

Rethinking Post Covid-19 Education: A Migration to Ubiquitous Learning Environment

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Abstract

This study adopted the explanatory sequential mixed methods design to investigate the way forward for education in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. The instrument for quantitative data collection was a validated online questionnaire that had an overall reliability index of 0.826. The qualitative data were collected through open-ended online interview questions. The quantitative data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while thematic analysis with the help of atlas.ti was used for qualitative data analysis. The results showed that the pandemic has pushed stakeholders in education to rethink the current digital platform for online learning. There is also the case of unpreparedness of the Nigerian education system to implement online learning due to weak infrastructure. The recommendations made include the use of ubiquitous learning environments in our education system, training of teachers, students, and parents to keep pace with changes in the field of education among others.

Keywords: Post COVID-19; Education; Ubiquitous; Lesson Learned; Priority of Education

Introduction

The global pandemic caused by the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which led to the prolonged closure of schools and disruptions of academic activities worldwide has necessitated countries around the world to rethink an alternative way of ensuring the continuity of education without any break. The report has shown that more than a billion students, constituting about 90% of the world student population have been affected as a result of these disruptions of learning activities due to social distancing policies put in place by the government (Azevedo et al., 2020; Owusu-Fordjour, 2020). Because of education continuity, most countries of the world rushed and embraced the ubiquitous learning environments via online learning platforms including learning management systems such as Moodle, Canvas, Google Classroom among others. The ubiquitous technology enables everywhere and anytime

access to learning, hence breaking the place and time barrier to education. This unplanned and sudden paradigm shift in the education sector has opened doors to new opportunities, and also new challenges.

Concerning this sudden switch to online education, the World Economic Forum (2020) highlighted that the way forward is to leverage further on the existing technologies and internet education, which will serve as a pivot to school education. This abrupt shift as a result of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic has forced most teachers around the world to deliver online classes without proper training or skills (Radha et al., 2020; Ramya & Variyar, 2020). There was no time to prepare for the use of the various new tools for the digitalization of learning contents and the development of new contents (livari et al., 2020). There also existed disparities in access to online education across countries (Watts, 2020;

Shama, & Ikbal, 2020), as the economic status of countries or individuals influences internet access (World Bank, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020). According to UNESCO (2020), groups of students such as those from low-income home, religious or ethnic minorities, migrants, in precarious home situations, those in the rural area, and the ones with special need require special attention and specific strategy during this COVID-19 pandemic when it comes to online distance learning. In a nutshell, the education sector faced and is still facing challenges as a result of the COVID-19 breakout. These challenges resulted in some abrupt paradigm shifts to sustain the education sector. It is therefore imperative to investigate the lessons learned from the challenges which confronted education during the COVID-19 pandemic and what should be the priority of the education system in building its plans and programs for the future.

Challenges of Education during COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the education sector and is rapidly changing the way learning and teaching are taking place. Some of the critical lessons learned from the challenges that confront the education sector during the pandemic included: unpreparedness of some education systems to provide remote learning, weak educational infrastructure, inequality in accessing the internet, and teachers' unpreparedness to switch to remote learning (UNESCO, 2020). Students were prevented from going to schools as a result of lockdown (Jonson et al., 2020; Brom et al., 2020), hence, most schools and universities world over adopted distance learning approaches (Dhawan, 2020; Huang et al., 2020). This is a shift from the normal school or university's instructional approach which normally



involves some element of a one-on-one or face-to-face encounter with the teachers from time to time. The benefits of online or distance education have been reported to include an increase in the level of students' motivation, increased academic engagement, expanded educational access, quality learning better opportunities, increased educational choice, and instructional flexibility, as well as efficiency administrative (Avgerinou & Moros, 2020). According to Avgerinou and Moros (2020), this transition led to increased faculty confidence in planning, teaching and assessing online with just-in-time and content-specific professional development. Parents' satisfaction is also observed despite the difficulty they experienced in providing the necessary online schooling facilities due to insufficient preparedness throughout the prolonged pandemic.

