

Examining the Ravaging COVID-19 Pandemic and its Implications for Educational Institutions on a Global Perspective

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Abstract – The study examined the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for educational institutions on a global perspective. COVID-19 outbreak occurred in Wuhan City, China at the twilight of the year 2019 and spread like wild fire to other countries. Globally, over eight million people have been infected with the coronavirus, over four million people recovered and more than half a million deaths recorded due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The disease was so dreadful that various nations adopted the lockdown measure to forestall further spread. Consequently, educational institutions at all levels were shut-down along-side other sectors. Corollary to the above, it was found that the academic calendar would be affected; international students' enrolment might reduce; schools that depend more on foreign students for funding may experience a down-turn during the period of COVID-19 outbreak; schools may not be able to be liberal with their financial aid offerings; private school owners may find it difficult to pay the salaries of their employees during the period of the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic. It was however, recommended that schools should source revenue through entrepreneurial practices; the government of each country should allocate 26% of her annual budget to education sector; tuition fee for international students should be cut down by at least 20%; World Health Organization (WHO) should sponsor more researches toward getting a vaccine for COVID-19.

Keywords – Ravaging COVID-19, Educational Institutions, Global Perspective.

I. INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus which is also known as COVID-19 is a microscopic organism that ordinarily could have been despised but the devastating effects of the virus have earned it an unprecedented popularity. Once the virus is contracted by a person, the transmission is usually spontaneous. The virus is so infectious that at its very beginning, it was difficult to contain even by developed countries hence the number of positive cases (infected persons) consistently increased and people died in hundreds and thousands

especially in such continents as Asia, Europe, North America and South America. The spread know no bounds. Both the small and great were infected leading to deaths of people irrespective of age, colour, height, weight, sex, social status etc.

In order to forestall further spread of the deadly disease, various countries adopted the policy of lockdown. Resultant from the above, schools, markets, banks, religious centres (churches and mosques), motor parks, airports, etc. were closed down except essential sectors such as health and security. Consistent with the above, World News (2020) reported that

Italy is considering a country-wide closure of all schools and universities in an effort to stop a further spread of coronavirus. Some international schools have already issued letters informing parents and guardians they will be closed as a preventative measure as of Thursday, with remote online teaching beginning Friday (p.35).

In some countries, schools were closed abruptly in response to the suggestion or rather recommendation of lockdown as most effective measure to contain the spread of the dreaded disease.

It is known that the school is an important institution of the society established to engender development in the society. Unfortunately, coronavirus outbreak has halted the operations/activities. The school as an institution of the society plays both social and economic roles. Inadvertently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the attendant lockdown has some implications for the educational institutions.

Corollary to the above, this paper discusses the origin/cause of COVID-19, its extent of spread, some prominent persons infected, impact of school and business closure (lockdown) on COVID-19 transmission rate, COVID-19 threats on human race and strategies of nations to contain it, World Health Organization's (WHO's) conditions to ease COVID-19 restrictions (lockdown), and the COVID-19 implications for education institutions on a global perspective.

II. ORIGIN OF COVID-19

The cause of coronavirus which is ravaging the whole world is still in obscurity. While it is known that the new virus outbreak occurred in Wuhan, China, it actually manifested at the twilight of 2019. Wuhan City is the capital of Hubei province in the People's Republic of China. According to International (2020:46) "the Wuhan outbreak came at the worst possible time which was on the eve of Lunar New Year when tens of millions of Chinese travel to celebrate with their families".

Concerning the cause or origin of the COVID-19, the whole world especially the United States of America had been so curious to know. The United States President, Donald Trump stated that his government is trying to determine whether the coronavirus emanated from a laboratory in Wuhan City of China. Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley said US intelligence indicates that the coronavirus likely occurred naturally which is in sharp contrast to being created in a laboratory in China. While the world populace are eager to hear or know the cause of the virus, the United States version is taking a dimension of politics. Consistent with the above, International (2020) reveals thus

Fox News reported on Wednesday that the virus originated in a Wuhan laboratory not as a bioweapon but as part of China's effort to demonstrate that its efforts to identify and combat viruses are equal to or greater than the capabilities of the U.S (p. 46).

