POPULATION EXPLOSION AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC: IT'S IMPACT ON EDUCATION DELIVERY SERVICES

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ABSTRACT--

Nigeria is the largest and most densely populated country in Africa and the 7th largest population in the world, with approximately 200 million people on a land mass area of 920,000km. Covid-19 pandemic has affect the lives of persons destroy the global economy and Educational sector at all levels not only in Nigeria, but globally. On March 19, 2020, the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria approved the closure of all learning institutions and this closure led to significant disruptions of education system in Nigeria. The closure of schools has affected 36,400,000 primary and secondary school students across Nigeria, this led to 10.2 million out-of-school children in Nigeria. Children whose parents cannot afford remote learning facilities may have to wait for schools to re-open to continue learning, as such, it is uncertain the number of children that will return to school when the pandemic is over. Despite the total number of children out school, Nigerian schools and institutions are overcrowded and over populated especially public school were more than 70-80 students are found in a single class. With this number how social distance can be possible in this condition of overcrowded class room before and during Covid-19.

KEYWORD: *covid-19, education, impact, Nigeria and population--*

INTRODUCTION

Over 130 countries have implemented nationwide closures impacting over 80% of the world's students' population. Some also implemented localized school closures and should these closures became nationwide. Millions of learners had experienced educational disruption (Musa, 2020).

Nigeria is the largest country in Africa in terms of population and has approximately 20% of the total out-school children population in the world and 1.2 billion learners are out of school and 73.8% of the world's school population have been affected by school closure (UNESCO, 2020). Even though this has affected education system, quality and equality, it has propelled the reshaping of education delivery across the world.

Since schools closed due to presence of Covid-19 pandemic, governments, private sector and key educational stakeholders have been struggling to promote continued learning and bridge potential learning gapsthrough making efforts ranging from large-scale, low technology solutions that do not require internetenabled devices (radio and

television), to high technology alternatives (virtual classrooms, video conferencing, animated lessons and online resources libraries) that require internet-enabled devices (UNESCO, 2020).

According to Vegas (2020) about 90% of developed countries are providing remote learning opportunities, less than 25% of developing countries are offering any type of remote learning at all. In fact, only 23% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, combine online and broadcast media platforms, and only 11% rely exclusively on online platforms.In an attempt to slow the rate of spread of the virus, the Federal Government of Nigeria, on several occasions, imposed targeted lockdown measures in areas with rapid increase of Covid-19 cases such states include Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. On March 19, 2020, the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria approved the closure of all learning institutions and this sudden closure led to significant interruptions in the education system of the country (Nlebem, 2020).

POPULATION IN NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM

Nigeria is the largest and most densely populated country in Africa and the 7[th]largest population in the world, with approximately 200 million people on a land mass area of 920,000km (360,000sq mi) (Amoo, *et al.,*2020).When the population changes began to affect the development and quality of life of people at individual, family, community, national and international level, debate started on problems and issues of population followed by efforts to control the same.Basic knowledge of population growth teaches that population increase is only desirable when accompanied with increase in human capital development, economic activity and good governance (Musbau, 2017). Frankly speaking, Nigeria's population is already creating uncountable of social issuestaking development indicators such as literacy rate, poverty rates, quality environment, social justice, gender equality and so on into account, and one cannot but conclude that our population growth is presently more of a liability than an asset. Recently released statistics of numbers of out-of school children in the country, there is no convincing indication that changes would come as regard issue of poverty induced crimes and 54 million illiterates put Nigeria at the bottom in the global literacy index ranking, Children-out-of-school is today a ticking time bomb that must not be allowed to explode (*ibid.*). That was the beginning of the efforts to control population both at global and national levels.

Overcrowding in the classroom is now the order of the day from Primary to University level and there are not enough places for the number of students in class/lecture roomsand this type of atmosphere is not conducive for effective teaching/learning process (Aminu, 2013). Effective teacher/student relationship may not be possible in an overcrowded classroom andthis probably explains why teachers in higher institutions of learning resort to the use of handouts (Akande, 2004 in Aminu, 2013). Despite the total number of children out of school, Nigerian schools and institutions are over populated especially public school where more than 70-80 students are found in a single class. With this number how social distancing can be possible in this condition during Covid-19.

