

COVID 19 Pandemic: A Threat to Quality Higher Education in Nigeria

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Abstract - The paper examined the ways by which Covid-19 had constituted itself to be a threat to effective operation of Nigerian higher education. The paper however examined the concepts, the related issues such as total lockdown, social distancing, community transmission, borders closed, hunters, government neglect, use of nose mask, advocating for virtual classroom without correspondent preparation, truncated salary of workers, all which had affected the quality of the tertiary education in Nigeria. The neglect during the Covid-19 pandemic had affected the quality of Teaching, research and community service operation of the Lecturers. It was noted that the problems of the pandemic scared the Federal government in Nigeria to open the schools because there was no preparation to tackle the expected problems like overcrowded classroom, school overpopulation, inadequate classrooms. It was however concluded that Covid-19 constituted great threat to the quality delivery of Nigerian higher education. It was recommended that more classrooms, infrastructural facilities and more Teaching staff are needed to be provided in Nigeria higher education so that quality can be delivered and assured at post covid-19 Pandemic situations in the country Nigeria.

Keywords: Covid -19, higher Education, Pandemic, and quality education

INTRODUCTION

Education had been accepted as the only instrument for the individual social mobility national social-economic transformation and global recognition of any nation. Federal Republic of Nigeria [1]. also accepted that education is a social responsibility that every citizen must enjoyed as a member of a nation. To this end, the three tiers of government had committed huge amount of funds towards rebuilding trust in Nigerian education and educational goals achievement. However, the Higher education in Nigeria comprise of the Monotechnics, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities. The higher Education was established purposely to develop the middle manpower for the socio-economic transformation, construction and development of the nation. The Federal Republic of Nigeria stated that higher education was purposely established for the following reasons: To train middle manpower need for social economics and cultural development and transformation of the society .The training is through teaching, research and community service by the Lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has also committed extensive efforts to achieve the objectives. Such efforts include employment of qualified human

resources like academic and non-academic staff. The academic staff are therefore charged with the responsibilities of teaching, research and community services. Over the years, according to Ogundele, [2]. many ethical challenges had constituted risks for achieving the objectives such challenges include corruption, incessant strikes, misappropriation of the public funds, sexual harassment and sex for mark scandals, politics in the management of the higher institutions and scourges of examination malpractices. The author however clearly described the challenges as threat to Higher education goals achievement.

It should be noted that higher education had been steadily moving to stabilize their academic calendars. In 2019, it was an outbreak of Corona Virus Diseases tagged COVID 19 Pandemic. The pandemic outbreak which originated from Wuhan University in China by one Professor Charles Libhier who happen to be the head of Department of Chemistry and Biology at Harvard University at U.S.A. The Corona-virus Disease (Covid – 19) was a test of technology which had been spreading from one country to the other. The outbreak of the disease had been globally affecting and hacking all works of life at global level including Education. The spread started in China to extent that millions of Chinese died as a result of infection. The

COVID 19 also infected Italy, UK and many Asian Countries. The Covid 19 Pandemic first entered Nigeria through the former vice president son called Yusuf Atiku and Chief Security to President Muhammadu Buhari called Abbas Kyari contacted the disease when he went to United Kingdom. He started to infect many Nigerian citizens like the Senators, Governors and many governmental functionaries that he met during the condolence visit to the Kogi State Governor who lost his mother. Many of the people contacted the disease through shaking, hugging, touching of Iron and sitting closely to each other.

However, according to Sanwolu [3]. the symptoms of the Covid 19 are headache, fever, hotness of the body sneezing, watery mucus from the nose, throat blockage typhoid. The author noted that the pandemic had started to kill many people at the global level. Also, Olatunbosun 2019 said that the pandemic infection had started to spread at a geometrical manner especially in Lagos, Ogun and Federal Capital Territory. In February the Federal Republic of Nigeria stated to provide palliative methods that will reduce the contacts of the infections. Such method include closing of all the Educational institutions, religious houses like churches and mosques, all entry borders and every gathering that contains more than 50 people.

Therefore, the federal Republic of Nigeria had ordered the closing of the entry borders to every state and all the borders that enter the country, Nigeria. Also, in March, April and May 2020, all states in the country Nigeria ordered for stay home to stay safe policy whereby they restricted the Movement in and out of everyone. All citizens were lockdown for three months. The lockdown, however, lead to destruction of all socio-economic and cultural sectors of the countries at global level. The markets, motor parks, industries hospitals are locked down. All the Educational institution including higher education institutions are seriously hacked none of the higher educational institutions was functioning, the universities were closed indefinitely. Covid 19 Pandemic however become a threat and blockage to effective teaching, research and community services. The paper therefore tried to explain the Covid 19 Pandemic and the areas the spread had constituted threat to the operations of the higher education in Nigeria.