The above excerpt is suggestive of the Wuhan laboratory as being where virology experiments take place and lax safety standards there led to someone getting infected and appearing at a nearby "wet" market, where the virus began to spread. While this accusation by U.S against China continues, it is worthy of note that U.S has relied on China for personal protection equipment desperately needed by American medical workers hence the two countries emphasize strong economic ties. The accusations notwithstanding, since February 2020, the Chinese state-backed Wuhan Institute of Virology dismissed rumours that the virus may have been artificially synthesized at one of its laboratories or perhaps escaped from such a facility. Moreso, China's foreign ministry has quoted World Health Organization (WHO) as positing that there is no evidence that the coronavirus that has infected millions of people globally was made in a laboratory. Nevertheless, the broad scientific consensus holds that SARS-CoV-2, the virus official name, originated in bats (International, 2020).

III. EXTENT OF SPREAD/TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19

It is strongly argued especially by the United States that the Coronavirus was created in the laboratory in the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Besides, the laboratory lacked safety facilities hence it led to someone getting infected and appearing at a nearby “wet market” where the virus began to spread. The spread had reached almost all the countries in the world with several active cases and deaths in each of the countries.

The rate of transmission of COVID-19 could be considered on a global perspective. For instance, African continent as at the period of this study had lower cases of coronavirus than other continents apart from Australia. The secretary to the Government of the Federation of Nigeria and Chairman of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, Mr. Boss Mustapha hinted as was reported by Obisue (2020) that

recent studies had revealed that the transmission rate of coronavirus in Africa is lower than what is obtainable in other climes ... the study also implies that Africa has so far experienced fewer severe cases and fewer death rate as earlier predicted (p.8).

In a recent publication by the World Health Organization on risk modeling for 47 countries in the African region, it was predicted that there would be 82,000 to 190,000 deaths during the first year of the pandemic. The above prediction may not be doubted considering the experience in northern Nigeria, particularly in Kano where dozens of human beings died as a result of coronavirus. This of course may not be unconnected with Mr. Boss Mustapha's remarks that African continent's healthcare systems were already overburdened hence the call on African leaders to take necessary measures to forestall a worst-case situation. He also emphasized that it is expedient to expand capacity to mitigate the implications of widespread community transmission of COVID-19 (Obisue, 2020).

In another development, WHO made a stern warning recently that COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, at the instance of 106,000 new active cases recorded globally. The WHO's Director General, Tedros Ghebreyesus as reported by Adewole (2020) stated in Geneva at a world press conference that

the virus was spreading in poorer countries, just as wealthier nations were emerging from lockdown. We still have a long way to go in this pandemic. We are very concerned about rising cases in low and middle-income countries. The infection rate has been growing rapidly in Latin America, with Brazil becoming the country with the third most confirmed cases after it surpassed the UK recently (p.36).

Still on the global spread of COVID-19, seventy-two Nigerians living in China have tested positive for the coronavirus disease. It was explained by Chinese authorities that 65 persons who had contact with the positive cases were being traced. The information was disclosed by the Foreign Affairs Office of Guangzhou Municipal People's Government in a note verbale (diplomatic correspondence) to the Nigerian Consulate in Guangzhou dated 22nd April, 2020. Part of the correspondence reads thus: “According to the data by Guangzhou Municipal Health Commission on April 21 there are currently 16 confirmed cases and 56 positive test cases among Nigerian citizens in Guangzhou as well as 65 cases of contact. It was also reported that III (one hundred and eleven) other African nationals also tested positive for COVID-19 during the tests of 4,553 Africans in Guangzhou City (Adepegba, 2020).

The aftermath of measures taken by various countries have yielded good result which is reduction or low spread rate of coronavirus especially in developed countries. The above notwithstanding, scientists are warning that though COVID-19 transmission dip as we head into the spring and summer, such a reduction should not be mistaken for an end to the outbreak. It should rather be noted that a reduction of cases during the summer should be exploited or used as an opportunity to prepare for next winter, when a new model suggests the virus could infect 100 times more people. Research scientists from universities in Basel and Stockholm have modelled the effects of seasonal variation on COVID-19 as which is the prevalent strain of coronavirus-transmission rates. Their model suggests we are currently experiencing a “small peak in early 2020 in temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere” which will be followed by “a larger peak in winter 2020-21”. Considering other coronaviruses, the researchers believe the rate of transmission will indeed drop as we head into spring and summer but then rise again, infecting as many as a hundred million people in total (International News, 2020).