The Education System and Building Future Programs

The COVID-19 pandemic has revolutionized how education will operate, most especially in Nursery, Primary, and Secondary schools. In light of this, it has been suggested that some urgent measures need to be taken to facilitate this transition. With rising concern on the future of education COVID-19, after UNESCO (2020)recommended that the education system should explore new methods to train and prepare teachers and educators to equip them with the necessary skills and competencies to keep pace with changes in the field of education. The system should review and upgrade the range of skills provided for students to ones that will equip and prepare them for the future, undertake a new measure for benchmarking the quality of education and tackling the current digital divide, and developing of a worldwide

framework for cooperation, coordination and effective partnership between the public and private institution to provide equitable and quality education to all students around the world.

Another study on teaching, technology, and teacher education during the COVID-19 pandemic by Avgerinou and Moros (2020), recommended clear objectives which are aligned with the core subjects and presents students with daily PowerPoint lessons without necessarily replicating a school day teaching; hosting of weekly meetings with faculty and scheduled meetings with parents; maintaining a communication line by providing weekly or biweekly parent letter about next step; maintaining a strong and continuous communication among school leadership, recognizing that everyone's need is different and be prepared to support students learning needs with personalized sessions both academic and psychological; collecting of feedback from the ongoing quantitative and qualitative survey as a necessary way to adjust the school's performance in a virtual learning setting; and most importantly preparation teacher and professional development. According to Hu et al. (2019), online and blended education is still a relatively new field for practice and research, hence the need for relevant teacher preparation programs and professional development cannot be overemphasized. Hu et al. (2019) also emphasized the need to support pre-service teachers to develop those skills and find their online teaching voices while being research and theoryinformed. To achieve transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO (2020) asserts that effort must be made to exploit Information Technology (IT), vocational training for teachers and improve their capacities, review assessment method,



undertake all-inclusive digital an transformation, build effective an partnership structure, and review educational philosophies as well as goals and outputs of educational systems to align with the current development as well as requirements for surviving in today's world.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- What are the lessons learned from the challenges that confronted the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2. What should be the priority of the education system in building their plans and programs in the future?

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, in particular, the explanatory sequential design to investigate the lesson learned from the challenges which confront education during the COVID-19 pandemic and what the way forward for the education system is in building its plan and programs for the future. This design involved collecting data in two phases, first, the quantitative data followed up with the qualitative data to refine, explain, and triangulate the quantitative results (Creswell, 2012).

A total of 680 respondents participated in the study. The instrument for quantitative data collection was a 16-item closed-ended online questionnaire. It is divided into three sections: Section A contains the demographic information, section B contains items on lesson learned from challenges that confront education during COVID-19 pandemic, and section C contain items on the priority of education system in building their plans and programs in the future. The items were rated on a four-

point rating scale of Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Computer and Robotics Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while one from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument had internal consistency reliability of 0.674 and 0.795 for cluster 1 and Cluster 2 respectively, with an overall reliability index of 0.826. The qualitative data were collected through open-ended online interview questions.

The online questionnaire/interview questions were shared with the respondents via e-mails; and social networking sites such as Facebook, and WhatsApp. The data collected from the stakeholders in education who included lecturers/teachers, students,



parents/guardians, and policymakers were analyzed using frequency count, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and text analysis with the help of SPSS (for quantitative data) and atlas.ti (for qualitative data). Items with mean ratings of 2.5 and above were accepted while mean ratings less than 2.5 were rejected. All ethical issues in conducting research such as seeking and participants' consent their confidentiality were strictly adhered to.

Results

Demographic Information

Six hundred and eighty (680) respondents participated in the online survey. Among them, 480 were male while 200 were female. Also, 460 of the participants were teachers/lecturers, 60 parents/guardians, 140 students, and 20 policymakers.

