected in this scenario are mothers with newborn babies.

In Nigeria, all babies are expected to be immunized after birth and at different intervals up till when they are two years of age. Such immunization programs have been very effective against many diseases and have prevented childhood deaths and deformities. As a result of difficulties faced at hospitals, most people now choose to self-medicate, buying drugs at pharmacies without prescription. Many also opt for traditional treatments in the form of herbal teas and concoctions. These options may create public health catastrophes on their own, including poisoning from herbal remedies and complication that may arise from taking medications not prescribed by doctors. In spite of the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic and the urgent response it requires, other areas in which the services of health workers are needed cannot be ignored. As part of its fight against COVID-19, the federal government needs to provide facilities for testing more people in hospitals, so that individuals with COVID-19 can be easily identified and treated (Adeboyejo, 2020).

4. Religion:

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted religion in various ways, including the cancellation of the worship services of various faiths, the closure of Sunday schools, as well as the cancellation of pilgrimages surrounding observances and festivals (Burke, 2020). Many churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples have offered worship through livestream amidst the pandemic (Parke, 2020). Relief wings of religious organizations have dispatched disinfection supplies, powered air-purifying respirators, face shields, gloves, ventilators

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

and food to affected areas. Christians and Muslim across the country have prayed for an end to the spread of coronavirus, attended services in person less often, and watched religious services online or on TV instead of in person (Pew Socialtrends2020). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, some churches continue to operate their food pantries that are offering bags filled with meat and toiletries for the needed families (Dias, 2020). Some Christians and Muslims are using online apps, which contain prayers and daily devotionals, to remain engaged with their faith (Heilweil, 2020). While many churches canceled Easter services to comply with social-distancing guidelines, others planned to continue normally (Parvini, 2020). Many Christian are worried about the present pandemic and fear that while not in church that something might happen to them. Churches being lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about financial problem to some church owners this is because some of these pastors, evangelist, Bishops depend on the church members offering, tithe and gifts to survive.

5. Transportation

Nigeria is an emerging economy with its underlying economic challenges as it copes with the pandemic. Before the outbreak of COVID-19 it was easy for people to travel within and outside Nigeria and people travel without fear of contracting any virus but that change as a result of coronavirus which caused people to travel with the fear of being infected. The country ranks as Africa's largest producer of oil and the sixth-largest oil-producing country in the world, and almost 90% of its export earnings are tied to oil (NNPC, 2020). Railways, waterways and road transportation serves Nigerian transportation needs; however, infrastructures in place are inadequate, mismanaged and archaic and does not optimally service the transportation demands of its residents. Road transportation involves (1) buses, (2) Minibuses owned and operated by individuals, (3) Taxis (4) Tricycles (locally called Keke) and (5) Motorcycles (locally called Okada). The federal government of Nigeria has however banned motorcycles from major highways. As public transport brings people into close contact in a confined space, increasing their risk of exposure to the virus (Yezli & Khan, 2020), the federal government through the Presidential task force -issued public transport guidelines to operators and passengers to curb the spread of the virus in buses, cabs, motor parks and garages in March 2020. The directive expects passenger's spacing to be fully observed, such as 1meter of a social distance between passengers. Concern arises in how feasible it is to achieve this social distance in a bus or on a tricycle, where these modes of transportation are far shorter than 2m. Taxi drivers, like tricycle and motorcycles riders, have an increased risk of acquiring the virus, given their close contact with their customers (Yezli & Khan, 2020).

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN-NIGERIA

Moreover, cash payment which is predominant puts drivers and essential workers at a higher risk of spreading the virus. While social distancing is essential, it would be impractical to practice social distancing in transportation sector. The transport operating companies, regulators and public transport owners should be aware of the exposure of the transport workers. This responsibility also falls on the operators and individual operators within the informal economy to protect themselves and reduce the risk of exposure. As often as possible, the transport workers must be reminded and educated about the need to protect themselves. The transport operators must ensure that the handrails and door handles are always kept clean. This cleanliness also includes the life jackets on commuters' board ferries. Alcohol based hand sanitizer, water, soap and paper towels should be provided to passengers. Where possible, protective screens should be installed on buses to provide a physical barrier and additional protection for the drivers and to ensure social distance. Individuals need to explore the possibilities of working from home and changing their travel behaviour. This will reduce their exposure to the virus, reduce the congestion on the road and enhance their wellbeing. As social distancing may negatively affect the subjective wellbeing and health status (De Vos, 2020), those who are not involved in essential travelling should be encouraged to walk and cycle to enhance their health and wellbeing. While acknowledging the economic challenges, it is essential to optimize the transport infrastructure and make sure that they are sustainable to meet the growing demands of the commuters. Musselwhite, Avineri, and Susilo (2020) noted that this pandemic highlights the importance of rethinking the essential design of social and economic resilience. This is especially relevant for highly populated and congested states, such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt. A long-term implication of COVID-19 on transportation in Nigeria is the reminder to explore alternative means of transportation.

Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education

As country after country imposed partial or total lockdowns, the number of universities and colleges closing their campuses and switching to e-learning soared. Few institutions were prepared for this sudden, disruptive move but Nigeria with lack of up to date technology seems not prepared for the crisis. In developing country like Nigeria, students from disadvantaged groups are facing tremendous difficulties (Jamil, Arnhold & Bassett 2020). Limited internet access and low broadband capacity have severely constrained opportunities for online learning, especially in rural areas. Many students from low-income households do not own a laptop or tablet which could enable them access information online as learning has been shift from traditional method to e-learning. Many lack experienced instructional designers, sufficient educational resources, an adequate grasp of the specifics and nuances of online education, and strong institutional capacity to deliver it (Jamil, Arnhold & Bassett 2020). Unlike in high-income countries, many governments of

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

developing nations have not been able to provide stimulus packages to support the tertiary education sector during the pandemic. However, their financial responses have tended to reallocate resources away from the education budget to help meet the soaring expenses of health emergency.