Covid-19 Pandemic and Quality Higher Education

The issue of concern here is that the Covid 19 is characterized with social distancing, washing of hand, palliative measure, discrimination between poor and rich citizens, use of sanitizing, palliative methods, total lockdown, creating of self-isolation centres for the

suspected cases and movement restrictions. Interaction restrictions closed down of all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In short, no educational sector was functioning. All the roads were deserted, the villages and citizens are existing as if there is no human being, the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown created hungers and damages to the economic development of the nation. However, the paper examines the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the operations and quality of Nigerian higher Education. Therefore, the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the quality of Nigerian higher Education are regarded as both blessing and curse, positive and negative.

Threats of Covid-19 On The Nigeria Higher Education Are: Total Lockdown of the Institutions: the total lockdown of the institutions in Nigeria was announced by the Nigerian President Muhammed Buhari that all Educational Institution to be closed until further notice. However, the closedown of all the educational institutions include the Basic, Post basic, Secondary and Higher Education programme. The closedown also affects the open and distance Education programme, Private institutions and the teaching-learning process was put on hold during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria. It should be noted that the no classroom interaction, no teaching learning process, the issue of classroom management not applicable, face to face and even distance education not applicable during the total lockdown. The issue of the quality delivery assurance and productivity become issue of concern for the educational stakeholders in Nigeria.

Higher Educational Finance in Nigeria: Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic effects in Nigeria, both the income and expenditure pattern in the financing of the higher education was greatly affected. The income like tuition fees, Internally Generated Revenue and other alternative sources of financing education are greatly affected. Also, both the capital expenditure on the provision and maintenance of the higher educations are greatly diverted and misappropriated for the containment of the Covid 19 Pandemic in Nigeria.

Security of the infrastructural facilities of the Nigerian universities were greatly affected: In Nigeria the originality of the infrastructure facilities status is greatly affected during the Covid-19 Pandemics. It should be noted that during the Pandemic lockdown, all the facilities are not put into use, the quality of the available infrastructural facilities like building equipment, lawns and landscaping, and library had been deteriorated for the use after the Pandemic lockdown. The problem of the determination greatly

affects the quality and the productivity of the Nigerian tertiary institutions. The result was supported by Oyedeji [4]. which opined that the quality of educational infrastructure in any school determine the quality of the products from such institutions. The loss of the original status in the Nigerian higher institutions affect the academic integrity of the higher education programme after the lockdown.

Truncated academic calendar of Nigerian Higher Education: Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria, the fear of community transmission that can lead to the spread, the schools were closed down for a period of Eight months there is no school system, the external examination like WASSCE, NECO, NABTEB and JAMB were postponed indefinitely, the higher institutions were closed down, the semesters examination and fresh admission were suspended. The issue of social distancing affects the lectures resumption because of the over-crowded classrooms that characterized the higher institutional system. The school system did not resume as expected, however, with the total lockdown of all citizens at home the student-teacher relations were totally ignored which affect effective teaching-learning processes in the school. It should be noted that, Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria had a baneful effect on the quality of higher education because it greatly truncates the school calendar in Nigeria.

Virtual classrooms for the Higher Education students during the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Federal and State Government in Nigeria initiated the virtual classroom for the higher institutions in Nigeria through Radio, Television and Video, Radio message, interconnectivity, the teaching learning process take place at the convenient of the students while at home. It should be noted that the initiatives greatly affected by poor power supply rural-urban dichotomy, parental, socio-economic status, level of computer literacy, network failure and poor connectivity of the students to the Radio and Television station. However, as Ogundele and Jimba [5]. rightly said that power and energy supply constituted great threat to the quality of education provided through the virtual classrooms in Nigeria.

The Covid-19 Pandemic related variables constitute problems to quality higher education programmes in Nigeria: The Pandemic related variables like total lockdown, social-distancing, the use of face mask and availability of quarantine centres affect the appropriateness of the Pedagogical approaches to be used during the teaching-learning

processes, such approaches like the child-centeredness approaches, group discussion, dramatization and tutorial methods, it should be noted that these methods are adopted for effectiveness and efficiency of quality provided for the students in higher education [6].