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		Teacher/lecturer	Parent/Guardian	Students	Policymaker	Total	
Gender	Male	340	40	80	20		480
	Female	120	20	60	0		200
Total		460	60	140	20		680

Table 1. Demographic Information

Table 1 shows that there were more male respondents (480) as compared to the female respondent (200). It was also noted that no female policymaker responded to the item of the online questionnaire.

Research Question 1: What are the lessons learned from the challenges that confronted education during the COVID-19 pandemic?

To answer research question one, the frequency count, percentages, means, and standard deviation were computed for responses on section B items. Items with a mean rating of 2.5 and above were accepted as a lesson learned from the challenges that confront education during the COVID-19 pandemic, while mean ratings less than 2.5 were rejected. The result is presented in Table 2.



Table 2. Frequency Count, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Lesson learned fromthe challenges that confront education during the COVID-19 pandemic

S/N	Item Statement	Ν	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1	There was unpreparedness of the Nigerian educational systems in providing remote learning	680	20 (2.9%)	20 (2.9%)	140 (20.6%)	500(73.5%)	3.65	0.68143	Accepted
2	The pandemic pushed us to assess and rethink current digital platforms for distant and life-long learning.	680		20 (2.9%)	280 (41.2%)	380 (55.9%)	3.53	0.55535	Accepted
3	COVID-19 pushed governments to accelerate their efforts in the educational sector	680	80 (11.8%)	320 (47.1%)	200 (29.4%)	80 (11.8%)	2.41	0.84490	Rejected
4	There is weak infrastructure for supporting online learning	680	40 (5.9%)		140 (20.6%)	500 (73.5%)	3.62	0.76809	Accepte
5	Inequality in accessing the internet	680	20 (2.9%)	20 (2.9%)	160 (23.5%)	480 (70.6%)	3.62	0.68713	Accepte
6	Teachers' unpreparedness to switch to remote learning	680	20 (2.9%)	100 (14.7%)	260 (38.2%)	300 (44.1%)	3.24	0.80714	Accepted
7	Decrease in academic attainment due to								
	lack of technological means for distance learning	660		40 (5.9%)	140 (20.6%)	480 (70.6%)	3.67	0.58648	Accepted
	Cluster1 Mean	680					3.39	0.41077	

Table 2 shows that items 1, 2,4,5,6, and 7 had mean ratings above 2.5. Therefore, the items were accepted as some of the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. It can also be observed that these items had percentage scores above 50 for strongly agree, with exception of item 6 which had 44.1% for strongly agree, and 38.2% for "agree". Only item 3 was rejected as not a lesson learned during the pandemic, since it had a mean rating of 2.41. Most respondents 47.1% disagree and 11.8% strongly disagree with this statement which said that "COVID-19 pushed governments to accelerate their efforts in the educational sector". A cluster mean of 3.39 shows that lessons have been learned from the challenge that confronts education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respondents' responses to the openended interview questions of the research question were coded using atlas.ti and the word cloud was presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Word cloud on lessons learned from the challenges that confronted education during the COVID-19 pandemic

The word frequency query cloud in Figure 1 showed the most frequently



occurred word from the respondents' responses to the lesson learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The larger the word font size, the more the frequency of occurrence of the word. According to the responses, some of the lessons learned included lack of government commitment to educational growth, lack of human capital development, lack of adequate power (electricity), and an internet connection to support and sustain e-learning, among others. **Research Question 2:** What should be the priority of the education system in building their plan and programs in the future?