COVID-19 PANDAMIC IN NIGERIA

There is no doubt that, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a serious disruption to education in Nigeria. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of many individuals, negatively impacting the global economy and sources of livelihoodsand due to measures to contain the pandemic. Moreover, education system in Nigeria could change significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic because education planning in the future will be affected (UNESCO, 2020).

However, the school session was approaching the end of the second term for many students it was a transition into the second term holiday season. For some others it was an abrupt to the term and end of term examinations were affected in some cases. Nevertheless, government and private organizations rolled into action to ensure that learning continued for students in Nigeria. We found through this study that there was high level responsiveness of both state and non-state actors in the education sector. In a short period of time, many innovations sprung up online and children began to access alternative means of learning. It also gave rise to innovation and technological disruption due to high population, that many parents, students and teachers may not have access to learning. Most teachers in our study reported that they prefer a blended approach to learning going forward. Government officials believe that education planning and learning process will forever be changed by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Undoubtedly, education, technology and distance learning offer unique opportunities to strengthen education in Nigeria. According to the Digital 2020 Global Overview Report, 58% of Nigerians are not connected to the internet. However, mobile devices show more promising trends. The report points that 169.2 million people – 83%

of Nigerians have access to mobile phone connections; but 50% of these are urban dwellers (Social & Hootsuite, 2020). If we consider subscribers with multiple devices and subscriptions, the numbers would be significantly lower raising concerns for inequality of access to learning for many children. Specifically, we can highlight the following challenges from our study.

Since schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been efforts by governments, private sector and key education stakeholders to promote continued learning and bridge potential learning gaps and these efforts range from large-scale, low technology solutions that do not require internet-enabled devices (radio and television), to high technology alternatives (virtual classrooms, video conferencing, animated lessons and online resources libraries) that require internet-enabled devices (*ibid.*). The COVID-19 pandemic is revolutionizing digital and online education globally but kids in rural and underserved communities in Lagos State and some other part of Nigeria are being left behind as they are not equipped to adapt or transition to the new methods of learning(Amorighoye, 2020).According to Vegas (2020), while about 90% of high-income countries are providing remote learning opportunities, less than 25% of low-income countries are offering any type of remote learning at all. Consequently, the former majorly engage learners via online platforms, while the latter mostly use television and radio to reach learners. In fact, only about 23% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, combine online and broadcast media platforms, and only 11% rely exclusively on online platforms.For parents, the shutting down of schools has necessitated deeper and more technical levels of involvement in their children's education. This has been challenging for most parents, as school teachers were mostly directly responsible for driving the learning outcomes of school children. A number of parents have had to balance working or managing their families with actively facilitating or monitoring the home-schooling of children (Babatunde, 2020). Children whose parents cannot afford remote learning facilities may have to wait for schools to re-open to continue learning, as such, it is uncertain the number of children that will return to school when the pandemic is over (Obiakor & Adeniran, 2020).

The education crisis during the pandemic has also challenged the leadership style of government agencies working in educationand these agencies have had to deploy crisis management skills in ensuring that the number of Nigeria's out-of-school children does not increase permanently by working with stakeholders to provide distance learning opportunities (Lawal, 2020) for as many children as possible and he further They however have not provided an enabling environment for public tertiary institutions to transition from traditional schooling to remote schooling and Nigeria requires huge training of teachers to teach at a distance and in the use of e-learning. Teaching online is much more difficult than teaching face-to-face (*ibid,*).

IMPLICATION OF POPULATION ON EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 IN NGERIA

One of the aspects of our national life this pandemic affected seriously is the educational system. In a country like Nigeria where the educational system has not been up to standard, having another serious factor like the Covid-19 pandemic coming into play has caused more harm.

Students' population in Nigeria has been affected by the pandemic, although primary and secondary students seem to be the most affected as many do not have the means to access online teaching (UNESCO 2020). Given that COVID-19 is having a vast impact on students, timely responses are needed the digital divide can also be observed at the university level, even in developed countries.