IV. SOME PROMINENT PERSONS INFECTED WITH COVID-19

Prince Charles of Wales has tested positive for coronavirus. Prince Charles is aged 71 and is the eldest son and heir to Queen Elizabeth II. The septuagenarian has been displaying mild symptoms of COVID-19 but otherwise remains in good health hence he has been working from home during the ailment. The Duchess of Cornwall (Camilla) has also been tested but does not have the virus. However, the couple (the Prince and the duchess) underwent self-isolation at their home in Scotland (prince Charles, 2020).

Menegian Saro-Wiwa who also had underlying health conditions had died after testing positive for coronavirus. Menegian died in London on the 13th April, 2020. Menegian is the son of the Late Playwright and Ogoni activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa. His sister Noo Saro-Wiwa announced via an Instagram post as was reported by News (2020) thus

We said goodbye to my brother, Gian, on Monday. He had COVID-19 combined with underlying health conditions. Gian was the smartest and most talented out of all of us: a champion sprinter at school, a poet, an artist, budding engineer, a self-taught guitarist and pianists (p. 10).

In Nigeria the Governor of Bauchi State, Mr. Bala Mohammed has tested positive of the deadly coronavirus. This information was disclosed by the governor's Senior Special Assistant (SSA) on Media, Mr. Muktar Gidado. His revelation as was reported by Garba, (2020) states thus

This is to inform the general public that the result of the six initial tests carried out by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) on Governor Bala Mohammed, his family and aids that accompanied him to Lagos is out; Of the six initial tests carried out, one of the samples was confirmed positive of COVID-19. The positive result happened to be that of Governor Mohammed, the Governor of Bauchi State (p.5)

Also Mohammed Abubakar, the son of Nigeria's former Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar has tested positive to coronavirus. Atiku's son was treated and managed at Gwagwalada Specialist Teaching Hospital in Abuja. It was revealed that Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi and Atiku's son shook hands and exchanged pleasantries when they met in Lagos in Aero Contractors aircraft (Garba, 2020).

Apart from the above, the Chief of Staff to President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, Abba Kyari also tested positive to COVID-19 and the complications arising from the COVID-19 led to his death. It is said that Abba Kyari was in the delegation that travelled to Germany to attend a meeting with the officials of Siemens to hold talks on improving electricity supply in Nigeria. The Chief of Staff may have contracted the disease from Germany since Germany was regarded as high-risk country then. Worse still on Kyari's coronavirus infection and eventual death, Olaoje (2020:5) reveals that "New Telegraph gathered that while the delegation returned to the country on March 14, Kyari failed to abide by the directives of the NCDC which recommended 14-days self-isolation for anyone returning from any of the coronavirus ravaged countries". Also infected by the deadly virus was speaker of Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Frank Okiye.

Furthermore, nine medical doctors have died in Philippines from COVID-19. The Philippine Medical Association as reported by International (2020:47) said "a ninth doctor had died of the virus, and that health workers were not getting enough protection" Expressing worries over the doctors' death, Benito Atienza, vice president of the Philippine Medical Association stated as was reported in International (2020:47) that "if it were up to me, test the frontliners first and test them again after seven days. Doctors could be carriers themselves".

Apart from the above, Guinea-Bissau's Prime Minister, Nuno Gomes Nabiam had been infected with COVID-19 alongside three top government functionaries. They include Interior Minister, Botche Cande; Secretary of State for Public Order, Mario Fambe; and Secretary of State for Regional Integration, Monica Boiro (International 2020 May 1). Moreso, the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was infected with coronavirus. According to Musa (2020)

The world stood attention as the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was wheeled out of the intensive care unit (ICU) amidst cheers by those who have sacrificed their own lives so that others may live. In complete recognition of the sacrifices these healthcare givers are offering to take care of those infected with the virus, many countries take a particular time of the day to

open their windows and salute their courage and resilience through a standing ovations in their various lockdown abodes. The public acceptance of their relentlessness and selfless service to carry on the battle to the end is a great inspiration worthy of global recognition and honour (p.40)

Also, Kogi State Chief Judge, Justice Nasir Ajana as well as former Governor of Oyo State Senator Abiola Ajimobi have all died of COVID-19. Ondo State Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu tests positive for COVID-19 as well as the Nigerian Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Onyeama Geoffrey.

V. IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN (SCHOOL AND BUSINESS CLOSURE) ON COVID-19 TRANSMISSION RATE

Most countries indeed took measure of lockdown ie to restrict movement between cities or states. The Chinese government adopted this measure and implemented to the letter. Wuhan, the city where the COVID-19 outbreak occurred first was placed on permanent lockdown. In order to achieve the safety of all students including foreign students, the students were isolated from the rest of the people. They were quarantined in their campuses all through the period when the coronavirus was ravaging. In order to make an appraisal of the impact that school and business closures has on coronavirus transmission rates, using data on how often people interact and where, researchers developed a model. Three separate scenarios were compared in the study viz no intervention and no holiday travel; no physical distancing and normal holiday travel; and school closures with only key workers at work. The researchers found that intervention by way of closing businesses and schools had significant impact in reducing new cases. In other words, the unprecedented measures the city of Wuhan adopted to minimize social contacts in school and the workplace have enhanced the control of the outbreak (International, 2020).

VI. COVID-19 THREATS ON HUMAN RACE AND HOW NATIONS STRATEGIZED TO CONTAIN IT.

COVID-19 has caused the world to experience a serious and inexplicable turn around in the milieu. People are dying in their numbers without respect for social status. Describing the scenario more appropriately, Lukman (2020) stated thus

One thing that is however certain is that COVID-19 is a world leveler whether with reference to so-called developed or undeveloped nations, rich or poor citizens, powerful or powerless citizens, or ideological standpoints. It is attacking and taking lives almost in the same magnitude across all countries indiscriminate of political, economic or social status. Somehow, the threat of COVID-19 is affecting all nations and humanity equitably (p.18)

Indeed, the virus has spread and has killed so many persons which made the WHO to declare it a pandemic. Giving credence to the above assertion, Musa (2020) stated that

... the epidemic that has caused the deaths of thousands of people and put other hundreds of thousands in the valley of death ... in Indonesia alone, no fewer than 18 doctors have paid the supreme price in the fight against the infection. From global statistics, no fewer than 100 doctors and nurses have been felled by COVID-19, with most of them suffering exhaustion (p.40).

The excerpt above is not limited to medical practitioners alone who have fought tooth and nail in staving off COVID-19 threat of extinction threatening human race. It rather encompasses over two million people infected globally.

It is against this backdrop that nations adopted certain measures especially total lockdown which affected almost all sectors including the education sector. The total lockdown measure is harsh as the poor finds it extremely difficult to cope. In line with the foregoing, Musa (2020) posits that

In recognition of the fact that the shutdown option is not appropriate in countries with high incidence of poverty, the World health Organization (WHO) had earlier warned against the imposition of lockdown on a populace that depends on daily incomes (p.48).

Considering the extent to which the lockdown (stay at home order) is biting hard on the populace, the various nations came up with new policies such as opening only supermarkets, allowing people to go to work for few hours, allowing banks to operate between 8:00am and 12:00 noon etc. These measures still left the populace dissatisfied especially the poor. Besides, WHO has

warned that about 73 million persons across Africa risk acute hunger and starvation following the restriction of movement brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. WHO is of the view that coronavirus was exacerbating food shortages, as food imports transportation and agricultural production have all been hampered by a combination of lockdowns, travel restrictions and physical distancing measures (Otokpa, 2020).

VII. WHO'S CONDITIONS TO EASE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN (RESTRICTIONS)

In a bid to show responsiveness to the yearnings of the world populace on COVID-19 lockdown, the WHO boss Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said countries that want to lift COVID-19 restrictions must meet a row of conditions to prevent another surge of infections. Such conditions include:

1. Government must ensure that the spread of the novel coronavirus is under control. This means that health authorities must know the origin of every single case and cluster of infections.
2. National health systems must also be able to find, test, isolate and treat every new case, and all recent social contacts of every infected person must be tracked down.
3. Countries that want to ease their curbs must minimize infection risks in hot spot settings such as hospitals and nursing homes.
4. Preventive measures must be in place in workplace, schools and other essential locations. This includes physical distancing, hygiene etiquette and possibly, temperature measurements, according to the new WHO guidelines.
5. Countries must also manage the risk of importing new cases from abroad, by detecting infected travelers, and by quarantining those who arrive from hot spot countries.
6. It is important that "communities are fully educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the new norm" of behaving in ways that prevent new infection. News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) as reported in (News, 2020).