COVID-19 Changing Landscape for Higher Education Longer Term

While there are many uncertainties about the prospects for universities reopening in the next academic year, the medium-term outlook is grim in developing countries which Nigeria is not left out (Jamil, Arnhold & Bassett 2020). For most higher education institutions, especially private ones that are fully dependent on tuition fees, financial survival will be seriously tested during the deep recession that many economists predict. Millions of students with limited resources could drop out of higher education altogether or shift to more affordable public institutions. Students graduating this year are also likely to face huge employment challenges. Similarly, working class students who lose their jobs may not be able to continue with their higher education programme. In the recovery phase of COVID-19, rather than being in a better position to rescue the tertiary sector, there are indications that Nigerian government would face competing priorities. The federal government could be tempted or forced to further slash their higher education budget.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has created tremendous impact in the higher education which include but not limited to:

- i. **Cancellation of Examination:** The closure of schools amidst the COVID-19 pandemic not only interrupts teaching and learning across the country, the closure coincides with assessment period. For instance, most federal higher institution in Nigeria were at the stage of writing their first semester examination but due to the outbreak and spread of the virus in Nigeria the examination was cancelled and school closed, thus making it impossible for students to assess their performance, their areas of strength and weakness. An alternative for the cancelled examination could be to use "predicted grades". Murphy and Wyness (2020) were of the opinion that predicted grades are inaccurate among high achieving students, the predicted grades for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are lower than those from more advantaged backgrounds.
- ii. **Interruption in Teaching and Learning:** School closure affects the students' performance adversely. Prior to the outbreak of the virus teaching and learning has been affected and this has prompted most institution to embrace online learning. Students are likely encounter problems in their intellectual abilities as a result of COVID-19 pandemic as schooling provides essential learning. When institution of

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

learning closed, students are deprived the opportunities for growth and development. The disadvantages are disproportionate for under-privileged learners who tend to have fewer educational opportunities beyond school (UNESCO, 2020).

- iii. **Students Dropout:** As a result of the COVID-19 number of death cases have been recorded by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Many families are affected by the spread of the virus thus resulting in death which students from such family could drop out of school due to the death of their parents or those who sponsor their education. Dixon (2020) in Newsroom (2020), asserted that "Not being able to attend school impacts students in many ways: students do not have an opportunity to learn, many students, may lose out on the opportunity to complete their education, which would prevent them from achieving their potentials". Without rapid decisive and coordinated action, the crisis threatens to pose a huge setback to hard-won gains in human capital, irreversibly damaging the lifelong opportunities of millions of students (Dixon, 2020).
- iv. **Cut in Budget of Higher Education:** Many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria may not be able to build new lecture halls, student's hostels, equip laboratories and workshops and payment of staff. In addressing these daunting economic challenges, the current consideration to revise the budget downward are inevitable. According to Ogonode (2020), a serious and progressive government would not allocate funds for any rehabilitation of government buildings or purchase of buses at the expense of critical sectors like Health and Education. The implication of revising the budget downward may directly affect the education budget of the country. Many infrastructural facilities and school expansion programme planned for this year has been removed from the budget due to the budget cut down. Damtew (2020) observed that Africa's growth performance, which stood at 3.4% in 2019, was expected to climb to 3.9% in 2020. This may now remain a dream as the global economic depression is likely to devastate its economy and also its institutions, including higher education.
- v. **Challenges Measuring and Validating Learning:** Calendared assessments, notably high-stakes examinations that determine admission or advancement to new education levels and institutions, are thrown into disarray when schools close. Strategies to postpone, skip or administer examinations at a distance raise serious concerns about fairness, especially when access to learning becomes variable.

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA

Disruptions to assessment results in stress for students and their families and could trigger disengagement (UNESCO, 2020).

Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic has cause major setback in economy and higher institution of Nigeria. Schools are closed and the economy has been shaken by the outbreak of the virus. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closures of schools, universities and colleges. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19. Students are currently affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. Various global businesses, political, social and even sporting events like the Tokyo Summer Olympics 2020 have all been postponed or outrightly cancelled. Movement of people and goods are restricted causing the prices of goods to skyrocket. Examinations has been cancelled in all higher institutions of learning in Nigeria putting students in a halt.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were made:

- i. There is urgent need of providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for health workers. This will reduce the fear of contracting the virus and give them the confidence they need to attend to people with other health problems.
- ii. Federal government should consider making provisions to transform learning from traditional method to online.
- iii. Government should provide facilities for testing more people in hospitals, so that individuals with COVID-19 can be easily identified and treated.
- iv. The federal governments should provide stimulus packages to support the tertiary education sector during the pandemic.
- v. Public transport guidelines issued by the federal government through the presidential task force to operators and passengers should be strictly adhered to curb the spread of the virus.
- vi. Travel restrictions should not be lifted especially international travel as the number of COVID-19 cases keeps increasing.
- vii. Rapid decision and coordinated action should be put in place by the federal government to cater for the needs of Nigerian students.

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**DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING CONTINUITY PLANS TO
MOVE CLASSROOMS ONLINE AT COVID-19 ERA IN NIGERIA**

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