In other to answer research question two, frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviation were computed for the participant response to section C of the questionnaire. Items with mean ratings of 2.5 and above were accepted as what should be the priority of the education system in building their plans and programs in the future, while mean ratings less than 2.5 were rejected. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency Count, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the Priority of the Education System in Building their Plans and Programs in the Future

S/N	Items Statement	Ν	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
8 9	Effort must be made to capitalize on ICT Enable infrastructure, make it available for	680			200 (29.4%)	480 (70.6%)	3.71	.45598	Accepted
	everyone and ensure that it can accommodate all updates occurring in educational platforms and resources	680			260 (38.2%)	420 (61.8%)	3.62	.48632	Accepted
10	Ensure mutual collaboration and support among organizations, institutions to empower underprivileged areas	680			320 (47.1%)	360 (52.9%)	3.53	.49950	Accepted
11	Establish regulatory policies and frameworks to handle emergencies and ensure quality and equity in education in all circumstances	680			260 (38.2%)	420 (61.8%)	3.62	.48632	Accepted
12	Improve curricula to accommodate different teaching and learning methods, especially the practical ones	680		20 (2.9%)	220 (32.4%)	440 (64.7%)	3.62	.54352	Accepted
13	Habilitate, train, and enable teachers and education authorities to develop their teaching and learning methods for lifelong learning	680			240 (35.3%)	440 (64.7%)	3.65	.47824	Accepted
14	Optimize distance learning and adapt to the changing reality of the educational process	660			320 (47.1%)	340 (50.0%)	3.52	.50015	Accepted
15	Creating specialized platforms for capacity- building and skill-development targeting students, teachers, and education authorities	680			300 (44.1%)	380 (55.9%)	3.56	.49689	Accepted
16	Training of parents and guardians to support their children's learning	680		40 (5.9%)	360 (52.9%)	280 (41.2%)	3.35	.58867	Accepted
	Cluster2 Mean	680					3.57	.31233	

Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed to all the nine items (item 8 to 16) in section C as what should be the priority of education systems in building their plans and programs in the future. Almost all the items except for item 16 had their mean ratings above 3.5 and a percentage above 50% for strongly agreed. The cluster mean of 3.57 shows that the respondents were unanimous about these statements as what should be the priority of the education system in building their plans

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and programs in the future. The qualitative finding is presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Word Cloud on what should be the Priority of the Education System in Building their Plans and Programs in the Future

The frequency cloud in Figure 2 shows the most commonly reported concerns by respondents. The bigger the word font size, the higher the frequency of occurrence of the word in the query cloud. For example, the issue of providing free data and LMS subscriptions to teachers and students was mentioned 24 times! Other important words identified in the query cloud included: students, online, bandwidth, data, monthly, subscription, training, teachers, learning, laptops, smartphones, train, afford, etc. The respondence identify training of students and teachers on Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL), making the Learning Management System (LMS) free for teachers, providing monthly data subscription to students and teachers among others.



Discussion

The discussion of results was conducted based on the two research questions guiding the study: what are the lessons learned from the challenges that confronted education during the COVID-19 pandemic? And what should be the priority of the education system in building their plans and programs in the future? Relevant literature were used in discussing the results.

Lesson learned from the challenges that confront education during the COVID-19 pandemic

The outbreak of COVID-19 has opened up an opportunity for rethinking the goals of education. This has necessitated the stakeholders in education to push for a paradigm shift from the traditional face-toface teaching approach to an online or distance learning approach with the help of technology. This has become the "new normal!"

Results in Table 2 show that about 73.5% of the respondent strongly agreed that there was the unpreparedness of the Nigerian education systems in providing remote learning. This could be observed in the manner in which the schools were locked down due to social distance policies imposed by the government to curbed the spread of the virus. Even when other countries of the world continued with classes online, most Nigerian schools remained closed with no academic activities (Lawal et al, 2020; Jacob et al., 2020). Also, 55.9% of the respondents

strongly agreed that the pandemic pushed them to assess and rethink current digital platforms for distant and life-long learning, 73.5% strongly agreed that there is a weak infrastructure for supporting online learning, 70.6% strongly agreed that there is inequality in accessing the internet, the same percentage also strongly agreed that there is a decrease in academic attainment due to lack of technological means for distance learning. Furthermore, 44.1% strongly agreed, and 38.2% agreed on teachers' unpreparedness to switch to remote learning, which also agrees with (UNESCO, 2020). Avgerinou and Moros (2020) found that teachers were not trained to teach using 47.1% of the technology. However, respondents disagreed that COVID-19 pushed governments to accelerate their efforts in the educational sector. Meaning that the government is not doing enough to accelerate its efforts in the education sector. This item statement also falls below the acceptance mean benchmark of 2.5, as its mean rating is 2.41. The qualitative findings further proved that the government was not doing enough. Some of the comments extracted from the respondents included: lack of government commitment to educational growth, lack of human capital development, lacks of adequate power (electricity), and internet connection to support and sustain e-learning, among others.