VIII. EXAMINING THE RAVAGING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ON A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

It is not disputable that coronavirus has spread to all the continents except the Antarctica causing not only health crisis but also social and economic crisis (Camara, 2020). On the economic sphere, educational institutions that depend more on foreign students to make money may be affected during the period of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Buttressing the above, Australia Council for International Education has it that there were over 212,000 about 28 percent of international students in the country. The students contribute over A\$12 billion to the country's economy annually. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, about 100,000 of the students are stuck in China. Consequently, the Global Reputation Taskforce has been set up by the Australia Council for International Education to research and unravel the implications and impact of the crisis caused by the pandemic. The United States of America has its own experience of the pandemic with its attendant implications. There were about 370,000 Chinese students in America prior to the coronavirus outbreak. India is second to China with regards to highest number of foreign students in the United States. Most of the foreign students are affected by the pandemic hence they are unable to go back to school whereas freshers are finding it uneasy to resume. Foreign students contributed over \$41 billion to the American economy in 2018/2019 academic session. The New York University which had over 20,000 foreign students is so cherished by foreign students. It is therefore not surprising that the university received over 85,000 applications for admission in the year 2020. Undoubtedly, most of those that applied may not go and take up their admission due to the COVID-19 effects. Writing on the implications of the pandemic on educational institutions, Hafeez Lukhani as cited in (Wuhab, 2020) posited that

It could be a setback to many universities and colleges because in the last decade, there have been deep cuts in state funding of higher education which made universities and colleges to focus on admitting more international students. And if there are fewer foreign students in American Universities and colleges, those schools would have to admit more domestic students that would pay full tuition and that means the schools may not be able to be generous with their financial aid offerings (p.29).

Apart from the above, the United Kingdom also has so many foreign students. About 17,640 Nigerians studied in UK universities in 2011/2012 academic session. Unfortunately, the seeming global economic meltdown arising from COVID-19 outbreak could hinder many foreign students from going back to school (Wahab, 2020). The above could be true as the price of crude oil has abysmally fallen in the international market. Besides, the Nigerian currency (Naira) has been so devalued that US \$1 is exchanged for over N360 whereas one British Pound (£1) is exchanged for over N400. This means that it would cost about N4,000,000 (four million naira) to sustain a student's study for a year.

In Africa, especially in Nigeria, a lot of activities in educational institutions were put on hold or postponed. This is quite indisputable because proposed fairs, workshops, seminars and symposia have been postponed by the organizers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Giving credence to the above, Wahab (2020:28) reported that "the Lagos State University, LASU, Ojo, had to shift its 24th convocation ceremony billed for this week. This is despite the huge resources already spent on preparations among others". Furthermore, the financial consequences of COVID-19 on institutions of learning is enormous. Buttressing on this, the Chairman, Triple Square Private Schools, Lagos, Mr. Doyin Adebunsi as reported by Wahab (2020:28) said "private school owners now have to grapple with how to pay their teachers for the period the schools would be closed".

IX. CONCLUSION

COVID-19 pandemic has indeed pushed the world to a standstill affecting the education sector tremendously. Education institutions at all levels were shut down during the ravaging period of COVID-19 pandemic. The economies of both individuals and nations were adversely affected and this permeated down to local and foreign students. Consequently, education institutions that depend on international students for funding would be negatively affected. More so, the generosity exhibited by such schools in terms of financial aid offerings may either be withdrawn or reduced to bare minimum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion above, the following recommendations were made thus:

1. Government of each country should allocate 26% of its annual budget to education sector as recommended by the United Nations;
2. Tuition fees for international students should be cut down by at least 20%;
3. Education institutions should source revenue through entrepreneurial practices;
4. WHO should sponsor more researches to provide vaccine for COVID-19 cure;
5. Upon resumption, each school should establish a centre where each student would be tested and quarantined for fourteen days before full integration.

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