HOW POPULATION IMPACTEDEDUCATION DURING COVID-19

✓ According to UNESCO, about 35.9 million primary and secondary school learners are currently out-of-school as a result of the school closures. For primary schools, approximately 25.6 million students, of which about 87 percent (23.5 million) are students enrolled in public schools. The numbers are just as unambiguous for secondary school learners. Of the roughly 10.3 million secondary school students who are out-of-school as a result of the closures, approximately 81 percent (8.4 million) of them are public school students. This lead to Missed learning for the majority of pre-pandemic in-school-students during the pandemic.

✓ In Nigeria, school opportunity is correlated to income level, and public schools differ from private schools in the populations they serve. While private schools serve learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds who are willing and able to pay more to access the better resources offered by private schools, public schools which are usually free, comprise students from lower socio-economic households

and low- income areas. In instances where distance learning opportunities are available, uptake will be low from the students in the public schools category, as a result of poor infrastructure such as lack of electricity, or poor/no internet connectivity, etc.

✓ Loss of access to vital school-provided services: Beyond the missed learning opportunities, students in Nigeria are also losing access to the daily meals made available by the federally-funded school feeding programs. Nigeria as one of the largest school feeding programs in the world, with the World Food Programme estimating that in 2019, Nigeria's Homegrown Schools Feeding Initiative provided access to daily meals to over 9 million children in over 40,000 public schools. The benefits of school feeding programs extend beyond the immediate education benefits of the meals provided, such as encouraging enrollment in schools, and boosting learning. With schools closed, over 9 million public school students are currently being deprived of this benefit.

✓ Leaving more kids behind - A longer-term impact of these school closures would be deepened educational inequality. While some international development partners such as UNESCO have put together and provided access to ICT-based resources to foster learning, uptake will depend largely on the level and quality of digital and internet access, and language accessibility.

CONCLUSSION

Students' population in Nigeria has been affected by the pandemic, although primary and secondary students seem to be the most affected as many do not have the means to access online teaching. Given that COVID-19 is having a vast impact on students, about 35.9 million primary and secondary school learners are currently out-of-school as a result of the school closures.School opportunity is correlated to income level, and public schools differ from private schools in the populations they serve. While private schools serve learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds who are willing and able to pay more to access the better resources offered by private schools, public schools which are usually free, comprise students from lower socio-economic households and low- income areas.Nigeria as one of the largest school feeding programs in the world, over 9 million children in over 40,000 public schools lose their access to daily meals.

This paper has highlighted key issues and conclusions from general study of the population in education situation in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. These paper found that although COVID-19 disrupted education like other sectors significantly, the responses of educational stakeholders in Nigeria provided a quick cushion to reduce the learning slide among Nigerian students. The key implications of the inadequate access to remote learning facilities are likely to be inequality of educational outcomes. Where children from comfortable households may access more learning online than their equivalents in poorer households. This increases the need for the government to ensure learning for all children in Nigeria; by creating measures to ensure that no child is left behind, support is required for different groups of students population, from financial to infrastructural to another remote learning options. Measures that ensure that teachers and parents are well prepared with the essential services and tools for supporting the continuous learning of children should be top of the government's priority at this time. The support of the private (non-state) sector was also identified as highly significant through the findings of this study. A system where such support can be highly maximized is critical to ensure that learning is not only taking place but can be assessed and improved for better outcomes for children.

The COVID-19 situation has also led to a number of opportunities that should be adequately exploited. However, education remains key to the success of any nation and its people; even in the middle of a global pandemic, the opportunities that arise from this situation are more accessible to countries whose leaders prioritize education and knowledge.

RECOMEMDATION
The authors recommend that:
✓ Enlightenment campaign is needed so that people can be aware about the dander and risk of over population in both primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.
✓ The need to control the admission in all level of education in the country to avoid overcrowded class/lecture room
✓ Providing prevention measures such as face mask, sanitizers etc. in each school

✓ Provision of remote learning for feature prevention and disruption

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