The Priority of the Education System in Building their Plan and Programs in the Future

To adapt to the new normal post-COVID-19 education, the education system must prioritize building its plans and programs to sequence with present realities. This pushed the researcher to sample the opinions of stakeholders in education to find out what



the priority of the education system should be in building their plans and programs for the future.

Results in Table 3 show that a majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the nine items under this theme as what should be the priority of the education sector in building their plans and programs for the future. The mean ratings for almost all the items is between 3.7 to 3.52 (with between 70.6 % and 50.0% of the 680 respondents strongly agreeing to the statements). Only item 16 (training of parents and guardians to support their children's learning) has a mean rating of 3.35, which is still within the acceptable range (agreed).

Results from this study show that effort must be made to capitalize on ICT; enable infrastructure, make it available for everyone and ensure that it can accommodate all updates occurring in educational platforms and resources; ensure mutual collaboration and support organizations, institutions among to empower underprivileged areas; establish regulatory policies and frameworks to handle emergencies and ensure quality and equity in education in all circumstances; improve curricula to accommodate different teaching and learning methods, especially the practical ones; and habilitate, train and enable teachers and education authorities to develop their teaching and learning methods for lifelong learning. Others are to optimize distance learning and adapt it to the changing reality of the educational process; creating specialized platforms for capacity-building and skilldevelopment targeting students, teachers, and education authorities; and Training of parents and guardians to support their children's learning. The cluster mean of 3.57 (with a standard deviation of 0.031) shows that overall, the respondents accepted

these items as what should be the priority of education systems in building their plans and programs in the future. The standard deviation of 0.031 also shows how closely spread the scores are among the respondents. This result is in agreement with numerous studies that have shown that the new normal now is adapting to online distance learning for every time and everywhere access to learning (Dhawan, 2020; Huang, 2020). Here, there is no barrier to place and time. Studies have also recommended making available ICT infrastructure to students and teachers to cope with this challenge (Sari & Navir, 2020, Kanwar, 2020). Reimers et al. (2020); and Drane et al. (2020) identified the creation of a special platform for capacity building and skill development targeting students, teachers, parents, and all stakeholders in education. The overall goal is to facilitate processes and rapidly design and implement adaptive responses to the emerging education challenges and to also make provision for and protect students learning opportunities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

This study focused on lessons learned from the challenges that confront education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what should be the priority of the education system in building their plans and program in the future. It was found that the pandemic is pushing people to rethink the current digital platform for online learning. There was also unpreparedness of the Nigerian education system to implement it due to week infrastructure. The study also shows that the priority of the education system must be capitalizing on ICT by building infrastructure that can accommodate all updates occurring in the educational platform and resources.



Other priorities should include establishing regulatory policies and frameworks to handle emergencies and ensure quality and equity in education in all circumstances, and training of teachers and parents to support their children's learning.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1. The education system must ensure a shift from the use of technology in the classroom to beyond the classroom innovatively and creatively. This could be achieved through enforcing the use of ubiquitous learning environments such as the Learning Management Systems (LMS) in our education system
- 2. The government must ensure that everyone has access to the internet and digital devices for teaching and learning purposes
- 3. The education system should devise new ways of training teachers to acquire skills and competencies that will keep them relevant to the changes in the field of education
- 4. The education system must review and upgrade the range of skills provided to students to better prepare them for the future.

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