



Repositioning the Teacher for Sustainable African Education Beyond Covid 19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The teacher in the education project is at the centre of the wheel, without which the efforts in the success story can never be sustained. This paper therefore examines the re-positioning of the teacher for sustainable education in post-COVID 19 era in Nigeria and Africa in general. To actualize this, the evaluation theory became the theoretical foundation; with a look at the African education retrospectively. A strong correlation was established between the "New Normal" and the teacher. In the end, the paper averred, among other things, that the teachers should become digital specialists, while education providers at all levels should prioritise remote learning process, revamp digital skills and education curriculum and enhance audio-visual learning. Among other recommendations were that the government should ensure inclusion of online teaching, provide the needed facilities, while the teachers themselves must be ready to move into the fast lanes of technology and protective teaching.

Keywords: number of examines the re-positioning, online teaching, sustainable education,



1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted education systems across the country and around the world, changing what classrooms and learning look like on a day-to-day basis. Educators are navigating a constantly shifting landscape, with the health of students, teachers and the community at large at stake. The outbreak of Covid-19 has forced innovation across all sectors and education is no exception to this. Breaking the classroom barriers, schools have launched live\virtual classroom, like most cases, there have been some mixed responses from students and parents in this regard. It has sparked a debate among many on how the teaching methods will evolve and change for good in the future. Some feel online live teaching environment is better than the traditional classroom, some are speculating if the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic. Covid-19 has had an enormous impact on education at every level all over the world. In many African countries, the experience of the pandemic has been traumatic but not perhaps as apocalyptic as some observers and experts had predicted. There are important lessons for all of us, both in Africa and outside it, on how African countries are dealing with the pandemic and are working to mitigate its effect on their education systems. Mistakes seem to have been made but there were notable successes too. Some African governments and institutions took steps that showed the sort of foresight, imagination and innovation that were often lacking in other parts of the world.

As at April, 21 2020, approximately 1,723 billion learners have been affected with the sudden closures of schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to UNESCO (2020) monitoring, 191 countries have implemented nationwide closures and 5 have implemented local closures, impacting about 98.4 percent of the world's student population. On 23 March 2020, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) released a statement announcing the cancellation of Efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19 through non-medical interventions and preventive measures such as social-distancing and self-isolation have promoted the widespread have as well ensured all schools and personnel experience a compulsory stay at home order so as to prevent further spread of this delay virus from spreading among students and school personnel since it can easily be contacted through have direct contact with the carrier of the virus. In fact, many unified examinations were suspended. Most of Africa's 54 countries are now with confirmed cases and death tolls due to COVID-19, some have closed their borders and banned international flights, local and international trade are declining at a drastic rate. Regrettably, most school systems discovered it was not easy to go virtual.

A lack of teacher training accessible tool, and preparation time made the launch of remote learning flawed and rushed. Added to the fact that education and school leaders were dealing with their own anxieties and fears for their lives as the virus continues to spread, and there is a global call to open back up schools (Oyedele, 2020). But the world we live in is no longer the stable and predictable place it once was. Add a deadly virus to the equation, and what do you get? A complex system ill-equipped to adapt quickly to serve its learners and prepare its teachers. As an education system, we must jump ahead and prepare for learning in the post COVID-19 era. In this paper, repositioning teachers for sustainable Africa education beyond COVID-19 became the concern of the researchers.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In many African countries, the experience of the pandemic has been traumatic but not perhaps as apocalyptic as some observers and experts had predicted. There are important lessons for all of us, both in Africa and outside it, on how African countries are dealing with the pandemic and are working to mitigate its effect on their education systems. Mistakes were made but there were notable successes too. Some African government and institutions took steps that showed the sort of foresight, imagination and innovation that was often lacking in other parts of the world.

Our observations as stakeholders in the education project in Nigeria and perhaps beyond its shores, showed that the Nigerian government and the African continent never saw the pandemic coming. This led to the nonchalant attitude towards building a formidable education system, where the lives of the principals, teachers and students would be safe. Furthermore, and most importantly, measures were not taken on how to move the pedagogy from the traditional chalk and board, face to face contact and one classroom to a more technological-based teaching and learning from the comfort of any space.