Administration of Higher Education was greatly affected: Since the Covid-19 is characterized by continuous lockdown of the citizens which include the lecturers' students and every member of the higher education community in their different homes. The problem of the lockdown lead to depression, laziness, indolence, suicide, teenager pregnancy, hunger, high rate of student dropout, spirit of addiction, violence and day-to-day evil thought [7]. The problems that emanated from this Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown therefore affect the administrative effectiveness, productivity and internal efficiency of the Nigerian higher education programmes.

COVID 19 pandemic affects Research conducts : Research which is one of the potent indicators for measuring the quality of education programme not only in Nigeria but also at the global level was greatly affected, it should be noted that during the Covid-19 Pandemic, all the local, national and international conferences were suspended, some that took place was through teleconference technology like skyped, zooms etc. because of the country's borders, interstate and inter-local Government Area border closure. However, the research publication and research production by the lecturers were greatly affected because of the Covid-19 total lockdown by the government, it should be noted that the lockdown affect the quality of the research conducts by the lecturers in Nigeria higher institutions.

Teaching and quality higher education during Covid-19 Pandemic: Lecturers' and students' interaction process during the teaching was greatly affected. The effective pedagogical approaches like child-centeredness approach, tutorial approach were greatly affected by the lockdown, the Pandemic witness the death the lecturers of higher institutions [8]. All the tertiary institutions both public and private institutions were closed down. Teaching-learning activities were totally closed down. The institutional learning environment were totally abandoned for reptiles and as jungles, the worst aspect of the teaching learning process during the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown was the introduction of the online teaching, e-learning through skypes, Zooms, radio, television, telegrams, Instagram, creation of virtual classrooms all were greatly affected by the inadequate planning and

implementation. According to Akinnubi [9], Etejere[10] and Ogundele and Ndokang [11], which agreed that the effectiveness of virtual classrooms depend on the availability of computer facilities, power and energy supply rural-urban dichotomy, parental socio-economic background, computer literacy and appreciation and financial capabilities of the students. However, these factors greatly affect the introduction of the online teaching and learning process during the Covid-19 Pandemic among the Nigerian higher education.

Convid-19 Pandemic lockdown and lecturers' community service in Nigeria: The issues relating to the lecturers' participations in seminars, workshops, inaugural lectures, public lectures, moral and career days, community project sponsorships, active participations in associations and clubs in the society which are required by the lectures are greatly affected due to the total Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown in Nigeria.

Benefits of Covid-19 pandemic lockdown to quality higher education in Nigeria: From the explanations and discussion above, it should be noted that covid-19 Pandemic lockdown has her own benefits. This is to say that all the issues relating to Covid-19 are not totally condemned. There is positive aspect that must be credited for the Pandemic which the Nigerian citizens would never forget. Prominent among the benefits are:

Financial resources were gulped to develop health institutions: Adequate funding of the Nigerian health institutions: As a result of the Pandemic in Nigeria, the Nigerian government philanthropists, meaningful individuals started to donate billions of Naira for the government to contain the spread of the Covid-19. However, the donations were used to provide health facilities to Nigerian health institutions including university teaching hospitals. It should be noted that the medical officers and Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) had been calling on the federal government to come to the aid of the universities to provide adequate facilities that will encourage effective internationalization of Nigerian universities, which the government pretended not to be listened to. But with the touch of the Pandemic billions of moneys were gulped to provide equipment to the universities teaching hospitals and other isolation centres created during the Pandemic.

Revisiting of Personal Hygiene in the school system: The Covid-19 Pandemic helps the stakeholders to revisit the personal school hygiene that

had long abandoned in the schools' system. Such personal hygiene of washing basin for the students to wash their hands before they enter classroom, regular exercises, resting period, social distancing to receive fresh air by the students etc. Ogundele [12]. The current Covid-19 Pandemic had greatly re-opened it in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Social distancing principle will reduce overcrowded classrooms in Nigerian higher institutions: Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, Nigerian higher institutions are characterized by high student-teacher ratio in the classroom. According to Afolabi [13] the student: Teach ratio in secondary school during the teaching of mathematics and English Language was 250:1. This is to say that 250 students to one teacher in the classroom. Ijaiya [14] also noted that the student-teacher ratio in higher institutions is 1800:1 especially in the core courses. However, the problem was caused by inadequate infrastructural facilities for teaching in the school system. Ogunyemi [15] stated that the reason why the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was on strike was the call on the Federal government to provide adequate infrastructural facilities for the Universities for internationalization and global competitiveness of Nigerian universities, but they refused. Therefore, the Covid-19 Pandemic issue of social distancing will enforce the Federal Republic of Nigeria to provide adequate facilities for the higher institution to contain the spread of Covid-19 through the community transmission in the schools. Integration of e-learning, online teaching and virtual classroom into Nigerian Higher Education.