To this end, the disaster of complete closure was the obvious and there was no remedy from the outdated curriculum which was seemingly irrelevant to the needs and aspirations of the receivers. The problem of this paper therefore is to reposition the teachers for sustainable African education beyond COVID 19 pandemic.

1.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study

According to Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991), the fundamental purpose of evaluation theory is to specify feasible practices that evaluators can use to construct knowledge about the value of social programs. These explanations of evaluation theory consist of five main components: practices, use, knowledge, valuing and social programming. The authors trace the evolution of evaluation: Micheal Scriven, Donald Campbell, Carol Wesis, Joseph Wholey, Robert Stake, Lee Cronbach and Peter Rossi. Evaluation is the structured interpretation and giving of meaning to predict or actual impacts of proposals or results. It looks at original objectives, and what is either predicted or what was accomplished and how it was accomplished. So, evaluation can be formative that is taking place during the development of a concept or proposal, project or organization. It can point in time or circumstance. Evaluation is inherently a theoretically informed approach with the following tenets:

1. A systematic, rigorous, and meticulous application of scientific methods to assess the design, implementation, improvement or outcomes of a program. It is a resource-intensive process, frequently requiring resources, expertise, labour, time channeled towards improving digital learning for quality education.
2. The critical assessment, in as objective manner as far as possible, of the degree to which a service or its component parts fulfils stated goals, the focus of this definition is on attaining objective knowledge, and scientifically or quantitatively measuring predetermined and external concepts.
3. The main purpose of evaluation can be to ascertain the level of preparedness of Nigerians in digital learning amidst Covid-19 pandemic towards attainment of quality education.

2. Methodology

The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive. Subjects are chosen voluntarily, there is no power involved in the selection of subjects. Collecting data is conveyed by implementing the following activities: participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions. In this research, the data are resulted by compiling test results from Interviews, Documents, and Observations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 African Education before COVID-19

For many years, all schools throughout the world have been following the standard traditional teaching style. A teacher's role in the traditional teaching style is of lecturing, where teachers would just lecture throughout the class and students would listen. However, this is most preferred teaching style both by the teachers and the parents due to several reasons.

Firstly, school is like a second home for children where the teachers take care of them the entire day. Thus, in the case of working parents, they can leave the students in the class and go to work peacefully. Therefore, parents get a feeling that they are in safe hands. One primary focus to teachers is to make students prepare for their exams. Teachers are of great help to the different levels of students. While some may be studious, others may like challenges or some students may also be last-minutes cramers. Teachers strictly monitor the assignments and give instructions. It is a practice that all educators follow in school to assess students' performance levels to ensure that all the students perform equally. It also makes the students aware of their accomplishments.

Secondly, in the traditional teaching method, teachers make sure not to keep any visual aids or computer screens in the classroom so that the students do not get distracted. In some cases, such as project-based learning, charts, blackboards, and other digital tools are being widely used. But the traditional classroom teachers do not prefer to use such methods so that the students can stay focused.

Another factor as to why this type of schooling system is widely accepted is because of strict discipline followed by teachers. All schools have their own rules and regulations. Thus, students in the school environment are expected to obey the institution's law and guidance. It helps group learning. In a classroom environment, in many cases, teachers tend to modify their teaching style with group activities and learning. This helps students to communicate with each other and understand how others are learning. This not only enables their social skills, but it boosts their confidence levels as well (Akther, 2020).

However, even as laudable as it is presented, can we all affirm that the traditional African method of teaching has placed our children in the right pedestal with their counterparts globally, making them to be innovative, inventive and creative?

3.2 The Effect of COVID-19 on Education in Africa and its Implications for the use of Technology

There have been negative noticeable effects on education occasioned by the pandemic. These are, but not limited to:

1. There has been widespread school closure across Africa in response to the pandemic and 97% of respondents reported school closures in their countries, and 95% of these noted that all schools had been forced to close. This was seen as an appropriate decision, as 92% of respondents expressed that the closures were essential.
2. A lack of access to technology is considered to be the biggest barrier for learning during the current pandemic together with school closures. Respondents felt that learners in rural communities are those most likely to be disadvantaged as a result. The most cited limitation is the lack availability and affordability of connectivity.
3. Early childhood and primary level pupils seem to be most likely to be disadvantaged by the crisis and least likely to be able to access the technologies required for learning.
4. Educational TV and radio programmes are seen as the most important technologies for sustaining learning for pupils at the primary school level. At the secondary level, online learning is considered to be the most important.
5. Survey results show that the large majority of educators have not received financial support for teaching and learning tools to help them continue teaching in the crisis, and do not feel there has been sufficient preparation to help them adapt.