Workers will be encouraged to be dedicated and stay in their places of work: During the Covid-19 Pandemic at the global level, everyone was locked down in their various homes, local government, states and countries, all borders were closed, the shops, offices, schools, the markets and companies and banks were closed. Every socio-economic sector stood still and paralyzed. Every stakeholder therefore was looking for the way forward to sustain their system, every sector took to electronic system such as e-banking-business, e-shopping.

Enforcement of e-learning, mobile technology, virtual classroom in the higher institutions: The higher education system took to e-learning online teaching teleconferencing, mobile teaching virtual classroom system using social media, mass media, skypes, Zoom, telegram, WhatsApp etc. to teach their students online. It should be noted that after the Covid-19 Pandemic holidays the three tiers of government,

philanthropists, and well-meaning Nigeria that have goodwill to educational development to come up to aid in the provision of the e-learning centres into Nigerian Universities.

Drastic health Education campaign for rebuilding hygienic Educational Institution: During the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown. There are series of health education campaign to have a healthy living and conducive learning environment for curbing the havoc Covid-19 Pandemic. The schools therefore need to embrace the health Education campaign for avoiding epidemic of Covid-19 and other diseases in the schools. However, Olokoto[16] noted that health education campaign strategies lie mass media, public discussion, social media, internet connectivity seminars, conferences and lectures. All these will develop hygienic livelihood among schools especially in Nigeria.

Effective human resource management in the institutions: Finally, stay home and stay safe is a signal to stay at work and stay committed for productivity [17].

CONCLUSION

Covid – 19 Pandemic lockdown experience that made entrance to Nigeria on February 27th, 2020 had constituted a mixed feeling of good and bad in the mind of the citizens. However, the mix feelings are now related to the expected quality of Nigerian higher education. The mix feelings therefore made people to be doubting of whether adequate quality can be expected of higher Education due to the havoc caused by Covid-19 on the quality and productivity of socio-economic sectors of Nigeria including higher education from the write-ups, the paper discovered that damages done to the quality of higher education programme are more than the good ones that provide an insights and eye opener to enhancing sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Based on the explanations and conclusion made as regard to the ways by which Covid-19 constitute threat to quality of higher education programme in Nigeria. However, the following suggestions were made like strategic planning need to be initiated among the educational managers. The Educational planners should form a round table discussion to find the areas that had collapsed due to the Covid-19 and initiate a lasting solution towards rebuilding the problematic areas that affect the expected quality of Nigerian higher education.

Infrastructural facilities should be provided to decongest the over-crowded classroom in Nigerian higher institution. Since the higher education is characterized by overcrowded classrooms, however with the issue of social distance, teleconferences, virtual classrooms, e-learning, there is the need to provide all the necessary infrastructural facilities like buildings, furniture, computers, and internet facilities that will decongest all the available overcrowded classrooms and moderate the school population in Nigeria higher institution after the Covid-19 Pandemic holidays.

The three tiers of government and non-governmental organisation should come to the aid of Nigerian higher education in the provision of computer facilities e-learning laboratories, donation of the laptops to both the students and lecturers, installation of Wi-fi to the nook and corners of every university campus for free use of the networks; for so doing the issue of online teaching and teleconferencing will not be so difficult and it will help in enhancing effective teaching-learning process for quality of higher Education program in Nigeria.

Funds should be provided to construct and equip the school clinics for the higher institutions to provide health equipment and other facilities that will encourage the social distancing of the patients in the Nigerian higher institutions especially in the school clinic. Also, more qualified lecturers should be employed to teach in Nigerian higher institutions. The said lecturers should be adequately motivated to take care of reduced student numbers due to the principles of social distancing in the classrooms. The lecturers' satisfaction will make them to work happily towards enhancing quality higher education programmes in Nigeria after the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown. Finally, the mind of the youth needs to be liberated towards competitiveness, technology transfer, trades and creativity thinking and avoid the receive mentality to solve their problems.

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