6. The majority of respondents- 83% think that national curriculum should be adapted for the future in response to the current crisis, to enable more effective distance learning.
7. Half of all respondents -50% think that in the most significant long-term effect of the crisis will be that it leads to new opportunities for education systems.
8. Some 85% of respondents anticipate that the current crisis will lead to more widespread use of technology in education in the future. However, they also note that this will lead to significant challenges for the most marginalized and may increase inequality.
9. Lack of technological know-how by teachers (UNESCO, 2020)

3.3 Repositioning the Teacher for Sustainable African Education beyond COVID-19 Pandemic

The role of a teacher is vital in a student's life. While children get their emotional needs from home, it is the teachers who acknowledge and understand them at school. They are the ones who nourish the child for a better future. In other words, teachers also work as 'parents' in the school. From the ancient era, students consider teachers to be role models. Usually, they were made to believe that- teachers were always right. As children spend most of their day in school, the impact a teacher can have in a student's life cannot be understated.

In the African educational institutions, stakeholders include the teachers, students, parents and principals but the core is the teacher who transacts the curriculum in the classroom. The teacher is the person who knows in and out of the student, so according to the situation, they renovate the roles and responsibilities. Drastic change is noticed in times of pandemic where a sudden change converted the face-to-face classroom to the online classes. In the present situation, teachers are inclined to conduct the classes in online mode and converting them into net savvy and more technical mode. Teachers have to put certain extra efforts to create an appropriate environment for handling the classes, using apt methods for content delivery, and finding different ways of evaluation which will be beneficial for the students to distillate more on the concept but all these will be possible only when teachers are making themselves durable.

Two crucial factors have shifted due to the pandemic. First, pedagogical adaptations have proven to be pivotal as the traditional lecturing in-person models do not translate to a remote learning environment. No matter the type of channel used (radio, TV, mobile, online platforms etc.) teachers need to adapt their practices and be creative to keep students engaged as every household has become a classroom more often than not without an environment that supports learning (Olibie, Ezoem, and Ekene, 2014).

As explained above, the pandemic drama has made the learning system change so dramatically such that it made the schools go into the e-learning method across the world. The e-learning is an educational method of teaching where students do not have to be present in the class. Instead, teachers teach the lessons online. As may be known, the e-learning or distance learning concept has been around for several years but was not highly popular. But now, as schools across the globe have shut down, e-learning has become mandatory. Because of the staggering impact of COVID-19 on the educational system, more virtual institutions are likely to come up, which will make education just a click away (Anake, Aloye, Achuen, and Egbe, 2020). For teachers to reposition themselves for sustainable education in the post COVID-19 era, the following imperatives should be considered in order to make it intellectual lockdown rather than an emotional one.

- a. **Teachers should become Digital Specialist:** Teachers have the ability to change and face hard situations. To prepare themselves for digital classroom, teachers need to ensure they are thoroughly familiar with the necessary tools and need to be internet savvy. Classrooms will be converted to zoom. Homework books will be sent to teachers in the form of e-mail. This is an experience that teachers will have to go through, which in turn, will make them digital experts.

UNESCO has provided many online educational resources. Some of the useful tools given by them include:

Schoology: Tools to support instruction, learning, grading, collaboration, and assessment.

Seesaw: Enables the creation of collaborative and sharable digital learning portfolios and learning resources.

Goggle Classroom: Helps classes connect remotely, communicate and stay organized.

ClassDojo: Connects teachers with students and parents to build classroom communities.

Moodle: Community-driven and globally-supported open learning platform.

- b. Internet and other Infrastructure must be earmarked as a basic need:** Post COVID-19, e-learning will be a classroom scenario in many institutional organizations. Teachers need to plan their classes well in advance. They need to prepare the syllabus and assemble all the required tools well in advance. They also need to be masters of the latest online teaching tools like goggle classroom, moodle etc. the cost of, and access to the internet is a critical factor. African governments need to immediately understand that access to the internet has become an essential service and a basic need. The African Union should use this opportunity to lead an Africa-wide broadband infrastructure project funded jointly by Africa countries to accelerate access to broadband internet in Africa. Education infrastructures, particularly in rural areas, are in crisis with many schools without access to clean water and situation facilities not to say the least of electricity, to implement the online learning.
- c. Prioritise remote learning:** Teachers should give attention to remote, technology-based learning with classes provided through live sessions or by pre-recorded content. African governments need to invest in free, high-quality online education for all Africans. Remote learning is the practice of moving a formerly in-person learning process online-usually temporarily. While there is not one single definition for remote learning any more than there is a single definition for 'learning through play,' the big idea is generally consistent: a temporary move from face-to-face teaching in a physical classroom to a digital space accessed 'remotely.' For teachers, this means a reconfiguring units and lessons to work with online teaching strategies while developing new learning materials optimized for learners online. For students, this means you'll be using new tools to learn, more or less, the same 'stuff'. There are pros and cons to this, as might have already been learned.
- d. Revamp digital skills and education curriculum:** there is a need for collaboration in education, especially with the introduction of computer science and robotics to boost 41R skills in Africa, moving beyond basic computer literacy. Education recovery involves the assessment and revision of the academic curriculum to be relevant and reflective of market demands and local realities, while catering to a non-physical environment. The content of what should henceforth be learnt should leave the learner a creative, innovative and inventive individual.
- e. Online learning:** A year ago, online learning was not popular amongst educators and students, and many did not believe that it was possible to learn properly in a virtual class. But with the pandemic still raging virtual classes are completely different from the traditional in-class lectures. In traditional in-class, the teacher feels more control over students' behaviour. To deal with this concern, study shows that teacher should devise different activities. Such activities which can enhance student learning skills in online classes (Bao, 2020), moreover, teachers should ask challenging questions from students during online classes (Smith & Diaz, 2004). These practices will help in establishing better learning abilities for students. Moreover, these approaches will ensure that students are more focused in classes. Besides these, getting feedback from students about these online classes can enhance the capacity of online classes.

3.4 Enhancement of Audio-Visual Learning

Inside the classroom, our audio solutions equip teachers with microphones connected to speakers that deliver high-quality sound throughout the classroom. This is especially important in an environment where teaching staff may be wearing masks that could muffle the sound of their voices. Beside saving their teaching voices, instructors say this equipment makes students more engaged, especially those with hearing disorders or seated in the back of the classroom. Beyond audio, our interactive flat panel displays and video solutions promote classroom collaboration, allow teachers to always face the room, and automate classroom tasks such as grading, collecting assignments and taking attendance. Our paging and intercom solutions enable teachers to alert the office via call buttons if there are emergencies in the classroom, giving them an added lifeline of support in unpredictable times. Outside the classroom, our audio-visual solutions offer easier ways for teachers to transition from paper to digital lesson plans through an intuitive platform that enables them to create, manage and deliver personal video content to students. To create the content, teachers can capture video directly from a mobile app, an installed or mobile cam, or the web cam on their desktop or laptop. From there the content is uploaded, stored and delivered to the recipients they choose. Students can download the video

files from any device or access them through Microsoft OneDrive, Google Classroom, Canvas or other preferred LMS.

4. Conclusion

The study apprised the repositioning of teachers in Africa for sustainable education in post COVID-19 era. The pandemic has unquestionably lifted the veil on the complexities involved in teaching. "Remote learning requires teachers to quickly adapt to skills to help minimize any disruption to learning, but the lasting impact of these new skills and experiences means considering what the future of teaching itself looks like. In the COVID-19 era, success in online curriculum delivery requires expertise, skills and competence. The worst is yet to come, if the global society and Nigeria in particular only attach importance to the health sector; no prophecy is needed to predict the future of the education system beyond now.

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